



Academic Stress and Burnout among Students in the Semester System: A Quantitative Investigation on Prevalence, Predictors, and Coping Strategies

Ania Shamim¹, Uzma Munawar² & Hina Munir³

¹MPhil Scholar, The Department of Education, The Women University Multan, Email: Aniasiyal786@gmail.com

²Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Women University Multan, Pakistan,

Email: uzma.munawar@wum.edu.pk

³Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Women University Multan, Pakistan, Email: hina.munir@wum.edu.pk

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Corresponding Author:

Ania Shamim

Email:

Aniasiyal786@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

This research "Academic Stress and Burnout Among students in the Semester System: A Quantitative investigation on prevalence, predictors, and coping strategies" seeks to investigate the effects of academic stress on semester system learners and identify the strategies they use in coping with stress to avoid burnout. The primary aims are to explore the prevalence and causality of stress among semester system students, and determine the effective coping strategies practiced by students to overcome stress with the maintenance of academic achievement. A quantitative approach was used as the research design, and data were gathered using structured questionnaires from a sample of 250 BS and M.Phil Physics and Urdu department students of The Women University Multan and Emerson University Multan. The survey also inquired for the reasons of academic distress, such as workload; peer pressure, exam anxiety, and cost burden, and usage of coping strategies such as time management, social support, and relaxation skills by the students. Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were used to examine the data. The findings showed high incidence of academic distress and burnout symptoms in students. Findings also suggested that students who used coping strategies effectively had less stress and greater academic engagement. Institution support and student-specific interventions are therefore vital in coping with academic stress as this study highlights. The study also underscores the importance of practicing healthy coping strategies to enhance students' psychological well-being and academic achievement in semester-based higher education systems.

Introduction

Education is one of the most important tools in social, political, and economic advancement for a country. Since information is a potent weapon, education is that rope which can lift individuals and societies to higher levels. The education system plays a vital role in preparing individuals for life roles, shaping teenagers' self-concept, and laying down the foundation for ultimate social contact that transcends vocational horizons. Among the centers for formal education, schools and universities are significantly influential in students' belief, habits, and attitude (Kamaruddin , 2022). In universities, the semester system has been associated with greater academic stress due to tight deadlines, repeated tests, and stacking of tasks (Ahmed, 2023). Academic stress over time can lead to burnout that is evidenced by emotional exhaustion and poor performance (Gupta & Wani, 2021). Though awareness of this has grown, little empirical research exists to measure what works for prevention or management (Iqbal , 2022). According to (Peifer and Schulz, 2020), academic stress is actually defined by the student's perception and interpretation of the academic demands. When the students find the academic demands as controllable, they are driven; however, when the pressure is felt as uncontrollable, they become anxious and burnt more quickly. Students who perform well perform better under academic stress than underachievers, who are not motivated and lack coping skills (Rahman & Jabeen, 2022). The welfare of students is becoming a greater priority for educators, parents, and legislators. This is due to the fact that students seem to be more vulnerable to a variety of physical and mental health issues, such as anxiety, loneliness, and depression (Duffy, 2019; Twenge, 2018). The Holy Qur'an emphasizes that human beings are endowed with the finest capabilities and potential to excel, observing the dignity and potential of all individuals (Farooq, 2021). The latter has even been demonstrated to be a result of other people's burnout (teacher burnout, for example, has been linked to lower student performance (Madigan & Kim, 2021) Different theoretical viewpoints, including those first put forth by Maslach and associates, have influenced these interventions. (Awa, 2010). burnout includes a three-dimensional arrangement that aligns with the definitional arrangement qualified to professional burnout: feeling tired due to academic demands, being distrustful and becoming apart toward academic studies, and experiencing feelings of lack of skill (Scheufli, 2002).

Literature Review

A literature review is an important component of any research study. It provides a broad overview of the research subject, generates in-depth perspective, and avoids duplication by virtue of the widened perception of the subject and its various facets. The chapter attempts to critically examine existing studies on academic stress and burnout in semester-based education systems and determine the relevance and necessity of the current study.

Academic Stress

Academic stress is psychological distress caused by academic pressures such as coursework, routine testing, and stringent expectations from teachers and parents. Under semester systems, the condensed academic calendar enhances this pressure through continuous assessment and time-limited performance demands (Ahmed & Hussain, 2022; Noreen , 2021). Compared with annual systems, semester systems are associated with increased pressure, which causes greater anxiety and emotional burnout (Rehman & Ali, 2021).

