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## ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN KARACHI

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**ABSTRACT**

*Current research examined the impact of academic stress on students and the subsequent impact on their academic performance based on higher education institutions (HEIs) in Karachi. The data was collected using the convenience sampling technique from BS students from NED University of engineering and technology, Karachi with using a modified questionnaire with a simple chi square statistical test. Students of all faculties and also all years of students are included in this study (1<sup>st</sup> year to final year students). There are many different sorts of stress, but this research largely focuses on the academic stress that students nowadays frequently experience. A barrier prevents students who are under academic stress from reaching their potential. This research also looks at the key sources of academic stress. The researchers have made an effort to identify the primary reason for this stress, whether it be household or professional. It has been proven that student depression brought on by academic stress has a detrimental impact on their academic performance and learning outcomes. Parents, teachers, professional social workers, and other stakeholders who are concerned about the education and performance of their children can benefit from the information provided by this research study.*

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**KEYWORDS**

*Academic stress, higher education institutions, performance, effort, result, academic self-efficacy*

**INTRODUCTION**

According to the transactional model, stress is a condition of physiological state brought on when there is a difference between the demands of a circumstance and the person's perceived capacity to deal. The resulting feeling of stress might be beneficial or harmful (Brody & Dwyer, 2008). It is defined as a particular relationship between a person and their environment that they regard as challenging or beyond their capacity and endangering their wellness (Volf & Raudeliunaite, 2020). Stress sensations may be triggered by multiple external or internal emotions, and they may even have a negative psychological impact on human life. Side by side it cause health issues. That's why we can say that it directly effect on student's academic performance, learning and results.

These people typically have personality and lifestyle issues that have become so ingrained in and routine for them that they fail to see anything wrong with the way they conduct their lives. They blame other people and external circumstances for their issues (Lorentz, 2018). Students that are stressed out are tired. They have many stress issues because they spend all of their energy thinking about the stressful situation. When this occurs, they are completely exhausted and unable to focus on their studies or even take care of other personal tasks. Students who are tired often screw up a number of things that are meant to aid them in life (Islam et al., 2018). also in another study Chawla & Sachdev in (2018) stated that college students claimed that academic-related problems are the primary source of stress.

A person's education is important to their life and may signal a turning point in their academic career. The academic progress is totally depend on a next level of a student's education and their career. An excessive amount of academic pressure at this period might have continuing negative repercussions (Thakkar, 2018). It is the basic foundation for the development of every generation through higher educational institutions (Abbas et al., 2021). HEIs performance depend on student's achievements (Aafreen et al., 2018). There are several factors that might influence a student's performance such as social, economical, personal, psychological and environmental, but these factors vary and depend on person to person psychological condition (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Additionally, it is significantly impacted by a multiple aspects in the contemporary society like social media, academic standing, and close relationships with family and friends, etc. (Likisa, 2018). Students face several pressures during their academic careers from various sources, which can lead to stress, anxiety, etc. (Aafreen et al., 2018). A another research conducted by Cheng et al.,

(2001), found that due to academic pressure and excessive parental expectations students have bad mood, a research study conducted in six cities and provinces on a 2400 students of different ages. Researchers claim that stress and sadness have a particularly severe impact on student's academic performance (Pascoe et al., 2020).

The major goal of the current study is to determine how stress related to academic life that affects student performance and learning. High level of stress can result in weariness, lack of appetite, headaches, and digestive issues. Negative effects of academic stress include poor performance, sickness, and anxiety. For instance, according to Yang et al., (2021), students stated that the most major everyday issues were ongoing study, writing papers, exam preparation, boring lecturers and the need to learn a lot of material quickly all contribute to academic pressure.

