

# Reducing Academic Stress in Secondary-School Adolescents through a Structured Neuro-Linguistic Programming Intervention: A Multiple-Baseline Single-Case Experimental Study

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## Abstract

Academic stress is a prevalent and impairing concern among secondary-school adolescents, yet brief, school-compatible interventions remain limited. This multiple-baseline single-case experimental study examined the feasibility and preliminary efficacy of a manualised nine-session Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) intervention for reducing academic stress in four adolescents (aged 14–15 years) exhibiting moderate-to-severe stress (baseline Academic Stress Scale scores: 19–22) and marked scholastic decline. Participants served as their own controls, with session-wise ASS monitoring from intake through Session 9. The protocol integrated stress mapping, internal-representation analysis, perceptual positions, the Visual Swish Pattern, resource anchoring, and future pacing. All students demonstrated clinically meaningful reductions in ASS scores (Student A: 22 to 13; Student B: 20 to 14; Student C: 19 to 12; Student D: 21 to 13), corresponding to 30–41% stress reduction. Post-intervention examination scores recovered to or exceeded pre-stress baselines (55–60% to 88.5–93.5%). Qualitative observations indicated improved sleep, reduced catastrophic thinking, and enhanced cognitive flexibility during examinations. While causal inference is limited by the small sample and absence of staggered baseline implementation, findings suggest that NLP techniques targeting internal representations and state management may offer a promising, brief adjunct to existing school-based stress-reduction programmes. Replication with rigorous SCED standards, larger samples, and follow-up assessments is warranted.

## Keywords:

Academic Stress, Adolescents, Neuro- Linguistic Programming, Single-Case Experimental Design, School-Based Intervention.

## Introduction

Compared with other stressors, academic stress has become one of the most common and debilitating daily stressors reported by secondary-school adolescents. Recent school-based surveys show that between 35% and 74% of students report moderate-to-high levels of examination, workload, grade, or future academic transition-related stress (Haritay, S. *et al* 2025). Academic stress, defined as psychological and physiological strain that develops when students feel the academic demands exceed their coping resources, is associated with decreased attention, poor working memory, sleep

disturbance, somatic complaints, sleep disturbance and low motivation, which adversely affect student performance and mental health (Jagiello, T., *et al.* 2025). The escalating consequences of board examinations, greater peer competition, and parental pressure create even more stress for grade 9–12 adolescents in India and similar high-pressure environments; this emphasizes the need to develop school-based interventions (Haritay, S. *et al.* 2025).

### **Adolescents and Academic Stress: Prevalence, Mechanisms, and Effects.**

Population-based research employing instruments with established psychometric properties (e.g. Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents [ESSA]) indicates a fairly high prevalence of clinically significant levels of stress among secondary students (Haritay, S. *et al.* 2025). In Karnataka, for instance, a school-based study of 1,426 adolescents (ages 13–15) reported that nearly three-quarters scored in the range considered high stress; grade progression and urban residence were significantly associated with scoring either medium-high or high on the scale. Likewise, a study among secondary school students in Kathmandu found that 46.7% experienced high academic stress, which was primarily caused by workload and performance pressure. In South Kerala, 35% of higher-secondary adolescents have reported high academic stress (Renu, S., *et al.* 2024). These findings are in line with systematic reviews which showed that academic stress is an increasing global phenomenon and its negative outcomes are detrimental to the psychological well-being, engagement, and performance of students (Pascoe, M. C., *et al.*, 2020).

### **Limitations of Existing Interventions and the Case for NLP-Based Approaches**

This has led to an increase in the implementation of school-based interventions based on cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), self-regulated learning (SRL), and acceptance and commitment training (ACT), which have been shown to effectively reduce academic stress with positive secondary effects (Banda, P., *et al.* 2026); Benavente, M., *et al.* (2026). MBCT in schools, for example, led to sustained reductions in perceived stress and psychosomatic complaints in 14–16-year-old girls (Banda, P., *et al.* 2026). A teaching method almost aligned with the SRL approach decreased junior-high Student Council members' stress by minimizing their time management, goal orientation, and emotion regulation challenges. Many protocols require multiple weeks of group sessions, trained mental-health specialists, or curricular integration, which can be challenging to implement in resource-constrained or exam-focused secondary schools (Benavente, M., *et al.* (2026). Additionally, while CBT and mindfulness are well-evidenced, there is continued interest in complementary approaches that directly target internal representations (images, self-talk, submodalities) and rapid state-change, which are central to how adolescents experience academic stress in the moment (Perrella, L., *et al.* 2026).

