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INVESTIGATING LEVEL OF ACADEMIC STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN LAHORE

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Abstract

In developing nations like Pakistan, where students must contend with increasing academic demands, financial limitations, and sociocultural pressures, academic stress is a growing concern among university students worldwide. The objectives of research are to measure the level of academic stress among university students in Lahore; To identify the coping strategies used by university students to manage academic stress; To examine the relationship between different coping strategies and the level of academic stress. It is a quantitative cross-sectional study which examines the level of academic stress and coping mechanisms used by Lahore university students. Data was gathered from a diverse sample of graduate and postgraduate students using a structured questionnaire based on the Brief COPE Inventory and Tumisang Modise's Academic Stress Response Scale. The demographic distribution was examined using descriptive statistics, and the internal consistency of the scales was validated by Cronbach's alpha. Pearson's Correlational analysis showed that there is a significant negative correlation with adaptive coping strategies and moreover a positive correlation with maladaptive coping strategies. Coping mechanisms explain 29% of the variance in academic stress levels, according to regression analysis. Additionally, one-sample t-tests showed that students actively use both adaptive and, to a lesser extent, maladaptive coping mechanisms while experiencing stress levels that are noticeably above average. The results highlight the critical need for colleges to foster student resilience, support effective stress management initiatives, and offer context-sensitive mental health care. This study advances knowledge of the dynamics of academic stress in Pakistan and has applications for institutional policy and student welfare.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

1.2 that more than 80% of students globally reported

Academic stress among students in universities has having moderate to high stress levels while pursuing become a major worldwide issue. Research has shown their academic life (Ghasemi, 2022). Stressors such as

academic pressure, fear of failure, competition, workload, and the necessity to balance work and study responsibilities are common among them.

Psychological effects attributed to study stress—like depression, anxiety, and burnout—have contributed to higher dropout rates, poor academic performance, and long-term psychological complications among students all over the world (Baruah et al., 2024).

In developing nations like Pakistan, structural and socio-economic limitations exacerbate the problem of study stress. They are frequently subjected to crushing educational stress fueled by strict evaluation systems, poor access to counseling services, and high expectations of parents who link academic achievement with family honor. Pakistan's current economic woes intensify this condition—most obviously the rate of inflation, which hit 24.9% in 2024 (State Bank of Pakistan, 2024), compelling numerous students to take up part-time jobs for survival. A national survey in 2023 determined that about 68% of Pakistan's university students work parttime, exacerbating the struggle between academic obligation and economic need (Bidi et al., 2024).

The main purpose of this study was to examine the level of academic stress and the coping strategies adopted by university students in Lahore i.e Pakistani students in Lahore. It focuses particularly on culturally unique stressors, economic pressures, and the changes brought about by technology in higher education with a view to guiding the creation of more specific mental health support systems and interventions.

1.2 Introduction

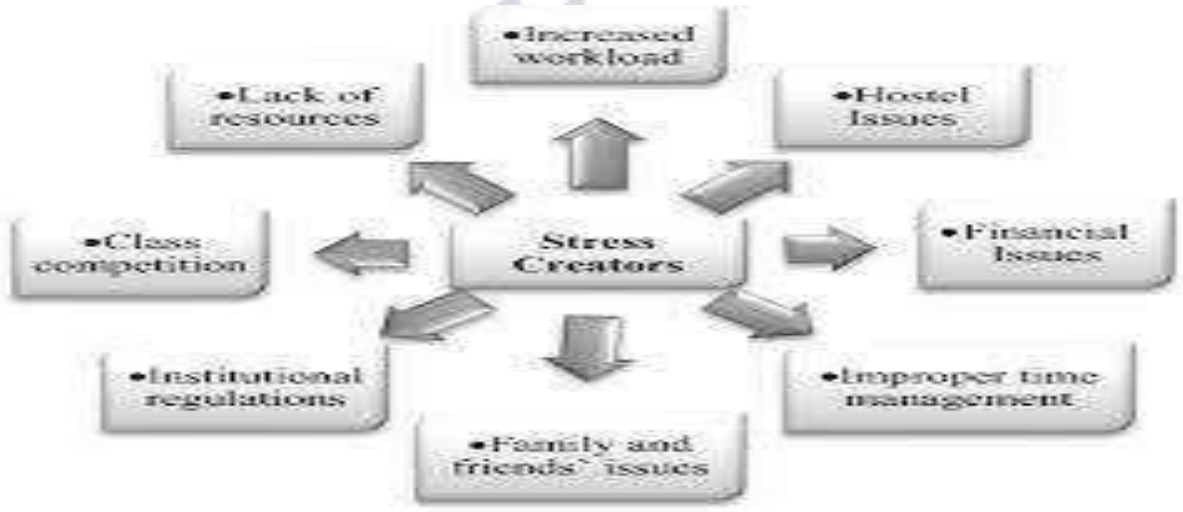
Higher education is a central determinant of an individual's academic, career, and personal growth. It provides students with the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking skills to deal with complicated societal and professional environments. But along with the university experience comes a myriad of stressors that can easily influence students' psychosocial well-being and academic attainment. While higher education holds the key to opportunity and development, it also poses serious psychological challenges—above all, academic stress.

Academic stress is the psychological state that emerges when academic requirements surpass a student's perception of being able to manage them (Boke, 2019). It is most often precipitated by the pressure to perform, time constraints, tests, excessive workload, and the incessant need to fulfill academic requirements. Some common symptoms are anxiety, tension, irritability, difficulty concentrating, insomnia, and in extreme cases, depression and academic burnout. This pressure is often compounded by external forces like peer rivalry, high parental expectations, and a dearth of institutional resources for mental health. (Ben-zur, 2020) In urban cities like Lahore, which are home to a cluster of public and private universities, students with varying cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds are exposed to a set of challenges that are distinct in nature. The learning environment is very competitive, and students tend to manage, in addition to financial woes, uncertainty about their future careers and restricted availability of counseling services for their psychological well-being. These circumstances not only increase the experience of academic stress but also condition how students deal with it. Nevertheless, this setting is not very well studied in academic literature.

One of the most important determinants of the influence of academic stress is how students adapt to it. Coping strategies are cognitive and behavioral approaches that people employ to deal with stressful circumstances they feel are overpowering. Coping strategies are commonly divided into two groups: problem-focused coping, which includes time management, seeking academic assistance, or making study plans, and emotion-focused coping, which includes techniques like emotional support, acceptance, reframing, and venting.

While adaptive coping can foster resilience, maladaptive coping—like avoidance, denial, or use of substances—can escalate stress and create profound psychological and educational repercussions. Personality characteristics, social support networks, and organizational climates influenced the efficiency of coping by the variety of individuals and the contextual variables. In societies such as Pakistan, where educational success has a strong cultural connotation with family reputation and social status, students will be subjected to extreme psychological

stress. This is compounded by financial uncertainty and changing requirements of online learning. The hasty implementation of artificial intelligence in academic circles has brought about new types of stress, including 'algorithmic anxiety,' where individuals report unease with work evaluated by AI and excessive reliance on tools such as ChatGPT (Perera et al., 2025).



In spite of increased international awareness of academic stress, there is limited research based on the contextual knowledge of how students in Pakistan—especially in high-activity cities with much educational activity—perceive and navigate academic stress. Ascertaining these dynamics is important for creating effective mental health interventions, institutional policies, and academic support mechanisms specific to students' actual experiences (Perera et al., 2025). This research, thus, seeks to examine the prevalence of academic stress among university students in Lahore and explore coping strategies they use. By analyzing this problem in Pakistan's cultural, economic, and institutional environment, the research hopes to produce insights that can be used to develop targeted support frameworks aimed at improving student well-being, minimizing academic burnout, and enhancing general academic performance.

1.3 Academic Stress

Stress is a natural reaction that people experience every day. According to (Kokkinos et al., 2024), it is the extent to which people perceive things to be stressful and applicable to their circumstances. Researcher clarifies that various stresses exist, including intellectual, psychological, emotional, and psychosocial stress (Liu et al., 2025). The subject of the current research was Academic work entails cognitive and emotional requirements that exceed the capacity of existing internal and external resources (Solhi et al., 2025). Academic stress is extremely common and widespread among college students, as evidenced by the body of literature in the field and coping mechanisms. Over 70% of graduate students at South African universities reported stress resulting in decreased functionality, emphasizing university students' susceptibility to stress.

Stress is a psychological and physiological response to demands which exceed the coping capacities of an individual (Perera et al., 2025). Stress in the university environment is typically related to academic stress, economic stress, and relationships. Pakistani students, particularly those in urban centers like Lahore, are typically under more stress due to cultural and societal pressures on academic performance and adhering to family expectations (Fitzgibbon & Murphy, 2023). Physical symptoms like headaches, chest discomfort, elevated blood pressure, and insomnia are some of the manifestations of academic stress among people and changes in behavior like irritability, hostility, anger, and frustration and also the anxiety was caused by the academic stress among post-graduate students. (Deyo et al., 2025). Moreover, under pressure and distracted postgraduate students also fail to focus on their research project, assignment, or even classes, and this leads them to drop specific courses or even quit university, according to (Ho & Gu, 2023)

Pressure in academic work within global education system is impacting student's mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being.

In the higher education system of Pakistan, mostly students are experiencing high intensity of stress which is a career killer.

In Pakistan, mostly post graduate students 68% experience severe stress and globally, around 34.8% of postgraduate students experience anxiety related stress. Agolla 2009, Stress is the definition of lifestyle crises, impacting physical and mental health such as headache, chest pain feeling depressed or sad, sleep disturbance. 8.9 suicides occurred due to academic pressure in Pakistan alone (male 13.3 % and female 4.3 %) in 2019 (Bidi et al., 2024). Although mental illness on campus is gaining more recognition, students continue to endure lingering academic stress and may lack healthy coping skills. The goal of this study was to examine that how much stress among university students encounter in the classroom and how they cope with it. Academic distress remains an under-researched and prevalent issue, especially in academic hubs such as Lahore, despite the fact that Pakistani university students are increasingly aware of their mental health concerns. Besides the demanding academic workload, the students also encounter the pressure of cultural expectations of academic performance, financial insecurity, and inadequate access to mental health services. These factors lead to elevated stress levels, which may develop into poor mental health, academic underachievement, and lack of interest in learning if not addressed.

Additionally, insufficient empirical data in Pakistan identified the most common types of the coping strategies and how much these are effective, even though coping strategies are vital for lessening the impacts of academic stress. Due to this reason, educational institutions cannot design interventions and policies that can assist students in managing their academic stress since they don't have evidence-based knowledge. Through an inquiry into the relationship between coping mechanisms and academic stress among Lahore university students, this research seeks to fill this gap.

1.4 Objectives of research:

The objectives of research are as follows:

- To measure the level of academic stress among university students in Lahore.
- To identify the coping strategies used by university students to manage academic stress.
- To examine the relationship between different coping strategies and the level of academic stress.

1.5 Hypothesis:

- **H0: Null Hypothesis**

There is a significant positive relationship between academic stress levels and coping strategies.

- **H1: Alternative Hypothesis**

There is no relationship between academic stress and coping strategies.

1.6 Statement of problem:

Even though mental health issues in higher education are becoming more widely recognized, many students still experience unresolved academic stress and might not have healthy coping mechanisms. This study aims to determine how much academic stress university students face and what coping strategies they use to deal with it.

1.7 Significance of Study

This quantitative research was very much significant to the different owners within the higher education system, including students, institutions, policymakers, school counselors, and researchers. Academic stress was known as the worldwide problem among the university students and its negative impact on mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being is well documented. However, there is a necessity for localized, empirical work that investigates the specific stressors that are found among university students in urban Pakistani contexts, and particularly in Lahore—a city globally known for academic competitiveness, heterogeneous student population, and rapidly expanding higher education market.

This study is significant for various reasons. To begin with, it aims to estimate the prevalence of academic stress among the students, providing empirical data on how widespread the phenomenon is. Through this, it exposes the extent to which academic stress is prevalent in universities in Lahore, and whether there are subgroups of students (e.g., undergraduate vs. graduate student, male vs. female students) who are more at risk for having higher levels of stress. Such information can help university administrators understand the psychological condition of their student populations, enabling more focused interventions and resource allocation.

Second, the study seeks to identify the coping processes employed by students in distinguishing adaptive (e.g., problem-solving, time management, emotional support) from maladaptive (e.g., avoidance, drug use) processes. Understanding these processes is crucial for crafting or reformulating student support programs such as academic advice, peer mentoring, time management training, and counseling for mental health. It also identifies areas where students have less effective coping processes, thereby enabling education institutions to be more actively involved in intervention.

Third, this study enriches the literature by establishing how certain coping mechanisms correlate with low or high levels of perceived stress of interaction between the academic stress and coping strategies. This is most beneficial to counselors of university students and mental health practitioners because it emphasizes the importance of enabling students with effective coping mechanisms to combat academic stress. Secondly, the study has policy-level implications. The findings can be used by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), university administration, and curriculum developers to implement student-focused policies that reduce stress-inducing factors such as overload of workload, rigidity, or lack of academic support. It may also encourage universities to craft more inclusive and psychologically safe learning environments that enhance student resilience and success.

Academically, It underwrites to the relatively the limited body of the literature about the academic stress and coping mechanisms in Pakistan. It provides avenues for further research to explore longitudinal effects, organizational culture's role, and the impact of interventions for alleviating academic stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Focusing on graduate and postgraduate students in Lahore, this chapter discusses the theoretical and empirical foundations of academic stress and coping strategies among university students. A preview of stress and its effects, a comprehensive analysis of academic stress and its reasons, coping strategies as discussed by prominent psychological models, and the relationship between academic stresses and coping strategies are the different sections in the chapter. A summary of the theoretical framework for this research is included at the conclusion of the chapter.

2.2 Comprehending Stress

Stress is a multifaceted psychological and bodily response that individuals experience when they feel there is a mismatch between the expectations placed upon them and their ability to fulfill these expectations.

It is not merely an emotional response; it is a multifaceted one which involves behavioral tendencies, emotional states, cognitive evaluations, and bodily modifications. Stress is the physical and mental response individuals experience to situations, events, and challenges which they perceive as perilous or beyond their capability to address (Amai & Hojo, 2022). These responses are subjective and vary significantly based on each individual's perception of the situations. The concept of stress is particularly relevant in the educational environment, with students often exposed to a range of stressful situations that test their emotional and intellectual capacities (Ng et al., 2022). Stress may be induced by both internal and external causes, and how each individual individually evaluates the situations is important. Stress is not something all individuals react to in the same manner; for other students, stimulation may induce stress.

For instance, whereas some students will see a challenging assignment as an opportunity to learn and grow, others will see it as something to be avoided. Such a perception of stress, referred to as "cognitive appraisal," is important in understanding how an individual responds to a stressor. Consequently, stress is determined by the characteristics of both the personal resources and the stressor as well as the individual's evaluation of their ability to manage it (Wang et al., 2025). Stress is often classified as being either positive, or eustress, or negative, or distress. Eustress can be beneficial in moderate doses; it may drive students to study harder for exams, meet deadlines on assignments, and enhance academic performance through heightened concentration and determination. When extreme or chronic stress exceeds an individual's tolerance for coping with it, it becomes distress.

Extended stress would have an impact on the physical and mental well-being, reduce motivation, diminish concentration, and eventually disrupt academic performance. Huang et al. (2025) say that students who are highly stressed tend to lose interest in studying, and this might lead to poor work, absenteeism, and in very rare cases, dropping out. Psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, irritability, and feelings of powerlessness can also occur due to it (Wu et al., 2024). Stress can also be viewed as an evolving process that develops over time. It does not come into being in isolation, but as a function of continuous interactions between the person and the environment. Stress is that component of a relationship that one person feels that their circumstances are taxing or demanding his personal resources (Finch & Ong, 2024). The ability of the student to handle such interaction with the environment determines whether they are able to thrive in terms of their mental health or performance in school.

Moreover, when learners are faced with stressors on a consistent basis without learning effective coping mechanisms, stress aggravates over time and can lead to burnout or emotional exhaustion (Kwaah et al., 2022).

2.3 University Students' Academic Stress

Academic stress is a severe and persistent issue that affects university students everywhere, but particularly in developing countries like Pakistan. It talks about how academic pressures like high standards, academic overload, failure anxiety, competitive environments, and uncertain career prospects can cause mental anguish. According to Luecha et al. (2025), academic stress is an emotional strain brought on by the demands of educational institutions, especially when students feel unprepared or unable to meet those demands. Stress can manifest as behavioral symptoms like procrastination or avoidance, emotional symptoms like anxiety or frustration, cognitive symptoms like worry or difficulty focusing, and physical symptoms like fatigue or difficulty sleeping.

Academic stress among college students is often exacerbated by the transition from adolescence to adulthood, which involves balancing increasing

academic and personal responsibilities simultaneously (Dong et al., 2024).

Academic stress frequently stems from performance pressure, where students are expected to maintain high grades, complete assignments on time, perform well academically, and study for tests while engaging in extracurricular and social activities. ElBarazi and Tikamdas (2025) said that the academic stress was a state of psychological unease initiated by students' internal pressure to perform well as well as external expectations, usually from teachers, parents, and peers. Due to their performance anxiety and fear of failing, students are especially vulnerable to stress during exam seasons, research deadlines, or competitive admission cycles. If left untreated, academic stress is a serious psychological issue that can lead to emotional instability, poor academic performance, and cognitive impairment (Daqiq & Akramy, 2023).

In educational settings, the broader learning environment contributes to stress in addition to academic assignments. Many students attend academically and socially competitive schools in urban areas like Lahore. Students often feel more alone and helpless in these environments because there are often insufficient resources available for their support. Particular pressure is placed on graduate students to maintain a particular GPA, secure scholarships, or qualify for competitive postgraduate programs. These demands are exacerbated by a lack of job opportunities, financial instability, and a lack of career guidance. Students who experience academic stress may feel overworked and mentally exhausted due to a variety of factors, including course overload, continuous assessments, and a lack of control over the academic pace (Gasser et al., 2025).

Academic curricula are designed as the one of the primary cause of the academic stress, which frequently ignores students' individual learning capacities and socioemotional needs. Students need to attend long lectures, manage group projects, and quickly absorb a lot of information in order to perform well on standardized tests (Baghoori et al., 2024). The inflexibility of academic curricula and the unreasonable demands of faculty and administration add to the load. Financial strains also increase academic stress, particularly for low-income students who must juggle living expenses, tuition, and parttime jobs. The lack of financial aid and scholarships at many Pakistani universities adds to the pressure by making it harder for students to focus solely on their studies (Blevins et al., 2022).

Another crucial factor to take into account is the connection between academic stress and social and personal factors like peer competition, social comparison, and family expectations. According to Abdullah et al. (2018), students who are under parental pressure to achieve high academic standing may experience feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and depression when they are unable to meet those expectations. Relationship issues and a lack of emotional support from classmates or teachers can also exacerbate feelings of stress and loneliness. Students who lack strong support systems are more likely to suffer from psychological distress and academic burnout, according to Shakeel et al. (2020). Additionally, students who find it difficult to socialize or build safe relationships in academic settings may affects students and they will undergo from higher levels of academic stress (Vidic, 2023).

Undergraduate and graduate students experience varying degrees of academic stress because they have different life stages and academic responsibilities. Other pressures that graduate students often face include independent research, publishing in academic journals, and preparing for future employment or further education. Furthermore, this group is more likely to be balancing family responsibilities or parttime jobs, which raises their stress levels (Chandra, 2020). On the other hand, undergraduate students may experience stress due to homesickness, difficulties adjusting to social situations, or a lack of familiarity with university procedures. However, because of ongoing academic stress, both groups are vulnerable to long-term consequences such as substance abuse, anxiety disorders, depression, and academic withdrawal (Martincová & Bílá, 2023).

