



Research Article

Manifestations and Coping Deficits: Investigating Variations in Perceived Parental Pressure, Exam Anxiety, and Emotional Well- Being among Secondary School Students

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Abstract

This paper has explored the perceived parental pressure, exam anxiety, and emotional well-being amongst secondary school children in Sargodha, Pakistan. The study's objectives include to investigate the perceived levels of parental pressure, exam anxiety, and emotional well-being among secondary school students. Quantitative cross-sectional survey design was used, and 240 students (Grades 9 and 10) were sampled by using multistage sampling. Data collection was done using three research instruments, which included the Parental Pressure Scale, Exam Anxiety Scale, and Emotional Well-Being Scale. Those were descriptive statistical analyses (frequency, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations). The findings showed that there was a lot of pressure on the parents, especially in terms of high-grade expectations. There was also extensive exam anxiety as students complained of psychological (e.g., worry, memory blanking) and physical (e.g., racing heart) symptoms. Although the overall outcome of the questions revealed that students were usually experiencing positive emotional well-being, including enjoying learning and being proud of their accomplishments, the academic stress and trouble with their personal life caused by schoolwork were also common. One of the major discoveries was the dual and sophisticated role of parental influence, which was a stressor, yet it was a support of personal passions to many. The research paper concludes that high parental expectations and exam anxiety are the major factors that put pressure on the emotional health of students. The report highlights the need for intervention measures and recommends that schools be given stress management programs, awareness workshops for parents, and curriculum changes that will promote a healthier balance between academic performance and mental health.

Keywords: Parental pressure, Exam anxiety, Emotional well-being, Secondary school students.

Introduction

The academic setting of secondary school is a sensitive stage in development characterized by a lot of developmental effects and academic pressure. In this context, it can be noted that parental pressure and anxiety about the examinations are two of the most notable psychosocial factors that can significantly affect the academic path and the emotional well-being of a student. This review summarizes the literature that has been done in relation to parental pressure, exam anxiety, and emotional well-being and outlines the relationship between them and provides the basis upon which the current study is being done. Parental participation is normally a key foundation of academic achievement, yet when it is done through an overbearing tone, it may turn into a major bully to the student. Parental pressure normally includes high standards in grades, academic comparisons with peers, and excessive stress on academic success as a key factor of value (Kim & Park, 2021). A longitudinal investigation by Jiang et al. (2020) observed that parental academic pressure became a strong predictor of high levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms among adolescents, which makes this tool potentially destructive to mental health. This is pressure that is usually driven by a need to make their children excel in competitive settings, but it may have the counterproductive effect of causing

poor performance, loss of self-esteem, and other unpleasant emotions (Liu et al., 2022).

Anxiety about exams is a particular form of performance anxiety, which is excessive worry about exams, physiological arousal, and cognitive interference before or during examinations (Zeidner, 2020). It is a common problem in the education systems around the world, especially in the high-stakes testing culture. This is always proven by the research that exam anxiety can affect cognitive abilities of working memory and attention, as well as having a considerable negative effect on academic performance (Putwain & Daly, 2014). The cognitive symptoms, such as blanking out and the physiological symptoms, such as heart racing and sweating, form a debilitating cycle that prevents students from proving that they are good. The level of emotion is a vital mediator between the outcomes of the variables on the academic performance of students

The effectiveness of emotional well-being is central to the mediation of the impacts (stressors) on academic performance. It involves the ability to cope with stress, positive relationships, and being tough despite adversity (Diener et al., 2018). A favorable emotional condition allows dealing with parental pressure, and the burden of passing exams makes it possible to demonstrate the best results in the educational process (Bong et al., 2021). On the other hand, bad emotional health also contributes to the adverse effects of parental pressure and examination anxiety, which results in a vicious cycle leading to failure in academic performance. Emotional well-being can therefore help the students rethink the challenges faced, use relevant coping mechanisms, and have a less unhealthy view of their academic processes. However, emotional well-being is a critical factor in this dynamic and predetermines that students are more capable of coping with stress and doing more at school. Studies indicate that when students give emotional well-being a high score, they can better handle parental expectations and stress associated with exams, hence better academic performance.

