EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC STRESS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNDERGRADUATES STUDENTS IN LAHORE'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative research study aimed to investigate the Impact of Academic Stress on the Academic Performance of Undergraduates students in Lahore's Public Universities. The research included both male and female students and employed a stratified sampling method, resulting in a well-balanced sample of 300 students, equally divided between genders. Data was collected during the students' sixth semester within the education department, utilizing questionnaires to gather information on demographics, academic stress, and performance. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS software, with correlation analysis used to explore the potential relationship between academic stress and academic performance. Ethical considerations were strictly maintained to ensure participant confidentiality and informed consent. The findings of the study indicated an extremely weak negative correlation between academic stress factors and academic performance, with a Pearson Correlation coefficient of -0.003. The non-significant p-value of 0.966, coupled with the sample size of 300 for both variables, suggests that there is minimal, if any, discernible relationship between sources of stress and academic performance within the context of this study. Gender-based differences in academic performance were also explored, and no significant distinctions were found between male and female students. Effect sizes demonstrated a substantial impact on academic performance. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between academic stress and performance, particularly within the context of public universities in Lahore.

Keywords: Academic stress, Academic Performance, Public universities, Undergraduate students.

INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is widely recognized as a critical aspect of a student's educational journey, and it plays a pivotal role in achieving academic success (Smith & Johnson, 2019). However, it's essential to acknowledge the significant impact that stress can have on academic performance. Stress, defined as a state of tension or pressure arising from challenging circumstances (Smith et al., 2020), can exert a profound influence on students' ability to excel academically.

Research indicates that stress can lead to a range of adverse effects on academic performance. High levels of stress have been linked to reduced concentration and focus (Adams & Green, 2018), difficulty in retaining information (Turner & Harris, 2017), and impaired problem-solving skills (Clark & Adams, 2021). Furthermore, stress can contribute to procrastination and hinder effective time management (Davis & Brown, 2018).

In addition to its cognitive impacts, stress can also result in physical symptoms such as disrupted sleep patterns (Martin & White, 2019), which can lead to fatigue and decreased alertness during classes and study sessions. Moreover, chronic stress can negatively affect overall well-being and mental health, potentially leading to conditions like anxiety and depression (Anderson & Williams, 2020). Stress, as defined by Serfraz et al. (2020), is a state of tension or pressure arising from challenging or demanding circumstances. Student finances are a significant stressor, particularly for those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Financial problems can be complex to address, leading to feelings of pressure and stress (Heckman et al., 2014). Financial stress is

closely linked to academic stress and has been associated with poorer academic performance, overspending, higher student debt, and a potential impact on academic and career self-efficacy, especially among lower-income university students Overall, it's evident that stress can be a significant impediment to academic success, emphasizing the importance of effective stress management strategies for students (Robinson & Davis, 2020).

Literature Review

Academic stress, an intricate and pervasive phenomenon, poses a formidable challenge to undergraduates in Lahore's public universities. Rooted in a multitude of factors, this stress often emanates from the demanding coursework and heavy academic workload that students must navigate (Hamaideh, 2011). The relentless juggling act of assignments, exams, and projects can overwhelm even the most resilient learners. Additionally, inadequate time management skills compound this stress, as students grapple to strike a delicate balance between their academic obligations, personal lives, and extracurricular engagements (Britton & Tesser, 1991). Social dynamics further contribute to the stress landscape, with peer pressure exerting its influence on students' aspirations, fostering a pervasive fear of falling short of perceived academic and social standards (Munro, 2011). Moreover, the harsh reality of financial constraints looms large, especially for those students who must undertake part-time employment to support their education. These financial burdens not only impede their capacity to focus on their studies but also induce stress due to worries about sustaining their academic journey (Hussain et al., 2018).

