

Academic Stress among College Students

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Abstract

Academic stress refers to the strain experienced by students, resulting in a state of distress that often manifests itself as various psychological and behavioral challenges. This research investigates into the pervasive issue of academic stress among college students, emphasizing its consequences and gender disparities. Employing a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, the study utilized a structured questionnaire to quantitatively assess academic stress level among selected students of a college using the Academic Stress Scale for College Students (ESSCS) that featured 16 items with six response choices. Findings indicated a notable gender difference in academic stress levels, highlighting the importance of addressing societal factors rather than inherent gender distinctions. Female students reported higher stress levels, emphasizing the need to address sources like pressure, anxiety, conflict, and frustration to improve their mental well-being. The study calls for collaborative efforts among educational institutions, parents, and educators to reduce workloads and implement innovative teaching methods, fostering divergent thinking and supporting diverse abilities. It serves as a call to action for institutions to prioritize students' mental health and create a more balanced and nurturing academic experience, advocating for a holistic approach to address the multifaceted challenges associated with academic stress.

Keywords: stress, academic stress, students, adolescence

Introduction

Stress is a very normal and natural occurrence which happens in response to a wide variety of circumstances. Stress is any situation that evokes negative thoughts and feelings in a person. The same situation is not evocative or stressful for all people, and all people do not experience the same negative thoughts and feelings when stressed. Stress is viewed as a negative emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and physiological process that occurs as a person tries to adjust to or deal with stressors. Stressors are defined as circumstances that disrupt, or

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threaten to disrupt, individuals' daily functioning and cause people to adjust (Auerbach & Grambling, 1998).

Academic stress is defined as burden, pressure, anxieties and worries related to their academic performance. Today, students face a new challenge in education calling for greater effort from students. There are various factors of academic stress in an individual life such as academic pressure, environment of home and school, peers, parental pressure evaluation system of the school etc. Academic stress is mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even unawareness to the possibility of such failure. Students have to face many academic demands, for example, school examination, answering questions in the class, and showing progress in school subjects. Understanding what the teacher is teaching, competing with other class mates, fulfilling teachers and parent's academic expectations. These demands may tax or exceed the available resources of the students. Therefore, they can be under stress, since the demand is related to achievement of an academic goal. So, academic related to the achievement of an academic goal. Adolescence is a transition stage from childhood to adulthood and is a time for major changes in all areas of functioning. Children and adolescence can experience various life stresses ranging from catastrophic or traumatic life events, persistent strain, and daily hassles (Hess & Copeland, 2006).

Academic stress among college students stems from a variety of factors. First, financial pressures play a crucial role. Many students grapple with the weight of tuition fees, living expenses, and other financial obligations. Additionally, the constant comparison between the cost of their education and their academic performance can compound this stress (Hossain et al., 2022). Secondly, peer pressure, emanating from both neighbors and relatives, contributes significantly to academic stress. Family and community members frequently inquire about students' grades and draw comparisons with their peers. This perpetual scrutiny places a heavy burden on students, as they feel compelled to uphold a particular status within their social circles (Moldes et al., 2019). Third, the weight of parental expectations and fears about future employment prospects can be overwhelming. Parents often harbour lofty expectations for their children's academic achievements, aspiring for them to excel and become leaders in their chosen fields. The looming fear of unemployment and the pressure to secure a job post-graduation also contribute to the stress experienced by students (Wahi, 2023). Lastly, the academic environment itself can serve as a source of stress. The general college atmosphere, characterized by intense academic competition and a demanding workload, can create a challenging and anxiety-inducing environment for students.

In summary, academic stress among college students is a complex issue shaped by financial burdens, peer pressure, parental aspirations, and the academic environment (Yikealo et al., 2018). Recognizing these factors is crucial in addressing and alleviating the stress that students frequently encounter during their college years.

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Stress is a part of everybody's life. Depending on the level of stress, it can control our lives. Stress is subject which is hard to avoid. These are heavy demands made in society on students to perform various task, rules many of which are undefined and unachievable. College students also experience stress because they are sometimes trapped between making decisions which is to follow rules and orders to be free and discover the world like they should. While acquiring knowledge and academic education, students have to face many academic demands, for example, school examination, answering questions in the class, showing progress in school subjects, understanding what teacher is teaching, competing with other class mates, fulfilling teachers and parents' expectations. This all lead to the stress on students and also may lead to mental and physical including depression, nervous breakdown, heart disease, depression on exam performance, day to day life activities and cannot manage anything.

