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Research Paper

Academic Pressure and Mental Health: Understanding Student Well-being in Modern Education

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ABSTRACT

Academic pressure is a budding phenomenon in the existing education scenario, which impacts the emotional conditions of students a lot. Higher levels of academic pressure, merit-based assessment patterns, or vagueness within their chosen professions are just a few parameters related to stress levels within students. In the given context, the present study delves into the relationship between academic pressures and the emotional conditions of students, specifically paying attention to the general emotional or psychological conditions of students. Quantitative cross-sectional study approach has been administered as a methodology for information gathering. Research has been carried out on a population of 500 students corresponding to both secondary and tertiary levels by adopting stratified random sampling. Academic Pressure Scale (APS), Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21), and Students' Well-being Index (SWBI) instruments are standardized. The findings reflect that many students face high academic pressure levels. Hence, increasing levels of stress and anxiety are strongly associated with this. A strong positive association was found between academic pressure and stress. A negative association was found between academic pressure and students' well-being. Upon analysis, academic pressure proved to be a significant predictor of reduced levels of well-being, considering the predictors in the regression analysis. It is observed that the age and gender of the participants significantly influence this prediction. In this regard, the stress-related issues that have developed among students need to be addressed by adopting student-friendly, holistic educational practices. The facilities need to be incorporated within education practices to ensure that students experience improved psychological well-being and sound academic development.

Keywords: *academic pressure, mental health, student well-being, stress, anxiety*

The contemporary learning context is represented by high academic pressure, competition, and associated learning outcomes. For instance, the pressure of academic achievement has been identified as one of the normal learning experiences of learners across different cultures and levels of learning stations. While the desire to achieve academic excellence may be responsible for the urge in learners to learn, high academic pressures have disastrous effects on their mental well-being. Indeed, contemporary learners encounter sources of stress that range from academic pressures to competition and insecurity. This essay critically assesses how academic pressure for achievement affects learners' mental health.

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Addressing students' mental health concerns, for example, could also be viewed from a public health perspective. Mental issues can affect the intellectual and motivational functioning and performance of the student. On the other hand, good mental health is more than merely the absence of pathology and distress; more precisely, happiness and satisfaction with one's life. It is, therefore, clear that since the struggle and duality of stress and mental health are multidimensional and real, this phenomenon calls for being examined with a structured examination in research like the current thesis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Pressure Defined

“Academic pressure can be regarded as mental pressure linked to demands from an individual’s educational context about assessment of present performance, competition for marks, and prospects,” said Putwain (2007). These demands originate from external pressures as well as internal demands specified by them to meet their needs. “They [academics] pressurize themselves regarding internal demands such as advancement either to higher education or to other better prospects.

Academic Stress Prevalence

There are several studies being conducted in different educational institutions, which have observed that the incidence of stress among students is quite high. To cite a few, Misra & McKean (2000) showed that about 70% of the college-going students feel that 'stress' is an important problem for them, which is primarily because of academic needs. Hamaideh (2011) observed that college-going students experience high stress concerning academic needs along with job insecurity.

Mental Health: Outcomes

There is also ample literature that addresses the impacts that it has on mental health issues. These include anxiety, depression, insomnia, and psychosomatic symptoms Bayram & Bilgel, 2008. Higher levels of academic stress are also thought to impact low levels of self-esteem and general life satisfaction Stallman, 2010. It should also be remembered that stress is capable of being an etiological contributor to chronic conditions that necessitate professional intervention.

Student well-being and modern learning spaces

Well-being in schools has been conceptualized as a multi-faceted construct comprising cognitive, emotional, social, and physical dimensions. Students exhibiting high levels of well-being also tend to experience high levels of academic functioning. The emphasis on well-being in school contexts resonates well within a tone that is also leaning towards a holistic nature, not simply norm-testing.

Moderate Factors

It might be the case that certain variables act to buffer the academic pressure and its consequences for mental health. First, social support has been described as a buffering factor for stress, emanating from friends and family members (Compas et al., 2017). Adaptive Coping Strategies, such as time management and self-regulation, are positively related to psychological outcomes of a person (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

GAPS THAT EXIST WITHIN THE LITERATURE:

The gaps in the literature that have been

Although there is a lot of literature associated with academic stress and problems about mental health, few research papers have been found to use quantifiable data and graphics to represent the problem from various perspectives. The paper stands apart in depicting academic stress and mental health problems in the way data has been represented.

