

Academic Stress and Life Satisfaction Among College Students

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Abstract

This study analyses the possible relationship connecting academic stress in students with life satisfaction. A quantitative approach underpinned by the positivist philosophy was used to administer standardized questionnaires through Google Forms to collect data from 110 participants. The measure for academic stress levels was the Perceptions of Academic Stress Scale (PAS), while the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) assessed life satisfaction. Negative correlation was found through data analysis on SPSS, indicating that higher life satisfaction is associated with lower academic stress levels, and vice versa. These results depict the significant relationship that the two variables have on each other. Knowledge on the interplay between subjective well-being and academic experiences is advanced through this study.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Life Satisfaction, College students

Introduction

Life satisfaction, which refers to the cognitive evaluation by an individual of his or her overall quality of life against personally set standards, according to Diener et al. (1985), is a vital component of psychological wellbeing. This construct impacts on individual subjective judgments pertaining to his or her life circumstances, which, to mention a few, include personal achievements and relationships with others as well as future ambitions (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Among college students, it becomes significantly important since this is a transitional life stage where an individual faces academic pressure, adapts to changes in social groups, and explores their identity (Suldo et al., 2008). This phenomenon was said to portray in the people's lives better mental health and how well college students performed academically, as well as boosting their resilience against stressors (Rode et al., 2005). This may also imply that the exact understanding of such life satisfaction concerning college students will form the bases for studying those different factors that affect their holistic well-being.

Misra and McKean (2000) describe academic-related stress as the psychological and physiological strain resulting from academic demands exceeding what is considered an individual's coping resources. Academic stress is another case prevalent to college-going students. This type of synthesis is formed mainly due to coursework, strict deadlines, examinations, and the anxiety of performance. At a certain point in time, students are expected to become self-sustaining and deal with career aspirations, which is why, at certain periods in their college lives, such stressors are magnified for them (Robotham, 2008). Disturbances caused by constant strain make one undergo negative consequences like anxiety, burnout, and lack of interest in studies, which tend to spoil life altogether for students (Suldo et al., 2008). Absolutely, understanding academic-related stress is key about the shaping of psychological as well as academic experiences undergone by the college-going population.

The relationship between life satisfaction and academic stress must be critically studied as both constructs are negatively correlated and influence each other (Rode et al., 2005). High academic stress may harm life satisfaction through exhausting students' coping resources so that feelings of dissatisfaction and reduced well-being emerge (Misra & McKean, 2000). On the other hand, life-satisfaction students can be more resistant to experiencing academic stress since good life evaluations could ameliorate the negative impact of demanding academic environments (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Evidence suggests that an increase in life satisfaction will diminish the effects of academic stress, leading to better adjustment for college students (Wilks, 2008). Therefore, the relationship provides justification for interventions that address these two constructs because they simultaneously promote both student wellbeing and academic success.

Review of Literature

Academic stress is a universal form of stress for students in every education level and is said to consist of psychological distress pertaining to academic demands and pressures. Brewer (2019) explains that stress occurs when academic demands exceed the student ability to cope; it may then have adverse effects on mental and physical well-being. The nature of academic stress is something that educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals need to know so that they can enhance students' overall well-being (Kristy Anjala, 2024).

Academic stress, on the other hand, constitutes psychological distress arising from the pressures and frustrations associated with academic performance and fear of failure. This research paper addresses the issue among the tenth-grade school students in the district of North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, where it establishes that there is no significant difference in the levels of academic stress between male and female students or between urban and rural students. This strong positive correlation between academic stress and academic achievement among these secondary school students (Kaur & Herbert, 2024).

Life satisfaction is an important component of subjective well-being, which has been widely studied in the field of education since it significantly affects student outcomes. In particular, it has been shown that life satisfaction strongly predicts academic engagement and achievement in university students (Antaramian, 2017).

According to the literature, higher life satisfaction has also been associated with higher job performance, greater career satisfaction, higher levels of organizational commitment, and reduced turnover intentions (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012).

Different studies show that there are multifaceted, interrelated dimensions to the relationship between life satisfaction and academic stress. Academic stress has an adverse effect on life satisfaction, but some mediators and moderators intervene in this relationship. For example, life satisfaction is negatively affected by performance stress but positively affected by academic self-perception (Rathakrishnan et al., 2022).

According to the findings, academic stress negatively predicts life satisfaction for the undergraduate sample, accounting for 6% of the variance in life satisfaction ($p < .01$). The mediation effect of locus of control had an additional influence on life satisfaction, accounting for 10% of the variance ($p < .01$). This means that students with high academic stress have their life satisfaction lowered additionally because of a locus of control (Karaman et al., 2018).

Need and Significance

Academic stress is one of the key determinants of mental health among college students, and it also has

an impact on life-satisfaction and quality of life. While good academic pressure leads to the intellectual and psychological growth of individuals, excessive stressors usually result in a decline in the person's perceived quality of life and a sense of freedom within themselves. This change is characterized quite often by a higher incidence of anxiety or depression among individuals suffering from stress. It is necessary to meet stringent academic standards, which imposes considerable psychological burden. It is also a pressure for good performance or avoiding poor performance in academics, which often heightens the responses to stressors and weakens adaptive modes of coping. Thus, research on academic stress with respect to life satisfaction is critical to coming up with meaningful operations for student mental health, academics, and general wellness. This research is to throw light on the multifarious interconnections between academic stress and life satisfaction-a pertinent issue to present day collegiate cohorts. Such thorough understanding becomes important in order to devise tailored programmed measures for better psychological outcomes and better quality of life for university students.

Method

Objectives

- To measure the level of life satisfaction among student population.
- To measure the degree of academic stress experienced by student population.
- To measure the association between life satisfaction and academic stress among student population.

