

Factors Contributing to Academic Stress among Islamic Education Masters Students in the Class of 2024 at Sultan Agung Islamic University

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the elements that contribute to academic stress among master's students in Islamic Education from the class of 2024 at Sultan Agung Islamic University. A quantitative study approach was utilised, involving a sample of 100 students, with data obtained using a questionnaire. The findings indicate that both internal and external variables substantially influence academic stress, albeit in differing degrees. Internally, self-confidence and time management skills were seen as critical variables, with 57% of respondents reporting that insufficient self-confidence exacerbated their academic stress, while 60% admitted that inadequate time management skills intensified academic strain. Nonetheless, learning motivation was shown to exert a little influence, as 79% of participants did not see poor motivation as a principal factor contributing to stress. Concerning external influences, social pressures were identified as the predominant driver, with 60% of respondents acknowledging that social expectations significantly influenced their academic stress. Conversely, 77% and 94% of respondents did not see physical and psychological environmental circumstances, together with familial pressure, as major factors. Most kids did not find high academic standards onerous, however others felt burdened. In conclusion, self-confidence and time management were recognised as the most impactful internal elements, but social expectations were seen as the most significant external component. This study's findings offer significant insights for educational institutions to formulate more effective measures to alleviate academic stress by addressing internal and external causes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Students' mental health and academic performance are both negatively impacted by the rising problem of academic stress, which is a problem that is hurting educational institutions all over the world. Therefore, in order to establish effective management and intervention methods, it is essential to have a solid understanding of the elements that uniquely contribute to this phenomena.

The weight of high academic expectations is one of the primary elements that contribute to the stress that students experience in the classroom. A significant correlation has been established between the amount of stress that students experience and the amount of pressure they face in their academic pursuits. For instance, Ahuja et al. (2022) discovered that the pressure that students feel to do well was a significant component that was connected with the overall level of academic stress that they experienced. A similar finding was made by Kim et al. (2023), who discovered that students frequently experience a large amount of stress as a result of the excessive amount of homework they are required to complete and the high expectations placed on them. (Barbayannis et al., 2022; Omar et al., 2020) Research has shown that the competitive academic environment,

which includes classroom competitiveness and the unrelenting chase of grades, contributes to an increase in the levels of stress experienced by students.

To add insult to injury, the move to online learning, which was expedited by the COVID-19 epidemic, has added a new dimension to the feeling of academic stress. (Abd-Elhamed et al., 2021; Tuffah & Al-Jubouri, 2021) A number of studies have demonstrated that a significant number of students have difficulties in adjusting to the online learning format, which they consider to be less effective and perhaps more stressful. According to Sadiq et al. (2021) and Putri et al. (2024), the absence of face-to-face connection eliminates a vital support system that has the potential to alleviate stress. This, in turn, might result in feelings of isolation and uncertainty regarding the content of the course. It has been demonstrated that these modifications have a detrimental effect not only on academic performance but also on mental health. Numerous students have reported experiencing heightened anxiety and a sense of hopelessness as a result of these changes (Gong et al., 2023; Abd-Elhamed et al., 2021). The attitudes and perspectives that students bring to the classroom are another significant component that contributes to the feeling of academic stress. According to Aghayi et al. (2023), dysfunctional attitudes towards academic activities have been connected to increased stress levels. This is because negative cognitive biases induce students to regard obstacles as insurmountable, which in turn leads to increased stress levels. According to research conducted by Ardi et al. (2021), students who have negative ideas or poor self-esteem are more likely to experience stress. This finding suggests that cognitive restructuring may be an essential component of stress management techniques.

Peer interactions are another important factor that contributes to the development of academic stress. Research conducted by Rizkita (2020) sheds insight on the ways in which social dynamics, such as competitiveness and peer pressure, can contribute to greater anxiety in relation to academic achievement, particularly when compared to peers. Students' self-esteem and mental health can be negatively impacted by the pressure they feel to maintain their social status and keep up with their academic success, which can contribute to stress.