Therefore, academic stress leads to a big problem in the life of the student, which hampers their life, future and academic status. While understanding the article concepts, the writer used different forms of questions to get the objective of the article like; What are the causes of academic stress among college students? What is the level of academic stress in men and female? This helped to examine the causes of academic stress among college students. To assess the level of academic stress between male and female students. It aims to understand the causes and effects of academic stress on these students. The research also examines how male and female adolescents cope with academic stress on a daily basis as they strive to reduce and control its negative effects on their academic performance. The findings from this study may provide valuable insights for future research into how various stress factors influence students' academic performance. This study is conducted only among third-year students at K & K International College. Therefore, the results of this research may or may not be applicable to students in other universities, making generalisations difficult. Time constraints prevented reaching the target population, and the sample size was relatively small.

Stress is an inevitable part of life, and its impact can be profound, often influencing our daily lives significantly. College students, in particular, face substantial societal pressure to navigate various challenging tasks and often encounter ambiguous and unattainable expectations. Balancing the desire for freedom and self-discovery with the need to adhere to rules and obligations can cause stress among students. In pursuit of knowledge and academic excellence, students face numerous academic demands, including exams, class participation, subject comprehension, competition with peers, and teachers' pressure to meet the expectations of teachers and parents' expectations. This academic stress can manifest as mental and physical health issues, such as depression, nervous breakdowns, and even heart disease, impacting not only academic performance but also daily life activities.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to fulfil the following objectives:

1. To investigate the underlying causes of academic stress among college students
2. To assess and compare the levels of academic stress between male and female students.

This research article aims to explore and understand the prevalence, causes, and effects of academic stress among male and female college students. It sheds light on how students cope with stress in their daily lives while striving to minimize its negative impact on their academic performance. The findings of this study may serve as a valuable resource for future research on the influence of various stress factors on students' academic achievements. It is important to note that this research is limited to third-year students at K & K International College, and therefore, its findings may not be universally applicable to students at other institutions. The sample size is relatively small due to time constraints, and generalizations should be made cautiously.

Stress, in the context of psychological experiences, refers to any situation that elicits negative thoughts and emotions in an individual. It encompasses a wide range of circumstances and challenges that can lead to feelings of tension, anxiety, or unease. Academic stress, specifically, is a subset of this broader concept, encapsulating the burdens, pressures, anxieties, and concerns that arise in relation to one's academic performance. This can include the pressure to excel in studies, the stress of meeting deadlines for assignments and exams, and the worry about achieving satisfactory grades. Academic stress is particularly relevant during adolescence, a transition stage between childhood and adulthood. Adolescence is marked by significant changes in various aspects of life, including physical, emotional, and social development. During this critical period, academic stress can be a prominent and impactful aspect of a young person's life, influencing their well-being and overall development. Understanding and addressing academic stress is essential to support the healthy growth and development of adolescents.

Throughout the research process, ethical principles are upheld. The researcher remains aware of their own biases and ensures that ethnicity or ethnic group does not influence the research. The collection of information is carried out in a trustworthy manner, and sources are cited in each section. Importantly, respondents are not coerced into participating in interviews or surveys, and confidentiality is maintained when gathering information from the field.

Literature Review

The literature review within the research paper is a comprehensive exploration of stress levels among college students, focusing specifically on the K & K college, Kathmandu. To acknowledge the generate understanding of stress level of among different college students we must not take a chance to foster the knowledge from different groups. College of Education at Multi-disciplinary Peer-reviewed Research Journal; Dharan, M. M. Campus, TU.

the Eritrea Institute of Technology has explored various dimensions of stress, covering academic stress levels and stressors, as well as social, psychological, and environmental stress experienced by college students. The review incorporates significant studies, such as Waghachavare et al.'s (2013) investigation into stress related to healthy lifestyles and academic factors, and Bhat et al.'s (2018) identification of a high prevalence of psychological stress, especially among engineering and art students. The article emphasizes the existence of contradictory findings in prior research, underscoring the necessity for further empirical investigations into the mental health problems of college students. Notably, it acknowledges the limited associations between stress levels and demographic factors such as gender and grade point average. This literature review offers a well-furnished foundation for a research paper on academic stress among college students, providing valuable insights and understanding of this critical issue within the specific context of the College of Education at the Eritrea Institute of Technology which has helped to explore further research.

Academic stress encompasses the adverse psychological conditions arising from educational pressures, including expectations from parents, teachers, peers, and family members, the relentless pursuit of academic success, the structure of the current educational and examination systems, and the weight of homework assignments (Ang & Huan, 2006). Extensive research has delved into the phenomenon of academic stress among students, with scholars pinpointing various stressors such as an overwhelming workload, fierce competition among peers, setbacks, and strained relationships with fellow students, or protracted lectures. Among these stressors, academic challenges stand out as the most prevalent source of stress for students, often resulting from the combined pressure to excel from both the students themselves and the expectations imposed by their parents and teachers.

