

The impact of academic stress on psychological well-being: A case study of international students at Northeast Normal University

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to examine the impact of academic stress on the psychological well-being of international students at Northeast Normal University. By analyzing stressors such as academic workload, language barriers, and cultural adjustments, the research seeks to understand how these factors contribute to anxiety and overall mental health.

Methods: A quantitative correlational design was employed focusing on international students at Northeast Normal University, China. Using the Perception of Academic Stress (PAS) Scale and the Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale, data were collected from 80 respondents (40 males and 40 females) through a Google Form questionnaire. SPSS was used for descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses to determine the relationship between academic stress dimensions—academic expectation, examination, and self-perception—and psychological well-being.

Results: The findings reveal that both academic stress and psychological well-being are moderately high among international students, with academic stress explaining 43.1% of the variance in psychological well-being. Self-perception emerged as the most significant predictor, emphasizing its critical role in stress management and mental health. No significant gender differences were found, but age showed a significant relationship with academic stress.

Conclusion: Academic stress significantly affects the mental health of international students, with self-perception playing a vital role in coping. Institutions should prioritize interventions that enhance self-awareness and psychological resilience.

Limitations: The study focuses on one institution with a limited sample, restricting generalizability.

Contribution: The study offers empirical insights into academic stress predictors and supports universities in designing culturally sensitive mental health and academic support programs for international students.

Keywords: *Academic Stress, Psychological Well-being, International Students, Self-Perception*

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1. Introduction

Stress has become an integral aspect of students' academic lives due to the internal and external obligations imposed upon them. University signifies a period for personal growth and development; nonetheless, the adaption process is intricate and dynamic, encompassing both personal and social demands (Deshpande, Johnson, Casta, Marien, & Reiff, 2024). University students experience stress from various sources, including time limitations, financial pressure, academic demands, and interpersonal challenges with instructors and classmates. Stress is a common experience for college students; however, if it becomes severe or prolonged, it may diminish academic performance, hinder participation in campus life, and elevate the risk of substance abuse and other detrimental behaviours (Lavoie-Tremblay, Sanzone, Aubé, & Paquet, 2022).

1.1 Background of the Study

In recent years, academic stress has emerged as a pervasive concern among students globally, particularly in higher-education environments. Academic stressors, including substantial workloads, examination pressures, and high expectations, are recognized to profoundly impact students' psychological well-being (Zhang et al., 2022). Stress levels may fluctuate due to various factors and circumstances. These factors may include gender, academic major, age, lifestyle, etc. While no evidence indicated that female students experienced varying levels of stress from different events compared to male students, the stress incident record revealed a significant disparity: a considerably higher percentage of men than women reported the absence of stressful events (Firth-Cozens, 2023). Tajvar, Atashbahar, Ahmadizadeh, and Shaqura (2024) offers significant insights into the traits of persons who are more prone to struggle with the challenges of college life and the inherent stress associated with careers in Education or Health Services.

International students frequently have supplementary problems, including cultural adaptation, linguistic obstacles, and social isolation, which might raise their stress levels (Masud, Mensah, Subarna, & Hasan, 2023). Academic stress can result in significant mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, which impact the psychological well-being of university students (Jiménez-Mijangos, Rodríguez-Arce, Martínez-Méndez, & Reyes-Lagos, 2023) although these pressures affect all students, overseas students face extra hurdles that can considerably heighten their stress levels. These hurdles frequently encompass cultural adaptation, linguistic obstacles, social isolation, and difficulties acclimating to different educational systems (Masud N. A. et al., 2023). A notable disparity exists between the academic stress levels of male and female students (Naushad, 2022). Students indicated experiencing stress from academic pressure, with no notable differences observed based on gender, age, grade, or other personal aspects (Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2015).

1.2 Problem Statement

Academic stress is a common concern among college students that profoundly affects their psychological health. This stress originates from several academic demands and pressures, potentially resulting in negative mental health consequences, such as anxiety, depression, and diminished overall well-being. Research has been conducted on the correlation between academic stress and psychological well-being. Nevertheless, limited research has been conducted on the effects of academic stress on the psychological well-being of college students in China.

