

The Role of Perceived Parental Pressure and Academic Anxiety in Predicting Academic Achievement Among Higher Secondary Students

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Abstract: Perceived parental pressure is a key psychological and environmental factor influencing students' academic performance. Although academic anxiety has been widely studied as a factor hindering academic achievement, the combined predictive effects of perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety on achievement have remained unexplored. The study investigated the combined effect of perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety in predicting academic achievement among higher secondary school students. Two hundred students were selected using simple random sampling from some higher secondary schools in Imphal West, Manipur. Two standardized measurement tools were used to collect data: the Perceived Parental Academic Pressure Scale (Kaynak et al., 2023) and the Academic Anxiety Scale (Sharma & Shakir, 2019). Academic achievement was measured using the percentage of marks obtained by students in the Class X final examination. The data were analyzed using SPSS. Correlation analysis showed that perceived parental pressure was positively correlated with academic anxiety and negatively correlated with academic achievement. In addition, academic anxiety was negatively correlated with academic achievement. Regression analysis showed that academic anxiety was a significant predictor of academic achievement, while perceived parental pressure did not significantly predict academic achievement when academic anxiety was included in the model. The findings highlight that excessive parental pressure increases academic anxiety, which in turn has a negative impact on academic performance. It is recommended that intervention programs be implemented to manage academic anxiety, educate parents, and foster balanced academic environments in order to enhance student well-being and academic performance.

Keywords: Perceived parental pressure, Academic anxiety, Academic achievement, Higher Secondary Students

1. Introduction:

Academic excellence is influenced by a complex interaction of individual, institutional, and family-related factors (Nagpal & Sinha, 2016). As adolescents transition through higher secondary education, rising academic expectations can significantly affect their psychological well-being and academic performance. Among the various factors affecting this stage, the role of parents stands out as both foundational and potentially stress-inducing (Nagpal & Sinha, 2016). Parental roles as caregivers and socializing agents significantly influence children's academic aspirations, motivation, and behaviour (Xu et al., 2022).

Parental involvement is strongly associated with positive outcomes, such as increased motivation, more substantial involvement in academic activities, and improved academic performance. The degree and type of involvement, however, may be quite different. Positive and supportive parent involvement frequently enhances students' resilience and motivation; however, excessive or controlling expectations can also be problematic. When students believe their value is tied to fulfilling their parents' academic expectations, they may feel perceived parental pressure, defined by internalized anxiety and fear of academic failure (Nagpal & Sinha, 2016). Although often well-intentioned, such pressure can intensify academic stress and ultimately hinder academic success (Jamwal, 2023).

Academic anxiety refers to worry, nervousness, or fear relating to academic tasks such as exams, assignments, and performance levels that may significantly impair a student's performance in terms of concentrating, memorizing, and academically performing (Putwain, 2007, BSU Academic Anxiety Resource Center, 2023). Several factors may contribute to an increase in its severity. These include parental pressure, highly competitive academic settings, and socio-economic conditions. This form of anxiety negatively affects students by lowering their academic performance and making it harder for them to adjust to the school environment (Putwain, 2007). A moderate level of anxiety is beneficial since it will motivate students to perform better. However, excessive anxiety can hinder academic performance and decrease learning efficiency (Nasir & Zaman, 2019; Nihayah et al., 2021).

Cultural norms, gender expectations, and individual coping skills are among the factors that influence the association between perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety (Maity, 2025). In cultures where academic success is highly valued, adolescents are more likely to experience stress, much of which arises from parental demands (Xu et al., 2024). These pressures may come from societal standards, peer competition, or parents' expectations, through excessive grade demands, continuous academic monitoring, or disapproval (Jamwal, 2023). Prolonged academic stress can lead to psychological and physical health issues, such as depression and anxiety, and can also lead to a decline in academic performance due to mental exhaustion (Pascoe, Hetrick, & Parker, 2020; Misra & McKean, 2000). Nevertheless, not all forms of parental pressure result in adverse outcomes. Some studies have suggested that moderate levels of parental pressure may motivate and enhance their academic performance (Ma, 2023). This emphasizes the vital need to understand the mediating factors, such as resilience and coping strategies.

