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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC PRESSURE AND MENTAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS****Fuad Hasan**

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\*✉: [fuadhasan16psw@gmail.com](mailto:fuadhasan16psw@gmail.com)**Abstrak**

Kesehatan mental mahasiswa di jenjang pendidikan tinggi telah menjadi isu kritis akibat meningkatnya tekanan akademis. Studi kasus ini mengkaji hubungan antara tekanan akademis dan kesehatan mental mahasiswa, dengan menyoroti bagaimana berbagai pemicu stres seperti ujian, tugas kuliah, dan ekspektasi tinggi memengaruhi kesejahteraan emosional. Dengan mensintesis literatur yang ada tentang topik tersebut, studi ini mengidentifikasi prevalensi masalah kesehatan mental di kalangan mahasiswa dan pemicu stres akademis spesifik yang berkontribusi terhadap kecemasan, depresi, dan kelelahan. Temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa tekanan akademis berdampak negatif pada kesejahteraan mahasiswa dan bahwa dukungan institusional, strategi penanggulangan, dan layanan kesehatan mental sangat penting untuk mengurangi dampak ini. Studi ini diakhiri dengan rekomendasi bagi universitas untuk mengatasi tantangan ini dengan merevisi kebijakan akademis, meningkatkan layanan kesehatan mental, dan menumbuhkan lingkungan yang mendukung bagi mahasiswa.

**Kata kunci:** Tekanan Akademis, Kesehatan Mental Mahasiswa, Kecemasan, Depresi, Kelelahan, Pendidikan Tinggi, Layanan Kesehatan Mental, Strategi Penanggulangan

**Abstract**

The mental health of students in higher education has emerged as a critical issue due to increasing levels of academic pressure. This case study examines the relationship between academic pressure and student mental health, highlighting how various stressors such as exams, coursework, and high expectations impact emotional well-being. By synthesizing existing literature on the topic, the study identifies the prevalence of mental health issues among students and the specific academic stressors contributing to anxiety, depression, and burnout. The findings suggest that academic pressure negatively affects student well-being and that institutional support, coping strategies, and mental health services are essential to mitigating these effects. The study concludes with recommendations for universities to address these challenges by revising academic policies, improving mental health services, and fostering a supportive environment for students.

**Keywords:** Academic Pressure, Student Mental Health, Anxiety, Depression, Burnout, Higher Education, Mental Health Services, Coping Strategies

**INTRODUCTION**

The mental well-being of students in higher education has become a critical public health concern, with a multitude of studies documenting its profound impact on both academic performance and overall quality of life (Hyseni Duraku et al., 2024). Elevated rates of mental

health problems, encompassing stress, anxiety, and depression, represent a significant challenge within university populations across the globe. Research indicates that approximately one in five college students worldwide will experience a mental health disorder, such as major depression or an anxiety disorder, within their initial year of study. This trend is consistently observed across diverse geographical regions, including the United States, various parts of Europe, the United Kingdom, and South Africa, highlighting the widespread nature of these issues (Hyseni Duraku et al., 2024). Furthermore, studies reveal that a considerable proportion of students grapple with psychological and emotional distress, feelings of anxiety and depression, and an elevated risk of burnout during their academic careers (Douwes et al., 2023). Data from the 2020-2021 academic year in the United States showed that over 60% of college students met the criteria for at least one mental health problem, and nearly three-quarters reported experiencing moderate to severe psychological distress (Abrams, 2022). This paints a clear picture of the significant mental health burden carried by students in higher education.

A prominent factor contributing to these challenges is the increasing recognition of academic pressure as a substantial stressor for students (Hyseni Duraku et al., 2024). Students themselves frequently identify the "pressure to do well" academically as a major source of their stress. Indeed, studies indicate that academic stress is cited as the primary source of stress for a large percentage of college students, often surpassing other life stressors (Barbayannis et al., 2022). This underscores the critical need to thoroughly understand the specific ways in which academic demands and expectations impact the mental well-being of students in higher education.