The collected literature provides unequivocal two-way correlations between parental pressure, exam anxiety and emotional well-being. Parental pressure may worsen the anxiety about the examinations, and consequently, this reduces emotional health. On the contrary, a high level of emotional health may cushion both the effects of pressure and anxiety. To a large extent, however, this study has been done in Western settings. Pakistan is a collectivist country with a highly competitive educational system that can influence these dynamics differently. As an example, the pressure of parents can be more normative but internalized in different ways by students. This paper intends to explore the perceived levels of parental pressure, exam anxiety, and emotional well-being of public and private secondary school students in Punjab, Pakistan. The consideration of such a role is critical in designing interventions to guarantee the well-being of the students and academic success, particularly on the secondary level, where one must meet the requirements of academic success. Hence, the study aims to contribute to the literature by undertaking a descriptive analysis of these three key variables in a less studied setting, that of secondary school students in Punjab, Pakistan. This study will help develop a baseline of knowledge to be used in specific, culturally sensitive measures to promote student achievement and emotional well-being by measuring the perceived levels of parental pressure, exam anxiety, and emotional well-being.

Problem Statement

This study aims to investigate variations in perceived parental pressure, exam anxiety, and emotional well-being among secondary school students.

Objective of the Study

The following Objectives were the focus of the study's design:

1. To investigate the perceived levels of parental pressure among secondary school students.
2. To assess the perceived levels of exam anxiety among secondary school students.
3. To examine the perceived levels of emotional well-being among secondary school students.

Material and Methods

This section outlines the methodological framework consisting of research design, population and sampling, sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods. It

underpins the methodology of the present research, which is designed to provide a clear, systematic, and replicable framework that forms the backbone of the current study.

Research Design

The research design used in this study is quantitative in nature, and the research approach is cross-sectional by using surveys to investigate the levels of the current research variables, including parental pressure, exam anxiety, emotional well-being, and academic performance. In parallel measurement of variables and investigation of statistical analysis, it is especially appropriate to use quantitative methods (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It also guarantees objectivity and generalizability, which are consistent with the purpose of this study, adopting the measurement of variables (Field, 2018). The same cross-sectional survey technique was employed; that is, data were gathered from samples consisting of secondary school students. This intensive quantitative framework allowed the study to yield generalizable and objective information. In addition to this, a structured approach permitted objective measurement and analysis, which guaranteed the possibility of extrapolating the results to a wider population.

Population and Sampling

The target group of the study included all the public and private secondary school students (both male and female) of the Grade 9 and Grade 12 of Punjab, Pakistan. While public and private sector secondary schools of the district Sargodha were taken as the accessible population for the study. All schools in both the urban and rural areas in the two sectors were considered to make it diverse in terms of socioeconomic levels.

A multistage sampling technique was employed to ensure a representative sample. In the first stage, district Sargodha was conveniently selected from all districts of Punjab, Pakistan. In the second stage, three tehsils were randomly stratified from the seven tehsils of district Sargodha, to capture variations in different academic backgrounds and a diverse range of socio-economic characteristics and on key criteria of geographic location comprising three tehsils, i.e. one tehsil from the north, one from the central, and one from the southern region of district Sargodha, including tehsil Bhalwal, tehsil Sargodha, and tehsil Sillanwali. Hence, out of three strata of the selected tehsils, in the third stage, four schools from each selected tehsil were conveniently selected to ensure that students of district Sargodha were adequately represented. However, in the last stage, within each selected school, twenty students were chosen using simple random sampling, totalling 240 male and female secondary school students of Grades 9 and 10. This sample size was considered adequate for ensuring that the findings can be generalized to a wider number of students within the district. It was considered adequate for the statistical analyses that provided diversity and reliability of the results. This scientific method reduced sampling bias and increased the representativeness of the sample, thereby providing a guarantee that the findings of the given study were representative of the whole group of secondary school students in District Sargodha. It is a better way to raise the aspect of representativeness and reduce selection bias (Bryman, 2016).

Instrumentation

The formulation of the research tools started with thorough research of the existing tools and the extant literature about parental pressure, exam anxiety, and emotional well-being, and a review of the related literature on these topics. This helped in the determination of the corresponding constructs and items in the formation of the research tools. It has been formulated with three important tools to assess the variables of study, such as the Parental Pressure Scale, Exam Anxiety Scale, and Emotional Well-Being Scale. This review was useful in the identification of the major dimensions to be captured, and it offered a theoretical background. On the basis of this literature, the preliminary item pool was developed. These items were well designed to demonstrate the versatile coverage of every variable.

