Academic Stress and Happiness Among Young Adults

Ms. Aayushi Ajithkumar Pillai[1], Dr. Lokesh L[2]

[1]Department of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College(Autonomous), Bengaluru
[2]Assistant Professor, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous),Bengaluru

Abstract

This study examines the correlation between academic stress and happiness in college-aged young adults, employing a correlational approach and quantitative methods to assess the impact on emotional well-being. With a sample of 240 predominantly college students from across the country, data were collected through self-report questionnaires, utilizing the reliable and valid Academic Stress Scale and Oxford Happiness Scale. The results reveal a statistically significant but relatively modest positive association between academic stress and happiness. Although happiness proves to be a robust predictor of academic stress, it explains only a small fraction of its variance. The relationship is deemed complex, influenced by various quantitative and qualitative factors. The study underscores the importance of a holistic approach to enhance student well-being and alleviate academic stress, emphasizing the need to address factors beyond happiness, including coping methods and support networks. Future research is encouraged to explore additional contributors to academic stress in young adults. In summary, this study contributes valuable insights into the intricate interplay between academic stress and happiness, enriching our understanding of student well-being and mental health complexities.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Happiness, Young Adults, College Students.

Introduction

Academic stress, comprising psychological, emotional, and physical strain, is a pervasive challenge for students across educational levels. Stemming from diverse academic demands and expectations, such as coursework, exams, and societal pressures, this stress uniquely impacts students' overall well- being and mental health. While some stress can be motivational, chronic and excessive academic stress poses risks to mental and physical health, as well as academic achievements. Pressures to meet expectations, navigate a competitive academic environment, balance multiple responsibilities, and the fear of failure contribute to heightened stress levels. The paradox is that extreme stress can lead to physical symptoms, mental health issues, and impaired cognitive functions, ultimately affecting academic performance. To effectively manage academic stress, students can implement strategies like prioritizing tasks, seeking emotional support from mentors and peers, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and incorporating stress-reducing practices such as mindfulness and meditation. Recognizing academic stress as a prevalent issue, collaborative efforts from educational institutions, families, and society are essential to create a supportive environment that equips students with effective coping mechanisms for a more resilient and successful academic journey.

Happiness, often regarded as a fundamental human aspiration, encompasses a range of positive emotions

and a sense of overall well-being. While happiness is a universal goal, its understanding and attainment can be complex due to the interplay of various internal and external factors. This essay delves into the multifaceted nature of happiness, delving into its determinants, consequences, and strategies for enhancing personal well-being.

Happiness is influenced by a combination of individual traits, social interactions, and life circumstances. One of the key contributors to happiness is genetics, which predisposes individuals to experience certain baseline levels of positive affect (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996). However, environmental factors and personal choices also significantly shape one's happiness.

Social relationships play a pivotal role in fostering happiness. The quality of social interactions, support networks, and a sense of belonging contribute to an individual's overall well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2004). Additionally, personal values, such as intrinsic goals aligned with self-expression and personal growth, are associated with higher levels of happiness (Sheldon & Kasser, 2001). The effects of happiness extend far beyond momentary joy. Research indicates that happiness is correlated with positive outcomes in various domains of life. One of the most significant impacts is on mental health. Individuals with higher levels of happiness tend to exhibit lower rates of depression and anxiety (Helliwell et al., 2020). This suggests that positive emotions act as a protective factor against psychological distress.

Method

Research Design

The research design which is used research is quantitative and descriptive research design which provides a framework of the method and techniques used. The current study enables the researcher to find the impact of Academic stress and happiness among young adult. The correlational analysis is a non-experimental research method that summarizes the relationship between two variables into a correlation coefficient, which can quantify the strength and describe the direction of linear relationship between two variables. Also, the value of the correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to 1, where -1 indicates a negative correlation and 1 indicates a positive correlation between the variables.

Objectives

The aim of the study is to identify or assess academic stress and happiness among young adults.

