ACADEMIC STRESS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS & SPORTS PARTICIPATION: MEDIATING ROLE OF SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between academic stress, sports participation, and social intelligence among college students in the Multan Division of Pakistan. A stratified random sampling strategy was employed to select a sample of 663 participants from the Government Degree Colleges. Standardized tools, including the Student's Academic Stress Inventory and Social Intelligence Questionnaire, were used to assess academic stress and social intelligence. Participants self-reported their previous youth sports participation. A cross-sectional survey approach was used to collect quantitative data. The results indicated that college students reported high levels of academic stress. College athletes reported significant social intelligence competency, and there was a significant positive relationship between academic stress and the social intelligence competency of college students. Additionally, there was a significant positive relationship between sports participation and social intelligence, suggesting that participation in sports has paramount significance in the development of social intelligence competency among its participants. Social intelligence was found to significantly mediate the relationship between academic stress and sports participation of college students. Furthermore, the data revealed that male athletes reported higher stress levels on various dimensions of academic stress, highlighting the need for counseling centers to provide extra attention and care to athletes and promote mental health awareness. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between academic stress, sports participation, and social intelligence among college students, shedding light on the mediating role of social intelligence in mitigating academic stress and improving mental health outcomes. The findings have important implications for educational institutions and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of promoting sports participation and social intelligence development to support students' overall well-being.

Keywords: Academic Stress; Social Intelligence; Sports Participation.

Introduction

Educational institutions are considered a major contributor to stress among students. Research indicates that academic problems are commonly a primary concern of college students worldwide (Altbach, 2011). There is a growing trend of psychological problems contributing to stress and the influence of stress on adolescents (Turecki & Meaney, 2016). Getting outstanding academic performance is the main concern in Pakistan, and the parents and students have high expectations of excellent performance in education, which may lead to stress among students. Hence, the pressure put on students to achieve high academic grades has been a topic of investigation among researchers (Durlak et al., 2011).

Very limited research has so far been conducted in the area of academic stress and sports participation. Research has identified that participation in leisure sports has a significant role in stress management (Chun et al., 2012). Findings have affirmed the positive association between sports participation and the development of psychological well-being as well as academic achievements (Eime et al., 2013. A similar study has indicated a link between leisure sports and the development of coping strategies in the perspective of stress

(Kimball & Freysinger, 2003). Research has also pointed out that the time spent in leisure sports may be one of the coping strategies for academic stress among adolescent students (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Now a day's, college remains an extension from youth to adulthood (MTVU, 2006), and one experience that can be extremely engaging and fulfilling is going to school or college (Abdullah et al., 2009). It is essential to emphasize, however, that "understudies are at a basic period where they will enter adulthood. They are required to be the elites in the general public" and "the present accentuation on instructive greatness and increased parental desires have accended scholastic pressure and strains in the young of today" (Masih and Gulrez, 2006). As expressed by Masih and Gulrez (2006), "stress is a way of life emergency."

Research indicated that academic stressors might be influenced by gender differences (Turecki & Meaney, 2016). For instance, studies revealed that men, as compared to women, report in perspective of controlling their emotions. In contrast, women often report in terms of letting out their feelings, whereas men more often report controlling their emotions (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Likewise, there exist dangerous differences in coping styles to stress. A study

reveals that females reported more overtly than males (Boud, 2012).

Those who fail to succeed academically have some sort of distress in their lives. Additionally, putting pressure in order to get financial assistance leads to stress among college students (Mori, 2000). Resultantly, pressure to achieve high academic achievement, lack of social support, and restricted financial support are some of the common stressors among college students. On the other hand, it is indicated that participation in sports not only helps in developing social intelligence competency but also helps in reducing academic stress among students (Din, 2006).

The role of sport participation in students' academic achievement and social intelligence has been debated for decades. Critics observe that sports activities deflect time away from the classroom, divert talent from academic programs, and the students who put their energies into sports are less likely to pursue educational objectives (Daley & Ryan, 2000). They do not have the time or energy to achieve excellence and satisfaction in both roles. Supporters of sports programs argue that sports participation improves students' achievement and motivation, improves students' grades, keeps them in college, raises their educational

aspirations, increases students' overall interest and commitment as well as their engagement in more student-teacher contact, more positive attitudes (Tremblay et al., 2000).

Objectives

1. To determine the relationship between academic stress and social intelligence among college students.
2. To determine the relationship between academic stress and sports participation among college students.
3. To determine the relationship between social intelligence and sports participation among college students.
4. To determine that social intelligence significantly mediates the relationship between academic stress and sports participation of college students.

Hypotheses

Ho: Academic stress has a significant negative relationship with the social intelligence of college students.

H1: Academic stress has a significant negative relationship with the sports participation of college students.

