

# The Effect of Academic Stress and Mental Anxiety among the Students of Khulna University

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## ABSTRACT

*The mental health issues that students encounter is becoming more widely recognized in today's educational setting. It explores the effect of academic stress and mental anxiety among the students of Khulna University. This study investigates the complex relationship between academic pressures, mental distress, and the general well-being of Khulna University students by using a mixed-methods research technique. The study utilizes a combination of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to obtain a thorough understanding of students' experiences. The relationship between academic stress variables, anxiety levels, and academic performance can be analyzed quantitatively to find patterns and connections. Simultaneously, qualitative interviews offer a refined comprehension of the students' subjective experiences, and feelings of stress and anxiety. The results provided insight into the frequency of academic stressors, and how these affect students' mental health. This result shows that 15.68% student suffer from high level of academic stress. And 76.8% student suffer from academic stress in some point of their academic life. This result shows that 16.7% reporting extremely severe anxiety. And 61.1% student suffer from anxiety in some point. This study has implications that go beyond Khulna University; it provides information that legislators, educators, and mental health professionals can use. This study is to contribute to the creation of focused treatments and support systems to promote a healthy academic environment for students by studying the dynamics of academic stress and mental anxiety. The study highlights the need for a holistic approach to education that prioritizes mental health and fosters an environment conducive to academic success and personal growth. It aims to add meaningful knowledge to the discourse on student well-being. This study is crucial not only for its implications for Khulna University, but also for its overall contributions to understanding and resolving mental health concerns in higher education. By shedding light on the prevalence, impact, and correlates of academic stress and mental anxiety, this study lays the framework for proactive treatments and policies targeted at boosting student well-being and cultivating a culture of mental health awareness and support in educational settings.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is a problem that affects students all around the world and has gained widespread recognition as a serious issue in higher education (Barbayannis et al., 2022). This issue is crucial, especially for Bangladesh, a developing nation with a fast-expanding educational landscape (Phillips et al., 2020). According to Kasey et al. (2021) one-third of students on campus experience signs of severe or extremely severe depression, anxiety, and/or stress. It was discovered that faculty/staff and students both

experienced similar levels of sadness, anxiety, and stress. Faculty/staff and students, however, differed significantly in terms of the mental health coping methods they used and the perceived obstacles to receiving professional mental health therapy according to Kasey et al. (2021).

Kasey et al. (2021) found that approximately one-third of the campus community experience symptoms consistent with severe or extremely severe depression, anxiety, and/or stress. The prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress was found to be similar among faculty/staff and students. However, there were significant differences between faculty/staff and students in regard to mental health coping mechanisms utilized and perceived barriers to professional mental health treatment.

Prevailing stress can lead to a range of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, which are increasingly observed among students (Talha et al., 2020). It may arise from various sources including high academic expectations, evaluation and grading, social stress, and other personal or educational factors (Talha et al., 2020). Mental anxiety is characterized by persistent, excessive, and unrealistic worry about everyday things including academic performance (Koppenborg et al., 2022). This has been linked to compromised academic performance and overall well-being, making it crucial to understand and address it (Phillips et al., 2020). Academic stress can be defined as mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even unawareness to the possibility of such failure (Barbayannis et al., 2022).

The current study aims to explore academic stress and its associated mental anxiety among students at Khulna University in Bangladesh, a prominent institution catering to a diverse student body. The current global higher education environment is characterized by a growing complexity, posing significant challenges for students who frequently encounter elevated levels of academic pressure and psychological distress. The aforementioned challenges have the potential to exert a detrimental influence on both academic achievement and overall personal welfare, as supported by the research conducted by Koppenborg et al. in 2022. In developing nations, such as Bangladesh, the circumstances are particularly notable due to the scarcity of resources allocated to mental health assistance within academic environments (Phillips et al., 2020).

By putting academic knowledge into reality, the institution hopes to have a lasting social and economic influence. The graduates will drive change in the areas of nutrition, poverty reduction, food security, and the environment. This institution's fundamental beliefs include tolerance for opposing viewpoints and intellectual freedom. Furthermore, Khulna University never wavers in its unwavering commitment to academic success (Chowdhury, 2022). Which bring huge academic pressure to the students.

At Khulna University, similar to numerous academic institutions in Bangladesh, there exists a dearth of all-encompassing, evidence-based information pertaining to academic stress, mental anxiety, their origins, coping strategies, and the potential association with academic achievement. The documentation and understanding of students' stress levels, their corresponding responses to these stressors, and the subsequent impact on their academic achievement are currently lacking. In addition, it is important to note that the current body of literature lacks sufficient exploration of culturally relevant coping mechanisms for stress. This gap in knowledge significantly impacts the provision of mental health services, as effective strategies for addressing stress may not be adequately understood or utilized.

Understanding the intricacies of academic stress and mental anxiety among university students requires delving into the extant literature on the topic. This literature review covers the sources of academic stress, its prevalence and implications, coping mechanisms, and its impact on academic performance.

Academic stress is a multifaceted phenomenon, influenced by various internal and external factors. Numerous studies have delved into these stressors, providing comprehensive insights into what university students' experience. This section dissects the primary sources of academic stress and mental anxiety, drawing upon established literature.

One of the most frequently cited sources of academic stress is the pressure from assignments, projects, and examinations. Koppenborg et al., (2022) conducted a study among university students and discovered that a significant number felt overwhelmed due to the sheer volume of their academic responsibilities. This overwhelming feeling can often lead to anxiety, as students grapple with meeting deadlines, ensuring quality in their submissions, and navigating vast syllabi.