The Parental Pressure Scale measured perceived parental expectations and assessed the intensity and nature of parental expectations exerted on students regarding their academic performance. The Exam Anxiety Scale was used to measure the examination anxiety and its magnitude that students experienced during or before examinations. The Emotional Well-Being Scale measured resilience and emotional regulation, and the general

emotional health of the students. The questionnaire consisted of forty-five items that were divided equally into three sections. These three subsections of the questionnaire consisted of fifteen items each, such as Parental Pressure, Exam Anxiety, and Emotional Well-Being. The questions in these scales were designed in the form of a five-point Likert-type response scale, with Strongly Disagree, Strongly Agree format as follows:

Validity and Reliability

After the development of the preliminary items, these were reviewed by subject matter experts of the district education department and academic professionals from the University of Sargodha to ensure that the tool items were contextually appropriate for secondary school students in District Sargodha. The expert reviews were taken to ensure that the instruments were sufficient to address the areas of parental pressure, anxiety about exams, and emotional well-being and in a manner of clarity, cultural suitability, and applicability to the context of the target students, comprising secondary school students from District Sargodha. The use of expert reviews was also central to the determination of face validity and content validity. The experts ensured that the items sufficiently captured all the aspects of parental pressure, anxiety related to examinations, and emotional well-being. The feedback served to validate that the items were well elaborated and contextually applicable to the target population, so that they could be comprehensive to cover every construct and to eliminate unnecessary or unclear statements. These reviews, suggestions, and feedback were used to make the items more refined and more relevant and clearer.

Initial items for each instrument were distributed among a few secondary school students for a field test to ensure the understandability, usability, and functionality of the instrument in real-world conditions. Moreover, a pilot study was then conducted with a small sample of the target population to test the clarity and practical applicability of the items. This preliminary study involved 40 participants taken comprising Grade 9 and Grade 10 students who were excluded from the final sample. The pilot study served as an additional check to ensure that the scales are well understood by the target population. The consistency of the measurement or reliability was evaluated by measuring internal consistency. The results of the pilot study allowed firstly obtaining Cronbach's alpha calculations. A considerable alpha coefficient of 0.70 and above was deemed acceptable in order to make sure that the items were adequately testing the intended constructs (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Each item passed this level of reliability since the value of Cronbach's alpha showed high levels of reliability of each instrument, such as parental pressure, exam anxiety, and emotional well-being.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The structured questionnaire was used to gather data, which was directly obtained by the selected students. In order to determine the relevance, clarity, and reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was done with a small subgroup before the main study. The questionnaires were issued during school hours with the assistance of school administrators. The students and their guardians were informed about the study and the fact that they can choose not to participate in the study; therefore, the students and their guardians fully understood their rights. Strict confidentiality and anonymity were observed during the collection of data. The number of responses obtained among the respondents was 240, and 40 of them were discarded; 200 questionnaires were picked for further data analysis.

Results and Discussion

The quantitative analysis was done using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Parental pressure, the anxiety of exams, emotional well-being, and performance of secondary school students were determined by frequencies, percentages, mean scores, standard deviations, and rankings.

Demographics

This study investigated the perceived levels of parental pressure, exam anxiety, emotional well-being, and the academic performance of secondary school students. Statistical Package of Social Sciences version 27 (SPSS) was used to analyze the quantitative data. Parental pressure, anxiety during exams, emotional well-being and

academic performance of secondary school students were determined using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, standard deviations, and rankings.

Item-Wise Frequency Analysis of Parental Pressure

The item-wise frequency analysis of parental pressure is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Item-wise frequency analysis of parental pressure.