In conclusion, academic stress among college students is a complicated issue influenced by academic, institutional, personal, and financial factors. It can affect students' academic performance as well as their overall mental health and well-being. Students in

Lahore must also adapt to demanding academic environments, socioeconomic pressures, and a dearth of resources for mental health. Understanding the causes and signs of academic stress is important for producing effective involvements and maintenance methods in higher education. The strategies students employ to control or reduce their stress levels and their attempts to deal with academic stress will be the focus of the next section (Tonsing & Tonsing, 2023).

2.3.1 Main Contributing Factors to Academic Stress

University students have different levels of academic stress since they are dealing with a multitude of stresses that are related and overlap. There are several things that might cause stress, such as a heavy school load, money problems, not having enough time, parents' expectations, problems with friends, and not having enough support in school. All of these things make kids mentally ill and make it tougher for them to do well in school. To help children learn how to deal with stress in a healthy way, we need to identify and evaluate these sources (Alhasani & Orji, 2025). Too much homework and other schoolwork is one of the primary things that stresses students out. University. A lot of the time, students have to do a lot of homework, examinations, quizzes, and presentations before the due date. Students don't have much time for fun or leisure since their schoolwork is so rigorous and requires a lot of mental energy and extended study sessions. A lot of students say they have to give up sleep, socializing, and even eating to fulfill school deadlines (Reddy et al., 2018). The stress of having to do well in a lot of subjects at once often makes people tired, angry, and less motivated to do well in school. In schools where grades and performance are ranked and competition is high, the stress from schoolwork is much worse.

Financial stress is another big thing that makes students' academic stress worse, particularly in countries like Pakistan where scholarships and assistance money are hard to get. Heo and Han (2021) say that students often have to cope with growing tuition fees, the cost of books and other supplies, as well as the cost of travel and housing. Most students have to work part-time jobs to pay for school, which takes more time and energy away from their schoolwork. According to Reddy et al. (2018), graduate students also have to worry about paying off their school debts and figuring out what to do with their lives when they graduate. Worrying all the time about how to pay for school and personal costs may make it hard to concentrate, lower your self-esteem, and cause long-term anxiety (Hazan-Liran & Miller, 2025).

Another big thing that stresses out college students is not being able to manage their time well. A lot of students feel stressed and overwhelmed because they can't find a way to combine their social, personal, and academic life. Jibril (2021) says that students' beliefs that they can't manage their time well often cause them more stress than the task itself. If you don't manage your time well, you could have to study for a test at the last minute, miss deadlines, or not be ready at all. All of these things can hurt your grades and your self-esteem. Abidin et al. (2025) say that avoidance behavior creates a loop of guilt, worry, and procrastination that makes people more stressed and less productive.

Expectations from parents also have a huge effect on academic stress, particularly in collectivist countries like Pakistan where doing well in school is intimately related to family reputation and social status. Students frequently feel that they have to meet or even exceed their parents' expectations because they think that doing well in school would lead to a good future. Abdullah et al. (2018) say that when a child's academic achievement doesn't match what their parents anticipate, it might cause emotional discomfort, poor self-esteem, and despair. Also, when students don't match these standards, they typically keep their displeasure within, which makes them more stressed, guilty, and anxious about failing (Ghani & Bano, 2024).

Problems in relationships and with other people may also cause academic stress. Students make vital connections at college, such as new love partners, acquaintances, and professional contacts. However, problems with relationships or issues keeping them might cause emotional problems that hinder school performance. Studies show that students who are

stressed out about their relationships often say they are less motivated, have trouble concentrating, and don't do their homework. Students' mental health might suffer when they lose social support and a feeling of security. This is important for maintaining academic stability (Sirkiä et al., 2024).

Academic stress is greater when there isn't enough social and institutional support. A lot of students feel alone at college, especially those who have moved away from home or are getting used to a new culture. Students may have trouble keeping up with their schoolwork if their friends, family, or mentors don't provide them adequate emotional support. Samuolis et al. (2023) say that students who don't have a solid support network are more likely to become sick from stress, feel lonely, and feel like they can't achieve anything. Most Pakistani institutions don't have enough academic advice, counseling, or mental health treatment, so students have to deal with these problems on their own.

A mix of structural, interpersonal, financial, and intellectual demands is what causes most of the academic stress that university students feel. The complicated web of problems that come from the interactions between each stressor hurts kids' mental health and academic performance. The school system in Lahore, which has higher academic standards, financial problems, and not enough mental health assistance, may make these pressures worse. So, it's important to find out what exactly causes academic stress so that we can make changes that would aid students more and make learning environments better.

2.3.2 Parental Expectations as Socio-Cultural Stressor

In Pakistan's collectivist culture, parents' academic expectations go beyond their own goals and stand in for family honor and intergenerational mobility. Abdullah et al. (2018) say that when a child's grades don't match their parents' expectations, they may feel emotional pain, have poor self-esteem, or become depressed.

There are three ways this shows up: Cognitive load: Seeing academic failure as a betrayal by family

Even when they are tired, 61% of students go to obligatory tutoring sessions because they are too busy with other things.

Emotional isolation: Avoiding disclosure out of shame (Ghani & Bano, 2024) in cultures where criticizing parental authority is frowned upon, filial devotion may keep individuals from getting help, which makes stress worse.

2.4 Coping and Coping Mechanisms Coping is the mental and physical strategies individuals use to cope with pressures from both within and outside of themselves that they think they can't handle. It is an important aspect of dealing with stress, especially academic stress, since it affects how individuals react and deal with hard circumstances. Folkman (2020) says that coping is a changing and flexible process that individuals use to go back to a stable mental state after stresses have disrupted it. Coping is more than simply a reaction. A person's personality, how they see the stressor, what resources they have, and what they've been through in the past all affect how they deal with stress. University students need to learn how to deal with their emotions and the responsibilities of their schoolwork. If you don't do this, you might end up feeling bad mentally or burning out in school.

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) is a way to think about how individuals deal with stress. This paradigm separates two main forms of coping: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. People generally choose one of these tactics based on whether or not they think they can handle the stressor. Students who believe they can handle their problems, such not having enough time or the course being too hard, are more likely to employ problem-focused techniques. On the other hand, students who believe they have no control over the stressor may utilize emotion-focused strategies. When and how they are utilized, both coping methods may have either a good or bad impact (Jackson & Serenko, 2023).

Like students at other schools, students at Lahore University use a variety of coping mechanisms to get through their studies. Some of them might be more proactive, like managing your time, making plans, and

asking for assistance with schoolwork. Others could be more reactive, like expressing your feelings, withdrawing, or avoiding people. It is important to know how children deal with stress in order to help them do well in school and be mentally healthy. So, in the next sections, we'll talk about the two main forms of coping—problem-focused and emotion focused coping—in greater depth, focusing on the particular techniques that students employ most often.

2.4.1 Problem-Focused Coping

The goal of this coping strategy is to address or modify the source of your stress. People usually use it when they think they can change the difficult situation or make it less stressful. Kamble (2020) says that issue focused tactics include figuring out what caused the problem, looking at possible remedies, and putting useful ideas into action. For kids who are failing academically, this might involve developing study schedules, getting support from professors, strengthening study techniques, or eliminating procrastination. These tactics are considered as proactive and helpful since they provide students the tools they need to deal with their academic problems (Mushumba et al., 2025).

Active coping is one of the most typical ways that college students deal with problems. Active coping is taking steps to deal with the stressor directly, such changing your study schedule, beginning your homework sooner, or going over tough course content. Active coping is a way to deal with stress that focuses on finding solutions. It involves planning, acquiring information, addressing problems, and altering one's surroundings (Goyal et al., 2021). Active coping helps children stay motivated in school and feel more in control of their academic success, which lowers the emotional toll of stress.

Planning is another important part of problem focused coping. Planning includes making academic objectives, giving out tasks, and putting them in order of how important and urgent they are. Students who plan ahead may better handle their work, see challenges coming, and make sure they have adequate time to study and review (Tomes et al., 2018). Planning may help college students avoid academic overload and last-minute stress by helping them manage their various deadlines and obligations. It also encourages self-control, reliability, and a methodical way of doing schoolwork (Almarzouki, 2024). Instrumental support is when you ask other people for help with something specific. It is another way to deal with problems. This might entail talking to academic counselors, asking professors for further information, or collaborating with classmates on hard tasks. Eroy et al. (2018) say that instrumental assistance helps students solve problems better by giving them more access to resources and making them feel less alone. Having supportive friends or mentors at college may help you deal with stress and make it easier to handle difficult situations.

Time management is one of the most important problem-solving skills. Good time management lets you define priorities for your work, split up your study time across courses, and avoid the extra stress that comes from putting things off. Carroll (2020) says that kids who are good at managing their time are happier and less anxious, whereas those who aren't are more stressed out and do worse in school. Time management is an important skill for Pakistani college students who have to balance a lot of commitments, such part-time employment and family duties, in order to lower the academic stress. Students may directly deal with the factors that generate academic stress by using problem-focused coping techniques. These include planning, taking action, and asking for support. These tactics work best when kids are in charge of their own schoolwork. Problem-focused coping not only lowers stress but also boosts resilience, academic engagement, and long term performance by giving pupils useful strategies to deal with school problems. The following portion will talk about emotion-focused coping techniques to see how students deal with the emotional repercussions of school stress, especially when they feel like they can't control the things that stress them out (Nyborg et al., 2024).

2.4.2 Coping with Emotions

"Emotion-focused coping" is the term for the ways individuals deal with the emotional pain that comes from stressful events, especially when they think the stressor is beyond of their control or can't be changed.

Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, tries to control feelings like worry, irritation, grief, and helplessness, while problem-focused coping tries to address the cause of stress. Folkman (2020) says that this kind of coping includes both planned and unplanned attempts to keep your mental health stable and lower your negative feelings when things become tough. When students can't change academic pressures like strict deadlines, school restrictions, or test anxiety, they might utilize emotion-focused tactics to lighten their emotional load.

University students who feel that they can't handle their personal problems and academic obligations typically utilize coping mechanisms that concentrate on their emotions. These tactics are especially useful when children are taking tests, trying to get into a competitive school, or not doing well in school. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) found that there are two forms of emotion-focused coping: active emotion focused coping and avoidant emotion-focused coping. Active methods are typically helpful and aimed to help you deal with your emotions in a positive manner, whereas avoidant strategies are frequently harmful and include ignoring the situation or downplaying its relevance (Alshareef et al., 2025).

Positive reframing is one of the active emotion focused approaches that students often use to look at academic problems in a more helpful and positive manner. Raj and Sabita (2021) say that positive reframing helps individual's see how they may learn or develop as a person from difficult situations. For example, a student can choose to see a failed test as a chance to better how they study instead of seeing it as a permanent setback. This kind of cognitive reorganization makes students more determined and able to bounce back in school.

Acceptance is another adaptive emotion-focused method that helps kids deal with their tough situations without denying them too much or thinking about them too much. Acceptance is a mental process that helps pupils accept their limits so they can be emotionally stable and focus on objectives they can reach (Ramli et al., 2018). This method is particularly helpful for children who are having trouble with schoolwork, don't have enough resources, or are dealing with things they can't control, including administrative delays or interruptions at school.

Many students' lives are also greatly affected by religious coping, especially in countries like Pakistan where culture and religion are closely linked. Haung et al. (2020) say that religious activities like praying, reading holy texts, or looking for spiritual direction may provide consolation, hope, and a feeling of purpose. Religious coping may help students deal with stress, keep their emotions in check, and make sense of tough events by giving them a moral and emotional guide. A lot of youngsters in Lahore use religious activities to deal with their personal and school problems.

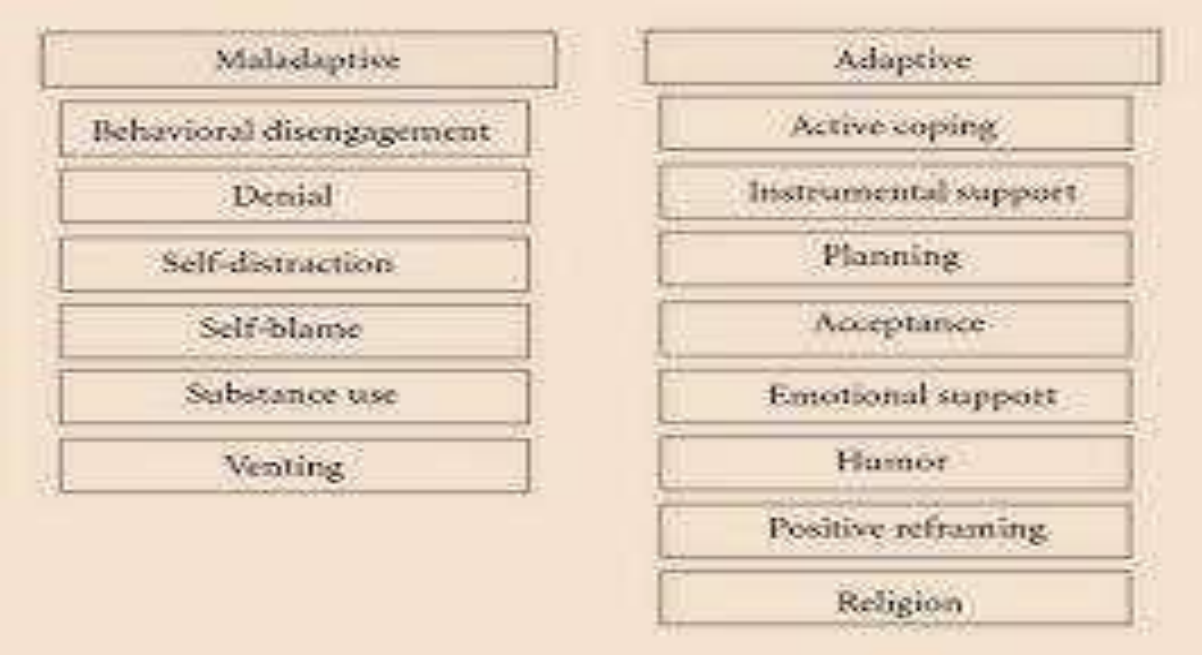
Another popular adaptive emotion-focused strategy is to get emotional support from friends, family, or peers. Crowe and Puymbroeck (2019) say that talking about your thoughts and getting support from people you trust may help you feel a lot less stressed. Emotional support may come in various ways, such as talking to someone, listening to them, and giving them companionship or embraces. Venting, or talking about your anger and other bad sentiments, is another way to deal with your emotions. Students who talk about their school stress with others feel less alone and get validation for what they're going through, which is often a relief. Ben-Zur (2020) says that venting might help for a short time, but it can become harmful if it leads to constant moaning or stops people from finding solutions to problems. But when combined with other methods like emotional support and reframing, venting may help kids see things from a different angle and let go of stress.

Avoidant emotion-focused coping mechanisms, on the other hand, generally include denial, withdrawal, or escaping. These methods are seen to be maladaptive because they may provide short-term emotional relief but have long-term negative impacts. One way students stop participating in class is via behavioral disengagement, which means they stop doing things cognitively or physically. Ben-Zur (2020) says that behavioral detachment might show up as missing classes, putting off tasks, or abandoning study groups. These things can hurt academic achievement and raise stress levels. Self-blame is another way to avoid problems. People who do this blame themselves for

bad things that happen, even if they are not to fault. Boryaz and Waits (2018) say that blaming yourself might make you feel powerless, depressed, guilty, and less confident. Students who only blame themselves for their scholastic failings generally feel worse mentally and are less motivated to do better.

Many studies have indicated that college students who use drugs or alcohol to deal with their emotions are not doing it in a healthy way. McConnachie (2019) says that some kids use drugs and alcohol to deal with school stress for a short time. Another avoidant emotion-focused response is denial, which is when you refuse to accept that a stressor exists or is serious. These ways of dealing with stress, on the other hand, may be very bad for your health, emotions, and schoolwork. They could even make the tension they are supposed to help worse. Ben-Zur (2020) says that denial might make it harder to get the academic help or assistance you need, which can lead to other difficulties like missing tests or graduating late. Denial may work for a short time as a way to protect yourself, but doing it for a long time might make it harder for pupils to deal with school problems.

In general, emotion-focused coping mechanisms may either make academic stress worse or help it, depending on how they are utilized. Adaptive tactics including acceptance, religious coping, emotional support, and positive reframing may help you feel better mentally, control your emotions, and be more resilient. On the other side, unhealthy ways of dealing with problems, including using drugs, blaming yourself, or denying your feelings, can make emotional pain worse and make it harder to do well in school. Schools and mental health professionals need to be aware of these tendencies and help children find better ways to deal with their problems.



2.5 University Students' Coping Mechanisms

In university, a person goes through a big change in their intellectual, social, and personal growth. At this point, kids have to cope with a lot of stresses, such money problems, social pressures, not knowing what the future holds, a lot of schoolwork, and high expectations for their success. These pressures may have a big impact on how a student feels emotionally and mentally. Coping strategies are important skills that students use to deal with various challenges and keep their emotional and intellectual equilibrium. There are several things that may affect how students deal with stress, including as their culture, personality, and the availability of societal or institutional care (Bidi et al., 2024).

In Pakistani higher education, particularly in a city like Lahore that is both academically challenging and culturally diverse, family duties, mental health services at schools, and social expectations all have a big impact on how people cope. When students are under stress, they typically utilize both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping techniques, depending on how much control they think they have over the stressor. When kids are stressed about school, some use organized, practical ways like planning and managing their time. Others use emotional control strategies like avoiding people, getting support from friends, or praying (Amai & Hojo, 2022). Recent research has indicated that students are more likely to utilize problem-focused techniques when they think they can deal with pressures directly. Making study plans, getting help with schoolwork, dividing up big tasks into smaller ones, and using your time wisely are all examples of these tactics. For example, students who have a lot of work to accomplish could make to do lists, study with other students, or ask their professors to explain difficult ideas. These activities not only make schoolwork easier, but they also provide kids a feeling of control and success, which decreases anxiety and improves performance (Ng et al., 2022).

However, when students feel like they can't control the stressor, they are more likely to utilize emotion focused coping mechanisms. Many students' resorted to social media, religious activities, and emotional expression to cope with the stress of being locked down, have trouble with online learning, and not being able to go to school during the COVID-19 epidemic. Studies by Carroll (2020) and McConnachie (2019) show that students prayed, spoke to their friends, and had a positive attitude to deal with too many emotions. These tactics that concentrate on emotions are very important for mental health and emotional strength, particularly when there aren't any practical answers (Wang et al., 2025).

It is important to note that university students who are under a lot of academic stress also turn to harmful ways of coping, such as using drugs, not doing their work, and blaming themselves. These treatments may help for a short period, but over time they usually make things worse. For instance, students who stop studying because they are stressed out may fall behind, which would make them even more stressed and lower their confidence. Blaming yourself too much may hurt your sense of self, much as using drugs and alcohol can hurt your health and schoolwork. Because of this, it is very important for counselors and colleges to provide support services that are easy to find and to teach people about adaptive coping methods (Huang et al., 2025).

People's coping mechanisms also depend on their gender, amount of education, and job position. Joseph et al. (2021) and Chandra (2020) did research that found that male students are more likely to use problem-focused coping strategies, like taking charge of school problems, while female students are more likely to use emotion-focused coping strategies, like looking for social or emotional support. Also, graduate students are more likely to adopt time management and goal-setting approaches since they have to balance their education with work or family duties. Undergraduate students are more likely to feel academic stress since they are still learning how to deal with it.

It's also important to remember that social settings and institutional support may affect how well and how easily people can use coping methods. Universities that provide academic advising, stress management seminars, peer mentorship, and mental health services make it easier for students to deal with problems in a healthy way. But children may have fewer choices at schools with insufficient support networks, which make it more likely that they would choose bad coping strategies. Even while several institutions in Lahore have started mental health programs, many students still say they don't know about or can't get to counseling services. Wu et al. (2024) say that this is a problem that has to be addressed.

In the end, students at Lahore University employ a variety of ways to deal with the stress of their schoolwork. Some individuals deal with stress by withdrawing emotionally or avoiding it, while many others use positive coping strategies include planning, active coping, asking for support, and participating in religious activities. How well these coping strategies work depends a lot on the kind of stressor, the person's personality, and the support networks that are accessible to pupils. Teaching students how to deal

with stress and encouraging them to use adaptive coping skills may greatly improve their mental health and academic experience. So, teachers, lawmakers, and mental health experts need to learn more about how pupils deal with things in order to make the classroom a more welcoming place (Finch & Ong, 2024).

