

Research Paper

Effects of Academic Pressure on Students Health and Well-Being: A Comprehensive Analysis

Manav Joshi¹, Nand Kumar Singh^{2*}, Archana Chaturvedi³, Vivek Bapat⁴

ABSTRACT

Introduction: - Academic pressure has become a significant concern in today's competitive educational environment and affecting students at all levels. Excessive academic stress can lead to severe physical and mental health. Sharma & Singh (2023) in their study "Academic stress and mental health among Indian college students: the role of coping strategies" indicated that high levels of academic stress among Indian, college students, particularly in competitive field like engineering and medicine. It identifies exam pressure, parental expectations, and fear of failure as major stressors. **Material and Methods;** - This study was quantitative research design to systematically investigate the relationship between academic pressure and student's health and well-being. Target populations was the student's enrolled in UG and PG levels educations and age range between 18-25 Years. Sample size was 100 and structured questionnaire administered consisting of closed-ended questions. Academic pressure measured using a self -developed scale and Stress- measured by perceived stress scale and Well-being – assessed by WHO-5 well-being index. Correlation, descriptive statistic, coding, frequency, percentage etc. used. **Result:** - The result revealed several significant insights into the relationship between academic pressure and student and academic stress was found to the negatively impact physical health with student reporting headache fatigue loss of appetites and poor sleep quality. Social life disruption indicated students under high academic pressure often withdrew from social activity leading to isolation. Mental health findings indicated a strong correlation between academic pressure and symptoms of mental health issue such as a anxiety, low mood, burnout and many students' reported sleep disturbance mood swings and finding of helplessness. **Conclusion:** This study findings highlighted the impact of academic pressure are influence the mental and physical health and social life of the students. So, we can further make plans to management of the students' academic pressure as per result of this study.

Keywords: *Academic Pressure, Student Health, Well-being*

¹M.Phil Psychiatric Social Work Trainee, Gwalior Mansik Arogyashala, Gwalior M.P.

²I/C, Department of Psychiatric Social Work, Gwalior Mansik Arogyashala, Gwalior M.P.

³Assistant Professor (Guest Faculty), Department of Social Work & Extension Education, Jiwaji University, Gwalior M.P.

⁴Professor & HOD Department of Social Work & Extension Education, Jiwaji University, Gwalior M.P.

*Corresponding Author

Received: October 08, 2025; Revision Received: November 22, 2025; Accepted: November 26, 2025

Academic pressure has become a significant concern in today's competitive educational environment, affecting students at all levels. While striving for excellence is encouraged, excessive academic stress can lead to serious physical health consequences. Factors such as long study hours, tight deadlines, and high expectations contribute to sleep deprivation, fatigue, headaches, and weakened immunity. Moreover, students under constant pressure often adopt unhealthy lifestyle habits—such as poor nutrition and lack of exercise—that further deteriorate their well-being. Research indicates that chronic academic stress can lead to long-term health issues, including cardiovascular problems and reduced mental resilience.

In India, the pressure to perform academically is deeply rooted in cultural expectations, highly competitive environments, and limited opportunities in higher education and employment. This pressure often manifests in extended study hours, enrollment in multiple coaching classes, reduced social interaction, and insufficient time for rest or recreation. Although the pursuit of academic excellence can foster discipline and ambition, excessive and unrelenting academic stress is associated with a host of negative outcomes. Furthermore, mental health support in schools and colleges remains largely inadequate, with few institutions offering professional counseling services or stress management resources.

This study examines the impact of academic pressure on students' physical health, psychological well-being, and social functioning. By systematically analyzing these relationships, the study aims to identify key stressors and coping mechanisms. The findings are intended to inform interventions and policies to promote students' overall well-being in academic settings.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have examined the effects of academic pressure on students. For example, **Sharma and Singh (2023)** explored academic stress and mental health among Indian college students, focusing on coping strategies. They found that students in competitive fields (such as engineering and medicine) experience high levels of academic stress. Key stressors identified included examination pressure, parental expectations, and fear of failure.

Similarly, **Gupta, Joshi, and Radaly (2021)** conducted a qualitative study on parental pressure and academic stress among Indian high school students. Their findings indicated that many Indian parents prioritize academic success over holistic development, leading to emotional distress and burnout in students.

