

## **Existing level of academic stress among the Student Teachers: A study based on Tamil-medium National Colleges of Education in Sri Lanka**

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Academic stress is a significant concern affecting student teachers globally, particularly in teacher education institutions where expectations are high, and support systems are often inadequate. This study investigates the current state of academic stress among student teachers in Tamil-medium National Colleges of Education in Sri Lanka. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving final-year student teachers. The study explores various stress-inducing factors such as academic workload, practicum-related pressures, time management challenges, and the struggle to balance personal and academic responsibilities. Findings reveal that a majority of student teachers experience moderate to high levels of academic stress, with females reporting slightly higher stress levels than males. Key stressors identified include assignment deadlines, examination preparation, limited access to Tamil-medium academic resources, and the pressures of performing effectively during teaching practice. Moreover, cultural expectations and the competitive environment within teacher education programmes exacerbate stress. Despite the prevalence of stress, coping strategies adopted by student teachers remain limited, with many relying on peer support, self-motivation, or avoidance techniques rather than institutional or psychological support. The study highlights the urgent need for targeted stress management programmes, culturally relevant counseling services, and curriculum reforms that reduce academic overload while enhancing support for Tamil-speaking student teachers. Addressing academic stress in teacher education not only improves student well-being but also enhances the quality of future educators, which is crucial for the broader educational system in Sri Lanka.

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