

PREDICTING THE ACADEMIC STRESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS THROUGH GENDER AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Jodelle John A. Enriquez

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology
jodellejohnenriquez07@gmail.com

Jelly Ace S. Basilio

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology
jellyace.basilio@kcast.edu.ph

Erika Mae P. Asoy

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology
erikamae.asoy@kcast.edu.ph

Jezil Joy C. Apolinar

Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology
jeziljoy.apolinar@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores how academic stress affects higher education students, focusing on gender differences and the role of parental involvement. Prior research shows that academic pressure can lead to poor well-being, lower grades, and higher dropout rates. Stress from negative factors such as heavy workloads, high expectations, and time management challenges particularly affect students. Interestingly, female students tend to report higher levels of stress compared to male students, possibly due to greater parental involvement and societal pressures. Grounded in Tend and Befriend Theory, the study examines how gender, program of study, and parental involvement impact academic stress through quantitative descriptive-predictive method. Using mean, standard deviation, and multiple regression analysis, the results show that both gender and parental involvement play a big role in students' stress levels. Female students, especially those with parents who have high expectations, tend to experience more stress. Surprisingly, the stress levels of students have no significant difference when differentiated according to the students' enrolled program. The study emphasizes the need for parents to balance their expectations with supportive involvement to help reduce stress. Schools should also offer programs that teach students how to cope with academic pressures, particularly those students who are most affected by stress such as the female students. Future research should look at how different forms of parental involvement impact stress and include a more diverse range of students.

Keywords: Gender, parental involvement, academic stress, gender and development

INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is one of the most prevalent challenges encountered by higher education students. Thus, students who are under academic stress have lower levels of subjective well-being, which results in poorer grades and a high dropout rate (Watson & Watson, 2016). Likewise, academic workload puts pressure on students to meet deadlines, complete assignments on time, and maintain high grades which negatively impact students' well-being. A study of Yang et al. (2021) finds out that academic workload is positively linked to perceived stress among college students. Resultant to academic stress, Bhutanese college students suffer from mental health problems such as depression, suicidal ideation, suicide attempt, drug usage, and unsafe sex (Sherab et al., 2019; Schuelka et al., 2021) which may lead to an increase in the already high dropout rate as well as a rise in stress and anxiety of the students (Yangdon et al., 2021). Further, according to Koshy (2019), most students experience academic stress with 45% having mild stress, 51% with moderate stress, and 4% with severe stress.

Moreover, a study found that variations in parental involvement in curricular and co-curricular activities of university students impact students' academic achievement, self-grooming, and character development, fostering confident and productive individuals (Batool & Raiz, 2019). Additionally, parental involvement in college students influences autonomy development by maintaining support, fostering responsibility, and avoiding unnecessary control, as highlighted in the study (Cullaty, 2011). Further, parental involvement can impact college students' psychosocial development positively by influencing career exploration, decision-making, and social competence, but excessive support may hinder competence development (Taub, 2008). However, parental involvement may vary based on their economic and social status. A researcher reveals that parental involvement for working class and low-income college students involves emotionally supportive relationships, with students being autonomous but emotionally connected to parents, acting as intermediaries with the institution (Wartman, 2009).

Also, gender influences how students respond to certain academic stressors. It was revealed in a study that both male and female college students experience stressors like family issues and academic pressure, impacting their academic and social lives differently (Ali, 2023). Moreover, female college students generally experience higher levels of perceived stress compared to males. Gender differences exist in coping strategies, with females utilizing emotion-focused coping and specific strategies more frequently (Graves et al., 2021). Also, female college students perceived higher academic stress in fields related to humanities and social sciences (Chen et al., 2020).

Studies also revealed that the program chosen by college students has contributed to their academic stress. Academic factors, such as the field of study, significantly contribute to stress among college students pursuing professional courses like medical, dental, and engineering (Waghachavare et al., 2013). Moreover, academic stress affects both first and final year undergraduate students pursuing a course or degree in college, with final year students experiencing higher stress levels due to increased responsibilities (Sridar, 2018).