Students often must make the right decisions about their higher studies and professional life, which accounts for stress levels (Fatima & Tariq, 2020). Chronic stress, especially if it's seen as beyond

one's control, undermines student performance, motivation, and mental well-being (Iqbal , 2021; Kamran & Khalid, 2020). Besides, academic stress is linked to mental disease such as depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders (Shah & Mahmood, 2023; Yasir , 2021).

Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion

Burnout is a mental condition induced by long academic pressure. It is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced feelings of accomplishment (Ali & Malik, 2021). In the semester system, the repetitive cycle of tests, brief recesses, and workload accumulation contributes to student burnout (Rashid & Anjum, 2023).

Students are capable of executing heavy workloads with overstated expectations of success, and this leads to emotional detachment, poor academic performance, and eventually academic disengagement (Khalid et al., 2022). Academic studies confirm that unresolved burnout contributes to intentions to withdraw and reduced academic persistence (Tariq & Zafar, 2022; Khan & Bukhari, 2023).

Coping Strategies and Social Support

The effective coping strategies are required to manage academic burnout and stress. Students that are effective utilize skills like task prioritization, time management strategies, and task breakdown (Shafique & Batool, 2020; Malik & Mehmood, 2022). Mindfulness exercise and the Pomodoro technique were also found to enhance attention and reduce symptoms of burnout (Naseer & Shahbaz, 2023).

Social support possesses a robust buffering effect. Undergraduate students with robust social networks of friends, mentors, and family members have lower levels of stress and improved emotional resilience (Latif & Sattar, 2021). Participation in extracurricular activities, peer study groups, and academic mentoring schemes strengthens emotional stability and feelings of belonging (Ahmed & Zubair, 2020; Awan & Khalil, 2023).

Institutional Role and Recommendations

Universities play a significant role in reducing and preventing burnout by having flexible academic policies, mental health counseling, and student-centered education (Farooq,2020; Jamil & Aslam, 2021). Institutional measures that contribute to overall well-being such as counseling services, awareness seminars, and academic advising have been proven to offset the negative effect of academic pressure (Zahid, 2023).

Research objectives

- To Investigate the impact of academic stress on students at semester system.
- To Identify the effective coping techniques of students at semester system.

Methodology

This study employed two quantitative research design to investigate academic burnout and stress among semester system students of Women University, Multan The population for this research

consisted of postgraduate and undergraduate students enrolled in semester programs in Women University, Multan. A representative sample was selected using an appropriate sampling method. The sample was determined to be: Education Department: 95 students (out of 520 total students) Physics Department: 41 students (out of 250 total students) Urdu Department: 64 students (out of 320 total students) Science Department: 50 students (out of 300 total students) The research adopted a stratified sampling technique to provide equal representation from all departments. Data was collected on structured questionnaires to evaluate the coping strategies, burnout, and levels of stress among students. Descriptive statistics (percent, frequency) and chi-square tests were utilized during data analysis to identify significant correlations among the variables.

Analysis

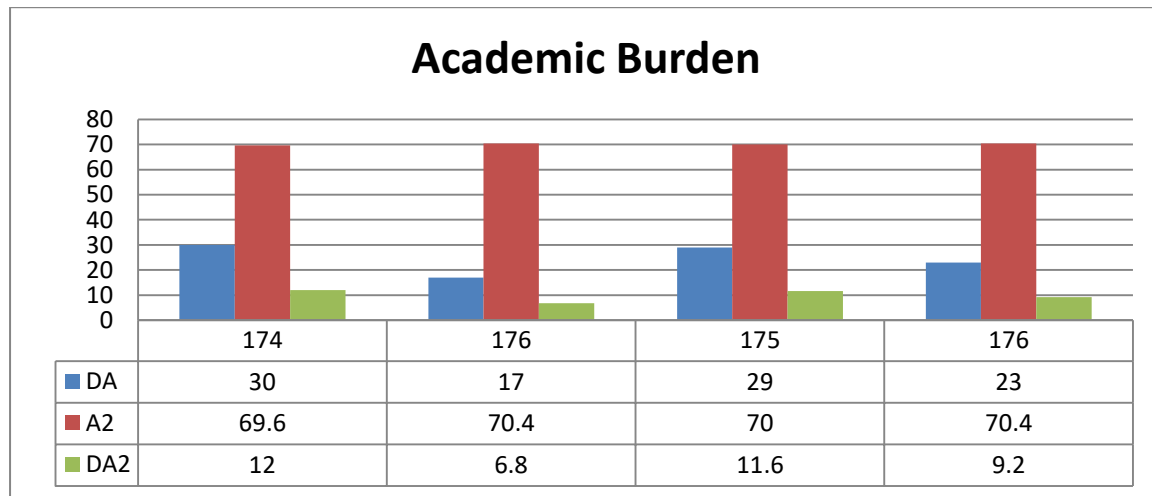
This study presents the analysis and interpretation of data for the research study, which tested academic burnout and coping mechanisms among the semester system students. Statistical analysis was used to examine the data in relation to the study's objectives. The following tables present the results, which guided the research questions. In addition to determining the prevalence of academic stress and burnout among students of the semester system, the analysis also probed the relationships between academic stress and different demographic variables. The effectiveness of different coping mechanisms and strategies in overcoming academic stress and burnout was also determined in this study. The results are graphically presented through tables and figures, and the analysis results are properly presented. The below statistical method was utilized:

Standard deviation, Mean, Frequency, Percentage.

Table 1: Investigate the impact of academic stress on students at semester system.

	Frequency		Percentage		Mean	Std.deviation
	A	DA	A	DA		
Academic stress has a negative impact on students.	174	30	69.6	12	2.08	1.136
Academic responsibility often leads to overwhelming stress.	176	17	70.4	6.8	2.04	.970
Excessive homework and assignments contribute to academic stress.	175	29	70	11.6	2.09	1.043
Pressure to achieve high grades is a significant source of academic stress	176	23	70.4	9.2	2.03	1.001
Fear of failure is a major contributor to academic stress in students.	189	20	75.6	8	2.04	.958
Academic stress affects physical health of students.	177	22	70.8	8.8	2.08	.937

Figure 1:



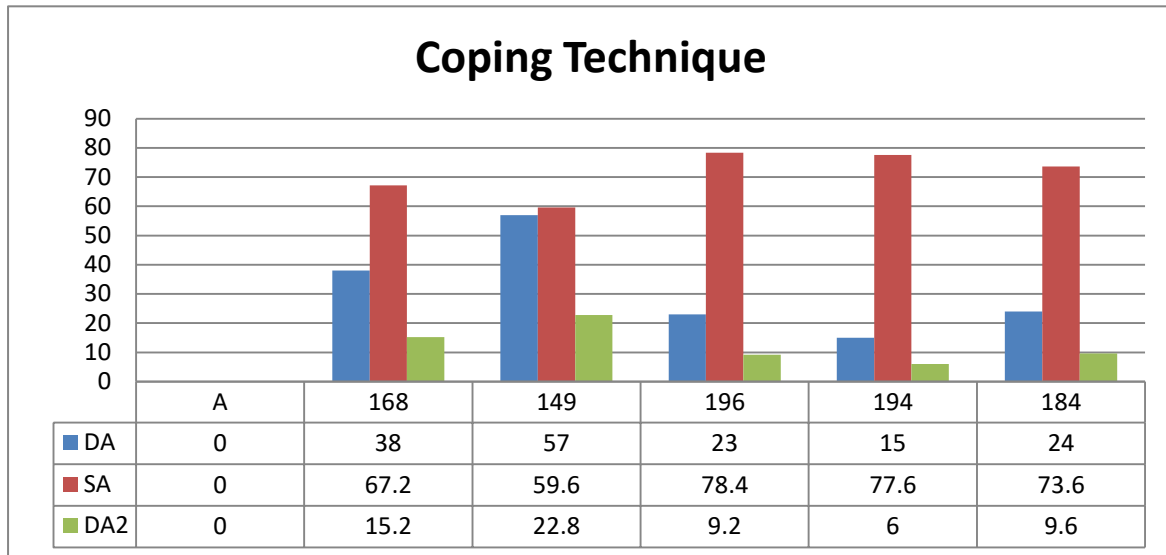
Findings of the study identified that academic stress significantly affects students. A large percentage of students (69.6%) concurred that academic stress negatively affects them, with a mean score of 2.08 and standard deviation of 1.136. Likewise, 70.4% of students concurred that academic responsibility tends to create excessive stress, with a mean score of 2.04 and standard deviation of 0.970. The research also established that too much homework and assignments are the sources of academic stress, as 70% of the students concurred with this assertion (mean = 2.09, SD = 1.043). In addition, the need to attain good grades was established as a key source of academic stress, as 70.4% of the students concurred (mean = 2.03, SD = 1.001). Fear of failing was also discovered to be a significant factor in causing academic stress, as 75.6% of the students concurred (mean = 2.04, SD = 0.958). Furthermore, the research unveiled that academic stress impacts the health of students physically, with 70.8% of students concurring (mean = 2.08, SD = 0.937). In general, the research indicates that academic stress is a common occurrence among students, with numerous factors being responsible for its occurrence. Identify the effective coping techniques of students at semester system.