At Northeast Normal University, international students represent a diverse and dynamic group, making it an ideal context for examining the unique stressors they face (Akram & Yingxiu, 2019). Despite the increasing number of international students at Northeast Normal University, research on the subject is limited. Overseas students constitute a diverse and dynamic cohort, providing an optimal setting for investigating the distinct pressures they encounter (Akram & Yingxiu, 2019). Despite the growing population of international students at Northeast Normal University, research on the effects of academic stress on their psychological well-being is scarce.

Mitigating the effects of academic stress on the psychological well-being of college students is crucial for enhancing their health and academic achievement. By comprehending the origins and ramifications of academic stress and establishing efficient support systems, educational institutions can alleviate these

adverse impacts and improve students' well-being. This study aimed to explore the impact of academic stress on the psychological well-being of international students at Northeast Normal University.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the effects of academic stress on the psychological well-being of international students at Northeast Normal University, specifically assessing levels of academic stress and psychological well-being, exploring demographic variations, and analyzing the influence of academic stress on psychological well-being.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Are there any significant differences in academic stress and psychological well-being based on demographic factors (e.g., gender, age) among international students at the Northeast Normal University?
2. To what extent does academic stress (academic expectations, examinations, self-perception) impact the psychological well-being of international students at Northeast Normal University?

1.5 Hypothesis

1. There are significant differences in academic stress and psychological well-being based on demographic factors (e.g., gender and age) among international students at Northeast Normal University.
2. Academic stress is a significant predictor of psychological well-being among international students at Northeast Normal University, with higher stress levels leading to lower psychological well-being.

1.6 Definition of key terms

1.6.1 Academic Stress

Academic stress refers to the psychological strain experienced by students due to academic demands and pressure. It encompasses a range of stressors, such as heavy workloads, the pressure to perform well in exams, assignments, and other academic tasks, as well as the expectations of professors, peers, and family (Reddy, Menon, & Thattil, 2018). Academic stress refers to the psychological, emotional, and physiological responses that students experience when they perceive academic demands—such as coursework, exams, and assignments—as exceeding their capacity to cope or manage. Bedewy and Gabriel (2015) describe academic stress as arising from factors such as heavy workloads, time pressure, and fear of failure.

1.6.2 Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being refers to the overall emotional and mental health of an individual, including how they feel about their life, their ability to cope with stress, and their sense of personal growth. It includes several dimensions, such as emotional stability, life satisfaction, self-acceptance, and a sense of purpose (Freire, Ferradás, Valle, Núñez, & Vallejo, 2016).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Stress

Stress is an intangible aspect of life that motivates individuals to maintain high performance. Nonetheless, stress can precipitate physical and mental ailments that detrimentally impact the body and individual. Studied also found that stress can precipitate illnesses, one's attitude towards stress is crucial in managing its resultant effects (Dorsey, Scherer, Eckhoff, & Furberg, 2022). University students often experience stress due to various factors, including academic performance, parental expectations and career development. In 2023, UNICEF and the British Academy Youth Futures Programme conducted research on individuals aged 15 to 29 years, revealing that over 30% of respondents experienced stress (Pavarini et al., 2023).

2.2 Academic Stress

Students frequently experience stress due to academic overloading and collaborative work. This tension, induced by the academic environment, is commonly referred to as academic stress. A cross-sectional study by Teh, Ngo, binti Zulkifli, Vellasamy, and Suresh (2015) revealed a high prevalence of stress

among undergraduate students in Malaysia. The extensive syllabus and anxiety about failing examinations were determined to be the primary sources of pressure for pupils. Moreover, Pozos-Radillo, de Lourdes Preciado-Serrano, Acosta-Fernández, de los Ángeles Aguilera-Velasco, and Delgado-García (2014) indicate that academic stress correlates favourably with the volume of assignments, examinations, and lecture attendance. Consequently, these pressures impact students' academic performance and health issues. Similarly, a stressful life might result in adverse consequences for students, including suicidal tendencies. Academic life predicts suicidal ideation due to adolescents' significant stress regarding parental expectations (Riera-Serra et al., 2024).

Undergraduate students experience a moderate degree of stress. Parental expectations and pressure may be the underlying cause. Freshmen experience elevated stress levels due to alterations in their study patterns, while students enrolled in medical and health-related programs exhibit the highest stress levels compared to other disciplines. Inadequate stress management among students may adversely impact their academic performance and elevate the risk of psychological distress, perhaps leading to certain infectious diseases (Oyewobi, Bolarin, Oladosu, & Jimoh, 2021). Academic stress can adversely affect undergraduate students, leading to mental health problems (Kaur, 2014). This may impact their daily lives and well-being over time.