This study aligns with SDG No. 3: Good Health and Well-Being, by addressing the problem of academic stress as mental health concern and SDG No. 4: Quality Education, by promoting supportive learning environment. It will also highlight gender differences in the level of stress and the

role of parental involvement which helps higher education institutions (HEIs) to implement policies that foster students' well-being. Also, it will contribute to the academic community in its advocacy towards balanced parental support and reduced dropout rates.

The aim of this study is to determine the significant difference in the level of academic stress when grouped by gender and program. The study's objectives are the following: describe the profile of respondents in terms of gender and program; describe the level of parental involvement in terms of parental expectations, parent-student communication, homework support, and school-based involvement; describe the level of academic stress in terms of pressures to perform, perceptions of workload, academic self-perceptions, and time restraints; and to predict if gender, program, and parental involvement significantly predict academic stress. Overall, this study is significant as it will support mental health awareness and academic success of the students which advance the goals of quality education and well-being.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored to the Tend and Befriend Theory of Taylor (2012) which suggests that when people face stress, they often seek comfort by caring for others and forming connections for protection. This response is driven by brain chemicals like oxytocin and opioids. When someone feels isolated or threatened, their oxytocin levels rise, signaling a need for social connection. This hormone helps reduce stress, especially when paired with positive social interactions. This pattern is more common in women and may explain why they tend to live longer than men. A study of Kneavel (2021) supported this theory as it found out that females have higher level of stress and support system. Studies conducted about the difference in academic stress between male and female college students shows that female students have higher level of stress than male students (Graves et al, 2021; Karaman et al, 2019). Another study of Gao et al. (2020) found out that anxiety is the most serious issue especially among female college students.

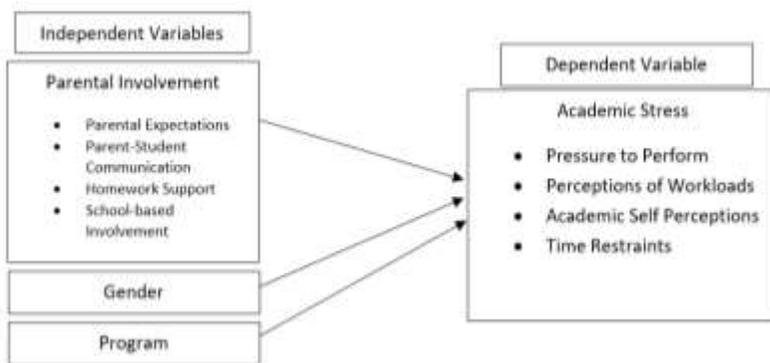
Conceptual Framework

Presented in Figure 1 below is the conceptual framework of the study. The dependent variable is the academic stress of higher education students while the independent variables are parental involvement, gender, and program of study. Parents' involvement with their children's academic performance can contribute as well to academic stress. Parental involvement, as defined by Castro et al. (2015), is the active participation of parents in various aspects of children's growth as well as in their social, emotional, and academic development that manifests in many forms such as setting expectations in children's academic success, homework, and presence in school activities. Mailhot and Feeney (2017) finds out that parents continue to shape academic self-concept and academic achievement among college students. The following are the indicators of parental involvement. The first indicator is parental expectations. The study by Zheng et al. (2023) with college students as participants found that parental expectation has a negative correlation with academic stress compared to middle students, as college students spend less time with their parents.

The second indicator of parental involvement is parent-student communication. Parent-student communication can be defined as communication from parents, which can take the form of verbal or written interactions with students, and other types of parental involvement, which

encompass the monitoring of students by their parents (Cosden et al., 2013). In a research investigation carried out by Covarrubias et al. (2020), it was found that first-generation students had fewer discussions about college with their parents compared to continuing-generation students. Among first-generation students, engaging in conversations about college was linked to more favorable self-concepts, subsequently leading to higher grades. However, for continuing-generation students, there was no significant association between discussions about college, self-concepts, and grades.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework Showing the Variables of the Study



The third indicator of parental involvement is homework support. A study reveals that homework support can influence academic stress in college students. Positive affect moderates the relationship between social support and stress, while negative affect plays a role in increasing stress levels (Çivitci, 2015).

