

RESEARCH THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC STRESS AND SOCIAL ANXIETY FACTORS AT GUANGXI TALENT INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE*

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were: 1) to study academic stress at Guangxi Talent International College, 2) to study social anxiety factors at Guangxi Talent International College, and 3) to study the relationship between academic stress and social anxiety factors at Guangxi Talent International College. This study adopts a quantitative method to explore the relationship between academic stress and social anxiety at Guangxi Talent International College. The accidental random sampling was 375 students at Guangxi Talent International College, selected according to Krejcie and Morgan table (1970). The research instrument was a self-designed questionnaire. The statistics used were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient.

The research results were:

1. Academic stress at Guangxi Talent International College in 6 aspects was at a high level ($\bar{x}=3.97$, S.D.=0.84). Considering the results of these 6 research

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aspects were as follows: the highest rank was "Employment Pressure" (\bar{x} =4.28, S.D.=0.64), indicates a high level. Followed by "Time Management Stress" (\bar{x} =4.09, S.D.=0.82), whereas "Course Load" was the lowest rank (\bar{x} =3.76, S.D.=0.85).

2. Social anxiety factors at Guangxi Talent International College in 2 aspects was at a high level (\bar{x} =3.87 S.D.= 0.98). Considering the results of these 2 research aspects were as follows: the highest rank was "Family Factors" (\bar{x} =3.89, S.D.=0.89), whereas "Environmental Factors" was the lowest rank (\bar{x} =3.84, S.D.=1.08).

3. It was found that the relationship between academic stress and social anxiety factors has a positive correlation at the very high level with statistical significance level at .01 ($r=0.66^{**}$).

Keywords: Academic Stress, Social Anxiety Factors, Guangxi Talent International College

Introduction

In contemporary higher education, college students face escalating academic demands and complex social interactions, making academic stress and social anxiety two prominent psychological challenges (Ruan et al., 2024). Academic stress, defined as the psychological burden arising from academic tasks (Tian & Deng, 2007), manifests in heavy course loads, frequent exams, and intense competition, while social anxiety refers to excessive fear or discomfort in social situations (Yang, 2023). These issues not only hinder students' academic performance but also lead to severe mental health problems such as depression and withdrawal (Chen et al., 2020), highlighting the urgency of understanding their interplay.

Against the backdrop of educational globalization, institutions like Guangxi Talent International College, with diverse student demographics and unique

academic environments, present a valuable case for exploring these dynamics. Investigating how academic stress interacts with social anxiety in such contexts can shed light on context-specific mechanisms, offering targeted insights for mental health interventions in similar institutions.

Extant research has extensively explored academic stress and its correlates. Ruan et al. (2024) found that self-concordance, particularly the disharmony between self and experience, significantly predicts academic stress, with negative coping styles playing a mediating role. Similarly, Chen et al. (2020) demonstrated a positive correlation between academic stress and anxiety, noting that psychological resilience mediates this relationship, alleviating anxiety levels. These studies confirm that academic stress is a multifaceted construct influenced by individual differences in cognition and coping strategies. (Daming, H. et to all. 2023, 2023, Xiang Hui, J. et to all., 2023, Yanting, C. et to all., 2023)

Research on social anxiety has identified its links to interpersonal relationships and environmental factors. Yang (2023) revealed that rejection sensitivity and shame mediate social anxiety among college students, while Zhang et al. (2020) highlighted that interpersonal disturbances are key predictors of mental health issues, including anxiety. Notably, studies by Li et al. (2018) and Wu et al. (2021) suggest that academic stress may exacerbate social anxiety by impairing emotional regulation, though the specific mechanisms remain underexplored, especially in non-elite or specialized institutions.

Despite growing attention to academic stress and social anxiety, existing studies suffer from two critical gaps. First, most research focuses on general student populations, with limited exploration of specific groups such as students in international or vocational colleges (Wang, 2021). Institutions like Guangxi Talent International College, which combine vocational training and international curricula, may impose unique academic pressures (e.g., language proficiency requirements, practical training demands) that interact differently with social anxiety compared to traditional universities.

