

## THE PREDICTIVE ROLES OF HOPE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT IN ACADEMIC STRESS

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationships among hope, academic stress, and social support in university students. It first assesses the levels of hope and academic stress and then explores their relationship. Additionally, the study examines how various forms of support—emotional, tangible, informational, and appraisal—affect academic stress and evaluates the predictive power of these factors. Employing a cross-sectional design, university students were selected through stratified random sampling. Measurement tools included the Adult Hope Scale, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale. Data analysis revealed that participants exhibited moderate levels of hope and social support while experiencing moderate academic stress. Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses indicated negligible and statistically non-significant correlations between social support types and academic stress, with minimal impacts from emotional ( $r = -0.04$ ,  $p = .154$ ), tangible ( $r = 0.01$ ,  $p = .325$ ), informational ( $r = -0.02$ ,  $p = .438$ ), and appraisal support ( $r = 0.01$ ,  $p = .476$ ). The regression analysis showed that social support types explained only a small variance in academic stress ( $R^2 = .018$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = -.013$ ), suggesting the influence of other critical factors in stress management. These findings highlight the situational nature of the relationships between hope, social support, and academic stress, underscoring the need for further research to identify effective strategies for supporting students during stressful periods.

*Keywords: Hope, Social Support, Academic Stress*

### INTRODUCTION

Academic stress significantly impacts university students, affecting both their performance and mental health in various profound ways. High levels of pressure are closely linked to health issues, including heightened anxiety, feelings of depression, and a decline in overall wellness (Olivera et al., 2023).

Mental health challenges can impact students' academic performance resulting in poor grades and reduced success. Factors, like adjusting to college life academic requirements, financial

pressures, and balancing work with studies contribute to the struggles that students face (Andrews & Hejdenberg, 2007). Managing day-to-day responsibilities while dealing both work and academic demands has been shown to affect students' ability to learn and their overall well-being. For instance, Carmo et al. (2016) found that the combination of school workload and work commitments often leaves students with time for relaxation and self-care leading to heightened stress levels and negative health consequences. These demands can impair learning functions such

as the ability to focus and recall impacting performance. Additionally, perceived stress is a factor in predicting health outcomes and can have adverse effects on academic success.

Khan and Shamama tus Sabah (2020) found that when students experience high levels of stress their performance tends to decrease, impacting their mental well-being. This demonstrates the importance of implementing stress management strategies and mental health support programs in universities. Research has extensively explored how stress can negatively affect cognitive abilities of students. Excessive stress can impair learning and memory functions which limits students capacity to comprehend and retain information effectively for academic success (Rafidah et al., 2009).

Positive mental health, self-efficacy, and social support moderates the adverse effects of academic stress. According to Pluut et al. (2015) students who have a social support and self-efficacy or confidence in themselves are better equipped to manage stress which lead to increased satisfaction with their studies and improved performance levels. Similar to the findings of Mahdavi et al. (2021) students who are motivated to maintain a healthy lifestyle tend to perform academically demonstrating the significance of supportive environment. The effects of stress on university students is complex and impacts their skills and academic success. Addressing these challenges require support systems that enhance students coping strategies and offer the tools to effectively deal with stress.

### **Hope and Its Role in Goal-Directed Behavior and Overcoming Academic Challenges**

In psychology, hope refers to a process involving goal-oriented thinking. It includes both the striving to achieve (agency) and the planning of ways to attain them (pathways) (Snyder et al., 2002). The Hope theory is a combination of goal conceptualization with the pathways leading to those goals and the drive to achieve them. This cognitive motivational framework enables individuals to visualize their objectives and establish pathways for accomplishment. Students, with levels of hope demonstrate higher levels resilience and perseverance resulting in improved

academic performance. These students excel at identifying and applying strategies to address challenges while staying motivated despite the demands placed on them (Snyder et al. 2002). This dual aspect of hope demonstrates an individual's belief in their ability to finding strategies to reach desired goals and their resolve to use those strategies. In academic settings, hope helps students in setting realistic goals, developing strategies for success and sustaining motivation. (Snyder et al., 2002). Research indicates that higher levels of hope is associated with enhanced performance, improved academic grades, and overall academic success (Gallagher et al., 2017).

