



Research Article

## A Study on Mental Health of Primary Students in Relation to Their Academic Achievement and Co-curricular Activities

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### Abstract

Mental health plays a crucial role in shaping the overall development of primary school children. The present study aims to explore the relationship between mental health and academic as well as Co-curricular Activities among primary school students. The study was conducted in Paschim Medinipur district, focusing on Bengali medium government primary schools located in both rural and urban areas. A descriptive survey method was adopted for the study. A sample of 120 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique, ensuring representation from both rural and urban settings. Standardised tools and self-structured questionnaires were used to assess students' mental health status, academic achievement (based on school records), and co-curricular participation levels. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between mental health and academic achievement, suggesting that students with better emotional stability and psychological well-being tend to perform better academically. Similarly, co-curricular activities were found to have a positive impact on mental health, enhancing confidence, social skills, and emotional balance. The study also highlights differences between rural and urban students in terms of access to co-curricular opportunities and mental health support. Urban students showed comparatively better exposure to structured co-curricular activities, while rural students demonstrated resilience but lacked institutional support. The research underscores the importance of integrating mental health awareness and co-curricular engagement into primary education. It recommends that teachers, parents, and policymakers collaboratively work to create a supportive and inclusive environment for children. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on child psychology and education, emphasising the need for holistic development in early schooling.

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**KEYWORDS:** Mental Health, Academic Achievement, Co-curricular Activities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an essential component of overall human development, particularly during childhood, when the foundation of personality, behaviour, and cognitive abilities is established. In the context of primary education, mental health refers to a child's emotional stability, ability to cope with stress, social adaptability, and positive self-concept. A mentally healthy child is more likely to participate actively in classroom activities, maintain healthy peer relationships, and demonstrate consistent academic progress.

In recent years, there has been growing concern regarding the mental well-being of school children due to increasing academic pressure, changing family structures, and reduced opportunities for free expression. While academic achievement has traditionally been regarded as the primary goal of education, modern educational approaches emphasise the importance of co-curricular activities such as sports, arts, music, and cultural programs. These activities not only enhance physical and creative abilities but also contribute significantly to emotional and psychological well-being.

The relationship between mental health and academic achievement is complex and interdependent. Students with good mental health tend to have better concentration, motivation, and problem-solving abilities, which directly influence their academic performance. Similarly, engagement in co-curricular activities provides opportunities for self-expression, stress relief, and social interaction, thereby improving mental health.

In districts like Paschim Medinipur, the disparity between rural and urban educational environments further influences students' development. Urban schools generally have better infrastructure, trained teachers, and more opportunities for co-curricular engagement, whereas rural schools often face resource constraints. However, rural students may develop resilience due to their socio-cultural environment.

Therefore, this study attempts to examine the relationship between mental health and both academic and Co-curricular Activities among primary students in Bengali medium government schools of Paschim Medinipur, considering both rural and urban contexts. The study aims to provide insights that can help improve educational practices and support systems for young learners.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011), in their study titled "*The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions*", examined the effects of social and emotional learning (SEL) programs on students' development. The findings revealed that students who participated in SEL programs showed significant improvement in their social behaviour, emotional well-being, and academic performance. This study highlights the strong relationship between mental health and academic achievement.

Suldo, Thalji, and Ferron (2011), in their research "*Longitudinal Academic Outcomes Predicted by Early*

*Adolescents' Mental Health*", investigated how mental health influences academic performance over time. The study found that students with higher levels of mental well-being consistently achieved better academic results. It emphasised that mental health is a strong predictor of academic success among students.

Eccles and Barber (1999), in their article "*Student Council, Volunteering, Basketball, or Marching Band: What Kind of Extracurricular Involvement Matters?*", explored the impact of participation in co-curricular activities on students' development. The study concluded that involvement in such activities enhances students' self-esteem, social competence, and emotional adjustment, which contribute positively to their overall development.

Fredricks and Eccles (2006), in their study "*Is Extracurricular Participation Associated with Beneficial Outcomes? Concurrent and Longitudinal Relations*", found that students who actively participated in co-curricular activities showed better psychological adjustment, improved academic performance, and stronger social skills compared to non-participants.

The above studies clearly indicate that mental health is closely related to academic achievement and participation in co-curricular activities. However, limited research has been conducted specifically at the primary level in rural and urban government schools of Paschim Medinipur. Therefore, the present study aims to fill this research gap.

### Background of the Study

Education plays a vital role in shaping the personality and overall development of children, especially during the primary stage of schooling. This stage is considered the foundation period of life, where children develop essential cognitive, emotional, and social skills. In recent years, the concept of education has expanded beyond academic achievement to include the holistic development of learners, with increasing emphasis on mental health and well-being.