The causal relationship and mediating/moderating factors between academic stress and social anxiety require deeper investigation. While some studies (Huang et al., 2021) hint at indirect pathways through cognitive failure or emotional regulation, few have empirically tested these mechanisms in diverse educational settings. This lack of context-specific research hinders the development of tailored mental health interventions for students in specialized institutions. (Meng, C. et to all., 2023; Zimin , Z., et to all., 2023; Zhonghua. et to all., 2023)

This research is justified by the pressing need to address the mental health challenges faced by college students, particularly in unique educational contexts. By exploring the relationship between academic stress and social anxiety among students at Guangxi Talent International College, it aims to fill gaps in existing literature, clarify underlying mechanisms, and provide evidence-based recommendations for universities to design targeted support programs. Ultimately, this study contributes to fostering healthier academic and social environments, empowering students to thrive amid academic demands and social interactions.

Objectives

- 1.To study academic stress at Guangxi Talent International College.
- 2.To study social anxiety factors at Guangxi Talent International College.
- 3.To study the relationship between academic stress and social anxiety factors at Guangxi Talent International College.

Literature Review

1. Academic stress

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined academic stress as a psychological response that occurs when students perceive academic demands as exceeding

their coping resources. In academic settings, such demands include course load, examinations, performance expectations, time constraints, teaching requirements, and employment preparation. Putwain et al. (2020) explained academic stress using control–value theory, suggesting that stress intensifies when students perceive low control over academic outcomes and face high evaluative pressure. Excessive academic demands under such conditions are likely to increase anxiety, fear of failure, and emotional strain. Lesener et al. (2020) proposed the Study Demands–Resources Model, which emphasizes that academic stress increases when study demands exceed available personal and institutional resources. Adequate coping abilities and educational support can buffer academic stress and promote students’ academic engagement.

2. Social Anxiety Factors

American Psychiatric Association (2022) defined social anxiety as a marked fear of negative evaluation in social or performance situations. Individuals with high levels of social anxiety often experience intense discomfort, heightened self-consciousness, and avoidance behaviors when facing situations that involve social interaction or evaluation. Rapee (2018) explained social anxiety factors from a developmental perspective, emphasizing the influence of early family environments. According to this view, parenting styles characterized by overprotection, criticism, and insufficient emotional support increase individuals’ sensitivity to social evaluation and contribute to persistent fear of negative judgment. Weeks et al. (2019) highlighted the role of environmental factors in the development of social anxiety. Their research indicated that repeated exposure to evaluative social contexts, such as peer comparison, academic competition, and performance-based assessment, can intensify fear of negative evaluation and reinforce social avoidance behaviors.

3. Research Framework

The research framework is developed to explain how academic experiences in vocational colleges influence students’ emotional outcomes.

Based on the cognitive appraisal theory proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), academic stress is conceptualized as students' overall evaluation of academic demands relative to their coping resources rather than a single academic task. Prolonged academic stress may extend beyond learning contexts and affect emotional functioning. According to the Study Demands–Resources Model (Lesener et al., 2020), sustained imbalance between study demands and available resources increases emotional strain. From a developmental perspective, Rapee (2018) suggested that heightened evaluative sensitivity contributes to the development of social anxiety. These theories jointly support the framework linking academic stress to social anxiety factors.