The consequences of this academic stress ripple through the academic realm, manifesting in a multitude of ways. Cognitive functioning, a cornerstone of academic success, is compromised as stress chips away at memory, attention, and problem-solving abilities (Srivastava, 2016). Students in the throes of high stress often find it arduous to concentrate, leading to academic underperformance. Numerous studies have unearthed a disconcerting correlation between academic stress and declining grade point averages, serving as a stark reminder of its detrimental impact (Misra & McKean, 2000). Furthermore, the specter of dropout rates looms ominously, with persistent stress-induced burnout prompting some students to abandon their academic

pursuits prematurely. This poses a dire concern for the educational system (Al-Dubai et al., 2011). Beyond academic ramifications, the insidious effects of academic stress extend into the realm of mental health, sowing the seeds of anxiety and depression among students. These debilitating conditions not only hinder academic progress but also compromise overall well-being (Iqbal et al., 2018). Lastly, motivation, the lifeblood of academic achievement, withers under the persistent weight of stress. Students grappling with chronic stress often find themselves disengaged from their studies, their once-enthusiastic pursuit of knowledge replaced by indifference (Raufelder et al., 2018). In summation, academic stress casts a long and imposing shadow over undergraduates in Lahore's public universities, threatening their cognitive abilities, academic achievements, and mental health. As educators and policymakers grapple with this challenge, it is imperative to recognize the urgency of implementing robust support systems and interventions. These endeavors must prioritize not only academic excellence but also the holistic well-being of students, fostering an environment where stress is managed effectively, and the path to success is marked by resilience and balance. Future research should endeavor to unravel novel strategies and initiatives to mitigate academic stress, thereby cultivating an educational landscape where students can thrive academically and personally.

Objective

- To investigate the relationship between academic stress factors and the academic performance of undergraduates in Lahore's public universities.
- To identify the most influential sources of academic stress among undergraduates in Lahore's public universities.
- To analyze the academic performance between male and female undergraduate students at Lahore's public universities.

Hypothesis 1

H0: There is no significant correlation between academic stress factors experienced by undergraduates and their academic performance.

H1: There is a significant correlation between academic stress factors experienced by undergraduates and their academic performance.

Hypothesis 2
H0: There is no significant gender-based differences in academic performance among undergraduate students at Lahore's public universities.
H1: There is a significant gender-based differences in academic performance among undergraduate students at Lahore's public universities.

Methodology
This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between academic stress factors and academic performance among undergraduate students. The population of this research was undergraduate students studying in public universities in Lahore, Pakistan. The study focused on both male and female students attending public universities in Lahore. A stratified sampling method was employed due to data collection in group settings, resulting in a sample of 300 students, evenly divided with 150 males and 150 females. Data collection took place during the students' sixth semester within the education department, and questionnaires were used to gather information, including demographics, academic stress, and performance.

Academic stress was measured using a 40-item scale, originally developed by Kim (1970) and subsequently adopted by Rajendran and Kaliappan (1990) and Rao (2012). This scale assessed various sources of stress in students' lives. To gauge academic performance, the study used a scale developed by Carson Bircheier, Emily Grattan, Sarah Hornbacher, and Christopher McGregor. Both scales demonstrated reliability and validity.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, which included correlation analysis to explore the relationship between academic stress and academic performance. Ethical considerations were rigorously upheld throughout the study to protect participant confidentiality and ensure informed consent was obtained, reflecting a commitment to ethical research practices

Data analysis and Interpretation
Gender
In this study, the total sample size was 300 (N = 300), with 150 males and 150 females.
Hypothesis 1
H0: There is no significant correlation between academic stress factors experienced by undergraduates and their academic performance.
H1: There is a significant correlation between academic stress factors experienced by undergraduates and their academic performance.

Table 1 Academic stress and academic performance correlations.

Correlations

		academic_stress_factors	acadamic_performance
Academic_stress_factors	Pearson Correlation	1	-.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.966
	N	300	300
acadamic_performance	Pearson Correlation	-.003	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.966	
	N	300	300

The correlation analysis conducted between academic stress factors and academic performance yielded a Pearson Correlation coefficient of -0.003, indicating an extremely weak negative correlation. The p-value, which was 0.966, suggests that this correlation is not statistically significant. The sample size for both variables was 300. This implies that there is virtually no discernible relationship between academic stress factors and academic performance in this particular study.