Sr.	Statements	Disagreement Zone		Total Disagreement	N	Agreement Zone		Total Agreement	Result
		SDA	DA			A	SA		
1	My parents want me to get high grades.	1 (.5%)	1 (.5%)	2 (1.0%)	2 (1.0%)	40 (20.0%)	156 (78.0%)	196 (98.0%)	Agreement
2	My parents ask me about schoolwork.	1 (.5%)	5 (2.5%)	6 (3.0%)	41 (20.5%)	86 (43.0%)	67 (33.5%)	153 (76.5%)	Agreement
3	My parents express their disappointment when I don't perform as they hope	1 (.5%)	10 (5.0%)	11 (5.5%)	23 (11.5%)	85 (42.5%)	81 (40.5%)	166 (83.0%)	Agreement
4	My parents compare my grades to those of my classmates.	29 (14.5%)	40 (20.0%)	69 (34.5%)	23 (11.5%)	48 (24.0%)	60 (30.0%)	108 (54.0%)	Agreement
5	My parents encourage me to compete with top-performing students.	8 (4.0%)	17 (8.5%)	25 (12.5%)	32 (16.0%)	60 (30.0%)	83 (41.5%)	143 (71.5%)	Agreement
6	My parents discuss the successes of other students, making me feel bad	29 (14.5%)	48 (24.0%)	77 (38.5%)	31 (15.5%)	51 (25.5%)	41 (20.5%)	92 (46.0%)	Agreement
7	My parents' discussion about my future career makes me anxious about my choices	27 (13.5%)	56 (28.0%)	83 (41.5%)	44 (22.0%)	37 (18.0%)	36 (18.0%)	73 (36.0%)	Disagreement
8	I feel that choosing a different career path will disappoint my parents	46 (23.0%)	55 (27.5%)	101 (50.5%)	37 (18.5%)	38 (19.0%)	24 (12.0%)	62 (31.0%)	Disagreement
9	My parents talk about their own career success, making me feel pressured	52 (26.0%)	73 (36.5%)	125 (62.5%)	29 (14.5%)	21 (10.5%)	25 (12.5%)	46 (23.0%)	Disagreement
10	I feel that if I choose a less traditional career path, my parents might not support me	65 (32.5%)	59 (29.5%)	124 (62.0%)	37 (18.5%)	23 (11.5%)	16 (8.0%)	184 (52.3%)	Disagreement

11	I feel that my parents support me in pursuing my passions, even if they differ from their expectations	6 (3.0%)	15 (7.5%)	21 (10.5%)	17 (8.5%)	72 (36.0%)	90 (45.0%)	162 (81.0%)	Agreement
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The examination of the responses of the students on the topics of parental pressure indicates that there is a tendency to agree with the majority of statements. The statement that got the highest level of agreement (98.0) was the one that stated that my parents want me to get high grades, implying that almost all students are under strong pressure from their parents to perform well academically. Likewise, 83.0% of the students said their parents were disappointed when they failed to deliver, which supports the idea that it is performance-based validation. Approximately 76.5 per cent of students said their parents often asked them about their schoolwork, which indicates parental engagement in their schoolwork. The data is, however, indicative of ambivalent attitudes towards parental comparisons and competitive pressure. Although 54.0% of them said that their parents compare their grades with their classmates, 71.5% of them said that their parents urged them to compete with the best students.

Interestingly, 46.0 per cent of students said they feel bad when the success of other students is discussed, whereas 36.0 per cent of the students said that they became anxious when their parents brought up career discussions. Another interesting 31.0% replied that they were sure that their parents would be disappointed with their decision to take another career path, and 52.3% believed that they might end up lacking parental support by taking a non-traditional career path. Nevertheless, on the bright side, 81.0% of students affirmed that their parents help them achieve their passions, although this may not be what their parents expect, which means that despite high expectations, most parents end up offering emotional support and acceptance to their children with regard to their choice of careers. This uncertain reaction points out the duality of parental pressure; it also causes stress and anxiety in terms of performance and career choices.

Item-Wise Frequency Analysis of Exam Anxiety

The item-wise frequency analysis of exam anxiety is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Item-wise frequency analysis of exam anxiety.

Sr.	Statements	Disagreement Zone		Total Disagreement	N	Agreement Zone		Total Agreement	Result
		SDA	DA			A	SA		
1	I feel worried about forgetting important information during exams	16 (8.0%)	17 (8.5%)	33 (16.5%)	36 (18.0%)	53 (26.5%)	78 (39.0%)	131 (65.5%)	Agreement
2	My mind goes blank when I sit down to take a test	35 (17.5%)	46 (23.0%)	81 (40.5%)	42 (21.0%)	43 (21.5%)	34 (17.0%)	77 (38.5%)	Disagreement
3	I struggle to remember what I studied when I'm anxious	10 (5.0%)	19 (9.5%)	29 (14.5%)	24 (12.0%)	81 (40.5%)	66 (33.0%)	147 (73.5%)	Agreement
4	I feel that my anxiety will impact my ability to perform well on the exam	13 (6.5%)	19 (9.5%)	32 (16.0%)	40 (20.0%)	77 (38.5%)	51 (25.5%)	128 (64.0%)	Agreement
5	I feel nervous right before an exam starts	16 (8.0%)	10 (5.0%)	26 (13.0%)	32 (16.0%)	66 (33.0%)	76 (38.0%)	142 (71.0%)	Agreement

