

# Relationship Between Mental Health And Scholastic Performance Of Tribal Students At The Higher Secondary Level

<sup>1</sup>S.Kasthuri & <sup>2</sup>Dr.S.Santhi

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Scholar, Sri Sarada College of Education (Autonomous), Salem-636016, Tamil Nadu, India Mail id: kasu2214@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Principal Sri Sarada College of Education (Autonomous), Salem-636016, Tamil Nadu, India

**Citation:** S.Kasthuri, et.al (2024). Relationship Between Mental Health And Scholastic Performance Of Tribal Students At The Higher Secondary Level, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(11) 3158-3162

Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i11.11381

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Mental health is a crucial determinant of students' academic success, particularly during the higher secondary stage when learners face increased academic pressure and career-related decisions. Tribal students often experience additional challenges due to socio-economic constraints, limited access to educational resources, and inadequate psychological support. The present study investigates the relationship between mental health and scholastic performance of tribal students at the higher secondary level. Using a descriptive survey method, data were collected from 788 XII standard tribal students selected through stratified random sampling from schools in Tamil Nadu. Mental health was assessed across five dimensions—*anxiety, sense of security, optimism, emotional well-being, and self-esteem*—using a standardized tool developed by the investigator, while scholastic performance was measured using academic achievement scores. Statistical analysis included Pearson's correlation and multiple regression techniques. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between overall mental health and scholastic performance. Anxiety showed a negative association, whereas self-esteem and emotional well-being emerged as strong positive predictors of academic achievement. The study underscores the importance of integrating mental health support into school education to enhance academic outcomes among tribal students.

**KEYWORDS:** Mental health; scholastic performance; tribal students; higher secondary education; anxiety; self-esteem

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a fundamental component of students' overall development and plays a decisive role in academic engagement, cognitive functioning, motivation, and scholastic achievement. During the higher secondary stage, students experience heightened academic demands, examination pressure, and career-related decision-making, all of which can significantly influence their psychological well-being (WHO, 2022). For tribal students, these challenges are often compounded by socio-economic disadvantages, geographical isolation, limited educational resources, and reduced access to guidance and counselling services (Government of India, 2020). Scholastic performance refers to students' achievement in academic subjects, commonly reflected through examination scores and overall academic outcomes. Research has consistently shown that mental health factors such as anxiety, emotional well-being, self-esteem, and optimism are closely linked to students' academic success (Patel et al., 2007; OECD, 2021). High levels of anxiety may impair concentration and memory, while positive emotional well-being and self-esteem enhance confidence, persistence, and academic motivation. Despite policy initiatives such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizing student well-being and inclusive education, empirical studies examining the relationship between mental health and scholastic performance among tribal students at the higher secondary level remain limited. Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate the extent to which mental health dimensions influence scholastic performance among tribal students, thereby contributing to evidence-based educational planning and intervention.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study specifically focuses on five dimensions of mental health anxiety, sense of security, optimism, emotional well-being, and self-esteem and examines how these psychological factors are associated with students' academic performance. Scholastic performance is assessed using students' academic achievement scores obtained from school records, representing their overall academic attainment. The investigation is confined to tribal students enrolled in government and government-aided higher secondary schools, and does not include students from private or residential institutions. The study adopts a quantitative survey approach, and therefore the findings are limited to the variables measured and do not explore qualitative aspects such as students' personal experiences, family background, or cultural influences in depth. Further, the study is restricted to a specific geographical area, and hence the results may not be generalized to all tribal students across different regions. The scope of the study also excludes the examination of other psychological, social, and environmental variables such as parental involvement, peer influence, school climate, and socio-economic status, which may also influence scholastic performance. Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into the role of mental health in academic achievement and serves as a foundation for future research and intervention-based studies aimed at enhancing both psychological well-being and scholastic success among tribal students at the higher secondary level.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Mental health is a vital factor influencing students' academic engagement, motivation, and overall scholastic performance, especially during the higher secondary stage when learners experience increased academic pressure and career-related concerns. Tribal students, in particular, often face multiple challenges such as socio-economic disadvantages, limited access to educational resources, cultural marginalization, and inadequate psychological support, which may adversely affect their mental well-being and academic achievement. Although several studies have examined mental health and academic performance separately, limited empirical research has focused on understanding the relationship between these two variables among tribal students at the higher secondary level. In this context, the present study is undertaken to examine the relationship between mental health and scholastic performance of tribal students at the higher secondary level, with special reference to selected dimensions of mental health.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of the present study, the following terms are operationally defined:

[a] Mental Health refers to the overall psychological well-being of students as measured by the Mental Health Scale developed by the investigator. It includes five dimensions—*anxiety, sense of security, optimism, emotional well-being, and self-esteem*—and reflects students' ability to manage emotions, cope with academic stress, and maintain a positive outlook toward learning and life.

[b] Scholastic Performance refers to the academic achievement of students, operationally defined by the marks or scores obtained in the higher secondary school examinations as recorded in school records. It represents students' overall academic attainment without considering subject-wise or dimensional differences.

[c] Tribal Students refer to students belonging to Scheduled Tribes (ST) and studying at the higher secondary level, specifically in XII standard, in government and government-aided higher secondary schools.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is there a significant relationship between mental health and scholastic performance of tribal students?
2. Which dimensions of mental health significantly predict scholastic performance?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

<b>Method</b>	The present study adopted a descriptive survey method, which is appropriate for examining relationships among variables as they naturally exist without manipulation.
<b>Sample and Sample Size</b>	The investigator used stratified random sampling technique for selecting the sample of 788, XII standard tribal school students from government schools, government aided schools and private schools in Salem and Namakkal districts of Tamil Nadu.
<b>Statistical Techniques Used</b>	1. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation 2. Multiple Regression Analysis

## TOOLS USED

### (i) Mental Health Scale

The mental health scale was developed by the investigator and consisted of 38 items, measured on a five-point Likert scale. The scale assessed five dimensions:

1. Anxiety
2. Sense of Security
3. Optimism
4. Emotional Well-being
5. Self-Esteem

The tool was validated through expert review to ensure content validity. A pilot study was conducted, and the reliability of the scale was established using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.79, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

### (ii) Scholastic Performance Tool

Scholastic performance was measured using students' academic achievement scores obtained from school records. This tool did not include sub-dimensions and represented overall academic performance. The data were verified for accuracy through school administration, ensuring criterion-related validity.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### Correlation

**Table 1: Correlation between Mental Health and Scholastic Performance**

Variables	r-value	Significance
Anxiety & Scholastic Performance	-0.46	Significant
Sense of Security & Scholastic Performance	0.41	Significant
Optimism & Scholastic Performance	0.44	Significant
Emotional Well-being & Scholastic Performance	0.48	Significant
Self-Esteem & Scholastic Performance	0.52	Significant
Total Mental Health & Scholastic Performance	0.56	Significant

### Interpretation

The table indicates a moderate positive correlation between total mental health and scholastic performance. Anxiety shows a negative relationship, while other dimensions demonstrate positive and significant associations, suggesting that better mental health contributes to improved academic outcomes.

### Regression Analysis

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Scholastic Performance**

Predictor Variables	Beta	t-value	Significance
Anxiety	-0.29	-4.21	Significant
Sense of Security	0.21	3.18	Significant
Optimism	0.24	3.67	Significant
Emotional Well-being	0.27	4.05	Significant
Self-Esteem	0.31	4.89	Significant

**Table 2 (a): Model Summary**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
0.61	0.37	0.35

**Table 2 (b): ANOVA**

Source	df	F-value	Significance
Regression	5	24.86	Significant
Residual	_____		
Total	_____		

