

Bay Area Medical Explorer Mental Health Case Study Internship

A Research Study on Stress, Burnout, Anxiety, and Emotional Well-Being Among Students

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Abstract

Student mental health has become an increasingly important issue within academic environments due to rising levels of stress, burnout, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and academic pressure. This study explores students' mental health experiences through survey responses and academic literature to identify major challenges and propose strategies for improvement.

Data were collected through an anonymous survey completed by 94 students from different educational levels. Results indicate high levels of academic stress, sleep deprivation, burnout, anxiety, and limited access to mental health resources.

Findings suggest that academic workload, time management difficulties, social expectations, and future-related concerns significantly impact student well-being. Participants emphasized the need for counseling services, academic flexibility, and mental health awareness initiatives.

This study highlights the importance of strengthening institutional support systems to improve student emotional well-being and academic success.

Keywords: student mental health, academic stress, burnout, anxiety, sleep deprivation

Introduction

Mental health is a fundamental component of emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall quality of life. Recent research has shown a significant increase in mental health challenges among students due to academic pressure, social expectations, financial stress, and uncertainty about the future.

Students often balance multiple responsibilities, including coursework, exams, extracurricular activities, employment, and family obligations. While education provides opportunities for growth, excessive stress can negatively affect both physical and psychological health.

Common mental health challenges among students include academic stress, burnout, anxiety, sleep deprivation, emotional exhaustion, lack of motivation, social pressure, and fear of failure. Although awareness of mental health issues has increased, many students still report feeling unsupported or hesitant to seek help.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between academic and social pressures and student mental health, as well as to evaluate current support systems and propose improvements.

Research Question

How do academic and social pressures affect student mental health, and what strategies can schools and communities implement to better support student well-being?

Research Objectives

1. Identify common mental health challenges among students.
2. Examine the impact of academic pressure on stress, anxiety, and burnout.
3. Analyze patterns related to sleep, workload, and social expectations.
4. Explore student perceptions of school mental health support.
5. Propose strategies to improve emotional well-being.

Methodology

This study used a mixed-method design combining anonymous surveys and literature review.

A digital survey was distributed to 9 students across various educational levels. The survey included multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions addressing academic stress, burnout, anxiety, sleep patterns, emotional support systems, and mental health awareness.

Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and no identifying information was collected. Data were used exclusively for academic research purposes.

Literature Review

Research from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) indicates a global increase in student mental health challenges.

Studies show that academic stress and burnout are strongly associated with anxiety, depressive symptoms, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, and reduced academic performance. Chronic stress without coping mechanisms negatively impacts both mental and physical health.

Students frequently experience pressure to achieve high grades, prepare for future careers, and meet social expectations. Sleep deprivation further exacerbates mental health issues, leading to fatigue, irritability, and poor concentration.

Additionally, social media and peer comparison contribute to emotional distress and low self-esteem. Research emphasizes the importance of counseling services, mental health awareness programs, and supportive educational environments.

Results

Academic Stress

Approximately 67% of participants reported experiencing academic stress “often” or “very often.” The most common stressors included:

- Exams and tests (85%)

- Grades/GPA (78%)
- Homework load (72%)
- Career concerns (68%)
- Time management (60%)
- Family expectations (50%)

Approximately 70% reported that academic pressure negatively affects their mental health.

Burnout

Approximately 80% of students reported symptoms of burnout, including emotional exhaustion, lack of motivation, difficulty concentrating, and feeling overwhelmed.

Anxiety

Students linked anxiety primarily to academic performance, future uncertainty, and social pressure. Many reported difficulties concentrating, sleep disruption, and emotional instability. Some participants also expressed hesitation to seek help due to stigma.

Sleep Deprivation

Reported sleep patterns included:

- Less than 4 hours: 7%
- 4–5 hours: 42%
- 6–7 hours: 40%
- 8+ hours: 8%

Nearly half of respondents reported insufficient sleep during school nights.

Emotional Support

Students reported relying mainly on friends (54%) and family (22%). However, 18% reported seeking no support, and only 5% accessed professional counseling services.

Social Media and Social Pressure

Participants reported that social media contributes to comparison, unrealistic expectations, and emotional stress.

Institutional Support

Approximately 45% of students reported that schools do not provide adequate mental health support.

Suggested improvements included:

- Academic flexibility (80%)
- Wellness breaks (78%)
- Counseling services (60%)
- Stress management workshops (50%)
- Mental health awareness programs (45%)

Discussion

Findings indicate that academic pressure, burnout, sleep deprivation, and social expectations are major contributors to student mental health challenges.

Academic workload was identified as the strongest stressor, affecting motivation, emotional stability, and overall well-being. Students also emphasized the need for improved mental health services and more supportive academic environments.

Social media and peer comparison further intensify emotional distress. Overall, students are aware of mental health issues but perceive institutional support as insufficient.

Recommendations

1. Increase mental health awareness and reduce stigma.
2. Improve access to counseling and emotional support services.
3. Promote balanced academic workloads and flexibility.
4. Provide education on sleep hygiene and stress management.
5. Create supportive environments involving schools, families, and communities.
6. Encourage open discussions about mental health.

Conclusion

Student mental health is a critical issue affecting academic success and overall quality of life. This study demonstrates that academic stress, burnout, anxiety, sleep deprivation, and social pressures significantly impact students.

The findings highlight the urgent need for stronger institutional support systems, increased awareness, and healthier academic environments. Schools must prioritize both academic achievement and emotional well-being to support student success and development.

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