

## Academic Stress, General Health and Life Satisfaction among College Students

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted on the Academic stress, general health and life satisfaction among college students. Sample of 100 college students were selected by employing simple random sampling. Objectives of the study: (1) To study the relationship between life satisfaction and academic stress among male and female college students. (2) To find out the relationship between life satisfaction and general health among male and female college students. (3) To measure relationship between academic stress and general health among male and female college students. (4) To find out the difference on the level of academic stress, general health and life satisfaction among male and female college students. (Academic Stress Scale), (General Health Questionnaire 12), (Life Satisfaction Scale) were employed in the present study. For the purpose of drawing out the result, statistical techniques are used which includes correlation and t-test. After analysing the data, the study explored gender differences in academic stress, life satisfaction, and general health among college students. Results showed that academic stress had a significant negative relationship with life satisfaction among female students, but not among males. Female students also showed a significant negative correlation between life satisfaction and general health, a pattern not seen in males. Both genders had a significant positive correlation between academic stress and general health, suggesting higher stress was linked to poorer health. Female students experienced higher academic stress and worse general health than males, but life satisfaction levels were similar across genders. This suggests that, although there were gender-based differences in academic stress and general health, life satisfaction remained consistent across both groups.

**Keywords:** *Academic Stress, Life Satisfaction, General Health*

### ACADEMIC STRESS

Academic stress is the cognitive appraisal of the student of any stressor associated with academics, the relations between environmental stressors as well as the physiological and/or psychological responses to these academic/environmental stressors (Deb S, 2015). Students experiencing a tense academic environment often display a range of behavioral issues, including frequent absences from school, diminished academic engagement, emotional outbursts such as crying spells, heightened irritability, and physical

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symptoms associated with stress (Goyal, 2016). In recent years, college students have faced increasing academic pressures, juggling exams, assignments, and a multitude of other responsibilities. This pressure isn't just from the coursework itself, but also from the expectations set by both educators and parents, who emphasize the importance of achieving high grades. Consequently, students often find themselves working tirelessly, leading to heightened levels of stress. Moreover, there's a societal expectation for students to excel not only academically but also in extracurricular activities, further adding to their workload and stress levels. Depression, anxiety, behavioural problems, irritability, etc. are few of the many problems reported in students with high academic stress (Deb, Strodl & Sun, 2015). The lack of adequate counseling resources exacerbates this confusion, leaving many students unsure about their career paths despite their rigorous study routines. This demanding environment from both parents and teachers leaves students feeling overwhelmed and stressed. Furthermore, adolescence and high school play pivotal roles in shaping a student's personality and worldview, with peer pressure being a common phenomenon. Peer pressure can either positively influence students or lead to harmful behaviors such as substance abuse or cheating on tests. The heavy workload and constant pressure to excel academically and in extracurriculars contribute to a pervasive sense of stress among students. Parents' intense focus on their children's academic success often backfires, causing undue pressure and ultimately hindering their well-being. Additionally, the lack of support and communication from parents and teachers only adds to students' doubts and confusion, leaving them feeling adrift and directionless. Prolonged stress can have serious consequences for students, both physically and emotionally, potentially leading to anxiety and depression. While stress is often viewed negatively, it can also serve as a motivator and help students sharpen their skills and meet their goals. However, it's essential for students to have healthy coping mechanisms in place to manage stress effectively and prevent it from becoming overwhelming.

### GENERAL HEALTH

WHO defines and explains that health encompasses a multidimensional concept reflecting an individual's overall physical, mental, and social well-being. It extends beyond the absence of disease or infirmity to encompass factors such as physical fitness, psychological resilience, social functioning, and quality of life. Researchers often consider general health as a dynamic state influenced by various factors, including biological, environmental, behavioral, and social determinants. It is assessed through a combination of subjective self-report measures and objective indicators, providing insights into an individual's overall health status and functioning across multiple domains. Psychological health is conceptualized as a state wherein a student achieves equilibrium both emotionally and intellectually. A psychologically healthy student demonstrates clarity in thinking, adeptness in social development, and ease in acquiring new skills. However, given that students undergo a critical developmental phase from adolescence to adulthood, they are particularly vulnerable to experiencing mental health disorders during this transition period (Giugliano, 2004). Within the academic realm, college students face a multitude of stressors that can profoundly affect their mental and physical health, as well as their overall satisfaction with life. These stressors stem from the rigorous demands of academic coursework, social pressures, and the transition to independent living. As such, understanding the interplay between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among college students is crucial for promoting their holistic well-being. This research aims to explore the relationships among these variables, shedding light on the mechanisms through which academic stress may impact students' health and satisfaction with life.