### Interpretation

The regression model is statistically significant and explains 37% of the variance in scholastic performance. Self-esteem and emotional well-being emerged as the strongest predictors, while anxiety negatively influenced academic achievement.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the study confirm that mental health is a significant determinant of scholastic performance among tribal students at the higher secondary level. Students who exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, optimism, sense of security, and emotional well-being demonstrate better academic performance, whereas

elevated levels of anxiety are associated with poorer scholastic outcomes. This indicates that positive psychological attributes enhance students' confidence, concentration, motivation, and persistence in academic tasks, thereby facilitating improved learning outcomes. The negative influence of anxiety on scholastic performance suggests that excessive academic pressure, fear of examinations, and uncertainty about future educational prospects may hinder cognitive functioning and academic engagement among tribal students. This finding aligns with earlier research highlighting anxiety as a major barrier to effective learning and academic achievement (OECD, 2021). In contrast, students with a strong sense of security and emotional stability are more likely to engage actively in classroom activities and demonstrate resilience in the face of academic challenges. Furthermore, the strong predictive role of self-esteem and emotional well-being underscores the importance of fostering a supportive school environment that promotes positive self-concept and emotional regulation. These findings are consistent with global and national studies that emphasize the role of psychological well-being in shaping students' academic success and long-term educational aspirations (WHO, 2022; NEP, 2020). For tribal students, who often face social marginalization and limited access to educational resources, mental health support becomes even more crucial. Overall, the discussion highlights that academic interventions alone may not be sufficient to improve scholastic performance unless they are complemented by systematic mental health support. Integrating counselling services, life skills education, and teacher sensitization programme within higher secondary schools can help address students' psychological needs and enhance their academic performance. The findings reinforce the need for a holistic, learner-centered approach that recognizes mental health as a vital component of educational success among tribal students.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future studies may include a larger and more diverse tribal population drawn from different geographical regions to improve the generalizability of the findings.
- Longitudinal studies may be conducted to examine changes in mental health and scholastic performance over time and to understand long-term academic trajectories of tribal students.
- Qualitative research approaches, such as interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies, may be used to explore students lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges in greater depth.
- Intervention-based studies may be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of school-based mental health programme, counselling services, and life skills education.
- Future research may examine the influence of socio-economic status, parental education, and family support on mental health and scholastic performance.
- Studies may explore the role of school climate, teacher–student relationships, and peer support as contributing factors to students' psychological well-being and academic success.
- Comparative studies between tribal and non-tribal students may provide insights into disparities in mental health and academic achievement.
- Research may focus on gender-specific differences in mental health dimensions and their impact on scholastic performance.
- Mixed-method research designs combining quantitative and qualitative approaches may offer a more comprehensive understanding of the variables studied.
- Future investigations may evaluate the impact of policy initiatives such as NEP 2020 on mental health support and academic outcomes among tribal students.

### CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that mental health plays a significant role in determining the scholastic performance of tribal students at the higher secondary level. Positive dimensions of mental health such as self-esteem, optimism, sense of security, and emotional well-being contribute substantially to improved academic achievement, while anxiety negatively affects students' performance. The results clearly indicate that academic success among tribal students cannot be achieved solely through instructional strategies without addressing their psychological well-being. The study highlights the need for school-based mental health interventions, guidance and counselling services, and teacher sensitization programme to support tribal students effectively. By fostering a supportive and emotionally secure learning environment, schools can enhance both the mental health and academic success of tribal learners, thereby contributing to inclusive and equitable education as envisioned in the National Education Policy 2020.

### REFERENCES

1. Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Ministry of Education. <https://www.education.gov.in>
2. OECD. (2021). *Students' well-being: What it is and how it can be measured*. OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org>.

3. Patel, V., Flisher, A. J., Hetrick, S., & McGorry, P. (2007). Mental health of young people: A global public-health challenge. *The Lancet*, 369(9569), 1302–1313. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(07\)60368-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)60368-7)
4. Reddy, G. L., & Anuradha, R. V. (2013). School mental health programmes in India: A review. *Journal of Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 39(1), 1–10.
5. Sahoo, S., & Khess, C. R. J. (2010). Prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress among young male adults in India. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 52(4), 314–318. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5545.74304>
6. Sharma, S., & Sharma, N. (2015). Mental health and academic achievement of adolescents. *International Journal of Education and Psychological Research*, 4(2), 13–17.
7. UNESCO. (2020). *Global education monitoring report: Inclusion and education*. UNESCO Publishing.
8. World Health Organization. (2022). *Adolescent mental health*. <https://www.who.int>