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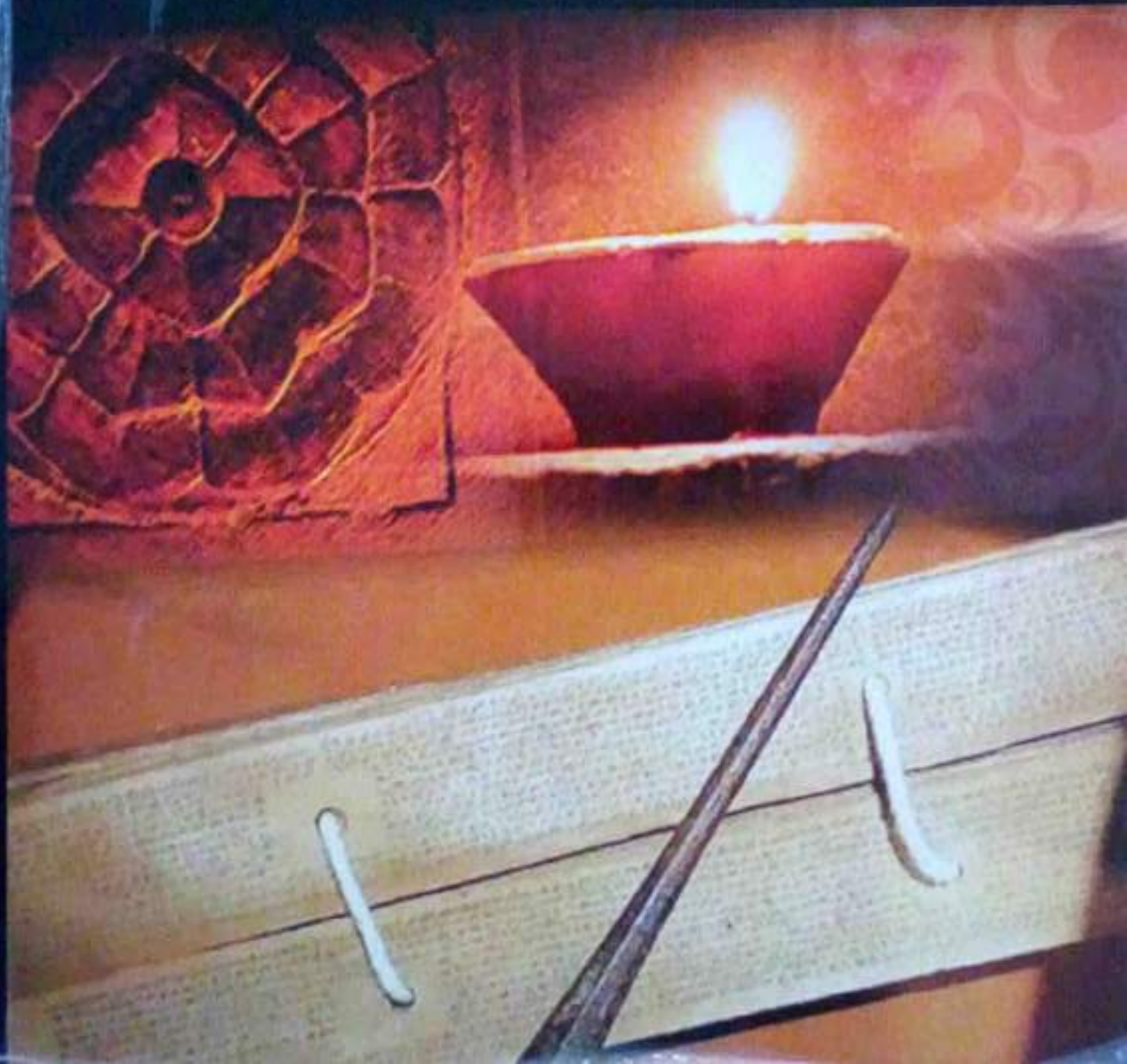
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## DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS OF KOTTAYAM DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT

*Today's young people are growing up in a world that is saturated by the media. In recent years, digital media and networks have become embedded in our everyday lives, and are part of broad-based changes to how we engage in knowledge production, communication, and creative expression. Young people are actively manipulating digital media to participate in social and cultural life. Making and sharing media has become an increasingly important feature of how young people communicate and engage with each other and with the wider world. The present study to examine Digital Media literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district reveals that there exists significant difference in Digital Media Literacy among Higher Secondary students of Kottayam district with respect to gender, locale and stream of study.*

#### **Key Term:**

*Digital Media Literacy*

### **Introduction**

Digital media is quickly replacing traditional media forms as those most accessible to the 21st century learners. Creating and sharing media in a digital environment has become an increasingly important feature of how young people communicate and engage with each other and with the wider world. Young people are actively manipulating digital media to participate in social and cultural life, to pursue their interests and to express themselves online. A generation is growing up in an era where digital media are part of the social and cultural fabric of learning, play, and social communication.

Media literacy is the ability to identify different types of media and understand the messages being sent. Students take in a huge amount of information from a wide array of sources, far beyond the traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers, and magazines). The digital age has made it easy for anyone to create media. Online and mobile media usage is being driven by the digital extensions of traditional media, driving up overall media usage as more content is regenerated for digital devices, such as internet and mobile video streaming of TV programmes and movies; online radio stations, web-based multiplayer editions of console videogames and mobile newspaper apps. All media shares one thing: someone

created it and it was created for a reason. Understanding that reason behind its creation and to identify whether it is credible or not is the basis of media literacy.

According to ComScore's Cross-Platform Future in Focus report (2017), total digital media usage has increased by 40% in the last three years and the amount of digital media time spent using mobile devices reached 68% in the U.S. In India 70% use only mobile phones. The smart phone has now become the primary way of getting online and for many users it is the only way. According to Google's Micro-moments study (2017), 87% of people always have their smart phone at their side, day and night. Interestingly, up to 50% of digital media time is dedicated to using mobile apps. Mobile apps are capable of displaying any web content in web views similarly to web browsers. More than one-fourth of time is spent on smart phones during socially-driven functions. Social networking and instant messengers are consistently among the most popular mobile behaviours.

Today's students are not being equipped with the critical thinking and analysis skills they need to successfully navigate our media-saturated environment. Time spent consuming media, continues to increase, but students often are poorly versed in analyzing and understanding different media messages and formats. They prefer to see the world of media messages as simple and straightforward, to be taken at face value, according to recent research in the field of media literacy. Digital media literacy skills will help students to improve their capacity to know what they are looking for, what information to ignore or discard, and how to identify what can be useful or significant. They learn to discriminate between the multiple sources of information available online and to challenge the views they find there. They learn how to create, collaborate and communicate effectively and to understand how and when digital technologies can best be used to support these processes. Thus media literacy is an essential skill in the digital age.