Researchers have thoroughly examined stress in academic environments (Alkhawaldeh et al., 2023). A prominent definition of stress referenced in these studies was articulated by Lazarus and Folkman. They defined stress as "a specific relationship between the individual and the environment that is evaluated by the individual as burdensome or surpassing his or her resources and jeopardizing his or her well-being" (Obbarius, Fischer, Liegl, Obbarius, & Rose, 2021). The phrase stress denotes a comprehensive concept. Individuals experience stress under various conditions and in response to several triggers. Consequently, academics have categorized the construct of stress to delineate its relationship with other life domains, including academic, job, and marital stress.

Academic stress encompasses students' judgments of their knowledge base relative to accomplishment and their feelings of inadequacy in completing tasks or reaching goals within a designated time-frame (Hansen, Shneyderman, McNamara, & Grace, 2021). Historically, researchers have focused on how college students manage and cope with academic stressors during their education (Baghoori, Roduta Roberts, & Chen, 2024), as academic stress can diminish students' physical and psychological resources, leading to physical illness and psychological distress. Ansari, Khan, and Iqbal (2025) conducted a study on the evaluative factors affecting the academic self-concept, self-esteem, and academic stress of college students. The researchers examined the influence of age, gender, prior educational experiences, and motivations for attending college on outcome variables, including self-esteem, academic self-concept, and academic stress. The findings indicate that academic stress was elevated when the incentive for attending college was career aspirations. Furthermore, the results indicate that age is not a significant determinant of academic stress. Researchers (Bashir & Khalid, 2022; Hitches, Woodcock, & Ehrich, 2022) examined international and domestic college students to understand their perceptions of stress in life.

Hansen et al. (2021) conducted a comparison of academic stress levels across 392 domestic and overseas college students. The findings indicate that domestic students experienced greater academic stress due to conflict, frustration, pressure, and self-imposed stress than their overseas peers. Domestic students exhibited more pronounced behavioral responses to academic pressure than their overseas counterparts. Separate research by Brunsting et al. (2021) focused exclusively on international college students. This study aimed to examine the correlations between life stress, social support, academic pressure, and responses to stressors. The study included 143 international students as participants. Brunsting et al. (2021) employed the SSI to assess academic stress. The findings demonstrated that elevated life stress and diminished social support forecast increased academic pressure.

Furthermore, elevated academic stressors forecasted responses to these stressors. Conversely, there was no disparity in academic and life stress levels between male and female students' stress levels. The authors indicated minimal effect sizes (Cohen's *d* varied from .09 to .27) for both academic and life

pressures, hence constraining the practical significance. Graves, Hall, Dias-Karch, Haischer, and Apter (2021) studied college students and compared variations in their locus of control and stress levels. The results indicated a substantial positive correlation between severe stress and belief in chance. In other words, people experiencing acute stress exhibit a heightened belief in chance. Nonetheless, no correlation was found between stress levels and influential individuals (those who impacted their lives). Students did not associate their stress with others in their lives.

2.2.1 High expectation of academic stress

Students feel apprehensive about their future, which is influenced by their poor academic performance. Undergraduate students aspire to achieve first honors in their degrees, hence holding the greatest expectations for their academic performance. Male students frequently presume that academic achievement holds significance (Castro-Sánchez, Ramiro-Sánchez, García-Mármol, & Chacón-Cuberos, 2022). They vie with their colleagues to achieve the highest scores in examinations. Consequently, students are predisposed to academic stress due to their apprehension of failing to fulfil their own standards. Additionally, pupils apprehend failure due to their aversion to receiving bad grades in subjects and facing scorn from their peers (Córdova Olivera et al., 2023). Mulyadi, Rahardjo, and Basuki (2016) discovered that students experiencing significant academic stress have diminished self-esteem. High self-esteem can foster a sense of positivity and intrinsic motivation in students, particularly in the completion of individual assignments, thereby reducing academic stress. Similarly, students with high self-esteem can confront challenges and manage substantial academic demands.