Hypothesis

The hypotheses of the research are as follows:

H01: There is no relationship between academic stress and happiness among young adults.

H02: There is no impact of Academic stress on happiness.

Population and Sampling

Young adults of 18 to 25 age group, would be consensually understood and evaluated. The study focused on young adults (n=240), evaluation details are collected with respect to ethics, human rights attainment, opposing malpractice and misapplication, leading to negatively impacting human rights. Consent is taken by assuring its greatness in study and field. Convenient sampling method is used.

Instrumentation

The first part of the instrumentation carries with the collection of academic stress among young adults

using Academic Stress Scale followed by Oxford Happiness Scale. Academic Stress Scale has total items were 40. Each factor has equal number of items. The higher the value of the score, the more the academic stress and vice-versa. To evaluate the level of happiness Oxford Happiness Scale is used. It contains 29 items along with 12 reversed scoring items and it is measured by using a six-point Likert scale. All the scores along with the reversed scores were summed up and divided by 29. The sum of scores is an overall measure of happiness. Higher the scores, the greater the happiness.

Data Analysis
Collected data, entered into Microsoft Excel, exported the statistical analysis of this data through IBM SPSS 28.

Data Collection Procedure
The data has been carried out through Google form on social media platforms, completed by students in person by scanning a QR code. Strict confidentiality and ethical guidelines like consent, anonymity, voluntary participation maintained by verbally explaining the purpose and values that the study is intended to focus on.

ResultsTable 1 *Academic Stress and Happiness descriptive statistics*

Variable	N	M	SD
Academic Stress	240	1.98	0.58
Happiness	240	3.30	0.39

Table 1 shows variables' descriptive statistics, Academic Stress and Happiness of 240 samples. Academic Stress mean is 1.98 and Happiness mean is 3.30. The standard deviations
0.58 for Academic Stress and Happiness is 0.39.

Table 2 *Academic Stress and Happiness among Young Adults*

Variable	n	M	SD	Academic Stress	Happiness	r
Academic Stress	240	1.98	0.58	-	.000	.141
Happiness	240	3.30	0.39	.000	-	.141

p*<0.05

Table 2 shows the Pearson Correlation method for variables, i.e., potential relationship between Academic Stress and Happiness among Young Adults. Results signifies a weak positive correlation between Academic Stress and Happiness, suggesting that higher levels of Academic Stress are associated with slightly higher levels of Happiness. (r = .141, p = .000).

Table 3 *Academic Stress and Happiness among Young Adults*

Variables	Unstandardized	Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Model summary
	B	Std error	Beta	

Happiness	.211	0.96	.141	t 2.194
				p 0.29
				R .141
				R square .020
				F 4.816

Dependent variable: Academic stress

Table 3 shows The Regression Analysis which shows statistically significant but weak positive relationship between Happiness and Academic Stress (B = 0.211, Beta = 0.141). While the overall model is significant (F-statistic = 4.816), the low R-square (0.020) and a p- value of 0.29 suggest that although a connection exists, the impact of happiness on reducing academic stress is uncertain and relatively small.

Discussion

The study aims to explore the connection between academic stress and happiness among college students, revealing a significant positive correlation (r = 0.141, p < .05). Notably, academic stress emerged as a predictor of happiness, indicating its modest yet meaningful impact on students' well-being. The findings align with prior research, suggesting a general trend of slightly increased happiness with higher levels of academic stress. However, the study also acknowledges discrepancies and nuances within the existing literature. The research identifies potential factors contributing to variations, such as individual coping mechanisms, cultural influences, and methodological differences.

Furthermore, the study highlights that the relationship between academic stress and happiness is complex. The mention of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) work emphasizes the variability of coping strategies and the intricate nature of stress and well-being. Cultural influences, as demonstrated by Lu, Chang, and Yeh (2011) study, also play a role in shaping perceptions of stress and happiness. It concludes by emphasizing the importance of addressing these inconsistencies and conducting more comprehensive research to gain a deeper understanding of the interplay between academic stress and happiness among college students.