The academic environment, particularly in competitive institutions, places a premium on grade achievements. This culture often instills a sense of urgency and pressure among students to secure top grades, as these are often viewed as direct reflections of their abilities and future potential. Baglione et al., (2022) in their research highlighted that such pressure could result in heightened anxiety levels, as students continuously strive to meet or surpass their personal and external expectations.

Balancing multiple academic responsibilities while also participating in extracurricular activities, maintaining a social life, and fulfilling personal commitments can pose significant challenges. According to Baglione et al., (2022), many students cite time management as a significant stressor. The constant juggle between these varied roles can create a continuous sense of urgency and tension, leading to feelings of being overwhelmed.

According to Mofatteh. (2021), there are various risk factors associated with stress, anxiety, and depression among university undergraduate students, including psychological, academic, biological, lifestyle, social, and financial factors. Identifying these risk factors early on can help provide additional mental health support to students and prevent exacerbation of these risk factors.

Mitchelle et al. (2020), claim that the prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression is high among university undergraduate students in both developed and developing countries. He proposes a remote mental health monitoring system (RMHMS) to track students' level of stress, anxiety, and depression and facilitate early interventions and treatment. The system incorporates alert systems to students' friends or families and their caregivers to intimate them of their situation too so that they may help the students to overcome their mental health issues before getting worsened.

Neeta and Singh (2020), found that there exist highly significant differences between the academic stress of male and female participants of higher secondary school students. It was also found that there was no significant difference between academic stress of government-aided & self-finance school students and rural & urban area school students. The causes of academic stress were classified mainly into seven categories, including stress due to teachers, exams and tests, peers, parents and social factors, time management and infrastructure, and self-inflicted factors.

According to Ridwan et al. (2021), examined that mental stress, depression, and anxiety among university students in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic. He claimed that a significant percentage of students are mentally stressed, anxious, and depressed due to the pandemic and its impact on their education and daily lives. The lockdown and isolation have led to negative effects on mental health, including feelings of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide. Lack of access to proper internet and technical resources, high internet costs, low internet speed, family financial instability, and mental stress on students are the main obstacles to online education in Bangladesh.

Shifa et al. (2020), found that there is a significant prevalence (79.5%) of anxiety, depression, and stress among university students. This high prevalence of mental health disorders can lead to poor academic performance, quality of life, serious health disorders, and even suicidal attempts. He also

highlights the need for the development and design of mental health prevention programs and health education programs to overcome this issue.

Chan et al. (2021), revealed that university students with higher levels of irrational beliefs were more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and stress. He also revealed that male students, students from low-income families, Law students, those pursuing 5-year programs, or those in the second year of study were likely to have more irrational beliefs. Additionally, male students, medical students, and those studying 5-year programs were found to have significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress.

According to Arévalo (2020) the prevalence of anxiety and depression in university students, identify associated factors, and their effect on academic performance. He also showed that university students have a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression than the general population worldwide. The prevalence range found was 16.0-76.0% (anxiety) and 9.6-74.4% (depression). Risk factors for both mental disorders included female sex, long daily commutes to access university, living outside the family home, having other extra-academic obligations, having financial difficulties, lower socioeconomic status, consumption of alcohol, moderate and severe family dysfunction, history of at least one traumatic event, and a family history of mental illness or dysfunction.

The university environment is a melting pot of relationships – with peers, faculty, administration, and even family. Muhnja et al., (2019) underscored the importance of these relationships in shaping a student's academic experience. Conflicts, misunderstandings, or even the sheer pressure of maintaining these relationships can be a source of stress. Especially when interpersonal issues intersect with academic challenges, the mental toll on students can be profound.

Especially relevant in contexts like Bangladesh, socio-cultural expectations play a pivotal role in academic stress. Family expectations about academic performance, societal views on suitable career paths, and cultural norms about success and failure can exert immense pressure on students. Phillips et al. (2020) pointed out that, in Bangladeshi universities, these external societal and cultural pressures often compound the already existing academic stressors, leading to heightened anxiety levels.

The academic environment, with its inherent challenges, tends to exert significant pressure on students, leading many to experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety. Over the years, the prevalence of these issues among university students has become an area of concern and study. This section delves into the established literature that investigates how widespread academic stress and mental anxiety are among university students.

The phenomenon of academic stress is not limited to a specific region or group of students. A study by Koppenborg et al., (2022) encompassing university students across diverse backgrounds and countries found that a considerable proportion of them reported high levels of stress and anxiety. Notably, the prevalence rates among university students were found to be higher than those of the general population.

Cultural and societal factors play an instrumental role in influencing the prevalence of academic stress. In countries with strong familial emphasis on academic achievement, such as in many Asian cultures, the stress levels among university students can be notably high. Phillips et al. (2020) in their study focusing on Bangladeshi university students found that the unique socio-cultural dynamics of the country significantly influenced the prevalence rates, with many students reporting overwhelming stress related to academic expectations.

While academic stress is a significant factor, it's crucial to understand its magnitude in comparison to other stressors. Martiny et al. (2021) found that, among the sample of college students they studied, academic stressors consistently ranked among the top sources of stress, even when compared to personal or familial issues.

In summary, the sources of academic stress and mental anxiety among university students are diverse and interrelated. These stressors, ranging from the immediate academic environment to broader socio-cultural contexts, play a significant role in shaping students' mental well-being.