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) offers a structured, skills-based framework for modifying the internal coding of stressful experiences—specifically, how students see, hear, and feel academic events in their minds—and for installing resourceful states that can be accessed on demand (Kur'ani, N. *et al.* 2026). Core NLP techniques such as the Visual Swish Pattern (for rapid substitution of stress-laden images with preferred, empowering ones), perceptual positions (for cognitive flexibility and de-centring from catastrophic narratives), and anchoring (for conditioning calm, focused states to simple physical or verbal cues) align closely with the cognitive and emotional processes implicated in academic stress (Kur'ani, N. *et al.* 2026). Recent empirical work supports this alignment: a 2026 BMC Psychology study found that a self-awareness-based NLP intervention significantly increased academic and social resilience among students, with gains mediated by improved self-awareness of thoughts, emotions, and triggers (Kur'ani, N. *et al.* 2026). Although NLP remains less extensively researched than CBT in school settings, its emphasis on internal representations, state management, and future pacing makes it theoretically well-suited for brief, individualised interventions with adolescents facing examination-related stress (Kur'ani, N. *et al.* 2026); (Banda, P., *et al.* 2026); Grennan, S., *et al.* 2026).

### **Patient Case Presentation and Baseline Diagnostics**

Four secondary-school adolescents (three boys, one girl; aged 14–15 years) were recruited for this multiple-baseline single-case experimental study. All participants exhibited a marked decline in

academic performance concurrent with elevated scores on the Academic Stress Scale (ASS), indicating moderate-to-severe academic stress (baseline ASS range: 19–22).

**Student A** (male, 15 years) had consistently achieved  $\geq 90\%$  in prior academic terms. Following the onset of examination-related worries (fear of underperformance, catastrophic thinking about test outcomes), his academic performance declined to 60%. Baseline ASS score: 22 (severe stress).

**Student B** (male, 15 years) had previously maintained  $\geq 85\%$  academic performance. Stress emerged in the context of transitioning between academic environments (change of school/curriculum), accompanied by a performance decline to 55%. Baseline ASS score: 20 (severe stress).

**Student C** (male, 14 years) had a history of  $\geq 85\%$  academic achievement. Stress was primarily related to difficulties with time management and task prioritization, with a concurrent performance decline to 55%. Baseline ASS score: 19 (Severe stress).

**Student D** (female, 15 years) had consistently achieved  $\geq 90\%$  before the stress episode. Similar to Student A, her stress was triggered by fear of underperformance, catastrophic thinking about test outcomes, with performance declining to 60%. Baseline ASS score: 21 (severe stress).

## Method

### Research Design

This study employed a multiple-baseline single-case experimental design (SCED) across four participants to examine changes in academic stress following a nine-session, manualised Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) intervention. Each participant served as their own control, with repeated measurements of academic stress collected at every session using the Scale for Assessing Academic Stress (Sinha, Sharma, and Mahendra, 2001). The intervention incorporated stress mapping, internal-representation work, perceptual positions, the Swish Pattern, resource anchoring, future pacing, and consolidation. Session-wise scores enabled within-case evaluation of academic-stress trajectories from intake to the final session; thus, findings indicate observed change rather than causal efficacy.

### Measures

Data were collected using the Academic Stress Scale. **Scale for Assessing Academic Stress (SAAS)** – The Scale for Assessing Academic Stress developed by Sinha, Sharma, and Mahendra (2001) was used. This scale consists of a 30-item self-report measure. The Subject has to answer each item regarding the presence or absence of academic stress symptoms. The subject has to choose a “yes” answer for the presence of academic stress or a “no” answer for the absence of academic stress, scored as (1- the presence of symptoms) and (0-the absence of symptoms) for each item, as applies to him/her.

### Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee, Lovely Professional University (IEC-LPU) (Ref. No.: LPU/IEC-LPU/2024/3/2; Date: 12.09.2024). Permission was also secured from the administrations of the participating schools prior to data collection. Written informed consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of all participants, and assent was obtained from the students. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process, and all data were used solely for academic purposes.