2.2.2 Academic overload

In addition to failing to satisfy personal standards, academic overload induces academic stress (Córdova Olivera et al., 2023). Sixty-five percent of first-year students in Vietnam indicated that heightened academic workload is the source of their stress (Frajerma, Chaumette, Krebs, & Morvan, 2022). The workload of undergraduate education is substantial, as students are required to enrol in approximately four to five disciplines each semester, necessitating the completion of assignments, group projects, and tests for each course. Consequently, they must manage substantial workloads within a limited time frame. The excessive burden of tests, examinations, and assignments induces academic stress (Shkulaku, 2015).

Undergraduate students face significant academic pressure due to homework deadlines and the intense stress associated with tests and examinations (Córdova Olivera et al., 2023). First-year undergraduate students typically experience the highest levels of academic stress because they must acclimatize to a new curriculum. Additionally, individuals may be unacquainted with novel study methodologies and their surroundings. They must allocate the majority of their time to completing assessments, projects and revisions. Consequently, people have diminished leisure time for relaxation, while stress continues to increase. Socialization can alleviate student stress; however, a substantial class workload reduces opportunities for social interaction. A substantial academic workload induces academic stress.

2.2.3 Effects of academic stress

Gao (2023) asserted that academic stress adversely affects academic achievement. While minimal academic stress can enhance student performance, excessive academic stress yields detrimental outcomes. When students fail to manage their time effectively, their study efficacy is compromised. Furthermore, failure impedes individuals from attaining their objectives, resulting in a sense of hopelessness. Chronic academic stress results in elevated cortisol levels (Deng et al., 2022). This negatively impacts the hippocampus, which is essential for memory and learning, resulting in subpar academic performance.

Sleep is essential for all individuals as it aids in the restoration of bodily energy. The National Sleep Foundation (2016) recommends that individuals aged 18–25 years obtain approximately 7–9 hours of sleep. However, the study by C. X. Chen et al. (2024) indicated that students in Hong Kong have reduced sleep duration compared to students from other countries. Approximately 30% of children obtain seven or fewer hours of sleep on school days, failing to meet the recommended sleep duration. Consequently, students' sleep duration is insufficient owing to the heightened demands of academic

life. Academic stress correlates with diminished sleep quality and is significantly linked to sleep problems (Bayoumy, Sedek, Omar, & Ayman, 2023; Waqas, Khan, Sharif, Khalid, & Ali, 2015). Several pupils indicated that they had insomnia and diurnal somnolence. Consequently, academic stress has led to inadequate sleep duration and diminished sleep quality (Klerman, Barbato, Czeisler, & Wehr, 2021).

2.3 Mental Health Problems

Academic stress is also related to psychological issues, including anxiety, tension, and despair (Kaur, 2014). Students experiencing academic stress are susceptible to developing negative attitudes due to factors such as professional advancement and elevated expectations regarding their academic performance (Chung & Park, 2024). They exhibit low self-esteem and sadness due to receiving lower grades in their programs. They experience significant pressure and fear of ridicule from their peers (Shafique et al., 2021). The challenge of acclimating to a new academic environment contributes to mental health issues, as many first-year undergraduate students experience anxiety. Furthermore, the pressure to achieve superior performance and the burden of extensive workloads have resulted in anxiety among students (Johansen, Espetvedt, Lyshol, Clench-Aas, & Myklestad, 2021). Consequently, academic stress may induce mental health issues among students.

2.4 Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being is typically defined as "the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively" (Franzen et al., 2021). Historically, investigations into psychological well-being have emphasized human development and life obstacles, including self-actualization (Janoff-Bulman & Berger, 2021), and virtues associated with various life stages (Sala, Amadei, Beylot, & Ardenete, 2021). In recent decades, researchers have predominantly elucidated psychological well-being from theoretical and philosophical perspectives (Phan & Ngu, 2021; Wang, King, Wang, & Leung, 2021). Coronel-Santos and Rodríguez-Macías (2022) proposed a multidimensional paradigm for defining psychological well-being, emphasizing self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth.

Research on the psychological well-being of East Asian overseas students has predominantly focused on life problems. Over the past five decades, most scholars have focused on sojourners (e.g., immigrants, refugees, travelers, and students) adaptation to unfamiliar cultures (Geeraert, Demes, & Ward, 2021; Yu & Leung, 2024). Sobkowiak (2021) categorized the investigations into two theoretical frameworks: recuperation models (U-curve and cultural recovery) and culture-learning models (communication and behavioral learning). Oberg (1960) four sequential stages of adjustment and his idea of "culture shock" were the most emblematic for recovery models. In the past decade, the notion of "acculturative stress" (Choy, Arunachalam, Taylor, & Lee, 2021) has been acknowledged by acculturation scholars as a significant theoretical framework that elucidates the psychological challenges in the cross-cultural adaptation process.