#### *Statement of the problem*

Twenty-first century communication has changed how individuals, companies and organisations connect to the world. Success and participation in social life increasingly depends on how creatively and effectively one can use digital media. Media in all forms, including TV, computers, and smart phones can affect how children feel, learn, think, and behave. The present study is an attempt to examine Digital Media literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district. Hence the study is entitled as 'Digital Media Literacy among Higher Secondary School Students of Kottayam district'.

#### *Objectives of the study*

1. To compare the mean scores of Digital Media literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district with respect to (a) gender (b) locale and (c) Stream of study.
2. To compare the mean scores of Digital Media literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on gender, locale and stream of study with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction

#### **HYPOTHESES**

1. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district with respect to (a) gender (b) locale and (c) stream of study.

2. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on gender, locale and stream of study with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction

#### METHODOLOGY

Survey method was adopted for the study. The sample of the study consisted of 931 XI standard students studying in various Higher Secondary Schools of Kottayam district. The investigator prepared and standardized the Digital Media Literacy Inventory based on four components namely Personal competence, Social competence, Critical understanding and Media addiction. Each statement consists of three options namely Always, Sometimes and Never. Reliability of Digital Media Literacy Inventory was estimated by the investigator using test- retest method and was found to be 0.83.

#### Analysis and Interpretation

1. *Testing significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam District with respect to (a) gender (b) locale and (c) Stream of study*

To compare the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district with respect to gender, locale and stream of study, the data were analysed with the help of 't' test and the result is given in Table 1.

Table 1

*Data and results showing significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district with respect to gender, locale and stream of study*

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Level of significance
Gender	Boys	490	101.62	17.224	4.94 P<0.01
	Girls	441	81.44	19.789	
Locale	Urban	454	95.52	19.183	4.94 P<0.01
	Rural	477	88.78	22.202	
Stream of study	Science	466	89.93	20.763	3.11 P<0.01
	Humanities	465	94.20	21.131	

From Table 1, it is observed that the obtained 't' value with respect to gender is 4.94 which is greater than the table value of significance at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district with respect to gender " is rejected. Further, the mean score of Digital Media Literacy of boys is 101.62 which is significantly

higher than that of girls whose mean score is 81.44. It may therefore be concluded that boys were found to possess significantly higher Digital Media Literacy in comparison to girls.

The obtained 't' value with respect to locale is 4.94 which is greater than the table value of significance at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis that There is no significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district with respect to locale is rejected. Further, the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of students belonging to Urban Higher Secondary Schools is 95.52 which is significantly higher than that of Rural School students whose mean scores of Digital Media Literacy is 88.78. It may therefore be concluded that students belonging to Urban Higher Secondary Schools were found to possess significantly higher Digital Media Literacy in comparison to students belonging to Rural Higher Secondary Schools.

The obtained 't' value with respect to stream of study 3.11 is greater than the table value of significance at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis that "there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary students of Kottayam district with respect to stream of study" is rejected. Further, the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of students belonging to Humanities stream is 94.20 which is significantly higher than that of students belonging to Science stream whose mean scores of Digital Media Literacy is 89.93. It may therefore be concluded that Higher Secondary Students belonging to Humanities stream were found to possess significantly higher Digital Media Literacy in comparison to students belonging to Science stream.

*2. Testing significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kerala based on gender, locale and stream of study with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction*

*2.1 Testing significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kerala based on gender with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction*

To compare the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on gender with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction, the data were analysed with the help of 't' test and the result is given in Table 2.

From Table 2, it is observed that the obtained 't' value for the components of Digital Media Literacy namely Personal competence, Social competence, Critical understanding and Media addiction with respect to gender are 15.45, 16.45, 7.84 and 14.61 respectively and the values are greater than the table value of significance at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis that There is no significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on gender with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical

Table 2

Data and results showing significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on gender with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction.

Components	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t value	Level of significance
Personal competence	Boys	490	32.396	5.7139	15.45	P<0.01
	Girls	441	26.286	6.3461		
Social competence	Boys	490	18.747	4.0836	16.45	P<0.01
	Girls	441	14.218	4.3104		
Critical understanding	Boys	490	21.949	4.7086	7.84	P<0.01
	Girls	441	19.238	5.7962		
Media addiction	Boys	490	28.596	7.3479	14.61	P<0.01
	Girls	441	21.476	7.5064		

understanding and (d) Media addiction. is rejected. Further, the mean scores of the four components of Digital Media Literacy of boys are 32.396, 18.747, 21.949 and 28.596 respectively which are significantly higher than that of girls whose mean scores of the four components of Digital Media Literacy are 26.286, 14.218, 19.238 and 21.476. It may therefore be concluded that boys were found to possess significantly higher Digital Media Literacy in comparison to girls with respect to the components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction.

*2.2 Testing significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kerala based on locale with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction*

To compare the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on locale with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction, the data were analysed with the help of 't' test and the result is given in the Table 3.

From Table 3, it is observed that the obtained 't' value for the components of Digital Media Literacy namely Personal competence, Social competence, and Media addiction with respect to locale are 3.48, 4.48, and 5.49 respectively and the values are greater than the table value of significance at 0.01 level. The obtained 't' value for the component of Digital media Literacy namely critical understanding with respect to locale is 2.54 and the value is greater than the table value of significance at 0.05 level. Thus the null hypothesis that "there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on locale with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understand-



**Table 3**

*Data and results showing significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on locale with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction.*

Components	Locale	N	Mean	SD	t value	Level of significance
Personal competence	Urban	454	30.286	6.8013	3.48	P<0.01
	Rural	477	28.755	6.6184		
Social competence	Urban	454	17.368	4.3153	4.84	P<0.01
	Rural	477	15.872	5.0492		
Critical understanding	Urban	454	21.128	4.7994	2.54	P<0.05
	Rural	477	20.224	5.9241		
Media addiction	Urban	454	26.718	7.7280	5.49	P<0.01
	Rural	477	23.801	8.4424		

ing and (d) Media addiction is rejected. Further, the mean scores of the four components of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students belonging to urban schools are 30.246, 17.368, 21.128 and 26.718 respectively which are significantly higher than that of Higher Secondary Students belonging to rural schools whose mean scores of the four components of Digital Media Literacy are 28.755, 15.872, 20.224 and 23.801. It may therefore be concluded that Higher Secondary Students belonging to urban schools were found to possess significantly higher Digital Media Literacy in comparison to those belonging to rural schools with respect to the components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction.

*2.3 Testing significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kerala based on stream of study with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction*

To compare the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on stream of study with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction, the data were analysed with the help of 't' test and the result is given in Table 4.