2.6 The Connection between Coping Mechanisms and Academic Stress

To understand how students deal with the many demands of college life, you need to know how coping methods and academic stress are related in a complicated and multi-dimensional way. Students experience academic stress when they think that the demands of their academics are too high for them to handle. Coping techniques, in turn, change how these stresses are seen, dealt with, and reacted to on an emotional and behavioral level. A coping strategy's success decides whether academic stress has short term, controllable consequences or turns into chronic stress that hurts a person's mental, emotional, or academic performance.

Research shows that the kind of coping mechanism used, whether it is adaptive or maladaptive, has a big effect on how much academic stress someone feels and what happens as a result (Folkman, 2020; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In general, problem-focused coping mechanisms like managing your time, making plans, and asking for help with schoolwork are linked to less stress and higher grades. These tactics work best when kids believe they can change or manage the stressor. For example, a student who knows how to utilize their time and resources well is more likely to do well in school and feel less stressed when they have a lot of deadlines. But coping mechanisms that concentrate on emotions, particularly unhealthy or avoidant ones like drug misuse, denial, or withdrawal, may make stress worse and cause emotional weariness or bad grades.

Research shows that coping techniques might affect the link between stressors and stress consequences. Tomes et al. (2018) say that students who actively plan and solve problems during times of high academic stress have better psychological adjustment and resilience. But those who take drugs, blame themselves, or ignore difficulties are more likely to become sick or fail in school because of stress. This means that coping not only helps students deal with stress better, but it also shows how stress impacts their health and academic performance over time. Personality factors and variations between people also have a big role in how stress and coping are related. According to Evans et al. (2018), personality qualities such as resilience, optimism, and emotional intelligence might affect how pupils deal with stress. For instance, pupils with greater emotional intelligence are more likely to notice when they are stressed and adopt appropriate ways to deal with it. On the other side, students who are very anxious or have poor self-esteem may be more likely to utilize unhealthy ways to deal with stress, which may make their stress levels go up and their grades go down.

This link is also affected by cultural and contextual factors. Pakistani students often work in places where there is a lot of academic pressure, not enough mental health facilities, and high familial expectations. Because of this, people often talk about ways to deal with stress, such as talking about their feelings, getting support from family, and going to church (McConnachie, 2019; Haung et al., 2020). These culturally sensitive tactics may help kids deal with academic problems, but their success may depend on the kind and level of stresses they are dealing with. The connection between coping techniques and scholastic stress was especially clear during the COVID-19 epidemic. Carroll (2020) discovered that students at all levels of schooling were more anxious about their schoolwork since they had to learn online, couldn't go to campus easily, and didn't know what their academic future held. Many others used emotion-based tactics like praying, talking to people on social media, and accepting what was happening. These were beneficial for a while, but they didn't always work since there wasn't enough institutional support or clarity on how to go forward in school. Because of this, the pandemic showed how important it is to have flexible, multifaceted ways to deal with problems that might change as schools change. Joseph et al. (2021) do further research on

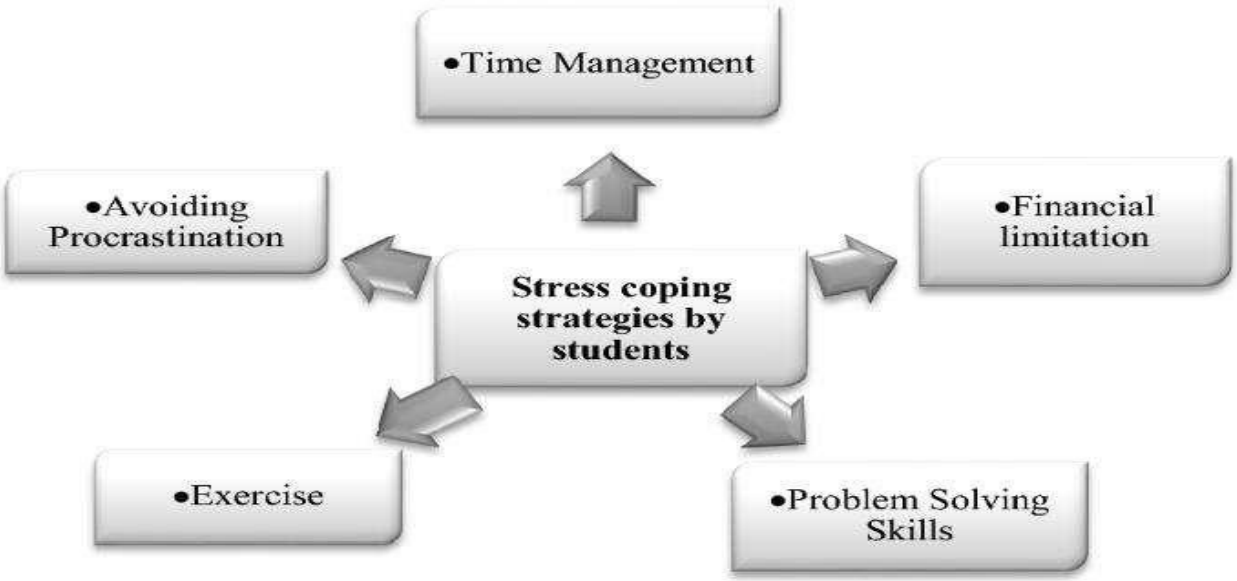
the variations between men and women when it comes to academic stress and coping. Their study shows that male and female students feel the same amount of academic stress, but men are more likely to employ problem-focused solutions, while females are more likely to use emotion-focused tactics, such ruminating and asking for emotional support. However, this discrepancy shows that we need to use different strategies in different situations and that people cope in different ways, rather than saying that one technique is better than another.

In conclusion, there is a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between coping mechanisms and academic stress. Good ways to deal with stress may make it less harmful, while bad ways can make it worse and hurt your grades. In order to help children do well in school and be mentally well, teachers, politicians, and mental health professionals need to fully understand this connection. Lahore's universities need to understand how important coping education is and put money into seminars, counseling, and peer support groups that teach students useful and flexible coping skills. By taking a proactive approach, academic stress may go from being a devastating force to a manageable issue. This will eventually help children accomplish better in school and feel better overall.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The research's ideas and analysis are based on the theory. It gives us a way to look at and understand academic stress and how college students deal with it. This research is based on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which Lazarus and Folkman came up with in 1984. This concept is particularly useful for college students who are often trying to balance social, mental, and academic demands while also learning how to deal with stressful circumstances (Finch & Ong, 2024).

The paradigm is based on the assumption that stress is not a dynamic process that happens when a person interacts with their environment, but rather a stimulus or response. Stress happens when people think they have more resources than they have. This concept says that how stress affects a person's mental health and ability to function relies on how they see the stressor and how they deal with it. The concept is especially useful in schools since children often have to deal with different levels of stress from their schoolwork, performance pressure, money problems, and changes in their lives (Kwaah et al., 2022). Learning how students deal with academic stress—by solving problems, getting help, controlling their emotions, or avoiding it—can provide us significant information about their mental health and academic success. The approach says that stress is a personal, subjective experience and that it's important to adapt to variances between people. Because students at Lahore University deal with a unique mix of social, economic, cultural, and academic problems, it is a good place to look into the link between coping and academic stress (Han et al., 2024).



The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) is the basis for this research. This concept says that stress is not just a stimulus or a response; it's a dynamic interaction (transaction) between a person and their environment. University students use cognitive appraisal when they have to do schoolwork. They undertake a first assessment to find out whether the scenario is risky and a secondary evaluation to find out if they have the tools to handle it. Based on this assessment, students choose either problem-focused coping (such planning and managing their time) or emotion-focused coping (like avoiding problems and asking for emotional support). This paradigm explains why students deal with and feel academic stress in different ways. It gives a good reason to look at the answers from the Academic Stress Response Scale and the Brief COPE Inventory, both of which were used in this study.

2.7.1 The Transactional Model of Coping and Stress

According to the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), it is a process that involves interactions between a person and their surroundings. According to the model, stress is not caused by the event itself, but rather by a person's cognitive assessment of those circumstances and their perceived capacity for coping. It emphasizes how stress is a highly individual experience that varies according to how people view and handle difficult circumstances (Lisnyj et al., 2023).

The two core cognitive processes of the model are primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Under primary appraisal, people determine whether an encounter is stressful, benign-positive, or irrelevant. If the situation is stressful, it is also evaluated as a threat, challenge, harm, or loss. For instance, a student who has several tests in a short amount of time may view this as a challenge to their academic performance or as something that can be overcome with effort (Luecha et al., 2025).

The assessment of options and coping mechanisms is part of the secondary appraisal. It refers to assessing both internal (such as knowledge, skills, and emotional fortitude) and external (such as institutional assistance and social support) resources. If they believe they have coping resources at their disposal, they are more likely to use health coping strategies and experience less stress. However, stress intensifies and frequently results in maladaptive coping if the person believes they are powerless to handle the situation (Dong et al., 2024).

Following evaluation, the person makes an effort at coping, which Lazarus and Folkman divided into two major groups: problem-focused coping and emotion focused coping. Problem-focused coping includes actions taken to change the stressor, like creating a

study schedule, getting academic support, or gathering resources. Emotion-focused coping is the control of the emotional reaction to stress through religious rituals, emotional support, or relaxation techniques. Both forms of coping may take place simultaneously or separately, depending on the circumstances and the person's sense of control over them (ElBarazi & Tikamdas, 2025).

For university students, especially those from Lahore, this model is extremely pertinent. Students frequently deal with learning challenges, financial stress, and social pressures. Whether or not they recognize these challenges, their coping strategies—such as actively resolving issues, asking for help, or emotionally withdrawing—can have a significant impact on their learning and mental health. For instance, if students believe that academic challenges can be handled and rely on time management and peer support, they will perform better academically and experience less stress. On the other hand, if a student believes that the same difficulties will never be overcome, they will become more stressed and perform worse academically, turning to drug abuse or avoidance (Daqiq & Akramy, 2023).

Second, rather than being an immediate reaction, the model proposes that coping is a continuous and dynamic process. In other words, students constantly evaluate and reevaluate stressors, changing their coping mechanisms as circumstances change. This dynamic coping style is essential in an academic setting where stressors change throughout semesters, assignments, and personal circumstances (Gasser et al., 2025).

By incorporating it into this study, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping can help us better understand how and why students experience academic stress as well as how various coping strategies impact their academic performance and general wellbeing. This theoretical framework guides the investigation into the proposed connection between coping strategies and academic stress and offers a methodical way to interpret the results in the context of Pakistani higher education (Baghoori et al., 2024).

In order to take contextual specificities into consideration, this study integrates Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources Theory with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model. Parental expectations act as cultural filters during primary appraisal, increasing the perceived threat of academic difficulties, as shown in Figure 1. In the meantime, generative AI integration (such as ChatGPT anxiety) and post-pandemic educational disruptions serve as resource depletes during secondary appraisal, limiting coping mechanisms. The stress-coping dynamics of Lahore students can be nuancedly analyzed thanks to this dual-axis framework.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to investigate the degree of academic stress and coping strategies among university students in Lahore. It provides information on population and sample, instruments, data collection methods, ethical concerns, analysis of data, and study design. In working towards meeting the research objectives and producing answers to the posed questions, the methodology delivers a systematic method of data collection that is reliable and valid.

3.2 Research Design

It is a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. The study used this design because it provides the opportunity to gather data from a large population simultaneously, hence making it easy to identify trends, correlations, and patterns. The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire, which assisted in quantifying stress and coping levels.

3.3 Population and Sampling

3.3.1 Target Population

The target population for this research included graduate and postgraduate students studying different disciplines in four of Lahore's biggest universities in Pakistan. The sites were chosen to reflect a variety of learning environments, including public and private, and to obtain representation of a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds.

3.3.2 Sampling Method and Size
Stratified convenience sampling was utilized to provide representation of every one of the four universities: the University of the Punjab (n=75), UMT (n=75), Minhaj University (n=75), and
Education University (n=75).

The sample size of 300 participants proved to be statistically sufficient for quantitative analysis. Stratification provided proportional representation across institutions, while convenience sampling provided accessibility and ease in data collection.

3.4 Research Tool
A Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents in Lahore.

3.4.1 Sociodemographic Questionnaire Background details of the participants were collected under this category, including:
Age
Gender
Program for a degree
Residence type (urban or rural)

3.4.2 Academic Stress Scale
Academic Stress Response Scale, a shortened and modified version of Tumisang Modise's validated scale, was utilized within this category. There are 20 items in total, representing four dimensions: Affective stress is indicated by emotional reactions like crying or emotional exhaustion.
Behavioural Stress (i.e., avoidance of class, indolence)
Psychological Stress (i.e., physical symptoms, sleep and eating)
Cognitive Stress (i.e., feeling overwhelmed, having trouble concentrating)
A 5-point Likert scale was used to collect data from respondents, and it ranged from:
1. None of the time
2. Little of the time
3. Some of the time
4. Most of the time
5. All of the time

3.4.3 Brief COPE Inventory and Motivation Scale91
The 16-item Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997), which measures problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping, was used to quantify coping.
The Motivation Scale-91 (Carroll, 2020) was also completed to meet the supervision note for 'Mouthson-91'. This 9-item scale assesses academic self-efficacy, persistence, and resource-seeking behavior on a 4-point frequency scale with strong reliability (α = .89) reported in previous studies. Coping techniques were evaluated using the Brief COPE Inventory, which consists of 16 items. The test evaluates a variety of coping mechanisms, such as: Problem-focused coping (e.g., active coping and planning)
Emotion-focused coping (e.g., seeking religion or other people to feel better)
Maladaptive or avoidant coping (e.g., substance use or denial)

3.5 Validity and Reliability
The questionnaire was derived from already tested instruments:
Tumisang Modise's work formed the basis for the Academic Stress Response Scale, which has demonstrated adequate reliability in educational settings.
The Brief COPE Inventory was developed by Carver (1997) and is a widely used, psychometrically verified self-report scale that has been utilized in many international investigations.
A pilot study was done on 30 students prior to last data collection in order to examine timing, clarity, and reliability. Small modifications were made to facilitate cultural and contextual appropriateness based on pilot reactions. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for both scales were determined to be higher than 0.70, which demonstrates good internal consistency.

3.6 Data Collection Method
Data was collected in more than four weeks via inperson handing out of questionnaires in paper form in shared spaces (cafeterias, libraries) in the four campuses. The participants were shown written descriptions of the study and gave their consent in writing. Additionally, data was also gathered via

online google forms. Confidentiality and anonymity of the responses were guaranteed to the respondents.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data from the surveys was processed using version XXV of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Included in the analysis were:

Descriptive Statistics: To describe demographic information, academic stress levels, and types of coping strategies, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed.

The association between the academic stress and the types of coping strategies was examined by Pearson correlational analysis.

According to demographic factors, stress differences and coping differences were identified utilizing independent t-tests.

Regression analysis was utilized to predict how specific coping strategies would impact stress reduction.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The research was approved by institutional review boards in all the participating universities. The major ethical procedures involved voluntary participation, storage. No personally identifiable data was gathered, protecting participant confidentiality.

3.9 Summary

Methodological framework used to research the extent of stress at academics and coping strategies utilized by Lahore university students was entirely outlined in this chapter. Apart from rendering the findings credible, the use of an ordered quantitative method based on standardized tools positions the reader for the presentation of outcomes in the following chapter.

Analysis and Results 4.1 Demographic Data

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the university students who participated in the study. The sample included participants from different gender identities, academic programs, and residential backgrounds. Table 1 summarizes the demographic distribution.

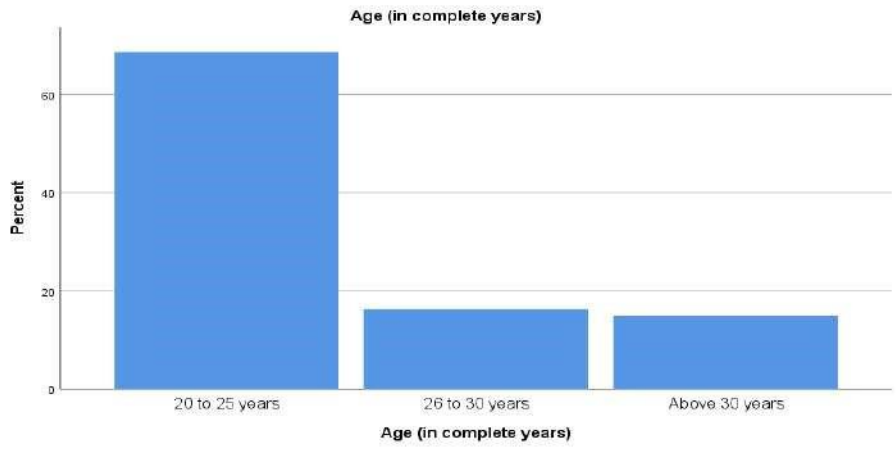
The respondents' age distribution is shown in Table 4.1. The vast majority of participants (68.7%) were just beginning their academic studies. with most being between the ages of 20 and 25. Only 16.3% of the population

right to withdraw without penalty, and secure data

	Frequency	Percent
20 to 25 years	206	68.7
26 to 30 years	49	16.3
Above 30 years	45	15
Total	300	100

Table 4. 1 Age of Respondents

was between the ages of 26 and 30, and 15% was over 30. According to this distribution, younger students who are probably still getting used to the demands of college are the ones who experience academic stress the most.



	Frequency	Percent
Male	127	42.3
Female	173	57.7
Total	**300**	**100**

The respondents' gender distribution is shown in that were sampled or their potential increased inter

Table 4. 2 Gender

Table 4.2. Of the entire sample, 42.3% were men and 57.7% were women. This suggests that more female students participated in the study, which may be due to their increased representation in the universities in conducting academic research. Meaningful genderbased insights into academic stress and coping mechanisms are made possible by the balanced distribution.

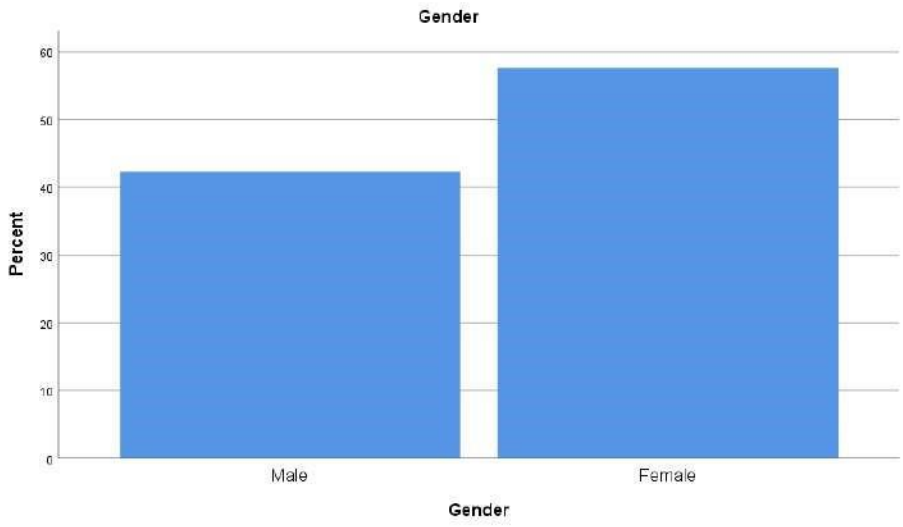


Table 4. 3 Educantional level

	Frequency	Percent
Graduate	183	61
Post Graduate	117	39
Total	**300**	**100**

The respondents' educational attainment is shown in Table 4.3. Of the participants, 39% were pursuing postgraduate studies, and the majority (61%) were enrolled in graduate programs. This implies that academic stress occurs at all levels of higher education, although graduate students are somewhat more likely to experience it. A more comprehensive understanding of how coping mechanisms and academic stress may differ by academic level is made possible by the inclusion of both groups.