6	I feel stressed in the days leading up to an exam	16 (8.0%)	24 (12.0%)	40 (20.0%)	29 (14.5%)	75 (37.5%)	56 (28.0%)	131 (65.5%)	Agreement
7	I feel irritable or short-tempered when I'm preparing for exams	33 (16.5%)	38 (19.0%)	71 (35.5%)	28 (14.0%)	48 (24.0%)	53 (26.5%)	101 (50.5%)	Agreement
8	I feel a racing heart or sweating when I sit down to take an exam	25 (12.5%)	33 (16.5%)	58 (29.0%)	43 (21.5%)	44 (22.0%)	55 (27.5%)	99 (49.5%)	Agreement
9	I check my notes or course material multiple times before the exam	11 (5.5%)	25 (12.5%)	36 (18.0%)	39 (19.5%)	61 (30.5%)	64 (32.0%)	125 (62.5%)	Agreement
10	I stay up late the night before an exam, thinking it will help me study more	31 (15.5%)	37 (18.5%)	68 (34.0%)	29 (14.5%)	56 (28.0%)	47 (23.5%)	103 (51.5%)	Agreement
11	I find myself reviewing questions I've answered during the exam	5 (2.5%)	19 (9.5%)	24 (12.0%)	32 (16.0%)	82 (41.0%)	62 (31.0%)	144 (72.0%)	Agreement
12	I use relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, to calm myself before tests	23 (11.5%)	33 (16.5%)	56 (28.0%)	40 (20.0%)	70 (35.0%)	34 (17.0%)	104 (52.0%)	Agreement

The response analysis of student responses about exam anxiety depicts that the majority of students feel very nervous before and during examinations. The greatest level of agreement (73.5) was on the statement saying I find it hard to remember what I learnt when I am nervous, which means that anxiety plays a great role in influencing memory recall. To the same extent, 72.0% of students agreed that they utilize questions that they have answered in exams, implying that they need to be reassured. Approximately 71.0 per cent stated that they felt nervous before an exam, and 65.5 per cent claimed that they felt stressed before an exam.

There were also some physical signs of anxiety; 49.5% said that they had a racing heart or that they sweated in exams. Also, 65.5 per cent of students are concerned about forgetting something important, and 64.0 per cent believe their anxiety influences their performance. Though 62.5% of them always take notes the night before an exam, 51.5% always stay up late at night studying more. Nevertheless, relaxation techniques are used by only 52.0% to deal with stress. The results indicate that although anxiety associated with exams is a common phenomenon, the number of coping mechanisms, including relaxation methods, is lower, which suggests that stress management assistance requires improvement.

Item-Wise Frequency Analysis of Emotional Well-Being

The item-wise frequency analysis of emotional well-being is given in Table 3. The review of the responses of students towards emotional well-being reveals that the overall picture concerning the emotional state of students is rather positive, yet there are some issues. The greatest consensus was with the statement; I find joy in learning new things with a consensus of 78.0% showing that the majority of the students are driven by learning. In the same manner, 76.5% of them replied to celebrating their successes, which displayed a feeling of achievement and positive reinforcement.

Table 3. Item-wise frequency analysis of emotional well-being.

Sr.	Statements	Disagreement Zone		Total Disagreement	N	Agreement Zone		Total Agreement	Result
		SDA	DA			A	SA		
1	I feel energized and motivated to tackle my daily tasks	8 (4.0%)	19 (9.5%)	27 (13.5%)	60 (30.0%)	65 (32.5%)	48 (24.0%)	113 (56.5%)	Agreement
2	I find joy in learning new things	7 (3.5%)	6 (3.0%)	13 (6.5%)	31 (15.5%)	64 (32.0%)	92 (46.0%)	156 (78.0%)	Agreement
3	I celebrate my achievements, no matter how small	12 (6.0%)	12 (6.0%)	24 (12.0%)	23 (11.5%)	70 (35.0%)	83 (41.5%)	153 (76.5%)	Agreement
4	I feel stressed managing my personal activities due to schoolwork	21 (10.5%)	9 (4.5%)	30 (15.0%)	42 (21.0%)	66 (33.0%)	62 (31.0%)	128 (64.0%)	Agreement
5	I feel angry or frustrated about my academic workload	24 (12.0%)	35 (17.5%)	59 (29.5%)	30 (15.0%)	59 (29.5%)	52 (26.0%)	111 (55.5%)	Agreement
6	I feel like giving up when faced with challenges	46 (23.0%)	44 (22.0%)	90 (45.0%)	41 (20.5%)	45 (22.5%)	24 (12.0%)	69 (34.5%)	Disagreement
7	I feel a sense of fear about attending classes or participating in activities	43 (21.5%)	42 (21.0%)	85 (42.5%)	55 (27.5%)	34 (17.0%)	26 (13.0%)	60 (30.0%)	Disagreement
8	I am satisfied with my life as a whole	12 (6.0%)	17 (8.5%)	29 (14.5%)	39 (19.5%)	52 (26.0%)	80 (40.0%)	132 (66.0%)	Agreement
9	I have a good balance between my studies and personal life	17 (8.5%)	28 (14.0%)	45 (22.5%)	52 (26.0%)	54 (27.0%)	49 (24.5%)	103 (51.5%)	Agreement
10	I feel that I have control over my life	17 (8.5%)	24 (12.0%)	41 (20.5%)	52 (26.0%)	50 (25.0%)	57 (28.5%)	107 (53.5%)	Agreement