Conclusion

The study's main aim was to analyses, identify, and comprehend whether there was impact of academic stress and happiness. The analysis was also done on the level of academic stress based on various sociodemographic aspects or variables chosen for analysis such as, marital status, age and work experience. The study's findings reveal a significant relationship between academic stress and happiness, indicating a weak correlation. Moreover, the results indicate a substantial difference in the levels of stress and happiness among the study participants.

Implications

Despite its limited strength, this insight has practical applications, informing plans to enhance student well-being and reduce academic stress. Recognizing the broader impact of contentment on physical and mental health, the study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive well-being strategy. Additionally, it proposes future investigations into specific stressors and coping techniques contributing to academic stress in young adults. In sum, the study offers valuable information for educators, policymakers, and

researchers to develop targeted interventions for improving the overall welfare of young adults in educational settings.

Limitations of the study

The study sheds light on academic stress in young adults, revealing that it accounts for only 2% of the stress variation, signalling the presence of unexplored variables. Despite a statistically significant but somewhat weak association between happiness and academic stress, the direction of causality remains unclear, with the study suggesting that academic stress tends to increase as happiness rises. The study recognizes the limitation of its cross-sectional design, suggesting the need for longitudinal studies to better understand temporal relationships and causality. This underscores the need for a comprehensive well-being strategy, cautioning against solely addressing happiness. However, limitations include the study's omission of specific stressors and coping techniques, and potential bias due to reliance on self-reported data.

Suggestions of Future Researchers

The study suggests future research directions to deepen our grasp of the intricate link between young adults' happiness and academic stress. It emphasizes investigating specific stressors within academia, such as coursework nature and assessment expectations, to identify factors strongly correlated with decreased happiness. Examining coping mechanisms, accounting for individual differences and cultural influences, becomes crucial in comprehending how individuals navigate academic pressures. Longitudinal research is proposed to assess the lasting impact of interventions like stress management courses on promoting well-being. The absence of a thorough exploration of coping mechanisms and cultural influences in the study underscores the need for more in-depth investigation in future research. Furthermore, cross-cultural research is encouraged to shed light on how diverse cultural norms and educational systems shape perceptions of stress and coping strategies. These focused research directions aim to offer a more comprehensive understanding, paving the way for targeted interventions and support systems.

Reference

1. Barba Yannis, G., Bandari, M., Zheng, X., Baquerizo, H., Pecor, K.W. & Ming, X. (2022) Academic stress and mental well-being in college students: Correlations, affected groups,and COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.886344]
2. Basith, A., Syahputra, A., Fitriyadi, S., Rosmaiyadi, R., Fitri, F. & Neni Triani, S. (2021) Academic stress and coping strategy in relation to academic achievement. *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 40, 292–304 [DOI: 10.21831/cp.v40i2.37155]
3. Singh, A.K. (2018) Mindfulness and happiness among students: Mediating role of perceived stress.
4. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 44, 198–207.
5. Rasim, E.D. (2015) Relationships between psychological well-being, happiness, andeducational satisfaction in a group of university music students. *Educational Research andReviews*, 10, 2198–2206 [DOI: 10.5897/ERR2015.2375].
6. Academic stress scale (2014). *Psychological Resources: Academic Stress Scale*. psychologicalresources.blogspot.com/2014/12/academic-stress-scale.html.
7. Hammen, C. (2005) Stress and depression. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 1, 293–319 [DOI:

10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.1.102803.143938]

8. Hills, P. & Argyle, M. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: A compact scale for the measurement of psychological well-being (2002). *Personality and Individual Differences*,33, 1073–1082 [DOI: 10.1016/S0191-8869(01)00213-6].

9. Lu, L., Chang, B. & Yeh, K.H. (2018) Academic stress and its moderators: A cross-cultural longitudinal study. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 49, 759–780.

10. Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B. & Podsakoff, N.P. (2012) Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendations on how to control it. *Annual Review of Psychology*,63, 539–569 [DOI: 10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100452].