



## The Contexts of Academic Pressure: Narrative Review

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### Abstract

Academic pressure is the pressure experienced by individuals related to academics. There are many contexts of academic pressure resulting from previous studies. The purpose of this research is to comprehensively explore and analyze the causes and impacts of academic pressure in many contexts. This research is important to do because currently there are increasing demands from an academic that must be understood by stakeholders to mitigate the emergence of negative impacts. The researcher conducted an article search using the keyword "academic pressure". Apart from keywords, researchers limit articles to English only. The article search was conducted on June 21 2023, and is limited to the year of publication between 2012 and 2023. The articles are articles sourced from the Scopus and Google Scholar databases. Researcher used narrative synthesis to summarize the evidence. The results of the review show that academic pressure has two major contexts, namely, students and lecturers. The antecedents and consequences of academic pressure on students and lecturers have also been discussed. A review of academic pressure can be a valuable contribution to stakeholders in determining and providing academic targets for students and lecturers. In addition, the results of this review of academic pressure can be a trigger for other researchers to study academic pressure in more depth related to the dimensions of academic pressure.

**Keywords:** *Academic Pressure; Lecturer; Student; Antecedents; Consequences*

### INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is a student's perception of a threat to himself in the learning process which results in various unwanted behaviors. Places of education such as schools and colleges are stressful places for students (Ji *et al.*, 2021). Many things make students feel stressed in academic terms, namely changes in the educational environment, academic demands, competition with other students, the transition to independence, failure, and academic stress is currently the main cause of stress in students (Yaribeygi *et al.*, 2017). Around 20% of students worldwide said that they not under academic pressure (Yuhuan *et al.*, 2022a). That's a very small number, and the data shows that students have reached a level of academic stress that requires sufficient investigation. Parents' demands, school demands, and the existence of competition in achievement among students are also important factors that become pressure in academic terms for students. Academic stress can make people feel academically depressed.

Currently, studies on academic pressure examine more academic pressure on students. This is because there are many academic demands placed on students from their teachers, parents, and schools (Quach *et al.*, 2015; Kleinkorres, Stang-Rabrig and McElvany, 2022; Chen *et al.*, 2023). However, academic pressure does not only occur on students but also on lecturers. This refers to the definition of academic pressure, which until now is still vague about the definition. Tian and Lu (2017) explained that academic pressure is pressure in an academic context which includes teaching and research. Not much previous research has discussed the academic pressure faced by lecturers.

Academic pressure on lecturers is related to research demands in terms of quality and quantity, teaching demands, as well as downstream knowledge that can be disseminated to the

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wider community so that the knowledge possessed can have a positive impact on society. These three obligations are the "tri dharma" of higher education that must be achieved by lecturers. In addition, due to "tri dharma", academic pressure experienced by lecturers is influenced by demands from universities, which currently almost all universities around the world have the goal of becoming world universities. Higher education has led to globalization, and competition is the existence of higher education rankings at the national and even world level. There are many existing rankings, one of which is a World-Class University (WCU). Almost every country encourages tertiary institutions to be able to achieve WCU rankings (Li and Xue, 2021; Do and Mai, 2022; Fernandes, Shukla and Fardoun, 2022; Guba, 2022). Many factors ultimately become the focus for tertiary institutions to improve their performance in accordance with the WCU assessment indicators. Apart from ranking, making universities into superior institutions is the basis for encouraging universities to change towards globalization. One of the leading indicators is the high quality of research produced by universities (Fauzi, 2021). Higher education is competing to be better by producing quality research through its lecturers. Each lecturer has a performance target to be able to produce works by developing authorship not only domestically but also establishing authorship internationally (Glänzel and Schubert, 2001). Of course, this is a pressure for a lecturer. This is due to higher demands on lecturers related to the amount of research that must be carried out (Tian and Lu, 2017).

There are many contexts in the study of pressure in an academic topic. Based on that background, this study will aim to explore and comprehensively analyze the causes and effects of academic pressure in many contexts. The novelty of this narrative review is there is a difference from the previous narrative review. Steare *et al.* (2023) have compiled a narrative review regarding the impact of academic pressure experienced by adolescents in the context of mental health problems. Currently, there is no narrative review that examines the context of academic pressure. In addition, the results of this study can be used as a basis for conducting more in-depth research through bibliometrics to find new things related to academic pressure.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Academic pressure is the pressure and target given by tertiary institutions to lecturers to reach a certain level in the realm of research (Tian and Lu, 2017). Lecturers feel stressed, feel that higher education management is unfair to lecturers, sacrifice time with family, and have to sacrifice time off just to finish their work for research and teaching. Another definition of academic pressure is the academic demands placed on students by their teachers, parents, and schools that make them feel pressured (Quach *et al.*, 2015; Kleinkorres, Stang-Rabrig and McElvany, 2022; Chen *et al.*, 2023).