Academic achievement, often considered a vital measure of educational success, reflects a person's intellectual abilities, coping skills, and resilience. Both academic anxiety and parental involvement play a role in shaping this outcome. Positive parental engagement helps create a supportive learning environment that encourages students' motivation and persistence. However, excessive parental control can cause students to feel less motivated, become mentally exhausted, and, as a result, perform poorly in their studies. When accompanied by emotional support and the promotion of autonomy, parental expectations may contribute positively to

student achievement (Jamwal, 2023; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Students facing unrealistic or excessive parental expectations may experience more psychological pressure, less intrinsic motivation, and a decline in academic performance (Subramani & Venkatachalam, 2019). Although academic pressure may enhance student motivation and performance, excessive pressure often results in poorer academic outcomes (Ma, 2023).

In this context, the higher secondary level is a decisive phase with important long-term implications for students' academic and career success. In culturally influenced settings where parental involvement is deeply rooted, understanding the complex impact of perceived parental pressure is important for promoting students' emotional and academic development. Although many studies have examined perceived parental pressure, academic anxiety, and academic achievement individually, the combined predictive effects of perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety on academic achievement have remained unexplored. This study addresses the identified research gap by investigating the combined influence of perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety in predicting academic achievement among higher secondary students. The findings will provide valuable implications for educators, parents, counsellors, and policymakers in developing academic environments that promote academic success and mental well-being.

2. Objectives:

- i. To examine the correlation between perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety.
- ii. To examine the correlation between perceived parental pressure and academic achievement.
- iii. To examine the correlation between academic anxiety and academic achievement.
- iv. To analyse the combined predictive effects of perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety on academic achievement.

3. Hypotheses

- H1: Perceived parental pressure is positively correlated with academic anxiety.
- H2: Perceived parental pressure is negatively correlated with academic achievement.
- H3: Academic anxiety is negatively correlated with academic achievement.
- H4: Perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety jointly predict academic achievement.

4. Literature Review

Adolescents' academic success is significantly influenced by psychosocial factors, among which parental involvement plays an important role. The increased expectations concerning academic success may result in a sense of parental pressure, which can significantly influence students' mental well-being and academic outcomes. Ahmad et al. (2023) reported that authoritarian parenting and high expectations negatively affect adolescents' academic performance by increasing anxiety and lowering self-perception. Chen (2012) reported that

exam anxiety among Chinese students was significantly influenced by parental expectations and socioeconomic conditions, with cultural norms and family background serving as mediating factors. Deb et al. (2015) reported that 63.5% of students experience academic stress due to parental pressure. This stress was often associated with mental health concerns such as anxiety and emotional instability.

Furthermore, these findings are consistent with those of Jindal et al. (2022) and Pienyu et al. (2024), which showed that higher parental pressure was strongly associated with higher academic stress levels among Indian adolescents. Pienyu et al. (2024) found that a majority of students experienced poor general well-being, and more than 87% of students reported high levels of parental pressure, underscoring the necessity of extensive mental health support systems. Mehrotra and Ullah (2024) made a significant contribution to the existing literature by establishing a negative correlation between perceived parental pressure and adolescents' subjective well-being. Their regression analysis revealed that the perception of parental academic pressure was a significant predictor of emotional maladjustment.

The effect of test anxiety is significant in mediating the association between parental pressure and the academic achievement of students. The perception of excessive parental pressure increases test anxiety, thereby adversely affecting academic achievement (Nagpal & Sinha, 2016). This mediation pathway aligns with the findings of Quach et al. (2013), which indicated that anxiety among adolescents was influenced by both paternal and maternal academic expectations, with paternal pressure having a more significant psychological effect. Parental warmth serves as a protective factor, reducing the severity of anxiety symptoms in adolescents.

5. Methodology
5.1. Research Design: The study employed a descriptive survey approach.

5.2. Sample: 200 students were randomly selected by simple random sampling from different higher secondary schools in Imphal West, Manipur. Their involvement was anonymous and voluntary.