Academic stress refers to the strain experienced by students, resulting in a state of distress that often manifests itself as various psychological and behavioral challenges. Researchers in both Korea (Lee & Larson, 1996, 2000) and Japan (Hill, 1996; Lock, 1988; School land, 1990) have extensively examined and identified the prevalence of academic stress among adolescents. Mental health experts have recognized academic pressure as a significant stressor that can lead to mental anguish and, in severe cases, even suicidal tendencies. Psychologist Dr. Matthew Kurian emphasizes the burden placed on children, citing the pressures associated with excelling in school and the demands of competitive exams (Iype, 2004). In essence, academic stress underscores the emotional and psychological challenges students face due to the intense demands of their educational pursuits, which can have serious consequences for their mental well-being.

Bowers (1983) discovered a connection between stress and a notable turnover of personnel within academic institutions. This study primarily explored the association between stress and an individual's academic performance, employing a research framework that was Multi-disciplinary Peer-reviewed Research Journal; Dharan, M. M. Campus, TU.

both predictive and methodologically rigorous to establish the link between stress levels and an individual's academic achievements. Campbell and Severson (1992) posit that students encounter significant pressures related to financial responsibilities, alterations in personal routines, effective time management, and the quest for potential life partners, regardless of their academic year or gender. They assert that stressors, in themselves, do not inherently lead to anxiety, depression, or tension; rather, these emotional outcomes result from the interplay between stressors and an individual's perception and response to them. Additionally, family-related stressors contribute to stress in adolescents, affecting their functioning (Rex Forehand et al., 1991).

Similarly, research conducted in Australia reveals that among high school students, stress primarily originates from school-related circumstances. The most frequently cited stressors include concerns about exams and academic performance, feeling overwhelmed by a heavy workload, anxiety about future prospects, the challenge of making career decisions, the extensive amount of material to learn, external pressures to excel, and self-imposed expectations for high achievement (Kouzma & Kennedy, 2004). Academic stress, as defined by Bisht (1980), refers to the academic demands placed on students that strain or exceed the cognitive resources available to them, encapsulating an individual's perception of academic frustration, conflict, pressure, and anxiety. Research carried out in both Korea and Japan has revealed that students grappling with academic stress exhibit their distress through various manifestations, including symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and somatic complaints (Lee & Larson, 1996; Schoolland, 1990).

Academic stress among college students has garnered increasing attention among researchers. Factors such as academic commitment, financial burdens, and inadequate time management skills have contributed to heightened stress levels, often occurring predictably during certain periods each academic year. The intensity of stress experienced can vary among students and across different school years. In their initial year at college, students grapple with the challenge of assimilating a substantial amount of academic content within a short timeframe, while striving to develop effective study techniques to manage the assigned workload, leading to stress. Additionally, interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers can be a source of stress, particularly when students find it challenging to adapt to the university's social environment. This adjustment difficulty is often considered a primary issue for students and can result in feelings of frustration, anxiety, and depression as potential consequences of high levels of stress (Keinan & Perlberg, 1986).

Academic stress is a consequence of the examination system, the weight of homework, and the attitudes exhibited by parents and teachers. In today's generation, there is an incessant emphasis on competition, pushing individuals to constantly compare themselves to their peers. Parental pressure further exacerbates this stress, as the focus is often on achieving excellence

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rather than acquiring knowledge. Some parents try to compensate through their children's achievements, placing undue expectations on them. When adolescents are unable to meet these expectations, they experience mental stress, frustration, aggression, rejection, and depression, which can lead to undesirable behaviors, including suicide. Interestingly, statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reveal that West Bengal has earned the unfortunate distinction of having the highest number of student suicides for three consecutive years. Despite this alarming trend, the state remains ill-prepared to address this pressing issue (Dasgupta, 2010).

