



Parental Expectations and Influence on Academic Stress among UG Students

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ABSTRACT

Every student, from kindergarten all the way through college, needs their parents' help to succeed academically. On the other hand, children's academic performance suffers when parents demand too much without providing enough support. Their academic performance suffers and their stress levels rise when they fail to meet their parents' expectations. In the Indian state of Nagaland, the study's goal was to examine the connection between parental expectations and academic stress among undergraduate students. We used a random sampling technique to get our samples. Empirical data consisting of 178 samples was collected from undergraduate students in Nagaland' Dimapur and a liker scale questionnaire was used. The DASS-42 scale was used to measure students' mental health condition and student's parental expectations were measured using the High Parental Expectations (HPE) scale. University of Nagaland first-year students reported a strong link between family expectations and academic stress. Academic stress and its subscales (anxiety, depression, and stress) were also shown to be significantly different across the sexes, according to an independent sample t-test.

KEYWORDS: Academic Stress, Mental Health, Nagaland, Parental Expectation, UG student

1. INTRODUCTION

The hilly Indian state of Nagaland is situated in the northeast. Each of the sixteen main tribes and many smaller ones in Nagaland has its own unique culture, (Department of Higher Education, 2022). With a total population of 19,80,602 and a literacy rate of 80.11% (male: 83.29% and female: 76.69%), Nagaland is the fifteenth most literate state in India, according to the 2011 census (Indiafacts, 2023). English serves as both the medium of instruction and the state's official language. The beneficial influence on society from the Nagas' love of learning and openness to new ideas is seen in their success and achievements in numerous disciplines both inside and outside of the state. Education is highly valued by the Nagas. The modifications in the higher education system have been student-friendly and focused on the individual's holistic development, which has led to an increasing enrollment ratio with a low drop-out rate. The higher education system is consistently working to catch up to the rest of the nation, and one sign of that is the growth in the number of NAAC graded institutions, which has risen to 31 colleges (2021).

Depending on its intensity, academic stress may be classified as mild, moderate, or severe. According to Utari and Hamid (2021), when stress levels are high, negative emotions might start to surface. Higher learning expectations from parents contribute to increased academic stress for their children's academic success. A student's academic performance may also be significantly affected by the size of their family (Ullah et al., 2022). Parental involvement is crucial for children's

learning. Parental involvement is crucial not just in their day-to-day lives, but also in their academic pursuits (Boonk et al., 2018). The notion of parental engagement is problematic, as it is linked to home/school-based involvement, which is how parents are involved in their children's education. Helping children with their homework, talking to them about school, setting high standards, praising their accomplishments, and providing a controlled atmosphere that promotes learning are all examples of ways that parents may be involved at home. Supporting children's school activities, joining clubs and events relevant to school, and building relationships with teachers and staff are all examples of school-based participation (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014).

The academic stress experienced by Nagaland Undergraduate (UG) students is influenced by cultural and familial norms in addition to academic performance and career choices. The following research questions are intended to be addressed in the study paper:

- [1] To investigate the gender disparities in Nagaland's undergraduate students' parental expectations and academic stress with a focus in Dimapur district.
- [2] This research aims to examine the connection between parental expectations and academic stress experienced by undergraduate students in Dimapur, Nagaland.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "parental expectations" describes the views and

evaluations held by parents on their children's future achievements, as seen in factors such as course grades, academic progress, anticipated degree of schooling, and more (Ma, Tse & Siu, 2018). Academic achievement and performance are two outcomes that are correlated with parental expectations (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Additionally, it may assist students in better understanding and navigating their professional trajectories. On the other hand, when these expectations are too high and beyond practical capabilities, their worth decreases.