From Table 4, it is observed that the obtained 't' value for the components of Digital Media Literacy namely Personal competence, Social competence and Critical understanding with respect to stream of study are 0.867, 1.74 and 1.87 respectively and the values are smaller than the table value of significance at 0.05 level. Thus the null hypothesis that There is no significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on stream of study with respect to the following components (a) Personal competence (b) Social competence and (c) Critical un-

**Table 4**

*Data and results showing significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on stream of study with respect to the following components (a)Personal competence (b)Social competence (c) Critical understanding and (d) Media addiction.*

Components	Stream of study	N	Mean	SD	t value	Level of significance
Personal competence	Science	466	29.693	6.4015	.867	P>0.05
	Humanities	465	29.310	7.0804		
Social competence	Science	466	16.330	4.8604	1.74	P>0.05
	Humanities	465	16.873	4.6511		
Critical understanding	Science	466	20.333	5.8746	1.87	P>0.05
	Humanities	465	20.998	4.9084		
Media addiction	Science	466	23.391	7.7965	6.97	P<0.01
	Humanities	465	27.060	8.2473		

derstanding' is accepted.

The obtained 't' value for the component of Digital Media Literacy namely Media addiction with respect to stream of study is 6.97 and the value is greater than the table value of significance at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis that 'There is no significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district based on stream of study with respect to the component Media addiction' is rejected. Further, the mean scores of the component Media addiction of Higher Secondary Students belonging Humanities stream is 27.06 which is significantly higher than that of students belonging to Science stream whose mean score is 23.39. It may therefore be concluded that Higher Secondary Students belonging to Humanities stream have more Media addiction when compared to students belonging to Science stream.

#### CONCLUSION

The study reveals that there exists significant difference in the mean scores of Digital Media Literacy of Higher Secondary Students of Kottayam district with respect to gender, locale and stream of study. Students belonging to Humanities stream are more addicted to Digital Media when compared to the students of Science stream. As Digital Media usage continues to grow steadily, it is necessary to help children develop healthy media habits and ways to be a good Digital Citizen.

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# ACADEMIC STRESS OF HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND SUPPORT OF EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED MOTHERS

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The present investigation aims at studying the relationship between the Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers. Academic Stress Inventory and Mother's Support Scale tools of research were used to collect data. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were adopted to analyze the data. The findings of the study can be an eye opener to the mothers and teachers regarding various factors which are responsible for the Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students so that they can take necessary steps to reduce the Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students.*

### **Key Terms:**

*Academic Stress, Mother's Support, Employed and Unemployed Mothers*

## **Introduction**

In the hustle and bustle of the modern world, stress is unavoidable. Too much stress can have debilitating effects on our health, contributing to and agitating many problems including heart diseases, high blood pressure, stroke and depression and sleep disorders. Stress is anxiety or distress, caused by any pressure or tension. In academic life, stress may act as a negative predictor of academic performance. One of the important sources of academic stress in schoolchildren is the great expectation of parents for achieving good marks in their examination.

The mother-child relationship is far important than any of these. Working mothers are occupied with so many tasks that they have to work outside and at the same time, they are responsible for all household work and responsible for bringing up their children. They also manage their time effectively and give specific time each day to their children and are concerned with their academic progress.

Today mothers are entering irresistibly in the work force in search of their own true identity. The decision to be an employed mother is prompted by personal, financial, family, and situational factors. This has its impact on her familial life. Now she has the freedom to spend her money in the development of her children. Sometimes she fails to give proper care and affection to her children. They start suffering from ill - health, which is the biggest misfortune that one can experience. Emotional bond between them also gets affected due to lack of care and affection. Children start getting involved in many unsuper-

vised activities and sometimes they become anxious and less co-operative, because of the absence of their mothers.

#### NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE

The major aim of the present study is to find out the relationship between academic stress of Higher Secondary School students and the support rendered by Employed and Unemployed mothers. Mothers are very important to the children for their overall development. The employed and unemployed mothers treat their children in different ways.

Different approaches of mothers create academic stress on children. The investigator tries to determine the important factors of academic stress of students. The study would be helpful to mothers in such a way that it sensitizes them as to what measures to take in raising their children to promote their children's psychological adjustment. This study also sensitizes teachers to gear their classroom management practices to promote psychosocial adjustment of students. Mother-child relationship has a vital role in the students acquisition of skills that are important for their healthy development and survival.

The findings of the study can be a revelation to the mothers and teachers regarding various factors, which are responsible for the academic stress of Higher Secondary School Students. This can help them to take necessary steps to reduce the academic stress of Higher Secondary School Students.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the level of Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students of Employed and Unemployed mothers.
2. To find out the level of Support rendered by the Employed and Unemployed mothers to their children at Higher Secondary level.
3. To compare the Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students of employed and unemployed mothers.
4. To compare the Support rendered by Employed and Unemployed mothers to their Higher Secondary School students.
5. To find out the relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed mothers.
6. To find out the relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Unemployed mothers.
7. To find out the difference in the relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers.
8. To find out the difference in relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers with respect to locality.
9. To find out the difference in the relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers with respect to gender.

#### HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Suitable hypotheses were formulated keeping the objectives of research in mind. They are as follows:

1. There is significant difference in the Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students of Employed and Unemployed mothers.

2. There is significant difference in the Support rendered by Employed and Unemployed mothers.

3. There is significant negative relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed Mothers to their Higher Secondary School students.

4. There is significant negative relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Unemployed mothers.

5. There is significant difference in the relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers.

6. There is significant difference in the relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers with respect to locality.

7. There is significant difference in the relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers with respect to gender.

#### METHODOLOGY

##### 1. Method of the study

The present study is a Normative survey method. It involves interpretation, comparison, measurement, classification, and generalization directed towards a proper understanding and solution of significant educational problems.

##### 2. Tools used for the study

Tool is a device used for collecting data. The tools used for the present study were:

##### 1. Academic Stress Inventory

##### 2. Mother's Support Scale

Both the above-mentioned tools were prepared and standardized by the investigator.

##### 3. Population and Sample selected for the study

In this study, population consisted of Higher Secondary School students in Kottayam district. In this study, sample consisted of 300 Higher Secondary School Students in Kottayam district.

#### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Keeping the requirement of the cited objectives, the analysis and interpretation of data have been given below.

##### 1. Level of Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students -Total sample

The investigator found Mean & Standard Deviation of the Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students. The investigator classified the students as low, medium and high on the basis of Academic Stress based on the formula  $M + \sigma$  and  $M - \sigma$ .

Those students between  $M + \sigma$  and  $M - \sigma$  are average students and those above  $M + \sigma$  are above average and those below  $M - \sigma$  are below average.

*Distribution of the total sample based on Employment/ Unemployment of Mothers*

The investigator found out the type to which each student belongs. The investigator classified the students under Employed and Unemployed mothers.