Objectives

1. The extent to which school-going students feel academic pressure.

2. Analysis of pressure on education and associated impacts on mental health.

3. The connection between academic stress and well-being in students.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Population

The target population for this research is the students who are currently undertaking studies at the High secondary and undergraduate institutions of learning. The population has been selected based on its relevance in the phase of learning it embodies and its demanding nature.

Sample

A sample size of 500 students was selected through stratified random sampling. The data was collected in online mode.

- High Secondary School:
- undergraduate

For representation on educational and socio-economic aspects, the respondents were selected by considering three urban and two semi-urban colleges.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design employed in this study was a cross-sectional correlational design; this study design involves examining the correlation between Academic Performance-Related Pressure and its effects on the mental health statuses of the research subjects at a single point in time.

Data Collection Tools

1. **Academic Pressure Scale (APS):** A standardized 20-item measure assessing academic demands, workload, and performance expectations ($\alpha = .89$).

2. **Depression Anxiety Stress Scales – 21 (DASS-21):** Assesses psychological distress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

3. **Student Well-Being Index (SWBI):** Measures emotional, social, and academic well-being (α = .85).

Process

Approvals were sought at the institutional level, and the data collection was through an online survey platform. The survey process was conducted anonymously and voluntarily. In this paper, the standards of consent and confidentiality were observed in the conduct of the study.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS & GRAPHICAL VIEW

Data Analysis Techniques

• **Statistics – Descriptive:** Mean, Standard Deviation, Multiple Regression Analysis

• **Inferential statistics:** Pearson's correlation coefficient (r)

Key Findings

1. Academic Pressure Levels

- Mean academic pressure score: **M = 62.3** (SD = 10.4)
- 68% of students reported moderate to high academic pressure.

2. Mental Health Outcomes

- Elevated stress (mean DASS Stress = **19.8**)
- Moderate levels of anxiety and depression reported.

3. Correlation Findings

Variables	Pearson r	Significance
Academic Pressure & Stress	.62	p < .001
Academic Pressure & Anxiety	.51	p < .001
Academic Pressure & Well-Being	–.57	p < .001
Stress & Well-Being	–.65	p < .001

4. Regression Model

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and frequencies) were computed to understand levels of academic pressure and mental health outcomes. Inferential statistics included Pearson's product–moment correlation to examine relationships among variables and multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive role of academic pressure on student well-being while controlling for age and gender.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Academic Pressure and Mental Health Variables (N = 500)

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Academic Pressure	62.30	10.40
Stress (DASS)	19.80	6.15
Anxiety (DASS)	16.25	5.72
Depression (DASS)	15.10	5.98
Student Well-Being	68.45	9.85

Note. Higher scores indicate greater levels of the respective construct.

Descriptive analysis revealed that students experienced a moderate to high level of academic pressure (M = 62.30, SD = 10.40). The mean stress score (M = 19.80, SD = 6.15) indicated elevated stress levels among participants. Anxiety and depression scores reflected moderate psychological distress. The mean score for student well-being suggested an overall moderate level of perceived well-being.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Academic Pressure Levels

Academic Pressure Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	160	32.0
Moderate	220	44.0
High	120	24.0
Total	**500**	**100**

Note. Moderate and high categories together represent 68% of the sample.

Frequency analysis indicated that 68% of students reported moderate to high levels of academic pressure, highlighting the widespread prevalence of academic stress in modern educational settings.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix Among Academic Pressure, Mental Health, and Well-Being

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Academic Pressure	—			
2. Stress	.62***	—		
3. Anxiety	.51***	.58***	—	
4. Student Well-Being	–.57***	–.65***	–.60***	—

Note. ***p < .001 (two-tailed).

Variables	Pearson r	Significance
Academic Pressure & Stress	.62	p < .001
Academic Pressure & Anxiety	.51	p < .001
Academic Pressure & Well-Being	–.57	p < .001
Stress & Well-Being	–.65	p < .001

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between academic pressure and stress (r = .62, p < .001), as well as a moderate positive correlation with anxiety (r = .51, p < .001). Academic pressure showed a significant negative correlation with student well-being (r = –.57, p < .001). Additionally, stress was strongly negatively correlated with

well-being ($r = –.65$, $p < .001$), indicating that increased psychological distress is associated with poorer student well-being.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Student Well-Being (N = 500)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	92.40	2.85	—	32.42	< .001
Academic Pressure	–0.48	0.05	–.52	–9.60	< .001
Age	–0.12	0.08	–.06	–1.50	.134
Gender	–0.85	0.62	–.05	–1.37	.171

Model Summary:

A multiple regression indicated that academic pressure significantly predicts reduced student well-being, controlling for age and gender ($R^2 = .42$, $p < .001$).