The fourth indicator of parental involvement is school-based involvement. A study of Peng et al. (2024) found out that parental school-based involvement can increase academic stress in students due to heightened academic expectations, while also enhancing learning engagement, thus, impacting academic performance positively and negatively.

Gender significantly influences academic stress among first-year university students, impacting areas such as academic demands, psychological and social relationships, and financial difficulties, as shown in the study of Aloka (2023). A recent study shows that female students tend to experience higher academic stress compared to males post-Covid-19. Individual counseling interventions may be necessary for outlier cases among female students (Iffil et al., 2023).

The choice of program or course also has an influence on the academic stress of college students. Research conducted by Banerjee and Chatterjee (2016) highlighted that the choice of degree or program impacts academic stress among medical, engineering, and general stream college students affecting their mental well-being and suicidal ideation.

Academic stress refers to the pressure experienced by the students due to academic expectation, demands, and challenges. A study points out that academic stress among college students, particularly adolescents, is a growing concern impacting mental health. Variances exist

between genders and institution types, influencing stress levels and academic performance (Reddy & Lalitha, 2021). The first indicator of academic stress in this study is pressure to perform. Pressure to perform refers to the internal and external factors that exceed a student's ability to cope, negatively impacting their academic performance (Abdullah et al., 2020).

The second indicator of academic stress is perceptions of workloads. Perceptions of workload significantly relate to academic stress in college students, impacting well-being and academic attainment (Smith, 2019).

The third indicator is academic self-perception. A study by Garcia-Martinez et al. (2023) reveals that academic self-perception influences academic stress in college students through emotional intelligence and neuroticism. Further, fear of failure and self-esteem significantly impact academic procrastination among college students, reflecting how self-perceptions influence academic stress indirectly through procrastination (Begum, 2023).

The last indicator of academic stress is time restraints. Based on the study of Macan et al., (1990) college students' time management behaviors correlate with academic stress. Poor time management, such as last-minute studying, is linked to increased stress and lower academic performance.

METHODS

This study used a quantitative descriptive-predictive method of research to measure relationships of the variable with varying levels of measurement. This method uses statistical tools to accurately describe characteristics of a population and uses current data to forecast future outcomes (Kamper, 2020). In this study, it was used to investigate parental involvement, gender, and program to significantly predict the academic stress of higher education students.

The respondents of this study were 366 students of Kapalong College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology for the Academic Year 2023-2024. The sample size was computed using Raosoft sample size calculator from a total population of 7,526 students.

This study employed stratified random sampling. Stratified random sampling is a sampling process that divides the population into non-overlapping subpopulations called strata and then simple random sampling is carried out on each stratum (Widodo et al., 2023). In this study, the different strata are the six departments of the institution: teacher education, criminology, agriculture, business administration, office administration, and public administration. Each academic department is proportionally represented in the sample. A simple random sampling technique was applied within each department to select respondents. This minimizes sampling bias and enhances generalizability of the findings, as it ensures that students from the six departments are equally represented in this research.

The study adopted questionnaires from the Academic Stress Scale of Bedewy and Gabriel (2015) and the Student-Rated Parental School Involvement Questionnaire of Goulet et al. (2023). The first questionnaire consists of 18 questions with four indicators: pressures to perform, perceptions of workload, academic self-perceptions, and time restraints. On the other hand, the second questionnaire has 20 questions with four indicators: parental expectations, parent-student communication, homework support, school-based involvement.

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested with Cronbach's alpha through pilot testing. Cronbach's alpha gives a score between 0 and 1 that indicates the internal consistency of a test or scale. A score closer to 0 indicates a more critical consistency of the scale (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Table 1
Scaling for Academic Stress

Score Interval	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High	This means that academic stress among higher education students is always manifested.
3.40 – 4.19	High	This means that academic stress among higher education students is oftentimes manifested.
2.60 – 3.39	Average	This means that academic stress among higher education students is manifested.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	This means that academic stress among higher education students is sometimes manifested.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	This means that academic stress among higher education students is seldom manifested.

