

**RESEARCH PAPER****Academic Stress and Coping Strategies among University Students: Case Study of university of the Punjab****¹Rabia Hameed, ²Dr. Rashida Jabeen and ³Dr. Ghazanfar Hussain***

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Corresponding Author ghazanafarhussain@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

Present study was intended to find the effects of academic stress on individual tendencies to cope with different difficult situations interrelated to learning process. Moreover, it was designed to identify the association between academic stress and used strategies to cope up with the stress. Abilities to understand new learning process and subjects are reassembled to traits which individual adopt to confront a difficult situation. It was a quantitative research by nature and Sample of (N=200) students (n=100 hostilities, n=100 day scholar) were selected using purposive sampling technique from University of the Punjab, Lahore. Correlation analysis was used to test hypothesis of relation between variables, whereas, test of Independent sample of two groups was conducted to find the difference of means of two groups (hostility and day scholar). Results found the significant relationship between variables and coping strategies as significant predictor for academic stress. Mean scores of hostiles and day scholar students are different for academic stress and coping strategies. The study findings suggested that coping strategies need to be measured at higher and secondary level to understand the academic and social adjustment of students.

Keywords: Academic Stress, Coping Strategies, Day Scholars, Hostels Students**Introduction**

Academic stress can be described as a student's mental state brought on by integral part of social and self-imposed pressure in a learning environment that reduces the student's psychological resources (Shaikh, et al., 2004). Level of stress tends to be happened when an individual forcefully demands to exceed his or her procedural possessions (Hussain & Malik, 2022; Imran, et al., 2016). Stress has various forms and numerous stressors behind, might be physical, social and psychological in nature depending upon the conditions and symptoms (Struthers, Perry & Menec, 2000). There are sort of injuries, raise of fall in body temperature, sweating, being milled of micro inversion are some common examples of physical stress (Shaikh, et al., 2004).

Students all around the world mostly suffer from physical and mental health conditions like depression, anxiousness, and academic stress. In light of this, it can be said that investigators (Umar, 2019) who are more concerned with the mental health and wellness of the student sample are addressing the topic of mental and physical health (Dada, Babatunde & Adeleye, 2019). Further, the concept of academic stress is adaptable and controllable in severe circumstances. However, continuously high levels of stress might cause serious issues (Dada, Babatunde & Adeleye, 2019). In life span, everyone experiences multiple stressors and they can be possibly relevant to academic life (Kalyani, 2020). The recent literature intended that a variety of stressors affect university life, including academic pressure, socioeconomic disadvantages, and psychological issues (Shah, et al., 2010). It necessitates a great level of commitment, dedication, and resolve on the part of the person. It could also entail living apart from the family, which increases social vulnerability

and brings about sense of isolation. The adolescents might not be ready to adapt to this change and can feel stressed out academically (Kalyani, 2020). This contemporary study was also intended to measure the stress of students and their coping strategies to address these stress for better academic performance.

Literature Review

The academic stress is a psychological disorder and one of the most common factors contributing to emotional problems in people of all ages (Kalyani, 2020; Younas, 2016). However, human body naturally reacts to an unexpected event that occurs in the person's life which may be physical, mental, or emotional (Saeed, Ullah & Ahmad, 2020). A stressor is an event that magnifies this natural reaction. According to the World Health Organization, stress will overtake other leading cause of mortality (like suicide) by the year 2020 (Yousafzai, et al., 2020). Stress has been considered as the most common cause of the death of the students from 15 to 24 years of college students (Schwartz, 2011). As suicide is not a disease (Sikander & Aziz, 2012), but a complicated spectrum of behavior that comes from spur of idea to materialize. Further, this behavior refers to the act of self-immolation (Baloch, Kamaludin & Baloch, 2021).

Students who are under academic stress experience adverse physiological and emotional effects that have an impact on their academic learning and over all well-being (Kausar, 2010). Therefore, developing efficient advising solutions to support students' growth and academic and professional achievement can be greatly simplified with an understanding of prevalence, contributing variables, and emotional issues (Kausar, 2010). Despite the fact that there were numerous research on academic stress during the COVID-19 pandemic in economically affluent nations.