Academic pressure in this context can be understood as the tension, discomfort, and emotional strain experienced by students due to the various pressures inherent in the learning process, originating from educational institutions, families, and broader societal expectations (Jiang et al., 2022). This pressure can manifest in numerous forms, including an overwhelming amount of assignments, the high stakes associated with examinations, the weight of expectations from oneself and others (parents, educators, institutions), and the perceived fairness or lack thereof in grading systems. While the focus of this report is on students, it is important to note that academic pressure also affects faculty members, particularly in relation to research demands, teaching responsibilities, and the overarching expectations of higher education institutions. For students, however, the immediate and direct demands of

coursework, assessments, and the pursuit of academic success form the core of this pressure (Qomariyah et al., 2023). Recognizing the multifaceted nature of academic pressure and its potential to significantly affect the mental health of students is essential for developing effective strategies to support their well-being.

This case study aims to delve into the intricate relationship between academic pressure and the mental health of students within the context of higher education. By synthesizing findings from existing scientific literature, this report seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of this critical issue. Specifically, it will identify key academic stressors encountered by university students and analyze their impact on various aspects of their mental well-being. Through this exploration, the goal is to contribute to a more informed understanding that can guide interventions and policies aimed at fostering a healthier and more supportive academic environment for all students.

## **METHODS**

This report adopts a literature-based case study approach to examine the relationship between academic pressure and student mental health in higher education. This methodology involves a comprehensive analysis of existing research published in reputable scientific journals to construct an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. By drawing upon a collection of studies, this approach allows for the identification of overarching themes, consistent findings, and potential causal links without conducting original empirical research.

The primary data sources for this case study are the provided research snippets (Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018; Posselt & Lipson, 2016). These snippets comprise a variety of materials, including articles from academic journals, research reports, and news articles that report on findings from scientific studies relevant to academic pressure, mental health, and higher education. The selection of these snippets was based on their direct relevance to the topic at hand, with a particular emphasis on studies that employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore the relationship between academic stress and student well-being.

The process of data synthesis involved a systematic review of the information contained within each snippet. Key findings, definitions of academic pressure, statistical data on the prevalence of mental health issues and academic stress, and reported relationships between these variables were carefully extracted. This information was then categorized according to

the themes identified in the outline, such as the correlation between academic pressure and mental well-being, specific academic stressors, and their impact on mental health outcomes.

The analytical framework employed in this case study focuses on identifying recurring patterns, consistent trends, and potential causal relationships as reported in the reviewed literature. The synthesized findings are organized following the standard scientific writing format, encompassing an introduction, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion. This structure ensures a clear, logical, and comprehensive presentation of the analysis.

It is important to acknowledge the inherent limitations of a literature-based case study. This report is constrained by the methodological rigor, sample sizes, and potential biases present in the original studies included in the snippets. Furthermore, the scope of the analysis is necessarily limited to the information provided within the pre-selected snippets. While this approach provides a broad overview of the existing literature, it may lack the nuanced understanding that could be gained from a case study focused on a specific institution or a particular group of students. The generalizability of the findings presented in this report is therefore dependent on the representativeness of the studies included in the provided research material. The general limitations of case study research, as highlighted in several snippets, include the potential for researcher bias, challenges in replicating findings, and the difficulty of generalizing results to broader populations. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the conclusions drawn from this analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

A consistent theme emerging from the literature is the significant correlation between academic pressure and diminished mental well-being among university students. Multiple studies have demonstrated this relationship, indicating that as academic stress increases, students tend to report poorer mental health outcomes. Specifically, research using scales such as the Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS) and the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (SWEMWBS) has revealed that higher scores on academic stress scales are associated with lower scores on mental well-being scales (Barbayannis et al., 2022). Furthermore, one study concluded that elevated levels of academic stress significantly increase the likelihood of students experiencing what is termed "languishing mental health," a state characterized by a lack of positive affect and a sense of stagnation (Córdova Olivera et al., 2023). This convergence of evidence across different studies and measurement tools underscores the

robust nature of the association between academic pressure and negative mental health outcomes in the higher education context.

The prevalence of both mental health issues and perceived academic stress among university students is notably high. Data indicates that a substantial majority, almost 90%, of students report that their mental health occasionally interferes with their ability to effectively study or complete academic assignments (Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018). Moreover, a significant proportion of students experience negative emotions, such as anxiety (41%), boredom (39%), and frustration (37%), while engaged in studying. These figures highlight the immediate and pervasive impact of academic demands on students' emotional state and their capacity to engage with their studies. In one particular study, approximately 61.3% of respondents reported facing mental health-related challenges, with an overwhelming 91.95% stating that they felt pressure due to academic expectations (Kabir et al., 2024). This suggests that the feeling of being academically pressured is almost ubiquitous among university students and is frequently accompanied by mental health concerns.