### **Social Support and Their Importance in Managing Stress**

Social support is broadly categorized into several types, and each type of support is essential, for managing stress and enhancing mental health. These categories include emotional support, which involves demonstrating empathy, love, trust and care to help individuals feel appreciated and understood thereby reducing stress levels significantly. For instance students who receive support from family members are more capable of dealing with academic demands and are less likely to experience extreme levels stress. Another form of support is known as instrumental support, which involves offering material aid such as financial or practical support.

This kind of support can directly address the challenges individuals face thereby easing their stress levels. Additionally, informational support involves offering advice, suggestions and information that can help individuals deal with their problems effectively. Informational support can empower individuals by giving them the knowledge they need to manage stressors effectively. This kind of support directly address the problems individuals face, thus reducing their levels of stress. Informational support entails providing guidance recommendations and knowledge that can assist individuals in managing their difficulties. Equipping individuals, with the information can empower them to handle stressors efficiently. Lastly, appraisal support that includes feedback and affirmation

aimed at helping individuals evaluate their circumstances and self-worth. This type of support enhances self-esteem and levels of self-efficacy levels which allows individuals to cope with stressors more easily.

In summary, social support serves as a protective factor against the impacts of stress. Individuals are given the tools to handle stress better which helps lower the chances of health issues and promotes well-being (Ozbay et al., 2007). Research indicates that individuals who have support systems tend to have better physical and mental health outcomes compared to those, with limited support. For instance students who feel supported by their peers, family and teachers tend to perform better and experience less stress (Baqtayan, 2011). Hope and social support are concepts in psychology that play roles in achieving goals and managing academic demands. Hope empowers students to set targets, with determination and resilience while social support offers practical, informational and evaluative assistance needed for effective stress management.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to examine the relationships between hope, academic stress, and social support among students. The study first determined the mean levels of hope and academic stress. It also investigated the relationship between hope and academic stress; and how different types of social support (emotional, tangible, informational, and appraisal) predict academic stress among students and determined the overall explanatory power of these predictors.

1. Determine the average levels of hope and academic stress among students.
2. Examine the relationship between levels of hope and academic stress among students.
3. Assess how different categories of social support (emotional, tangible, informational, and appraisal) predict academic stress among students, and evaluate the overall explanatory power of these predictors.

## METHODOLOGY

*Study Design.* A cross-sectional study was conducted to investigate the influence of hope and social support on stress levels and coping strategies during specific times. This research method was selected to analyze the relationship between the variables of interest in this study at a specific point in time, enabling analysis on how hope and social support impact stress and coping among students.

*Participant Inclusion Criteria, Sample Size Calculation, and Sampling Method.* The study involved university students who met requirements the following requirements: They had to be enrolled in a program at a recognized university and fall within the age range of 18 to 25 years; they had to have demonstrate a grasp of the language used in the questionnaire to ensure they could understand and respond accurately. Individuals with known conditions or undergoing therapy were not included in this study to control for confounding variables associated to mental health. Participants were recruited through several methods, including email invitations sent via university mailing lists, utilizing university social media platforms to reach broader audience. The sample consisted of 132 participants, with 75.8% (n=100) being females and 24.2% (n=32) males all falling between the ages of 18 to 23 years age = 19.78, standard deviation = 1.174).

*Scales Used.* The Adult Hope Scale (AHS) created by Snyder and colleagues in 1991 was used to measure the levels of hope in this study. The AHS consists of twelve items that evaluate a person's motivational state. Each item is rated on an 8 point scale, from 1 (to 8 (definitely true). It includes two subscales: Agency, which measures goal directed energy, and Pathways which assesses planning to achieve goals. The internal consistency of the AHS was found to be satisfactory at 0.798 in this study.

To assess depression, anxiety and stress levels in the participants, the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) was utilized. This scale comprises 21 items rated on a 4 point scale ranging from 0 (did not apply to me to 3 (applied to me very much or most of the time). The DASS aims to



evaluate states such as depression, anxiety and stress. In this research the DASS demonstrated consistency, with a Cronbachs alpha value of 0.931 as reported by Lovibond and Lovibond in 1995.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Mitchell & Zimet, 2000) was utilized to assess the respondents' perceived social support. MSPSS comprised of twelve items with seven possible responses (1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree). MSPSS had an internal consistency of 0.930 in the present sample.