In response to the identified problem, this study has been designed to undertake a comprehensive analysis of academic stress and mental anxiety among students at Khulna University. The understanding gleaned from this study will provide valuable insights for stakeholders to formulate strategies and interventions to alleviate academic stress and enhance student well-being. The specific objectives of this study are: (1) to determine the prevalence of academic stress and mental anxiety; and (2) to assess the impact of stress levels on academic performance and daily life and well-being.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a mixed-methods design. In light of the extensiveness and breadth of these study objectives, a mixed-method technique will be utilised in this investigation. In order to provide a holistic viewpoint, this requires merging qualitative and quantitative research approaches. As Creswell & Clark (2017) explained that researchers are able to understand complicated phenomenon qualitatively through the use of the Mixed-Method Approach, as well as explain what is happening through the use of numbers, charts, and fundamental approaches to statistical analysis. Quantitative methods will help in measuring the prevalence of stress and anxiety, while qualitative methods will provide insights into the the impact of Stress Levels on Academic Performance and Daily Life and Well-being, and their nuances.

The concurrent mixed-methods approach is particularly utilised in this research. Research that is conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is referred to as concurrent mixed-methods research. It is because of this that the collection of qualitative and quantitative data is not dependent on one another, and the collection of one type of data does not influence the gathering of the other type of data. (Bell et al., 2022)

### Study Area

The research population comprises all students enrolled in Khulna University.

### Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique is used, ensuring that each faculty or department is represented proportionally in the sample. Singh and Mangat (1996) explained stratified sampling are the process of dividing the population into distinct groups, which are referred to as strata, and then selecting a sample from each stratum independently. When the procedure is called stratified random sampling, it is referred to as such because the sample that is drawn from each stratum is picked at random.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

1. Demographic Information
  - a. Gender

Table 1. Participant's gender

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Male	193	52.9
Female	172	47.1
Total	365	100.0

There were 365 individuals included in Table 1, with 172 (47.1% of the total) identifying as male and 193 (52.9% of the total) identifying as female. When it comes to recognising potential disparities in

the behaviours, coping strategies, and sensitivity to academic stress and mental anxiety that male and female students may exhibit, gender distribution is an extremely important factor to consider. By doing an analysis of the data from a gender-based perspective, this study has the potential to uncover nuanced insights that add to a comprehensive knowledge of the elements that influence the mental well-being of students in an academic setting. The gender-specific approach makes it possible to implement targeted treatments and support measures that are aimed at addressing the unique challenges that male and female students have when coping with the stress and anxiety that are associated with academic concerns.

b. Age

Table 2. Age of Participant

N	365
MEAN	22.24
MEDIAN	22.00
RANGE	6
MINIMUM	19
MAXIMUM	25

Table 2 shows a mean age of 22.24 years, showing the average age of the students sampled. The median age is 22.00, indicating a balanced distribution around the age range's midpoint. The age range functions from 19 to 25 years, suggesting variation in the age group under examination. This data is useful for contextualizing the findings because different age groups encounter and cope with academic stress and mental anxiety in different ways.

c. Level of Education

Table 3. Level of Education of Participants

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
First year	49	13.4
Second year	68	18.6
Third year	147	40.3
Fourth year	101	27.7
Total	365	100.0

Table 3 on the participants' educational level reveals a varied distribution across academic years. 13.4% of the 365 participants are in their first year, 18.6% in their second year, 40.3% in their third year, and 27.7% in their fourth year. This distribution reflects a significant representation of students at various stages of their academic journey. The higher percentage in the third year suggests a significant cohort in the middle of their undergraduate programs, potentially at the peak of academic challenges and stressors.

2. The Prevalence of Academic Stress and Mental Anxiety

a. Academic stress Scale

Table 4. Academic stress Scale

ACADEMIC STRESS SCALE		
SCORE	Frequency	Percent
31-40	83	23.12
41-50	131	35.73
51-60	93	25.51
61-70	58	15.64
TOTAL	365	100.0

The study discovered a frequency distribution for an Academic Stress Scale with score ranges. Each score range is assigned a frequency and percentage of individuals who fall within that range. Here's how it works:

Score Range 31-40: 83 competitors, representing 23.12 % of the total. Score Range 41-50: 131 participants (35.73% of the total). Score 51-60: 87, accounting for 25.51% of the total. Score Range 61-70: There were 58 competitors, accounting for 15.64% of the total.

This distribution depicts the distribution of academic stress levels across survey participants. The bulk of participants appear to be in the 41-50 range, indicating a high prevalence of academic stress in this cohort. Further research should look into the factors that contribute to stress within these score ranges, as well as ways to address them.

This result shows that 15.68% student suffer from high level of academic stress. And 76.8% student suffer from academic stress in some point of their academic life.

b. Anxiety Scale

Table 5. Anxiety Scale

ANXIETY SCALE	Frequency	Percent
Mild severity	81	22.2
Moderate to severe	142	38.9
Severe	81	22.2
Highly severe	61	16.7
Total	365	100.0

The findings, based on 365 participants, provide a more nuanced understanding of the prevalence and severity of anxiety among students. According to the distribution, a significant proportion of students, 22.2%, reported mild anxiety severity, while 38.9% reported moderate to severe anxiety. Furthermore, 22.2% of participants reported severe anxiety, with 16.7% reporting extremely severe anxiety. These findings highlight the significant impact of academic stress on students' mental health, indicating a range of anxiety experiences among the student body.

This result shows that 16.7% reporting extremely severe anxiety. And 61.1% student suffer from anxiety in some point.