### Intervention Protocol: Nine-Session Neuro-Linguistic Programming Programme for Academic Stress

This manualised nine-session NLP protocol targeted internal representations, perceptual flexibility, and resource-state installation. Session-wise ASS monitoring tracked stress-reduction trajectories across four adolescents with distinct academic stressors.

### Session 1: Intake, Rapport, and Stress Mapping

The first session aimed to establish rapport, develop a case conceptualisation, and identify the main sources of academic stress among the four students. Stressors: Students A & D; stressors: tests, exams. Student B's stress is related to the transition from one academic environment to another, new teachers/peers/routines, and expectations. Student C reported struggling with time management and pressure from incomplete tasks to peer competition.

The practitioner focused on the internal experience of stress for each student by asking what they saw, heard, thought, and felt during a stressful academic event. Student A reported fear, difficulty with the questions, and poor results. Student B expressed not knowing and fearing about adapting to the new environment. Student C's positive aspects were not unified but included worrying about deadlines and negatively comparing oneself to other students. In turn, Student D's experiences were around facing fears of being told that the answers that she gave were wrong and not meeting their academic expectations. The Session 1 ASS scores were 22, 20, 19, and 21 for Student A, B, C, and D, respectively, indicating moderate-to-extreme levels of academic stress in the case records that were available.

### **Session 2: Establishing Rapport & Getting Introduced to NLP**

The second session was a continuation of building rapport and began with Neuroscience & Neuro-Linguistic Programming as a beautiful method used for identifying and practicing what very well could be unhelpful internal images, thoughts, or emotional responses. The students were guided to separate the event from their internal appraisal of it. As an example: exams when the mind triggered failure-related images for Student A and D; the new classroom environment created confusion for Student B; and unfinished work pressure for Student C.

Many of the students pointed out negative self-talk, imagined failure, tension, worry and diminished confidence as common stress responses. The four ASS scores collected at the intake session did not change: Student A 22, Student B 20, Student C 19, and Student D 21. This emerging stability was regarded as a normal part of the alliance-building and assessment stage.

### **Session 3: Internal Representations and Identifications of Candidate Resource-States**

In the third session, we were all trained to pinpoint the internal replicas that students have for their outside academic stress situations. A and D students went through photographs of challenging tests, not being able to remember answers, and poor scores. Student B examined entering a classroom he is not familiar with and feeling unable to call out what needs you have as the interaction with teachers or peers becomes uncomfortable. Student C examined pictures of half-finished production, deadlines looming, and peer performance appearing superior.

Each student was subsequently directed to think of a time when they had been resourceful, confident, focused, flexible, or when they had applied advanced planning or done well in school. The idea was to create a personally significant state that could be induced later in stress-inducing situations. The ASS scores reduced to 20 for student A, while student B:19, student C: 18, and Student D: up to 20.

### **Session 4: Perceptual-Position Exercise**

The fourth session adopted perceptual positions and encouraged participants to view their stressor through more than one perspective. For the first position, students stated their immediate emotional experience. At 2, they thought about how a nurturing teacher, parent, or other peer might see the very same incident. They would practice saying the event in the third person and distinguishing facts from feared predictions.

The exercise (in which Students A and D participated) was about differentiating a challenging exam and the belief that failure is inevitable. Student B thought that some students were having difficulty adjusting to the new environment too. Student C distinguished between classmates doing well and individual academic progress, recognising specific achievable behaviours like planning what to do and knowing task priorities. ASS scores for Students A, B, C, and D were 18, respectively (decrease in stress).

### **Session 5: Swish Pattern Initial Practice**

The fifth session discussed the NLP Swish Pattern. The first step was to identify a concrete mental image that pulls up stress for each student. This was an examination paper or the inability to solve

questions for Students A and D. At least for Student B, it was stepping into a new, unknown classroom or sitting in front of unfamiliar classmates. In the case of Student C, it was the sight of unfinished work or imagining fellow students earning higher grades.

An image was created that each student preferred. Students A and D imagined doing exams in a calm and orderly manner; Student B entering the classroom calmly and participating cautiously; Student C visualising himself using a timetable towards his tasks while completing one thing at a time. The practitioner encouraged the students to shrink down the stress image and make it fuzzy, and then make the preferred image clear and immediate. The ASS scores fell to 16 for Students A, B, and C and to 17 for Student D.