In a different context, academic pressure can be interpreted as a source of stress for school students (Lal and Rohtak, 2014). A coping strategy, social support, parenting experiences, and academic-related stress experienced by school students need to be implemented to prevent academic pressure from occurring. While the sources that cause academic stress are fear of missing out on courses, motivation to study, time pressure, financial worries, and concerns about the academic abilities of students, and worries over grades.

Stress does not always have a negative impact but can also have a positive impact. The factor that differentiates the consequences of stress in everyone is the existence of different coping strategies for everyone. In general, coping strategies are cognitive or behavioral efforts to manage stressors (Lazarus and Folkman, 2016). Person and Frazier (2023) explain that the right coping strategy, by controlling the understanding that is owned, the thought process, and controlling the actions that appear properly will be able to translate pressure into a threat. Instead, the pressure is interpreted as a condition that must be resolved properly. If drawn in the context of academic

pressure, not all stressors related to academics will give rise to academic pressure.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is a narrative review of the causes and consequences of academic pressure in many contexts. The manuscript is divided into two main topics so that the keywords used focus on these two things. This narrative review does not use a systematic approach as in the systematic literature review (SLR). However, to filter this article, the researcher conducted a systematic search using the keyword "academic pressure". In addition to keywords, researchers limit articles only in English. Article searches were conducted on July 21, 2023, and are limited to publication years between 2012 and 2023. The articles used are articles sourced from the Scopus and Google Scholar databases (top 100 rankings).

The results of the search found ten articles that matched. Based on the journal article, the researcher carried out two phases of data collection techniques, including filtering titles to abstracts and, removing irrelevant publications and reading the full text of identification of studies that met the eligibility criteria (Frandsen, Sørensen and Anne, 2021). Researchers perform data extraction by entering data according to the above categories in the form of a table (appendix). The researcher used narrative synthesis to summarize the evidence.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Academic Pressure on Student**

#### *Antecedent of Academic Pressure on Student*

##### 1. Parental Academic Pressure

The factors that affect academic pressure can be classified into 3. The first is the influence of parenting styles on children's academics (Lee, Cho and Lee, 2019). Very big expectations from parents for the success of children will trigger pressure on children (Strodl, Deb and Sun, 2015). Parents will tend to impose their wishes regarding academic achievement on their children. Parents set academic targets without thinking comprehensively about the development and potential of their children. The role of parents to be able to encourage and help children to develop according to their potential is degraded by these academic targets. This condition is called parental academic pressure. Parenting styles that place too much academic emphasis on children will also result in high academic pressure.

##### 2. School Institution

Schools have many factors that affect students' academic pressure. High curriculum requirements in schools with good quality education (Fahey, 2012). The higher the quality of the school institution, the higher the academic pressure that exists on students through their curriculum. In addition, the existence of teacher pressure is a separate pressure for students. Teachers with a conventional approach are able to create higher academic pressure on students (Conner, Miles and Pope, 2014). This is because what is done by the teacher is an effort that is only oriented towards student academic achievement without paying attention to the psychology and abilities of students. However, potential-oriented teachers will make students develop more comfort and well-being.

##### 3. Environment

Slightly different between elementary school students and students who have reached their late teens. Friendship in late teens can influence their academic pressure. Students will feel competitive academically if they have worse achievements than others. Conversely, when students have an unsupportive environment related to achievement and academics, they will feel safe and

will not bring up a competition (Lal and Rohtak, 2014). In accordance with Erikson's theory of developmental stages, peers are attachment figures for individuals in the late adolescent stage (Clasen and Brown, 1985). There is a shift in the figure that is used as a role model, namely from the figure of a parent shifting to a role model for peers.