3. The impact of Stress on Academic Performance and Daily Life and Well-being.

a. Impact on Academic Performance

Difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance due to academic commitments

Table 6. Difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Rarely	20	5.5
Occasionally	130	35.6
Often	155	42.5
Very often	60	16.4
Total	365	100.0
<b>MEAN</b>	2.70	

According to the Table 6, maintaining a healthy work-life balance in the context of scholastic commitments offers varied degrees of difficulties for the participants. In particular, 5.5% of respondents said they faced this difficulty only occasionally, 35.6% occasionally, 42.5% frequently, and 16.4% extremely

frequently. Due to academic responsibilities, the mean score of 2.70 indicates a considerable overall difficulty in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. These findings emphasize the pervasive impact of academic expectations on students' personal life, as well as the importance of educational institutions considering techniques that encourage a more balanced and sustainable approach to academics.

Table 7. Mean of the Impact on Academic Performance Due to Stress and Anxiety

	Mean
My academic performance has been suffered due to high levels of stress	3.75
I find it challenging to concentrate on my studies when I am stressed.	3.78
Stress negatively affects my ability to complete assignments and homework on time.	3.73
I often lose motivation to study when I am under a lot of stress.	3.73
Stress makes it difficult for me to perform well on exams and assessments.	3.62
I frequently experience physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, and fatigue) as a result of stress during the academic year.	3.66
Stress leads to procrastination in my academic work.	3.77
I feel overwhelmed by the academic demands, which contribute	3.64
Stress affects my sleep patterns, leading to insufficient rest during the academic semester.	3.73
I have sought academic support or counseling due to stress-related academic issues.	3.72
I believe that my academic performance would significantly improve if I could manage my stress better.	3.88
I often experience a sense of anxiety or panic related to academic responsibilities.	3.67
I have missed classes or academic deadlines due to stress-related issues.	3.47
I believe that stress is a significant factor affecting my overall academic success.	3.59
I actively seek out stress management techniques to improve my academic performance.	3.85

#### b. Academic performance

The data gathered from Table 7 shows a significant link between stress levels and academic achievement. The majority of respondents, 69.9%, agreed that high levels of stress had harmed their academic performance, with an additional 5.5% strongly agreeing. Meanwhile, 19.2% were undecided, and 5.5% disputed that stress has a negative impact on their academic performance. The mean score of 3.75 reflects the participants' widespread agreement that academic stress has a negative impact on their academic performance. This conclusion highlights the vital importance of tailored interventions and support services aimed at minimizing stressors and improving coping mechanisms in order to promote academic success and general well-being among students.

#### c. Challenging to concentrate on studies

The data received from Table 7, suggests that stress has a significant impact on students' capacity to concentrate. A majority of respondents, 52.1%, agreed that it is difficult to concentrate on their academics when they are worried, and an additional 15.1% strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 30.1% were neutral, and only a small proportion disapproved (1.4% objected and strongly disagreed). The mean score of 3.78 suggests that participants generally agree that stress interferes with their ability to concentrate during academic tasks.

#### d. Stress negatively affects Ability

The data from Table 7 shows a significant relationship between stress and academic task completion. The majority of respondents, 55.1%, agreed that stress has a negative impact on their ability to finish assignments and homework, and an additional 11.0% strongly agreed. On the other hand, 29.9% were neutral, and only 4.1% disagreed. The mean score of 3.73 indicates a significant agreement among participants regarding the negative impact of stress on reaching academic deadlines. This conclusion emphasizes the need of educational institutions implementing appropriate stress management programs and support mechanisms to meet the issues students have in carrying out their academic responsibilities. Stress reduction has the ability to improve time management and academic achievement in kids.

e. Lose motivation to study

According to the Table 7, stress has a significant impact on motivating levels. The majority of respondents, 60.5%, agreed that they frequently lose motivation to study when under a lot of stress, and an additional 9.6% strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 23.0% were undecided, while 6.8% disagreed. The mean score of 3.73 suggests that participants agree that stress has a detrimental impact on their drive to engage in academic activities. This research emphasizes the significance of treating stress-related issues in educational environments, emphasizing the need for focused interventions to increase student motivation and maintain a healthy learning environment. Implementing stress-reduction measures can help students maintain their excitement for studying, resulting in increased academic achievement and well-being.

f. Stress makes difficult to perform well

According to the data from Table 7, there is a considerable relationship between stress and academic achievement. A sizable proportion of respondents, 56.4%, agreed that stress makes it harder to do well on exams and assessments, with an additional 8.2% strongly agreeing. Meanwhile, 24.7% were undecided, while 10.7% disagreed. The mean score of 3.62 suggests that participants agree that stress has a negative impact on exam performance. This research emphasizes the vital importance of educational institutions implementing specialized treatments and support mechanisms that address stressors unique to assessment times. Stress reduction and coping skills strategies have the potential to contribute to a more favorable atmosphere for students, supporting improved exam performance and overall academic achievement.

g. Stress leads to procrastination in my academic work

The data from Table 7 reveals a significant link between stress and academic task delays. A large majority of respondents, 58.9%, agreed that stress causes procrastination in academic work, with another 12.3% strongly agreeing. Meanwhile, 21.9% were undecided, and a smaller minority (6.8%) agreed. The mean score of 3.77 suggests that participants agree on the impact of stress on procrastinating behavior.

h. Difficulty in Concentration

Academic stress and mental anxiety often emerge as barriers to sustained focus and attention during study sessions, classes, and exams. When focus is impaired, it becomes more difficult to absorb complicated concepts, retain knowledge, and engage successfully with learning materials. As a result, students may struggle to satisfy academic objectives and do well in tests. Concentration problems have a negative impact that extends beyond particular projects; they can affect overall academic achievement and lead to a cycle of stress and anxiety.