According to Wang and Heppner (2002), emotional fragility might result from the discrepancy between parental expectations and the student's own expectations. When undergraduate students believe that their parents have higher expectations for them than they have for themselves, there is a disconnection that may cause anxiety about failing to meet parental expectations and the potential repercussions. Ullah et al. (2022) define academic stress as "mental strain and strain caused by academic duties, including learning outcomes such as exams, peer competitiveness, and expectations from parents and instructors." Factors that might contribute to academic stress include learning load, grades, expectations, feelings of despair, and assignments (Sun et al., 2011). While some writers focus on a single topic, others investigate stress, anxiety, and depression in both student and non-student populations in a systematic manner to find evidence of a connection between these problems (Van Tuan, 2021). There have been several analyses and clarifications of the causes of mental health disorders among high school students.

Studies conducted on a national and international scale have shown that parental expectations are a factor contributing to academic stress among East Asian students (Rappleye, & Komatsu, 2018). Student mental health is strongly correlated with their perceptions of parental expectations and their own sense of fulfillment of those expectations. According to Almroth et al. (2020), students' ambitions and aspirations tend to rise when their parents have high expectations of them. This suggests that parental views have a substantial impact on students' ambitions. The academic self-efficacy of the student will decrease if the student's perception of parental expectations differs from their own performance. College students experience both mental and bodily harm as a result of negative or excessive stress. Feelings of lethargy, lack of hunger, headaches, and gastrointestinal problems are all symptoms of chronic stress. Ill health, anxiety, despair, and subpar academic achievement are only some of the negative outcomes associated with academic stress.

For instance, Travis et al. (2020), among others, found substantial associations between academic stress and both mental and physical health. Chang et al. (2010) found a strong negative connection between parents' excessive engagement or direction in their children's education and their children's academic success among a sample of college students aged 18 to 25. In addition, college counselors agreed with the finding of Watkins et al. (2011) that mental health issues like depression frequently resulted from what students regarded as parental pressure to succeed academically. Research has looked at parental communications that stress the importance of academic success, remind children of the sacrifices their families have made for them, and imply that family honor is contingent on academic achievement (Dundes et al., 2009).

Undergraduate students in Nagaland may experience academic stress and despair as a result of these perceived parental expectations and demands about academic accomplishment.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Undergraduate students in Dimapur, Nagaland are the focus of this research proposal, which employs a positivist worldview, a deductive methodology, and a survey technique to systematically investigate the relationship between perceived parental expectations and academic stress. In order to find patterns and relationships between parental expectations and academic stress, this approach seeks to provide quantitative data that can be analyzed statistically. In order to collect data at a single point in time, a cross-sectional study methodology will be used. According to Creswell (2017), this model adequately depicts the influence of parental expectations on undergraduate students' academic stress. Undergraduate students from Dimapur, Nagaland majoring in engineering, business studies, social sciences, and science participated in the current research. The current research included a random sample of 178 undergraduate students in Dimapur, Nagaland, 94 of whom were male and 84 of whom were female. To collect numerical data, a systematic questionnaire was used. In order to assess various aspects of parental expectations and academic stress that UG students may be facing, the questionnaire includes closed-ended questions. The student's parental expectations were measured using the High Parental Expectations (HPE) scale created by Fuligni (1997). Included in its four parts are Likert scale questions with possible answers ranging from "almost never" (the lowest possible score) to "almost always" (the highest possible score). According to Ma, Siu, and Tse (2018), the teenagers were able to rely on the scale, and it maintained an excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .77.

Using 42 questions that represent particular symptoms of three mental health problems, "Stress, Anxiety, and Depression", the DASS-42 scale measures students' mental health condition (Lovibond et al., 1995). On a Likert scale of 0 to 5, students rate their own performance. The findings of the research demonstrate that the scales are reliable; specifically, the Depression scale has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.90, the Stress scale has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.93, and the Anxiety scale has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.87.