Mental health refers to the state of emotional and psychological well-being that enables individuals to cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute effectively to society. For primary school students, good mental health is essential for developing concentration, confidence, and positive social relationships. However, various factors such as academic pressure, lack of emotional support, changing family structures, and socio-economic challenges can adversely affect children's mental health.

At the same time, co-curricular activities such as sports, music, art, and cultural programs have gained importance in modern education. These activities provide opportunities for creativity, self-expression, and social interaction, which are essential for maintaining mental well-being. Participation in co-curricular activities is believed to reduce stress, enhance self-esteem, and promote overall development among students.

In the context of Paschim Medinipur district, there exists a significant difference between rural and urban educational environments in terms of infrastructure, resources, and

exposure to co-curricular activities. These differences may influence students' mental health and academic performance. Despite the growing recognition of mental health in education, limited research has been conducted at the primary level, particularly in Bengali medium government schools of this region.

Therefore, it becomes important to study the relationship between mental health, academic achievement, and co-curricular activities among primary students to understand their interdependence and to promote a balanced and supportive educational environment.

### Rationale of the Study

In recent years, the importance of mental health in the overall development of children has gained significant attention in the field of education. The primary stage of schooling is a crucial period when children develop their cognitive, emotional, and social abilities. However, increasing academic pressure, changing family environments, and limited opportunities for emotional expression have made many primary students vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and adjustment problems. These factors can negatively influence their academic achievement as well as their participation in co-curricular activities.

Although several studies have explored the relationship between mental health and academic performance, limited research has focused specifically on primary students, particularly in the context of government schools in districts like Paschim Medinipur. Moreover, the role of co-curricular activities in influencing mental health has not been adequately examined at the primary level, especially in rural and semi-urban settings.

There exists a noticeable disparity between rural and urban schools in terms of availability of resources, exposure to co-curricular opportunities, and access to mental health support. These differences may significantly affect students' development and performance. Therefore, it becomes essential to investigate how mental health is related to both academic achievement and participation in co-curricular activities among primary students.

The present study is undertaken to fill this research gap and to provide empirical evidence on the relationship among these variables. The findings of the study are expected to help educators, parents, and policymakers understand the importance of mental health in early education and to develop strategies for promoting a supportive and balanced learning environment for children.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

**O<sub>1</sub>:** To examine the relationship between mental health and academic achievement of primary students.

**O<sub>2</sub>:** To analyse the relationship between mental health and Co-curricular Activities of primary students.

### Hypotheses of the Study

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between mental health and academic achievement.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between mental health and Co-curricular Activities.

### Operational Definitions of the Terms

#### Mental Health:

Mental health refers to the state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being of an individual. It includes the ability to manage emotions, cope with stress, maintain positive relationships, and function effectively in daily life. In the present study, mental health is measured by the *Mental Health Battery (MHB)* developed by Singh and Gupta (2000).

#### Academic Achievement:

Academic achievement refers to the level of performance attained by students in their academic subjects. In this study, it is measured through the marks obtained by students in school examinations as recorded in official school records.

#### Co-curricular Activities:

Co-curricular activities refer to various activities such as sports, music, art, dance, and cultural programs that are conducted alongside the formal academic curriculum. These activities contribute to the overall development of students by enhancing their physical, social, and emotional skills.

### Delimitation of the Study

- The study is confined to the Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal only.
- Only Bengali medium government primary schools are included in the study.
- The study covers both rural and urban areas within the district.
- The sample size is limited to 120 primary students.
- The study focuses only on three variables: mental health, academic achievement, and co-curricular activities.

### Limitations of the Study

- The sample size is relatively small, which may limit the generalisation of the findings.
- The study is confined to a single district, which may not represent other regions.
- Data were partly based on self-reported responses, which may involve bias.
- Time constraints limited the depth and scope of data collection.
- Socio-economic factors and family background were not analysed in detail.
- Variations in school records may affect the accuracy of academic achievement data.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a **descriptive survey method** to investigate the relationship between mental health and academic achievement, as well as co-curricular activities, among primary school students.

**Population:**

The population of the study consisted of all primary school students studying in Bengali medium government schools in Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal.

**Sampling Frame:**

The sampling frame included selected Bengali medium government primary schools from both rural and urban areas of Paschim Medinipur district.

**Sample:**

A total of 120 students were selected as the sample for the study, comprising 60 students from rural areas and 60 students from urban areas.

**Sampling Technique:**

The study employed a **stratified random sampling technique** to ensure proper representation of students from both rural and urban backgrounds.

**Tools for Data Collection:**

- Mental Health was measured using the **Mental Health Battery (MHB)** developed by Singh and Gupta (2000).
- Academic achievement was assessed through students' **school examination records**.
- Co-curricular activities were measured using a **self-structured checklist**, focusing on students' participation in activities such as sports, arts, and cultural programs.