Further, students from different environment face difficulties in adapting new language, educational methods and environment that reflect high level of stress among students (Imran, et al., 2016). As international students used to stay in hostels apart from their home so, incidents of home sickness stress and other psychological stressors are reported which tend to increase their level of academic related stress (Han et al, 2021). For example, Misra, Crist, and Burant (2003) reported in their study about the students faces education related stress also prone at high risk of developing other social, psychological and physical stresses than other students. Moreover, both the life stressors and education related stressors act as predictors to measure each other (Gallagher et al., 2021).

There are several conditions, situations or stressors which aggravate the symptoms leading to higher or lower level of stress including, uncertainty and level of aversive incentive (Imran, et al., 2016). Uncertainty of behavior and emotional arousal are usually found as characteristics of these provoking situations. As result of these provoking situations cognitive abilities like thinking, understanding and evaluation of specific situations effects person's self-control against the condition (Shaikh, et al., 2004). On other hand affected person may use some defense mechanism in form of shield against the stressors to cope with situation of uncertainty (Kamish et al., 2002).

Characteristics of personality and individual difference reflects their tendencies f differences for adaptation of coping strategies. There are four models of coping learning strategies given by Krone. Sensitizer: refers to the coping model used when an individual intentionally towards stress provoking situation (Shaikh, et al., 2004). These individuals showed high rank on variation towards stressors and low effective rates on cognitive abilities against stressors. Whereas both repressive and non-defensive models reflect person's flexibility and flat behavior towards both stressors and cognitive dimensions respectively (Rosa et al., 2021).

Level of stress depends on conflicts between consciousness and unconscious mind of an individuals against a stressor along prolonged phase of denial. There are number of universal stressors which can create the prolong denial phase in individuals, suffering from it. However individuals variedly response to universal stresses i.e. war, unemployment, terror, fire burst and natural disasters. Some individuals develop severe stress disorders and poser traumatic stress disorders in response to this environmental stress while other act in normal manner unaffectedly (Busari, 2012).

Wilson (2004) research detected out the alterations among results and tiers of hypothetical strain in Australian and worldwide students existing in the universal dormitory in Melbourne, Australia. The sample consisted of 84 learners from 20 different regions and countries though online survey method of research using student life stress inventory measure various stress related situation and its effects on students' life perception developed by (Gadzella, 1994). The study results found no significant difference between the level of stress experienced by Australian and other international student.

A discontinuity study was conducted on the 250 students enrolled in public and private universities of Malaysia, at their first year of graduation, to find out the conjuring techniques adopted by students between effectiveness of coping and settlement towards stressors (Quraishi, Aziz & Siddiquah, 2018). Study used survey method to analyze the patterned responses of effort of respondents to attain idea of different coping techniques. Yet there was significant association between the stresses generated by finance department policies of the university and coping techniques used by students against these stressors (Quraishi, Aziz & Siddiquah, 2018). Moreover, statistical significant difference was found between the group of students used coping strategies and those who were not used coping strategies against academic, educational and environmental stressors (Clabaugh, Duque & Fields, 2021). The phenomena of academic stress gained attention internationally and nationally in the perspective of academicians. However, the phenomena of academic stress of students were not addressed thoroughly in the local perspective. The idea of coping strategies did not gained attention before that how the coping strategies has helped the students to address the phenomena of academic stress, which also have addressed the literature gap that how students used the coping strategies against their academic stress. The H_1 of this investigation helps to see the association of academic stress with coping strategies, which depicted their association with each other. Further, this study H_2 explore the difference in the impact of academic stress on day scholars and hostilities students, which help to understand the level of (day scholar or hostilities) impact from academic stress. The study also investigates the difference in the coping strategies of day scholars and hostilities in term of academic stress.