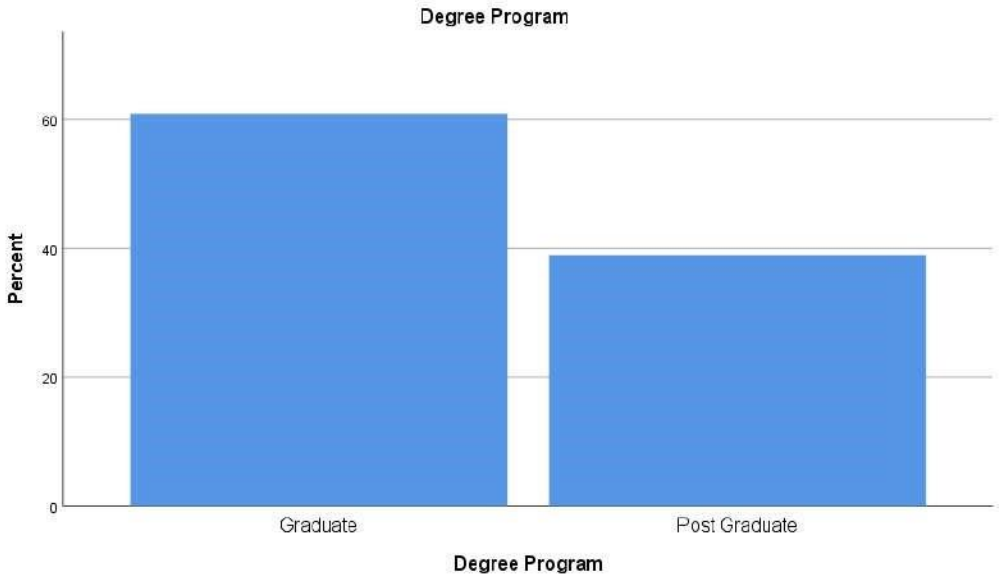
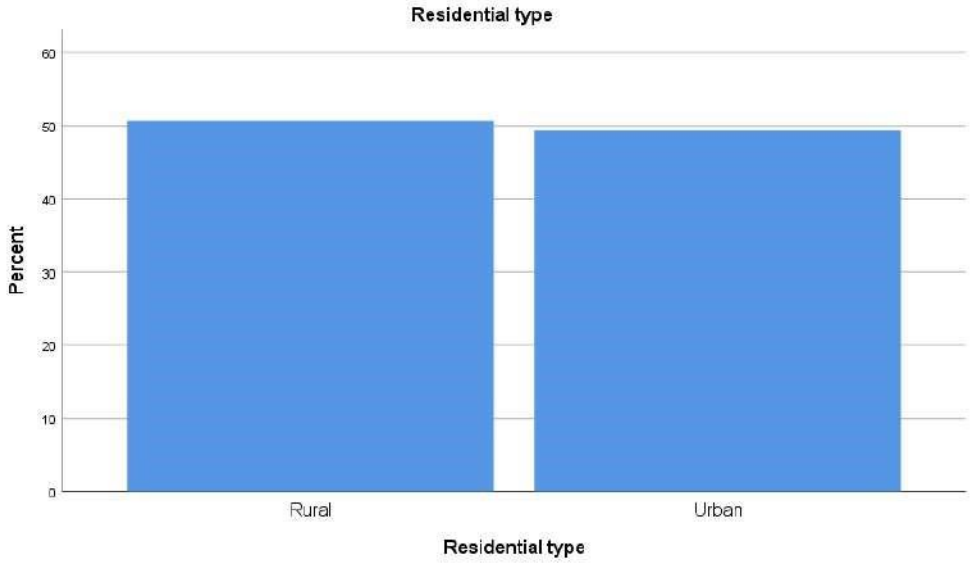


Table 4.4 Residential Type

	Frequency	Percent
Rural	152	50.7
Urban	148	49.3
Total	**300**	**100**

Table 4.4 shows the residential background of the respondents. The data reveals a nearly equal distribution, with 50.7% of students belonging to rural areas and 49.3% from urban settings. This balance ensures that perspectives from both geographic contexts are represented, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how location may influence academic stress and coping strategies. The slight rural majority also highlights the growing participation of students from less urbanized regions in higher education.



4.2 Frequency Tables

Table 4. 5 My work built up so much I felt like crying

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
	92	30.7	2.26	1.1446
	100	33.3		
None of the time		19.7		
Little of the time	59			
some of the time				
Most of the time				
All of the time				
	36	12		
	13	4.3		
Total	**300**	**100**		

According to Table 4.5, a sizable portion of respondents (33.3%) said they felt overwhelmed to the point of crying "little of the time," while 30.7% said they never felt this way. Nonetheless, 19.7% said they experienced this feeling "some of the time," which suggests that they were under moderate stress. According to the mean score of 2.26, respondents generally felt that their workload occasionally caused them emotional distress.

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	59	19.7	2.4767	1.12858
Little of the time	113	37.7		
Some of the time	74	24.7		
Most of the time	34	11.3		
All of the time	20	6.7		
Total	**300**	**100**		

Table 4. 6 I felt emotional

37.7% of respondents reported feeling emotional said they felt emotional "most" or "all of the time." "little of the time," compared to 24.7% who reported Overall, the mean score of 2.48 indicates that feeling this "some of the time," according to Table 4.6. respondents occasionally had emotional reactions to Just 11.3% and 6.7% of respondents, respectively, their workload.

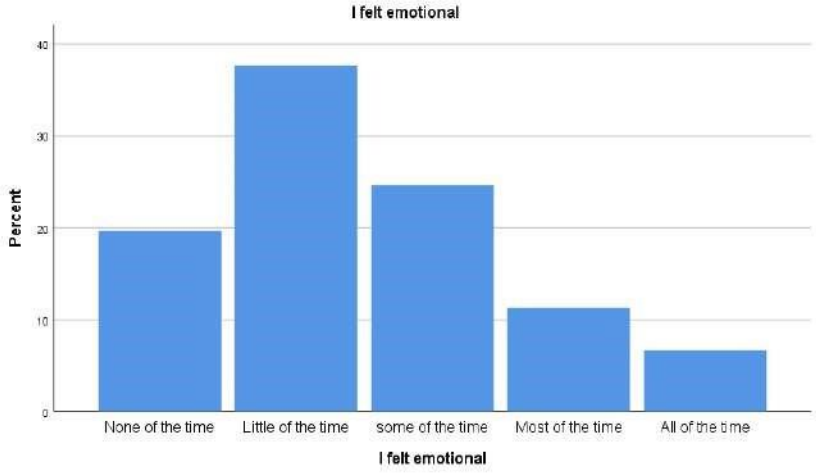


Table 4. 7 My emotions stopped me from studying

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	55	18.3	2.6833	1.15506
Little of the time	79	26.3		
Some of the time	90	30		
Most of the time	58	19.3		
All of the time	18	6		
Total	**300**	**100**		

Table 4.7 shows that 30% of respondents reported their emotions stopped them from studying "some of the time," while 26.3% experienced this "little of the time." Notably, 19.3% said this happened "most of the time," and 6% "all of the time," indicating emotional interference with academic tasks. The mean score of 2.68 reflects a moderate impact of emotions on students' study routines.

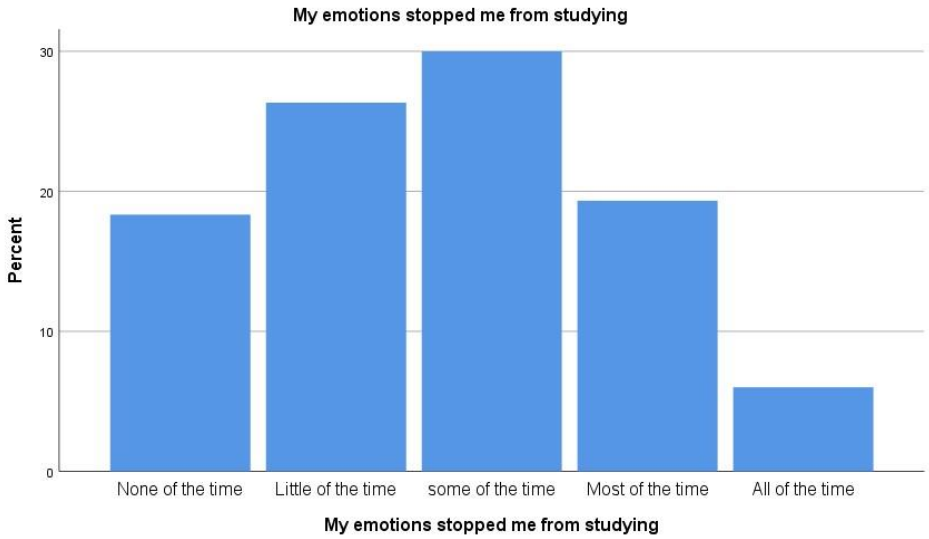


Table 4. 8 I yelled at my family or friends

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	66	22	2.58	1.21181
Little of the time	90	30		
Some of the time	69	23		
Most of the time	54	18		
All of the time	21	7		
Total	300	100		

Table 4.8 indicates that 30% of respondents yelled at family or friends "little of the time," while 23% did so "some of the time" and 18% "most of the time." Only 22% reported not doing this at all. The mean score of 2.58 suggests a moderate level of emotional outbursts directed at close relations, likely as a stress response.

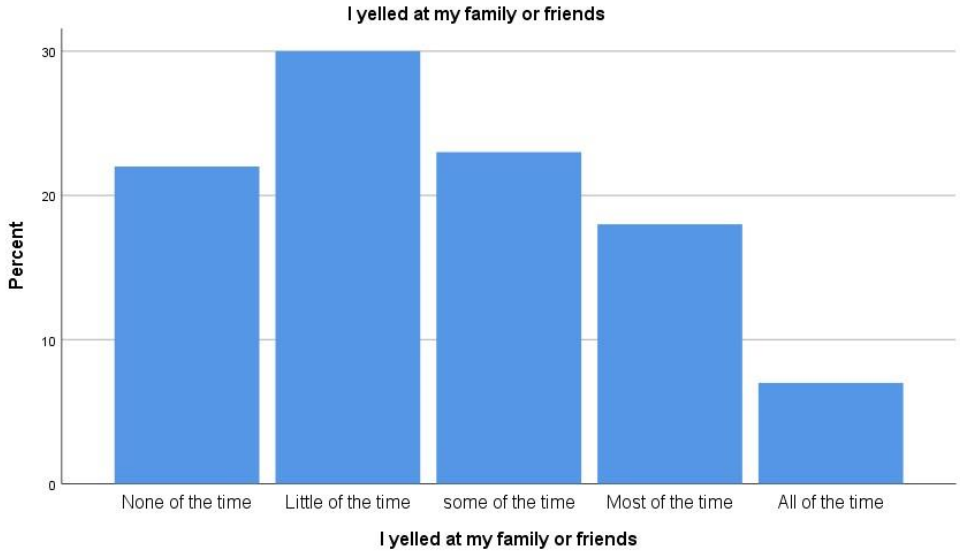


Table 4. 9 I felt emotionally drained

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	76	25.3	2.3833	1.15795
Little of the time	104	34.7		
Some of the time	67	22.3		
Most of the time	35	11.7		
All of the time	18	6		
Total	300	100		

A combined 34.7% of students reported feeling indicates a consistent depletion of energy and emotionally depleted little of the time while 6% emotional resources, pointing to prolonged exposure reported all of the time. The mean score of 2.38 to stress without sufficient recovery.
suggests moderate emotional exhaustion. This

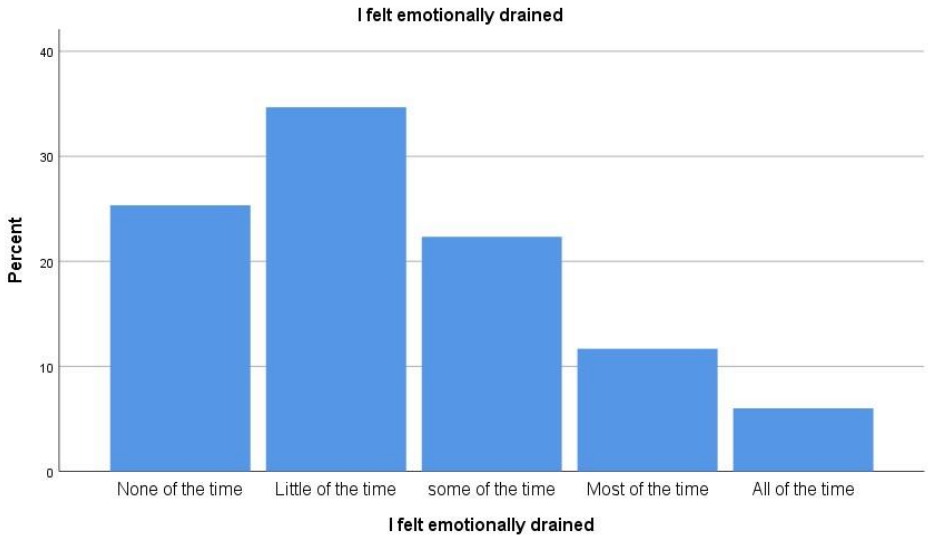


Table 4. 10 I felt lazy when it comes to university work

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	66	22	2.63	1.24563
Little of the time	84	28		
Some of the time	71	23.7		
Most of the time	53	17.7		
All of the time	26	8.7		
Total	300	100		

Almost 23.7% of participants admitted to feeling lazy toward academic tasks at least "some of the time" while 8.7% reported all of the time and 28% students face academic stress due to lazy work little of the time. The mean of 2.63 and a relatively high standard deviation reflect variability in motivation. This indicates demotivation and avoidance behaviors possibly linked to stress, burnout, or emotional fatigue.

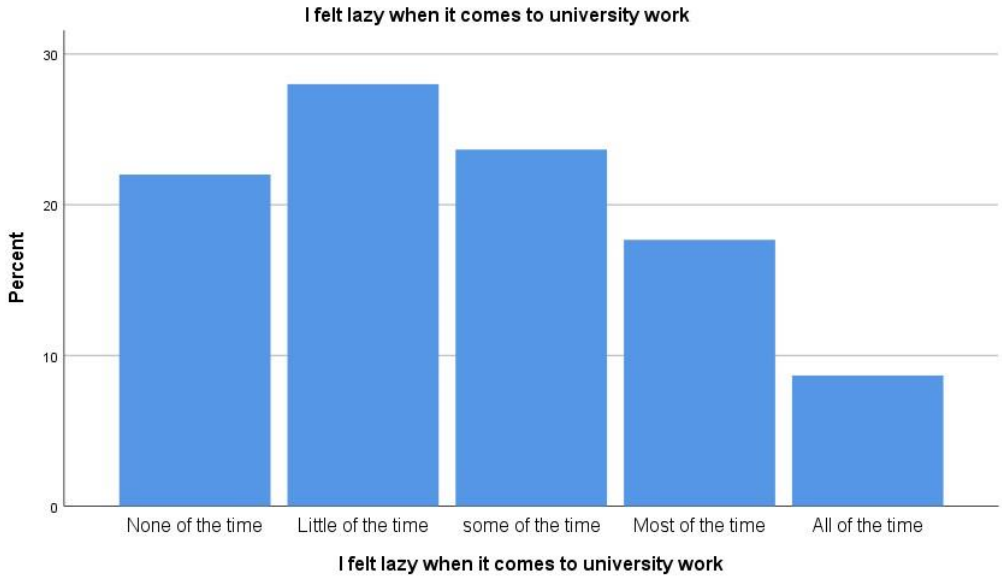


Table 4. 11 I get easily distracted in class

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	66	22	2.78	1.32317
Little of the time	69	23		
Some of the time	65	21.7		
Most of the time	65	21.7		
All of the time	35	11.7		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.11, 23% of respondents said whereas 21.7% said they were distracted "some of the they were easily distracted in class "little of the time," time" and "most of the time." Furthermore, 11.7% said they were distracted "all the time." The data indicates a moderate degree of classroom distraction among participants, with a mean score of 2.78.

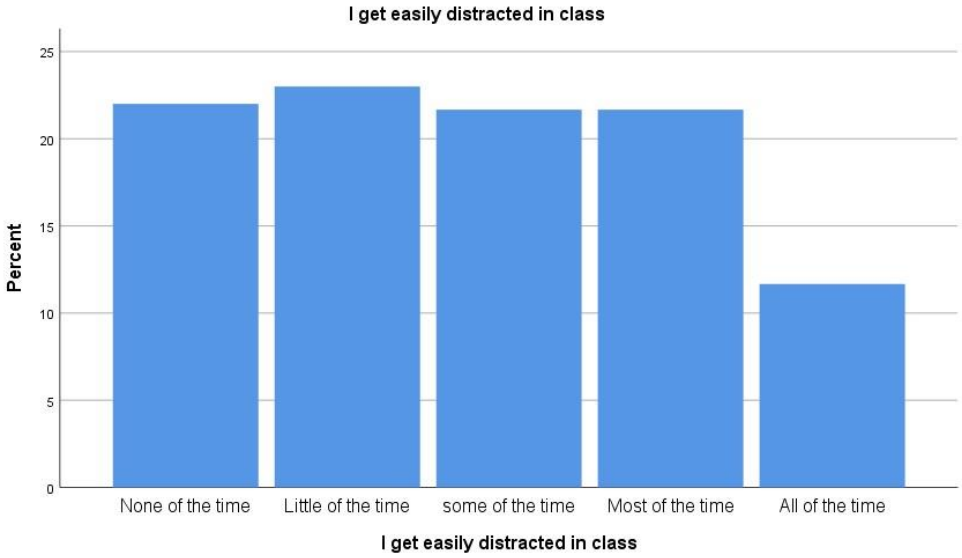


Table 4. 12 I was unable to study

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	40	13.3	2.7867	1.19691
Little of the time	101	33.7		
Some of the time	74	24.7		
Most of the time	53	17.7		
All of the time	32	10.7		
Total	300	100		

Table 4.12 shows that 33.7% of respondents said they couldn't study "little of the time," 24.7% said they couldn't study "some of the time," and 17.7% said they couldn't study "most of the time." Interestingly, 10.7% said they couldn't study "all of the time." The average score of 2.79 indicates that many participants' academic functioning was only slightly impacted.

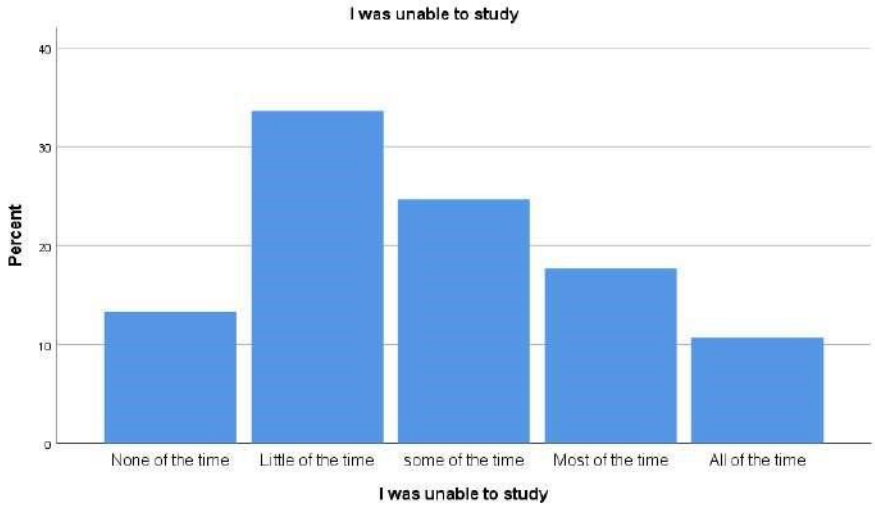


Table 4. 13 I had trouble concentrating in class

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	56	18.7	2.74	1.20162
Little of the time	73	24.3		
Some of the time	88	29.3		
Most of the time	59	19.7		
All of the time	24	8		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.13, 29.3% of respondents reported having difficulty focusing in class "some of the time," followed by 24.3% who reported having difficulty "little of the time" and 19.7% who reported having difficulty "most of the time." Just 18.7% said they had no trouble at all. The participants' moderate level of concentration problems, indicated by their mean score of 2.74, are probably related to emotional or academic stress.