From the pilot testing of the scale given to 30 respondents, academic stress generated a Cronbach's alpha of .872, which is higher than the required .70 for reliability. The scoring guide of academic stress was categorized into five levels; the range listed above.

Table 2
Scaling for Parental Involvement

Score Interval	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High	This means that parental involvement is always manifested among higher education students.
3.40 – 4.19	High	This means that parental involvement is oftentimes manifested among higher education students.
2.60 – 3.39	Average	This means that parental involvement is manifested among higher education students.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	This means that parental involvement is sometimes manifested among higher education students.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	This means that parental involvement is seldom manifested among higher education students.

Parental involvement generated Cronbach's alpha of .909, which is higher than the required .70 for the reliability from the pilot testing of the scale given to 30 respondents. The scoring guide of parental involvement was categorized into five levels; the range listed above.

The researchers administered the research instrument via online using Google Forms. A permission letter to conduct the study was submitted to and approved by the Students Development Services Office. The survey was conducted during the first semester of the school year 2023-2024. The questionnaire was checked and approved by the research office of the institution. Pilot testing was conducted to ensure if the questionnaire is valid in the research setting. The data gathered was then tallied, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted by the researchers based on the objectives of the study.

RESULTS

Table 3 shows the summary data gathered from the respondents about their attitude toward parental involvement. The result showed an overall mean of 3.36 and a standard deviation of .60 with a descriptive level of average. The score signifies that academic stress among higher education students is manifested.

Based on the findings, the indicator, *academic self-perceptions*, has the highest level which has a mean of 3.66 and standard deviation of .80, which has a high level of description. It means that academic stress among higher education students is oftentimes manifested in terms of academic self-perception. Second to this is the indicator, *perceptions of workload*, which has a mean of 3.33 and standard deviation of .80. which has an average level of description. This means that higher education students experience moderate level of academic stress in terms of perceptions of workload. Next to this is the indicator, *pressure to perform*, with a mean of 3.25 and standard deviation of .80 which has also an average level of description. It indicates that moderate level academic stress among higher education students is manifested in terms of pressure to perform. However, the indicator that got the lowest level is the indicator, *time restraints*, which has a mean of 3.19 and standard deviation of .66, which is described as average level. This indicates that higher education students experience moderate level academic stress in terms of time restraints.

Table 3
Level of Academic Stress

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
Pressures to Perform	3.254	0.796	Average
Perceptions of Workload	3.326	0.799	Average
Academic Self-perceptions	3.656	0.787	High
Time Restraints	3.190	0.657	Average
Overall	3.356	0.599	Average

Table 4 shows the summary data that has been gathered from the respondents with the result of parental involvement which showed an overall mean of 3.23 and a standard deviation of .78. This signifies that parental involvement is manifested among higher education students.

Based on the findings, *parental expectation* got the highest level with a mean of 4.00 and a standard deviation of .90, indicating a high descriptive level. It means that oftentimes, parents of

higher education students have higher expectations of their academic performance. Next to this is *parent-student communication* with a mean of 3.35 and standard deviation of 1.04, which indicates an average level of descriptive equivalency. This means that parents of higher education students have parental involvement in the form of parent-student communication. The third one is *homework support* with a mean of 3.08 and a standard deviation of 1.11, which also has an average level of description. It indicates that parents of higher education students have parental involvement in terms of helping them with their homework. However, the indicator, *school-based involvement*, got the lowest level among the indicators of parental involvement with a mean of 2.47 and a standard deviation of 1.09, which is described as low level. This indicates that, sometimes, parents of higher education students have school-based involvement.