#### *Consequence of Academic Pressure on Student*

##### 1. Psychological Factors

Academic pressure is a very important topic to be further developed and researched. This is because the academic pressure experienced by students will have a negative influence on many factors. Previous studies have shown that academic pressure can have an impact on students' psychology (Lee *et al.*, 2021; Lu, Nie and Sousa-Poza, 2021; Willis *et al.*, 2021; Jiang *et al.*, 2022; McLean, Gaul and Penco, 2022; Ramgoolam-Atchiamith *et al.*, 2022; Wu, Ma and Luo, 2022; Brown *et al.*, 2023). The results of previous research indicate that when students experience academic pressure, individual energy will be used up enormously, which can result in a decrease in their learning efficiency, they are depressed, low psychological well-being, low mental health, anxiety, fear, and other adverse psychological reactions. This is because individual psychological reactions can be influenced by their thinking processes. Individuals who think that academic demands are a burden and a threat will bring up negative psychological.

##### 2. Parent-Child Conflict

Another impact of academic pressure on students is the emergence of parent-child conflicts (Jiang *et al.*, 2022). Parental academic pressure given by parents to their children will put students under pressure so that students with low awareness and understanding will fight against their parents. This is what causes conflict between parents and children. The existence of resistance from children to their parents is a form of defense mechanism that children have to avoid pressure that is interpreted as a threat to children (Ambhore and Vishnu Bhutekar, 2022). This is because, basically human behavior appears to avoid a threat.

##### 3. Adolescents' Problem Behavior

Academic pressure on students will also have an impact where students will bring up problematic behavior as a student (Jiang *et al.*, 2022). Freud's personality theory explains that adolescents who are under pressure will perform a displacement mechanism by generating problematic behavior (Twenge, 2020). In addition to carrying out problematic behavior, they will also feel emotional exhaustion and self-regulatory fatigue (Lee, Cho and Lee, 2019).

##### 4. Hatred Academic

Hatred academics are negative emotions in a difficult and competitive academic context (Lee *et al.*, 2020). Hatred academics is a dimension of academic burnout. Lee *et al.*, (2022) show that apart from being related to changes in individual student characteristics, academic pressure also has an impact on academic results. Students with high academic pressure will avoid academic matters. In addition, the pressure of academic achievement from teachers can affect the level of academic hatred in students. However, if there is support for teacher autonomy, it can reduce the level of academic hatred in students.

#### *Mediator of Academic Pressure in Student*

##### 1. Self-Control

Self-control is the regulation of thoughts, feelings, and actions that are carried out on one's

own accord when the goals that have been valued so far conflict with more satisfying momentary goals. (Duckworth *et al.*, 2019). In addition, self-control is a mental process that is carried out to overcome, inhibit, or change impulses, thoughts, emotions, and behavior to comply with social norms and global goals that are personally accepted (Wright and Masten, 2015). Self-regulation comes from limited internal resources so that one's ability to control oneself is also limited (Choo and Prihadi, 2019). Self-control is also needed in the context of academic achievement (Dewey, 1997). Academic pressure can be reduced or even eliminated if individuals have good self-control so that academic achievement can be achieved well.

## 2. Social Support

Social support is defined as a concept that has many dimensions. It refers to the social and psychological support that individuals receive or feels that comes from friends, family, and community (Lourel *et al.*, 2013; Awang, Kutty and Ahmad, 2014; McLean, Gaul and Penco, 2022). Social support as support that is capable of enhancing an individual's psychological drive and making emotional, physiological, and cognitive contributions (Yuhuan *et al.*, 2022b). That support can provide energy in developing a person's physical and mental. Social support can increase individual intrinsic motivation to do better things (Beri and Kumar, 2018). In addition, social support has a positive impact on a person's mental health and well-being, which can directly change psychological processes through affective, cognitive, and psychomotor (McLean, Gaul and Penco, 2022). Social support is associated with positive outcomes for students in the context of well-being and academic achievement.

## 3. Resilience

The high academic pressure experienced by students is meaningless if they have good resilience. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity and adapt to circumstances and demands effectively to overcome obstacles, contests, difficulties, and burdens (Martin and Marsh, 2006). Individuals who have high resilience can adjust to conditions that are unpleasant or uncomfortable for them. They will reshape perspectives and patterns of thinking, resilience is able to make a person rise again by paying attention to strengths and opportunities, not weaknesses and weaknesses (Russ, Lonne and Darlington, 2009; Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013; Harrison, 2013; Troy *et al.*, 2023). Resilience is the result of coping processes that are influenced by individual and environmental conditions. Resilience as an important part of the conceptual bridge between coping and development (Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013). When someone gets a pressure condition, the individual will feel threatened. These conditions will force individuals to carry out coping strategies that are controlled by their unconscious, which will produce a degree of resilience. Individuals will easily bounce back when they can quickly change from the point of view of the conditions they face. Conversely, individuals will continue to be under pressure if their ability to rise is low

### **Academic Pressure on Lecturer**

#### *Antecedent of Academic Pressure on Lecturer*

Slightly different from the antecedents of academic pressure on students, previous research did not explain much about academic pressure on lecturers. Several studies explain that there are several factors that influence the academic pressure of a lecturer at a university.

