The Role of Perceived Social Support on Academic Stress

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ABSTRACT

Academic stress has many negative effects on the students, and support from different levels can prevent this. This cross-sectional survey study among 322 students of class 8 and 10 from 3 public schools in Pokhara, Nepal was conducted to identify the role of perceived social support (PSS) from different levels (family, friends, and others) on academic-stress of students. The schools and participants were selected through a multistage cluster sampling technique. To collect the data self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the participants in their respective classrooms by one of the researchers. The data were analyzed in SPSS 20 with descriptive and inferential statistics (chi-square test and odds ratio at 95% confidence interval) at <0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that 34.4% of students had moderate to high levels of academic stress. Among different socio-demographic and background variables, factors such as age of the adolescents, mother's education level, socioeconomic status of the family, parental marital-status with whom adolescents are staying, home environment, night sleep, abuse at home, the problem has not listened, and feeling of discrimination were significantly associated with academic stress. The study concluded that perceived social support from the family has a greater preventive role along with other background factors. Hence, combined efforts of family and school are essential, where the family plays the most important role. The study findings have important implications for parents, family, school teachers, health personnel, counselors, and others in preventing academic stress and achieving mental wellbeing for adolescent students.

KEYWORDS: Adolescents, academic stress, perceived social support

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the formative as well as transitional period of life. It is also called a period of stress and storm. During this unique developmental period, adolescents have to adjust with new changes and challenges of puberty, independence, identity development, and preparation for future roles (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2019; Potts & Mandleco, 2011). Academic stress is a

widespread phenomenon in different stages of academic levels and adolescents are the largest group to face this stress around the world (Sun et al., 2012; Jayanthi et al., 2015; Watode et al., 2015). Hence, on the one hand, the effort to adjust with own bodily changes, mostly the pubertal changes, changes in temperaments, and emotions related to the hormonal influence in itself make a period of stress among adolescents. On the other side, various external factors, for example, the pressure from parents and school, the competitive nature of our society to evaluate the children in terms of academic achievement i.e. the mere percentage or grade secured in school examinations further causes stress to adolescents.

Our society is changing rapidly due to the influence of urbanization, modernization, communication technology, and parallel to this, the social values are also changing rapidly, and society is becoming more competitive than that of past especially in urban and suburbs of developing countries like Nepal. In this situation, every parent wants to secure the best future for their children. In developing countries, parents want to fulfil their dream through their children i.e. what they desired for but did not achieve in their time is wished to be achieved by their children. Besides, the success in education and career is the matter of pride and prestige in society. It might be because of that, compared to the past, adolescents now are more to deal with academic expectations and demands (Lal, 2014) and parents' pressure and unrealistic expectations were found to be the greatest source of stress (Leonard et al., 2015). It is identified that the academic pressure was a major precursor for stress, and parents, teachers, and friends were found as the major source of stress (Deb et al., 2015; Watode et al., 2015; Camara et al., 2017; Sangma et al., 2018). Adolescents of Nepal are no exception because it is believed that the school leaving certificate exam is the key door (Mathema, 2007) that determines the future education and career, and therefore children are pressurized by parents and school. An American study reported nearly half of all students felt a great deal of stress daily and 31% reported feeling somewhat stressed and higher among females (Leonard et al., 2015). Studies in India revealed that 87.6% (Watode et al., 2015) and 63.5% of the higher secondary students experienced academic stress (Deb et al., 2015). The latter study also reported 66% feel the parental pressure. This signifies that whether parents are the one to contribute to academic stress through the pressure to their children, or, the parents can also contribute to prevention or minimization of stress was needed to be explored.

In Nepal, two studies among secondary school students in public schools of Kathmandu, one identified the prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression was 27.5%, 56.9% and 41.6% respectively (Sharma, 2015) and another found academic stress as 33.1% (Lamichhane, 2015). These studies showed that academic stress is a common phenomenon for Nepali adolescents. However, to the best of our search, there is a lack of study in Nepal that tried to find out what will help to protect adolescent students from academic stress. Therefore, the study in its socio-cultural context and setting is needed to identify the protective factors, so that the effective interventions could be planned for the prevention of stress among the Nepali adolescent students.