Table 2:

Coping technique

	Frequency		Percentage		Mean	Std.deviation
	A	DA	A	DA		
Reading books for pleasure enhances relaxation	168	38	67.2	15.2	2.12	1.160
Listening to music to reduces stress.	149	57	59.6	22.8	2.45	1.235
Spending time in nature improves mood	196	23	78.4	9.2	2.08	.902
Engaging yourself in creative activities like (art, crafting, gardening)	194	15	77.6	6	1.99	.878

Mindfulness practices (meditation, eating food, cooking, deep breathing) reduce stress.	184	24	73.6	9.6	2.07	.963
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The study questioned a variety of stress-reducing activities and their effects on the students' health. The study concluded that engaging in activities such as staying outside (78.4% concurrence, mean = 2.08, SD = 0.902) and creative activities such as painting, crafts, or gardening (77.6% concurrence, mean = 1.99, SD = 0.878) proved to be highly effective in enhancing mood and reducing stress. Mindfulness practices such as meditation, slow breathing, and mindful eating were also helpful, as 73.6% of students agreed (mean = 2.07, SD = 0.963). Reading for enjoyment was also said to bring about relaxation in 67.2% of students (mean = 2.12, SD = 1.160), while music helped in alleviating stress in 59.6% of students (mean = 2.45, SD = 1.235). Overall, the results indicate that having fun and leisure activities is a good stress-coping activity and can also enhance the general well-being of students.

Discussion

The research identifies the widespread incidence of stress and burnout among semester system students as primarily being due to workload overload, academic pressure for excellence, and fear of failure. Stress impacts beyond learning are also apparent on physical health as well as affective depletion. Findings validate existing research in that they register higher stress on semester systems due to multiple frequent tests and intensive schedules. Burnout is one of the main effects, and this leads to lower motivation and academic disaffection. Students cope with the effects of burnout utilizing coping, and nature activity, creative activity, and mindfulness interventions are the most effective interventions. These are coping strategies that enable emotional regulation and stress reduction, as illustrated from past relaxation and leisure coping strategies research. In their study, Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya (2014) highlighted that burnout was negatively influenced to decrease engagement and performance, especially in rigorous semester-based programs. In a similar vein, Misra and McKean (2000) research established that students in colleges usually suffer from excessive stress from workload and time constraints impacting their physical and emotional well-being to a great extent. Institutional response through counseling and training in stress management is emphasized by the study as highly important in the enhancement of students' well-

being. An optimal learning culture and the provision of students with successful coping strategies would increase performance and resilience even under highly stressful learning contexts. Indeed, academic stress fighting is most frequently a matter of interceptive action by students, teachers, and universities. By stress management education and a healthy learning environment, universities can enhance students' motivation, coping, and long-term success under semester systems. Institutional intervention is necessary to avoid academic stress. The well-being of students should be taken into highest consideration while planning stress-reduction programs, providing counseling facilities, and cultivating concord in studies in universities. Additionally, students should be guided to healthy coping strategies, and staff should manage workload and promote a healthy learning atmosphere.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the universality of student burnout and stress in semester education systems. The findings of the study reveal that excessive academic pressure, pressure to perform, and fear of failure are some of the overriding factors that lead significantly to psychological and physical distress among students, and that they, in the majority of instances, end up leading to emotional exhaustion and demotivation. This stress, if not regulated, has negative effects on academic learning and health. The research also recognizes healthy coping strategies and students benefit most from nature activities, creative pursuits, mindfulness activities, and recreational reading. The strategies lower stress and improve emotional resilience, pointing toward the need for non-academic interventions for assistance in acquiring good mental health. Institutional support is vital in minimizing academic stress. Universities should be responsible for responding to student well-being by stress-reducing measures, accessible advice, and a healthy learning environment. The students also need to be encouraged to learn healthy coping mechanisms, while the teachers must learn how to manage workloads and offer supportive learning conditions. Academic stress, in the long term, should be addressed through collective input from institutions, teachers, and students. By implementing stress management courses and healthier campus lifestyles, colleges can advance student resilience, motivation, and eventual success in semester-by-semester frameworks.

Recommendations

- Institution's role Colleges and universities need to implement stress-reducing programs, provide counseling facilities, and schedule a balanced academic calendar.
- Student's Role Students must practice good time management, use peer and family support, and participate in stress management workshops.
- Role of Educator The educator can act as a catalyst by creating a healthy learning environment and special care to monitor students' workload.

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