Given the intricate interplay between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction, understanding the underlying mechanisms and relationships among these variables is paramount. By elucidating these dynamics, researchers and practitioners can develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms to mitigate the negative effects of academic stress and promote students' holistic well-being. Through comprehensive assessments and interventions tailored to students' unique needs, colleges and universities can foster environments that nurture not only academic success but also health, happiness, and fulfillment among their student populations. Research on the interconnectedness of academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among college students is essential due to the limited exploration of these factors collectively. While academic stress is frequently studied, its implications for students' general health and life satisfaction are often overlooked. Understanding how these elements intersect can offer valuable insights into students' overall well-being and inform targeted interventions. By delving into this relationship, our study seeks to fill a crucial gap in the literature, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by college students and paving the way for more effective support strategies.

### **LIFE SATISFACTION**

Life satisfaction is the positive assessment of one's life circumstances, indicating that they meet or exceed personal standards or expectations. It serves as a fundamental measure of overall human well-being, representing an individual's evaluation of their life from negative to positive. This concept, alongside positive and negative affect, constitutes a major aspect of well-being (Diener, 1984). Aligned with cognitive theory, life satisfaction is described as an individual's cognitive judgment regarding the compatibility of their life conditions with internal standards (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffen, 1985). Diener (1984) outlines that positive reflections on life consist of three elements: frequent positive emotions, infrequent negative emotions, and a general sense of contentment with life. While positive and negative affect gauge emotional aspects of subjective well-being, life satisfaction reflects a cognitive evaluation of one's overall life quality rather than a simple sum of specific domains (Diener et al., 1985). Life satisfaction pertains to individuals' evaluations of their lives against personal standards, reflecting a cognitive assessment influenced by subjective criteria. D. C. Shin and D. M. Johnson (1978) It signifies positive life experiences that motivate individuals to pursue their goals. Understanding life satisfaction among university students is crucial, particularly as recent research has linked it to anxiety levels. Findings suggest that students with lower anxiety tend to report higher life satisfaction. A. Paschali and G. Tsitsas (2010) Moreover, studies by Bear and Minke (2006) have shown that factors like academic performance, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships contribute to greater life satisfaction.

Additionally, high life satisfaction correlates negatively with negative attitudes towards stress, depression, and anxiety. Stress has become increasingly prevalent among students in both school and university settings. This stress stems from various causes and significantly impacts academic performance, particularly among university students, where the pressure to excel intensifies, especially in their final year. The attainment of good grades is crucial for securing employment post-graduation, amplifying stress levels (K. J. Reddy 2018). Therefore, it is imperative to explore how student stress influences their life satisfaction and social sustainability, such as happiness during their college years. Academic stress plays a pivotal role in the myriad challenges faced by university students, who often undergo a significant adjustment from high school (B. Rathakrishnan (2022)). This transition can induce culture shock as students struggle to acclimate to the university's academic rigors and social

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dynamics. Furthermore, the necessity to meet predetermined academic standards for graduation exacerbates stress levels A. L. Dwyer (2001), B. Rathakrishnan, S. A. Rahim (2017). Failure to swiftly adapt to these new circumstances can lead to diminished self-well-being, decreased academic performance, and heightened psychological distress.

### **METHODOLOGY**

**Aim:** To find out the relationship between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among male and female college students.