The increasing mental health problem among adolescents is becoming the major public health issue globally, which causes many negative consequences against happy, healthy, and productive adulthood. Mental health conditions account for 16% of the global burden of disease and injury, depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability, and suicide is the third leading cause of death among adolescents (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019). Academic stress could be one of the contributing factors for these health problems and the factor hindering on academic success in adolescents because studies have demonstrated the negative impact of academic stress on

students' learning capacity, academic performance, education and employment attainment, sleep quality and quantity, physical health, mental health, and substance use outcomes (Pascoe et al., 2019). Some studies showed the association of academic stress with suicide (Arun & Chavan, 2009), substance use (Leonard et al., 2015), lower subjective well-being, risky behavior (smoking and drinking) and lower quality of relationship with parents and peers (Lemma et al., 2014), higher risk of depression (Jayanthi et al., 2015). Similarly, if adolescent students were not satisfied with their academic performance and/or parental dissatisfaction, they were more likely for depression (Verma et al., 2017; Singh et al., 2017). Unfortunately, in the current situation, the COVID-19 pandemic has further affected the academic area of students and it may cause for the escalation of stress among the Nepali adolescent students. Hence, identifying the measure that can help to reduce or prevent from academic stress among adolescents is very important.

The family and more especially the parents may have an important role in preventing their children from stress. A longitudinal study in Korea stated that parents, teachers, and peers are the most influential agents, parental academic support played as a double-edged sword with both positive and negative effects, however, parental emotional support was beneficial (Song et al., 2015). As we had discussed earlier on findings of the studies that showed the parents as a source of stress, because parents impose pressure on scholastic achievement, but significant interaction effect was also found in other studies, which indicated that stress substantially depends on perceived social support from family and friends (Glozah, 2013). The social support from different sources was inversely associated with psychological wellbeing and achievement (White, 2009). One study showed that perceived parental support had positive effects on competence, interest, importance and enjoyment, and negative effect on math anxiety (Ahmed et al., 2010). Therefore, it projects further necessity to study if the perceived social support from different sources will help to reduce or prevent academic stress among adolescent students. Furthermore, it is elusive that whether these study findings from other countries can be generalized among the Nepali adolescents. Therefore, a study in our own socio-cultural setting would have very important practical implication to prevent adolescents from academic stress and in contributing better academic success and mental wellbeing as well.

Moreover, Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory indicated that adolescence is the period of identity development, in which adolescents develop a set of beliefs about one's attributes (e.g. tall, intelligent), roles and goals (e.g., occupation one wants to have in his future), etc. This self-belief is influenced by the relation and interpretation of others (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009; Potts & Mandleco, 2011) i.e. for students how others judge him/her in terms of his academic performance. Similarly, Meads' theory of symbolic interactionism and Cooley's looking glass self also signifies the influence of people around the adolescents' everyday context (Cooley, 1998). More importantly, this study is based on the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory, which specifies the importance of the different level of nested systems from the micro level to the macro levels that include parents/family, peers, school, neighborhood, etc., which may exert both the positive or negative influence on adolescents' developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). How an adolescent perceives the relation and support provided by these different levels have an impact on adolescents' coping and adaptation with everyday stresses. The study based on this theoretical underpinning could add clarity on the role of the support perceived by adolescent students from their family, peers, and others in preventing or reducing their stress related to their academic area. Hence, this study was conducted in Nepal, a developing country, located in South

East Asia, which has a diverse society with multiethnic, cultural, religious, lingual and economic background; however, Hindu is the main religion and Nepali is the main language. The total population is 26.5 million and adolescents of age 10-19 years make a quarter of its total population (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2014). Understanding this important part of the population upon which the future of the nation is based was identified as an important area for this study. Furthermore, the literature search also found the lack of studies among the Nepali adolescents on factor preventing academic stress. Therefore, the study findings will have an important implication on the prevention of academic stress of Nepali adolescent students through intervention at family and school level. Moreover, the present study fills the knowledge gap through its findings of the role of different sources of support on the prevention of academic stress among adolescents. Set against this backdrop, the present study aims to find out the factors associated with academic stress and the role of perceived social support among the secondary level adolescent students in western Nepal.

METHODOLOGY

The cross-sectional survey study design was adopted for the study. The study was based on the theoretical concept of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory in which the adolescent is at the centre or the core of the system and the family, peers and the significant other persons in their social relationship surround the core and exert the influence. This study is focused on how is the influence in terms of the support provided by these different levels on adolescents' outcome of academic stress.