*Procedure for Survey Distribution.*

Participants were recruited from various channels such as through university emails, social media platforms and campus. Informed consent was obtained after explaining the research's purpose, participant rights and data confidentiality measures. Detailed information on the study's goals, procedures, potential risks and benefits was shared with participants. It was made clear that participation was voluntary with no repercussions for withdrawing at any time. Surveys were conducted flexibly to accommodate students schedules and preferences using their preferred platform for convenience. Anonymity of responses was maintained through codes instead of personal information, stored securely in password protected digital systems accessible only to authorized team members. The study followed guidelines, for human subject research to meet confidentiality and data protection standards at both national levels.

*Analysis.* In order to investigate the research issues outlined various statistical methods were utilized.

The study examined the association between hope and academic stress, also examined levels of hope influenced students perceptions and experiences of stress. Descriptive statistics were computed to establish averages, deviations and ranges for hope levels and academic stress. Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between hope and academic stress. Additionally a simple linear regression analysis was conducted with stress as the outcome variable and hope as the predictor variable to assess the influence of hope on stress.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**1. Hope and Academic stress**

In this study, Pearson correlation analysis and simple linear regression were used to assess the relationship between hope and stress.

*Table 1*  
*Descriptive Statistics for Hope and Academic Stress*

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Total Hope	71.61	10.78	36	95
Total Stress	74.21	9.34	56	101

As table 1 below shows, the participants report a hope score of 71.61 with a standard deviation of 10.78 indicating a moderate level of hope. The range of hope scores are from 36 to 95. This falls within the range of hope scores suggesting that students generally hold an amount of optimism and anticipation for positive outcomes. This discovery aligns with studies indicating that hope plays a role in predicting various academic achievements such as GPA and academic retention (Marques, Gallagher, & Lopez, 2017). The mean academic stress score was 74.21 with a deviation of 9.34 also suggesting a level of academic stress among students ranging from 56 to 101. These stress levels are consistent with research showing that students experience varying levels of stress due to factors, like personal coping mechanisms and support networks (Ye et al., 2020).

**2. Correlation of Hope and Stress**

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of  $r = .25$  ( $p < .01$ )

Hope, a concept deeply rooted psychology is often linked with positive outcomes such as resilience. However students who possess higher levels hope tend to set ambitious academic goals and have high expectations for themselves. While striving for success is advantageous it can also result in heightened stress as they struggle to meet their goals. A study conducted in 2017 by Marques, Gallagher and Lopez shows that while hope



typically leads to performance, it can also bring about stress and anxiety related to achieving excellence. Supporting this idea, is the research by Chang (1998) who found that students with higher levels of hope also demonstrated better problem solving abilities, but also experienced increased stress when confronted with academic challenges.

It appears that while hope can help students cope better it can also lead to stress as their goals become more ambitious. Additionally a study by Wen et al. (2020) indicated that hope and self-efficacy could potentially lessen the impact of stress. While hope may increase stress levels, it also empowers students with the skills needed to effectively manage stress. Their research revealed that students with higher levels of hope showed resilience in managing stress when they faced greater overall stress (Wen et al., 2020). A moderate positive relationship between hope and academic stress demonstrates how hope influences the setting motivating students to strive for success while providing them with coping strategies that may heighten the pressures associated with pursuing their objectives.

### 3. Hope Predicts Academic Stress

The regression analysis shows that hope played a role in predicting stress levels. The model was able to account for 6.3% of the variation in stress scores. Specifically, with each unit of hope there was a corresponding increase of 0.22 points, in academic stress scores indicating a statistically significant relationship ( $p = .004$ ), as shown in table 2.

**Table 2**  
*Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Stress from Hope*

	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>p</b>
Intercept	58.61	5.32		11.01	<.001
Total Hope	0.22	0.07		2.96	.004

The present study analyzed the relationship between stress and hope using a linear regression. The results showed that the regression model was statistically significant with an F value of 8.78  $p = .004$  explaining 6.3% of the variability in stress ( $R^2 = .063$ ,  $R^2 = .056$ ). The regression coefficient ( $B = 0.22$  SE = 0.07,  $p < .01$ ) indicates that a one unit

increase in hope is associated with a 0.22 increase in stress scores. This suggests that while hope plays a role, in predicting stress it only explains a part of the variability.