**Table 1**

*Table showing Percentage of students in terms of Employed and Unemployed Mothers*

Employed Mothers		Unemployed Mothers	
Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
128	48%	172	52%

Out of the 300 sample, 48% are employed mothers and 52% are unemployed mothers.

*2. Level of Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students of Employed Mothers*

**Table 2**

*Table showing Percentage of Different levels of Academic Stress of students of Employed Mothers*

Sample		High	Medium	Low
Academic stress of wards having employed mothers	Number	24	76	28
	Percentage	18.75%	59.38%	21.87%

From the above table, it is clear that 59.38% of students of employed mothers experience Academic Stress at medium level, 18.75% of students' experience Academic Stress at high level, and 21.87% of students' experience Academic Stress at low level.

*3. Level of Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students of Unemployed Mothers*

**Table 3**

*Table showing Percentage of Different levels of Academic Stress of Students of Unemployed Mothers*

Sample		High	Medium	Low
Academic stress of wards having unemployed mothers	Number	49	81	42
	Percentage	28.49%	47.09%	24.42%

Percentage analysis reveals that 47.09% of students of unemployed mothers experience

Academic Stress at medium level, 28.49% of students experience Academic Stress at high level and 24.42% of students experience Academic Stress at low level.

**Table 4**

*Table showing Distribution of the Students according to the level of Support rendered by the Employed Mothers*

Sample		High	Medium	Low
Level of Support provided by employed mothers towards their wards	Number	26	74	28
	Percentage	20.31%	57.81%	21.87%

Percentage analysis reveals that 57.81% of students of employed mothers experience Mother's Support at medium level, 20.31% of students experience Mother's Support at high level and 21.87% of students experience Mother's Support at low level.

**Table 5**

*Table showing Distribution of the Students According to the Level of Support rendered by the Unemployed mothers*

Sample		High	Medium	Low
Level of Support provided by unemployed mothers towards their wards	Number	47	86	39
	Percentage	27.32%	50%	22.68%

Percentage analysis reveals that 50.00% of students of unemployed mothers experience Mother's Support at medium level, 27.32% of students' experience Mother's Support at high level and 22.68% of students' experience Mother's Support at low level.

**Table 6**

*Table Showing Mean, Standard Deviation and Critical ratio of Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students*

Group	N	Mean	S D	t- value	t-value at 0.05 level	t- value at 0.01 level	Level of significance
Employed	128	18.65	4.34	0.244	1.96	2.58	Not significant
Unemployed	172	18.51	5.57				

From the above table, it is clear that the t-value obtained is 0.244 and is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there is no significant difference in the Academic Stress of higher secondary school students of employed and unemployed mothers. That is the two groups selected for the study are more or less equal



with regard to their Academic Stress.

**Table 7**

*Table showing Mean, Standard Deviation and Critical ratio of Mother's Support of Higher Secondary School Students*

Group	N	Mean	S D	t- value	t-value at 0.05 level	t- value at 0.01 level	Level of significance
Employed	128	66.83	12.37	1.502	1.96	2.58	Not significant
Unemployed	172	64.62	12.91				

From the above table it is clear that the t-value obtained is 1.502 and is less than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 levels. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there is no significant difference in the Mother's Support of higher secondary school students of these two categories. Both employed and unemployed mothers give almost equal support to their children at higher secondary level.

Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students and Support of Employed Mothers

**Table 8**

*Table showing Data and Results of test of the Significance of Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed Mothers*

Group	N	r- value	Table value	Level of significance
Employed	128	-0.207	0.174	Significant at 0.05 level

From the above table, it is clear that there is negligible negative relationship ( $r = -0.207$ ) between the variables and that it is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, we can conclude that there is significant negative relationship between academic stress and support of employed mothers. That is, as the support of employed mothers increases the academic stress of their children decreases and vice versa.

**Table 9**

*Table showing Data and Results of test of the Significance of Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Unemployed Mothers*

Group	N	r- value	Table value	Level of significance
Unemployed	172	-0.201	0.138	Significant at 0.05 level

From the above table, it is clear that there is negligible negative relationship ( $r = -0.201$ ) between the variables and it is significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is significant negative relationship between academic stress and support

of unemployed mothers. That is, as the support of unemployed mothers increases, the academic stress of their children decreases and vice versa. Comparison of the Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed Mothers

**Table 10**

*Data and Results of test of Significance of Difference in the Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed Mothers*

Group	N	r	z- value	t-value	Level of significance
Employed	128	-0.207	0.210	0.025	Not significant at 0.05 level
Unemployed	172	-0.201	0.204		

From the above table, it is found that the calculated t-value obtained for academic stress of higher secondary school students of employed and unemployed mothers is 0.025, which is smaller than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore it can be concluded that, there is no significant difference in the relationship between academic stress of higher secondary school students and support of employed and unemployed mothers.

Comparison of the Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students and Support of Employed and Unemployed Mothers with respect to Locale (Rural)

**Table 11**

*Table showing Data and Results of test of Significance of Difference between values obtained for Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students and Support of Employed and Unemployed Mothers with respect to Locality (Rural)*

Group	N	r	z- value	T- value	Level of significance
Employed	75	-0.243	0.248	0.377	Significant at 0.05 level
Unemployed	75	-0.183	0.185		

From the table 11, it is found that the calculated t-value between academic stress of higher secondary school students and support of employed and unemployed mothers with respect to locality (Rural) is 0.377, which is lower than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it can be concluded that, there is no significant difference in the relationship between academic stress of higher secondary school students and support of employed and unemployed mothers with respect to the locale-Rural. Comparison of the Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students and Support of Employed and Unemployed Mothers with respect to Locale (Urban)

**Table 12**

Table showing Data and Results of test of Significance of Difference in the Relationship between Academic Stress of higher secondary school students and Support of employed and Unemployed Mothers with respect to Locality (Urban)

Group	N	r	z- value	T- value	Level of significance
Employed	75	-0.552	0.621	2.89	Significant at 0.05 level
Unemployed	75	-0.137	0.138		

From the table 12 it is found that the calculated t-value between academic stress of higher secondary school students and support of employed and unemployed mothers with respect to locality (urban) is 2.89, which is higher than the table value at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore it can be concluded that, there is a significant difference in the relationship between academic stress of higher secondary school students and support of employed and unemployed mothers with respect to locale (Urban).

Comparison of the Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students and Support of Employed and Unemployed Mothers with respect to Gender (Boys)

**Table 13**

Table showing Data and Results of Test of Significance of Difference in the Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary school Students and Support of Employed and Unemployed Mothers with respect to Gender (Boys)

Group	N	r	z- value	T- value	Level of significance
Employed	75	-0.214	0.217	2.40	Significant at 0.05 level
Unemployed	75	-0.55	0.618		

The table 13 shows that the calculated t- value of the relationship between academic stress of higher secondary school students and support of employed and unemployed mothers with respect to gender (boys) is 2.40 which is higher than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is significant difference in the relationship between academic stress of higher secondary school students and support of employed and unemployed mothers with respect to gender (boys).