The proportion of students who stated that they were satisfied with their life was about 66.0%, and 56.5% of them felt that they were energized and motivated enough to manage tasks of everyday activities, pointing to a positive state in general. Nevertheless, there is observable stress and frustration; 64.0% of them are stressed dealing with personal activities because of schoolwork and 55.5% state that they are frustrated by schoolwork. The difficulties associated with emotional stability were also present, as 34.5% of people confessed that they felt like quitting when they encountered difficulties, and 30.0% claimed that they were afraid to attend classes or engage in activities. Besides, 51.5 per cent indicated a good balance between studies and personal life, and 53.5 per cent indicated that they oversaw their life. The results indicate that students are largely emotionally well, but in terms of stress and workload management, there is room to improve.

Descriptive Analysis of Parental Pressure

Descriptive analysis of parental pressure is given in Table 4. As shown in the table, different kinds of parental pressure faced by students in secondary schools and the degree of emotional well-being of these pressures are represented. The strongest parental pressure can be seen in the statement; my parents want me to get high grades where the mean score is 4.75, which shows that the students have a strong feeling that they are expected to excel academically. This is then followed by "My parents tell me that they are disappointed with me when I do not do well academically (mean = 4.17), which is to say that a significant number of students feel the

emotional burden of being disappointed by their parents when they cannot deliver.

Table 4. Descriptive analysis of parental pressure.

Sr.	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranking	Interpretation
1	My parents want me to get high grades.	200	4.75	0.549	1st	High
2	My parents express their disappointment when I don't perform as they hope.	200	4.17	0.859	2 nd	High
3	I feel that my parents support me in pursuing my passions, even if they differ from their expectations.	200	4.13	1.046	3rd	High
4	My parents ask me about schoolwork.	200	4.07	0.827	4th	High
5	My parents encourage me to compete with top-performing students.	200	3.97	1.131	5th	High
6	My parents compare my grades to those of my classmates.	200	3.35	1.452	6th	Moderate
7	My parents discuss the successes of other students, making me feel bad.	200	3.13	1.373	7th	Moderate
8	My parents' discussion about my future career makes me anxious about my choices.	200	3	1.317	8th	Moderate
9	I feel that choosing a different career path will disappoint my parents.	200	2.7	1.334	9th	Moderate
10	My parents talk about their own career success, making me feel pressured.	200	2.47	1.318	10th	Moderate
11	I feel that if I choose a less traditional career path, my parents might not support me.	200	2.33	1.261	11th	Low

To illustrate, e.g., my parents compare me with other students in terms of their grades (mean = 3.35), and my parents discuss how successful other students are, which makes me feel bad (mean = 3.13) are representative of the moderate level of pressure related to the comparison with peers. There is also moderate anxiety about career discussion with students whose responses indicate that they feel anxiety after having a conversation with their parents on the topic of their future career with the following statements: My parents discuss my future career, and I feel that talking to them about it makes me anxious about my choices (mean = 3.00), and I believe that by choosing a different career path I will disappoint my parents (mean = 2.70). Nonetheless, the pressures arising in the career are not as high as the academic ones.

Lastly, the statements with the lowest levels of pressure include those that discuss the parental career success that makes me feel pressured (means = 2.47) and those that say that my parents will not support me in an unconventional career choice, making me feel pressured (means = 2.33). These results indicate that though there are students who find pressure in terms of career choice, the level of this pressure is comparatively low in comparison to the pressure associated with academic matters.

Descriptive Analysis of Exam Anxiety

The descriptive analysis of exam anxiety is given in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive analysis of exam anxiety.