The study setting was three public schools in Pokhara and the students of class 8 and 10 of those schools who were available on the day of data collection and those who agreed to participate were the study participants (*n=322*). Schools and participants were selected with the multistage cluster sampling technique. At first, 3 wards were selected with the simple random method from the list of 33 wards of Pokhara. Then, at the second stage, one public school from each ward i.e. 3 secondary schools were selected from 3 wards by simple random sampling technique. Class 8 and 10 of those three schools were the final cluster and all the students who were available and agreed to participate in the study were the participants in this study. Although the questionnaire was given to 341 students, considering the completeness of the questionnaire, 322 students were included in the final analysis; hence, 322 was the final sample size for this study. The data were collected with a structured self-administered questionnaire.

The research instrument consisted of three parts. The first part included the questions related to demographic information, the second was five-point Likert scale with 10 questions to measure academic stress level, and the third part included the questions to measure perceived social support, for which multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) was used. The content validity of the instrument was established by consultation with research experts and research advisors for the accuracy and adequacy of the content. The questionnaire was pretested among 10% of the students who met similar characteristics as study participants. Thereafter necessary modification was made to make the questionnaire easy to understand, and with proper sequence. A formal permission from the headmaster and an informal permission from the concerned class teacher were taken for data collection and the data was collected in their respective classrooms during the study hours. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents. An informed verbal consent was taken from each respondent before data collection.

The data were collected through self-administered questionnaires and around 25-30 minutes were taken to collect data from each respondent. The precaution was taken

throughout the study in every step to safeguard the right and welfare of all respondents. Anonymity was maintained in the questionnaire and obtained data were used for the research purpose only. The data were analyzed in SPSS version 20 with descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (chi-square test and odds ratio at 95% level of significance was calculated) at <0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

The results of this study are based on the data of 322 adolescent students from three public schools of Pokhara. The result section presents the findings according to the aforementioned objective of the study. The study was based on three specific objectives, (1) to assess the level of academic stress of adolescent students, (2) to identify the association between selected background variables and academic stress, and (3) to find out the association between perceived social support and academic stress level of adolescent students. Therefore, firstly, the academic stress and perceived social support level of adolescents from different sources i.e. from adolescents' family, friends and significant others, which was measured with a multidimensional scale of perceived social support; secondly, the information on sociodemographic factors and their association with adolescent's academic stress level is presented, followed by the association between other background variables and academic stress, and finally the association of perceived social support with academic stress is presented.

Table 1
Perceived Social Support (PSS) from Family, Friends and Others and Academic stress level of the respondents (n=322)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Academic/ school-related stress		
Low	211	65.5
Medium and High	111	34.5
PSS from family		
Low and Medium	125	38.8
High	197	61.2
PSS from Friends		
Low and Medium	161	50.0
High	161	50.0
PSS from others		
Low and Medium	204	63.4
High	118	36.6

Table 1 displays that a higher proportion of the respondents had perceived high support from family (61.2%). Regarding support from friends, it was equal i.e. half of them perceived high support, and half had a low or medium level of support from their friends. But a higher proportion of students had low or moderate support from significant others (63.4%). Importantly, 66.5% of the students had reported low levels of academic stress; however, 34.5% had medium or high levels of stress.

Table 2

Socio-demographic Characteristics of adolescent students and the Association between Socio-demographic variables and Academic stress of the Students (n=322)