The sample was ensured to reflect a variety of high-growth start-ups via the use of a stratified random sampling approach. Factors such as sector, size, and location will decide the level of stratification. According to Fowler (2013), this method will enhance the sample's representativeness and allow for a more detailed examination of differences across various demographic subgroups. The data that has been collected will be examined using statistical analysis. To ensure accuracy and efficiency in handling large datasets, data analysis will be conducted using software such as SPSS or R. To determine if there were significant variations in respondents' perceptions of parental expectations and students' academic stress, an independent sample t-test was used. We calculated the correlation between parental expectations and academic stress to find out how the two are related.

4. RESULTS

Table 1: “Prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress among university students in Dimapur, Nagaland,” N = 178.

Characteristics	Percentage (%)
Depression level (mean ± SD)	13.78 (±6.88)
Normal	57.45
Moderate	27.64
Severe	14.91
Anxiety level (mean ± SD)	13.87 (±5.80)
Normal	29.00
Moderate	34.96
Severe	36.04
Stress level (mean ± SD)	15.22 (±6.89)
Normal	74.39
Moderate	19.65
Severe	5.96

Table 1 shows that 57.45% of the students are in the normal range for depression, 27.64% are in the moderate range, and 14.91% are in the severe range. Anxiety levels are more worrisome, with only 29% of people in the normal range and 36.04% showing severe anxiety. Stress seems to be lower overall, with 74.39% of people being normal, 19.65% being moderately stressed, and 5.96% being severely stressed.

Parents in Nagaland place more expectations on their sons than on females due to the cultural belief that boys should be educated to a point where they can support their families in old age (The Naga Family, n.d.). Therefore, a t-test was administered to see “if there was a difference in parental expectations and academic stress among undergraduate students based on their gender.”

Table 2: t-test scores

Variables (df-176)	Male		Female		t- value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Parental Expectations	13.19	3.18	14.81	3.28	1.71*

* = not significant at 0.05 level.

Table 2 reveals that when it comes to parental expectations, there is no significant difference between the sexes among undergraduate students. Gender disparities in parental

expectations were determined to be non-significant, with a mean of 13.19 for male students and 14.81 for female students (critical value of df-176 at 0.05 level is 1.96).

Table 3: t-test scores

Variables (df-176)	Male		Female		t- value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Depression	11.92	3.27	13.01	3.22	2.68*
Anxiety	8.98	2.50	11.76	2.81	2.75*
Stress	11.17	2.03	12.58	2.76	2.30*

* = Significant at 0.05 level.

Table 3 shows the gender difference in academic stress total score and its sub-scale scores. Significant gender differences were observed in the dimensions of pressure from the study, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress with t-values 2.68, 2.75, and 2.30 respectively (critical value of df 176 at 0.05 level is 1.96). The results show that female students had more psychological problems on all three of the examined factors. For example, the average depression score for women was 13.01 (SD = 3.22), whereas the average score for men was 11.92 (SD = 3.27). The t-value for this comparison is 2.68, which means that the difference is statistically significant at the usual $p < .05$ level, which is shown by an asterisk. Also, women had significantly greater levels of anxiety ($M = 11.76$, $SD = 2.81$) than men ($M =$

8.98, $SD = 2.50$), with a t-value of 2.75. This disparity shows that female students have a lot more anxiety symptoms than male students. Lastly, women had far greater stress levels ($M = 12.58$, $SD = 2.76$) than men ($M = 11.17$, $SD = 2.03$), with a t-value of 2.30.

These data show a clear pattern reflecting female UG students in Nagaland had far greater levels of depression, anxiety, and stress than male UG students. There are many social, cultural, and psychological reasons why these gender differences exist. For example, girls may feel more academic pressure, be more sensitive to what their parents want, and be more emotionally open than boys.

Table 4: Correlation

	r	R2
Depression	0.29*	0.140**
Anxiety	0.26*	0.116**
Stress	0.28*	0.136**

Table 4 shows how parental expectations are related to the mental health indicators of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress among undergraduate students. It uses Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and coefficient of determination (R^2). This study shows how strongly and substantially undergraduate students' mental health results are linked to what they think their parents expect of them.