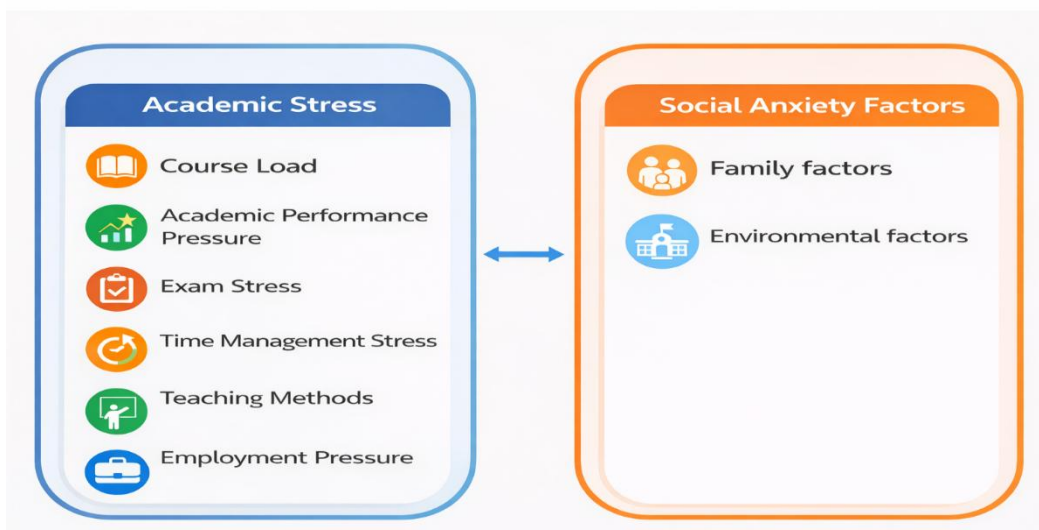


Figure 1. Research Framework

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research method to systematically explore the relationship between academic stress and social anxiety factors.

1. Population and the Sample Group

Population

The research population are 12,000 students from Guangxi Talent International College.

Sample

The sample group of this study is 375 students in Guangxi Talent International College according to Krejcie and Morgan table (1970) by accident random sampling

2. Research Instrument

The research instrument is a questionnaire with 3 parts:

Part 1: General Information. This section has 6 questions to gather background information on the respondent's gender, grade, major, hometown, living status and family size.

Part 2: Academic Stress. it is 5 rating Scales. This main section has Academic Stress statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". It is organized into 5 dimensions: 1) Course Load (5 statements); 2) Academic Performance (5 statements); 3) Exam Stress (5 statements); 4) Time Management Stress; 5) Teaching Methods (5 statements); 6) Employment Pressure (5 statements).

Part 3: Social Anxiety Factors. it is 5 rating Scales. This main section has statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". It is organized into 2 dimensions: 1) Family Factors (5 statements); 2) Environmental Factors (5 statements);

All statements display consistency with the measurement target as evidenced by an average score of 0.67 to 1.00 on the acceptable consistency index (IOC). The reliability of a pilot test of questionnaires assessed using Cronbach's α , a statistic measuring internal consistency, with α value of 0.77, indicating excellent internal consistency.

3. Data Collection

To ensure the systematic collection of data, the researcher implemented the following procedures:

Distribution: The online questionnaires were distributed to students at Guangxi Talent International College via digital channels. Each respondent was informed of the research objectives, confidentiality, and their voluntary participation.

Platform Utilization: Data were collected through the "Questionnaire Star" (Wenjuanxing) online platform, which facilitated efficient data gathering and management.

Data Screening: Upon completion of the collection period, the raw data were screened. Invalid responses, such as incomplete forms or patterned answers, were excluded to ensure the integrity of the results.

Preparation for Analysis: The final valid datasets were coded and organized for statistical processing and analysis.

4. Data analysis

Part 1 To study academic stress at Guangxi Talent International College, data analysis uses mean and stand deviation.

Part 2 To study social anxiety factors at Guangxi Talent International College, data analysis uses mean and stand deviation.

Part 3 The relationship between academic stress and social anxiety factors at Guangxi Talent International College were analyzed by using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r).

Results

Part 1: Academic Stress

Table 1 The mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (S.D.) of academic stress at Guangxi Talent International College in 6 aspects.

Academic Stress	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level	Ranking
1. Course Load(X1)	3.76	0.85	High	6
2. Academic Performance Pressure(X2)	3.88	0.82	High	4
3. Exam Stress(X3)	4.00	0.84	High	3
4 Time Management Stress(X4)	4.09	0.82	High	2
5. Teaching Methods(X5)	3.80	0.93	High	5
6. Employment Pressure(X6)	4.28	0.64	High	1
Total	3.97	0.84	High	

From Table 1, the overall average of academic stress in 6 aspects, was at a high level (\bar{x} =3.97, S.D.=0.84). Considering the results of these 6 research aspects were as follows: the highest rank was "Employment Pressure" (\bar{x} =4.28, S.D.=0.64), indicates a high level. Followed by "Time Management Stress" (\bar{x} =4.09, S.D.=0.82), whereas "Course Load" was the lowest rank (\bar{x} =3.76, S.D.=0.85).