Although the main cause of academic stress are academic track, admissions, students forced to change/ transfer of admission, exams, burden of extra classes, social comparison, exams stress, teachers and parents expectations (Asgarabad, et al., 2021). It includes the accurate load of learning as well as the physical and mental strain that results from students having to accomplish their tasks, and it contains both subjective and objective components (Long et al., 2013). Students frequently report experiencing symptoms of stress that can vary from minor anxiety to sleep and food problems, thus consequences like poor performance, aggression, despair, and other incapacitating conditions (Stewart et al., 2006). Student's mental health is significantly impacted by stress, and 42.3% of Canadian university respondents reported experiencing distressing excessive worry and stress (Hunefeld et al., 2020). Therefore, prolonged untreated depression, anxiety, or stress can negatively affect people's capacity for action and output, posing a threat to the public's health (Aleksic et al., 2018).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Definition of Mental disorder by WHO, A state of wellbeing in which an individual can deal with daily difficulties, engage in productive and successful job, and contribute back to their society (Chengti, 2018). According to Pargman (2006), Stress is characterized as an ambiguous response to both internal and external factors, which might be either a good or negative reaction to environmental stimuli. This context, in which whole body responds to changes and strange circumstances that arise throughout time. Vital bodily organs respond quickly at this time, including the heart rate, blood pressure, volume of the stroke, and respiratory rate. Many hormonal reactions are at their peak.

In practice, stress refers to how certain issues that communicate force are applied to human existence. For instance, problems with money, health challenges, and disputes with friends all exert strain on a person's body, mind, and soul. A certain amount of

the pressure comes from the outside world, but it most often shows itself as worry, anxiety, regret, discouragement, and low self-confidence inside a person's mind (Islam et al., 2018). Although it differs from person to person, there are such typical symptoms and signs that could be a natural part of life. It disrupts everyday activities, including changes in eating or weight, sleep patterns, rage or irritation, energy, reckless behavior, concentration issues, loss, and inexplicable pain or lack of pain perception. Suicide has a strong connection to depression (Farooq, et al., 2020). Stress related diseases physiologically are differ from person to person symptoms and conditions, the basic symptoms are reproduction, cardiovascular, metabolism and gastrointestinal diseases (Hellhammer & Hellhammer, 2008). It is a frequent issue that significantly decreases people's mental state and it becomes extreme may lead to various psychological disorders like depression etc. (Schimelpfening, 2020). The Effects of Stress are muscle tensions, hostility, reduced appetite, overeating, memory loss (American Psychological Association, 2018). External environmental factors or a person's own internal beliefs can both cause stress that can cause anxiety or other unfavorable feelings and sensations like pressure, anguish, despair, etc., can lead to serious mental health issues like post-traumatic stress disorder (Tse et al., 2010).

Classroom factors and students performance are the internal and external factors of student's academic performance in which classroom related to schedule, class size, learning issues while in the other hand financial, social and other problems related to external factors (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). A student's proficiency in English is the most key element that has a favorable influence on their performance. Strong communication abilities and a basic command of the English language improve student outcomes (Harb & El-Shaarawi, 2006). A student's performance is favorably impacted by their effort in the institute, their accurate use of the resources the institution has made available to them, and how well their learning preferences and the institutions are matched (Norhidayah et al., 2009). Socioeconomic factors such as student attendance, family income, parent's education, and teacher-student ratio, the presence of capable teachers in the classroom, student sex, and school distance also have an impact on the academic success of learners (Raychauduri et al., 2010). The researchers Hijaz and Naqvi (2006) conducted a research study on a private colleges in Pakistan and they found that family income and student's performance have a negative association. The researchers (Islam et al., 2018) stated that students at universities were under a lot of stress due to the financial crisis. The majority of students at public universities are from lower- and middle-class households. Many of them now experience financial hardship as a result. They experience stress as a result of the financial crisis.