#### 1. Academic Competition

The findings show that higher education and lecturers are influenced by external pressures such as government regulations, expectations of professional norms and collegiality of the

academic community as academic pressure, and the need to comply with international standards (Grossi, Dobija and Strzelczyk, 2020). Lecturers in an organizational context have conditions that are between lecturers as individuals and part of an institution. The institutional logic and pressures associated with the field of higher education and the organizational context shape the use of university performance measurement practices and produce a variety of solutions. This will have an impact on how a lecturer must appear related to the research being carried out.

## 2. Publication Pressure

Lecturers at tertiary institutions feel pressure in carrying out publications that continue to grow to achieve better quality where the goal is to meet world university ranking indicators. Lecturers at universities with world-class rankings will be under pressure to be able to publish articles on an international scale. The pressure is not only on quantity but also on quality. The results of research that has been conducted by Tian and Lu, (2017) show that each lecturer has different interests related to the characteristics of a lecturer's duties. For lecturers who are only interested in teaching, the obligation to publish articles is a pressure. On the other hand, for lecturers who have the passion to continue researching, publication is a fun job and does not include academic pressure for them.

## 3. Career

One indicator of a lecturer's career success depends on the number of publications produced. Pressure to publish poses additional challenges for researchers (Grossi, Dobija and Strzelczyk, 2020). Also another factor is that publishing in journals with a certain reputation requires a lot of time and money so authors feel that their careers are hindered when the review panel admits the publisher's lack of credibility (Kearney *et al.*, 2015). Various ways of authorship are adopted by academics to achieve performance targets, one of which is by adding writers in the hope of getting mutual benefits or as a result of pressure placed by more senior staff on junior staff (Tung and McKercher, 2017). This shows how the pressure that must be received by lecturers as researchers in achieving their careers.

### *Consequence of Academic Pressure on Lecturer*

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#### 1. Ethics Violation

Research ethics must be carried out to maintain the validity and reliability of published articles (Singhal and Kalra, 2021). This is important because published articles are used as a basis for further research. In addition, the research results are believed to be scientific findings that can be trusted because they have passed a rigorous methodology. Academic pressure experienced by lecturers can make them commit plagiarism (Tian and Lu, 2017). Plagiarism is the use of another author's previously published work in a manuscript without approval, credit, or acknowledgment. This condition is a form of error in scientific studies that often occurs either intentionally or not (Ernstrom, 1985). Apart from plagiarism, a violation that is often committed by lecturers when under publication pressure is data fabrication (Tijdink, Verbeke and Smulders, 2014). Violations of research ethics refer to publications that report results and draw conclusions from data that are not produced by research which is called fabrication. In addition, violations of research ethics can also be defined as falsifying data (Ernstrom, 1985).

## 2. Well-Being

The research results show that the well-being of faculty members is a serious concern in academia (Sabagh *et al.*, 2022). In this case, the well-being of lecturers as employees means health of physical, psychological, and emotional. Well-being divided into two components, namely well-being in a general context and work-focused well-being. Well-being in the work context is defined as the feeling of well-being experienced by individuals in relation to the jobs they face. Warr (1999, 2007) also describes three opposite dimensions, namely displeasure or pleasure, anxiety or comfort, and depression and enthusiasm. Sabagh *et al.*, (2022) explained the results of his research that job demands, work-life conflict, and academic pressure can positively predict employee frustration. Conversely, academic support as a source of employment was negatively predicted to predict frustration among faculty members. In addition, academic pressure is able to influence welfare through resilience as a mediator (Ramgoolam-Atchiamith *et al.*, 2022).

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the narrative review show that academic pressure occurs in more than one context. Academic pressure on students can be influenced by parental academic pressure, teachers academic pressure, curriculum, school pressure, and also peer factors. While academic pressure on students has quite a lot of impact including academic achievement, self-regulatory fatigue, resilience, student welfare, academic hatred, adolescents' problem behavior, emotional exhaustion, parent-children conflict, and self-control.

A different context on academic pressure occurs in lecturers. However, the study of academic pressure for lecturers is still very limited. Academic pressure for lecturers is influenced by academic competition, publication pressure, institutional pressure, and public pressure. The impact of academic pressure on lecturers can encourage lecturers to commit plagiarism, violation of publication ethics, and the welfare of lecturers.