Elhami and Roshan (2024) define acculturative stress as "a response by people to life events that are rooted in intercultural contact." Acculturative stress is regarded as a more constructive notion than culture shock, as it encompasses the psychological stresses associated with culture shock, such as melancholy and anxiety, while also offering four ways for individuals to manage their acculturation experiences (Elhami & Roshan, 2024). Numerous studies on East Asian international students have been conducted within the theoretical framework of acculturative stress, encompassing diverse domains such as general stressors (Koo & Nyunt, 2022), perfectionism (Suh, Pigott, Rice, Davis, & Andrade, 2023), Internet usage H. Chen, Zhang, JIANG, and LAI (2025), self-concealment, social self-efficacy, and depression (Masuda, Allen, Liu, & Tully, 2021).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative research design was employed based on the study's objectives and research questions. McCusker and Gunaydin (2015) assert that the quantitative method is appropriate when the researcher aims to categorize or quantify characteristics and develop statistical models. Quantitative research

should be undertaken with a defined objective aimed at assessing an existing condition, with the intention of generalizing the findings to a broader population (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). The quantitative research approach can be employed to delineate correlations and effects among variables (Shrestha, Khan, McClintock, DeGroote, & Zeman, 2023), which constitutes the primary objective of this investigation.

Consequently, the researcher chose a correlational research design for this study. In a correlational research study, researchers collect two or more quantitative variables from the same set of individuals and analyze them through a series of calculations to determine whether a relationship (or covariance) exists between the variables (Asamoah, Kwablah, & Amoah, 2024). The correlational research design also focuses on the degree to which the variables are related and the direction of the relationship (Galvan & Galvan, 2024). Accordingly, in this study, the researcher will analyze the relationship between academic stress (independent/predictor variable) and psychological well-being (dependent/criterion variable) among international students. Two questionnaires, the Perception of Academic Stress (PAS) Scale and the Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale, were used in this study.

3.2 Target Population, Sample Size, Sampling Procedure & Instruments

3.2.1 Target population

This research was conducted at Northeast Normal University, Chang Chun City, Ji Lin Cheng, and the Republic of China. The population comprised a cohort of individuals sharing a common trait (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The population was international students currently studying at Northeast Normal University to investigate the impact of academic stress on the psychological well-being of NENU international students.

3.2.2 Sample size and sampling procedure

Sampling is the process of selecting from the population of interest (Ormrod, 2023). Creswell and Creswell (2017) define a sample as a subset of a target population that the researcher intends to study to generalize findings about that group. A Google Forms questionnaire was used to collect data using a simple random sampling method. The survey was disseminated via We Chat groups for international students. Participants interested in this survey completed a questionnaire using Google Forms. A concise introduction to the research and a supportive message to encourage respondents were included in the questionnaire. Eighty international students at Northeast Normal University responded to this Google questionnaire, comprising 40 males and 40 females. This gender balance was not artificially altered but occurred by coincidence.

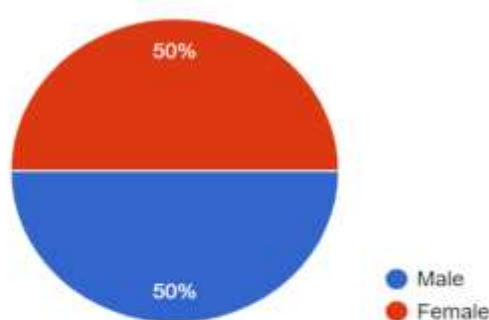


Figure 1: Number of International Students participated in the Study by Gender

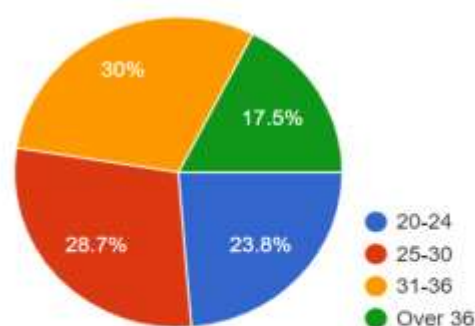


Figure 2: Number of International Students participated in the Study by Age

3.2.3 Research instrument

To assess academic stress and psychological well-being among international students at Northeast Normal University, this study employed the Perception of Academic Stress (PAS) and Psychological

Well-Being (PWB) scales. The researcher conducted a pilot study with 30 international students to examine the reliability of these scales. As the reliability values were sufficiently reliable, the researcher used these two scales in this study.