One respondent shared "*When I'm having trouble concentrating, it's as if the information flows through my mind without sticking. I read a paragraph and realize at the end that I have no idea what I just read.*"

Another respondent also added "*If I can't concentrate during lectures, I miss important points. It's as if I'm physically present but mentally absent. It's infuriating because class time is valuable, and not participating fully hurts my overall learning.*"

#### i. Decline in Motivation

When students are stressed or anxious, their intrinsic drive to complete academic assignments may suffer. Fear of failing or excessive pressure to achieve high expectations might lead to a lack of interest in learning. As a result, students may lose interest in their studies, resulting in procrastination, decreased effort, and a deterioration in overall academic performance.

One respondent shared "*When I am stressed, my motivation suffers. I find myself procrastinating, putting off assignments or studying. It's not that I don't care, but the overwhelming tension makes it tough to get started.*"

Another respondent also shared "*The stress undermines my belief in my abilities. I begin to doubt my ability to meet the academic obligations, and this self-doubt reduces my desire even further. It's a vicious circle that's difficult to break.*"

#### j. Resistance to taking risks

When students are stressed or anxious, they may be hesitant to venture outside their comfort zones and pursue creative or challenging academic activities. This fear of taking chances can hinder their capacity to engage in critical thinking, problem solving, and creative activities. Academic advancement frequently entails a willingness to accept challenges, but increased stress can lead to a fear of failure and a preference for safer, more familiar academic paths.

One respondent stated "*When I'm stressed, I avoid assignments that appear difficult. As my fear of failure grows, I stick to what I know I can handle, even if it means passing up opportunities for growth.*"

#### k. Impact on Creativity

High levels of anxiety and stress can generate a cognitive burden, limiting a student's capacity to think divergently and solve issues in novel ways. Creativity is an essential component of effective learning and problem solving, yet academic pressure can impede this creative process.

One respondent mentioned "*Academic stress has become a means of suffocating my creative thinking. It is difficult for me to approach assignments with new thoughts or to think outside the box. The pressure to meet expectations restricts my creative expression.*"

#### l. Struggles with Time Management

Stress can cause feelings of overload and a constant sensation of being pressured for time, making it difficult for students to organise and prioritise their academic duties. This difficulty with time management can lead to missed deadlines, incomplete tasks, and poor exam preparation. As a result, academic performance may deteriorate, with grades reflecting the difficulties of balancing various assignments under time constraints.

One respondent said "*When I'm stressed, I tend to delay on assignments. I believe I have more time than I have, resulting in a last-minute hurry. This has an impact not just on the quality of my work but also adds extra stress.*"

Another respondent also shared "*Despite making study timetables, stress interferes with my ability to follow them consistently.*"

#### m. Increased Test Anxiety

The pressure of academic expectations, along with the fear of failing exams, might raise test anxiety levels. This increased worry may impair a student's ability to recall material, think critically, and perform at their best during tests.

One respondent stated "*Extreme stress causes moments of blanking out during tests. Even if I study properly, anxiousness can lead my memory to go blank, making it difficult to recall important facts.*"

Another respondent also shared "*With high test anxiety, the fear of failure increases.*" *It's not only about earning a lower mark; it's about being afraid of what that grade means for my academic achievement and future chances.*"

n. Impact on Attendance

As students deal with mental health issues, there may be an increase in absenteeism or a decrease in active involvement. Missed lectures, essential knowledge, and crucial connections with instructors and peers can all result from poor attendance.

One respondent said "*During times of high stress, I find myself skipping classes more frequently.*" *The tremendous pressure tempts me to avoid the academic environment, which affects my attendance and overall grasp of the course material.*"

o. Interference with Goal Setting

The pressure to succeed or the fear of failure can lead to a sense of overload, making it difficult for students to formulate and pursue precise goals. Without well-defined goals, students may lack a strategic approach to their studies, affecting their ability to stay focused, motivated, and organized. Interference with goal setting can contribute to a lack of direction in academic efforts, potentially resulting in inferior performance.

One respondent shared "*Setting realistic goals becomes difficult under the weight of academic stress. The pressure to succeed might lead to establishing unrealistically high goals that are difficult to meet, laying the stage for failure.*"

p. Impact on Exam Performance/Inconsistent Performance

Fluctuating stress levels can cause anxiety attacks, interfering with a student's ability to maintain continuous focus and effort across their education. This irregularity may lead to differences in assignment quality, exam performance, and total academic output. The cyclical nature of stress and anxiety might cause scholastic achievement to have peaks and valleys.

One respondent mentioned "*My performance during high-stress moments is inconsistent. While I may succeed in certain areas, the overall quality of my work suffers, resulting in an uneven spectrum of scores.*"

Another respondent also shared "*Exam performance suffers during times of intense stress. It's as if my head fogs up, impairing retention and application of knowledge in the exam situation.*"

q. Decline in Assignment Quality

When students are dealing with high levels of anxiety and stress, their ability to study, think critically, and explain ideas coherently in their assignments can suffer. The pressure to fulfil deadlines and attain academic achievement may result in hasty or unfinished work, resulting in a decrease in overall assignment quality.

One respondent shared "*During difficult times, the quality of my tasks frequently suffers. I find myself hurrying through projects while sacrificing depth and quality.*"

r. Stress-Induced Mistakes

Stress levels can rise as a result of the increased pressure to succeed, impacting cognitive function and decision-making. Students may be more prone to making mistakes in their work, including tests, assignments, and evaluations, under such settings. These stress-related errors might jeopardize the accuracy and quality of their academic output, potentially resulting in lower grades and a distorted depiction of their genuine comprehension of the content.