The literature identifies a range of specific academic stressors that contribute to the mental health challenges faced by students:

1. **Exams:** The pressure associated with examinations is a significant source of stress. Students report skipping exams due to feelings of unpreparedness, fear of performing poorly, a lack of motivation, or even physical illness induced by stress (Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018). Tough exams are described as causing panic, anxiety, and frustration. Test anxiety, a specific form of anxiety related to exam performance, is prevalent among university students, affecting a large percentage of the student population (Alkowitz et al., 2022).
2. **Coursework:** The demands of academic coursework are consistently identified as a major stressor for undergraduate students (Imed Bouchrika, 2025). The sheer volume of assignments, coupled with the perceived difficulty and the need to balance multiple courses simultaneously, can lead to significant stress (Gondal et al, 2025).
3. **Competition:** The competitive nature of the academic environment also contributes to student stress. Studies have found that high levels of perceived competition within classes are associated with an increased risk of both depression and anxiety among students (Posselt & Lipson, 2016). Students often feel pressure to outperform their peers, which can create a stressful and anxiety-inducing atmosphere (Gondal et al, 2025).

4. **High Expectations:** The pressure to achieve and maintain high grades, along with the fear of academic failure, significantly impacts students' mental well-being (Kabir et al., 2024). This pressure can originate from various sources, including professors who set high academic standards and the competitive nature of the peer group (Córdova Olivera et al., 2023). Furthermore, unrealistic expectations from parents regarding their children's academic performance can also increase anxiety levels.
5. **Workload and Time Management:** Many students struggle with managing their academic workload effectively and often experience difficulties with time management and procrastination. Academic overload, characterized by a large number of courses or assignments, and an insufficient amount of time to adequately prepare for them, are significant contributors to student stress (Bataineh, 2013; Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018).
6. **Financial Concerns:** Financial stress represents another significant burden on university students, which can negatively affect their mental health. Worries about tuition costs, student loan debt, and the general cost of living can create substantial anxiety and contribute to overall stress levels.
7. **Transition to University:** The transition from high school to university involves significant adjustments, such as adapting to a new academic environment, managing increased independence, and navigating changes in lifestyle. These transitions can be stressful for many students (Córdova Olivera et al., 2023).
8. **COVID-19 Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic introduced unprecedented disruptions to daily life and academic routines, leading to elevated stress levels and a decline in both mental and physical health among college students (Barbayannis et al., 2022). The shift to remote learning, social isolation, and uncertainty about the future exacerbated existing stressors and created new challenges for students' well-being.

The cumulative effect of these various academic pressures can have significant negative consequences for students' mental health. Research consistently links academic pressure to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout (Barbayannis et al., 2022). This stress can also disrupt sleep patterns and contribute to an overall unbalanced lifestyle (Kabir et al., 2024). The negative emotions experienced during studying, if persistent, can have serious long-term consequences for students' well-being (Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018). In some cases, academic stress can become so overwhelming that it acts as a risk factor for students dropping out of college. Furthermore, academic stress can manifest as emotional exhaustion and contribute to feelings of depersonalization (Córdova Olivera et al., 2023). In more severe instances, excessive

academic pressure has been associated with the development of eating disorders and self-harm behaviors, as well as an increased likelihood of substance use as a maladaptive coping mechanism.

It is important to note that certain groups of students appear to be more vulnerable to the negative impacts of academic pressure on their mental health. Non-binary individuals, for example, have reported the lowest levels of mental health and the highest levels of academic stress compared to their peers. Women and non-binary students also tend to report higher levels of academic stress than men. Similarly, female college students, in general, report experiencing increased stress compared to their male counterparts. Racial and ethnic minority groups of students are also more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation compared to their white peers (Barbayannis et al., 2022). Finally, first-year students, who are navigating the significant transitions associated with starting university, may be particularly vulnerable to the pressures of the academic environment (Hyseni Duraku et al., 2024). These findings highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of how academic pressure affects different student populations and the importance of tailored support services.