The research paper investigating academic stress among college students reveals a significant research potential that warrants attention for a more comprehensive scholarly understanding. While the study seeks to examine academic stress, its consequences, and gender-based disparities, it overlooks several critical aspects. At first, there is a notable space in the contextualization of academic stress. While it acknowledges the influence of societal pressures, parental expectations, and educational structures as contributors to stress, it falls short in providing a nuanced analysis specific to K & K International College. A deeper exploration of these factors within this institution's unique context is necessary to grasp the full spectrum of stressors that students there may encounter. Second, the research predominantly relies on quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires. Although this quantitative approach offers valuable information on the prevalence of academic stress and gender differences, it does not capture the nuanced qualitative dimensions of student experiences. Employing qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, would enable a richer understanding of how students perceive, cope with, and navigate academic stress. Last, while the study advocates for urgent action and collaboration among educational institutions, parents, and educators to address academic stress, it lacks specificity in terms of recommended intervention strategies. A research gap exists in the absence of a detailed exploration of evidence-based interventions and policies that could effectively mitigate academic stress. In summary, this research paper provides important information on academic stress and gender disparities among college students, but it fails to provide a comprehensive analysis of root causes, qualitative aspects, and actionable intervention strategies. Addressing this research space is imperative to foster a more profound understanding of academic stress and to provide practical guidance for creating a supportive and stress-free educational environment. This research space analysis serves as a foundation for future research endeavors and informs the development of evidence-based interventions to enhance the well-being of college students.

Research Materials and Methods

Study Site/Area

The present study is aimed to explore the academic stress of K & K International College, New Baneshwor. This research was carried out among college students of bachelor's 3rd year. The study sample consists of 30 students. To make this study access and worthy, the respondents were directly asked the question by the researcher through visit at k & k international college and required information from the respondents were collected. The research is based mainly on primary data. The research design followed a purposeful nature as it will try to find the level of academic stress among college students.

Sampling Design

Table 1

Distributions of Respondents

Level	Male	Female	Total
Bachelor 3rd year	15	15	30

This Table 1 represents the distribution of respondents according to their gender and academic level. Specifically, it focuses on third-year Bachelor's students. In total, there are 30 respondents, with an equal split of 15 male and 15 female respondents.

Data Collection Tools

The data collection for this research on college students' academic stress utilized a questionnaire method. The structured questionnaire consisted of specific questions aimed at gathering quantitative data. Respondents for the study were selected through purposive sampling. The survey procedure involved providing a brief introduction to the purpose of the survey and ensuring confidentiality. Subsequently, the selected students were given the questionnaire and requested to complete it. The questionnaire served as the primary tool for gathering specific information from the respondents. Functioning as a tool to collect and record data on the particular issue of academic stress, the questionnaire comprised a list of questions, accompanied by clear instructions and space for answers. The design of the questionnaire incorporated aspects such as the causes, effects, and levels of academic stress. To measure academic stress among college students, the research employed the "Jindong Sun Academic Stress" tool. This tool consists of 16 items, each offering six choices for respondents, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The six choices pertain to pressure from study, workload, worry about grades, self-expectation, and study dependency.

Approach of the Study and Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative and qualitative approach was used for finding the academic stress in college students. A both narrative and statistical procedure is used for the approach of the study. Mixed method is used in doing this research. The way of collecting information about different phenomenon and situation in a descriptive form and presented a result in analytical narrative form is a qualitative approach. It gathers information from various people and situations by assessing their ideas, views, and opinions. The way of collecting information about different phenomenon and situations in a numeric form and result presented in statistical way, information is collected in numbers accordingly.

Qualitative data procedures are used to analyze the obtained data because study conducted on academic stress among college students tries to obtain the quantitative information from the respondents simple table, frequency, and percentage were adopted in the presentation and analysis of data generated of the study.

Results and Discussion

The research paper's results reveal significant insights into academic stress among respondents. Examining the data, the study compared levels of academic stress based on gender, providing valuable information on potential variations in stress experiences between male and female participants. Additionally, respondents' perspectives on the major causes behind academic stress were explored, offering a comprehensive understanding of the factors perceived as significant contributors to stress in the academic context. Moreover, the research investigated respondents' views regarding the effects of academic stress on their overall academic performance, shedding light on the perceived impact of stress on educational outcomes. Together, these findings contribute to a nuanced comprehension of the multifaceted nature of academic stress, encompassing gender differences, identified stressors, and their potential repercussions on academic performance.

Comparison of Academic Stress by Gender

Table 2

Result obtained from Educational Stress among College Students (ESACS)

Description	Number of respondents	Male	Female
High	25	13	12
Moderate	5	2	3
Low	0	0	0
Total	30	15	15

This table 2 displays a comparison of academic stress levels between male and female students. The data appears to be categorized into three stress levels: High, Moderate, and Low. In the study conducted under the name "ESACS," a total of 30 respondents were surveyed to assess academic stress levels. These respondents were evenly split between male and female students, with 15 in each group. For the "High" stress level, 13 male students and 12 female students reported experiencing high levels of academic stress, totaling 25 respondents. For the "Moderate" stress level, 2 male students and 3 female students reported experiencing moderate levels of academic stress, totaling 5 respondents. There were no respondents in either the male or female group who reported "Low" academic stress. In summary, the table provides a comparison of academic stress levels between male and female students, categorizing them as High and Moderate, and indicates the number of respondents in each category.