There are substantial repercussions from the high rates of stress, anxiety, and depression among students. Psychological morbidity can affect a student's quality of

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life and academic performance, as well as disrupt family and institutional life (Kokou-Kpolou et al., 2021). So, stress may be thought of as a force applied to a person, and strain is the result of uncontrolled stress, which happens when a person is unable to handle a job or issue they are faced with. While for some people the impact is little and they are able to handle the pressure, for others it is significant and has a negative impact. Mood swings are additional regular side effect of stress on students. They can't keep up a certain attitude for very long. Even though mood swings are typical among all students, they happen far more quickly for stressed-out. Other students find it challenging to interact with them or provide assistance because of their mood swings. The frequent mood swings spoil student's lives and prevent them from being able to concentrate (Islam et al., 2018). According to research, a variety of factors, including learning facilities, gender and age disparities, etc., can have an impact on student's performance (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). Another cause of stress among university students was going to be tension during exams. Exams are the method used to evaluate a student's performance. It is the most significant aspect of being a student. Students experience pressure throughout exams (Islam et al., 2018).

Researchers applied a variety of methodologies in a different study to examine the social and civic attitudes of 542 adolescents in 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> grades in the Jiangsu province cities of Shanghai and Nantong. According to their research, 11th graders had much less interest in practically all social concerns than 8<sup>th</sup> graders, including growing pollution, crime control, nuclear energy, and improving facilities for young people (Zhao et al., 2012). As far as urban 11<sup>th</sup> graders who face greater excessive academic stress have moral reasoning and civic views that substantially rule (Zhao et al., 2013). According to some studies Castaldelli-Maia et al., (2012), the students have not gotten treatment for mental health concerns also are unable to talk about their issues. In this scenario teachers and their parents should work and spend time, build communication and remove the gap among them so students can easily share their thoughts, difficulties and problems with them so, no mental disturbance can cause in students. As according to Aamir et al., (2021) students must acquire essential skills in addition to developing their knowledge and information to successfully compete in the current dynamic industrial world. The above literature provides wide ways for future researches on this related topic. General objective of the present research was to identify the factors causing stress among students in higher educational institutes (HEIs) situated in Karachi.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To identify the various causes of academic stress among students.
2. To investigate the role of teachers in controlling academic stress.
3. To study techniques to deal with the academic stress.
4. To highlight the role of parents in coping academic stress.

5. To identify the cause of lack of interest in studies.

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. There will be a significant relation between teachers' behavior and academic stress.
2. There will be a significant relation between roles of family to release of academic stress.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the gathering of numerical data, the researchers used a quantitative approach and for textural data they chose a qualitative one. The total number of respondents are 94 in this research and students of all faculties and also all years of students are included (1<sup>st</sup> year to final year students) of NED University of engineering and technology, Karachi. A questionnaire was used. For the present study, researcher used chi-square test, which applies to situation involving categorical variables. A chi-square test determines whether subject break up into given categories as expected.

### DATA ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the key elements that have a significant impact on student's academic performance. Research was conducted on university students in Karachi.

**Table 1: Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	38	40
Female	56	60
Total	94	100

The Table.1 shows that the highest percentage of the respondents that is 60% are female and 40% are males.

**Table 2: Age**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
17-20	73	78%
21-24	21	22%
Above 24	0	0
Total	94	100

The Table 2 shows that 78% are in the range of (17-20) year's groups, 22% (21-24) year's group.

**Table 3: Respondent's Faculty in which are enrolled**

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage
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AMS (Advanced Materials Structures)	18	19%
CPE (Chemical & Process Engineering)	2	2%
CPL (Civil & Petroleum Engineering)	25	27%
ECE (Electrical & Computer Engineering)	11	12%
ISH (Information Science & Humanities)	15	16%
MME (Mechanical & Manufacturing Engineering)	23	24%
Total	94	100

27% of respondents said that they are study in the faculty of (CPL), 24% of respondents said that their faculty is (MME) while 19% of respondents said that their faculty is (AMS), 16% of respondents said that their faculty is (ISH), 12% (ECE), and 2% respondents said that their faculty is (CPE) in the Table.3.