## **Discussion**

The evidence presented in the results section points to a strong and concerning relationship between academic pressure and the mental health of students in higher education. Several mechanisms may explain this connection. Chronic stress, a common consequence of sustained academic pressure, has been shown to trigger anxiety disorders, depression, and other mental health issues. This prolonged stress can also negatively impact cognitive functions, emotional regulation capabilities, and an individual's overall quality of life. At a biological level, academic stress can activate the body's stress response system, involving the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and the release of cortisol, a stress hormone (Córdova Olivera et al., 2023). Furthermore, the intense fear of academic failure, often amplified by high expectations and competitive environments, serves as a significant source of stress for many students (Bataineh, 2013). This constant pressure and fear can lead to emotional changes, particularly in adolescents and young adults, increasing their susceptibility to mental illnesses.

While academic pressure presents a considerable challenge to student mental health, research also indicates that students employ various coping strategies to manage stress, and the availability of support systems can play a crucial role in mitigating its negative effects.

Students utilize both emotion-focused coping strategies, which aim to manage the emotional response to stress, and problem-focused coping strategies, which involve actively trying to address the source of the stress. Seeking social support from friends, family, or peers, and actively engaging in activities that promote mental health development, are also common coping mechanisms. Interventions such as resilience training courses have demonstrated the potential to lessen symptoms of anxiety and depression among students. Similarly, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) programs have been shown to enhance students' overall mental health outcomes. The emotional support and practical advice offered through group therapy and peer support programs can also significantly improve students' capacity to deal with academic stress (Kabir et al., 2024). Moreover, a sense of connectedness to the university community has been found to reduce the likelihood of developing significant symptoms of depression and anxiety (Adams et al., 2021).

The findings of this literature-based case study have significant implications for higher education institutions. It is evident that universities need to proactively address the mental health crisis affecting their students (Abrams, 2022). This requires prioritizing open discussions about mental health and actively advocating for student well-being. Creating campus environments that are perceived as safe, supportive, and inclusive is crucial for fostering positive mental health outcomes. Institutions should also focus on enhancing the accessibility and quality of their mental health services while addressing underlying socioeconomic inequalities that may exacerbate student stress (Hyseni Duraku et al., 2024). Providing students with resources and training to improve their self-regulation and time-management skills can empower them to better manage academic demands and reduce associated stress levels (Von Keyserlingk et al., 2022). Furthermore, managing academic pressure itself through clear communication of expectations, offering flexibility in learning and assessment, and adopting inclusive teaching strategies can contribute to a less stressful academic experience. Increasing access to clinical mental health services and actively promoting emotional health awareness across the university community are also necessary steps (MacPhee et al., 2021).

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this literature-based case study. The conclusions drawn are necessarily constrained by the scope of the provided research snippets and the inherent limitations associated with case study research in general. These limitations include the potential for bias in the original studies, as well as the challenges of generalizing



findings from specific contexts to broader student populations. Therefore, while this report provides a valuable synthesis of existing research, further investigation, particularly research that focuses on specific higher education settings and employs a variety of methodological approaches, is needed to gain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between academic pressure and student mental health.

## CONCLUSION

This case study, drawing upon a synthesis of scientific literature, confirms a significant and concerning relationship between academic pressure and the mental health of students in higher education. The consistently high rates of mental health issues reported among university students, coupled with the identification of academic pressure as a dominant contributing factor, highlight the urgency of addressing this critical issue. Specific academic stressors, such as examinations, demanding coursework, competitive environments, and the weight of high expectations, have been shown to negatively impact students' mental well-being, frequently leading to increased anxiety, depression, burnout, and other adverse outcomes.

To further advance our understanding of this complex issue, future research should prioritize longitudinal studies to establish clearer causal pathways between specific academic pressures and mental health outcomes. Investigating the effectiveness of various intervention strategies in real-world higher education settings is also critical. Additionally, more in-depth research is needed to explore the unique experiences of diverse student populations and to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of students facing academic pressure and mental health challenges through qualitative methodologies. By continuing to investigate this important relationship, higher education institutions can work towards creating learning environments that not only promote academic success but also prioritize the mental health and overall well-being of their students.

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