#### **Session 6: Swish Pattern Consolidation**

The 6th session deepened practice of the Swish Pattern. Students practiced replacing images rooted in fear, uncertainty, or comparisons with images of confidence, focusing on the task at hand and taking academic action within reason. Students A and D learned to focus on overcoming exam anxiety by taking exams question by question. Then, Student B rehearsed behaviours from the shift of uncertainty to a small adjustment behaviour, like asking question or following routines. Student C learnt in her sessions to move away from worrying about deadlines and focus on one task at a time. The ASS scores were Student A at 16, Student B at 15, Student C at 14, and Student D again, where they started, also a score of 16. The unchanged score for Student A did not mean the intervention was ineffective; rather, we understood it as possible short-term stability when practicing skills.

#### **Session 7: Meeting Anchoring with Resources and Academic Practice**

The students chose a physical or verbal anchor for an image of a resourceful state that was recalled (greatness-state), such as calmness, confidence, focus, flexibility, stick-to-itiveness. The intention behind it was to prepare before studying, go into class being mindful of deadlines or exams, and to have the positive state be more readily accessible.

Students practiced the anchor as it pertained to their own academic situations. A and D used it before tests/exams. B practised using it before walking into class or engaging with new peers and teachers. Student C practiced using it before starting a study task that was scheduled or when she had comparison thoughts. The ASS scores were 15 for Students A, B, and D, while Student C had 14.

#### **Session-8: Future Pacing & Simulating Anxiety Situation**

In the eighth session, future pacing was used to instil in students the ability to imagine themselves applying their skills in real-life academic settings in the near future. Students A and D practiced going into an examination hall, coping with first exam nerves, reading the question papers carefully before attempting them, tackling easier items first while returning to the more difficult ones later. Student B practiced being in a new school, doing the classroom activity and responding nonverbally to the unknown social and academic demands of that environment. During busy academic periods, Student C practiced with a schedule and focusing on her progress instead of comparing herself to peers.

Students were encouraged to recognize early signs of distress, activate their resource anchor, use positive self-talk, and redirect attention toward an actionable next step. Students A, B and D experienced a decline in ASS scores, but Student C remained statically stable with an ASS of 13.

#### **Session 9: Ecological Verifications and Palpitation**

The last session examined what had been accomplished, what stressors were still causing concern, and how to begin applying NLP techniques in real-world contexts outside of counseling. An ecological verification assessed whether the new coping responses were naturalistic, individual-restorative, and relevant to each student's academic aspirations. Students A and D: focus on calmness and task-oriented behaviour during exams. The focus for Student B was on ongoing acclimation to the new environment. Student C: It was about, you know, structuring better and not comparing yourself too much to others when they did something.

For each of the four students, a maintenance strategy was established. These included utilizing resource anchors prior to a stressful academic event, deep breathing and Swish Pattern practice when distressing images presented themselves, future pacing before examinations or deadlines, and redirecting focus back onto immediate actions that can be executed. For each of the four students,

final ASS scores (n=4; Student A: 13, Student B: 14, Student C: 12 & Student D: 13) reflect reductions from baseline.

## Result

**Table 1. Student A, Academic Stress Scores**

**Table 1** presents Student A's academic stress scores from intake through the final session. The observed data show a reduction from 22 at intake to 13 after the ninth session.

| Assessment Point | Primary Intervention Focus                                 | Ass Score | Interpretation on available Case record            |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Session 1        | Initial assessment and problem identification              | 22        | Severe to Extreme stress                           |
| Session 2        | Rapport& Introduction to NLP                               | 22        | Severe to Extreme stress                           |
| Session 3        | Internal representations and resource-state identification | 20        | Severe stress                                      |
| Session 4        | Perceptual-position exercise                               | 18        | Moderate-to-high stress                            |
| Session 5        | Swish Pattern: initial practice                            | 16        | Moderate stress                                    |
| Session 6        | Swish Pattern: consolidation                               | 16        | Moderate stress                                    |
| Session 7        | Resource anchoring and academic rehearsal                  | 15        | Mild-to-moderate stress                            |
| Session 8        | Future pacing and stress-situation rehearsal               | 14        | Mild stress                                        |
| Session 9        | Ecological check and consolidation                         | 13        | Improved/normalised range according to case record |

