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A Study on Factors Contributing to Academic and Career Stress among Management Students

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Abstract

Stress related to academics and careers is becoming a major issue in management students because of growing academic pressure and career pressures. This paper explores factors causing academic and career stress by adopting a descriptive research approach. Primary data are obtained from 400 management students by the use of a structured questionnaire while reliability test was conducted to test the reliability of the data collected. Data analysis in this case includes descriptive analysis, t-test, ANOVA and correlation tests. The results bring out the major causes of academic and career stress while demonstrating variations in stress among demographic variables.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Career Stress, Management Students, Academic Workload, Placement Pressure.

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1. Introduction

Management education in today's world is extremely challenging and competitive in nature, and hence students are under constant academic pressure owing to high performance and concurrent assessment criteria. The pressure of academic, career, peer, and placement makes students under constant stress. Rapid changes in the business environment make students feel uncertain about their future. Academic and career stress have serious effects on the psychological well-being and academic performance of students. Therefore, stress needs to be understood, and this paper is focused on analysing.

Scope of the Study

In the current research, the focus is on factors that contribute to both academic stress and career stress among management students. It consists of a number of items related to academic stresses (assignments, course work, tests, examinations, time management), career pressures (pressure regarding placement, job insecurity and career expectation in the future). The current research further focuses on how demographics and individual characteristics affect stress. The findings of this research may help educational institutions reduce stress among students.

Objectives of the study

- Determination of the primary causes of stress in management students.
- Study the effects of the burden of studies, use of technology for studies, and expectations from the class on the stress levels of management students.

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- Analysis of how peer pressure, social comparisons, and parental expectations affect the level of stress in management students.
- Conducting research on coping strategies of management students for managing their stress.
- Based on the findings, provide recommendations to reduce student stress.

2. Review of literature

Qayyum et al. (2022) in this investigation, the variable of social competency served as mediator for the investigation of relationship between career worries of students and their academic stress. In this research, a correlational design was used; in which standardized tools were utilized to collect data from 100 students from public universities in Lahore (Pakistan). The results indicate a significant positive relationship between academic stress and career anxiety. Stress resulting from academics is also found to significantly affect negatively the social competency of an individual. Results of the mediation analysis reveal that social competency significantly moderated the effect of academic stress on career anxiety.

Lisnyj et al. (2021) this research identified the influencing factors on stress and academic performance of post-secondary learners applying the socio-ecological framework for health promotion. The methodology employed in this research involved a qualitative approach involving a phenomenological method by conducting 38 interviews among both learners and staff at an institution in Canada. It is clear from the analysis of findings that psychological, social, physical, and academic determinants contribute to stress. Among them, ineffective communication and low awareness of available sources of support were noted as major contributors.

Adom et al. (2020) the present study sought to assess the level of stress among lecturers and students in Ghanaian Higher Institutions and the health and academic implications that ensue as a result of this stress. The research was conducted using a mixed method approach, involving 478 respondents. Unplanned preparation, procrastination, unhealthy lifestyles, and unrealistic academic goals have been established as stress factors in the study. Amongst others, some of the coping strategies recommended include setting realistic goals, proper time management, and exercise.

Yousaf et al. (2016) the research focused on what leads to stress among the students and how they cope with stress in terms of obtaining and processing information? The transactional theory was used and postulated that stress is caused by students' perception of inability to cope with academic obligations. The results revealed some important stressors that include fear, pressure of time, growing need for knowledge, shortage of information and/or skills, money problems, and ill-health. It should be noted that stress can have both positive and negative effects; on one hand, they encourage students to do something, whereas on the other hand, they force them to escape from reality.

Maryam Moula Bakhsh & Sayeeda Amber Sayed (2015) the research employed a cross-sectional design to analyze the academic stress that existed among students studying for an MBA degree at a business school in Karachi. The sample size included 100 students enrolled for either an ordinary or executive MBA program.

Key sources of stress involved the huge syllabus, many assignments, and dissatisfaction with lectures. Symptoms of stress included trembling, crying, and excessive smoking. Students resorted to coping mechanisms like task management, sleep, and taking medication.