The academic pressure that students are under is further compounded by the setting of their homes and the expectations of their families. There is a correlation between unfriendly or unsupportive family situations and elevated levels of academic stress, according to research conducted on teenagers (Santhakumar et al., 2023). Children who come from households that have high expectations frequently end up having difficulty meeting these standards, which can result in feelings of inadequacy and extended stress. An illustration of how the presence or absence of support from family members may either intensify or alleviate stress is provided by the connection between home life and the demands of schooling.

Counselling and the promotion of healthy support systems are two of the most important strategies that may be used to address the issue of academic stress. Self-care and mindfulness are two examples of effective coping methods that have been found as helping in the process of reducing the effects of academic stress. A study conducted by Aghayi and colleagues (2023) highlighted the significance of mindfulness practices in terms of interrupting the loop of negative thinking patterns that are connected with academic stress. It is possible for educational institutions to have a substantial influence on the reduction of stress levels among students and the improvement of their academic performance if they provide support for psychological support and training in resilience. In conclusion, the function that instructors and institutional assistance play in the management of academic stress is also another extremely essential factor. According to Kim et al. (2023), the interaction with lecturers and the provision of sound advice are essential components in the process of fostering a sense of belonging among students and lowering the levels of stress they experience. Through the establishment of a learning environment that is supportive, educational institutions have the ability to greatly minimise the stress that students experience as a result of the academic demands and obstacles they confront.

In general, academic stress is a complicated problem that originates from a multitude of causes. These factors include the pressure to do well academically, the shift to online learning, personal attitudes towards education, peer connections, family expectations, and the assistance provided by institutions. In order to effectively address the issue of academic stress, a holistic strategy is required. This approach should incorporate cognitive-behavioral treatments, learning environments that are supportive, and proactive institutional policies that aim to empower students to become resilient.

2. METHOD

The study employed a quantitative technique, especially utilising a closed questionnaire with binary replies (yes/no) to collect data from a sample of 100 active students. This corresponds with prior studies highlighting quantitative approaches for their efficacy in successfully capturing numerical data and analysing correlations across variables (Ghanad, 2023; Jensen & Limbu, 2016). These strategies improve the reliability and validity of findings by employing systematic ways to data collecting and reporting (Ghanad, 2023; Limayyasya et al., 2022).

The utilisation of closed questionnaires allows researchers to obtain succinct, targeted replies, therefore facilitating data analysis via statistical methods (Putri et al., 2021). Furthermore, the unique benefits of quantitative methodologies encompass the clarity of results presentation and the applicability of findings to broader groups (Amaruddin et al., 2021; Sibarani, 2019). Consequently, structured questionnaires are especially advantageous in educational research, facilitating concentrated insights into student attitudes and knowledge, as demonstrated in several studies (Muiruri & Wilson, 2022; ILTER, 2023).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Academic stress in students is a complex issue shaped by internal and external variables. Internal variables comprise self-confidence, time management abilities, and enthusiasm for learning, whereas external factors include environmental conditions, social context, familial pressure, elevated academic standards, and societal pressures.

3.1. Internal Factors

Self-confidence is a fundamental internal component affecting academic stress. Elevated self-confidence is generally correlated with less anxiety and enhanced coping strategies in response to scholastic problems. Research demonstrates that students possessing higher self-efficacy generally encounter reduced academic stress, as they perceive themselves as more competent in fulfilling academic requirements (Lesmana & Bidanghan, 2021; Yuda et al., 2022; Pertiwi et al., 2024). Efficient time management is a crucial internal element influencing academic stress. Students who proficiently manage their time frequently experience reduced stress levels in contrast to those who grapple with procrastination and prioritisation. Inadequate time management can result in an accumulation of tasks and amplified stress, ultimately leading to greater academic anxiety (Safarzaie et al., 2017; Austria-Cruz, 2019; Rohmani & Andriani, 2021; Arslan, 2017). Research has established a definitive association between students' time management skills and their overall academic performance, emphasising the need of regular schedules in reducing stress (Fuente et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2024). Academic motivation functions as a vital internal catalyst for educational success and is intricately associated with the intensity of academic stress. Motivated students typically engage more profoundly with their academics, which helps mitigate stress. A deficiency in motivation may result in emotions of powerlessness and heightened academic pressure (Austria-Cruz, 2019; Zeb et al., 2025; Jung et al., 2015). Moreover, intrinsic motivation has been acknowledged as especially potent in augmenting academic self-efficacy, hence alleviating stress (Stevens et al., 2019; Shehadeh et al., 2020; Mafla et al., 2019).