#### *Objectives:*

1. To study the relationship between life satisfaction and academic stress among male and female college students.
2. To find out the relationship between life satisfaction and general health among male and female college students.
3. To measure relationship between academic stress and general health among male and female college students.
4. To find out the difference on the level of academic stress, general health and life satisfaction among male and female college students.

#### *Hypotheses*

- H1: There will be significant relationship between academic stress and life satisfaction among female college students.
- H2: There will be significant relationship between academic stress and life satisfaction among male college students.
- H3: There will be significant relationship between life satisfaction and general health among female college students.
- H4: There will be significant relationship between life satisfaction and general health among male college students.
- H5: There will be significant relationship between academic stress and general health among female college students.
- H6: There will be significant relationship between academic stress and general health among male college students.
- H7: There will be significant difference on the level of academic stress among male and female college students.
- H8: There will be significant gender difference on the level of general health among male and female college students.
- H9: There will be significant difference on the level of life satisfaction among male and female college students.

#### *Sample*

A sample size of 100 was taken to ensure adequate representation across different demographics such as age, gender and academic year. Among the 100 students out of which 50 were female and 50 were male pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate courses, with the age range of 18 to 25 years. Random sampling was employed to ensure representation across different demographics such as age, gender, academic major, and academic year. Sample for this study was college students enrolled in various academic programs. The introduction and a brief explanation of the research were given to the participants.

### *Instruments:*

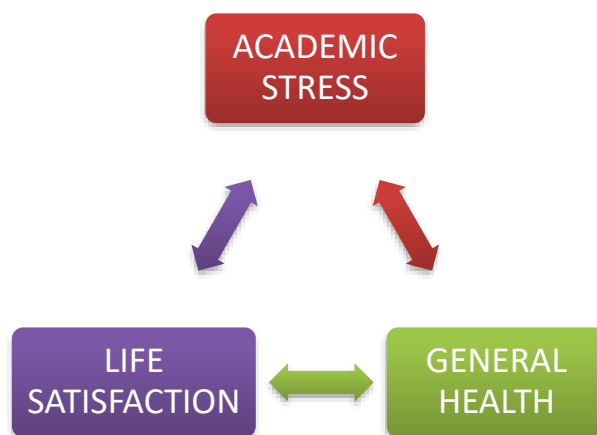
Three measures were used in this study,

- 1. Academic stress scale:** The 40-items academic stress scale originally developed by Kim (1970). It is a five point Likert scale ranging from “no stress i.e., 0” to “extreme stress i.e., 4”. The Academic Stress Scale has a good internal consistency score with a Cronbach alpha of 0.70. The total number of items was 40. Therefore 160 is the maximum possible score and the highest score for each factor would be 32. Those who scored more than the mean score of 67.13 were considered to have high academic stress and those less than the mean score of 67 had no academic stress. Overall, the higher scores on the mean average indicated more academic stress.
- 2. GHQ-12:** is a quick reliable and sensitive short form, which is an ideal one for research studies. It is a self-administered questionnaire. An Indian research to test the reliability and validity of general health questionnaire (GHQ-12) was carried out in Kanpur India and according to the results; an alpha test coefficient of 0.93 (the reliability of this method was  $\alpha = 0.90$ ) was obtained for the entire sample which is universally accepted value for confirming reliability. Thus, this study confirms that GHQ- 12 is a highly reliable and valid scale for the Indian context. High scores indicates worse health.
- 3. Life satisfaction Scale:** The Life satisfaction Scale by Prof. Hardeo Ojha (2015). The total 20 items. 12 items were in positive and 8 items were in negative. The scoring is on five-point alternatives, viz., strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Reliability of this test is computed by test – retest method. Reliability shown there is 0.79 and the split-half reliability is 0.77.

### *Procedure*

The current study aims to find out the relationship between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among college students. Random sampling method was employed to ensure representation across different demographics such as age and gender and academic year. Sample for this study was college students enrolled in various academic programs. A sample of 100 college students were taken out of them 50 were female and 50 were male. Sample age range was 18 to 25 years. The study is quantitative in nature and explored the connection between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among college students in India and employed correlational design. Data was collected using self-report questionnaires which were given to participants both online and offline. The questionnaire included standardized scales, which were Academic Stress Scale originally developed by Kim (1970), General health questionnaire 12 (GHQ 12) and Life Satisfaction Scale by Prof. Hardeo Ojha (2015) was administered to find out the relationship between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among male and female college students. Statistical analyses such as correlation, t-test was conducted to examine the relationships between these variables and to test the proposed hypotheses. Individuals with pre-existing mental health issues and those outside the 18-25 age range will be excluded from this study.