**Table 4: Academic Levels**

Year	Frequency	Percentage
First	56	60%
Second	19	20%
Third	11	12%
Fourth	8	9%
Total	94	100

The Table 4 indicates that the highest percentage of the respondents who are 60% are in the range of first year group, 20% are in second year group, 12% are in third year group, and 9% are in fourth year group. While 61% respondents said they take 6 courses, 26% respondents said they take 5 courses, 7% respondents said they take 7 courses and lastly only 2% respondents per Take 8+ courses in a semester.

**Table 5: Employed Family Members**

No. of employed family members	Frequency	Percentage
1 to 3	88	94%
4 to 6	4	4%
7 to 9	2	2%
Above 10	0	00%
Total	94	100

The main focus of this present research is towards knowing the basic role, performance, problems of student's academic stress also identify the factors causing stress among students in higher educational institutes (HEIs) in Karachi. In the above Table. 5, 94% of the participants said that 1-3 family members are employed, 4% of respondents said that 4-6 members are employed while 2% of the respondents said that 7-9 family members are employed. In which mostly head of family are fathers.

**Table 6: Respondents Employment Status**

Employed	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	29%
No	67	71%
Total	94	100

The Table.6 shows that the highest percentage of the respondents are 71% are in the range of unemployed group, 29% are employed and they provide tuitions and part time jobs to support their parents.

**Table 7: Academic Tasks Assigned during a Semester**

Average projects/assignments	Frequency	Percentage
5-7	29	31%
8-10	32	34%
11-13	13	14%
14-16	2	2%
16 or more	18	19%
Total	94	100

In the above context, 34% of the respondents said that they have to complete 8-10 assignments or projects, 31% claimed 5-7, 19% claimed 16 and more assignments or projects have to complete during a semester, 14% marked 11-13 while 2% stated 14-16 assignments or projects have to complete during a semester in Table. 7.

**Table 8: Requesting answers to respondents as follows**

S.No	Answers to respondents	Yes (%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%)	Always (%)	Total (%)
1	Is respondent's workload manageable	24 (26%)	15 (16%)	48 (51%)	7 (7%)	94 (100%)
2	Do respondents communicate with their parents regarding their academic stress	40 (43%)	25 (27%)	29 (31%)	0 (00%)	94 (100%)
3	Do respondents consider their deadlines a source of stress	82 (87%)	12 (13%)	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	94 (100%)
4	Do respondents feel an added academic	27 (29%)	26 (28%)	12 (13%)	29 (31%)	94 (100%)



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5	pressure from family	Have respondents ever taken measures to improve their academic performance	58 (62%)	11 (12%)	25 (27%)	0 (00%)	94 (100%)
6	Change the system of education	Change the system of education	85 (90%)	9 (10%)	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	94 (100%)

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According to the present research, 51% of respondents said that sometimes workload is manageable, 26% of respondents said that workload is manageable, 16% of respondents said that workload is not manageable and 7% of respondents said that workload never manageable.

As shown in Table.8, 43% of respondents said that communicate with their parents regarding their academic stress. 31% of respondents said that sometimes they communicate with their parents regarding their academic stress rest of 27% of respondents said that they don't communicate with their parents regarding their academic stress. 87% of the respondents said that they consider their deadlines a source of stress while only 13% of the respondents said that they don't consider their deadlines a source of stress. The above table shows that 31% of participants always feel an added academic pressure from family due to unwanted pressure they feel depression, stress, anxiety and reclusion, insomnia. 29% of participants feel an added academic pressure from family additionally 28% of participants don't feel an added academic pressure from family and 13% of participants sometimes feel an added academic pressure from family.

62% of respondents said that they have ever taken measures to improve their academic performance by listening music, eating food for satisfying their self and outing with friends or family, 27% of respondents said that sometimes they have ever taken measures to improve their academic performance and the lowest 12% of respondents said that they have no ever taken measures to improve their academic performance. 90% of respondents said that they can change the system of education by their teaching methods should be modernized, by changes in examination system, quota system be dissolving and by departmental politics should be banned while the rest of 10% of respondents said that they can't Change the system of education.