Variables	Total		Academic Stress		OR	P#
	Frequency	Percentage	No	Yes	(95%CI)	Value
Age						
12-15 years	150	46.6	111(74.0)	39(26.0)	2.049	**0.003***
> 15 years	172	53.4	100(58.1)	72(41.9)	(1.275-3.293)	
Mean ± SD 14.60 ± 1.10 years						
Sex						
Male	143	44.4	101(70.6)	42(29.4)	1.508	0.085
Female	179	55.6	110(61.5)	69(38.5)	(0.944-2.411)	
Religion						
Others (Buddha, Islam, Christian)	58	18.0	39(67.2)	19(32.8)	1.098	0.762
Hindu	264	82.0	172(65.2)	92(34.8)	(0.600-2.008)	
Ethnicity						
Brahmin/Chhetri	124	38.5	80(64.5)	44(35.5)		0.874
Janajati	135	41.9	88(65.2)	47(34.8)		
Others	63	19.6	43(68.3)	20(31.7)		
Father's education						
Illiterate	28	8.7	14(50.0)	14(50.0)	0.492	0.070
Literate	294	91.3	197(67.0)	97(33.0)	(0.226-1.074)	
Mother's education						
Illiterate	50	15.5	23(46.0)	27(54.0)	0.381	**0.002***
Literate	272	84.5	188(69.1)	84(30.9)	(0.206-0.702)	
Father's Employment						
Not employed	27	8.4	14(51.9)	13(48.1)	0.536	0.118
Employed	295	91.6	197(66.8)	98(33.2)	(0.242-1.184)	
Mother's Employment						
Home maker	127	39.4	86(87.7)	41(32.3)	1.175	0.505
Employed	195	60.6	125(64.1)	70(35.9)	(0.732-1.886)	
Socioeconomic status						
Hardly sufficient	71	22.4	30(42.3)	41(57.7)	0.283	**0.000***
Sufficient and surplus	251	77.6	181(72.1)	70(27.9)	(0.164-0.488)	
Type of family						
Joint	107	33.2	69(64.5)	38(35.5)	0.933	0.781
Single	215	66.8	142(66.0)	73(34.0)	(0.574-1.518)	
Currently staying with						
Parents	225	69.9	161(71.6)	64(28.4)	2.365	**0.001***

Other than parents	97	30.1	50(51.5)	47(48.5)	(1.445 – 3.869)

Note: Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage; CI: Confidence interval; OR: Odds ratio; # Chi-square *p* –value significant at ≤ 0.05

Table 2 shows that the mean age of the respondents was 14.6 with a standard deviation of 1.1. The proportion of females (55.6%) was slightly higher than males (44.4%). Most (82.0%) of the respondents were Hindus. Regarding the family type, 66.8% belonged to a single-family type than joint (33.2), and a higher percentage were currently staying with their parents (69.9%). The table also reveals the association between several socio-demographic factors of the students and their academic stress level. Age, mother's education level, socioeconomic status and currently with whom they stay were significantly associated with academic stress. That is, higher the age they were twice more likely to have an increased level of stress (OR = 2.049, *p* = 0.003). Similarly, respondents whose mothers were literate were less likely for stress compared to those whose mothers were illiterate (OR = 0.381, *p* = 0.002), the respondents whose family socioeconomic status was better, i.e. family economy was sufficient or surplus for their living expenses had less stress (OR = 0.283, *p* = 0.000), and if the adolescents were staying with their biological parents, they were less likely for academic stress whereas those who reported that they do not stay with their parents were twice more likely to have academic stress (OR = 2.365, *p* = 0.001).

Table 3
Background variables and Academic stress of the Students (n=322)

Variables	Total		Academic Stress		OR	P#
	Frequency	Percentage	No	Yes	(95% CI)	Value
Parental marital status						
Separate/Divorced/Widower	90	27.9	41(51.2)	39(48.8)	0.283	**0.002***
Married/Staying together	242	75.1	170(70.2)	72(29.8)	(0.164-0.488)	
Home environment						
Feel good	257	79.8	182(70.8)	75(29.2)	3.012	**0.000***
Feel not good	65	20.2	29(44.6)	36(55.4)	(1.724 – 5.264)	
Adequate sleep at every night						
Yes (7-8 hours)	301	93.5	206(68.4)	95(31.6)	6.939	**0.000***
No (less than 7 hours)	21	6.5	5(23.8)	16(76.2)	(2.469 - 19.498)	
Play/watch television						
No	65	20.2	30(46.2)	35(53.8)	0.879	**0.000***
Yes	257	79.8	181(70.4)	76(29.6)	(0.206 – 0.628)	
Abuse at home						
Scolded badly						
No	283	88.0	197(69.6)	86(30.4)	3.927	**0.000***