The PAS scale (Appendix A) was established by (Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015). This is a 5-point Likert scale that includes 18 elements. Point one signifies significant disagreement, whereas point five denotes strong agreement. The reliability of this scale, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.74. The PWB scale (Appendix B) was established by Blasco-Belled and Alsinet (2022). The scale comprises 42 items. Similar to the PAS, the PWB scale is also a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability of the PWB scale was 0.85. SPSS version 15 was used for data analysis.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are significant factors that must be addressed. Human participants must be safeguarded against exposure of their identities. Prior to creating the Google Form questionnaire, the researcher meticulously deliberated on the components to be incorporated in the demographic information. To maintain the security and anonymity of the information gathered from participants, this Google Form questionnaire was not disseminated outside the university WeChat group. Participants were allotted sufficient time (two weeks) to complete the task to avoid impacting their academic responsibilities negatively. The researcher stated that completing the questionnaire was voluntary.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

This chapter provides data on the effects of academic stress on the psychological well-being of overseas students at the Northeast Normal University. This chapter sought to address the following research inquiries: (1) Are there significant disparities in academic stress and psychological well-being based on demographic factors (e.g., gender, age) among international students at Northeast Normal University? (2) To what degree does academic stress (comprising academic expectations, examinations, and self-perception) affect the psychological well-being of international students at Northeast Normal University?

4.1.1 The Level of Academic Stress & Psychological Well-Being of International Students at Northeast Normal University

A descriptive analysis was conducted to identify the level of academic stress and psychological well-being.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Academic Stress (AS) and Psychological Well-Being (PWB) of International Students

Variable	N	Mini	Max	Mean	SD
AS	80	1.17	3.98	3.10	0.41
PWB	80	1.00	4.13	2.89	0.53

Source: Data processed using SPSS V. 15

Table-1 shows that the mean value of academic stress is 3.1 and of psychological well-being is 2.89. These values indicate that the academic stress and psychological well-being of international students at Northeast Normal University are slightly higher than average. This means that academic stress and psychological well-being among Northeast Normal University students are high.

4.1.2 Differences in Academic Stress & Psychological Well-Being Based on Demographic Factors among International Students at Northeast Normal University

In this study, demographic factors such as gender and age were considered. Among the 80 respondents, 40 were male and 40 were female. On the other hand, 23.8% of respondents were age-20-24, 28.7% of respondents were age-25-30, 30% of respondents were age-31-36 and 17.5% were aged over 36. Table 10 shows a comparison of the academic stress and psychological well-being of international students by gender.

Table 2. Results of Independent sample t-test on Academic Stress (AS) and Psychological Well-Being (PWB) of International Students by Gender

Variable		F	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
AS	Gender	1.37	0.25	78	0.44
PWB		4.78	0.03	78	0.70

According to table-2, there is no significant difference in academic stress and psychological well-being among international students by gender. Therefore, the hypothesis one is rejected. Table 2 shows the results of the comparison of the academic stress of international students by age.

Table 3. ANOVA Results for Academic Stress (AS) of International Students by Age

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Academic Stress (AD)	Between Groups	3.43	3	1.14	4.72	.004
	Within Groups	18.40	76	2.24		
	Total	21.837	79			

Table 3 reveals that there was a significant difference in academic stress among international students by age ($F(3, 76) = 7.72, p < 0.05$). This means that international students' academic stress differed significantly with age. hypothesis one was accepted for age. To identify the differences between age groups, Tukey's test was conducted. Table 12 shows the results of the Tukey test.

Table 4. Results of Tukey HSD Multiple Comparisons for Academic Stress of International Students by Age

Variable	Age (I)	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Academic Stress (AD)	31-36	20-24	0.49*	0.15	0.008
		Over 36	0.45*	0.16	0.04

. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

There was a significant difference between the age group of 31-36, 20-24 and over 36. Specifically, the difference between the group and 31-36 and 20-24 was significant ($p < 0.008$). Table 5 shows the results of the comparison of the psychological well-being of international students by age.