There is a 0.29 correlation coefficient (r) with depression, which is given with an asterisk (*) to show that it is statistically significant at $p < .05$. This positive association means that when undergraduate students think their parents demand more from them, they also become more depressed. The R^2 value of 0.140 shows that parental expectations may explain 14% of the differences in depression. This doesn't explain most of the variety, but it's still a significant part of social science study, where many things affect behavior and mental health.

The correlation coefficient for anxiety is 0.26*, which is likewise significant, and the R^2 value is 0.116. This means that what parents anticipate from their undergraduate students is responsible for 11.6% of the differences in how anxious they are. The link is still vital, even if it is a little weaker than for depression. It seems that when parents have high expectations for their undergraduate students, it might make them more anxious. This could be because they are afraid of failing or feel like they have to fulfill high standards. The stress variable also has a correlation of 0.28* and a R^2 value of 0.136. In other words, 13.6% of the differences in stress levels amongst undergraduate students may be traced back to what their parents anticipate of them. Again, this shows a moderate positive association, which means that undergraduate students who think their parents have higher expectations likely to say they are more stressed.

The analysis data in Table 4 showed that parents' expectations for students in the sample are positively correlated with all three mental health problems of students: correlation coefficient (r) between expectations of Parents with depression problems was 0.29 ($p < 0.05$), with anxiety problems 0.26 ($p < 0.05$), with stress problems 0.28 ($p < 0.05$).

5. DISCUSSION

The study found no statistically significant gender difference in perceived parental expectations, indicating that parents hold similar academic standards for both male and female students. This may reflect increasing gender equality in educational opportunities and aligns with findings by Chui and Wong (2017). Although prior research by Dhull and Kumari (2015) reported gender differences in dimensions of academic stress such as study pressure and grade anxiety, the present study did not observe gender differences in self-expectations. Parental expectations were moderately and positively associated with depression, anxiety, and stress among undergraduates in Dimapur, suggesting that higher expectations can predict poorer mental health outcomes. A considerable proportion of students reported moderate to

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severe anxiety, indicating that academic and parental pressures may be more strongly linked to anxiety than depression. These findings are consistent with earlier studies reporting notable prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms among students. Female students reported higher academic stress than males, supporting previous research. While parental involvement plays an important role in academic development, excessive expectations may contribute to psychological distress. The study highlights the importance of balanced communication, parental awareness programs, and supportive interventions to reduce academic stress and promote students' mental well-being.

6. CONCLUSION

Among undergraduates in Nagaland, students with highly involved parents reported higher levels of academic stress, indicating a significant positive relationship between parental involvement and stress levels. Female students experienced significantly higher academic stress than male students, highlighting gender differences in stress perception and experience. Academic stress was positively associated with mental health issues, and parental expectations showed a strong positive correlation with students' mental health challenges. The findings stress the need for mental health awareness and support systems at institutions such as Nagaland University of General Studies, including educating parents about mental health care options and teaching students self-care, early identification of mental health concerns, and help-seeking behaviors. While balanced parental expectations combined with emotional support can be beneficial, excessive pressure may not enhance performance and can lead to psychological distress.

Implications

The results have major educational implications for educators, policymakers, and administrators who work closely with undergraduate students in Nagaland. The findings show that administrations and universities need to do more to raise awareness about mental health by understanding how parental academic expectations might affect student's mental health (Zhang et al., 2024).

The findings show that we need to look at the academic stress levels of Nagaland's undergraduates, especially when students say they are anxious or depressed because their parents are putting too much pressure on them to do well in education. Students who don't believe they can do well in school may have mental health problems including anxiety and depression. One of the objectives of cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is to lower the symptoms of depression. CBT is based on Beck's (2011) cognitive theory and seeks to change negative thoughts and beliefs into more positive ones. This study also stresses how important it is to think about cultural values while dealing with students, especially those from racial and ethnic minority groups (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

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