Yes	38	12.0	14(36.8)	24(63.2)	(1.938 – 7.956)	
Called by bad word/bad name						
No	295	91.6	203(68.8)	92(31.2)	5.240	**0.000***
Yes	27	8.4	8(29.6)	19(70.4)	(2.213 – 12.409)	
Insulted						
No	272	84.5	195(71.7)	77(28.3)	5.381	**0.000***
Yes	50	15.5	16(32.0)	34(68.0)	(2.809 - 10.310)	
Beaten						
No	293	91.0	196(66.9)	97(33.1)	1.886	0.101
Yes	29	9.0	15(51.7)	14(48.3)	(0.875 – 4.065)	
Problem is not listened to						
No	266	82.6	184(69.2)	82(30.8)	2.410	**0.003***
Yes	56	17.4	27(48.2)	29(51.8)	(1.342 – 4.327)	
Discrimination						
No	297	92.2	200(67.3)	97(32.7)	2.624	**0.018***
Yes	25	7.8	11(44.0)	14(56.0)	(1.149 – 5.995)	

Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage; CI: Confidence interval; OR: Odds ratio; # Chi-square *p* –value significant at ≤ 0.05

Table 3 shows that the respondents whose parental marital status was intact i.e. married and living together (OR = 0.283, *p* = 0.002), and those who play and watch television after school or get time to recreation (OR = 0.879, *p* = 0.000) were less likely to have academic stress. Moreover, those who feel their home environment is not good were thrice (OR = 3.012, *p* = 0.000), who do not sleep adequately each night were 7 times (OR = 6.939, *p* = 0.000) more likely for academic stress. Similarly, those who encounter abuse at their home that is, scolded badly (OR = 3.927 *p* = 0.000), called with bad words or bad name (OR = 5.240, *p* = 0.000), insulted (OR = 5.381, *p* = 0.000), they are not listened or their problem is not listened (OR = 2.410, *p* = 0.003), and those who feel they are discriminated or not behaved good by others at home (OR = 2.624, *p* = 0.018) were prone to have academic stress.

Table 4
Association between Perceived Social Support and Academic stress of the Students (n=322)

Variables	Academic Stress		OR	P#
	No	Yes	(95%CI)	Value
PSS from family				
High	144(73.1)	53(26.9)	2.352	0.000*

Low and Medium	67(53.6)	58(46.4)	(1.467-3.771)	
PSS from Friends				
High	109(67.7)	52(32.3)	1.212	0.412
Low and Medium	102(63.4)	59(36.6)	(0.765-1.921)	
PSS from others				
High	83(70.3)	35(29.7)	1.408	0.167
Low and Medium	128(62.7)	76(37.3)	(0.866-2.290)	

Note: Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage; CI: Confidence interval; OR: Odds ratio; # Chi-square *p*-value significant at ≤ 0.05

Table 4 reflects that the perceived social support from the family was significantly associated with academic stress of the students. Those who had high support from their parents/family were less prone to academic stress while those with low or medium support were twice likely to have academic stress (OR = 2.352, *p* = 0.000). But the analysis did not show any association between academic stress and PSS from friends or from others.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted among adolescent students studying in class 8 and 10 in public schools in Pokhara. The study was aimed to identify the level of academic stress and the association of several demographic and background variables with academic stress level of adolescents. The main purpose was to find out how is the role of perceived social support from different sources i.e. from family, friends and others in adolescents' academic stress. Hence, keeping these objectives in mind, the findings of this study are discussed with reference to the literature available to the researchers.

The present study found that a significant number of adolescents have moderate to high level of academic stress (34.5%) as measured with academic stress scale consisted of ten items in a five-point likert scale. The academic stress level identified by this study is nearly similar to the past studies (Glozah, 2013; Leonard et al., 2015; Lamichhane, 2015; Sharma, 2015). This study also found that the higher proportion of adolescents (61.2%) perceived high support from family. This finding on level of PSS, i.e. high support was perceived from family compared to friends and the least from others was also supported by the past findings (Glozah, 2013). The study showed that the family is the main source of support for adolescents.