Respondents View based on Major Cause behind Academic Stress

Table 3

Major causes behind Academic Stress

(N = 30)

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Assignment / project	5	16.7
Exams	5	16.7
Practical	15	50
Grades	5	16.6
Total	30	100

This table 3 presents the viewpoints of 30 respondents regarding the major causes of academic stress. It categorizes their responses into four main factors: Assignment/Project, Exams, Practical work, and Grades. In a study a total of 30 respondents were asked to identify the major causes of academic stress. Their responses were divided into four categories; Assignment/Project, Exams, Practical work, and grades respectively. 5 respondents, which is equivalent to 16.7% of the total respondents, cited assignments or projects as a significant source of academic stress. 5 respondents, also representing 16.7% of the total, pointed to exams as a major contributor to academic stress. The majority of the respondents, 15 in total, accounting for 50% of the sample, identified practical work as the primary cause of academic stress. 5 respondents, or 16.6% of the total, mentioned that their stress was mainly related to concerns about their grades. In summary, this table 3 provides insights into the factors contributing to academic stress as perceived by the 30 respondents. The most frequently mentioned cause was practical work, followed by assignments/projects and exams, with grades also playing a role in causing stress for some respondents.

Respondents View towards the Effects on Academic Performance**Table 4***Effects of Stress towards Academic Performance (N= 30)*

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Low confident	5	16.7
Poor memory	10	33.3
Low grades	10	33.3
Others	5	16.7
Total	30	100

This table 4 presents the perspectives of 30 respondents regarding the effects of stress on academic performance. It categorizes their responses into four main effects: Low confidence, Poor memory, Low grades, and Others. 5 respondents, which is equivalent to 16.7% of the total respondents, mentioned experiencing low confidence as an effect of stress on their academic performance. 10 respondents, representing 33.3% of the total, indicated that stress negatively impacted their memory. Another 10 respondents, also making up 33.3% of the total, reported that stress resulted in low academic grades. 5 respondents, or 16.7% of the total, provided responses falling under the category of "Others," suggesting various effects beyond the three specified categories. In summary, this table provides insights into how the 30 respondents perceive the effects of stress on their academic performance. The most commonly mentioned effects were poor memory and low grades, followed by low confidence, while some respondents described other effects not specified in the table.

Discussion

The research at K & K International College addresses the prevalent issue of academic stress among college students using a combination of surveys and interviews. A purposive sample of 30 third-year students, with an equal gender distribution, participated in the study. The findings reveal a noteworthy trend of high levels of academic stress among students at K & K International College. This aligns with global patterns observed in higher education institutions. Notably, the primary stressors identified by participants were practical assignments and exams, indicating a need for a reevaluation of assessment methods and workload distribution. The study also underscores the substantial negative effects of academic stress, including low confidence, impaired memory, lower grades, and decision-making difficulties. These interconnected outcomes emphasize the imperative for proactive measures within the college. Recommendations include stress management workshops, counseling services, and revisions to curriculum and assessment practices. Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment is crucial for helping students effectively cope with the demands of higher

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education. In conclusion, the research sheds light on a critical issue at K & K International College, emphasizing the necessity for targeted interventions to address academic stress and enhance the overall well-being and success of students.

Conclusion

A significant difference in academic stress levels between male and female adolescents has been observed, with females experiencing higher levels of stress, possibly due to their innate sensitivity and seriousness compared to the more carefree nature often associated with males. To address this gender disparity, efforts should focus on managing and alleviating academic stress factors such as frustration, conflict, pressure, and anxiety. Reducing academic stress can lead to improved mental well-being among adolescents. This study's findings have implications for students, families, teachers, counselors, and researchers, highlighting the need for schools to implement strategies that create a stress-free and supportive environment for academic growth. Schools and parents should ensure students are not overwhelmed with excessive work, allowing room for innovation in teaching methods and accommodating students' diverse abilities and interests, ultimately fostering divergent thinking. Collaborative efforts between teachers, parents, and students are essential in combating academic stress effectively.

Further studies should be concluded in this topic so that all the people will get aware about the academic pressure and its negative side effects. People will also get aware about the impact of academic stress on academic performance and the personal life. So far, more updates people can study the different of this topic.

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