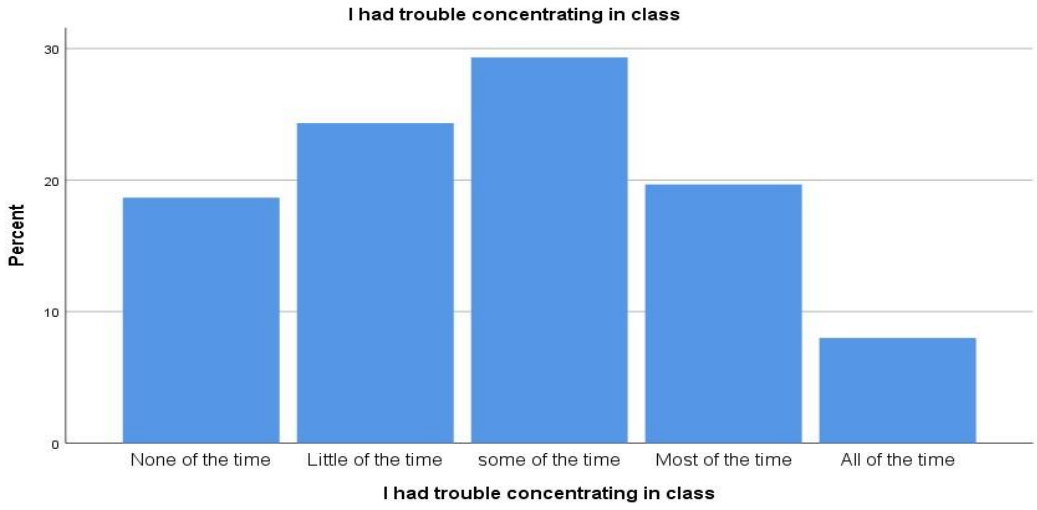


Table 4. 14 I avoided class

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
	51	17	2.7667	1.22361
	86	28.7		
	73	24.3		

None of the time	62	20.7
Little of the time		
some of the time		
Most of the time		
All of the time	28	9.3
Total	300	100

28.7% of respondents avoided class "little of the time," compared to 24.3% who avoided it "some of the time" and 20.7% who avoided it "most of the time," according to Table 4.13. Interestingly, 9.3% acknowledged skipping class "all of the time." The participants' moderate propensity to skip classes, perhaps in reaction to stress or emotional strain, is indicated by the mean score of 2.77.

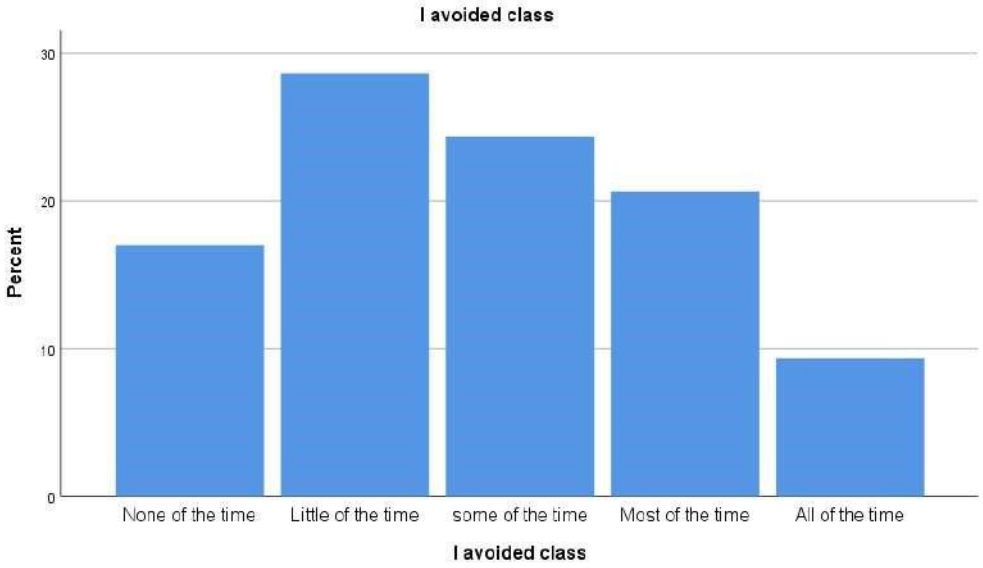


Table 4. 15 I can't breathe

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	19	6.3	3.2233	1.26443
Little of the time	93	31		
Some of the time	53	17.7		
Most of the time	72	24		
All of the time	63	21		

Total	300	100

31% students face breathing problem at little of the time due to academic stress. A high percentage (24%) experienced breathlessness, commonly associated with anxiety or panic most of the time while 6.3% said none of the time. The mean score of 3.22 reflects above-average stress-related physical symptoms. This suggests that some students experience stress at a physiological level, which may require clinical or counseling support.

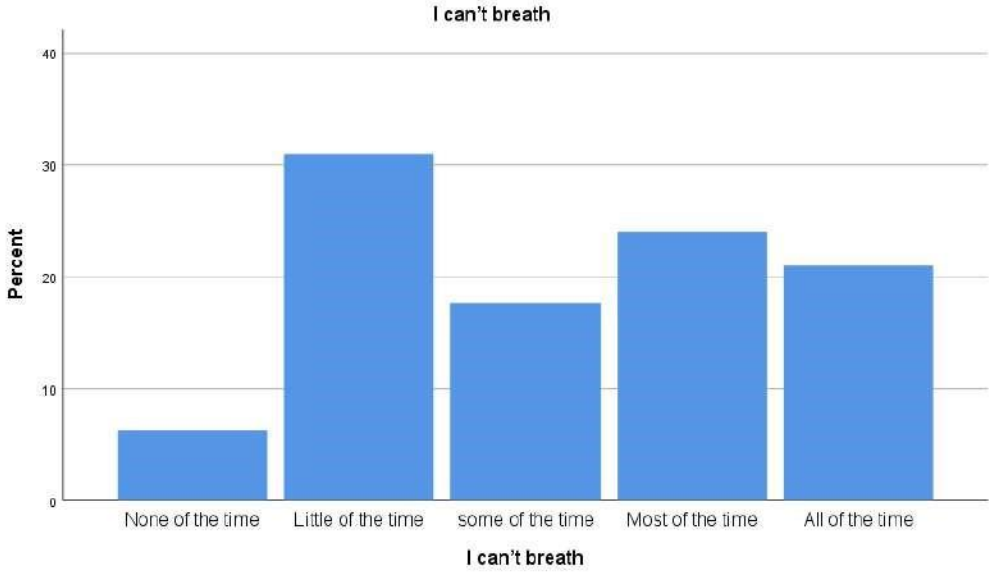


Table 4. 16 I have difficulty eating

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	32	10.7	3.2833	1.21984
Little of the time	39	13		
Some of the time	98	32.7		
Most of the time	74	24.7		
All of the time	57	19		
Total	300	100		

32.7% reported appetite loss or difficulty eating some of the time while 10.7% reported none of the time. With a high mean of 3.28, this symptom appears widespread. Appetite suppression is a strong indicator of stress affecting physical well-being. Long-term effects may include nutritional deficiencies and weakened immunity.

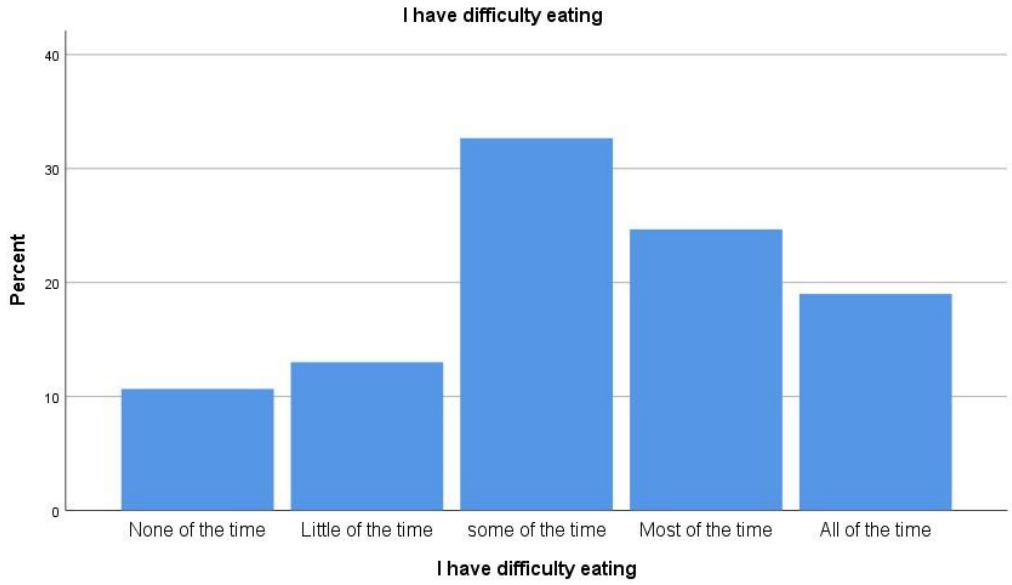


Table 4. 17 My hands were sweaty

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	35	11.7	3.3967	1.29805
Little of the time	44	14.7		
Some of the time	55	18.3		
Most of the time	99	33		
All of the time	67	22.3		
Total	300	100		

Over 22.3% of respondents showed signs of one of the highest, signals high anxiety levels. This nervousness through sweaty palms all the time while finding indicates that stress is not just emotional but 11.7% said none of the time. The mean score of 3.40, clearly manifests in students' bodies.

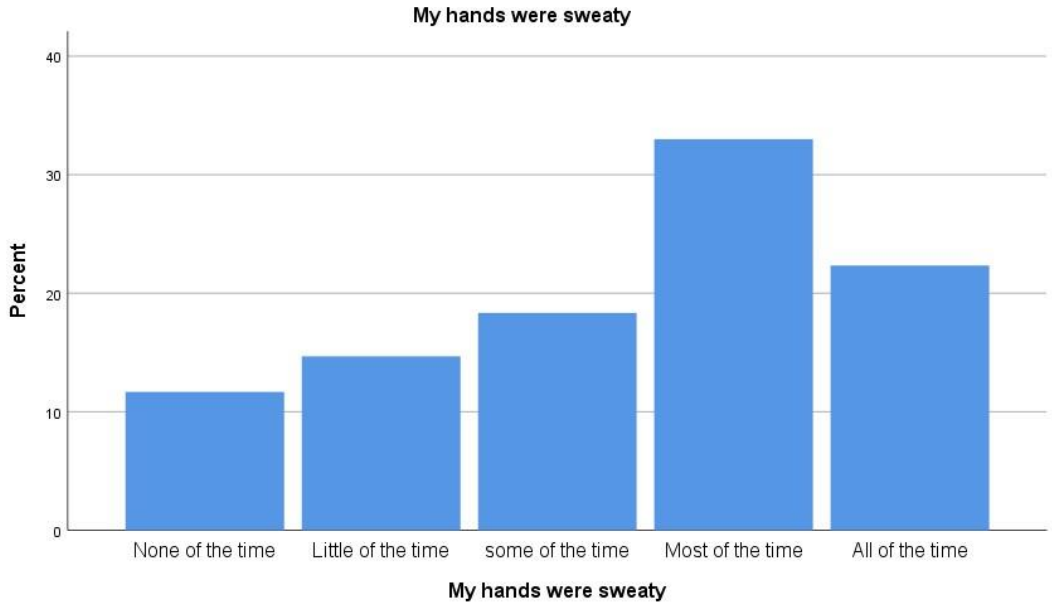


Table 4. 18 I had a lot of trouble sleeping

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	32	10.7	3.33	1.28059
Little of the time	49	16.3		
Some of the time	74	24.7		
Most of the time	78	26		
All of the time	67	22.3		

Total	300	100

Approximately 24.7% of students had sleep disturbances some of the time, a classic stress symptom while 10.7% said none of the time. A highest percentage indicates that students have a lot of sleeping problem most of the time due to academic stress. A mean of 3.33 further confirms the depth of this issue. Poor sleep negatively affects memory, learning, and emotional regulation. It's a key concern for mental health and academic functionality.

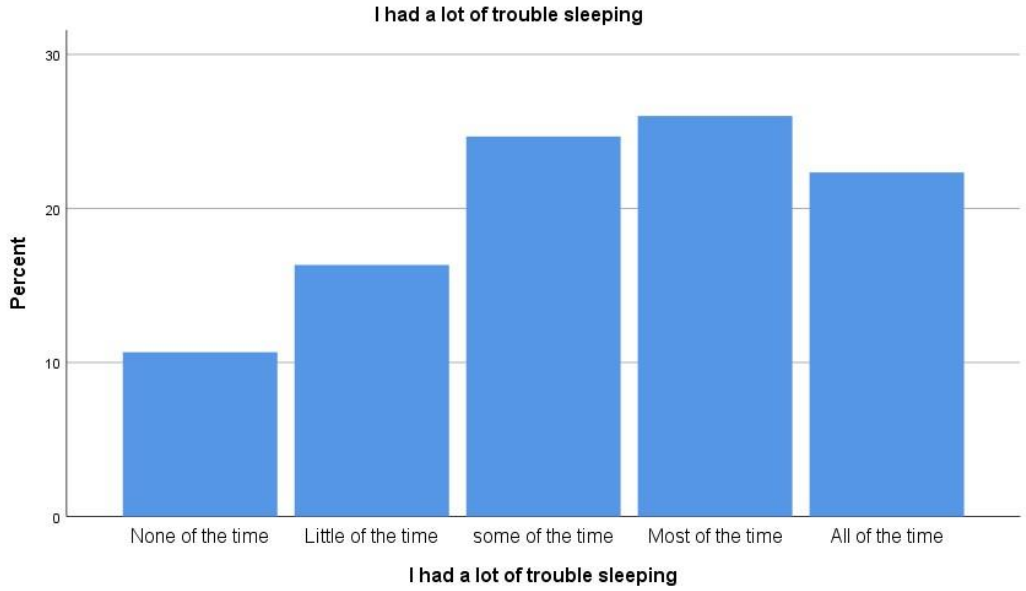


Table 4. 19 I have a headache

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation

None of the time	33	11	3.3133	1.32955
Little of the time	62	20.7		
Some of the time	54	18		
Most of the time	80	26.7		
All of the time	71	23.7		
Total	300	100		

More than 26.7%% of participants reported most of interpretation of stress-induced somatic complaints. the time headaches while 11% said none of the time. Headaches are often stress-related and may impair The mean of 3.31 is notably high, supporting the concentration and daily functioning.

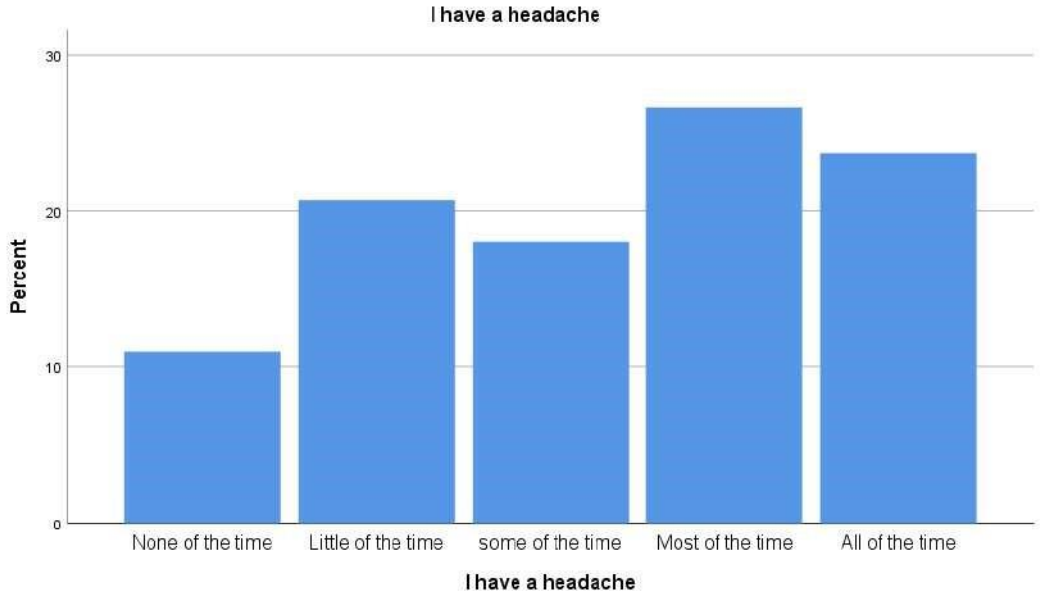


Table 4. 20 I felt overwhelmed by the demands of study

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	61	20.3	3.05	1.41923
Little of the time	53	17.7		
Some of the time	54	18		
Most of the time	74	24.7		
All of the time	58	19.3		
Total	300	100		

A significant portion (24.7%) of students said most of the time and while 20.3% said none of the time, showing a high stress perception related to academic workload. With a mean of 3.05, this reveals that students are finding it difficult to manage time, tasks, or expectations. The educational system might need to review support structures.

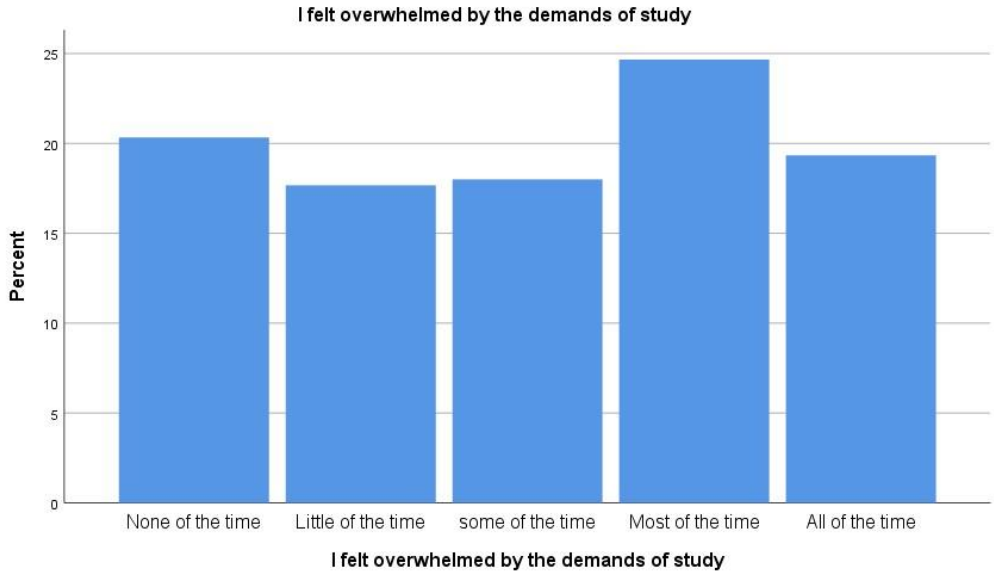


Table 4. 21 I felt worried about

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	25	8.3	3.2533	1.26007
Little of the time	73	24.3		
Some of the time	64	21.3		
Most of the time	77	25.7		
All of the time	61	20.3		
Total	300	100		

A large percentage (20.3%) admitted to feeling worried regularly while 8.3% said none of the time. 25.7% of the students were most of the time worried about their future. The mean of 3.25 suggests anxiety is a persistent emotional response. The source could be grades, future career concerns, or deadlines. This highlights the need for stress-management interventions.