**Table 2. Student B Academic Stress Scores**

**Table 2** presents Student B's academic stress scores from intake through the final session. The score decreased from 20 at intake to 14 after the ninth session, indicating an overall reduction of 6 points

| Assessment Point | Primary Intervention Focus                                 | Ass Score | Interpretation on available Case record |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------|
| Session 1        | Initial assessment and problem identification              | 20        | Severe to Extreme stress                |
| Session 2        | Rapport& Introduction to NLP                               | 20        | Severe to Extreme stress                |
| Session 3        | Internal representations and resource-state identification | 19        | Severe stress                           |
| Session 4        | Perceptual-position exercise                               | 18        | Moderate-to-high stress                 |
| Session 5        | Swish Pattern: initial practice                            | 16        | Moderate stress                         |
| Session 6        | Swish Pattern: consolidation                               | 15        | Mild-to-moderate stress                 |
| Session 7        | Resource anchoring and academic rehearsal                  | 15        | Mild-to-moderate stress                 |
| Session 8        | Future pacing and stress-situation rehearsal               | 14        | Mild stress                             |
| Session 9        | Ecological check and consolidation                         | 14        | Mild stress                             |

**Table 3. Student C Academic Stress Scores**

Table 3 presents Student C's academic stress scores from intake through the final session. The score decreased from 19 at intake to 12 after the ninth session, yielding an overall reduction of 7 points.

| Assessment Point | Primary Intervention Focus                                 | Ass Score | Interpretation on available Case record            |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Session 1        | Initial assessment and problem identification              | 19        | Severe stress                                      |
| Session 2        | Rapport& Introduction to NLP                               | 19        | Severe stress                                      |
| Session 3        | Internal representations and resource-state identification | 18        | Severe stress                                      |
| Session 4        | Perceptual-position exercise                               | 18        | Severe stress                                      |
| Session 5        | Swish Pattern: initial practice                            | 16        | Moderate stress                                    |
| Session 6        | Swish Pattern: consolidation                               | 14        | Mild-to-moderate stress                            |
| Session 7        | Resource anchoring and academic rehearsal                  | 14        | Mild-to-moderate stress                            |
| Session 8        | Future pacing and stress-situation rehearsal               | 13        | Mild stress                                        |
| Session 9        | Ecological check and consolidation                         | 12        | Improved/normalised range according to case record |

**Table 4. Student D Academic Stress Scores**

Table 4 presents Student D's academic stress scores from intake through the final session. The score declined from 21 at intake to 13 after the ninth session, representing an overall reduction of 8 points.

| Assessment Point | Primary Intervention Focus                                 | Ass Score | Interpretation on available Case record            |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Session 1        | Initial assessment and problem identification              | 21        | Severe to Extreme stress                           |
| Session 2        | Rapport& Introduction to NLP                               | 21        | Severe to Extreme stress                           |
| Session 3        | Internal representations and resource-state identification | 20        | Severe stress                                      |
| Session 4        | Perceptual-position exercise                               | 18        | Moderate-to-high stress                            |
| Session 5        | Swish Pattern: initial practice                            | 17        | Moderate-to-high stress                            |
| Session 6        | Swish Pattern: consolidation                               | 16        | Moderate stress                                    |
| Session 7        | Resource anchoring and academic rehearsal                  | 15        | Mild-to-moderate stress                            |
| Session 8        | Future pacing and stress-situation rehearsal               | 14        | Mild stress                                        |
| Session 9        | Ecological check and consolidation                         | 13        | Improved/normalised range according to case record |

### Scholastic Performance Recovery

After completing the 9-session NLP protocol, all four students sat for their official institutional secondary term examinations. Unburdened by the cognitive interference of peer-induced panic and normalized academic stress, their working memory capacity and executive function operated at markedly improved efficiency. Students A and D, who had previously declined from  $\geq 90\%$  to  $60\%$ , recovered to  $93.5\%$  and  $88.5\%$ , respectively. Students B and C, who had dropped from  $\geq 85\%$  to  $55\%$ , rebounded to  $91\%$  and  $90\%$ . These outcomes not only completely recovered their failing mock scores but also exceeded their historic pre-crisis academic baselines, consistent with evidence that NLP-based interventions can enhance academic motivation and performance by reducing anxiety and improving cognitive-emotional regulation (Kur'ani, N. *et al* 2026).

