ACADEMIC PRESSURE AND WAYS OF OVERCOMING IT: A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. Academic pressure is one of the most common sources of psychological strain among students. It arises from examinations, deadlines, heavy workloads, social comparison, and high expectations from family, teachers, and the students themselves. This paper defines academic pressure, identifies its main causes, describes its effects on students’ emotional state, concentration, motivation, and physical well-being, and analyzes evidence-based ways of managing it. It is argued that academic pressure can be overcome through a combination of time management, realistic goal setting, healthy lifestyle habits, social support, and a constructive attitude toward mistakes. The paper concludes that students should focus on progress rather than perfection.

Keywords: academic pressure, academic stress, coping strategies, time management, well-being, social support, perfectionism, motivation.

Introduction. Education plays a significant role in personal and professional development, yet student life is accompanied by demanding academic requirements. Examinations, homework, deadlines, and expectations of high achievement create a level of strain that many students find difficult to handle. Research indicates that stress is widespread among students in secondary and higher education and is associated with lower well-being and impaired academic functioning [1]. At the

same time, stress is not harmful in all cases. According to the classic Yerkes–Dodson law, moderate arousal can improve performance, while excessive arousal reduces it [2]. The key question is therefore not how to eliminate pressure completely, but how to keep it at a manageable level and how to respond to it effectively. Understanding the nature of academic pressure and the strategies for coping with it is relevant for students, teachers, and parents alike.This paper argues that academic pressure is a manageable challenge rather than an inevitable obstacle: when students recognize its causes and early signs and apply a combination of effective time management, realistic goal setting, healthy lifestyle habits, social support, and a growth-oriented attitude toward mistakes, they can reduce stress, preserve motivation, and achieve sustainable academic results.

1. The concept of academic pressure. Academic pressure can be defined as the stress that students experience when they feel obliged to achieve high grades or to meet the expectations of others. From the transactional perspective, stress occurs when a person appraises environmental demands as exceeding his or her available resources [3]. Applied to education, this means that pressure arises not only from the amount of work itself but also from the student’s perception of whether he or she can cope with it. The sources of pressure may be external (school or university requirements, teachers’ and parents’ expectations) and internal (personal standards and fear of failure). A moderate level of pressure may stimulate effort and engagement, but an excessive level makes learning less enjoyable and less effective [2].

2. Main causes. Several factors are commonly identified. The first is examination anxiety and the fear of poor results. The second is social comparison, when students evaluate their achievements against those of classmates, which often leads to dissatisfaction with their own progress. The third is unrealistic expectations, especially perfectionism, which has been linked to higher levels of burnout [4]. The fourth is an excessive workload combined with poor planning: when many tasks must be completed in a limited time, students feel overwhelmed, and weak time-

management skills are associated with higher stress [5]. Finally, fear of mistakes and failure makes students avoid challenges and increases anxiety.

3. Effects on students. Prolonged academic pressure affects several areas of functioning. Emotionally, students may feel worried, irritable, or discouraged. Cognitively, stress interferes with attention and concentration, which reduces the quality of studying. Motivationally, students may lose interest in learning, especially when study is driven mainly by fear of failure rather than genuine interest [6]. Physically, fatigue and sleep problems are common, and insufficient sleep itself reduces learning capacity and academic performance [7]. These effects can reinforce each other and create a cycle in which stress lowers performance and poor performance increases stress, which is why early recognition of stress is important.

4. Ways of overcoming academic pressure. The strategies below are interrelated and are most effective when used together.

The first strategy is organizing time and dividing large tasks into smaller steps. Students who plan their time and use time-management practices tend to achieve better grades and experience less stress [8]. A weekly schedule, prioritization of tasks, and avoidance of last-minute preparation make the workload more manageable. Closely connected to this is setting realistic goals: specific and achievable goals give direction and sustain effort, whereas unrealistic goals increase the sense of failure [9]. The second strategy is the care of physical and mental well-being. Sufficient sleep supports memory and learning [7], while regular physical activity is associated with better mental health [10]. Short breaks during study sessions help restore attention and prevent fatigue. The third strategy is seeking social support. Support from teachers, family members, and friends reduces the negative impact of stressful events by providing emotional comfort and practical help, an effect known as the stress-buffering role of social support [11]. Students should therefore feel free to ask for advice and help instead of coping with pressure alone. The fourth strategy is the development of a healthy attitude toward grades and mistakes. A person’s value is not defined by grades. Students who view mistakes as

a natural part of learning and an opportunity to improve, a view characteristic of the growth mindset, show greater persistence and resilience [12]. Treating oneself with understanding rather than harsh self-criticism also contributes to emotional well-being [13]. Focusing on personal progress rather than on perfection or comparison with others reduces unnecessary pressure and supports intrinsic motivation [6].

Conclusion. Academic pressure is a common challenge in student life, but it does not have to control a student’s life. Its causes, including exam anxiety, social comparison, unrealistic expectations, and excessive workload, can be identified, and its effects on emotions, concentration, motivation, and health can be reduced. Good planning, realistic goals, healthy habits, support from others, and a constructive attitude toward mistakes help students deal with stress successfully. By focusing on progress rather than perfection and by believing in their ability to reach their goals, students can turn academic pressure from a source of distress into a stimulus for growth.

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