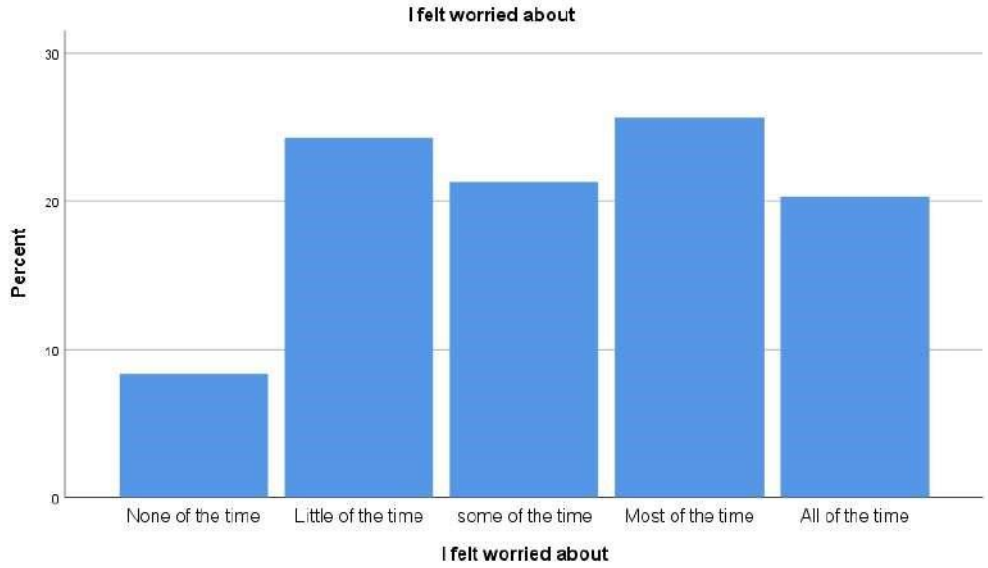


Table 4. 22 There is so much going on I can't think straight

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	37	12.3	3.2433	1.26602
Little of the time	47	15.7		
Some of the time	76	25.3		
Most of the time	86	28.7		
All of the time	54	18		
Total	300	100		

Over 18% reported mental overload, making clear thinking difficult while 12.3% said none of the time. 28.7% of the students said that there is going so much that they can't think straight most of the time. A high mean of 3.24 shows cognitive disorganization and reduced problem-solving capacity. These are signs of burnout and emotional flooding due to excessive demands.

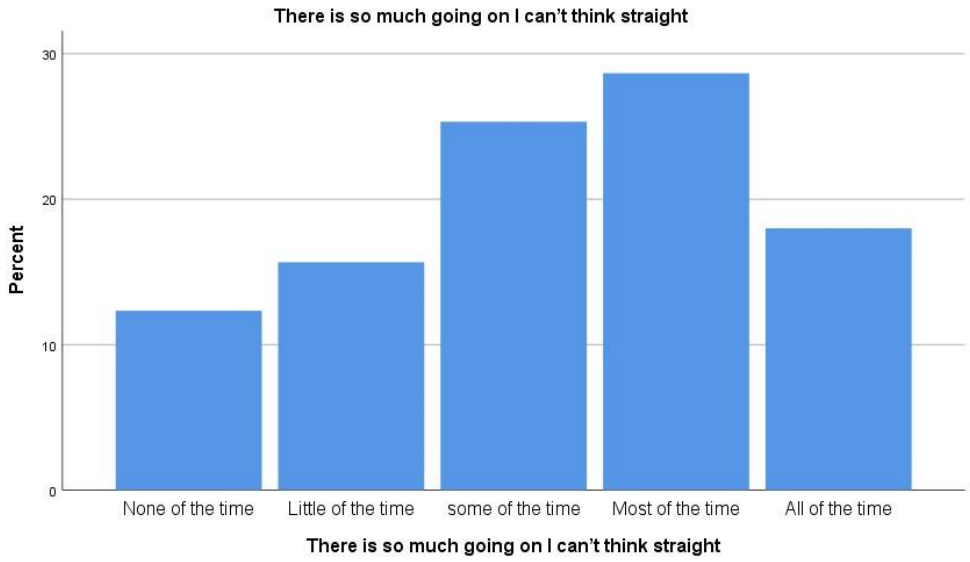


Table 4. 23 I felt emotionally drained by university

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
None of the time	31	10.3	3.3133	1.27825
Little of the time	56	18.7		
Some of the time	64	21.3		
Most of the time	86	28.7		
All of the time	63	21		
Total	300	100		

Around 28.7% felt emotionally exhausted specifically because of university experience and very lowest percentage said that they do not felt emotionally drained i.e 10% the mean score of 3.31 indicates severe emotional burnout linked directly to academic responsibilities. This underscores the pressing need for student wellness and counseling programs.

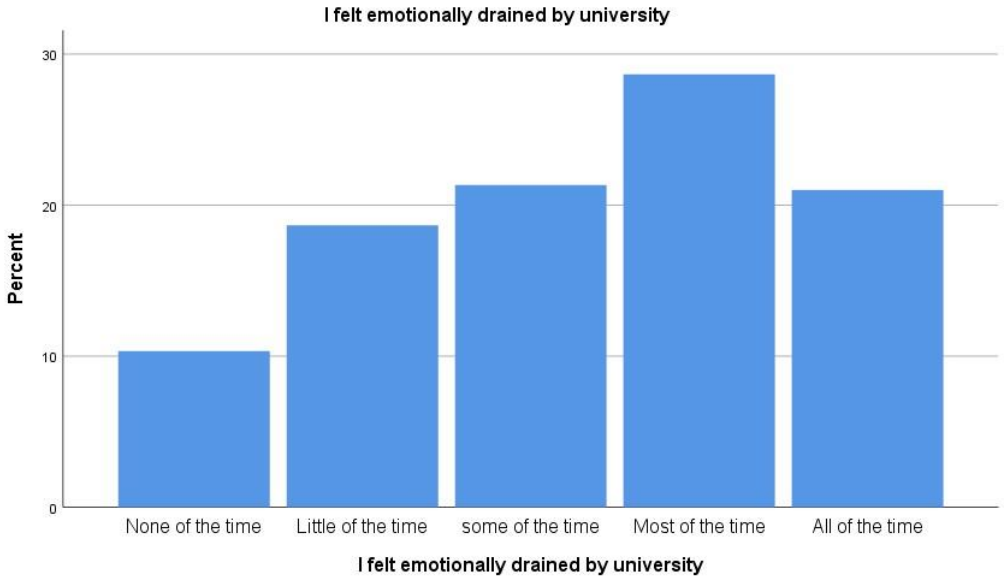


Table 4. 24 I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I have been doing this at all	37	12.3	2.8	0.96771
I have been doing this a little bit	65	21.7		
I have been doing this a medium amount	119	39.7		
I have been doing this a lot	79	26.3		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.24, 26.3% of respondents used work or other activities as a major source of distraction, compared to 39.7% who used them to a medium degree. Just 12.3% reported never using this coping mechanism. The average score of 2.8 indicates that participants used work or other activities as a moderately common method of distraction.

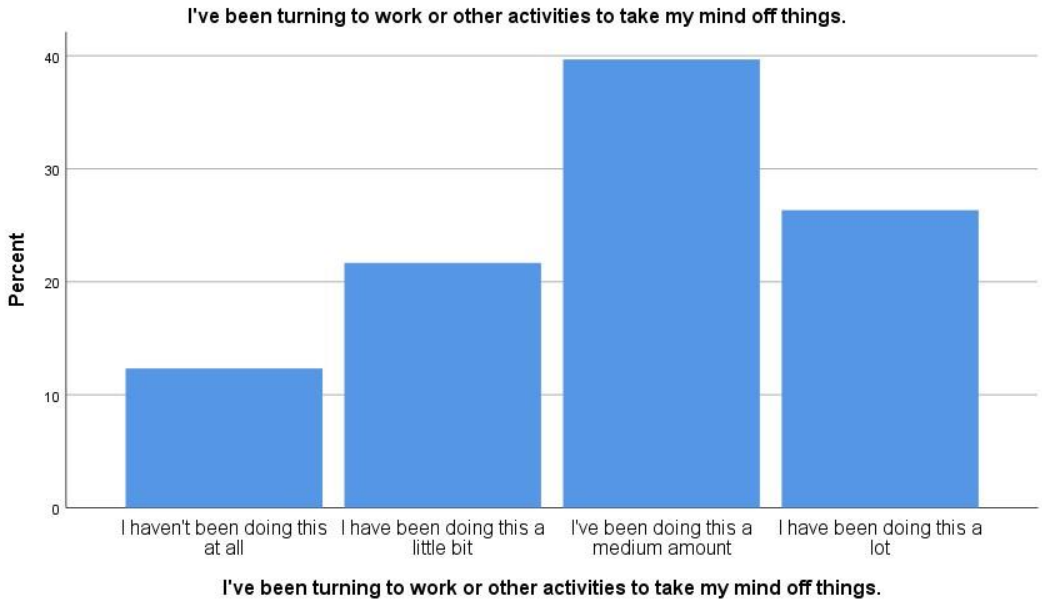


Table 4. 25 I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	32	10.7	2.8433	0.93544
I have been doing this a little bit	62	20.7		
I've been doing this a medium amount	127	42.3		
I have been doing this a lot	79	26.3		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.25, 26.3% of respondents focused their efforts heavily on actively resolving their circumstances, whereas 42.3% focused their efforts on doing so to a medium degree. Just 10.7% said they did nothing at all. The average score of 2.84 suggests that participants frequently used problem-focused coping.

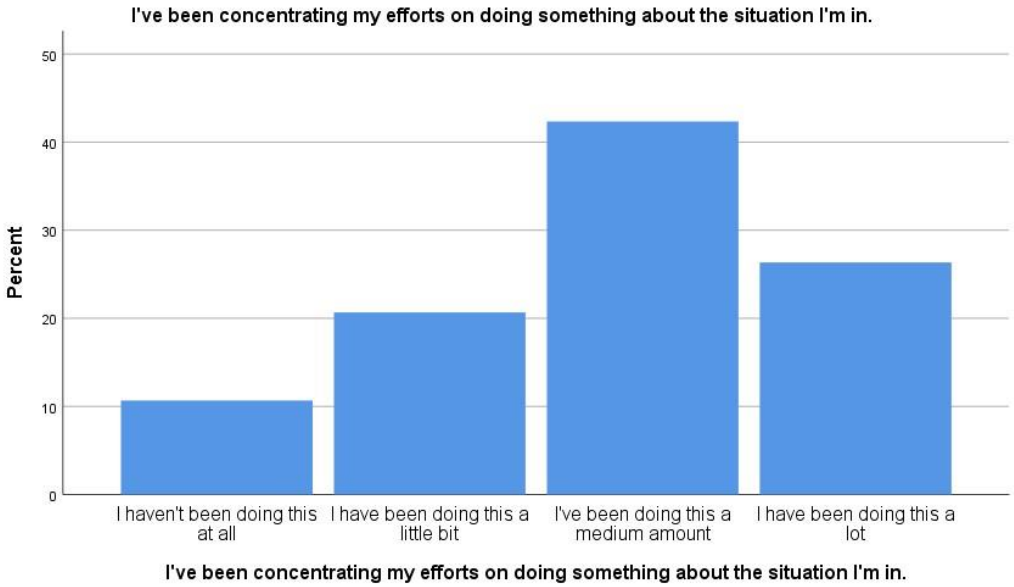


Table 4. 26 I have been using alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	99	33	2.5167	1.20328
I have been doing this a little bit	27	9		
I've been doing this a medium amount	94	31.3		
I have been doing this a lot	80	26.7		
Total	300	100		

Table 4.26 shows that 26.7% of respondents used alcohol or other drugs heavily to feel better, compared to 31.3% who used them to a medium degree. But 33% said they didn't do this at all. The participants' moderate reliance on substances as a coping mechanism is indicated by their mean score of 2.52.

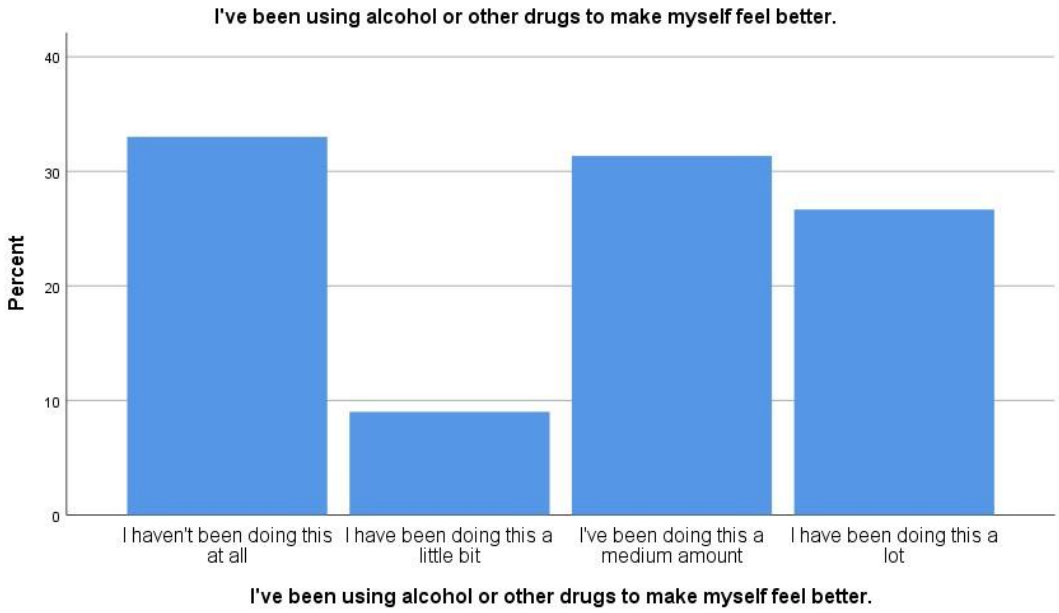


Table 4. 27 I've been getting support from others

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	15	5	2.9067	0.86436
I have been doing this a little bit	82	27.3		
I've been doing this a medium amount	119	39.7		
I have been doing this a lot	84	28		
Total	300	100		

Table 4.27 shows that 39.7% of respondents received emotional support from others to a medium extent, while 28% did so a lot. Only 5% reported not seeking emotional support at all. The mean score of 2.91 indicates that turning to others for emotional support was a commonly used coping strategy among participants.

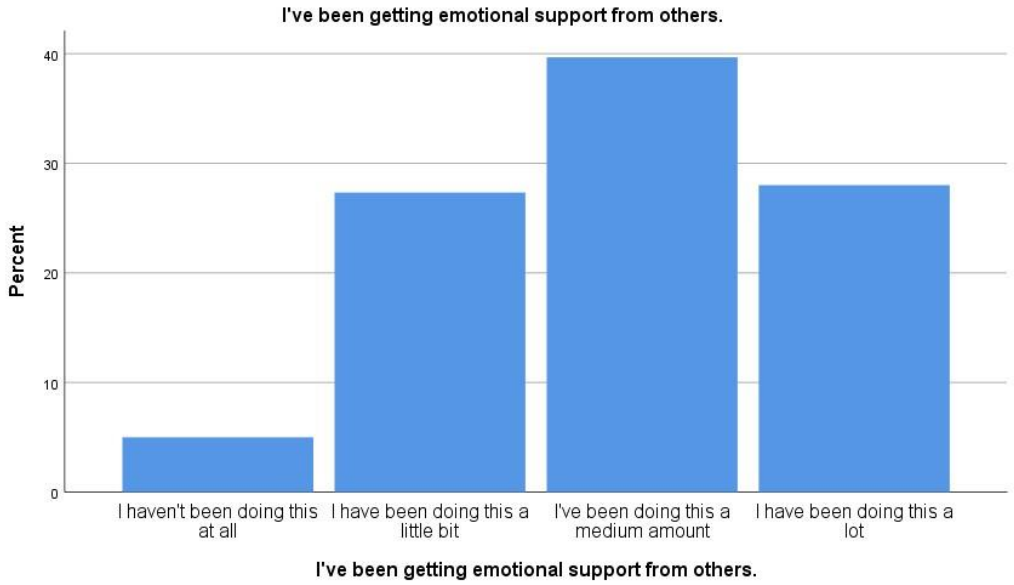


Table 4. 28 I've been giving up trying to deal with it

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	34	11.3	2.92	0.91454
I have been doing this a little bit	36	12		
I've been doing this a medium amount	150	50		
I have been doing this a lot	80	26.7		
Total	300	100		

50% of respondents acknowledged giving up on trying to solve their problems to a medium degree, whereas 26.7% did so extensively, according to table 4.28. Just 11.3% of respondents said they never engaged in this avoidant behavior. A significant proportion of participants experienced feelings of helplessness in managing their circumstances, as indicated by the mean score of 2.92.

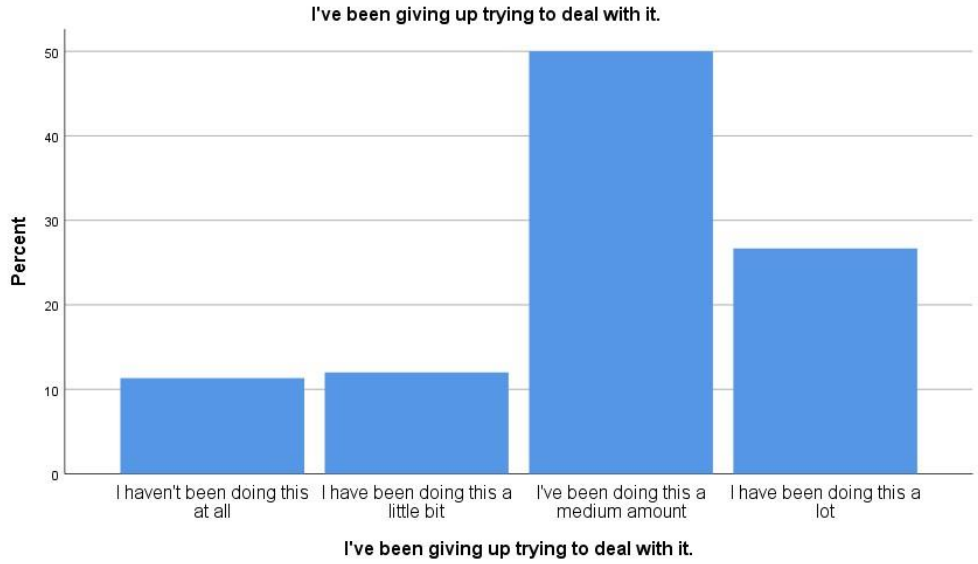


Table 4.29 I've been getting help and advice from other people

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	16	5.3	3.2033	0.83525
I have been doing this a little bit	32	10.7		
I've been doing this a medium amount	127	42.3		
I have been doing this a lot	125	41.7		
Total	300	100		

Table 4.29 indicates that a majority of respondents sought help and advice from others, with 42.3% doing so to a medium extent and 41.7% doing so a lot. Only
5.3% reported not seeking support at all. The high mean score of 3.20 reflects a strong tendency among participants to rely on social support as a key coping strategy.

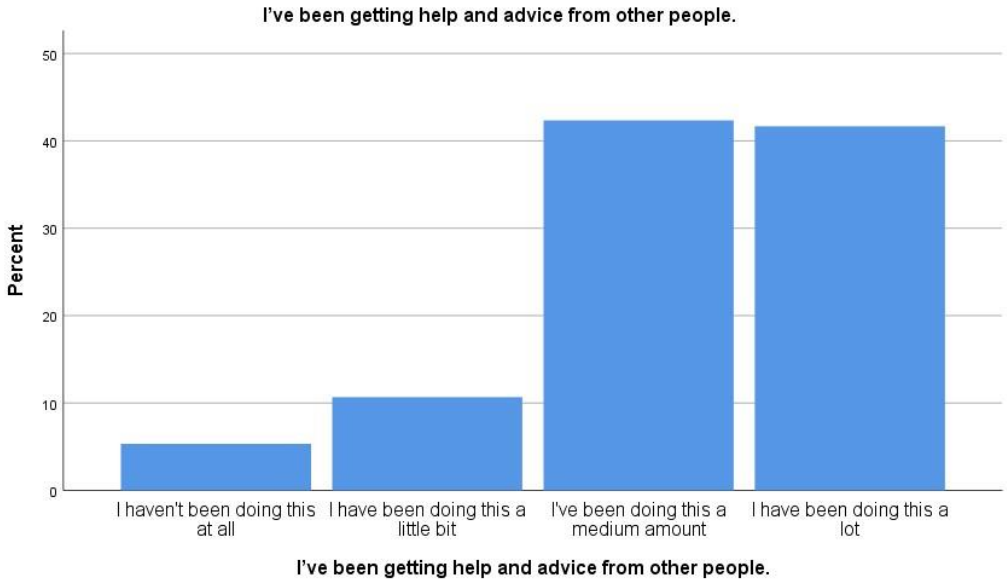


Table 4. 30 I've been using drugs to help me get through it

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	34	11.3	2.97	0.9445
I have been doing this a little bit	36	12		
I've been doing this a medium amount	135	45		
I have been doing this a lot	95	31.7		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.30, 45% of respondents said they used drugs to cope to a medium degree, 31.7% said they used drugs frequently, and only 11.3% said they had never used drugs. Although the accuracy of this data should be confirmed, the high mean score of
2.97 raises concerns and suggests that drug use was a significant coping mechanism for many participants.