One respondent shared "*Stress-related errors are becoming more common. Whether it's missing information in an assignment or making arithmetic mistakes, the overall accuracy of my efforts suffers.*"

s. less Enjoyment in Learning

Academic stress and mental anxiety have a widespread effect on students' enjoyment of studying, which can have a substantial impact on academic success. When pupils are stressed and anxious, the joy and intrinsic motivation that are generally linked with the learning process may be jeopardized. Learning becomes a cause of stress rather than a rewarding and engaging experience. This loss of enthusiasm in studying can lead to a decrease in active participation, a loss of curiosity, and an overall disengagement from academic endeavors.

One respondent stated *"Most importantly, at times of extreme stress, pleasure in the learning process decreases. It becomes mainly about fulfilling deadlines than enjoying the joy of learning."*

4. Effects on Daily Life and Well-being

a. Stress affects sleep patterns

According to the evidence, there is a considerable association between stress and sleep quality. The majority of respondents, 60.3%, agreed that stress interferes with their sleep habits, resulting in insufficient rest, with an additional 13.7% strongly agreeing. In contrast, 15.1% were neutral, while smaller percentages opposed or strongly disagreed (6.8% and 4.1%, respectively). The mean score of 3.73 reflects the general consensus among participants regarding the negative impact of stress on sleep.

b. Frequently experience physical symptoms

The data from 365 individuals shows a significant link between stress and physical well-being. The majority of respondents, 59.2%, agreed that they frequently feel physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, fatigue) as a result of stress, while another 9.6% strongly agreed. In comparison, 23.3% were undecided, with only a tiny minority disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (3.8% and 4.1%, respectively). The mean score of 3.66 indicates that participants agree on the tangible impact of academic stress on physical health.

c. Impact on Sleep Patterns

Sleep habits are one noticeable characteristic that is influenced by various stress. Academic endeavours, with their demanding nature and related anxiety, frequently disturb typical sleep cycles, resulting in inconsistencies in sleep duration and quality. Persistent sleep disruptions can cause exhaustion, decreased cognitive function, and poor emotional well-being, affecting students' overall daily functioning.

One respondent shared *"My sleep patterns are frequently disrupted by academic stress. Whether it's staying up late to study or having sleepless nights due to worry, my sleep quality and duration suffer."*

d. Social Withdrawal

Students may withdraw from social engagements as they deal with the pressures of scholastic demands and the emotional toll of worry, separating themselves from friends, family, and support networks. Not only does social retreat impede the development of important interpersonal skills, but it also exacerbates feelings of loneliness and separation. Because social involvement is important for mental health, this phenomena may contribute to a drop in general well-being.

One respondent shared *"During times of intense stress, I tend to stay away from social gatherings. The stress of scholastic commitments can make it difficult to attend social activities or spend time with friends."*

e. Changes in Eating Habits

Increased stress and anxiety frequently cause changes in eating behaviours, resulting in anomalies in food intake and dietary patterns. Some kids may notice a loss of appetite, which could lead to dietary deficits and decreased physical health.

One respondent shared "*My eating habits are directly affected by stress. It's a toss-up between stress-induced overeating and appetite loss.*"

f. Impact on Self-Esteem /Impact on Self-Confidence

The constant pressure and anxiety connected with academic obstacles can weaken students' faith in their skills, resulting in a drop in self-esteem and self-confidence. Persistent self-doubt and fear of failure can make it difficult for them to engage in academic work and social relationships, compounding feelings of inadequacy. This loss of confidence not only has an impact on daily living by inhibiting effective decision-making and problem-solving, but it also poses a significant obstacle to overall well-being.

One respondent shared "*I frequently fail to fulfil high expectations, and setbacks in academic efforts can lead to self-doubt that extends beyond the academic realm. Which lower my self-confidence and self-esteem.*"

g. Increased Sensitivity to Criticism

Individuals' reactions for critique are frequently exacerbated by increased stress and anxiety, making them more sensitive to misinterpreting criticism as a personal assault. This increased sensitivity might lead to a reluctance to participate in academic or social contexts, hampering meaningful discourse and personal progress. Understanding the relationship between greater sensitivity to criticism and mental well-being is critical for building an environment that develops resilience and appropriate coping mechanisms as students deal with the stress of academic expectations.

One respondent shared "*I grow more sensitive to criticism, both internal and external. Constructive remarks that I would typically disregard can become difficult and contribute to increased stress.*"

h. Impact on Decision-Making

Academic pressures and anxiety can place a cognitive strain on students' capacity to make informed judgements, as increased stress levels can lead to impulsivity or indecisiveness. The constant pressure to excel academically may cloud their judgement and reduce their confidence in making decisions, both in academic settings and in everyday life. This impact on decision-making can add to a sense of uncertainty and may prevent pupils from dealing with issues in a proactive manner.

One respondent shared "*Academic stress can have an effect on my decision-making ability. Decisions, both intellectual and personal, become increasingly difficult as the stress fog distorts my judgement.*"

i. Coping Strategies Sometimes Ineffective

When confronted with the tremendous expectations of academic obstacles, students may resort to coping techniques that, while initially providing respite, ultimately prove inefficient or even harmful. Avoidance behaviours, substance abuse, or unhealthy work habits are examples. These practises not only fail to address the underlying causes of stress and anxiety, but they may also exacerbate the problems, resulting in a vicious cycle of increased stress and degraded well-being.