This pattern aligns with recent quasi-experimental and intervention studies showing that structured psychological protocols, particularly those incorporating cognitive restructuring, resilience-building, and emotion-regulation strategies, produce significant gains in examination scores alongside reductions in academic stress. For example, an interdisciplinary school-based intervention reported exam-score increases from a control mean of  $71.05$  to  $80.11$  in the intervention group, driven by lowered stress and heightened learning motivation. Similarly, NLP-focused work with adolescents has demonstrated significant improvements in academic motivation, a key predictor of scholastic recovery (Indriyani, L. D., *et al* 2026).

### **Qualitative Clinical Observations & Cognitive Restructuring**

Qualitative clinical observations confirmed profound cognitive restructuring across all four cases. Students reported complete resolution of secondary insomnia, noting rapid sleep onset and restful sleep before exam days, a change consistent with research linking stress-reduction interventions to improved sleep and emotional regulation in adolescents (Kur'ani, N. *et al* 2026). During exam conditions, whenever intrusive peer comparisons or catastrophic thoughts arose, the trained Visual Swish Pattern (an NLP technique for rapid state change) automatically triggered a calm, resourceful state, allowing them to maintain cognitive flow and focused attention (Kur'ani, N. *et al* 2026).

This automaticity mirrors findings that NLP techniques such as anchoring, reframing, and the Swish Pattern can reduce learning anxiety and support adaptive cognitive patterns under pressure (Qushoy, M. *et al* 2025). In parallel, cognitive restructuring-based counseling has been shown to significantly lower academic stress by helping students dispute irrational beliefs and reframe negative thoughts, thereby fostering emotional regulation and perseverance. Together, these mechanisms explain the observed normalization of stress and the robust recovery and even enhancement of scholastic performance post-intervention. Proceeding (Qushoy, M. *et al* 2025).

### **Discussion**

Across the four cases, academic-stress scores decreased between intake and the final session (Student A 9 points, Student B 6 points, Student C 7 points, Student D 8 points); this within-case pattern suggests a relationship between the nine-session NLP-informed intervention and decreasing self-reported academic stress specifically in response to linking techniques with each student's unique stressor (examination anxiety; transition-related uncertainty; time-management difficulties; peer comparison). Because the study employed a small multiple-case repeated-measures design with no control condition or staggered baseline, these findings should be interpreted as preliminary associations rather than evidence of causal efficacy.

Its clinical value derives from its structure with respect to appraisals, imagery, attention, and behavioural rehearsal. Students received support to identify stress-associated thoughts and images, generate coping-focused alternatives, practise resource anchoring, and rehearse upcoming academic instances (Pascoe *et al.*, 2020). This fits well with cognitive-behavioural theories of stress in academic environments, which highlight the role of negative appraisal, perceived lack of control, and dysfunctional coping in academic stress. Exam-related anxiety and the academic burden have also regularly been recognised among student stress contributors (Pascoe *et al.*, 2020).

The differing trajectories highlight the importance of individual formulation. Student C showed the largest proportional decline, possibly because planning and task prioritisation directly addressed controllable aspects of stress. Student B showed a smaller reduction, which may reflect the continuing nature of adjustment demands in a new educational environment. Future research should use larger

samples, validated repeated measurements, follow-up assessments, intervention-fidelity monitoring, and controlled or staggered-baseline designs to evaluate the specific contribution of NLP techniques.

### Conclusion

This multiple-case study provides preliminary evidence that a structured, nine-session NLP intervention may reduce academic stress and support scholastic recovery among secondary-school adolescents. All four participants demonstrated substantial reductions in SASS scores and returned to or exceeded their pre-stress academic performance levels. The intervention's focus on modifying internal representations, installing resource states, and rehearsing adaptive responses aligns with cognitive-behavioural models of stress and offers a brief, skills-based complement to existing school-based programmes. While findings are promising, the small sample, limited experimental control, and absence of long-term follow-up reflect limitations. Future research should employ rigorous multiple-baseline SCED protocols with staggered intervention onset, independent fidelity checks, multi-method outcome assessment, and extended follow-up periods. If replicated, NLP-based protocols could offer scalable interventions for examination-related stress in resource-constrained educational settings.

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