Comparison of Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students and Support of Employed and Unemployed Mothers with respect to Gender (Girls)

From the table 14, it is found that the calculated t- value of the relationship between academic stress of higher secondary school students and support of employed and unemployed mothers with respect to gender (girls) is 2.88, which is higher than the table value 2.58 at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, it can be concluded that, there is a significant difference in the relationship between academic stress and support of employed and un-

employed mothers of higher secondary school students with respect to gender (Girls).

**Table 14**

*Table showing Data and Results of test of Significance of Difference in the Relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School Students and Support of Employed and Unemployed Mothers with respect to Gender (Girls).*

Group	N	r	z- value	T- value	Level of significance
Employed	75	-0.545	0.61	2.88	Significant at 0.05 level
Unemployed	75	-0.129	0.1297		

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- ▶ There is no significant difference in the Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students of Employed and Unemployed mothers.
- ▶ There is no significant difference in the Mother's Support of Higher Secondary School students of these two categories.
- ▶ There is significant negative relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed mothers. As the support of Employed mothers increases, the Academic Stress of their students decreases.
- ▶ There is significant negative relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Unemployed mothers. That is as the Support of Unemployed mothers increases the Academic Stress of their students decreases.
- ▶ There is no significant relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers.
- ▶ There is no significant relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers with respect to locality (Rural).
- ▶ There is significant relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers with respect to gender (Boys).
- ▶ There is significant relationship between Academic Stress of Higher Secondary School students and Support of Employed and Unemployed mothers with respect to gender (Girls).

## CONCLUSION

The study provided awareness about the relationship between the academic stress of higher secondary school students and the support rendered by employed and unemployed mothers. It also discussed the measures to be adopted by mothers in raising their children.

giving proper consideration to the Psycho- social adjustment of students.

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# GEARING STUDENTS WITH FUNCTIONAL WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH TO FACE PRESENT CHALLENGES

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## **ABSTRACT**

*It is the need of the hour that we should equip students to execute their writing skills, so as to communicate correctly and effectively. These skills are essential for further learning and employment, since they need to know at least the basic functional writing skills. In addition to this, it will help in developing confidence of students as they make presentations, take part in group discussions and write reports and reviews. The article thus stresses the importance of mastering the functional writing skills as well as delineates the relevance of discourses in the form of spoken and written communication.*

### **Key Term :**

*Functional writing skills*

## **Introduction**

Writing is meant for communication of ideas in written form. It is the visual representation of speech. It is a productive skill symbolizing spoken form and involves manipulating, structuring and communicating. In the hierarchy of language skills, it should be given balanced emphasis along with other skills. Reims discusses the sub-skills of writing which include the ability to form letters accurately, to use the correct form of words, to follow syntactic patterns, to express information explicitly and to make the text well-organized and structured.

Functional writing skills are designed to equip learners with the skills needed to execute their writing skills with confidence within working and day-to-day life. This ability develops the skills needed to communicate via writing effectively and correctly. Functional skills are practical skills that provide every individual with skills that help them to function independently, effectively and confidently in their life. These skills are essential for further learning and employment since they are basic skills needed for most jobs. So functional skills should be integrated into the curriculum so that learners can apply these skills in real life.

The knowledge within the subject has to be linked with the practical skills, helping them to think creatively. These skills help to build the confidence of an individual while listening, speaking, reading and writing. It fosters effective communication where information can be passed clearly through either speaking or writing. It helps to understand information and act appropriately. It assists in making presentations, writing reports, tak-

ing part in group discussions and for analyzing ideas and information. It helps to present information in a logical sequence, in the correct format using correct grammar.

### ***Functional Skill Standards***

'Writing' within functional skills is defined as the independent construction of written text to communicate in a purposeful context. The standard of functional skills in English is related to the attainment of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.. Functional writing is a term used to describe the art of writing. Teaching children to write functionally shows them the importance of rethinking, because they need to fully understand all the steps involved in a task before they can write it down, and also need to be able to review and edit those steps in order to make sure that the ideas they have written are complete and meaningful.

Functional writing is writing that is meant to fulfill real life purposes, such as: making a request or giving advice, inviting someone for a visit or to a function, or applying for something. That is, the writing activities carried out resemble those done in real life for practical purposes. This kind of writing practice prepares learners for writing which they must do as part of survival in everyday life. The writing of titles, headlines, advertisements and posters is also a form of functional writing, because people write headlines as part of a job, and prepare advertisements and posters to accomplish specific purposes.

### ***Relevance of Discourses***

The term 'discourse' means the verbal expression in speech or writing. The term 'Discourse' is derived from the Latin word *discursus*, which means 'running to and from', i.e., which denotes spoken and written communication. The Discourse theory holds then, that textual deep structures have essentially a semantic rather than a syntactic character. Thus an entire text could be summarized by a string of logical symbols which have some type of universal validity. Discourse is not a string of propositions or theme statements. The author of a discourse had a purpose in mind, as he wrote and arranged his material accordingly. Before the nuclear concept of a unit can be determined, the relationships between the concepts, propositions, or paragraphs of the unit must be assimilated. Discourse analysis thus aims at determining the universal semantic meaning of a text and displays that meaning in the form of concepts, propositions, paragraphs, and so forth, in their relationships to one another.

### ***Levels of Discourse Processing***

Discourse researchers have identified five levels of cognitive representation that are constructed during comprehension. These include the surface code, the text base, the situation model, pragmatic communication, and the discourse genre. The surface code is a record of the exact wording and syntax of the sentences. This code is preserved in memory for only a few seconds, when the technical text is read. The text base contains explicit propositions in the text in a stripped down form that captures the semantic meaning but loses details of the surface code. The situation model (sometimes called the mental model) is the referential mental world of what the text is about. The pragmatic

communication level refers to the information exchange between speech participants. In a two-party oral conversation, the two speech participants take turns speaking, while pursuing conversational goals. Discourse genre is the type of discourse such as narration (stories), exposition, persuasion, and so on. Narrative text is normally much easier to comprehend than expository text, because narrative has a closer affinity to everyday experiences.

### *The Nature of Oral Educational Discourse*

Schools are special kinds of places, social institutions with particular purposes, conventions and traditions. So, although teaching and learning go on in many other places outside the formal education system, schools, colleges and so on are associated with particular, distinctive patterns of language use. Life in classrooms generate and sustain some distinctive ways of using language, though this may not be well recognized by teachers because they are immersed in it, and because they take these features for granted. Even students, whose mother tongue is the language they use in school, have much to learn about how that language is used as an educational medium.