Table 5. ANOVA Results for Psychological Well-Being (PSB) of International Students by Age

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Academic Stress (AD)	Between Groups	0.54	3	0.18	1.06	.36
	Within Groups	12.90	76	0.17		
	Total	13.45	79			

Table-5 revealed that there was no significant difference in psychological well-being among international students by age; $F(3, 76), 1.06, p > 0.05$. This means that international students' psychological well-being was not significantly different across ages.

4.1.3 The Relationship between Academic Stress and Psychological Well-Being among International Students at Northeast Normal University.

In order to identify the relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being, correlation analysis between academic stress and psychological well-being is done.

Table 6. Correlation between Academic Stress and Psychological Well-Being among international students at Northeast Normal University

Variable		Psychological Well-Being
Academic Stress	Pearson Correlation	.656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	80

Source: Data processed using SPSS V. 15

Table -6 shows that the Pearson Correlation Coefficient is 0.656, and the p-value of this analysis is much smaller than 0.001. This indicates a significant, strong, and positive relationship between academic stress and psychological well-being.

4.1.4 The Impact of Academic Stress on the Psychological Well-Being of International Students at Northeast Normal University

To identify the impact of academic stress (academic expectations, examination pressures, and self-perception) on the psychological well-being of international students at Northeast Normal University, linear regression analyses were conducted. First, the impact of total academic stress on psychological well-being was calculated.

Table 7. Regression model summary of the Impact of Academic Stress on Psychological Well-Being

Model Summary- Academic Stress				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.656 ^a	.431	.424	.31323

2.4.1 Predictors: (Constant), Academic Stress

Table 7 indicates that academic stress explains 43.1% of the change in psychological well-being. According to Bedewy and Gabriel (2015), there are three sub-dimensions of academic stress: academic expectation, examination, and self-perception. Here, the impact of every single sub-dimension on psychological well-being was calculated.

Table 8. Regression Model Summary of Academic Expectation

Model Summary- Academic Expectation				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.402 ^a	.161	.151	.38025

a. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Expectation

Table 8 indicates that the academic expectation dimension explains 16.1% of the change in psychological well-being.

Table 9. Regression Coefficient – Academic Expectation

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	St. error			
(Constant)	2.576	.143		18.035	.000
Academic Expectation	.208	.054	.402	3.876	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

Table 9 shows that academic expectations have a significant and positive relationship with psychological well-being ($r=0.208$, $p<0.01$).

Table 10. Regression Model Summary- Examination

Model Summary- Examination				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.562 ^a	.316	.307	.34347

a. Predictors: (Constant), Examination

Table 10 indicates that the examination dimension explains 31.6% of the change in psychological well-being.

Table 11. Regression Coefficient – Examination

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	St. error			
(Constant)	1.955	.195		10.008	.000
Examination	.407	.068	.562	6.001	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

Table 11 shows that examination dimension has a significant and positive relationship with psychological well-being.

Table 12. Regression Model Summary- Self-perception

Model Summary- Self-perception				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.613 ^a	.376	.368	.32813

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self-perception

Table 12 indicates that the self-perception dimension explains 37.6% of the change in psychological well-being.

Table 13. Regression Coefficient – Self-perception

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	St. error			
(Constant)	1.831	.190		9.656	.000
Self-perception	.401	.059	.613	6.849	.000

b. Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-Being

Table 13 indicates that self-perception has a significant and positive relationship with psychological well-being. The results mentioned above support hypothesis three is accepted, which states that as academic stress increases, the psychological well-being of international students at NENU also increases.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that academic stress and psychological well-being are both notably elevated among international students at Northeast Normal University, with age significantly affecting academic stress but not psychological well-being. This differs from the findings of Smith and Chang