Sr.	Statements	N	Mean	S.D.	Ranking	Interpretation
1	I find myself reviewing questions I've answered during the exam.	200	3.89	1.033	1st	High
2	I feel nervous right before an exam starts.	200	3.88	1.205	2nd	High
3	I struggle to remember what I studied when I'm anxious.	200	3.87	1.127	3rd	High

4	I feel worried about forgetting important information during exams.	200	3.80	1.264	4th	High
5	I check my notes or course material multiple times before the exam.	200	3.71	1.197	5th	High
6	I feel that my anxiety will impact my ability to perform well on the exam.	200	3.67	1.148	6th	High
7	I feel stressed in the days leading up to an exam.	200	3.66	1.230	7th	Moderate
8	I feel a racing heart or sweating when I sit down to take an exam.	200	3.36	1.367	8th	Moderate
9	I use relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, to calm myself before tests.	200	3.30	1.255	9th	Moderate
10	I stay up late the night before an exam, thinking it will help me study more.	200	3.26	1.404	10th	Moderate
11	I feel irritable or short-tempered when I'm preparing for exams.	200	3.25	1.448	11th	Moderate
12	My mind goes blank when I sit down to take a test.	200	2.98	1.354	12th	Moderate

The statistics indicate that anxiety in examinations is high in secondary school students, as seen through activities like reading answers multiple times (mean = 3.89), nervousness before exams (mean = 3.88), and difficulty in recalling what they have learnt (mean = 3.87). Besides having physical effects such as a racing heart (mean = 3.36), the students also experience feeling stressed when preparing (mean = 3.66). Anxiety does not occur on exam day. Although relaxation strategies are used by students (mean = 3.30), they are not applied as often as anxious behaviours. The barriers of exam mental were less common (mean = 2.98). The findings reveal that emotional well-being, exam anxiety, and parental pressure play a very important role. This highlights the importance of emotional support programs that can be used to improve the academic performance of the students.

Descriptive Analysis of Emotional Well-Being

The descriptive analysis of emotional well-being is given in Table 6.

Table 6. Descriptive analysis of emotional well-being.

Sr.	Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranking	Interpretation
1	I find joy in learning new things	200	4.14	1.018	1st	High
2	I celebrate my achievements, no matter how small	200	4.00	1.147	2 nd	High
3	I am satisfied with my life as a whole	200	3.86	1.209	3rd	High
4	I feel stressed managing my personal activities due to schoolwork	200	3.70	1.249	4th	High
5	I feel energized and motivated to tackle my daily tasks	200	3.63	1.072	5th	High
6	I feel that I have control over my life	200	3.53	1.256	6th	Moderate
7	I have a good balance between my studies and personal life	200	3.45	1.239	7th	Moderate
8	I feel angry or frustrated about my academic workload	200	3.40	1.356	8th	Moderate
9	I feel a sense of fear about attending classes or participating in activities	200	2.79	1.313	9th	Moderate
10	I feel like giving up when faced with challenges	200	2.79	1.345	10th	Moderate

They also deal with serious issues like feeling pressured by their studies (mean = 3.70) and finding it difficult to manage their personal lives with their schoolwork (mean = 3.45). Many people are inspired (mean = 3.63), but some are also frustrated (mean = 3.40) and afraid of school-related activities (mean = 2.79). This implies that even though students often have a favourable emotional state, their emotional health is impacted by academic stress and difficulties. The results emphasise how crucial it is to investigate emotional health as a

moderator in order to comprehend how exam anxiety and parental pressure interact.

Discussion

The results of the study provide helpful knowledge about the complicated relationship between parental pressure, exam anxiety, and the emotional well-being of secondary school students. These findings prove the fact that parental expectations play an important role in the experiences of emotions and education in terms of students. It is important to note that the frequency analysis indicated that students mostly view parental focus on academic success as a priority, and this can be aligned with the recent studies demonstrating that parental expectations, when interpreted as demanding as opposed to their assistive nature, can result in the occurrence of a higher degree of psychological stress in adolescents (Kaya & Erdem, 2020).

It was revealed in the analysis of exam anxiety that exams are associated with high levels of psychological and physiological anxiety in most students, including worry, memory loss, and physical discomfort. Such results are consistent with the results presented by Putwain and Daly (2014), who reported that test anxiety is a primary predictor of poor performance and is frequently enhanced by perceived external demands. Other more recent studies by Liu et al. (2020) reinforce the notion with additional evidence that exam-related anxiety is closely connected with maladaptive perfectionism and high parental control. Although some of the students said that they used practices like checking back notes and late nights to cope with the anxiety, a smaller number of them employed healthy methods of coping, such as relaxation strategies. This correlates with the conclusions of Salmela-Aro et al. (2022), who conclude that academic burnout and anxiety tend to be associated with poor stress management habits in students.