One respondent shared "*While I try to use coping mechanisms, there are instances when they seem ineffective. Academic stress might sometimes outweigh the benefits of relaxation techniques or stress management practices.*"

## Discussion

One of the specific goals of the research is to determine the impact and how it affects academic performance. The respondents to the poll said that they had varied degrees of difficulty maintaining a healthy work-life balance while also handling the commitments of their academic pursuits. 5.5% of respondents reported that they experienced this issue on an infrequent basis, 35.6% on an occasional

basis, 42.5% on a frequent basis, and 16.4% on an extremely frequent basis. According to Sprung and Rogers (2020), the concept of work-life balance has a detrimental effect on the mental health of college students. They highlighted that perceived stress acts as a mediator between the balance between work and life and anxiety and symptoms of depression.

The data collected from the participants in the study demonstrates a significant connection between stress and academic achievement. There was a negative impact on academic achievement for 69.9% of respondents, with 5.5% strongly agreeing with this statement. 19.2% of respondents were unsure, and 5.5% of respondents disputed that stress has a negative impact on academic performance. As to the findings of Keshi and Basavarajappa's (2011) research, the factors of academic stress, aggression, and depression have the potential to account for 68 percent of the variation in academic performance. In addition, the findings indicate that there are differences between males and females in terms of aggressiveness and depression.

This research found a link between stress and academic task completion. Stress hinders assignment and homework completion for 55.1% of respondents and 11.0% strongly agree. However, 29.9% were neutral and 4.1% disagreed. Pascoe et al. (2019) also demonstrated academic-related stress can lower academic achievement, reduce motivation, and enhance the risk of dropping out of school, with long-term consequences including less sustainable employment.

The study found that stress significantly affects motivation. When stressed, 60.5% of respondents and 9.6% strongly agreed that they lose study motivation. 6.8% disagreed, while 23.0% were undecided. Hollon et al. (2015) stated stress affects motivation via multiple brain circuits, influencing decision-making and mental health conditions, with impacts that vary based on the stressor's intensity, duration, and controllability.

The research data shows a strong link between stress and academic performance. Stress makes it harder to do well on exams and assessments, according to 56.4% of respondents, with 8.2% strongly agreeing. 24.7% were undecided and 10.7% disagreed. As per Pascoe et al. (2019) academic stress has the potential to impair academic performance, impede motivation, and increase the likelihood of student attrition, all of which can lead to enduring repercussions such as less stable employment opportunities. The study found stress significantly delays academic tasks, according to study. Most respondents (58.9%) agreed that stress causes academic procrastination, with 12.3% strongly agreeing. Only 6.8% agreed, while 21.9% were undecided. Yerdelen et al. (2016) evaluated that procrastination in education is extremely common among students, resulting in missed deadlines, poorer performance, and even course withdrawal.

The present study showed focus issues make it harder to understand complex ideas, retain information, and learn. Thus, students may struggle to meet academic goals and pass tests. Beyond specific projects, concentration issues can hurt academic performance and cause stress and anxiety. Academic stress and mental anxiety can impair concentration in study, class, and exam. Focus issues make it harder to understand complex ideas, retain information, and learn. Thus, students may struggle to meet academic goals and pass tests. Son et al. (2020) established that due to increased stress and anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, 89% of undergraduates experienced difficulty concentrating. The study found that time management issues can cause missed deadlines, incomplete tasks, and poor exam preparation. Academic performance may suffer as a result, with grades reflecting the challenges of juggling multiple assignments under pressure. Pascoe et al. (2019) explained that the presence of academic stress can hinder academic achievement, hinder motivation, and raise the probability of students dropping out, all of which can result in long-lasting consequences such as reduced job stability.

As per the current research mental health issues may increase absenteeism or decrease active participation in students. Poor attendance can lead to missed lectures, knowledge, and important relationships with instructors and peers. Carton and Goodboy (2015) demonstrated students experiencing psychological distress, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, tend to have lower levels of engagement in college courses.

The findings demonstrated students with high anxiety and stress can struggle to study, think critically, and write clearly. Under pressure to meet deadlines and succeed academically, assignments may be hastily completed, lowering quality. As Nurwulan et al. (2021) explained a clear and affirmative correlation between the amount of assignments and the level of stress experienced. Furthermore, research discovered that gender had a substantial impact on the level of stress.

Students' enjoyment of studying is greatly affected by academic stress and mental anxiety, which can affect their academic achievement. Stress and anxiety can reduce students' joy and intrinsic motivation to learn. Learning becomes stressful rather than enjoyable.

Within the scope of this study, one of the specific objectives is to investigate the effects on day-to-day life and well-being. Sleep patterns are impacted by stress. Both worry and academic pressure can interrupt sleep cycles, which can lead to problems with both the quality and length of sleep. A study conducted by Jensen (2003) discovered that college students experience increased sleep problems as a consequence of altered sleep cycles, increased levels of stress, and particular challenges that are present within academic environments.

Students may withdraw from their friends, family, and support networks when they struggle with their studies and worry, according to the findings of the study. Distancing oneself from others and increasing feelings of isolation and isolation are all consequences of social retreat. According to Gazelle and Rubin (2019), the formation of social retreat and anxiety on the part of young people is influenced by a number of factors, including child susceptibility, interpersonal stress, and ecological changes.

Eat habits and diets are frequently altered as a result of stress and anxiety. It is possible for students who experience a loss of appetite to suffer from dietary inadequacies as well as poor health. It was discovered by Pollard and colleagues in 1995 that individuals who have a high trait anxiety and a low social support may consume more total energy, fat, and saturated fat while they are taking tests.