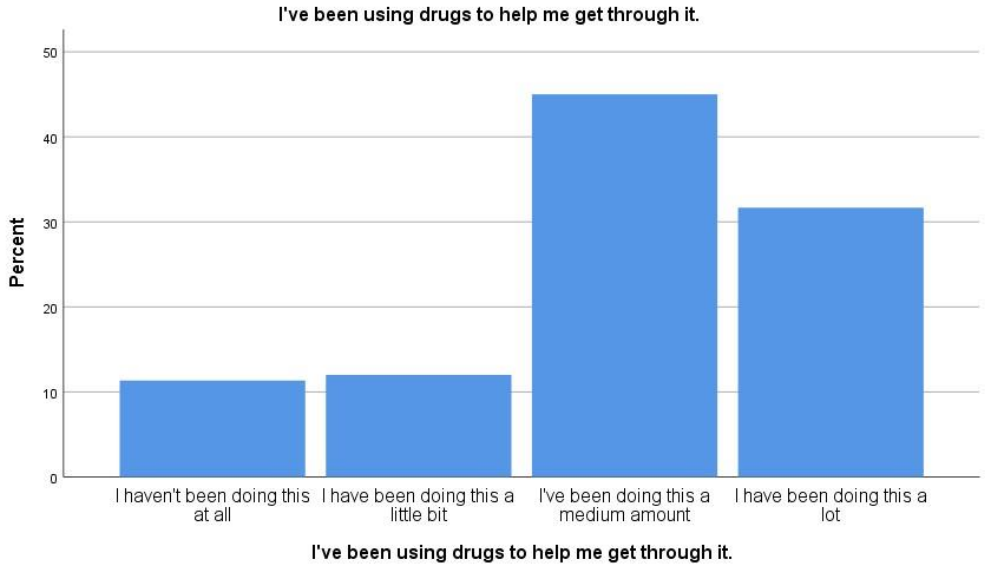


Table 4. 31 I've been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	21	7	2.9333	0.84732
I have been doing this a little bit	55	18.3		
I've been doing this a medium amount	147	49		
I have been doing this a lot	77	25.7		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.31, 25.7% of respondents made a significant effort to view their circumstances more positively, compared to 49% who did so to a medium degree. Just 7% had never employed this cognitive reframing technique. Positive reinterpretation was a frequently used coping strategy, as indicated by the mean score of 2.93.

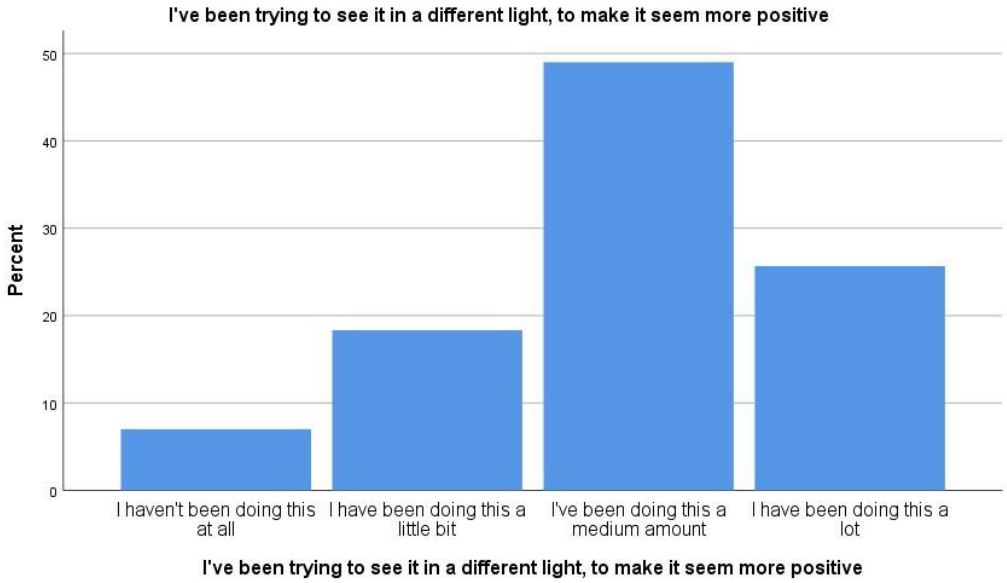


Table 4. 32 I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	45	15	2.7867	1.01221
I have been doing this a little bit	57	19		
I've been doing this a medium amount	115	38.3		
I have been doing this a lot	83	27.7		
Total	300	100		

38.3% of respondents attempted to devise a mediumlevel coping technique, according to table 4.32, while 27.7% did so a lot. Just 15% said they didn't do this at all. The participants' moderately proactive approach to overcoming their obstacles is indicated by the mean score of 2.79.

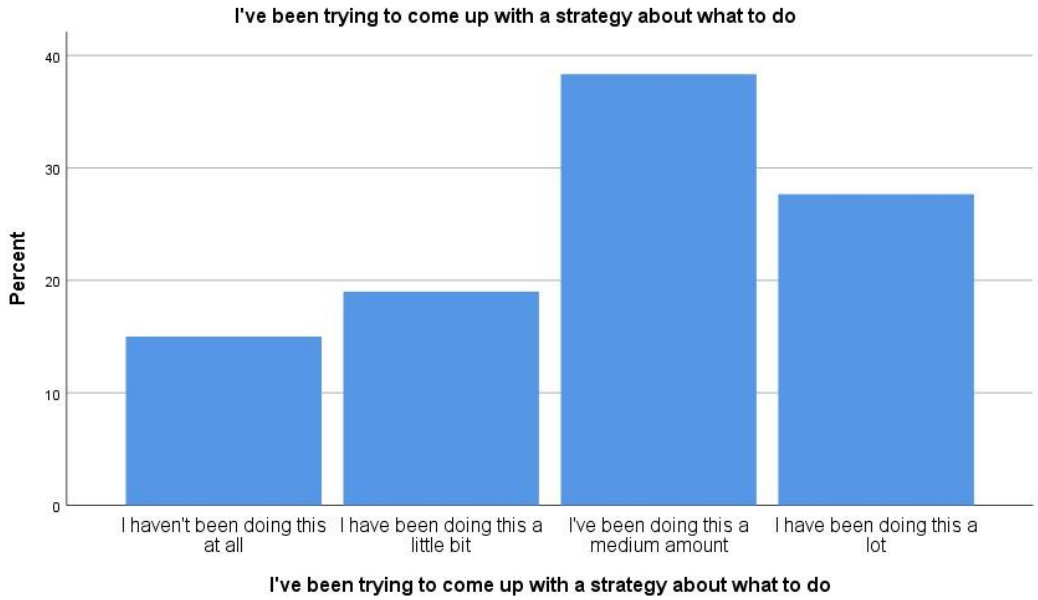


Table 4. 33 I've been looking for something good in what is happening

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	37	12.3	2.8	0.96771
I have been doing this a little bit	65	21.7		
I've been doing this a medium amount	119	39.7		
I have been doing this a lot	79	26.3		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.33, 26.3% of respondents said technique. As a coping mechanism, the mean score of they looked for something positive in their 2.8 indicates that many participants were actively circumstances frequently, whereas 39.7% said they looking for positivity or meaning. looked for something positive to a medium degree. Just 12.3% had never used this constructive reframing

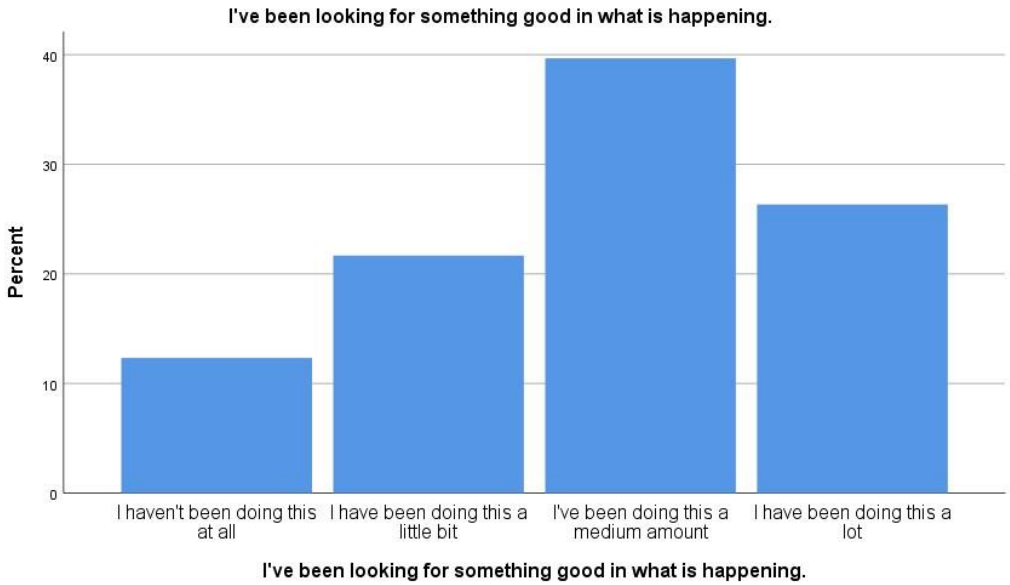


Table 4.34 I've been reducing my thoughts about it by going to movies, watching TV, reading, sleeping, daydreaming, or shopping.

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	32	10.7	2.8433	0.93544
I have been doing this a little bit	62	20.7		

I've been doing this a medium amount	127	42.3
I have been doing this a lot	79	26.3
Total	300	100

Table 4.34 shows that 26.3% of respondents undertook a lot of distraction activities, such as shopping or watching TV, while 42.3% did so to a medium degree. Only 10.7% reported not using such strategies at all. The mean score of 2.84 indicates that avoidance through leisure or distraction was a commonly used coping mechanism.

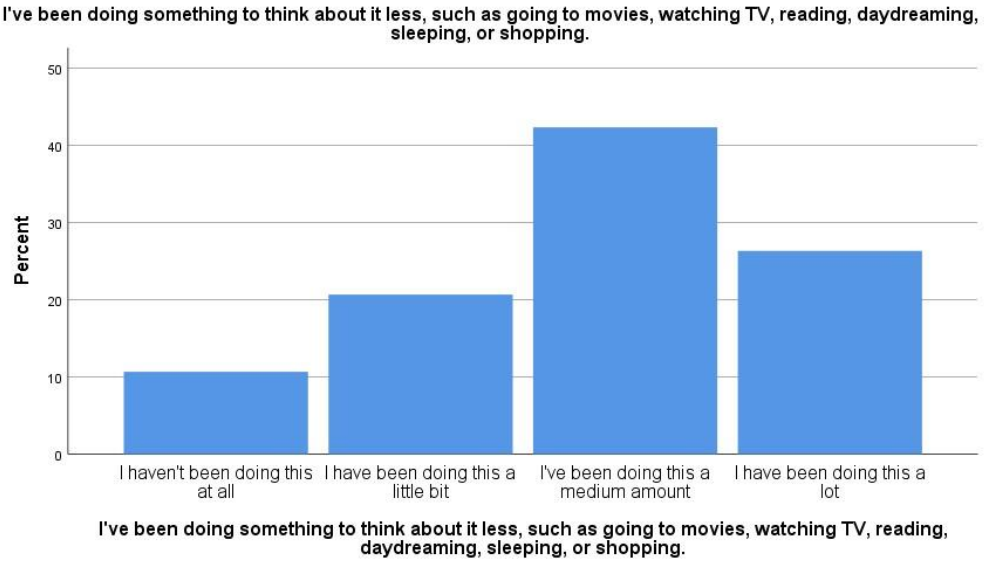


Table 4. 35 I've been expressing my negative feelings

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	99	33	2.5167	1.20328
I have been doing this a little bit	27	9		
I've been doing this a medium amount	94	31.3		
I have been doing this a lot	80	26.7		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.35, 33% of respondents had not of 2.52 indicates that participants have a moderate been expressing their negative emotions at all, propensity to use negative emotion expression as a compared to 31.3% who did so to a medium degree coping strategy. and 26.7% who did so frequently. The average score

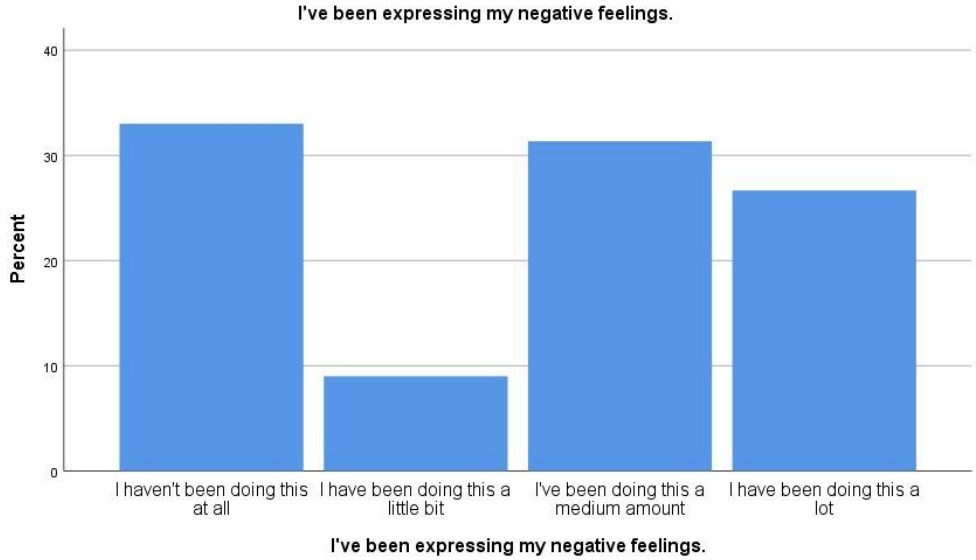


Table 4. 36 I've been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	15	5	2.9067	0.86436
I have been doing this a little bit	82	27.3		
I've been doing this a m edium amount	119	39.7		
I have been doing this a lot	84	28		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.36, 28% of respondents sought moderate and frequent use of religious or spiritual solace in their religion or spiritual beliefs frequently, beliefs as a coping mechanism is indicated by the while 39.7% did so to a medium degree. Just 5% had mean score of 2.91.
never used this coping strategy. The participants'

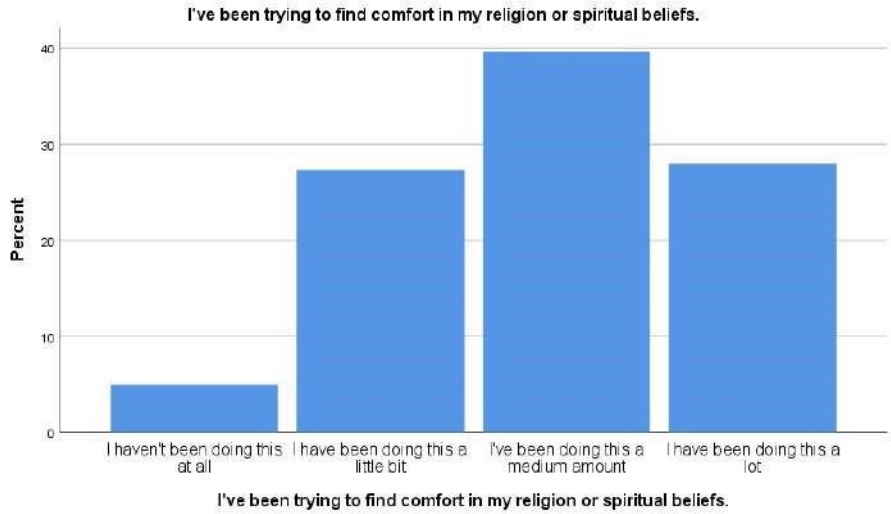


Table 4. 37 I've been learning to live with it

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	34	11.3	2.92	0.91454
I have been doing this a little bit	36	12		
I've been doing this a medium amount	150	50		
I have been doing this a lot	80	26.7		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.37, 26.7% of respondents had been "learning to live with it" extensively, whereas 50% said they had been doing so to a medium degree.
Just 11.3% had not used this coping strategy at all.
The average score of 2.92 indicates that the majority of participants were using gradual situational adaptation as a coping mechanism.

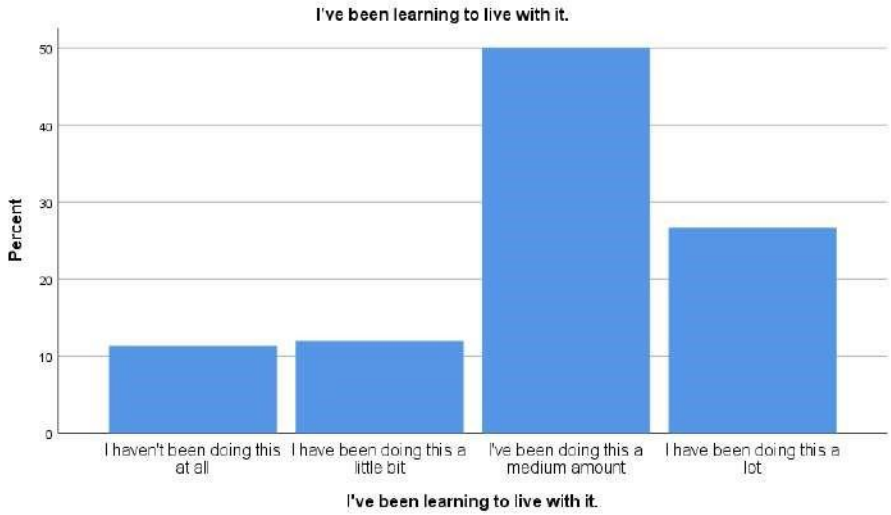


Table 4. 38 I've been blaming myself for things that happened

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	16	5.3	3.2033	0.83525
I have been doing this a little bit	32	10.7		
I've been doing this a medium amount	127	42.3		
I have been doing this a lot	125	41.7		
Total	300	100		

According to Table 4.38, many respondents placed a high percentage of blame for events on themselves (41.7%) or a medium percentage (42.3%). Just 5.3% said they didn't do this at all. The high mean score of 3.20 indicates emotional distress and negative coping, as well as a noticeable propensity for self-blame among participants.