$R^2 = .42$, Adjusted $R^2 = .41$, $F (3, 496) = 119.84$, $p < .001$

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether academic pressure predicts student well-being after controlling for age and gender. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F (3, 496) = 119.84$, $p < .001$, explaining 42% of the variance in student well-being. Academic pressure emerged as a significant negative predictor of well-being ($\beta = –.52$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher academic pressure is associated with lower levels of student well-being. Age and gender did not significantly predict well-being.

Graphical View

Below is a textual description of visual trends typically represented in figures:

Figure 1: Distribution of Academic Pressure Scores

Shows a right-skewed distribution, indicating that more students experience moderate to high pressure.

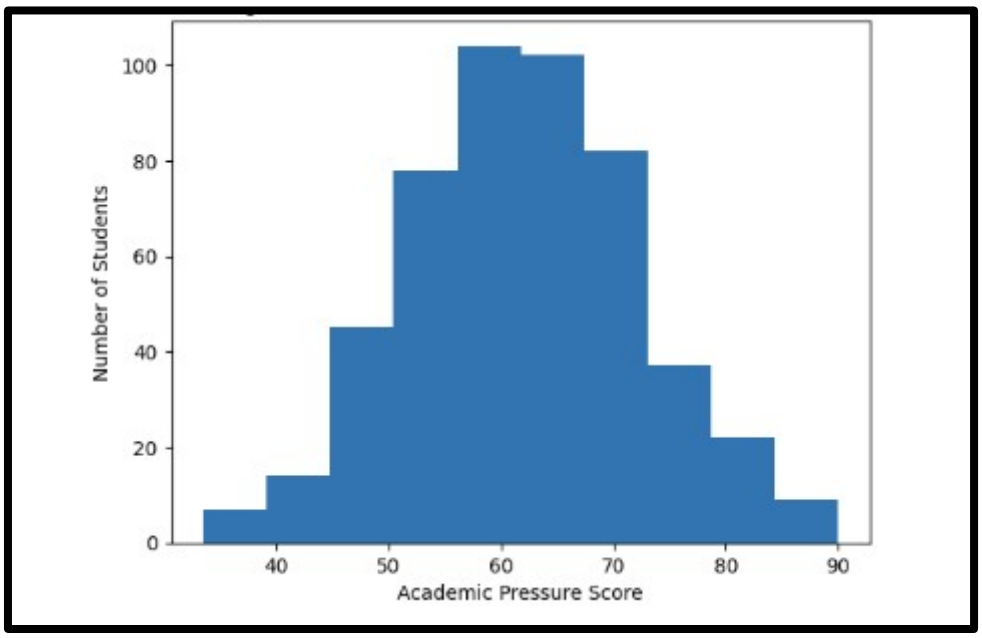


Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of academic pressure scores among students. The histogram shows a **right-skewed distribution**, suggesting that a larger proportion of students experience **moderate to high levels of academic pressure**, while comparatively fewer students report low pressure levels. This pattern indicates the pervasive nature of academic stress in modern educational settings.

Figure 2: Mental Health Symptoms by Educational Level

Undergraduates show slightly higher stress and anxiety than secondary students.