H2: Social intelligence has a significant negative relationship with the sports participation of college students.

H3: Social intelligence significantly mediates

the relationship between academic stress and sports participation of college students.

Methods and Methodology

Research Design

In the researcher's opinion, descriptive research was the best way to investigate the study at hand.

Justification

As the study deals with assessing the hypothesis and analyzing the relationship between variables, hence; the researcher adopted a descriptive research design. Likewise, the researcher collected data from all the sports participants of Government Degree Colleges of Multan Division; therefore, the survey method was used for the collection of the required information.

Population

All the students studying in Government Degree Colleges of Multan Division constituted the population for the study. Since the study was conducted in Multan Division, therefore, the division was classified into four districts Multan, Lodhra, Khanewal, and Vehari.

Sample and Sampling

The researcher used stratified random sampling to select representatives from the whole population. In this regard, the researcher selected a sample of n=1105 (50% of the total population N=2210) from each college, considering the proportion of the students in the respective colleges.

Data Collection Tool

The success of any research largely depends upon the tool used to collect needed data. The problem of the present study revolves around the following three variables: a) Students' Academic Stress, b) Social intelligence, and c) Sports Participation. Therefore, the researcher used the following standardized tools to gather information to investigate the Academic Stress of College Students concerning their Sports Participation and Mediating Role of Social Intelligence.

A standardized tool Students Academic Stress Inventory developed by Lin and Chin (2009) and the Social Intelligence Questionnaire developed by Chadha and Ganshen (2015), were used respectively for assessing Students' Academic Stress and Social Intelligence of College Students, Multan Division and participants self-reported their previous youth sports participation.

Results

Table 1: Academics stress of male and female athlete students

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	t	P-value
Teachers Stress	Male	429	3.6324	.55054	10.081	**.000**
	Female	186	3.1439	.55540		
Results Stress	Male	429	3.6028	.66191	5.451	**.000**
	Female	186	3.2796	.70559		
Test Stress	Male	429	3.6439	.63102	7.471	**.000**
	Female	186	3.2070	.74128		
Time Management Stress	Male	429	3.6733	.73895	4.864	**.000**
	Female	186	3.2191	.75388		

α = 0.05

Table 2: Academics stress of rural students and urban athlete students

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	t	Sig.
Teachers Stress	Urban	327	3.1169	.63382	4.433	**.025**
	Rural	288	3.4480	.54762		
Results Stress	Urban	327	3.6532	.67432	5.816	**.000**
	Rural	288	3.3368	.67201		
Test Stress	Urban	327	3.5673	.70416	6.115	**.034**
	Rural	288	3.2488	.68089		
Time Management Stress	Urban	327	3.7387	.70347	5.097	**.000**
	Rural	288	3.4350	.77367		

α = 0.05

Table 3: Academics stress of students based on individual V/S team sports

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	t	Sig.
Teachers Stress	Individual Games	54	3.4900	.50035	0.068	**.946**
	Team Sport	557	3.4842	.60327		
Results Stress	Individual Games	54	3.4333	.64632	-.818	**.414**
	Team Sport	557	3.5138	.69430		
Test Stress	Individual Games	54	3.5139	.58563	-.028	**.978**
	Team Sport	557	3.5166	.69996		
Time Management Stress	Individual Games	54	3.5374	.65880	-.597	**.551**
	Team Sport	557	3.6011	.75609		

α = 0.05

Table 4: Social Intelligence Competency of male and female athlete students

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	t	Sig.
Social Information Processing	Male	429	2.5623	.74796	9.240	**.000**
	Female	186	1.9247	.86757		
Social Skills	Male	429	2.4761	.66359	4.887	**.040**
	Female	186	2.8860	.62269		
Social Awareness	Male	429	2.0021	.70367	3.408	**.001**
	Female	186	1.7878	.74408		

α = 0.05

Table 5: Social Intelligence Competency of rural students and urban athlete students.

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	t	Sig.
Social Information Processing	Urban	327	2.4586	.85864	2.826	**.005**
	Rural	288	2.1683	.80402		
Social Skills	Urban	327	2.6528	.68585	5.838	**.000**
	Rural	288	2.3465	.60073		
Social Awareness	Urban	327	1.9182	.75988	6.703	**.000**
	Rural	288	1.5590	.67771		

α = 0.05

Table 6: Social Intelligence Competency of students based on individual V/S team sports.

