PSYCHODIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS' STRESS LEVELS: THE CASE OF ACADEMIC PRESSURE

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Abstract: Academic stress has become one of the most significant psychological challenges faced by university students in modern educational systems. Increasing academic demands, competitive environments, time constraints, and expectations from family and society contribute to elevated stress levels, which may negatively affect students' mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. The present study aims to psychodiagnostically assess stress levels among university students with a particular focus on academic pressure as a primary stressor. The research employs standardized psychodiagnostic instruments, including the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and an Academic Stress Questionnaire, to evaluate the intensity and sources of stress. A quantitative research design was used, involving undergraduate students from various academic disciplines. The findings reveal that academic pressure is a dominant factor contributing to moderate to high stress levels among students. Significant correlations were identified between stress levels and academic workload, examination anxiety, and fear of academic failure. The study highlights the importance of early psychodiagnostic assessment and psychological intervention to prevent long-term negative consequences of academic stress. The results may serve as a basis for developing stress management programs and psychological support services within higher education institutions.

Keywords: academic stress, psychodiagnostic assessment, students, academic pressure, mental health, higher education.

Introduction

In recent decades, stress among university students has emerged as a global concern, attracting increasing attention from psychologists, educators, and policymakers. Stress is a natural psychological and physiological response to demands that exceed an individual's coping resources. While moderate stress may enhance motivation and performance, excessive or chronic stress can lead to adverse psychological outcomes such as anxiety, depression, burnout, and reduced academic achievement.

Academic stress refers to stress experienced by students as a result of educational demands and academic expectations. These demands include heavy coursework, frequent examinations, deadlines, competition with peers, and pressure to achieve high grades. In many cases, students perceive academic requirements as overwhelming, which negatively affects their emotional state and learning capacity.

Psychodiagnostic assessment plays a crucial role in identifying stress levels and their underlying causes. Through standardized psychological tools, it becomes possible to measure stress intensity, recognize vulnerable groups, and implement targeted interventions. Understanding academic stress from a psychodiagnostic perspective is essential for improving students' psychological well-being and enhancing the quality of higher education. The present study focuses on assessing students' stress levels through psychodiagnostic methods, with particular emphasis on academic pressure as a major stressor. The research seeks to answer the following questions:
1. What is the level of stress among university students?
2. To what extent does academic pressure contribute to students' stress?
3. What academic factors are most strongly associated with elevated stress levels?

Literature review

Numerous studies have examined stress among university students, identifying academic pressure as one of the most prominent stressors. According to Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress, stress arises when individuals perceive environmental demands as exceeding their coping abilities. In academic contexts, this perception is often shaped by examination systems, grading policies, and workload intensity. Research by Misra and McKean (2000) indicates that academic stress significantly predicts anxiety and poor academic performance among college students. Similarly, Bedewy and Gabriel (2015) found that examination pressure, academic workload, and fear of failure are the most common sources of academic stress. Psychodiagnostic tools such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Student Stress Inventory (SSI), and Academic Stress Scale (ASS) are widely used to measure stress levels in educational settings. These instruments provide reliable and valid data on students' psychological states and stress-related experiences.

Despite extensive research, stress levels among students continue to rise due to increasing academic competition, technological changes, and societal expectations. This highlights the need for ongoing psychodiagnostic assessment and the development of evidence-based psychological interventions.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design aimed at assessing stress levels among university students and identifying the role of academic pressure in stress development.

Participants

The sample consisted of 120 undergraduate students (aged 18–23) from various academic faculties, including social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was ensured.

Instruments

The following psychodiagnostic instruments were used:

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10): Measures the degree to which individuals perceive their lives as stressful.

Academic Stress Questionnaire (ASQ): Assesses stress related to academic workload, examinations, time management, and academic expectations.

Both instruments demonstrated satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.80).

Procedure

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed during regular class sessions. Participants were instructed to respond honestly and were informed about the purpose of the study.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and comparative analysis to examine relationships between academic pressure and stress levels.

Results

The results indicated that:

62% of students experienced moderate stress levels.

21% reported high stress levels.

Academic pressure was identified as the primary source of stress by 68% of participants.

Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between stress levels and:

Academic workload ($r = 0.56$)

Examination anxiety ($r = 0.61$)

Fear of academic failure ($r = 0.58$)

These findings suggest that academic pressure plays a substantial role in shaping students' stress experiences.

Discussion

The findings align with previous research indicating that academic pressure is a dominant stressor among university students. High workload and frequent assessments contribute to increased psychological tension and emotional exhaustion. The significant correlations between stress and academic factors highlight the need for institutional changes in curriculum design and assessment methods. Psychodiagnostic assessment proves to be an effective approach for identifying stress levels and risk factors. Early detection allows for timely psychological support, stress management training, and counseling interventions.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that academic pressure significantly contributes to stress among university students. Psychodiagnostic assessment provides valuable insights into students' psychological well-being and should be integrated into higher education systems. Universities are encouraged to implement preventive programs, promote mental health awareness, and create supportive learning environments to reduce academic stress.

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