The most obvious kind of spoken language used in education is between teachers and learners. The patterns of language use established by teachers have important consequences for how their students use language. One of the most obvious functions of spoken language in a classroom is for teachers to tell students what they are to do, how they are to do it, when to start and when to stop. Talk is the means by which teachers can provide students with information, a lot of which would be very hard to communicate in any other way. They tell students stories, read texts to them and describe objects, events and processes (sometimes introducing new descriptive vocabulary as they do so). Language in most educational contexts is also the main tool for a teacher's control of events in the classroom. And teachers assess students' learning through talk, in the familiar question-and-answer sequence of classroom life.

### *Discourse Oriented Instruction*

It is the method in which teaching is done with the help of different types of discourse in the classroom for the teaching-learning process. Teachers typically follow a curriculum script that covers definitions, facts, concepts, attributes of concepts, and examples. This content is at the lower levels of Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive objectives. Teachers rarely attempt to encourage Bloom's higher levels of inference, synthesis, integration, and the application of knowledge to practical problems. There are some methods of improving deep comprehension and learning by invoking discourse processing mechanisms, including: (1) constructing explanations, (2) asking questions, (3) challenging a learner's beliefs and knowledge, and (4) tutoring.

1. Constructing explanations: Students who are able to comprehend, generate explanations as they read text or listen to lectures. These explanations trace the causes and consequences of events, the plans and goals of agents (humans, animals or organizations), and the logical derivations of assertions. The questions that derive explanations are why,



how, what-if, and what-if-not questions.

2. Asking questions: Students should be encouraged to ask and answer deep-reasoning questions to help them construct explanations. Unfortunately, students are not in the habit of asking many questions, and most of their questions are shallow.

3. Challenging the learner's beliefs and knowledge: One of the easiest ways to get students to ask questions is to challenge one of their entrenched beliefs, and thereby put them in cognitive disequilibrium.

4. Tutoring: One-to-one human tutoring is superior to normal learning experiences in traditional classroom environments. This advantage cannot entirely be attributed to the possibility that tutors are more accomplished.

Discourse plays an important role in helping the learner shift from shallow to deep comprehension, and from being a fact collector to being an inquisitive explainer. In summary, research in discourse processing can help solve some of the pressing challenges in education.

### ***Discourses Strategies used by Teachers***

Various discourse strategies or techniques have been identified which are commonly used by teachers in many parts of the world. Some experts suggest that the ubiquity of these ways of using language reflects the fact that all teachers have some similar responsibilities for guiding the learning and understanding of their students. The different types of literary discourse are:

Expressive literary discourse typically consists of creative non-fiction prose. Examples of expressive discourse include letters, diary entries, and stream of consciousness writing. This type of discourse highlights an individual's ability to express his personal point of view. Poetic discourse is a type of written communication which includes most creative works, including fictional novels, poetry, fictional short story collections, and screen plays. Fictional discourse tends to focus on how language is formed and used to communicate various abstract themes, philosophical ideologies, settings and imagery. Transactional discourse is primarily used in business communication, such as advertising or correspondence. Literary discourse is usually analyzed in literature, creative writing, and English composition courses.

### ***Styles common to functional writing:***

#### **i. Formal Letters**

These are also called official or business letters and they fulfill official functions, such as applying for a job, apologizing to the headmaster, asking for permission to be away, applying for a place as a pupil, etc. It is important for us to train our learners to write as many types of formal letters as possible.

#### **ii. Informal Letters**

These are letters one writes to friends or relatives. Their purpose can be to invite someone for a function or any programme, to accept or refuse an invitation, to apologize for

something done wrong, to thank someone for something, to explain something, to express one's feelings about something, to plan something, to keep in touch by discussing normal everyday life, telling jokes and carrying on a friendly conversation by means of writing.

### iii. Notice

Notices refer to written information displayed in strategic places (e.g. doors, class notice board, school notice board, police notice board, certain parts of a road) to warn, advise or inform particular groups of people. Some are written in continuous prose and some in short phrases or sentences.

### iv. Book Review

These are reports written about books read. For example, a pupil can read Masembe's 'The Breaking Branch' and then write a review of it. Here is a list of the information to be included in a book review of a novel:

1. The title of the book read and the author.
2. The setting: where the action takes place.
3. The characters in the book; what they are like, their behaviour, which of them the reader likes or dislikes, etc.
4. What the book is about (summary of the story).
5. Whether the book is simple or difficult, interesting or boring.

### v. Curriculum Vitae

Curriculum vitae, shortened to CV, are a brief description of a person's career-related history. It is usually handed in with an application letter, together with other documents such as certificates showing educational qualification.

### vi. Diary Entries

A diary is a personal account through which we see an individual's view of the world. The language is generally informal and relaxed and would suit those students who find the structure of speeches and reports difficult.

Functional writing is thus the practice of expressing specific information meant to mirror real-life scenarios such as how to make or do something, giving advice, inviting someone to something or telling what happened in a specific situation. Functional writing often turns a complex subject into something that is more understandable to the reader. Teachers can help students master this type of writing by assigning various functional oral activities and written tasks.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, the investigator tried to explore almost all the theoretical aspects of Discourse - Oriented Instruction. The researcher became well - acquainted with diverse theories on Discourse Oriented Instruction. The realization of different types of strategies of related to Functional Writing aided the investigator to recognize the widespread scope of Discourse Oriented Instruction.

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# IMPROVED LEARNING THROUGH CREATIVE GRAPHIC TECHNIQUES

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## **ABSTRACT**

*A mind map is a graphic technique of representing ideas, using words, images, symbols and colour. It directly represents the mental image that you would create from text and helps you to unleash your creative thinking skills. A mind map is a powerful graphic technique which provides the universal key to unlock the potential of the brain. It harnesses a full range of words, images, numbers, logic, rhythm, colour and critical skills spatial awareness in a single, uniquely powerful manner.*

### **Key Terms:**

*Creative graphic techniques, mind- maps.*

### **Introduction**

Mind maps make use of key words and images. The visual nature of mind maps make them easy to remember. The non-linear profile of a mind map enables it to link easily the different elements in the map. Mind Map helps you manage your mind... It is magical" said the founder of Mind Maps, Tony Buzan. (2016.)

The human brain functions may be divided into two- the left handles reason and logic, while the right deals with emotions and creativity. Mind maps make use of both. They take care of sequences and indicate causes. They offer visual patterns that simplify the recall of verbal and non-verbal content. They appear more vivid and accurate as the relationships are shown in visual style. Rosemann & Bielski (2001), proved experimentally that the mind mapping method made it possible for the pupils of the experimental groups to write down far more facts in the cloze maps than requested, because there was no limitation by a given text structure.