Material and Methods

It was a quantitative research by nature and researchers used cross-sectional research design to collect and analyzed the data. Purposive sampling techniques was used to select sample of 200 respondents (100 day scholar students and 100 hostilities students), who were enrolled in different programs of study in different departments of Punjab University, Lahore. Education related stress was measured through the use of scale for adolescents developed by (Sun, et al. 2010). Five domains were measured with the help of 16 items and every domain of the scale was based on different statements. Like, (i) study pressure was measured using four items of the scale. (ii) Study workload consist of three items, (iii) Self-Expectations Stress consist of three items, (iv) worry about grades consist of three items and (v) dejection workload measured through three items.

Further, coping strategy questionnaire used to measure the strategies to cope with stressors related to academic and educational environment developed by Kausar (2001). This scale was contained 62 items, from which 52 items were used to obtained information of coping techniques by the students. Four subjective areas of concepts were measured

using this scale named as: (i) coping of active practical consist at (11items) (ii) coping of active distractive (8 statements), coping avoidance-focused, (14 statements), and coping of religious-focused have (8 statements). Reliability of each factor measuring effect of coping techniques was moderate to high (Kausar & Munir, 2004). Before moving towards final data collection the researchers done a piloting with the help of 50 students (25 day scholar, and 25 hostile), which help the researchers to understand the potential of questionnaire to measure the academic stress and coping strategies and make changes which were necessary to do in the questionnaire. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire was also checked and Cronbach alpha of the questionnaire was .85 which highlighted a strong reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Researchers used correlation and independent sample techniques for the purpose of data analysis. Furthermore, researchers considered the concept of ethical consideration and informed the students before interview and anonymized the name of students. The concept of volunteer participation also keep in view by the researchers.

Results and discussion

The analysis of this study based on the descriptive part that in which researchers discussed in detail the demographic profile of the study participants, whereas the second part of analysis of the study based on inferential to explore the relationship in students coping strategies with their stress and it differently impacted the hostilities students then day scholars.

Table 1
Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	92	46
Female	108	54
Age		
16-20	80	40
21-24	90	45
25-28	30	15
Residence		
Day Scholars	99	49.5
Hostilities	101	50.5
Parents Education		
Nil to Middle	50	25.0
Matric to FA	92	46.0
BA to MA	50	25.0
MPhil/PhD	8	4.0
Monthly Income		
10000-25000	59	29.5
26000-50000	69	34.5
51000-80000	51	25.5
81000 Plus	21	10.5

In this research majority of the participants were female and most of the students were belong to the age group of 16-20. Further, majority of the student's parents were have the education from matric to FA and mostly of them were have the monthly income between 26000 to 50000.

Table 2
Relationship between educational stress and coping strategies (components of coping strategies) N=200

	Variables	2	3	4	5	6	Sig.	Mean	SD
1.	Educational stress	.51**	.84*	.76**	.34***	.31*	0.03	0.23	2.9147
2.	Coping Strategies	-	.233**	.94*	.008**	.34**	.04	0.68	2.86
3.	Active-Practical Coping	-	-	.91	.38**	.761	.001	1.74	3.85
4.	Active Distractive Coping	-	-	-	.076	.01**	.013	0.85	2.71
5.	Avoidance-Focused Coping	-	-	-	-	.52	.05	0.52	2.85
6.	Religious-Focused Coping	-	-	-	-	-		0.23	2.1

In the correlational analysis, the results indicated a strong relationship between educational stress and coping strategies ($r=.51$, $n=200$, $p<.0$). When the relationship between the educational stress and components of coping strategies was measured, the result directed a strong positive relation between educational stress and active practical coping ($r=.84$, $n=200$, $p<.05$); and active distractive coping ($r=.76$, $n=200$, $p<.05$). Whereas, educational stress have moderate level of relationship with avoidance focused coping ($r=.34$, $n=200$, $p<.05$) and religious focused coping strategies.