Table 4
Level of Parental Involvement

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
Parental Expectations	4.002	0.903	High
Parent-Student Communication	3.359	1.039	Average
Homework Support	3.080	1.112	Average
School-Based Involvement	2.470	1.087	Low
Overall	3.228	0.775	Average

Table 5 shows the correlation between parental involvement and academic stress of higher education students. The correlation analysis indicated that parental involvement among higher education students showed a statistical significance p-value of .000 and r-value of 0.426, which means that there is a significant relationship between parental involvement and academic stress.

Table 5
Relationship between Parental Involvement and Academic Stress

Parental Involvement	Academic Stress				Overall
	Pressures to Perform	Perceptions of Workload	Academic Self-perceptions	Time Restraints	
Parental Expectations	.416** (.000)	.307** (.000)	.585** (.000)	.351** (.000)	.529** (.000)
Parent-Student Communication	.198** (.000)	.225** (.000)	.342** (.000)	.314** (.000)	.339** (.000)
Homework Support	.079 (.129)	.131* (.012)	.234** (.000)	.278** (.000)	.223** (.000)
School-Based Involvement	.149** (.004)	.170** (.001)	.079 (.133)	.324** (.000)	.221** (.000)
Overall	.269** (.000)	.272** (.000)	.397** (.000)	.421** (.000)	.426** (.000)

Table 6 shows the data analyzed by regression analysis to test if the predictors, namely gender and parental involvement, significantly predict the academic performance of higher education students. R² of .190 or 19 percent of the variance in academic stress is explained by gender, program, and parental involvement. In comparison, the other 81 percent is the coefficient of alienation that is not covered in the study.

Table 6
Predicting the Academic Stress of Higher Education Students through Gender and Parental Involvement

Predictors	Academic Stress			Sig.
	B	B	T	
Constant	2.099			
Gender	0.093	.095	1.994	.047
Program	.003	.007	.148	.882
Parental Involvement	.338	.437	9.149	.000
R =	.436			
R ² =	.190			
F =	28.301			
P =	.000			

On the one hand, data illustrates that gender and parental involvement both have an influence on the academic stress of higher education students. Program, on the other hand, was regarded as not significant in predicting the academic stress of higher education students.

Below is the formula for predicting the dependent variable, which is the academic stress of higher education students. Furthermore, the simulation of the said model is discussed in this section.

The formula for Multiple Linear Regression:

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$$

Model for Academic Stress among Higher Education students:

$$\text{Academic Stress} = 2.099 + 0.093(\text{Gender}) + 0.003(\text{Program}) + .338(\text{Parental Involvement})$$

Table 7
Simulation of Academic Stress among Higher Education Students Model

Gender	Program	Parental Involvement	Academic Stress
2(Female)	2(Education)	3.228	3.382

Using the formula, we coded female as 2 in gender, and education was coded as 2 in program, and parental involvement of 3.228, the academic stress will be 3.382. This means that when a female student of education program has a parental involvement being in average level of description, academic stress is manifested. The results also show that parents of higher education students have high expectations for their child in regard to their academic performance.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results, *academic self-perceptions* have the highest descriptive level among the indicators of academic stress. Thus, *academic self-perceptions* are oftentimes manifested among higher education students. Garcia-Martinez et al. (2023) stated that self-perception of college students has an influence on their academic stress. Further, the influence of self-perceptions contributes indirectly to academic stress through procrastination (Begum, 2023).

Pressures to perform, perceptions to workload, and time restraints all show average level of description. Hence, *pressure to perform, perceptions to workload, and time restraints* are manifested among higher education students. In line with the results, pressures to perform (Abdullah et al., 2020), perceptions of workload (Smith, 2019), and time restraints (Macan et al., 1990), contribute to academic stress of college students.

Of the indicators of parental involvement, *parental expectation* has the highest level of description. This means that parents' expectation is oftentimes manifested among higher education students. According to Zheng et al. (2023), *parental expectation* is in negative correlation with academic stress compared to middle students, as college students spend less time with their parents

Moreover, the indicator, *parent-student communication*, is described to be average in level, which involves the monitoring of students by their parents through verbal or written communication (Cosden et al., 2013). This means that *parent-student communication* is manifested among higher education students.