Variables	Gender	n	Mean	Std.	t	Sig.
Social Information Processing	Individual Games	54	2.2931	.69082	-6.674	**.500**
	Team Sport	557	2.3736	.84985		
Social Skills	Individual Games	54	2.6365	.72334	1.505	**.133**
	Team Sport	557	2.4940	.65831		
Social Awareness	Individual Games	54	1.8006	.72974	-1.443	**.149**
	Team Sport	557	1.9486	.71850		

α = 0.05

Table 7: Academic Stress Inventory and Social Intelligence of the athlete students

		Academic Stress Inventory	Social Intelligence
Academic Stress Inventory	Pearson Correlation	1	.818[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	615	615
Social Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	.818[**]	1.00[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	615	615

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

Table 8: Academic Stress Inventory and sports participation of the athlete students

		Academic Stress Inventory	Sports Participation
Academic Stress Inventory	Pearson Correlation	1	.083**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.232
	N	615	615
Sports Participation	Pearson Correlation	.083**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.232	
	N	615	615

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

Table 9: Social intelligence and sports participation of the athlete students

		Sports Participation	Social Intelligence
Sports Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.876**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N	615	615
Social Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	.876**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	615	615

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

Table 10: Social intelligence as a mediator between academic stress and sports participation of college students

		Sports Participation	Social Intelligence	Academics Stress
Sports Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.876**	.083**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.232
	N	615	615	615
Social Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	.876**	1	.818**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	615	615	615
Academics Stress	Pearson Correlation	.083**	.818**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.232	.000	
	N	615	615	615

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

Findings

The following are the main findings obtained after carefully analyzing the collected data.

1. The analyzed data indicated that both the categories of respondents (males and females) reported stress. However, when their mean scores on different dimensions were compared, the male athletes reported higher stress on various dimensions of academic stress (Teachers

Stress, Results Stress, Test Stress, and Time Management Stress) compared to their counterpart female athletes (Table 1).

2. Accepting the alternate hypothesis, the analyzed data showed that rural athlete students reported higher academic stress than urban athlete students (Table 2).

3. Rejecting the alternate hypothesis, the data revealed that students who participated in individual sports reported slighter academic stress than those who participated in team sports (Table 3).

4. The analyzed data revealed that college athletes reported significant social intelligence competency. However, no statistically significant differences were noted between males and females on various dimensions of social intelligence competency (Social Information Processing, Social Skills, and Social Awareness) (Table 4).

5. The analyzed data illustrated that rural athlete students reported higher social intelligence competency than urban athlete students (Table 5).

6. The study's results indicated that students who participated in individual sports reported slighter social intelligence competency than those who participated

in team sports. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis is hereby rejected (Table 6).

7. Rejecting the null hypothesis, the analyzed inferences indicated a significant positive relationship between academic stress and the social intelligence competency of college students (Table 7).

8. The results of the study explained that academic stress has a negative relationship with the sports participation of college students (Table 8).

9. The analyzed data pointed out a significant positive relationship between sports participation and the social intelligence of college students (Table 9).

10. The P value for all three variables, sports participation, social intelligence, and academic stress, was less than the significant level (Sports participation=.000, social intelligence=.000, and academic stress=.232. Therefore, the set hypothesis is accepted with two out of three (Table 10).

Conclusion

This present study was conducted to investigate college students' academic stress in relation to their sports participation, the mediating role of social intelligence among college students of Multan Division. It has

been concluded that college students reported high levels of academic stress. The specific academic stressors, Teacher's Stress, Results Stress, Test Stress, and Time Management Stress were measured among the college students.

The analyzed data revealed that college athletes reported significant social intelligence competency. Consequently, the results indicated a significant positive relationship between academic stress and the social intelligence competency of college students.

On one side, the study's results described that academic stress has a negative relationship with the sports participation of college students. On the other side, the analyzed data pointed out a significant positive relationship between sports participation and college students' social intelligence. It means that participation in sports is paramount in developing social intelligence competency among its participants. The analyzed data depicted that social intelligence significantly mediates the relationship between academic stress and sports participation of college students.

In terms of the demographic profiles of the participants, the data revealed that male athletes reported higher stress on various dimensions of academic stress. Likewise, rural athlete students reported higher academics stress than urban athlete students. In contrast, those who participated in individual sports reported slighter academics stress than students who participated in team sports.

The present study ultimately found no statistically significant differences between males and females on various dimensions of social intelligence competency. The analyzed data illustrated that the rural athlete students reported higher social intelligence competency than urban athlete students. The results of the study indicated that students who participated in individual sports reported slighter social intelligence competency than students who participated in team sports

Recommendations

Keeping into consideration the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that:

1. All the colleges may focus on promoting mental health awareness among students. This can be done by arranging a counseling program in the colleges.
2. There is a dire need to give extra attention and care to athletes if no counseling centers could help promote mental health awareness.

3. The researcher recommended that physical educationists, coaches, and trainers may look at how athletes deal with stress.

4. The study indicated that social intelligence significantly mediates the relationship between academic stress and sports participation of college students. Therefore, special attention may be given to developing social intelligence competency so that athletes can manage their emotions and prioritize their mental health.

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