Amongst several demographic factors, the present study found that the higher the age the more the students were likely to get stress, and this finding of significant association between the age and academic stress was supported by a previous studies in India (Jayanthi et al., 2015; Watode et al., 2015). It can be said that when the age increases the academic pressure from others and expectations of oneself and others also increases. When child steps up to higher class i.e. compared to eight class students of class ten have more time to be spent in school, or more time to give on reading, writing, preparation for tough examination, they need to concentrate more, and spend more time to meet academic demand. Schools also demand good percentage from each student as far as possible for their reputation and parents also want their children to do their best because it determines the future study and career ladder as well as it is linked to the

prestige of the family. Therefore, it might be due to that fact that with increasing age students are more likely for stress. Regarding the gender, the present study did not show any association, either male or female for academic stress but in contrast to this a significant difference was found for academic stress of girls and boys i.e. more stress among girls in various studies in past (Lal, 2014; Dhull & Kumari, 2015; Leonard et al., 2015). But Glozah (2013) identified higher stress among boys in Ghana. This difference might be due to the variability in the study setting and population characteristics.

The present study also demonstrated that adolescents of literate mother are less likely to have academic stress compared to their counterparts and similar to this a study in India had also indicated a significant association between mother's education level and the academic stress of adolescents (Watode et al., 2015). Another Indian study also found an association between father's education and the academic stress of adolescents (Deb et al., 2015); however, the present study did not have such a finding. In the present study, although the higher percentage of adolescents with illiterate fathers had academic stress compared to those having the literate father, but this difference were not statistically significant. This might be again due to a difference in context and population.

The current study revealed the significant association between socioeconomic status of family with academic stress of adolescents, i.e. adolescents in such home where their family income was sufficient for livelihood or have some surplus were less likely to have stress and those in family with economic hardship for livelihood were prone to have more academic stress. This finding related to socioeconomic status and academic stress is in line with past studies from India and Ghana (Sun et al., 2012; Glozah, 2013). The present study also identified that those adolescents who do not live with their own parents or they live with others were double likely to have stress than those who staying with their parents. The ample evidences indicated that children and adolescents need adequate love, care and support (White, 2009; Ahmed et al., 2010; Potts & Mandleco, 2011; WHO, 2019). This shows that adolescents who do not stay with their parents may lack the needed love, affection, care and support, and might be due to that they are more prone to develop stress.

In regard to the association between background variables and academic stress of adolescent students, the present study showed that the parental marital status is significantly associated, i.e. those adolescents whose parents were married and living together were less likely to have stress than those whose parents were widow/widower/ separated/ divorced. In this context, in support of this finding, the role of family dynamic has been projected by a previous study (Camacho-Thompson et al., 2016). Furthermore, those adolescents who play and watch television after school or get time to recreation were less likely to have academic stress. Similarly, in agreement to our finding, a study in India depicted that recreational activities like engagement in yoga, listening music, etc. were helpful in coping with stress (Sangma et al., 2018). The present study also revealed that those who feel their home environment is not good were thrice more likely to have academic stress, and in support to present findings a review study by Ghatol (2017) has stated that parents should consider child's aptitude and interest; family environment should be congenial; and parents should try to make the family atmosphere more supporting and pleasurable. Moreover, the study found that anyone who does not sleep adequately each night was 7 times more likely for academic stress. Children and adolescents need adequate rest and sleep i.e. at least 7-8 hours of quite sleep at night for their physical and mental health and overall development. The poor rest and sleep affect different dimensions for example; memory, concentration, emotion, energy, enthusiasm and coping with stress (Potts & Mandleco, 2011; WHO, 2019). Therefore, it can be said

that those who do not have proper rest and sleep will feel more fatigued and they lack coping with the problems, so that they are more likely to have more stress.

Similarly, those who encounter abuse at their home, that is, scolded badly were four times, called with bad words or bad name were five times, insulted were five times, those who reported that they are not listened or their problem is not listened were twice, and those who feel they are discriminated or not behaved good were three times prone to have academic stress. Glozah (2013) also indicated the need for healthy interpersonal relationship between adolescents and their family. The WHO (2017, 2019) also stated that the adolescents should be free of any kind of abuse, violence, and discrimination for their appropriate development and to attain highest level of mental wellbeing. Therefore, the present study shows the importance of factors related to family dynamics i.e. intact family (parental marital status), to be stay with parents, good environment i.e. emotional environment at home, adequate rest and sleep, time and opportunity to play and recreation, and to be free from abuse etc. for prevention of academic stress.