Also, *homework support* as an indicator of parental involvement has an average level of description. Çivitci (2015) states that homework support can influence academic stress in college students and that positive affect can moderate stress while negative affect can increase the levels of stress. Thus, *homework support* is manifested among higher education students.

The last indicator, *school-based involvement*, is described as low. Peng et al. (2024) stated school-based involvement has an impact on academic performance in both positive and negative light as a result of increased expectation. Hence, *school-based involvement* is sometimes manifested among higher education students.

Parental Involvement and Gender in Academic Stress of Higher Education Students

It was revealed in the results of this study that there is an average level of parental involvement, which is manifested among higher education students. The data indicates that parental involvement has a significant relationship with academic stress, and this relationship varies with

gender. Higher education students, regardless of gender, experience varying levels of academic stress as influenced by different aspects of parental involvement. The analysis reveals that parental expectations are strongly correlated with academic stress, particularly in terms of pressures to perform and academic self-perceptions. This is in contrast to the study of Zheng et al. (2023) which shows that parental expectation is in negative correlation with academic stress. Female students, in particular, exhibit higher levels of stress compared to their male counterparts, aligning with some study findings (Graves et. al, 2021; Chen et. al, 2020) that women face greater academic stress compared to men. This correlation suggests that high parental expectations might contribute more significantly to academic stress among female students.

Overall, while parental expectations and parent-student communication are associated with higher levels of academic stress, school-based involvement shows a weaker impact. The lower involvement of parents in school-based activities might contribute less to academic stress compared to other forms of parental involvement.

Relationship between Gender and Parental Involvement in Academic Stress

The result revealed that gender and parental involvement have a significant relationship with the academic stress of higher education students. This confirms the assertion of Taylor (2012)'s Tend and Befriend Theory that females have higher levels of stress compared to males and that to overcome this, they seek for social support system and focus on protecting and nurturing themselves. This support system might be in the form of same-sex close relationships, same-sex friends, or even family members. Furthermore, this only shows that higher education students, especially female students need a good extent of parental involvement to cope with stressors such as academic stress.

Predicting the Academic Stress through Gender and Parental Involvement

The regression analysis indicates that gender and parental involvement are significant predictors of academic stress among higher education students, accounting for 19% of the variance in academic stress. Gender has a significant impact, with female students experiencing higher levels of academic stress compared to male students. Parental involvement also significantly predicts academic stress, highlighting its role in influencing students' stress levels. The results support the studies of Graves et al. (2021), Chen et al. (2020), and Karaman et al. (2019) that stress is more common among female college students. Further, it also corroborated the idea of Taub (2018) that excessive parental involvement among higher education students can hinder the development of their competence.

The model demonstrates that increased parental involvement, particularly in terms of expectations, significantly contributes to higher academic stress. However, the program of study does not significantly predict academic stress in this study, suggesting that the choice of program alone may not be a substantial factor in determining stress levels.

Conclusion

The study highlights the substantial role of gender and parental involvement in influencing academic stress among higher education students. Female students experience higher levels of academic stress compared to male students, and parental expectations are a significant predictor of

this stress. Although parental involvement generally has a positive effect on students' academic performance, its impact on stress levels varies with the type of involvement and gender. The findings suggest that while parental involvement can support students, it can also contribute to increased academic stress if expectations are set too high.

Recommendation

Based on the results and the conclusions of the study, this study recommends parents to balance their expectation with their supportive involvement. Parents should engage in open communication with their children about academic goals and support them in managing their workload effectively. Also, higher academic institutions should offer programs that help students develop coping strategies for managing stress, particularly focusing on those who might be disproportionately affected, such as female students. Institutions should consider implementing policies that promote mental health and well-being among students such as peer tutoring program in schools for students who experienced difficulties in their academic life. Lastly, further studies should explore the impact of different types of parental involvement and their effects on academic stress across various programs and institutions. Additionally, including a more diverse sample of students, including those from different socio-economic backgrounds and different types of institutions, could provide more comprehensive insights into the dynamics of academic stress.

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