Study showed that the constant pressure and anxiety of academic obstacles can lower students' self-esteem and confidence. Their self-doubt and fear of failure can make academic and social engagement difficult, compounding feelings of inadequacy. Loss of confidence hinders decision-making and problem-solving, affecting daily life and well-being. Hembree (1988) demonstrated that test anxiety has a detrimental effect on students' academic performance and self-esteem. However, mitigating test anxiety can result in enhanced test scores and overall grade point average (GPA).

The study found due to stress and anxiety, individuals are more likely to misinterpret criticism as a personal attack. This increased sensitivity may make it difficult to participate in academic or social settings, hindering meaningful discourse and personal growth. Atlas (1994) argued the Sensitivity to Criticism Scale is a dependable and accurate tool for evaluating how individuals react to criticism. It is associated with neuroticism, depression, self-esteem problems, and a decline in motivation and academic performance.

Academic stress and anxiety can impair students' decision-making by causing impulsivity or indecision. The pressure to succeed academically may cloud their judgement and reduce their confidence in making decisions in study and life. As Gagnon and Wagner (2016) stated Episodic memory retrieval is negatively impacted by acute stress, leading to attention deficits, impaired prefrontal cortical function, and potentially influencing decision-making in a biased manner.

Study found Student coping mechanisms may initially provide relief but ultimately prove ineffective or harmful when faced with high academic expectations. Lewis and Frydenberg (2002) explained when adolescents are unable to handle a situation, they respond by engaging in more coping activities. However, relying too heavily on unproductive strategies can prevent them from effectively using productive coping strategies.

The research's one of the specific aims to find The Prevalence of Academic Stress and Mental Anxiety. The study found an Academic Stress Scale frequency distribution with score ranges. Frequency and percentage of people in each score range are assigned. This result shows that 15.68% student suffer from high level of academic stress. And 76.8% student suffer from academic stress in some point of their academic life. Son et al. (2020) showed a total of 71% of the 195 students enrolled at a prominent public university in the United States reported experiencing heightened levels of stress and anxiety as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Poots and Cassidy (2020) showed academic stress is associated with well-being in 258 university students aged 18-39. Taha et al. (2017) demonstrate that approximately 84% of female students at Taif University are stressed, with the majority experiencing moderate stress (75.5%). Hossain et al. (2021) found nearly 60% of current university students in Bangladesh were extremely concerned about academic delays and were under severe stress. As Chowdhury et al. (2022) found Among 516 university students in Bangladesh, 414 (80.2%) reported mild to severe depression and 399 (77.3%) reported low to moderate perceived stress.

This study result shows that 16.7% reporting extremely severe anxiety. And 61.1% student suffer from anxiety in some point. Alex-According to Assensoh (2021) almost three out of every four college students suffer from severe anxiety. Rosas and Mendoza-Arias (2022) found during the pandemic, 75.4% of first-year medical students at a private university in Peru reported feeling anxious. Islam et al. (2020) added during the COVID-19 outbreak, 71.5% of university students in Bangladesh reported at least mild anxiety symptoms. As Dhar et al. (2020) stated COVID-19 has caused severe anxiety in 44.59% of university students in Bangladesh, moderate anxiety in 48.41%, and mild anxiety in 3.82%.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study provides a thorough assessment in order to gain meaningful insights on the intertwining of mental health and academic success, it is important to evaluate the impact that stress levels have on academic performance as well as on daily life aspects. It is possible for kids to experience negative effects on their ability to concentrate, remember information, and perform well academically while they are experiencing high levels of stress and worry. Through the identification of these relationships, this research has the potential to contribute to the creation of methods and support systems that are targeted at minimising the adverse impacts of stress on the educational outcomes of students as well as their general quality of life.

Through the provision of empirical evidence and recommendations that can be put into practice, the findings of this study have the potential to make a contribution to the greater field of mental health in higher education. The purpose of this research is to provide an explanation of the specific stressors and obstacles that students at Khulna University encounter. This research has the potential to serve as a model for similar studies that are conducted at other academic institutions, both locally and internationally. This corpus of research can be used to influence best practices in increasing student well-being, cultivating a campus atmosphere that is supportive, and eventually improving the entire experience of attending college.

Khulna University must recognize the impact of academic stress and mental anxiety on student well-being and academic achievement. By implementing the offered guidelines, the institution may help

to build a holistic approach to education—one that prioritizes students' mental health and fosters an environment conducive to both personal growth and academic success.

Evaluating the influence of stress levels on academic achievement and daily functioning yields significant insights into the interdependence between mental well-being and academic accomplishments. Elevated levels of stress and anxiety have the potential to adversely impact pupils' capacity to focus, retain knowledge, and achieve academic success. Through the identification of these connections, this study can provide valuable insights for the creation of tactics and assistance structures designed to alleviate the adverse impacts of stress on students' academic achievements and overall well-being.

The results of this study have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the broader domain of mental health in higher education through the provision of scientific data and practical suggestions. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the stressors and obstacles encountered by students at Khulna University. The findings of this study can be utilised as a model for doing similar research in various academic institutions, both at the regional and worldwide levels. This compilation of research can provide valuable insights into the most effective methods for encouraging student well-being, cultivating a nurturing campus atmosphere, and eventually improving the overall college experience.

Moving forward, it is critical that educational institutions, governments, and mental health practitioner's work together to foster a culture that values and prioritizes mental health. We can foster a resilient and flourishing student community by addressing the core causes of academic stress and offering effective support services.

In essence, this thesis is a rallying cry for Khulna University and other similar institutions to recognize the importance of mental health in the academic journey. The findings in this paper lay the groundwork for future study and the creation of tailored treatments that contribute to students' overall well-being, providing a more fulfilling and successful educational experience.

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