Mind maps reflect the pattern of thinking process in the human mind. It enhances the quality of thinking and gives a better insight of the subjects of study. Mind mapping involves writing down the central idea and thinking up new and related ideas that radiate outwards from the centre. It is a tool that encourages creative thinking and generates creative solutions to problems.

As one constructs a mind map on paper, one is simultaneously building a map in one's mind. The map holds information in a format that the mind finds easy to remember and quick to review. Friedrich (1995) counts this method as one of the information processing strategies, with which information is permanently stored in memory by sophisticated processing.

### ***Suggestive Steps to Draw an Effective Mind Map***

- ▶ Start in the centre of a blank page and gradually work outwards. Because starting

in the centre gives your brain the freedom to spread out in all directions and to express it more freely and naturally.

- ▶ Let the centre show the core idea.
- ▶ Write legibly.
- ▶ Make sub-units if needed.
- ▶ Use an image or picture for your central idea. Because an image *is* worth a thousand words and helps you use your Imagination. A central image is more interesting, keeps you focussed, helps you concentrate, and gives your brain more of a buzz.
  - ▶ Use symbols or sketches instead of words.
  - ▶ Keep the paper in a landscape mode.
  - ▶ Use standard abbreviations.
  - ▶ Use colours throughout. Because colours are as exciting to your brain as are images. Colour adds extra vibrancy and life to your mind map, adds tremendous energy to your creative thinking, and is fun. Use different colours for different genres of ideas.
- ▶ Look for relationships. Connect your main branches to the central image and connect your second- and third-level branches to the first and second levels, etc. Because our brain works by association and works by linking (or three, or four) things together. If you connect the branches, you will understand and remember a lot more easily.
  - ▶ Use arrows and special lines to show cross linkages.
  - ▶ Leave enough space where additional thoughts can be inserted later.
  - ▶ In case of overloaded points, it is recommended to make subsidiary maps. Preferably, both the main map and the subsidiary map must be on the same page so that a clear comprehensive image is developed in the learner's mind.
    - ▶ Build a powerful picture moving step by step.
    - ▶ Make your branches curved rather than straight-lined. Because having nothing but straight lines is boring to your brain.
  - ▶ Use one key word per line. Because single key words give your mind map more power and flexibility. Represent key points and minimum words
  - ▶ Avoid use of adjectives.

## CONCLUSION

Mind maps are helpful for learning and enhancing memory and helps in effective learning. Engelmann (2004) Freund (2003) and Schmidt (2001) have shown experimentally that the development of a mind map - as a conceptual web - leads to better memory performances than conventional presentation forms and that with increasing age, the use of the mind mapping method results in better memory performances

When mind maps are used on a daily basis, learning becomes more productive, fulfilling, and successful on every level. There are no limits to the number of thoughts, ideas and connections that the human brain can make, which means that there are no limits to the different ways one can use mind maps. In doing so, it gives the freedom to roam the infinite expanses of the brain. A mind map can be applied to every aspect of life where

improved learning and clearer thinking will enhance human performance.

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# WORK PLACE MENTAL HEALTH: TARGETING THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Stress and work-life balance issues are extremely prevalent in India. A fundamental difference between mental health and mental illness is that everyone has some level of mental health all of the time, just like physical health, whereas it is possible to be without mental illness. There are several key issues shown to have a significant effect on employee mental health. Within each key issue, are various factors that organizations need to consider in their efforts to create a mentally healthy workplace. The importance of maintaining good mental health is crucial to living a long and healthy life. Mental health when good can enhance, when poor prevent, someone from living a normal life. Organizations that are committed to the mental health of their employees are pro-active in implementing policies and programmes that promote the positive mental health of employees and support early identification, treatment and recovery of employees experiencing mental illness.*

### **Key Terms:**

*Mental Illness, Mental Health Promotion.*

### **Introduction**

Mental Health is the psychological state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioral adjustment. A fundamental difference between mental health and mental illness is that everyone has some level of mental health all of the time, just like physical health, whereas it is possible to be without mental illness.

The importance of maintaining good mental health is crucial to living a long and healthy life. Mental health when good can enhance, when poor prevent, someone from living a normal life. According to Richards, Campania, & Muse-Burke (2010) "There is growing evidence that is showing emotional abilities are associated with pro-social behaviors such as stress management and physical health" (2010).

### **Types of mental illnesses**

There are many different types of mental illnesses, just as there are many types of physical illnesses. Some of the defining characteristics of a mental illness are:

- ▶ That it is a recognized, medically diagnosable illness;
- ▶ That it can cause significant cognitive, affective, or relational impairment;
- ▶ That it results from biological, developmental and/or psychosocial factors;
- ▶ That it can be managed using physical disease approaches (i.e. prevention, diagno-

sis, treatment and rehabilitation).

Research on mental illness is evolving. As time passes, more mental illnesses are being discovered and diagnosed. Some of the more common and well researched mental illnesses, by category of illness, include:

Mood disorders (affective disorders): Depression, mania and bipolar

▶ Anxiety disorders: Generalized anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder

▶ Psychotic disorders: schizophrenia

▶ Concurrent disorders: addictions and substance abuse

▶ Personality disorders: antisocial personality disorder, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder

Mental illness is much like diabetes, heart disease and a broken leg — one can live with it and recover from it. Recovery is not an end state; it does not mean that the individual no longer has depression, schizophrenia or another mental illness. Recovery means that the person has stabilized and regained his role in society. Learning more about mental health and mental illness is a crucial step in dispelling stigma, stopping prejudice and promoting early identification and effective treatment.

Optimal mental health often referred to as mental well-being or mental wellness, is at one end of the continuum, while poor mental health, also referred to as languishing, and is at the other end. On the horizontal axis, having a serious mental illness is at one end of the continuum, while having no symptoms of a mental illness is at the other end. Ultimately, this means that someone can be mentally healthy with a mental illness and that someone can have poor mental health without a mental illness.



Figure 1: The Mental Health/Illness Continuum

Despite poor mental health *not* defined as an illness, having poor mental health is associated with emotional distress and psychosocial impairment comparable to that of a major depressive episode. The effects of poor mental health are both severe and prevalent, with poor mental health being more common than depression.

#### *Stigma and Discrimination*

Stigma: It is the negative and prejudicial ways in which people living with mental illness are labeled. Often being labeled means as nothing more

than the disease itself. Stigma is an internal attitude and belief held by individuals, often about a minority group such as people with mental illness.



**Discrimination:** The way people living with mental illness are treated, intentionally or unintentionally, due to stigma. People with mental illness are often treated with disrespect, experiencing such behaviors as exclusion, bullying, aggression, ridicule and devaluation. Such discrimination can result in limits and barriers to many of life's opportunities.