**Table 9: Main problem during study**

Problem	Frequency	Percentage
Heavy workload	44	47%
Long university hours	34	36%
Long classes	10	11%
Non-cooperative behavior	6	6%
Total	94	100

This table show that the highest percentage of the respondents that is 47% of respondents said that the main problem during study is the heavy workload, 36% of respondents said that the long-time duration in university, 11% of respondents said long class duration, whereas 6% of respondents marked that non-cooperative behaviours of teacher and other classmates creates hurdles in smooth learning process.

**Table 10: Is respondent's family satisfaction with respondent's academic performance**

Family Satisfied	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	82	87%
No	12	13%
Total	94	100

In Table.11 the highest percentage of the respondents that is 87% said that their family satisfied with their academic performance and 13% said that their family is not satisfied with their academic performance because their parents are comparison them with others and they think that this field has no scope.

### Hypothesis 1

#### Problem Analysis

H1= There will be a significant relationship between teachers' behaviour and academic stress.

H0= There will be no significant relationship between teachers' behaviour and academic stress.

#### Statistical Test

Chi-square formula:  $\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$

#### Result

The computed value is  $\chi^2=4.418$  which is greater than the tabulated value of 3.841, therefore null hypothesis is rejected, and the researched hypothesis is accepted which concludes that there are some other causes of a significant relationship between teachers' behaviour and academic stress.

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**Hypothesis 2****Problem Analysis**

H1= There will be a significant relationship between the role of the family to release academic stress.

H0= There will be no significant relationship between the role of the family to release to academic stress.

**Result**

The computed value is  $\chi^2=2.78$  which is less than the tabulated value of 3.841, therefore null hypothesis is accepted, and the researched hypothesis is rejected which concludes that there are some other causes of a significant relationship between the role of the family to release academic stress.

Students in higher education suffer from stress. A student's personal and academic lives are troubled by it. Stress has a significant impact on university student's physical and mental health as well. Extra academic pressure will have an injurious influence on academic performance and will power (Pan et al., 2016). Putting in place efficient strategies is important for their academic and everyday success. According to Zhu & Wang in 2009, Academic burnout can result from extreme academic strain. Additionally, 58.1% of students said they find it difficult to undertake academic work. A large sample of respondents in Germany, Bulgaria, and Poland view assignments as a weight on their lives that they are unable to bear in comparison to their relationships or any other problem in life (Pascoe et al., 2020). This research will enable people to identify the primary factors causing their stress from a variety of perspectives and take action to discover solutions that will allow them to enjoy a successful academic career.

Although researchers in this study utilized a quantitative approach, we suggest future researchers on the same issue to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods in order to develop a whole theory about the study. A personal interview is crucial in this situation to obtain more authentic proof of the stress problem.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

There should be a good balance of working and study hours so as to avoid stress.

Time management is the key for not to get stressed out.

The parents of the students must communicate with each other so they can aware of their child's mental health.

Teachers and parents can play a positive part in helping student fight academic stress.

The policymaker of an educational institute should focus on not to overburden the students because overburden can affect their mental health so that they become mentally and physically ill.

Modern methods of teaching should be applied so students can learn more in an

effective manner.

The behaviour of a teacher should be more professional and cooperative so that the teacher can easily know the basic problem of a student.

Parents should play a great role to check their academic performance on a daily bases so that they know how their children are performing in their studies.

The syllabus should be updated day by day so that students would take an interest in their studies.

Freedom of speech is a right to any individual if he/she faces any kind of problem regarding their academic life they are free to talk with their teachers, parents, and hierarchy of the state.

The curricular of the institute should be designed in the supervision of concerned authorities like a psychologist, social workers and educationist and other members of the educational institutes so that they can design a healthy atmosphere for the students.

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