5.3. Instruments: To collect data, two standardized scales were used:

5.3.1. The Academic Anxiety Scale, developed by Sharma and Shakir (2019), comprises 48 items across six dimensions: anxiety due to the teacher, anxiety related to the learning environment, anxiety related to cognitive components, anxiety concerning study habits, symptoms of academic anxiety, and examination anxiety. The scale has 28 negative and 32 positive statements. It employs a five-point Likert Scale, where the scoring system for positive statements was scored from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), and negative statements were scored in the opposite direction.

5.3.2. The Perceived Parental Academic Pressure Scale, developed by Kaynak, Koçak, and Kaynak (2023), comprises 20 items categorised into three distinct dimensions: excessively high expectations, restriction, and psychological pressure. The scores were rated

from 1 (absolutely inappropriate) to 5 (absolutely appropriate) and do not incorporate reverse scoring.

5.3.3. Academic Achievement Scores: Academic achievement was measured using the percentage of marks obtained in the Class X final examination.

5.4. Data Analysis: The data were analyzed with SPSS, using correlation and regression analyses to investigate the interrelationships among the study variables and assess the combined predictive influence of perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety on academic achievement.

6. Findings & Results:

6.1. Correlation Analysis between Perceived Parental Pressure and Academic Anxiety

Table 1. Correlation between Perceived Parental Pressure and Academic Anxiety

		Perceived Parental Pressure	Academic Anxiety
Perceived Parental Pressure	Pearson Correlation	1	.525**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Academic Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.525**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 presents the results of the correlation analysis examining the association between perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety among higher secondary school students. The finding indicates that perceived parental pressure is significantly and positively correlated with academic anxiety, indicating that more pressure from parents is associated with increased academic anxiety. This positive correlation supports Hypothesis 1, which stated that perceived parental pressure positively correlates with academic anxiety.

The finding aligns with earlier studies; Chen (2012), Deb et al. (2015), and Nagpal & Sinha (2016, which indicated that excessive parental expectations are associated with higher psychological distress, particularly academic anxiety. The results indicate that it is necessary to reduce adverse parental pressure and cultivate strategies for dealing with academic anxiety, which can be beneficial in enhancing students' mental well-being and academic success.

6.2. Correlation Analysis between Perceived Parental Pressure and Academic Achievement

Table 2. Correlation between Perceived Parental Pressure and Academic Achievement

		Perceived Parental Pressure	Academic Achievement
Perceived Parental Pressure	Pearson Correlation	1	-.385**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-.385**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 presents the results of the correlation analysis examining the association between perceived parental pressure and academic achievement among higher secondary school students. The finding indicates that perceived parental pressure is significantly and negatively correlated with academic achievement, indicating that increased levels correspond with diminished academic outcomes. This negative correlation supports Hypothesis 2, which stated that perceived parental pressure negatively correlates with academic achievement.

The finding aligns with earlier studies; Furry and Sy (2015) and Collado et al. (2023) demonstrated that overly demanding parental involvement does not necessarily result in improved academic outcomes. Instead, such pressure may hinder student success by increasing stress, lowering intrinsic motivation, and contributing to disengagement from learning activities. Overall, the results highlight that controlling or excessive parental pressure can harm students' academic progress by contributing to increased stress and reduced engagement with learning.

6.3. Correlation Analysis between Academic Anxiety and Academic Achievement

Table 3. Correlation between Academic Anxiety and Academic Achievement

		Academic Anxiety	Academic Achievement
Academic Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	-.607**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-.607**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 presents the results of the correlation analysis examining the association between academic anxiety and academic achievement among higher secondary school students. The

finding indicates that academic anxiety is significantly and negatively correlated with academic achievement, indicating that increased academic anxiety is linked to decreased academic achievement. This negative correlation supports Hypothesis 3, which proposed that academic anxiety negatively correlated with academic achievement.

This finding aligns with studies of Hashmi and Shakir (2023), Shakir (2014), and Das and Kumar (2022), which report a strong inverse association between academic anxiety and academic achievement. Elevated levels of academic anxiety may disrupt students' concentration, lead to negative self-perceptions, and cause physical discomfort. These effects can collectively impair their academic achievement (Hashmi & Shakir, 2023; Shakir, 2014). This highlights the importance of managing academic anxiety through counselling, supportive teaching strategies, and stress-management programs.