Mental illness is often called an invisible illness. Often, the only way to know whether someone has been diagnosed with a mental illness is if they tell you. The majority of the public is unaware of how many mentally ill people they know and encounter every day. And, mental illness doesn't discriminate; anyone can develop a mental illness or experience poor mental health (languishing). People facing these issues often face discrimination due to stigma. An organization may need to address stigma and discrimination before its members would be willing to talk about mental health and to make positive changes. Mental health literacy in the workplace is critical to combating stigma. Self-stigma, or embarrassment about having a mental illness, often keeps people from seeking treatment for what is often a very treatable illness. Organizations that are committed to the mental health of their employees are pro-active in implementing policies and programs that promote the positive mental health of employees and support early identification, treatment and recovery of employees experiencing mental illness.

The three most significant determinants of mental health are:

- ▶ Social Inclusion
- ▶ Freedom from Discrimination and Violence
- ▶ Access to Economic Resources

These factors are inextricably intertwined with employment. As workplaces develop mental health promotion programs, these determinants must be addressed in the programming.

### ***Issues in the workplace that affect Employee Mental Health***

There are several key issues shown to have a significant effect on employee mental health. Within each key issue are various factors that organizations need to consider in their efforts to create a mentally healthy workplace. The following issues affecting employee mental health fall under one or multiple psychosocial risk (PSR) factors. More research and development has been focused on stress and work-life balance, which is why these topics are not discussed in as much detail as stigma and discrimination, harassment, violence, bullying, mobbing and substance use, misuse and abuse. High quality resources focusing on stress and work-life balance have already been developed.

#### ***Work-Life Balance***

Work-life balance is a state of well-being that a person can reach or can set as a goal in order to allow them to manage effectively multiple responsibilities at work, at home and in their community. Work-life balance is different for everyone and it supports physical, emotional, family and community health and does so without grief, stress or negative impact.

Work-life conflict occurs when individuals, at any level within an organization, find

their roles within the workplace and outside it are overwhelming to them or interfering with one another. Poor work-life balance can directly negatively impact an individual's mental health and it can also hinder the prevention and management of mental illness. It is defined as 'a work environment where there is recognition of the need for balance between the demands of work, family and personal life'. Poor work-life balance can directly impact an individual's mental health and mental illness prevention and management.

As illustrated in the diagram, workplace health promotion activities can fall under three categories: occupational health and safety, health and lifestyle practices and organizational culture.



In practice, workplace health promotion activities can fall under multiple categories. Below are eight strategies that positively affect mental health in the workplace.

*What is a mentally healthy workplace versus a psychologically healthy workplace?*

Psychological injuries are stress-related emotional conditions resulting from real or imagined threats or injuries. Psychologically

healthy workplaces and mentally healthy workplaces are synonymous terms that describe the same high-functioning, respectful and productive workplace. The term "psychologically healthy workplace" is often used in the context of prevention of psychological injury. The term "mentally healthy workplace" is often used within the context of mental health promotion and is often viewed as a strategy used to reduce risk factors for developing mental illness.

### ***Psychosocial Risk Factors***

Psychosocial Risk Factors (PSRs) are organizational factors that impact the psychological safety and health of employees. These factors include the way work is carried out and the context in which work occurs. PSRs have the ability to affect employee mental responses to work and to cause mental health problems.

Eight workplace strategies to Promote Mental Health: (1) Encouraging active employee participation and decision-making. (2) Clearly defining employees' duties and responsibilities. (3) Promoting work-life balance. (4) Encouraging respectful and non-derogatory behaviors. (5) Managing workloads. (6) Allowing continuous learning (7) Having conflict resolution practices in place (8) Recognizing employees' contributions effectively.

Similar to mental health promotion in the workplace, the effects of more general workplace health promotion initiatives are broad reaching and can build on each other. Programms focused solely on improving workplace mental health can produce multiple benefits.

Possible benefits of a comprehensive workplace health promotion programme include: Improved: Productivity, morale and employee satisfaction, staff retention, staff co-op-

eration, creativity, loyalty to the institution and recruitment.

Reduced: Medical leave, staff turnover (and therefore lower recruitment and training costs), workplace injuries and accidents, work time lost, health costs, absenteeism and presenteeism (inability to concentrate at work and to achieve work outcomes)

*Guarding Minds @ Work identified the 12 PSRs below:*

1. **Psychological Support:** a work environment where co-workers and supervisors are supportive of employees' psychological and mental health concerns, and respond appropriately as needed.
2. **Organizational Culture:** a work environment characterized by trust, honesty and fairness.
3. **Clear Leadership and Expectations:** a work environment where there is effective leadership and support that helps employees know what they need to do, how their work contributes to the organization and whether there are impending changes.
4. **Civility and Respect:** a work environment where employees are respectful and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with customers, clients and the public.
5. **Psychological Job Fit:** A work environment where there is a good fit between employees' interpersonal and emotional competencies, their job skills and the position they hold.
6. **Growth and Development:** a work environment where employees receive encouragement and support in the development of their interpersonal, emotional and job skills.
7. **Recognition and Reward:** a work environment where there is appropriate acknowledgement and appreciation of employees' efforts in a fair and timely manner.
8. **Involvement and Influence:** a work environment where employees are included in discussions about how their work is done and how important decisions are made.
9. **Workload Management:** a work environment where tasks and responsibilities can be accomplished successfully within the time available.
10. **Engagement:** a work environment where employees enjoy and feel connected to their work and where they feel motivated to do their job well.
11. **Balance:** a work environment where there is recognition of the need for balance between the demands of work, family and personal life.
12. **Psychological Protection:** a work environment where employee psychological safety is ensured.

### ***Workplace Mental Health Promotion***

A workplace health promotion programme is a series of activities, initiatives and policies developed for the continuous enhancement of the quality of working life, health and the well-being of all working populations. These interventions are developed to improve the environment (physical, psychosocial, organizational, economic), to increase personal

empowerment and for personal growth development.

There is no blueprint for a mentally healthy workplace because every workplace is different: the people doing the work, the work that needs to be done, the leaders running the organization, the size of the organization, the external environment that influences the societal norms, and the external resources the company draws. They all affect employee mental health. Actions and strategies that are oriented in promoting mental health are Empowerment, Choice and Participation. They strengthen protective factors, lessen risk factors and build on the social determinants of health, often involving partnerships across sectors.

## CONCLUSION

Mental health can be seen as a continuum, where an individual's mental health may have many different possible values. Mental wellness is generally viewed as a positive attribute, such that a person can reach enhanced levels of mental health, even if the person does not have any diagnosed mental health condition. This definition of mental health highlights emotional well-being, the capacity to live a full and creative life, and the flexibility to deal with life's inevitable challenges. Many therapeutic systems and self-help books offer methods and philosophies espousing strategies and techniques vaunted as effective for further improving the mental wellness of otherwise healthy people.

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