Arora et al. (2020) investigated academic stress among adolescents in India and emphasized that academic success is strongly linked to future opportunities in a highly competitive society. They noted that students face intense pressure from various sources—parents, teachers, peers, and societal expectations—from an early age through higher education, which adversely affects their mental, emotional, and physical health.

Chauhan (2020) examined the impact of coaching classes on the mental health of students preparing for competitive exams. The study highlighted that in coaching hubs (e.g. Kota, Hyderabad, Delhi), long study hours, hyper-competitive environments, and fear of failure create a high-pressure atmosphere that can lead to mental fatigue, low self-esteem, and feelings of alienation among students. Together, these studies underscore the pervasive and multifaceted nature of academic pressure in the Indian educational context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Aim: To investigate the effects of academic pressure on the health and well-being of college students.

Research objectives

- To examine the relationship between academic stress and sleep patterns among students.
- To investigate the impact of competitive examinations on student's physical well-being.
- To analyze the long-term effects of academic pressure on student's mental health.

Research Hypotheses

- **H1:** There is a significant relationship between academic stress and sleep patterns among students.
- **H2:** Competitive examinations have a significant impact on student's physical well-being.
- **H3:** Academic pressure has a significant long-term effect on student's mental health outcomes, including burnout, anxiety disorder, and their ability to cope with personal relationship.

Research Design: This study employs a quantitative research design to systematically investigate the relationship between academic pressure and student's health and well-being. Total 100 participants were taken for the study of the student's enrolled in UG and PG levels of various colleges of Jiwaji University, Gwalior M.P. and age range between 18-25 years. The primary objectives to quantify the effects of academic pressure on health and wellbeing are: -

- Psychological health (e.g. stress, anxiety, depression)
- Physical health (e.g. sleep patterns, fatigue.)
- General well-being (e.g. Satisfaction with life academic motivation.).

Data collection Instruments

- Self-develop Socio-demographic data sheet e.g. sex, age, educational background, living arrangement etc.
- Self-develop tool for assess the impact of academic pressure on health and wellbeing. In this scale total 29 questionnaires divided in two domains e.g. health and stress.

Data collection procedure

- Data was collected via online surveys using platform such as google forms.
- Informed consent were obtained from all participants and ensured about confidentiality.

Data analysis

The data collected from the 100 participants and was analyzed to identify patterns, relationship and statistical significance regarding the impact of academic pressure on student's health and well-being. Number, percentage, Frequency was used.

Table- 1 The Socio-demographic variables of participants.

| Variables | f | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|----|------------|
| Age | | |
| 18-20 | 48 | 48% |
| 21-23 | 30 | 30% |
| 23-25 | 22 | 22% |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 45 | 45% |
| Female | 55 | 55% |
| Education Level | | |
| PG Level | 40 | 40% |
| UG Level | 60 | 60% |
| Living Arrangement | | |
| With Family | 88 | 88% |
| Hostel | 8 | 8% |
| Rented House | 6 | 6% |
| Study Hours | | |
| 30 min- 2hour | 70 | 70% |
| 2hour – 4hour | 20 | 20% |
| 4hour – above | 10 | 10% |
| No. of exams attempted | | |
| 1-2 | 70 | 70% |
| 2-4 | 20 | 20% |
| 5- above | 10 | 10% |
| Study methods | | |
| Self-study- coaching | 80 | 80% |
| Online study | 18 | 18% |
| Group study | 2 | 2% |

- Most students are in their early twenties, with age 18 being the most frequent.
- The majority of participants (48%) were aged 18–20, followed by 30% in the 21–23 age group and 22% in the 23–25 range.
- This indicates that younger students formed the largest portion of the sample, reflecting higher academic engagement in early adulthood.
- The sample consisted of 45% male and 55% female participants, indicating a slightly higher representation of females.
- The majority of participants were from the UG level (60%), while 40% were pursuing PG studies. This suggests that undergraduate students formed the larger share of the sample, possibly indicating greater academic stress at the foundational level.
- Most participants (88%) lived with their families, while only 8% stayed in hostels and 6% in rented accommodations.
- This indicates a strong familial living trend, which may influence the levels and types of academic stress experienced.
- A majority of participants (70%) studied between 30 minutes to 2 hours daily, while 20% studied 2–4 hours and only 10% studied over 4 hours.
- This suggests that most students preferred shorter study durations, which may impact their academic pressure and performance.