The association between hope and academic stress, while not strong, might show how these factors interact. Higher levels of hope may lead to higher levels of aspirations and more ambitious goals which could then lead to increased stress levels as students work hard to achieve their academic goals. A study by Gallagher et al. (2017) showed this dual role of hope and showed that hope was a predictor of academic success, but also noted demands in maintaining high expectations (Gallagher, Marques, & Lopez, 2017)

In a study conducted in 1998 by Chang it was found that students who possess a sense of hope tend to employ problem solving techniques although they may also encounter heightened stress when faced with challenging academic situations. This indicates that while hope can improve coping mechanisms it can also contribute to increased stress levels as students strive towards their goals. Recent research by Wen and his team in 2020 has demonstrated that hope plays a role in alleviating the impact of stress. This implies that individuals with levels of hope not do not experience elevated stress levels but also exhibit superior coping strategies. The intermediary role of hope highlights its significance, in fostering resilience and managing the stresses associated with expectations.

As the regression model only accounts for part of the variation in academic stress, it demonstrates that there are several factors at play. It is then important that interventions cover a range of areas such as time management strategies, mental health promotion and social support systems (Darabi, Macaskill, & Reidy, 2017). This study leads to the need for research to examine other variables contributing to academic stress. Gungor, (2019) study shows how hope is related to stress in students. Although a significant association is shown, i.e. higher hope and slightly increased stress levels, this relationship is weak and shows that many other factors influence academic stress. In order to effectively deal with stress, it is essential to take into account all aspects affecting the well-being of students. Future studies could examine factors such as resilience, self-



efficacy, social support, and academic workload and how these contribute to hope and stress.

This research indicates that while hope is generally viewed as a positive psychological resource in educational environments, increased levels of hope might be linked to slightly elevated stress levels possibly due to heightened ambition and increased goal commitment. While the relationship between hope and heightened academic stress is evident, this also equips students with coping strategies. This complex dynamic demonstrates the significance of employing wholistic approach in supporting students by fostering hope while addressing the stress related to high academic goals.

#### 4. Level of Perceived Social Support

**Table 3**  
*Descriptive Statistics for Social Support and Academic Stress*

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Emotional Support	16.08	4.39	3	21
Tangible Support	15.80	4.19	3	21
Informational Support	14.72	4.05	3	21
Appraisal Support	15.80	3.99	3	21
Academic Stress	74.21	9.34	56	101

Research has consistently demonstrated that having a support network can help lessen stress levels. Emotional support, like understanding, kindness, and reliability has been shown to ease stress by fostering a sense of connection and emotional security (Cohen & Wills 1985). Additionally, receiving assistance such as services or financial aid can reduce stress by addressing directly practical needs. For instance, students who receive help with homework or financial support may find their stress levels decrease as their immediate practical worries are taken care of (Thoits, 2011).

Informational support, which entails offering advice, guidance and information can empower students to manage stressors effectively by enhancing their problem solving abilities and decision making skills (House, 1981). Lastly appraisal support. Aiding individuals in evaluating their thoughts and emotions through feedback can enhance self-esteem and decrease stress by

offering a clearer perspective on challenges (Cutrona & Russell 1990). This study then affirms that different forms of support are related to different levels of stress among students. This results aligns with what previous studies have shown highlighting the significance of creating a nurturing atmosphere to successfully handle pressure.

#### 5. Relationship between Social Support and Stress

**Table 4**  
*Correlation between Types of Social Support and Academic Stress*

Type of Support	R	p-value
Emotional Support	-.04	Non-significant
Tangible Support	.01	Non-significant
Informational Support	-.02	Non-significant
Appraisal Support	.01	Non-significant

Pearsons correlation analysis was used to explore the relationship between types of support and academic stress. The findings revealed no significant correlations. Specifically, emotional support showed a correlation with academic stress ( $r = .04$ ) tangible support had almost no correlation ( $r = .01$ ) informational support exhibited a slight negative correlation ( $r = .02$ ) and appraisal support displayed a minimal positive correlation ( $r = .01$ ). These results imply that the perceived social support in different forms does not have an impact on the levels of academic stress, among the participants.