Tabel 1. Internal Factors

No	Indikator	Agree	disagree
1	Self-confidence	57	43
2	Time Management Skills	60	40
3	Learning Motivation	21	79

Based on the table above, Self-confidence plays an important role in facing academic challenges. Based on the survey results, as many as 57% of respondents agreed that self-confidence affects their academic stress levels. This shows that those with low self-confidence tend to be more susceptible to stress. Conversely, 43% of respondents disagreed, meaning that some did not feel a direct relationship between self-confidence and academic stress. The ability to manage time well is very important in reducing academic stress. As many as 60% of respondents agreed that poor time management can increase their academic stress levels. This indicates that many individuals find it difficult to manage time between academic tasks, personal activities, and rest. While the other 40% disagreed, indicating that some felt that even though they were less proficient in time management, it did not have much impact on their stress. Motivation to learn is also a factor that influences academic stress levels. The survey results showed that 79% of respondents disagreed that low motivation to learn was the main cause of academic stress, meaning that the majority of respondents felt that their motivation was not too affected by academic factors. In contrast, only 21% agreed, indicating that for a small proportion of people, a lack of motivation to study can actually worsen the stress they feel..

3.2. External Factor

External elements, including environmental circumstances, strongly influence pupils' stress levels. The physical and psychological environment in which students study significantly influences their academic experience. Classroom dynamics, resource availability, and institutional support can either enhance resilience or exacerbate stress levels (Zhao, 2024; Kwaah & Essilfie, 2017; Fuente et al., 2019). Peer interactions and the social dynamics within academic environments can contribute to stress levels. A supportive social network can diminish feelings of isolation and mitigate academic stress, but a competitive social environment might elevate

stress levels (Pertiwi et al., 2024; Fuente et al., 2014; Fuente et al., 2019). Familial expectations for academic achievement can impose significant external constraints on kids. These pressures frequently result in anxiety, especially when students believe their performance does not meet familial expectations (Stevens et al., 2019; Pertiwi et al., 2024; Perceka et al., 2023). Likewise, social expectations and peer validation might intensify academic stress, as students may feel pressured to achieve elevated standards (Zhao, 2024; Austria-Cruz, 2019; Fuente et al., 2019). Social involvement, including extracurricular activities, part-time employment, and interpersonal relationships, may further exacerbate academic stress. Students managing various obligations frequently experience heightened stress due to the need to balance academic pursuits with social engagements (Liu et al., 2024; Zeb et al., 2025; Avdiija, 2018). Social duties may diminish study time and focus, thereby intensifying emotions of academic burden.

Tabel 2. External Factors

No	Indicators	Agree	Disgree
1	Environmental Conditions	23	77
2	Social Environment	47	53
3	Pressure from Family	6	94
4	High Academic Expectations	42	58
5	Social Demands	60	40

External variables contributing to academic stress are evident in the survey findings, which indicate diverse impacts. The physical and psychological ambient circumstances of the research location are deemed insignificant, since 77% of respondents do not perceive them as the primary source of academic stress. Conversely, the social environment, while less predominant, remains very important, with over half of respondents reporting an impact from their social contacts. Pressure from familial academic expectations is hardly experienced, with 94% of respondents not perceiving it as a source of stress. Nonetheless, elevated academic expectations proved to be very impactful, although a majority of respondents did not perceive this as a hardship. Social pressures, including participation in organisations and adherence to societal standards, are the predominant causes, with 60% of respondents acknowledging their influence on academic stress. Social pressures and elevated academic expectations are the predominant external elements affecting academic stress levels, whereas familial pressure and physical environmental circumstances exert less impact.

3.3 Discussion

The findings of the questionnaire on the sources of academic stress demonstrate a clear divide between internal and external variables impacting pupils. An study of the data yields significant insights into the interrelation of these elements and their contribution to the total academic stress experienced by students.