Part 2: Social Anxiety Factors

Table 2 The mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (S.D.) of social anxiety factors in 2 aspects.

Social Anxiety Factors	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level	Ranking
1.Family Factors (Y1)	3.89	0.89	High	1
2.Environmental Factors (Y2)	3.84	1.08	High	2
Total	3.87	0.98	High	

From Table 2, the overall average social anxiety factors in 2 aspects, was at a high level (\bar{x} =3.87 S.D.= 0.98). Considering the results of these 2 research aspects were as follows: the highest rank was "Family Factors" (\bar{x} =3.89, S.D.=0.89), whereas "Environmental Factors" was the lowest rank (\bar{x} =3.84, S.D.=1.08).

Part 3: The relationship between academic stress and social anxiety factors at Guangxi Talent International College.

Table 3 The relationship between academic stress and social anxiety factors

Social Anxiety Factors (Y_{tt})	Academic Stress (X_{tt})						
	X_1	X_2	X_3	X_4	X_5	X_6	X_{tt}
Y_1	0.12*	0.18**	0.22**	-0.02	0.18**	0.09	0.25**
Y_2	0.56**	0.67**	0.50**	-0.03	0.28**	0.10	0.70**
Y_{tt}	0.49**	0.61**	0.50**	-0.04	0.31**	0.12*	0.66**

* statistics significant at .05 level

** statistics significant at .01 level

From table 4.12, it is shown that the overall relationship between academic stress and social anxiety factors has a positive correlation at the high level with statistical significance level at .01 ($r=0.66^{**}$).

Discussion

1. Academic stress at Guangxi Talent International College was at a high level overall, with "Employment Pressure" ranking highest, followed by "Time Management Stress", whereas " Course Load " was the lowest rank. The reason for confirming the research result is that students at Guangxi Talent International College face intense employment competition, high family expectations, and uncertainty about future career development, which increase their psychological

burden and make employment pressure the most prominent source of academic stress. The results of this study are consistent with those of Tomlinson et al. (2022), who identified employment-related uncertainty as a major source of stress in employment-oriented educational contexts, explaining the prominence of employment pressure. They are also consistent with Lesener et al. (2020), whose Study Demands–Resources Model suggests that time-related demands intensify stress when study requirements exceed available resources, accounting for high time management stress and relatively lower course load pressure.

2. Social anxiety factors at Guangxi Talent International College was at a high level overall, "Family Factors" indicates a high level, whereas "Environmental Factors" was the lowest rank. The reason for confirming the research result is that family factors exert a long-term influence on students' emotional development and sensitivity to evaluation, whereas students may gradually adapt to campus environments. The results of this study are consistent with those of Rapee (2018), who emphasized that negative family experiences are stable predictors of social anxiety across development.

3. A statistically significant and strong positive correlation was found between academic stress and social anxiety factors at Guangxi Talent International College ($r=0.66^{**}$, $p<.01$). The reason for confirming the research result is that family factors exert a long-term influence on students' emotional development and sensitivity to evaluation, whereas students may gradually adapt to campus environments. The results of this study are consistent with those of Putwain et al. (2020), who reported a significant positive association between academic stress and anxiety-related outcomes in evaluative academic contexts.

Recommendation

The implementation of the research results is as follows:

1. The findings indicate that course load obtained the lowest score among the six dimensions of academic stress, suggesting that students still experience difficulties in balancing coursework requirements and learning intensity. Therefore, teachers should optimize curriculum arrangements by coordinating assignments and examinations and reducing unnecessary repetitive tasks

2. The results also show that some students lack effective strategies to cope with continuous academic demands. As a result, universities should provide systematic academic support programs, such as study-planning workshops, learning-skills training, and academic counseling, to enhance students' self-management abilities.

3. In addition, the relatively low score of course load reflects differences in students' learning abilities and academic foundations. Therefore, administrators should implement flexible teaching and assessment methods, including differentiated instruction and personalized learning support, to meet diverse learning needs and reduce academic pressure.

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