Esther (2013) Career stress among academic staff at the tertiary level of education in Cross River State, Nigeria was explored in this study. This descriptive survey involved a sample size of 450 senior lecturers from CRUTECH, COE, and UNICAL institutions. Analysis of variance was used to test the two formulated hypotheses. Results revealed that there is no significant variation between the causes and challenges of career stress among academic staff at the various institutions. But many of the academic staff experience symptoms related to stress.

Hou et al. (2013) The research investigated the issue of academic stress faced by accounting students as well as developed a sound scale to measure it. It is a quantitative study conducted in the USA, specifically in a mid-western university. Initially, data was gathered from 59 students of accounting major and subjected to various statistical analyses such as factor analysis and reliability test to come up with five main components of academic stress validating the construct validity of the measuring scale. The study was then extended to 98 undergraduate students majoring in accounting.

Purna Nandamuri and Ch. Gowthami (2011) the study was conducted among 500 postgraduate management students pursuing their education at educational institutions located within Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh, India, employing a descriptive methodology and an instrument constructed by the researchers themselves. The study found out stress factors in relation to academics and instruction, team work, evaluation practices, and placement programs. Several micro-factors were also observed under these categories, proving the multidimensionality of academic pressure.

3. Research methodology

This study will be descriptive in nature because it will seek to identify the causes of academic and career stress amongst the management students. This data collection process utilized structured questionnaire distributed to 400 respondents based on non-probability sampling method.

Data was also obtained using secondary sources which included information from journals and other online resources. The data obtained was then subjected to analysis through SPSS and recommended statistics.

Data analysis and interpretation

Table 1: Reliability test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.898	24

Interpretation

Reliability analysis results show that table 1 good reliability and internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha being 0.898. The obtained result is indicative of very good reliability of the measuring instruments used in this research, making the results valid for further analysis and interpretations.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Stress due to frequent exams	400	1	5	3.67	.764
Academics syllabus is extensive	400	1	5	3.60	.870
Balancing academic work with career preparation	400	2	5	3.79	.776
Tight deadlines for academic submissions	400	1	5	3.72	.912
Valid N (list wise)	400				

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

As can be seen table 2 shows that from the descriptive statistics data, the students experience stress due to academics in the form of moderate to high values. Managing their studies together with their careers ranks highest (Mean = 3.79) in terms of mean scores, and this means that it is the leading stressor among all the others. Next comes the stress due to tight submission deadlines of the academic papers (Mean = 3.72) and stress due to regular exams (Mean = 3.67), indicating high academic stress. Another stress-causing factor in this regard is the heavy academic curriculum (Mean = 3.60).

4. Anova

Table 3: Academics syllabus

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Academics syllabus is extensive	Between Groups	36.916	2	18.458	27.623	.001
	Within Groups	265.281	397	.668		
	Total	302.198	399			
Tight deadlines for academic submissions	Between Groups	38.832	2	19.416	26.275	.001
	Within Groups	293.366	397	.739		
	Total	332.198	399			
Pressure to meet future career expectations	Between Groups	28.319	2	14.160	19.288	.001
	Within Groups	291.441	397	.734		
	Total	319.760	399			
Continuous use of digital learning platforms	Between Groups	38.772	2	19.386	20.987	.001
	Within Groups	366.725	397	.924		
	Total	405.497	399			
Guidance from faculty or mentors	Between Groups	19.739	2	9.869	13.168	.001
	Within Groups	297.559	397	.750		
		317.297	399			

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

From the ANOVA tests conducted table 3 shows that, it is evident that there is a significant difference in the three groups based on each of the chosen variables. The difficulty level of the academic syllabus ($F = 27.623$, $p < 0.001$) and the pressure of adhering to deadlines for academic submission ($F = 26.275$, $p < 0.001$) have a very high difference among the groups since they affect students greatly. Again, the pressure for future career expectation ($F = 19.288$, $p < 0.001$) and frequent use of technology learning sites ($F = 20.987$, $p < 0.001$) have a high difference between the groups.