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- Most participants (70%) had attempted 1–2 exams, while 20% attempted 2–4 exams and only 10% faced more than 5.
- This indicates limited exam exposure for the majority, which may influence their perceived academic stress levels.
- The majority of participants (80%) relied on self-study and coaching, while 18% used online study and only 2% engaged in group study.
- This highlights a strong preference for individual learning approaches over collaborative or digital methods.

Table-2 *The relationship between academic pressure and health and well-being of students*

| Variables | f | Percentage | M | SD | χ^2 | p |
|--|-------|------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|
| Sources of stress | | | | | | |
| Syllabus load – peer competition | 55 | 55 | | | | |
| High Expectation – parental pressure | 38 | 38 | | | | |
| Time constraint | 7 | 7 | | | | |
| Total | N=100 | 100% | 33.33 | 24.34 | 22.81 | 0.001 |
| Stress level due to exam | | | | | | |
| (Yes) | 82 | 82 | | | | |
| (No) | 18 | 18 | | | | |
| Total | N=100 | 100% | 50.0 | 45.35 | 40.96 | 0.001 |
| Physical symptoms due to stress | | | | | | |
| (Yes) | 85 | 85 | | | | |
| (No) | 15 | 15 | | | | |
| Total | N=100 | 100% | 50.0 | 49.5 | 49.00 | 0,001 |
| Long-term mental health effects | | | | | | |
| (Yes) | 80 | 80 | | | | |
| (No) | 20 | 20 | | | | |
| Total | N=100 | 100% | 50.0 | 42.43 | 36.0 | 0.001 |
| Effect experience of due to stress | | | | | | |
| Loss of motivation | 45 | 45 | | | | |
| Anxiety | 35 | 35 | | | | |
| Mood swing – irritability | 20 | 20 | | | | |
| Total | N=100 | 100% | 33.33 | 12.58 | 9.50 | 0.001 |
| Symptoms Experienced During Peak Exam Periods | | | | | | |
| Tense – fatigue | 65 | 65 | | | | |
| Sleepy | 25 | 25 | | | | |
| Energized | 10 | 10 | | | | |
| Total | N=100 | 100% | 33.33 | 28.44 | 48.49 | 0.001 |
| Impact of Academic Stress on Social Relationships | | | | | | |
| I have conflicts with friends/family due to stress | 58 | 58 | | | | |
| I have less time for friends and family | 28 | 28 | | | | |

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| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| I avoid socializing due to workloads | 10 | 10 | | | | |
| No impact on my relationships | 4 | 4 | | | | |
| Total | N=100 | 100% | 25 | 24.29 | 70.56 | 0.001 |
| Coping mechanisms | | | | | | |
| Listening to music – exercise | 78 | 78 | | | | |
| Meditation | 12 | 12 | | | | |
| No coping strategy | 10 | 10 | | | | |
| Total | N=100 | 100% | 33.33 | 38.70 | 89.83 | 0.001 |

Note; F= frequency M=mean SD= Standard deviation χ^2 = Chi-Square p=p-value

- The analysis revealed that **syllabus load and peer competition** were the most commonly reported source of stress (55%), followed by **parental pressure** (38%) and **time constraints** (7%). Statistical testing showed a significant difference among the sources ($\chi^2 = 22.81, p = 0.000011$), indicating that stress levels varied notably across categories.
- The majority of participants (82%) reported experiencing stress due to exams, while only 10% said no and 8% rarely felt stressed. The statistical analysis indicated a significant variation in responses ($\chi^2 = 48.63, p \approx 2.76 \times 10^{-11}$), highlighting that exam stress was a prevalent concern.
- A significant majority (85%) of respondents reported experiencing physical symptoms due to stress, while only 15% did not. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 26.35, p = 2.85 \times 10^{-7}$) confirmed a statistically significant difference, indicating that stress commonly manifested physically.
- A large proportion (80%) of participants reported experiencing long-term mental health effects due to academic stress, while 20% did not. The chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 36, p = 0.0001$) indicated a statistically significant difference, showing that academic stress had lasting psychological impacts.
- The most commonly experienced effect of stress was loss of motivation (45%), followed by anxiety (35%) and mood swings or irritability (20%). Statistical analysis ($\chi^2 = 9.50, p = 0.0086$) showed a significant difference among responses, indicating varied psychological impacts of stress.
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- The majority of participants (58%) reported conflicts with friends or family due to academic stress, while others experienced reduced time (28%), social withdrawal (10%), or no impact (4%). The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 70.56, p = 0.00001$) indicated a highly significant difference, showing that academic stress affected social relationships in varied ways.
- Most participants (78%) coped with stress through music or exercise, while fewer used meditation (12%) or had no coping strategy (10%). The chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 89.95, p = 0.00001$) showed a significant difference, indicating strong preference for active coping methods.