*Model for Correlation Study*



*Figure 1: The above figure shows the model for the correlation study.*

**RESULTS**

*Table 1. Correlation value between Academic Stress and Life Satisfaction among female college students.*

Variable	N	r	p
Academic Stress	50	-0.36	Sig ***
Life Satisfaction	50		

From the above table correlation value was calculated where ( $r = -0.36$ ), thus it was found significant at both the levels. Which shows that there is a significant negative relationship between academic stress and life satisfaction among female college students.

*Table 2. Correlation value between Academic Stress and Life Satisfaction among male college students.*

Variable	N	r	p
Academic Stress	50	-0.05	Insig
Life Satisfaction	50		

From the above table correlation value was calculated where ( $r = -0.05$ ), it was found that there is no statistically significant relationship between academic stress and life satisfaction among male college students.

*Table 3. Correlation value between Life Satisfaction and General Health among female college students.*

Variable	N	r	p
Life Satisfaction	50	-0.40	Sig ***
General Health	50		

From the above table correlation value was calculated where ( $r = -0.40$ ), thus correlation value was found significant at both the levels. Which shows that there is a significant negative relationship between life satisfaction and general health among female college students.

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**Table 4. Correlation value between Life Satisfaction and General Health among male college students.**

Variable	N	r	p
Life Satisfaction	50	-0.17	Insig
General Health	50		

From the above table correlation value was calculated where ( $r = -0.17$ ), it was found that there is no statistical significant correlation between life satisfaction and general health among male college students. Therefore, according to this result life satisfaction cannot be considered a significant predictor of general health in this male student demographic.

**Table 5. Correlation value between Academic Stress and General Health among female college students.**

Variable	N	r	p
Academic Stress	50	0.55	Sig ***
General Health	50		

From the above table correlation value was calculated where ( $r = 0.55$ ), thus it was found significant at both the levels. Which shows that there is a significant positive correlation emerged between academic stress and general health among female college students. This indicates that higher academic stress coincides with poorer general health.

**Table 6. Correlation value between Academic Stress and General Health among male college students.**

Variable	N	r	p
Academic Stress	50	0.50	Sig ***
General Health	50		

From the above table correlation value was calculated where ( $r = 0.55$ ), thus it was found significant at both the levels. Which shows that there is a significant positive correlation emerged between academic stress and general health among male college students. Thus, the findings suggests that higher levels of academic stress are associated with poorer general health outcomes among male students.

**Table 7. Mean, S.D and t-value for Academic Stress among male and female college students.**

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	t	p
Female	50	86.38	24.86	2.012	Sig*
Male	50	76.02	26.59		
Total	100				

From the above table, the t-value was calculated to be ( $t = 2.012$ ), indicating a significant result at the 0.05 level. This suggests that there is a significant difference between the levels of academic stress among male and female college students.

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**Table 8. Mean, S.D and t-value for General Health among male and female college students.**

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	t	p
Female	50	19.82	5.19	2.239	Sig*
Male	50	17.36	5.77		
Total	100				

From the above table, the t-value was calculated to be ( $t = 2.239$ ), indicating a significant result at the 0.05 level. This suggests that there is a significant difference between the levels of general health among male and female college students.

**Table 9. Mean, S.D and t-value for Life Satisfaction among male and female college students.**

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	t	p
Female	50	61.18	11.62	-1.325	Insig
Male	50	64.06	10.06		
Total	100				

From the above table, the t-value was calculated to be ( $t = -1.325$ ), This suggests that there is no significant difference between the level of life satisfaction between male and female college students at both the levels.