(2014), who determined that younger students generally encounter greater academic stress owing to adjustment difficulties. The absence of age-related disparities in psychological well-being may indicate the distinct pressures encountered by overseas students. Regression analyses indicated that academic stress, encompassing academic expectations, examination pressure, and self-perception, strongly predicted psychological well-being, with self-perception being the most potent predictor. Yiming, Shi, Kayani, and Biasutti (2024) discovered that students who view themselves as capable and proficient in their academic skills exhibit enhanced psychological well-being and manage stress more successfully, corroborating the findings of this study. This study emphasizes the necessity of enhancing international students' confidence and coping skills to alleviate the adverse effects of academic stress on their psychological well-being.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the impact of academic stress on the psychological well-being of international students at Northeast Normal University, revealing critical insights into the multifaceted challenges these students face. The findings underscore that academic stress significantly affects the mental health and emotional stability of international students, often leading to heightened anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and reduced academic performance. Several key stressors were identified, including language barriers, cultural adaptation, academic workload, performance expectations and social isolation. These stressors contribute to academic strain and intensify feelings of loneliness and homesickness, ultimately impairing students' psychological resilience. Moreover, the unfamiliar academic environment and pressure to meet high academic standards in foreign settings further exacerbate emotional distress.

It became evident from The research shows that the availability and utilization of coping strategies, such as social support networks, counseling services, time management, and stress reduction techniques, play a pivotal role in mitigating the adverse effects of academic stress. However, many international students were found to be unaware of or reluctant to access the available mental health resources due to cultural stigma, language difficulties, or lack of awareness. This study also highlights the crucial role of university administration and faculty in fostering a supportive academic environment. By creating culturally inclusive policies, offering accessible mental health services, and promoting awareness campaigns, institutions can play an instrumental role in enhancing students' overall well-being. Mentorship programs, peer support groups, and stress management workshops can serve as effective tools in this regard.

In conclusion, academic stress is a significant determinant of the psychological well-being of international students at Northeast Normal University. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive, proactive approach involving academic institutions, mental health professionals, and students themselves. Encouraging open dialogue about mental health, improving support structures, and adapting academic expectations with sensitivity to the international student experience are essential steps toward fostering a healthier and more productive educational environment. With continued attention and targeted interventions, it is possible to reduce academic stress and empower international students to thrive academically and emotionally during their studies abroad.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings regarding the impact of academic stress on international students' psychological well-being at Northeast Normal University, several recommendations are proposed to help mitigate these adverse effects and promote healthier academic and emotional environments. First, universities should strengthen mental health support services specifically tailored to international students. This includes hiring counselors proficient in multiple languages and trained in cross-cultural psychology to effectively address diverse student backgrounds. Regular mental health workshops and confidential counselling sessions can help students manage stress and seek help without stigma.

Second, academic departments should consider implementing flexible deadlines, reducing course overload, and encouraging more interactive and practical learning methods to improve student engagement. International students often struggle with language barriers and unfamiliar academic

expectations, which can be alleviated through supportive teaching strategies, peer mentoring, and academic writing support. Third, student organizations and international offices should create more opportunities for social engagement and community building. Activities that encourage cultural exchange and peer bonding can reduce feelings of isolation and homesickness, which are key contributors to academic stress and poor mental health.

Fourth, stress management programs, including mindfulness sessions, physical wellness activities, and time management training, should be integrated into students' lives. These programs can empower students to develop healthier coping strategies for dealing with stress. Finally, universities should conduct ongoing assessments of students' psychological well-being through anonymous surveys or focus groups, ensuring that their needs are continuously understood and addressed. Feedback mechanisms should be established to adapt policies and services in response to changing challenges. Implementing these recommendations can create a more inclusive and supportive academic environment, enhancing the academic performance and psychological well-being of international students at Northeast Normal University.

5.2 Limitations

Despite providing valuable insights, this study has some limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small and limited to international students at Northeast Normal University, which may affect the generalization of the findings to other universities or domestic student populations. Second, the study relied heavily on self-reported data through questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias or inaccuracies in participants' self-assessment of stress and psychological well-being. Third, the design of the research limits the ability to establish causality between academic stress and psychological outcomes; longitudinal studies would be more effective in identifying long-term effects. Additionally, cultural differences in the perception and expression of stress and mental health issues were not fully accounted for, which may have influenced the participants' responses. Language barriers may have affected the clarity of communication during data collection. Finally, external factors such as financial concerns, social isolation, and adaptation to a new environment were not comprehensively explored, although they may significantly contribute to psychological stress. Future research should consider a more diverse sample, utilize mixed methods, and examine additional contextual factors to gain a more holistic understanding of this issue.

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