DISCUSSION

The results clearly demonstrate that high academic pressure is associated with multiple negative outcomes for students' health and well-being. Consistent with Sharma and Singh (2023) and Arora et al. (2020), the findings indicate that intense exam-related pressure and heavy coursework (syllabus load) are linked to elevated stress levels. These stressors manifested in both physical symptoms (e.g. fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances) and psychological symptoms (e.g. anxiety, low mood, burnout) for a large proportion of students. As noted by Debys et al. (2015), academic stress in Indian students is often accompanied by anxiety and somatic complaints, which aligns with our finding that 85% experienced physical symptoms and 80% reported long-term psychological effects.

The finding that 82% of students reported exam-related stress underscores the prominence of exams as a key stressor. This aligns with earlier research (Sharma & Singh, 2023) that identified examination pressure as a major contributor to student stress. The data also showed that many students sacrificed social engagement due to academic demands: over half experienced conflicts with friends or family and reduced social time. This is consistent with Arora et al. (2020), who noted that academic demands can significantly strain social and emotional well-being.

Regarding coping, the majority of students (78%) used informal strategies (music or exercise), while fewer used structured techniques like meditation. Few students reported no coping mechanism, suggesting that most students recognize the need to manage stress but may lack access to formal support. This observation highlights a gap in mental health resources, as informal coping may not fully mitigate chronic stress.

Overall, the findings corroborate the literature on academic stress: the combination of parental expectations, competitive environments, and heavy workloads contributes to a high-stress context for Indian students. The significant chi-square results indicate that these stress patterns are unlikely due to chance. The study's results emphasize that academic pressure affects not only mental and physical health but also social functioning, highlighting the need for comprehensive interventions.

Limitation

- It was limited time-bound study, sample size was small
- The data was collected through self-report questionnaires I didn't used standardized questionnaire for general well-being health related to academic pressure
- The data was collected from one specific area or institution, so the results may not apply to students in other places.
- The study was done at one point in time, so it does not show how academic pressure affects students in the long term.
- Students filled the forms themselves. Some may not have shared honest answers due to fear or discomfort.
- Self-reported data may be subject to the response bias or desirability bias.

Future direction & suggestion

- Future studies can include more students from different colleges and cities to get more accurate results.
- Future studies can include interviews with teachers, counselors, or psychologists to get more detailed insights.

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- Future studies can also check how stress affects marks, attendance, and learning ability.
- Future studies can focus on which stress-relief methods (like yoga, time management, or counseling) work best for students.
- Balanced curriculum - school and University should promote a balance academic curriculum and create the subject to reduce monotony and stress
- Mental health support - institution should be offer accessible mental health resources Peer support programmed and stress management workshops.
- Policy reforms - Educational policy makers should consider reform that prioritize student welfare such as a limiting excessive homework reduce the high stakes testing and supporting individualized learning approach.

CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that academic pressure has a significant negative impact on college students' overall well-being. High academic stress was strongly linked to a range of adverse outcomes, including physical symptoms (fatigue, headaches, poor sleep) and mental health issues (anxiety, burnout, low mood). Many students under intense pressure also experienced social repercussions, such as interpersonal conflicts and social withdrawal. These findings underscore the urgent need for strategies and interventions to help students manage academic stress. Educational institutions, families, and policymakers must collaborate to create supportive environments that balance academic performance with students' mental and physical health. Future efforts should focus on developing stress-reduction programs, promoting healthy coping mechanisms, and improving mental health awareness and resources in academic settings.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest: The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

Effects of Academic Pressure on Students Health and Well-Being: A Comprehensive Analysis

How to cite this article: Joshi, M., Singh, N.K., Chaturvedi, A., & Bapat, V. (2025). Effects of Academic Pressure on Students Health and Well-Being: A Comprehensive Analysis. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(4), 1516-1524. DIP:18.01.139.20251304, DOI:10.25215/1304.139