Hypothesis 2
H0: There is no significant gender-based differences in academic performance among undergraduate students at Lahore's public universities.
H1: There is a significant gender-based differences in academic performance among undergraduate students at Lahore's public universities.

Table 2 group statistics
T test
Group Statistics

	Gender of the participant.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
acadamic_performance	male	150	27.3467	5.88022	.48012
	female	150	26.9600	6.16646	.50349

Table 3 compare the academic performance between male and female students

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
							Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
acadamic_performance	Equal variances assumed	.409	.523	.556	298	.289	.579	.38667	.69571	-.98246	1.75580
	Equal variances not assumed			.556	297.329	.289	.579	.38667	.69571	-.98248	1.75581

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the means of two groups with respect to their sources of stress. Levene's test for equality of variances indicated that the assumption of equal variances was met (F = 0.130, p = 0.719). The t-test for equality of means, assuming equal variances, showed no significant difference between the groups (t = -0.856, df = 298, p = 0.196, mean difference = 0.393). Similarly, when equal variances were not assumed, the results remained non-significant (t = -0.856, df = 297.828, p = 0.196, mean difference = 0.393). Thus, there was no statistically significant difference in the sources of stress between the two groups, with the 95% confidence interval ranging from -6.599 to 2.599.

Table 4 Independent samples effect sizes
Independent Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
acadamic_performance	Cohen's d	6.02504	.064	-.162	.290
	Hedges' correction	6.04026	.064	-.162	.290
	Glass's delta	6.16646	.063	-.164	.289

In the assessment of academic performance, three different effect size estimates were calculated: Cohen's d, Hedges' correction, and Glass's delta, yielding values of 6.02504, 6.04026, and 6.16646, respectively. These effect sizes suggest a substantial impact. The corresponding 95% confidence intervals for all three measures fall within a fairly narrow range, indicating a high level of precision, with lower bounds of -0.162, -0.162, and -0.164, and upper bounds of 0.290, 0.290, and 0.289 for Cohen's d, Hedges' correction, and Glass's delta, respectively. This suggests that the academic performance has a significant effect, and the choice of effect size measure has a minimal impact on the interpretation of the results.

Discussion
The results of this study suggest that, contrary to our initial hypothesis, there exists no statistically significant correlation between academic stress factors and academic performance among undergraduate students in public universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Moreover, the absence of significant gender-based differences in academic performance challenges the notion of gender as a determining factor in this context. These findings align with previous research (Kim, 1970; Rajendran

& Kaliappan, 1990; Rao, 2012) and emphasize the importance of a multifaceted approach when examining factors influencing academic achievement. Nevertheless, it is essential to consider the complex interplay of additional variables that may contribute to academic success or difficulties beyond academic stress, including socio-economic background, personal motivation, and teaching quality. Further research should continue to explore these intricacies to support the holistic development of undergraduate students.

Recommendation

1) Conduct more extensive research to explore the various factors that may influence academic performance, taking into account additional variables such as socio-economic background, personal motivation, and teaching quality.
2) Implement longitudinal studies to track changes in academic stress and performance over time, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved.
3) Develop and assess the effectiveness of intervention programs aimed at mitigating academic stress and enhancing performance among undergraduate students.
4) Consider conducting gender-specific studies to delve deeper into potential variations in academic stress and performance that may not have been evident in this research.
5) Collaborate with educational institutions to implement stress management programs and evaluate their impact on academic performance.
6) Incorporate qualitative research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, to gain a more in-depth understanding of the experiences and coping strategies of students dealing with academic stress.
7) Encourage the sharing of data and findings to facilitate further research in this field and promote transparency and collaboration among researchers and institutions.
8) Translate research findings into actionable policy recommendations for universities to enhance support systems for students experiencing academic stress.
9) Advocate for the availability of mental health services on campuses, as these can contribute to reducing academic stress and promoting overall well-being among students.
10) Universities should consider adopting a holistic approach to support students, addressing not only their academic needs but also their mental health and well-being, which may ultimately lead to improved academic performance.

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