Speaking of emotional well-being, it can be concluded that all students have a positive view of themselves, as most of them expressed their feelings of being joyful, motivated, and satisfied. Nonetheless, stress between academic and personal life, frustration, and fear of failure were also noted to be problems. These trends correlate with the literature that has determined academic resilience and school connectedness as protective factors that can be used to maintain emotional well-being amid external stressful situations. Students who believed that they had the support of their academic endeavours, even under pressure, exhibited improved emotional results, which implies that perceived parental warmth could mediate the negative influence of academic expectations (Kaya and Erdem, 2020).

Conclusions

An alarming number of students indicated having a lot of parental pressure, especially the pressure that requires them to excel in school, with the percentage of agreement being so high about statements like My parents want me to get high grades. Although such pressure can serve as a driving force in academic life, at the same time, it is a source of stress, especially the areas where disillusionment of parents or the urge to keep up with peers is encouraged. Interestingly, the ambivalence of parental influence came into the spotlight: on the one hand, students reported being pressured to achieve, but on the other hand, they felt very encouraged to follow their interests, and hence, parental role is not necessarily mutually exclusive with the personal development. Exam anxiety proved to be an all-pervasive issue, and students have reported the presence of physical and psychological test prep symptoms, including memory loss, increased heartbeats, and nervousness before exams. The analysis found that anxiety not only occurs during exam times but also in preparation stages, and students resort to unproductive coping strategies such as cramming during the night. This notwithstanding, relaxation techniques were not used extensively, indicating a serious weakness in institutional encouragement of stress management. This relationship is further complicated by the paradox of emotional well-being as a partial mediator between parental pressure and exam anxiety. The higher the emotional well-being, the more anxiety was reported by students, but less significantly, which may be explained by increased academic investment or self-awareness, though it destroys the notion that well-being always reduces stress.

There was a complex situation on the emotional level as well. Although most respondents were happy with life and excited about learning, there was constant pressure due to school loads and difficulties arising from a

lack of time to balance personal activities. The fact that emotional well-being is negatively correlated with academic performance points to the idea that well-being is not necessarily a predictor of improved performance per se, meaning the importance of reducing the systemic stressors, and not merely making people resilient. It is preferable to focus on stress-management programs in schools, create an open dialogue between parents and students on the realism of expectations, and introduce emotional resilience training into curricula. Finally, it is crucial to provide conditions under which academic rigor and mental health support can co-exist, bringing up well-rounded and thriving students.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations for the study based on the findings and conclusions of the study:

1. Schools ought to establish and implement specific support initiatives required to address stress management or center-based mindfulness training, stress management sessions, and building emotional resilience, among others, into the curriculum. These programs must specifically impart to students healthy coping skills (i.e., parenthesis like relaxation techniques) to successfully handle exam anxiety, as opposed to using maladaptive coping techniques such as last-minute cramming.
2. Schools ought to hold seminars and workshops, on a regular basis, for parents. The messages to be taught during these sessions are the adverse effects of over-acquiring, the need to help their children emotionally, and how they can help their children with realistic and supportive goals that do not affect the psychological health of the children when they require them to study hard.
3. School administrators and policy makers should strive to reform assessment culture to make exams less high-stakes. By promoting a learning atmosphere where curiosity, mastery and personal development are prized compared to the grades received, one can potentially reduce the main causes of anxiety in students.
4. Schools need to make sure that the availability of professional psychological counseling services to the students. These services would offer a confidential environment, where students can talk about academic pressures, career anxieties, emotional problems and work out their own strategies for addressing them.

Moreover, future studies need to:

1. Use longitudinal designs to monitor the changes in parental pressure and anxiety about exams in a longer period and how they influence psychological and career long-term effects.
2. Hold cross-cultural comparative research to learn how cultural expectations (e.g. collectivist vs. individualist society) influence parental expectations and student reactions to stress.
3. Consider qualitative approaches (e.g., interviews, focus groups) to investigate the paradoxical result that more emotional well-being was associated with more anxiety profoundly, with such variables as academic engagement and self-awareness explored.
4. Determine the moderating effects of socioeconomic status, gender, and geographic place (rural/urban) on the experience of parental pressure and emotional well-being.

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