Table 4
Difference in hostilities and day scholars on the response of Stress through independent sample t-test (N=200)

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	T	Df	'p'
ES	Day scholar	92	168.5978	20.31189	-.71	198	.01
	Hostilities	108	170.6574	20.57181			

Results of difference between the means of two groups (day scholar and hostilities) were calculated shown in table indicating a difference in mean and SD of two groups, day scholar ($M=168.59$, $SD=20.31$) and hostilities ($M=170.65$, $SD=20.57$; $t(200) = -.71$, $p=.01$).

Table 5
Difference in mean scores of hostilities and day scholar coping strategies through Independent sample t-test (N=200)

Variables	Type	N	M	SD	T	df	'p'
CS	Day Scholars	100	169.2020	22.70064	-.35	19	.03
	Hostilities	100	170.2079	19.19287			

Difference in mean of hostilities and day Scholar students were found through t-test. Results have shown a significant difference between the means score of two groups for using coping strategies to deal with academic related stressors, day scholars ($M=169.2$, $SD=21.70$) and hostilities ($M=170.20$, $SD=19.19$; $t(200) = -.35$, $p=.03$) students.

Discussion

The current era of globalization emphasis on individual's growth prior to the society (Basith et al., 2021). Indeed, societies place more emphasis on individuals cause stress, pressure, anxiety, and depression in the general population. Similarly, in academic settings students face variety of stressors leads to low performance. The modern world has permeated standardized values of individual competitiveness, achievement and growth which may unevenly effects human with varied consequences. This situation may happen as stress whether it is home, workplace, or any other social setting. The word "stress" is not alien to ears in today life therefore it has gained focused in research due to its magnitude of effects.in academic settings students encounter kind of pressures and demands to counter increasingly demands of global competitiveness and career orientation. Though in

pursuance of sense of achievement, students face socio cultural differences, political and governance structure, and financial obstacles

This study results found significant positive relationship between stress related to academic courses, educational environment, learning language as adaptation towards academic institutions with patterns or strategies used by students to cope with these stresses. Results of t-test showed a difference in the means of groups of male and female on the level of stress they experienced and strategies to cope with stress among hostilities and day scholar students. Results of present study was supported by the conclusions from literature, studied the similar variable in account to analyse association and difference of groups.

A recent research study (Baloch et al., 2021; Han et al., 2021; Imran et al., 2016; Kalvani 2020; Salman et al., 2022) formulating the relationship between academic stress and use of coping technique by students during the pandemic situation of COVID-19 indicated negative association that more the level of adaptation of the students towards the use of academic related techniques of coping lessen the chances of individual's to develop stress for their academic performances. Moreover, those who have much stress of examination, presentation, assignments and their grades are tend to develop less use of coping strategies (Babicka-Wirkus, 2021).

The Coping strategists overcome any form of irrational behavioral attempts or focus on an accommodative cognitive pattern in any threatening situations or events (Smith & Renk, 2007). Accordingly, the ability of students' behavior regulation profoundly depends in part on their personal learning of coping resilience and techniques and institutional culture. Furthermore, Ayman et al. (2006) carried out research on social support and academic stress among students. The findings indicated that students' perceptions of stress and social support are moderate and in gender comparison, female students perceived more stress and social support than male students. Therefore, this research finding also consolidate the result of this contemporary study.

Recommendations

Based on current research findings, this study envisions fewer suggestion for future researcher as to select respondents with diverse sociocultural background, economic status, and religious beliefs can provide reliable data for teacher's role and institutional reforms.

- Further research analyzing Gender difference among students enrolled in different universities can provide a wider picture of this research phenomena.
- Similarly, longitudinal and cross-sectional method with several populations at the secondary, higher secondary, and college levels can investigate the association between coping mechanisms and academic stress, social adjustment, and academic adjustment.
- Furthermore, the vitality of teacher's role can supplement mentorship by conducting trainings or enabling sessions in developing coping strategies among the students to overcome their stress for their noteworthy educational achievement and personality development.

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