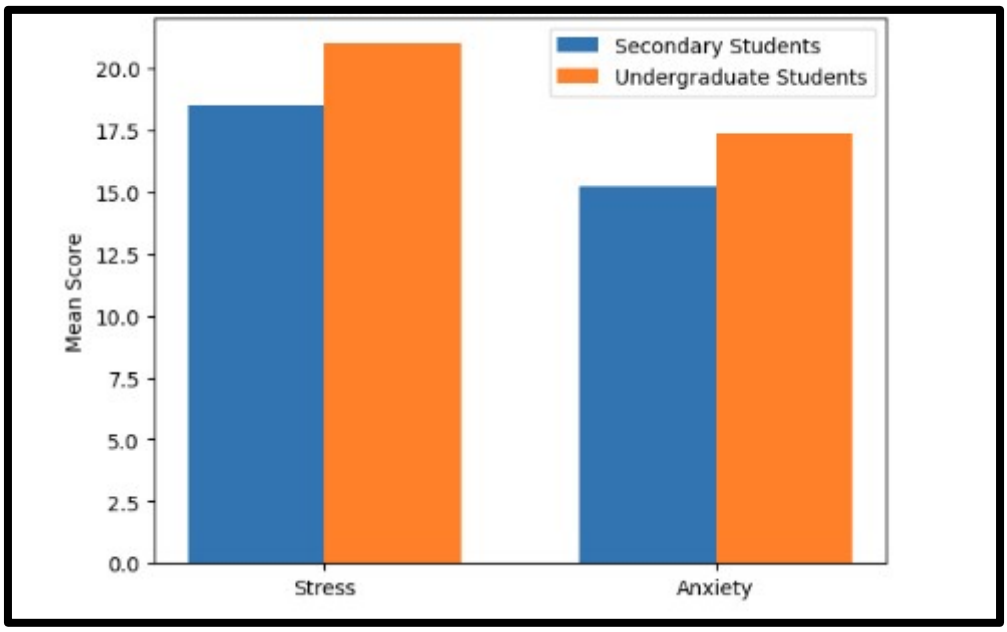
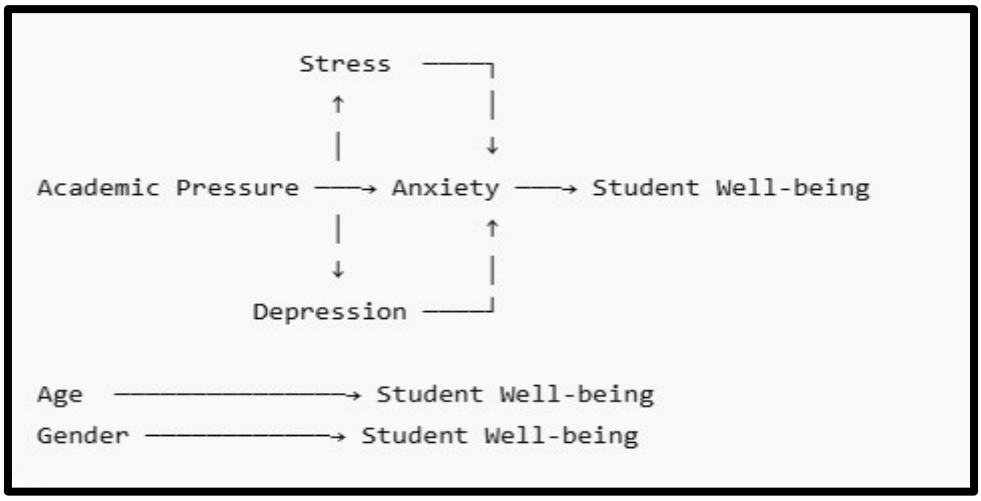


Figure 2 compares mean stress and anxiety scores between secondary and undergraduate students. The bar chart reveals that **undergraduate students report slightly higher levels of stress and anxiety** than secondary students. This suggests that increased academic demands and transitional challenges in higher education may contribute to greater psychological distress.

Graphical Representation (AMOS Diagram – Textual)

AMOS Path Diagram:



DISCUSSION

These outcomes show there is a trend to distinguish between the reality of pressure from academic performance and its existence, which can be manifested on the secondary level, on the college level, and at other levels of students. A tremendous relationship can be noticed between having very high pressure to perform academically and very high stress and anxiety and stress and anxiety experiences. An inverse relationship exists between pressure to perform academically and wellness.

All of these are valid grounds for the negative impact of performance expectancy and workload on concerns regarding problems of mental health (Misra & McKean, 2000; Bayram & Bilgel, 2008). There are many emotional problems a person faces when he or she is academically challenged, such as emotional exhaustion, low self-esteem, feelings of loneliness, and sleep deprivation.

It is quite interesting to note that these findings are beginning to approach slightly higher levels of experience of distress that have been observed within the undergraduate group. They might be relevant in relation to certain pressures that are inherent within the context of HE and were likely confused with issues such as confused career choices and competitiveness.

The negative correlation between pressure to perform and well-being indicates that there are negative effects of the traditional education system on the mental states of people. Based on the results, learning institutions are advised to utilize tools for improving well-being, tools for managing stress, such as counseling sessions, flexible learning, and buddy systems.

It should be said that causal statements cannot be regarded as definitive in cross-sectional studies. Nevertheless, there are rather stable correlations, and a point of prediction has been made. Longitudinal research might be a basis for a deeper understanding of processes of causality.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that academic pressure significantly affects student mental health and well-being in modern educational contexts. Elevated academic demands are associated with increased stress, anxiety, and reduced life satisfaction. Academic pressure isn't merely a personal challenge—it is a systemic concern requiring institutional attention. Educational systems must broaden their focus from performance metrics to holistic support that includes mental health promotion. Student well-being is not only about coping with stress but about fostering resilience, psychological resources, and learning environments that support human flourishing.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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