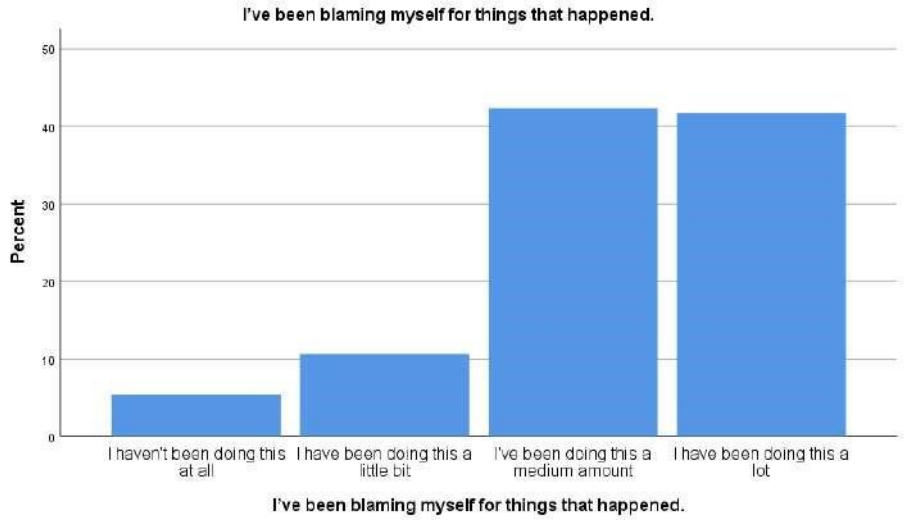


Table 4. 39 I've been praying or meditating

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std Deviation
I haven't been doing this at all	34	11.3	2.97	0.9445
I have been doing this a little bit	36	12		
I've been doing this a medium amount	135	45		
I have been doing this a lot	95	31.7		
Total	**300**	**100**		

According to Table 4.39, 31.7% of respondents said done it. The data indicates that the majority of they prayed or meditated frequently, while 45% said participants used prayer or meditation as a common they did so to a medium degree. Just 11.3% had never coping strategy, with a mean score of 2.97.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

To evaluate the scales' internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was computed. Values above .70 indicate acceptable reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Table 4.40 presents the reliability coefficients.

Table 4. 40 Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Academic Stress Response Scale	0.89
Brief COPE Scale	**0.86**

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The association between coping mechanisms and academic stress was investigated using Pearson correlation analysis. The correlation coefficients are shown in the table. Academic stress and adaptive coping were significantly correlated negatively (r = .45, p <.01), whereas academic stress and maladaptive coping techniques were positively correlated (r =.52, p <.01).

Table 4. 41 Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
1. Academic Stress	—		
2. Adaptive Coping	-.45**	—	
3. Maladaptive Coping	**.52****	**-.28***	—

A number of significant discoveries regarding the connection between university students' coping mechanisms and academic stress are shown by the Pearson correlation matrix in the table. Academic stress and adaptive coping strategies have a significant negative correlation (r = -0.45, p <.01), indicating that students who practice problem-solving and constructive behaviors like time management, planning, asking for help, and changing their perspective are less likely to experience academic stress. This finding supports the theoretical understanding that adaptive coping mechanisms act as a buffer against stress and promote emotional resilience in academic settings.

On the other hand, there was a noteworthy positive connection (r = 0.52, p <.01) between academic stress and maladaptive coping techniques. Higher levels of academic stress are linked to maladaptive tactics such avoidance, substance abuse, behavioral disengagement, and denial, suggesting that students who rely on these coping techniques may be making their stress worse rather than better.

Table 4. 42 Regression Coefficients:

Moreover, there is a modest **negative correlation between adaptive and maladaptive coping** (r = -0.28, p < .05), implying that students tend to rely more heavily on one style of coping rather than using both types interchangeably. The inverse relationship suggests that those who frequently adopt adaptive strategies are less likely to engage in maladaptive behaviors and vice versa.

These findings highlight the importance of promoting **adaptive coping skills** in student populations and addressing maladaptive habits that may compromise mental health and academic performance.

4.4 Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed using academic stress as the dependent variable and adaptive and maladaptive coping as independent variables in order to evaluate the predictive impact of coping techniques on academic stress.

The regression model is statistically significant, indicating that the two coping strategy types explain approximately **29% of the variance** in academic stress levels.

The **beta coefficient for adaptive coping** is negative and significant (β = -0.31, p < .01), confirming that students who use adaptive coping strategies tend to report **lower levels of academic stress**. Conversely, the **beta coefficient for maladaptive coping** is positive and significant (β = 0.38, p < .01), indicating that students who frequently engage in maladaptive strategies are more likely to report **higher levels of stress**.

These results affirm that **coping style is a significant predictor** of stress levels and suggest the need for targeted psychological interventions to encourage adaptive behaviors and reduce maladaptive tendencies in student populations.

Predictor	B	β	t	p-value
Adaptive Coping	-0.36	-0.31	-5.42	< .01
Maladaptive Coping	**+0.44**	**+0.38**	**+6.01**	**< .01**

4.5 One-Sample Statistics

To determine whether students' reported stress and coping levels were statistically above or below average, **one-sample t-tests** were conducted comparing the mean scores against the neutral midpoint of the Likert scales used (i.e., 3.00).

The mean score for academic stress (M = 3.87) was significantly higher than the neutral point, confirming that students in the sample are experiencing aboveaverage levels of stress.

The mean for adaptive coping (M = 3.25) was also significantly above average, indicating that students frequently use constructive strategies to manage their stress. However, the mean for maladaptive coping (M = 2.78) was significantly below the neutral midpoint, suggesting that while such behaviors exist, they are less commonly reported.

These findings imply that although students are facing high stress, most are attempting to manage it using positive strategies, with fewer relying on harmful methods. 4.6 Summary of Results

Table 4. 43 **One-Sample Statistics**

Variable	Mean (M)	SD	t	df	p-value
Academic Stress	3.87	0.72	18.75	299	< .001
Adaptive Coping	3.25	0.65	9.53	299	< .001
Maladaptive Coping	**2.78**	**0.74**	**-4.12**	**299**	**< .001**

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of data collected from university students in Lahore. The key findings can be summarized as follows:

The demographic profile showed a diverse student population in terms of gender, degree level, and residential background.

The academic stress response scale (α = 0.89), as well as the brief COPE scale (α = 0.86), were found to have strong internal consistency, according to the reliability analysis.

Correlation analysis revealed that adaptive coping was associated with lower stress levels, while maladaptive coping was linked to higher stress.

Regression analysis demonstrated that coping strategy types significantly predict academic stress levels, explaining nearly 29% of the variance.

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed using academic stress as the dependent variable and adaptive and maladaptive coping as independent variables in order to evaluate the predictive impact of coping techniques on academic stress.

One-sample t-tests confirmed that students experience higher-than-average stress but also engage regularly in adaptive coping behaviors.

Overall, the results suggest that academic stress is a critical issue among university students, but the presence of effective coping strategies offers a protective buffer. These findings emphasize the need for institutional mental health programs, stress management workshops, and culturally responsive counseling services to support students' academic and emotional well-being.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations 5.1 Discussion

Examining the level of academic stress and coping strategies employed by Lahore University students was the aim of this study. The findings indicate that a significant amount of academic stress is being experienced by students as a result of their academic workload, emotional strain, and physical symptoms associated with their academic responsibilities. Most students reported feeling overworked and emotionally exhausted, and they struggled to concentrate in class or effectively manage their study time.

The results also demonstrate that students employ a range of coping strategies, including adaptive ones (like planning, seeking emotional support, and religious coping) and maladaptive ones (like substance abuse, avoidance, and self-blame). The relationship between stress and coping showed that higher stress levels were linked to more frequent use of coping mechanisms, though not always healthy ones. There is also discussion of personal, social, and environmental factors. Peer competition, family expectations, the university environment, and a lack of institutional support all have a big impact on the stress-coping dynamic. A lack of mental health resources and awareness on college campuses is often indicated by unhealthy coping mechanisms like substance abuse or emotional detachment.

High levels of academic stress were reported by university students, particularly in relation to emotional exhaustion, the volume of schoolwork they had to complete, and trouble focusing or falling asleep.

The frequency of physical symptoms such as headaches, breathing problems, difficulty sleeping, and appetite loss showed the physiological effects of academic stress. Students often experienced emotional symptoms such as anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and frustration, which often led to aggressive behaviors such as yelling at friends or family. The high proportion of students who used adaptive coping strategies like planning, praying, or seeking help showed resilience and self-awareness. However, there have also been reports of unhealthy coping strategies like substance abuse, avoidance, or self-blame, which suggests that formal mental health treatments are necessary.

Many students reported using distractions like sleeping or watching TV to mentally escape stress; these may offer short-term relief but are not long-term fixes.

5.2 Findings

Findings of the study are as follows:

- Correlation analysis revealed that adaptive coping was associated with lower stress levels, while maladaptive coping was linked to higher stress.
- Regression analysis demonstrated that coping strategy types significantly predict academic stress levels, explaining nearly 29% of the variance.
- A multiple linear regression analysis was performed using academic stress as the dependent variable and adaptive and maladaptive coping as independent variables in order to evaluate the predictive impact of coping techniques on academic stress.
- One-sample t-tests confirmed that students experience higher-than-average stress but also engage regularly in adaptive coping behaviors.
- While 30.7% of respondents stated they never experienced this feeling, a significant

percentage (33.3%) claimed to feel overwhelmed to the point of crying "little of the time." However, 19.7% reported feeling this way "some of the time," indicating that they were experiencing moderate levels of stress. The mean score of 2.26 indicates that most respondents thought they occasionally experienced emotional distress as a result of their workload.

- Of those surveyed, 37.7% said they felt emotional "little of the time," while 24.7% said they felt this "some of the time." The mean score of 2.48 suggests that respondents occasionally experienced emotional reactions to their workload, with only 11.3% and 6.7% of respondents, respectively, reporting feeling emotional "most" or "all of the time."
- According to Table 4.8, only 22% of respondents said they never yelled at friends or family, whereas 30% said they did so "little of the time," 23% "some of the time," and 18% "most of the time." A moderate level of emotional outbursts directed at close relationships, most likely as a stress response, is indicated by the mean score of 2.58.
- Six percent of students said they felt emotionally spent all the time, compared to 34.7% who said they felt that way only occasionally. A mean score of 2.38 indicates a moderate level of emotional exhaustion. This suggests a persistent loss of vitality and emotional reserves, suggesting extended stress exposure without adequate recuperation.
- Nearly 23.7% of participants acknowledged feeling lethargic about schoolwork at least "sometimes," whereas 8.7% said they did so constantly. Variability in motivation is reflected in the 2.63 mean and a comparatively high standard deviation. This suggests avoidance and demotivation behaviors that may be related to emotional exhaustion, stress, or burnout.
- The data indicates a moderate degree of classroom distraction among participants, with a mean score of 2.78. Of the respondents, 23% reported being easily distracted in class "little of the time," while 21.7% reported being distracted "some of the time" and "most of the time." Additionally, 11.7% reported being distracted "all the time."
- The average score of 2.79 suggests that many participants' academic functioning was only marginally affected. Of the respondents, 33.7% stated they couldn't study "little of the time," 24.7% said they couldn't study "some of the time," and 17.7% said they couldn't study "most of the time." It's interesting to note that 10.7% said they couldn't study "all of the time."
- According to the study's findings, 29.3% of participants said they had trouble focusing in class "some of the time," followed by 24.3% who said they had trouble "little of the time" and 19.7% who said they had trouble "most of the time." Only 18.7% of respondents said they had no trouble at all. The participants' mean score of 2.74 suggests that they have moderate concentration issues, which are most likely caused by emotional or academic stress.
- According to Table 4.14, 28.7% of respondents said they avoided class "little of the time," compared to 24.3% who said they avoided it "some of the time" and 20.7% who said they avoided it "most of the time." Interestingly, 9.3% admitted to skipping class "all of the time." The mean score of 2.77 suggests that participants have a moderate propensity to skip classes, possibly as a result of stress or emotional strain.
- A significant portion (24%) reported having dyspnea most of the time, which is frequently linked to anxiety or panic, whereas 6.3% reported not having it at all. The mean score of 3.22 indicates physical symptoms associated with stress that are above average.

This implies that some students may need clinical or counseling support because they experience stress on a physiological level.

- 10.7% said they had trouble eating or lost their appetite occasionally, while 32.7% said they did so occasionally. This symptom seems to be common, with a high mean of 3.28.

One powerful sign of stress affecting physical health is appetite suppression. Immune system weakness and nutritional deficiencies are possible long-term consequences.

- Sweaty palms were a constant sign of anxiety for more than 22.3% of respondents, whereas 11.7% said they did not. High levels of anxiety are indicated by the mean score of 3.40, which is among the highest. This research shows that stress affects students physically as well as emotionally.
- Of the students, 10.7% reported never experiencing sleep disturbances, while 24.7% reported experiencing them occasionally, a common sign of stress. The severity of this problem is further supported by a mean of 3.33. Memory, learning, and emotional control are all adversely affected by inadequate sleep. It is a major issue for both academic performance and mental health.
- Over 26% of participants said they had headaches frequently, while 11% said they didn't. The interpretation of stress-induced somatic complaints is supported by the notably high mean of 3.31. Stress is frequently the cause of headaches, which can affect daily functioning and concentration.
- Students' perceptions of stress related to academic workload were high, with a significant portion (24.7%) saying most of the time and 20.3% saying never. Students are having trouble managing their time, assignments, and expectations, as evidenced by their mean score of 3.05. Support structures may need to be reviewed by the educational system.
- A sizable portion (20.3%) acknowledged experiencing worry on a regular basis, whereas 8.3% said they did not. The average of 3.25 indicates that anxiety is a recurring emotional reaction. Grades, worries about a future career, or deadlines could be the source. This emphasizes the necessity of stress-reduction measures.
- More than 18% said mental overload made it hard to think clearly, while 12.3% said it didn't happen often. A high mean of 3.24 indicates diminished problem-solving ability and cognitive disarray. These indicate emotional overload and burnout brought on by too many demands.
- About 21% reported feeling emotionally spent, particularly as a result of their time at university. Severe emotional burnout associated with academic responsibilities is indicated by the mean score of 3.31. This emphasizes how urgently counseling and wellness programs for students are needed.
- Of those surveyed, 26.3% cited work or other activities as their primary source of distraction, while 39.7% cited them to a moderate extent. Only 12.3% said they had never used this coping strategy. Participants employed work or other activities as a moderately common form of distraction, according to the average score of 2.8.
- According to the study's findings, 42.3% of respondents concentrated their efforts to a medium degree on actively resolving their circumstances, while 26.3% of respondents concentrated their efforts heavily on doing so. Only 10.7% claimed to have taken no action. The average score of 2.84 indicates that problem-focused coping was used frequently by the participants.
- Results indicate that 26.7% of respondents used drugs or alcohol heavily to feel better, while 31.3% used them moderately. However, 33% claimed not to have done this at all. The mean score of 2.52 for the participants indicates a moderate reliance on substances as a coping mechanism.
- It was found that 28% of respondents received a lot of emotional support from others, compared to 39.7% who received it to a medium degree. Just 5% said they never sought out emotional support. According to the mean score of 2.91, participants frequently used seeking emotional support from others as a coping mechanism.
- According to table 4.28, 50% of respondents admitted to giving up on trying to solve their problems to a medium degree, while 26.7% did so extensively. Only 11.3% of those

surveyed claimed to have never engaged in this avoidant behavior. The mean score of 2.92 suggests that a considerable percentage of participants felt powerless to control their situation.

- The majority of respondents, 42.3% to a medium extent and 41.7% to a lot, were found to have sought assistance and advice from others. Just 5.3% said they never sought help. The high mean score of 3.20 indicates that participants have a strong propensity to use social support as a primary coping mechanism.
- It was found that only 11.3% of respondents claimed to have never used drugs, 31.7% reported using them regularly, and 45% said they used drugs to cope to a medium degree. The high mean score of 2.97 raises questions and implies that drug use was a significant coping mechanism for many participants, even though the accuracy of this data should be verified.
- According to the findings, 49% of respondents made a medium effort to view their circumstances more positively, while 25.7% of respondents made a significant effort. Only 7% had never used this method of cognitive reframing. The mean score of 2.93 suggested that positive reinterpretation was a commonly employed coping strategy.
- It was found that 27.7% of respondents developed a strategy to cope heavily, whereas 38.3% attempted to do so to a medium degree. Only 15% claimed not to have done this at all. The mean score of 2.79 indicates that the participants took a moderately proactive approach to overcoming their challenges.
- Of the respondents, 26.3% reported looking for something positive in their circumstances frequently, while 39.7% reported looking for something positive to a medium degree (Table 4.33). Only 12.3% had never employed this helpful reframing strategy. The mean score of 2.8 suggests that many participants actively sought out meaning or positivity as a coping strategy.
- Table 4.34 shows that 26.3% of respondents did a lot of distraction activities, such as shopping or watching TV, while 42.3% did so to a medium degree. Just 10.7% said they never used such tactics. The mean score of 2.84 suggests that a common coping strategy was avoidance through distraction or leisure.
- Table 4.35 shows that 33% of respondents had not been expressing their negative emotions at all, while 26.7% did so regularly and 31.3% did so to a medium degree. With an average score of 2.52, participants are moderately likely to express negative emotions as a coping mechanism.
- Table 4.36 shows that 28% of respondents regularly and 39.7% to a medium extent found comfort in their religion or spiritual beliefs. Only 5% had never employed this coping mechanism. The mean score of 2.91 indicates a moderate and frequent use of religious or spiritual beliefs as a coping mechanism by the participants.
- Table 4.37 shows that 50% of respondents reported "learning to live with it" to a medium degree, while 26.7% reported "learning to live with it" extensively. Only 11.3% reported never using this coping mechanism. The majority of participants used gradual situational adaptation as a coping strategy, as indicated by their average score of 2.92.
- A large number of respondents attributed a medium (42.3%) or high (41.7%) portion of the blame for the events to themselves. Only 5.3% claimed not to have done this at all. Participants' high mean score of 3.20 suggests negative coping strategies, emotional distress, and a clear tendency toward self-blame.
- Table 4.39 shows that 31.7% of respondents reported praying or meditating regularly, and 45% reported doing so to a moderate extent. Only 11.3% had never done it. With a mean score of 2.97, the data shows that most participants used prayer or meditation as a common coping strategy.
- Students at universities expressed high levels of academic stress, particularly in relation to emotional exhaustion, the volume of

schoolwork they had to complete, and trouble focusing or falling asleep.

- The frequency of physical symptoms such as headaches, breathing problems, difficulty sleeping, and appetite loss showed the physiological effects of academic stress. Students often experienced emotional symptoms such as anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and frustration, which often led to aggressive behaviors such as yelling at friends or family.
- The high proportion of students who used adaptive coping strategies like planning, praying, or seeking help showed resilience and self-awareness. However, there have also been reports of unhealthy coping strategies like substance abuse, avoidance, or self-blame, which suggests that formal mental health treatments are necessary.
- Many students reported using distractions like sleeping or watching TV to mentally escape stress; these may offer short-term respite but are not long-term fixes.
-

5.3 Conclusion

To sum up, academic stress is a common issue that affects the emotional, mental, and physical well-being of university students in Lahore. While students employ a range of coping strategies to manage stress, not all of them are effective or long-lasting. The findings highlight the pressing need for educational institutions to recognize student stress, integrate mental health awareness programs, and create secure learning environments. Students must strike a balance between the demands of their studies and their emotional well-being in order to succeed and preserve their psychological well-being.

5.4 Recommendations

The study's conclusions lead to the following recommendations:

1. Mental Health Support: Universities should establish stress-relieving programs, mental health workshops, and student counseling services to help students who are having academic difficulties.
2. Academic Flexibility: Teachers should embrace continuous assessments over lengthy exams, offer academic guidance for managing time and workload, and permit deadline flexibility.
3. Peer and Social Support Systems: To strengthen students' emotional coping networks, promote peerled support groups, mentorship programs, and group discussions.
4. Awareness Campaigns: Use lectures, pamphlets, and social media to raise awareness of constructive coping mechanisms.
5. Faculty Training: Teach academic staff how to spot stressed-out students and provide prompt academic and emotional support.

6: Implementation by HEC: For increased level of stress there should be implementation and intervention of policies by HEC at educational level in universities.

5.5 Limitations

Despite the fact that this study offers insightful information, some limitations must be noted:

- Sample Limitation: Because only Lahore university students were included in the sample, results might not apply to students in other parts of Pakistan.
- Self-Report Bias: Self-report questionnaires were used to gather data, which may be biased or exaggerated.
- Cross- sectional design: The cross-sectional design of this study involved the collection of data at a specific moment in time. The way that stress and coping change over time may be better captured by longitudinal research.

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