This narrative review show that academic pressure that occurs on both students and lecturers has a negative impact. this shows that academic pressure occurs on students and lecturers through the same process, namely how individuals get pressure and then how to interpret the pressure they face. The level of meaning of academic pressure depends on the coping strategy used.

## LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

The author's suggestion for further research related to the topic of academic pressure is to carry out more in-depth research related to academic pressure on lecturers by using a systematic literature review with research mapping using bibliometrics to produce research that is more rigor and can find research gaps that have not been filled related to academic pressure for lecturers. In addition, it is necessary to carry out more comprehensive research on the more comprehensive conditions of academic pressure, not only the negative impacts but also the positive impacts that can be explored to provide a more complete overview of the concept of academic pressure.

The weakness of this study is that it does not use a systematic methodology in selecting reviewed articles, making it difficult to duplicate research by future researchers. Narrative literature reviews are arranged based on the author's line of thought with the evidence of the articles that have been analyzed. This has the potential to create subjective biases according to what researchers find interesting or controversial. However, in this writing, the researcher has built an objective review of the reviews that were prepared.

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## APPENDIX

Table 1. Article Source

Author	Title	Method	Findings
Ruben Kleinkorres, Justine Stang-Rabrig, Nele McElvany	Comparing parental and school pressure in terms of their relations with students' well-being (2023)	Quantitative	Parental and school pressure are negatively related to several facets of well-being.
Minyoung lee, mi kyoung lee, huk yaung, taerim lee, sang min lee	Academic Hatred: Focusing on the influence of supportive classroom climate (2022)	Quantitative	Teachers' academic pressure, autonomy support, and peer support on academic hatred at both the individual and classroom levels have effect to academic hatred significantly.
Anusha Ramgoolan, Aila Khan, Cristina Rodrigues, Karina Michelle Wardle	Stress during Work placement-examining positive outcomes for Hospitality Students in a work-integrated learning program (2021)	Quantitative	Academic pressure is the most common stressor identified by hospitality students. This was followed by stress caused by time pressure. Model testing reveals that experiencing career development concerns has a statistically significant association with resilience. Moreover, there is a strong link between resilience and well-being.
Zhang Yuhan, Zheng Pengyue, Chen Dong, Niu Qichao, Pang Dong, Song Anqi, Jiang Hongbo, Di Zhixin	The association between academic stress, social support, and self-regulatory fatigue among nursing students: a cross-sectional study based on a structural equation modelling approach (2022)	Quantitative	Academic stress was correlated with social support and self-regulatory fatigue.
Xian Wu, Xin Ma, Xingkai Luo	Can less be more? Effects of study load on science achievement among Chinese eighth-grade students (2022)	Quantitative	Student, teacher, and school characteristics indicated statistically significant absolute effects on science achievement.
Giuseppe Grossia, Dorota Dobijac, Wojciech Stzelczyk	The Impact of competing institutional pressures and logics on the use of performance measurement in hybrid universities (2019)	Qualitative	Institutional pressure and logic related to the higher education field and organizational context shape the use of universities' performance measurement practices and result in diverse solutions.
Haiyang Lu, Peng Nie, Alfonso Sousa-	The effect of parental educational expectations on adolescent subjective well-	Quantitative	PEE and adolescent SWB have a positive relationship. In addition, PEE relationship

<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Poza	being and the moderating role of perceived academic pressure: longitudinal evidence for China (2020)		is negatively moderated by adolescent-perceived academic pressure, indicating that academic pressure is likely to attenuate the beneficial impact of PEE on adolescent SWB.
Mei Tian & Genshu Lu	What price the building of world-class universities? Academic pressure faced by young lecturers at a research-centered University in China (2017)	Qualitative	Academic pressure has consequences, namely feelings of insecurity, uncertainty, and anxiety.
Alison Willis, Peter Grainger, Stephanie Menzies, Rachel Dwyer, Sue Simon, Catherine Thiele	The role of teachers in mitigating student stress to progress learning (2021)	Qualitative	Creating space, finding margin, mitigating, and reducing pressures and stresses while upholding academic rigor are the salient capabilities described by teachers in this study for simultaneously managing student well-being concerns and academic performance.
Joeri K. Tijdink, Reinout Verbeke, and Yvo M. Smulders	Publication Pressure and Scientific Misconduct in Medical Scientists (2014)	Quantitative	Publication pressure was strongly and significantly associated with a composite scientific misconduct severity score.