### **Findings of the study**

- There was a significant negative relationship between academic stress and life satisfaction among female college students.
- There was no significant relationship between academic stress and life satisfaction among male college students.
- There was a significant negative correlation between life satisfaction and general health among female college students.
- There was no significant relationship between between life satisfaction and general health among male college students.
- Female college students exhibited a significant positive correlation between academic stress and general health, indicating that higher levels of academic stress were associated with poorer general health.
- Male college students demonstrated a significant positive correlation between academic stress and general health, suggesting a similar association.
- There was a significant difference between the levels of academic stress among male and female college students.
- There was a significant difference between the levels of general health among male and female college students.
- There was no significant difference between the level of life satisfaction between male and female college students.

## **DISCUSSION**

The correlation analyses revealed significant gender-specific patterns in the relationships between academic stress, life satisfaction, and general health among college students. Among female students, a significant negative correlation was observed between academic stress and life satisfaction, indicating that higher levels of academic stress are associated with decreased life satisfaction. Additionally, a negative correlation was found between life



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satisfaction and general health, suggesting that higher life satisfaction is linked to better general health outcomes in female students. Conversely, among male students, the correlations between academic stress and life satisfaction and between life satisfaction and general health were not statistically significant, thus there is no significant relationship between academic stress and life satisfaction and between life satisfaction and general health among male college students.

Both female and male students exhibited a significant positive correlation between academic stress and general health, indicating that higher levels of academic stress coincide with poorer general health outcomes irrespective of gender. Furthermore, gender differences were evident in academic stress and general health, with female students reporting higher levels of academic stress and lower levels of general health compared to their male counterparts. However, no significant difference was found in life satisfaction between male and female students. These findings underscore the importance of considering gender-specific factors in understanding the complex interplay between academic stress, life satisfaction, and general health among college students, with implications for targeted interventions and support services aimed at promoting student well-being.

The relationship between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among college students reveals nuanced patterns with varying effects based on gender. Several studies highlight that female college students tend to experience higher levels of academic stress compared to their male counterparts. Bukhari (2017) and Puri (2016) found that academic stress often correlates with depression and anxiety, leading to lower life satisfaction among female college students. Similarly, Afridi (2019) observed that perceived stress negatively affects life satisfaction in female university students. This suggests that academic stress can be a significant factor impacting the overall well-being of female students.

Conversely, studies focusing on male college students yield mixed results regarding the relationship between academic stress and life satisfaction. Phyleecia (2022) found no significant correlation between academic achievement (as a source of stress) and work readiness, while Aman Khera (2022) reported no notable gender-based differences in life satisfaction. These findings suggest that the relationship between academic stress and life satisfaction among male students may be influenced by various factors, indicating a need for further research focusing on this specific demographic.

The link between general health and life satisfaction among college students is similarly complex. While Aktaş et al. (2023) suggested that risky health behaviors could lead to decreased life satisfaction, other studies like Ding et al. (2022) indicated that positive coping styles play a mediating role between life events and life satisfaction, highlighting the importance of healthy coping mechanisms. Although direct evidence linking general health and life satisfaction among female college students is limited, these studies suggest that health-related behaviors and coping strategies can impact life satisfaction.

Regarding general health among male college students, Badger (2019), and Fogle (2013) reported a positive correlation between academic stress and general health, suggesting that academic demands, reduced social support, and financial burden contribute to stress and unhealthy behaviors. This finding underlines the importance of addressing academic stress to promote better health outcomes among college students.

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Gender disparities in general health among college students are evident, with female students often exhibiting higher stress levels and worse health outcomes compared to males. Research indicates that female students face greater susceptibility to ill-health due to various factors, including environmental and lifestyle influences (Samson Otene, 2023). Furthermore, studies during the COVID-19 pandemic found that female students experienced higher psychological distress, anxiety, and stress levels compared to male students (V.V. Shkarin et al., 2022).

While some research indicates that academic stress may affect life satisfaction differently based on gender, other studies suggest a more complex relationship. García-Martínez et al. (2023) found that female and male students might have similar levels of life satisfaction, indicating that gender alone may not be a significant predictor of life satisfaction among college students.