This study's findings show that the relationships found that while social support is often considered as an essential factor in stress management, its direct impact on academic stress within this sample may be limited. Past studies have shown how social support can help reduce stress and enhance well-being by offering aid, practical help and useful guidance (Cohen & Wills 1985). However, the current findings align with some studies that have reported mixed or context-dependent effects of social support on academic stress.

Several factors could account for these findings: The impact of social support might depend



on the quality and source of support. Support from friends, family or teachers could have effects depending on how trustworthy and understanding they are perceived to be. Furthermore the kinds of challenges students encounter and their individual coping strategies could influence how social support affect the level of stress. Is (Thoits, 2011).

This study shows nonsignificant correlations between types social support and academic stress indicating that the perceived social support may not directly influence levels of academic stress. It is recommended for future studies to also examine the dynamics among sources of support and personal coping mechanisms to gain a better insight into how social support can effectively alleviate academic stress.

### 6. Effect of Social Support on Stress

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the combined and individual effects of these types of social support on academic stress.

The model was found to be weak, explaining only about 1.8% of the variance in academic stress ( $R^2 = .018$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = -.013$ ). None of the types of social support significantly predicted academic stress, with p-values well above the conventional threshold for statistical significance. The regression coefficients were as follows: emotional support ( $B = -.65$ ,  $p = .154$ ), tangible support ( $B = .56$ ,  $p = .325$ ), informational support ( $B = -.27$ ,  $p = .438$ ), and appraisal support ( $B = .34$ ,  $p = .476$ ).

**Table 5**  
*Multiple Regression Analysis of Types of Social Support on Academic Stress*

Predictor Variable	B	p
Emotional Support	-0.65	.154
Tangible Support	0.56	.325
Informational Support	-0.27	.438
Appraisal Support	0.34	.476

*Model Summary:*  
 $R^2 = .018$   $R^2 = .018$   $R^2 = .018$   
 Adjusted  $R^2 = -.013$   $R^2 = -.013$   $R^2 = -.013$

The results reveal that, although students do receive support, it does not seem to alleviate academic stress in this group significantly. This lack of correlation suggests that other significant factors may be influencing academic stress levels, highlighting the need for further exploration into methods for managing stress and building resilience in educational environments.

The findings indicate that, despite receiving various forms of support, this particular sample of students does not experience a notable reduction in academic stress. This absence of a connection implies that other factors may play a critical role in determining stress levels. This points to the necessity of investigating strategies to manage stress and foster resilience within educational settings. Previous research has shown that social support can help mitigate stress in certain situations (Cohen & Wills, 1985), and these findings align with studies that emphasize the context-specific nature of this relationship (Thoits, 2011). One potential explanation for these results is that the quality and relevance of the support received differ; support from friends, family, or teachers could have varying effects based on their perceived reliability and understanding. Additionally, individual coping strategies and the nature of the stressors faced could also influence the effectiveness of social support (House, 1981).

### CONCLUSION

This research sheds light on the connections between hope, social support, and academic stress among college students. The findings suggest that hope is a predictor of stress levels, while the influence of social support is more intricate and requires further investigation. By implementing initiatives that foster hope, such as developing promotional programs and employing standardized stress assessments, universities can better support students in managing stress. Future research utilizing longitudinal studies and objective measurements could further expand on the results of this study. Based on these findings, universities can adopt the recommended strategies to cultivate

supportive learning environments that enhance student well-being and academic success.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, these practical recommendations put forward to support university students in managing academic stress;

Hope Enhancement Programs may be designed to nurture and maintain students hope by offering activities, like goal setting sessions, resilience training and motivational exercises. These programs empower students to set goals and develop strategies to overcome challenges ultimately boosting their overall sense of hope. Quality Social Support Initiatives may be established to focus on enhancing the quality and relevance of support given to students. Strategies involve training faculty and staff to provide emotional and academic support establishing peer mentoring programs and forming support groups. These efforts aim to offer support that can effectively reduce stress. Objective Stress Assessment may be constructed which could incorporate stress measures like cortisol levels and heart rate monitoring into student health services. These assessments complement self-reported data to give a view of student stress levels. The goal is to tailor interventions, in addressing specific stressors faced by students. By implementing these suggestions universities can cultivate a learning environment that promotes student well-being and achievement.

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