6.4. Regression Analysis: Predicting Academic Achievement from Parental Pressure and Academic Anxiety

Table 4. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.612 ^a	.375	.368	6.099	.375	59.012	2	197	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Anxiety, Parental Pressure

Table 5. ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4389.928	2	2194.964	59.012	.000 ^b
	Residual	7327.492	197	37.195		
Total		11717.420	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Anxiety, Perceived Parental Pressure

Table 6. Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	98.821	3.168		31.194	.000
	Perceived Parental Pressure	-.059	.043	-.091	-1.367	.173
	Academic Anxiety	-.193	.023	-.560	-8.451	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement

The model summary, ANOVA results, and regression coefficients of the regression analysis are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6. The regression model was statistically significant, indicating that perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety jointly explain a considerable deviation in academic achievement. The ANOVA table verifies the statistical significance of the regression model ($p < .001$), further supporting that the overall model significantly predicts academic achievement and was not due to chance variation. Academic anxiety significantly and negatively predicted academic achievement, indicating that increased levels of academic anxiety are linked to decreased academic achievement. Parental pressure was not a significant predictor of academic achievement when accounting for the effect of academic anxiety. Although the coefficient is negative, its lack of statistical significance indicates a minimal effect on academic achievement when academic anxiety is included in the model.

This finding partially confirms the fourth hypothesis (H4), which proposed that perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety jointly and significantly predict academic achievement. Although the regression model is significant, only academic anxiety was a statistically significant independent predictor. This finding confirms that academic anxiety mediates the link between perceived parental pressure and academic achievement, as reported by earlier research (Nagpal & Sinha, 2016).

Considering that academic anxiety is a significant impediment to academic performance, interventions should focus on enabling students to cope with anxiety related to academic tasks. In addition, while parental pressure did not predict academic achievement, its contribution towards enhancing anxiety cannot be ignored. A comprehensive support system involving parents, educators, and school counsellors can help develop a balanced academic environment that promotes performance by managing anxiety and stress.

7. Conclusion:

This research explored the combined predictive effects of perceived parental pressure and academic anxiety on the academic achievement of higher secondary school students. The results show that perceived parental pressure is positively related to academic anxiety and negatively related to academic achievement. The results further indicate that academic anxiety has a strong negative relationship with academic achievement and serves as a significant predictor. In contrast, the direct influence of parental pressure disappears when academic anxiety is included in the analysis. This implies that the link between perceived parental pressure and academic achievement is mediated by academic anxiety (Nagpal & Sinha, 2016).

These findings highlight how excessive parental expectations intensify students' emotional distress, rather than promote academic success. This finding aligns with Self-Determination Theory, highlighting that a controlling environment can harm individuals' intrinsic motivation and overall psychological well-being. In the context of greater academic competition and the cultural emphasis on achievement in India, it becomes essential to introduce specific interventions to manage academic anxiety and parental pressure.

From these insights, several practical recommendations can be derived. First, parental education programs must raise awareness of the psychological hazards of excessive academic pressure, promoting emotionally supportive and autonomy-promoting engagement. Second, schools should implement strategies to reduce academic anxiety, such as mindfulness training, cognitive-behavioural techniques, and resilience-building programs. Third, creating a supportive school environment that balances academic challenge with students' emotional well-being through strong cooperation among teachers, counsellors, and families is important.

While the investigation offers significant findings, it is constrained by specific limitations. As the study employed a cross-sectional design, it precludes the establishment of causality between the variables. Moreover, using a sample drawn from a particular geographic region and educational setting may restrict the applicability of the results to a broader range of populations. Future research employing longitudinal designs, integrating mixed-method approaches, and including culturally diverse samples would further cement knowledge and improve interventionist enlightenment.

In conclusion, increased levels of perceived parental pressure negatively affect academic performance among adolescents by indirectly increasing academic anxiety. Interventions targeting anxiety reduction and encouraging positive parental involvement may substantially enhance academic success and student well-being. This integrated approach is vital in developing balanced, resilient students who succeed in demanding academic settings.

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