Self-confidence considerably affects academic stress, as 57% of respondents recognise that insufficient self-confidence contributes to heightened stress levels. This corresponds with evidence highlighting the beneficial influence of self-efficacy on students' capacity to navigate academic problems (Rosaline & Anggraeni, 2020; Yikealo et al., 2018). Self-confidence is commonly connected to resistance against stress, as students who question their ability may find themselves more prone to worry over academic duties (Wang et al., 2022). Nevertheless, 43% of respondents expressed disagreement, suggesting that opinions of the correlation between self-confidence and stress differ across students. Time management skills surfaced as a significant internal component, with 60% of respondents concurring that insufficient time management exacerbates academic stress. This corresponds with prior research that emphasises the importance of efficient time management for alleviating stress (Kurniawan et al., 2024; Yikealo et al., 2018). Ineffective time management frequently culminates in procrastination, hence increasing stress as deadlines near. Significantly, 40% of respondents expressed disagreement, indicating that certain students may not associate their stress levels with time management, which reflects varying personal techniques or resources. Notably, learning motivation had a weak correlation with academic stress, as 79% of participants reported that they did not perceive poor motivation as a substantial factor contributing to their stress. This data contradicts the concept that motivation directly influences stress in academic environments (Yasmeen et al., 2024; Ye et al., 2018), indicating that several students are capable of self-motivated while experiencing stresses (Prastiwi et al., 2019).

Concerning external elements, environmental conditions were determined to exert minimal impact on academic stress levels, as 77% of respondents refuted the notion that their surroundings constituted a principal stressor. This indicates that elements like classroom environments, noise levels, or spatial arrangements may not substantially influence students' academic experiences (Kritikou & Giovazolias, 2022; Meo et al., 2021). Although external stressors might affect well-being, they are seen as less significant than internal elements such as self-efficacy and time management (Hosseinkhani et al., 2020). Forty-seven percent of respondents indicated that their social contacts affected their stress levels, implying that interpersonal relationships moderately impact students' academic experiences (Aina & Wijayati, 2019). Conversely, familial expectations did not seem to impose a substantial strain on respondents, with 94% reporting minimal familial pressure,

underscoring robust familial support systems (Mosanya, 2020). The little familial pressure may be associated with research suggesting that supportive family dynamics might alleviate stress (Piña-Watson et al., 2015). Moreover, 58% of participants indicated that elevated academic expectations did not significantly burden them, supporting the notion that despite the existence of academic problems, students may have effective internal strategies to manage these pressures (Wu et al., 2018; Tuffah & Al-Jubouri, 2021). The most major external element discovered was social demands, with 60% of participants claiming that these obligations increased their academic stress. Diverse sources examine how social duties and expectations may generate considerable stress in students (Hu et al., 2024; Lent et al., 2016). The burden of social obligations—whether real or perceived can inundate students, especially in settings that require significant social contact in conjunction with academic responsibilities.

The examination of the survey data underscores the multifaceted character of academic stress, shaped by both internal and external influences. Internally, time management abilities and self-assurance are substantial factors to stress, whilst social pressures constitute the principal external element affecting pupils. These insights can assist educational institutions in formulating initiatives that tackle these concerns, eventually seeking to diminish academic stress levels among students

4. CONCLUSION

The questionnaire findings indicate that the factors contributing to academic stress among respondents are impacted by both internal and external influences in varying quantities. Internally, self-confidence and time management skills emerged as critical concerns; 57% of respondents indicated that a deficiency in self-confidence exacerbated their academic stress, while 60% acknowledged that inadequate time management skills heightened academic strain. Nonetheless, learning motivation exerted minimal impact, since 79% of respondents did not see low learning motivation as the primary factor contributing to stress. Externally, social expectations emerged as the predominant cause, with 60% of respondents affirming that social pressures significantly contributed to their academic stress. Conversely, physical and psychological environmental circumstances, together with familial pressure, did not exert a substantial influence, as 77% and 94% of respondents, respectively, did not see them as stress-inducing variables. Most respondents did not find high academic demands very burdensome, however a minority experienced considerable pressure. The primary internal determinants were self-confidence and time management abilities, whereas the predominant external element was social pressures. This study's results offer significant insights for educational institutions to formulate more effective ways for mitigating academic stress by taking into account both internal and external influences.

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