Variables and Operational Definition

Life satisfaction is the measure of how happy and content an individual feels about their overall life-well-being-as determined by the average rating given on statement agreements on a scale similar to the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).

Academic Stress has come to describe that type of pressure and strain experienced by students owing to school or college demands such as examinations and assignments, typically measured using the Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS), where the students rate the level of stress, they perceive within themselves.

Hypothesis

- There is no statistically significant association exist between life satisfaction and Academic stress among students.
- There is statistically significant association exist between life satisfaction and Academic stress among students.

Sample

A convenient sample of 110 college students was selected. The questionnaire was distributed through social media platforms.

Inclusion Criteria

The study included regular college students enrolled in both undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) programs from various colleges around the globe.

Exclusion Criteria

Part-time students and students who do not know English were excluded from the study.

Tools for the Study

Ed Diener, Robert A. Emmons, Randy Larsen and Sharon Griffin developed the Satisfaction with Life Scale in 1985. It comprises 5 items which was scored on a 7-point Likert Type scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). It demonstrates a good construct and criterion validity, in addition to that SWLS has high internal consistency (0.89-0.90 Cronbach's alpha) and high test - retest reliability (0.82-0.84).

Dalia Bedewy and Adel Gabriel developed the Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS) in 2015. Supported by exploratory factor analysis, it comprises 18 items and assesses three broad categories: academic expectations, academic workload and tests, and academic self-perceptions. Ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5, each item was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

Research Design and Statistical Technique

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design. Data were gathered using a convenient sampling method, and the correlations between variables were analysed with SPSS statistical software.

Result

To test the hypotheses, the correlation method is used. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the correlation between Life satisfaction and academic stress among college students.

		Academic Stress	Life Satisfaction
Academic stress	Pearsons	1	-.450**
	Correlation		
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	110	110
Life satisfaction	Pearsons	-.450**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	110	110

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed)

The statistical association between the measures of academic pressure and life satisfaction was assessed to be Pearson's coefficient at -0.450 (moderate negative correlation). It suggests the presence of negative association in which the greater the academic stress, the more a student scores lesser in life satisfaction level. This correlation is found to be significant at p-value 0.000 ($p < .01$, 2-tailed). Therefore, based on the results of statistical analysis, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis.

Discussion

A quantitative analysis, comprising 110 samples, was undertaken to explore the relationship between life

satisfaction and academic stress among college students. An instrument used in the study was the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) while the PAS, or Perception of Academic Stress Scale, was used to further assess the targeted variables. The data was analysed using SPSS and showed a significant negative correlation between both variables ($r = -0.450$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, an increase in the academic stressors results in a decrease in life satisfaction and vice-versa.

The negative correlation found corroborates results from earlier studies that life satisfaction moves in the opposite direction to academic stress. In particular, Rode et al. (2005) indicated that higher levels of academic stress were detrimental to students' well-being, a finding supported by our current results. Misra and McKean (2000) stated that too great an academic burden can crush a student's coping resources, leading to lower life satisfaction. Current findings indicate that college students facing high academic pressure from coursework, exams and performance expectations report low satisfaction with their lives; this is the psychological impact of this stressor.

Given the developmental circumstances under which students contend with multiple transitional hurdles, including academic difficulty, social adjustment, and identity formation (Suldo et al., 2008), this relationship is particularly relevant. The moderate strength of the relationship (r from -0.450) supports this assertion: a meaningful relationship but not absolute. This means, that although academic stress is a significant contributor to life satisfaction, other variables probably exist. This indicates that interventions aimed toward reducing academic stress can greatly increase life satisfaction in university students.

The conceptual models affirming that life satisfaction protects against stress are reinforced by the study. As articulated by Pavot and Diener (2008), increased life satisfaction affords students resilience in coping with academic pressures. The present significant negative correlation further suggests that students with low life satisfaction might lack the buffering effect and thus be more vulnerable to the impact of academic stress. This interaction highlights the dynamic nature of subjective well-being and its exposure to contextual demands as residing in the higher learning environment (Wilks, 2008).

Summary and Conclusion

The present study explores the co-relations of life satisfaction with academic stress among college students. The sample of the study included a total of 110 college students from diverse institutions all around the world, selected through a convenient sampling method. The data were collected using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and the Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS) with the help of online questionnaires. The statistical analysis was done through SPSS software. The results indicate that there exists a highly significant negative correlation between life satisfaction and academic stress, inferring that an increase in academic stress causes a decrease in life satisfaction and vice versa.

Implication

Through an understanding of the inverse correlation between life satisfaction and academic stress, institutions of higher education can benefit. Institutions could utilize these findings to install programs such as stress management intervention programs, peer support networks or even laws towards a healthier academic environment. These programs could help students cope better with academic pressure, improve quality of life and mental health, and produce improved academic performance outcomes. The study findings may also entice additional interest for enacting pragmatic strategies toward the betterment of student wellness within a much broader holistic educational philosophy.

Limitation

- The use of a convenient sampling method may restrict the generalizability of the findings.
- Limited sample size may not represent the broader college student population.
- Exclusion of non-traditional students (e.g., part-time) narrows the scope.
- Quantitative methods alone failed to capture the full picture of individual experiences.

Suggestion for further Research

- Randomly sampling would make the results more representatively applicable.
- Increase the sample size in order to bolster its power and reliability in the research findings.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to observe the changes in life satisfaction and academic stress over a period of time and show any possible causation.
- Explore other variables like selective coping strategies or even social support in the dynamics of life satisfaction and academic stress.

Ethics Followed

- Participants provided consent prior to participation, fully informed of the study's purpose and procedures.
- The study avoided probing sensitive emotional topics to prevent discomfort.
- All personal information and responses were kept confidential and anonymized.

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