These findings suggest that other factors may play a crucial role in determining life satisfaction. For example, J.A. Rivera Márquez (2023) highlights the importance of emotional intelligence and resilience as key contributors to life satisfaction. Similarly, N. Perween and R. Dewan (2022) found that optimism and interest in physical education positively influenced life satisfaction among students, irrespective of gender. Ahmet, Sagin (2022) further supports this notion, emphasizing that gender-based comparisons might overlook the broader spectrum of factors that contribute to life satisfaction.

Overall, the literature suggests that while female college students often face higher levels of academic stress and associated health risks, the relationship between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among male students requires further exploration. These findings emphasize the need for targeted support systems and interventions to mitigate academic stress, enhance general health, and improve life satisfaction among college students.

### ***Limitations***

The study has several limitations that may affect the generalizability of its results. With a sample size of only 100 college students, the findings may not be representative of the broader student population in India. Additionally, despite employing simple random sampling, the study focused on college students from certain Indian states, which could introduce a regional bias and limit the representation of students from other areas. The reliance on self-report measures to evaluate academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction poses a risk of subjectivity. Participants' responses could be influenced by factors like social desirability bias or errors in self-assessment, leading to skewed or inaccurate data. While the study concentrated on academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction, it overlooked other potentially influential factors such as socioeconomic status, family background, and cultural differences. Furthermore, the study design did not consider external influences like ongoing events, shifts in educational policies, or societal pressures, which might have impacted the results. These uncontrolled variables suggest that the study's findings should be interpreted with caution, as these limitations could affect the validity and reliability of the conclusions. Future research should aim to address these limitations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

### ***Implications***

This study has significant implications for various stakeholders involved in the educational and developmental progression of college students. Through the utilization of a descriptive

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survey approach and the random sampling of 100 college students, the research aimed to illuminate crucial facets of students' overall health and satisfaction with life. Before discussing specific implications, it is vital to acknowledge the broader context of the study's aims. These aims include evaluating levels of academic stress, investigating general health, assessing overall life satisfaction, exploring the interconnections between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among college students in India, and offering recommendations for interventions and support systems to enhance student well-being in the country. These objectives highlight the comprehensive scope of the study, which seeks to provide insights into the multifaceted challenges encountered by college students during their academic journey.

### *Future Research*

Future research should focus on delving deeper into the connections between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among college students. Longitudinal studies are crucial for capturing how these relationships change over time, allowing researchers to track student experiences from freshman year to graduation. This approach can identify patterns of resilience and vulnerability, providing insights for effective interventions. Intervention studies are also recommended to explore methods for reducing academic stress and enhancing overall well-being. By testing various approaches like stress management workshops and wellness programs, researchers can determine which strategies are most effective at improving general health and life satisfaction.

Comparative studies across diverse cultural, socioeconomic, and institutional contexts are another important area for future research. Such studies can highlight unique challenges and opportunities among different groups of college students, offering a broader perspective on the factors influencing stress and satisfaction. Finally, the role of technology in shaping academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction requires further examination. As college students increasingly rely on digital devices and social media, understanding how technology impacts their well-being is critical. Research into technology's influence on stress levels, sleep patterns, and social interactions can guide effective digital usage and well-being strategies for college students.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings underscore the importance of considering gender differences when examining the relationships between academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among college students. Understanding these dynamics can inform targeted interventions and support strategies aimed at promoting student well-being and academic success. Additionally, further studies are needed to delve deeper into these findings, particularly considering the limited research conducted on gender-specific differences in the context of academic stress, general health, and life satisfaction among college students. The current study sheds light on some key relationships, but more comprehensive investigations are necessary to fully understand the complexities involved. Future research should explore additional factors that may influence these dynamics, such as socio-cultural differences, academic disciplines, and coping mechanisms. Moreover, longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how these relationships evolve over time and their implications for long-term well-being and academic outcomes. By addressing these gaps in the literature, researchers can contribute to the development of more targeted interventions and support programs tailored to the unique needs of different student populations.

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