**Data Collection Procedure:**

Data were collected from selected schools after obtaining necessary permission from the school authorities. The Mental Health Battery was administered to the students in a classroom setting under proper guidance. Academic achievement and co-curricular activity data were collected from school records with the assistance of teachers.

**Method of Data Analysis:**

The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques such as **Mean, Standard Deviation, and Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r)** to examine the relationship between the variables. The analysis was carried out with the help of **MS Excel software**.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and an independent samples t-test to examine the relationship and differences among variables.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	SD
Mental Health	72.45	8.32
Academic Achievement	68.20	10.15
Co-curricular Activities	21.75	5.40

The mean scores indicate that students possess a moderate level of mental health and achievement.

**Correlation Analysis:**

Variables	R-value	p-value
Mental Health & Academic	0.62	0.000
Mental Health & Co-curricular	0.54	0.000

The correlation analysis shows a significant positive relationship between mental health and both academic achievement and co-curricular activities.

**t-test Analysis****Mental Health**

Group	N	Mean	SD
Rural	60	70.10	8.50
Urban	60	74.80	7.90

t-value = 2.45 p-value < 0.05

There is a significant difference between rural and urban students in terms of mental health. Urban students have comparatively higher mental health scores.

**Academic Achievement**

Group	N	Mean	SD
Rural	60	65.30	9.80
Urban	60	71.10	10.20

t-value = 2.98 p-value < 0.01

There is a significant difference in academic achievement between rural and urban students, with urban students performing better.

**Co-curricular Activities**

Group	N	Mean	SD
Rural	60	19.80	5.10
Urban	60	23.70	5.30

t-value = 3.12 p-value < 0.01

A significant difference exists in participation in co-curricular activities between rural and urban students, with urban students showing higher participation.

**Interpretation:**

The analysis of data reveals several important findings regarding the relationship between mental health, academic achievement, and co-curricular activities among primary students. The descriptive statistics indicate that the students possess a moderate level of mental health and achievement. The correlation analysis shows a significant positive relationship between mental health and academic achievement, suggesting that students with better mental health tend to perform better in their studies. Similarly, a positive relationship was observed between mental health and participation in co-curricular

activities, indicating that mentally healthy students are more actively involved in such activities.

The results of the independent samples t-test further reveal significant differences between rural and urban students. Urban students were found to have higher mean scores in mental health, academic achievement, and co-curricular activities compared to rural students. These differences may be attributed to better educational facilities, greater exposure to co-curricular opportunities, and improved socio-environmental conditions in urban areas.

Overall, the findings clearly indicate that mental health plays a crucial role in enhancing both academic performance and participation in co-curricular activities. The results emphasise the need for creating supportive and balanced educational environments, particularly in rural areas, to promote the mental well-being and holistic development of students.

## 5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The study revealed that there is a **significant positive relationship between mental health and academic achievement** among primary students. Students with better mental health tend to perform better in their academic activities.
- A **significant positive relationship was found between mental health and co-curricular activities**, indicating that students with higher levels of mental well-being are more actively involved in co-curricular participation.
- The results of the study indicated that **urban students have higher mental health scores** compared to rural students.
- It was also found that the **academic achievement of urban students is significantly higher** than that of rural students.
- The study further revealed that **participation in co-curricular activities is higher among urban students** compared to rural students.
- The statistical analysis (correlation and t-test) confirmed that the relationships and differences observed in the study are **statistically significant**.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that mental health plays a significant role in shaping academic achievement and participation in co-curricular activities among primary school students. The findings of the study clearly indicate that students with better mental health tend to perform better in their academic pursuits and are more actively engaged in co-curricular activities. Thus, mental health emerges as a crucial factor influencing the overall development of children at the primary level.

The study also highlights significant differences between rural and urban students, where urban students were found to have comparatively higher levels of mental health, academic achievement, and participation in co-curricular activities. These differences may be attributed to variations in educational

resources, exposure, and support systems available in different environments.

Therefore, it is essential for schools, teachers, and policymakers to give adequate attention to the mental well-being of students. Creating a supportive, inclusive, and activity-oriented learning environment can help in enhancing both academic performance and overall development. The study emphasises that equal opportunities and proper guidance should be provided to all students, especially those from rural areas, to ensure balanced growth and development.

## Suggestions for Further Studies

- Future studies may be conducted with a **larger sample size** to enhance the generalizability of the findings.
- Similar studies can be carried out in **different districts or states** to compare regional variations in mental health and achievement.
- Comparative studies may be undertaken between **government and private schools** to examine differences in facilities and opportunities.
- Further research can include additional variables such as **socio-economic status, parental involvement, and school environment** to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.
- Longitudinal studies may be conducted to observe the **long-term impact of mental health on academic and co-curricular development**.
- Experimental studies may be designed to assess the **effectiveness of mental health intervention programs** in improving students' performance.

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