In regard to our final objective, i.e. the association between the perceived social support from family, friends and significant others with adolescent students' academic stress, the present study revealed that amongst these three sources, PSS from family was significantly negatively associated with academic stress. Students with higher support from family were less likely for stress whereas, those with low and medium level of support were double likely to have academic stress. This inverse relationship of PSS from family on academic stress of adolescents is assimilated with previous studies that indicated PSS has a stress buffering role. They showed the important role of family and peer support, but this study only showed the family support is significant (Glozah, 2013; Leonard et al., 2015). Other studies also supported the present finding in relation to the association between PSS and academic stress (Ahmed et al., 2010; Sun et al., 2012; Camara et al., 2017; Ghatol, 2017). The family has an important role in the prevention of academic stress of their adolescent children. Therefore, the study added an expansion of literature with the findings of important protective role of family support against adolescent's academic stress from the diverse socio-cultural context of a developing country. The study findings from own socio-cultural setting will have an important practical implication to prevent adolescent students from academic stress and this might further contribute to the better mental wellbeing and academic success for the adolescents.

CONCLUSION

The study was aimed to identify the sociodemographic and background related factors associated with academic stress and the role of perceived support from different sources (family, friends, and others) in prevention of academic stress among adolescent students. The study findings have shed light on the fact that a significant number of students studying at secondary level in public schools of Pokhara have academic stress. It was also identified that several demographic and background variables were associated with academic stress of adolescent students, that is, adolescents having literate mother, those from family with higher socioeconomic status, those staying with own parents, whose parents are staying together, and those who play and watch television after their school are less likely to have academic stress. In addition, those who do not sleep adequately each night, who do not feel their home environment is good, and those who face emotional abuse at home were more likely to have academic stress. Furthermore, the study has revealed that support from family has a significant protective role against academic stress of adolescents. The family was perceived as major source of support by the adolescents and if the adolescent perceive that they have the higher support available

from their family; then they were less likely to have stress compared to those who reported they have low or medium level of perceived support from their family. Therefore, it is concluded that the family and school level interventions considering the study findings will better help to prevent academic stress of adolescent students and would lead to a successful academic transition and better mental wellbeing of adolescents. The study has important practical implications for parents, family, teachers, school health personnel, and others who are interested in the area of adolescent's academics, school success, and mental wellbeing. This study will be helpful for the students and researcher who are interested to conduct studies in this area. A future study could be conducted including both the students from private and public schools and both in the rural and urban areas, in order to further expand the understanding on this topic or area.

STRENGTH AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study should be interpreted in terms of the strength and limitations of the study. The study was conducted to find out the understanding of very important but rarely studied area of adolescent's academic stress and what factors can have preventive role. The study has adopted the probability sampling method; hence, the findings can be generalized to all the adolescent students studying in public schools of Pokhara, and the findings could also add an understanding of adolescents in other urban areas like Pokhara. However, the findings could not be generalized to students in private schools and in rural areas. The generalization is also limited to students of class 8 and 10. Although the study has drawn a good sample size, and applied the inferential statistics in the analysis of association between independent and outcome variables, the cross-sectional design of the study infers to establish the cause and effect association. Therefore, the longitudinal study applying the more sophisticated statistical analysis could be conducted for more strong evidence in the future in reference to this study. Furthermore, it is recommended that the future study could cover both the urban and rural area as well as the students from both the public and private schools. Although there are the limitations, the study adds an understanding about adolescents' academic stress and the preventive role of perceived social support from a diverse socio-economic, ethnic and cultural background than those of past studies from other countries. This study has added in scant literature in the context of Nepal. In sum, this study has an important practical implication on the prevention of academic stress among adolescents through the intervention at family and schools.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

This study will contribute to the prevention of academic stress and mental wellbeing of adolescent students i.e. based on the findings the schoolteachers and school health personnel could plan counseling and interaction program with parents and families. The teachers can focus more on the students who are from low economic background, those who do not stay with their parents, who is from single parent family. Teachers and school health personnel can try to identify the adolescents who are facing difficulties (i.e. facing abuse at home, those with no good family environment and those who perceive less support from their family), and can provide more support to them in schools so that it will have very beneficial effects on lessening the stress level of those adolescent students. Teachers and health personnel can also provide counseling to the parents to offer and provide more support to their adolescent children. School personnel can help parents to understand that the parents are the most important resource for their

adolescents and can play an important role for preventing academic stress of their children.

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