5. Correlation

Table 4: Competition with classmates for grades

Correlations			
		Competition with classmates for grades	**Comparing academic performance with peers**
Competition with classmates for grades	Pearson Correlation	1	.750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	400	400
Comparing academic performance with peers	Pearson Correlation	.750**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
		400	400
Source: Primary data Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Interpretation

The result of the analysis table 4 shows a strong and significant positive correlation between competition with classmates for grades and comparison of academic performance with peers ($r = 0.750$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that there is a strong association between the level of competitive behaviour and the level of tendency to compare academic performance with peers, which are strongly linked together.

6. T test

Table 5: T test

Variable	F	Levene's Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Academic workload should be distributed more evenly throughout the semester	7.190	.008	-3.442	398	.001
Stress management workshops should be regularly conducted for management students	3.515	.062	-2.323	398	.021

Source: Primary data

Interpretation

The study employed an independent samples t-test to investigate how students perceived stress management strategies. Table 5 shows that Levene's test ($p = 0.008$) revealed different variances in the distribution of academic burden, and the t-test result ($t = -3.442$, $p = 0.001$) confirmed a statistically significant difference between groups. The t-test result was significant ($t = -2.323$, $p = 0.021$) for stress management workshops, while Levene's test was not significant ($p = 0.062$), indicating equal variances. Overall, the results demonstrate significant differences in students' perceptions regarding both academic workload distribution and the need for regular stress management workshops.

Findings

- The reliability test demonstrates good value of Cronbach's Alpha (0.898) and it indicating that the questionnaire employed in the research has high reliability.
- Descriptive analysis reveals that management students' academic stress and career stress are moderate to high.
- The biggest stress for students is balancing work with getting ready for a career.
- High pressure deadlines to submit academia and regular exams also add a lot of stress.
- The large number of courses that they have to take in college is the most common perceived source of stress by students.
- ANOVA results reveal significant differences among the groups with respect to "academic burden", career pressure, Digital Learning usage and Faculty guidance.
- Intensity of academic syllabus and tight deadlines are by far the most influenced, having been chosen as major contributors to stress.
- A very high positive relationship between competition for grades and peer comparison has been found, which suggests that the competitive academic atmosphere increases stress.
- The t-test results indicate significant differences in students' views about workload distribution and stress management.

Suggestions

- Educational organizations must arrange stress management programs for their students.
- There can be an alteration in the academic calendar that helps avoid stress due to excessive work.
- Similarly, career guidance and placements need to be arranged in accordance with the curriculum and should not add up to the stress experienced by the students.
- Teachers and mentors need to keep motivating students consistently throughout their studies.

- Instead of putting too much stress on grades, students should be encouraged to compete healthily with one another.
- Digital learning should be done within limits as it may contribute to screen-related stress.
- Timely counselling for stressed students is highly recommended.
- Planning and managing time, as well as being aware of stress management, can really help in balancing academics and careers.

Conclusion

As per the results of the investigation, it is revealed that students belonging to management faculties have a relatively high amount of stress because of educational reasons as well as professional expectations. As per the data of analysis, the students belonging to the final year in the faculty of management have a high level of stress owing to the pressures of getting placement in addition to uncertainty about their future. The academic reasons like a very heavy burden of work along with a lack of time to finish assignments are other important causes of stress among students.

Declaration

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not Applicable

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Competing interests

The authors declare that we have no competing interest.

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Data availability

All data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this article.

Use of AI Technology

Portions of this work used AI tools (such as ChatGPT) strictly for language refinement and structuring assistance. All scientific content, system design, implementation, results, and conclusions were produced by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the content.

Authors' contributions

Author 1: She Performed the Analysis of overall concept, writing and editing

Author 2: She participated in the methodology, Conceptualization, Data collection and writing the study

Author 3: She participated in the methodology and conceptualization phases of the project,

Author 4: She contributing to the design of the research framework,

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