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IMPACT OF EXAMS PRESSURE AND MEDIA USE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

University students often experience considerable pressure to perform well in examinations, while excessive or inappropriate media use may affect their emotional state, concentration, study habits, and academic performance. This study aims to examine the impact of examination pressure and media use on the psychological wellbeing and academic achievement of university students in Lahore. A quantitative correlational research design was employed. The population of the study was comprised university students enrolled in universities in Lahore. A sample of 400 university students was selected to participate in the study. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire comprising standardized and previously validated scales measuring examination pressure, media use, psychological wellbeing, and academic achievement. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the collected data. The findings indicated that examination pressure and media use were significantly associated with students' psychological wellbeing and academic achievement. The results further suggested that higher levels of examination pressure were related to poorer psychological wellbeing and academic outcomes, while the influence of media use varied according to students' patterns and extent of media engagement. The study concludes that managing examination pressure and promoting balanced media-use practices are important for supporting students' psychological wellbeing and academic achievement.

I. INTRODUCTION

University education represents a critical developmental period in which students experience significant academic, social, and personal transitions. While university education offers opportunities for intellectual enhancement and career development, students in higher education institutions often face psychological issues related to academic pressures, competitive environments, financial challenges, and career uncertainty. Examination pressure is one of the most salient stressors among these stressors, as assessment can be a determinant of students' academic path, grade, and career prospects. Examination anxiety can have a negative impact on emotional regulation, motivation, attention, sleep quality and psychological well-being if it persists and is not mitigated (Zhang et al., 2024). In recent

years, research has shown that an individual's level of stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms can predict poor academic performance. Examination pressure is the mental tension which occurs in students as a result of the demands of examination, anticipated outcomes, fear of failure and the perceived implications of failure. While some academic stress is expected to create motivation and lead to better performance, too much can be detrimental as it can lead to emotional exhaustion, avoidance behaviour and increased anxiety. While doing their academic work, university students are asked to receive continuous assessment, have frequent exams, and are expected to perform well by their families, institutions, and universities, and even anticipate from themselves, all of which can increase the stress in their academic lives. For example, a recent experimental study on the emotional responses of university students during the preparation for an examination revealed that examination-related stress had a significant impact on students' emotional states, such as concentration, engagement and relaxation, highlighting the multifaceted impact that examination stress has on psychological functioning (Kouroupetroglou et al., 2024). A knowledge of examination stress is therefore important as if it is not managed appropriately, it can have a negative impact on psychological health and academic performance.

Psychological wellbeing is a multi-faceted construct, encompassing positive emotional functioning, life satisfaction, resilience, self-acceptance and effective management of everyday functioning. Psychological wellbeing is significant for university students' academic achievement because students who are psychologically well will be more able to stay motivated, participate in learning activities and manage academic challenges. However, poor psychological health can be linked to decreased focus, engagement in school and performance. Recently, researchers have shown that indicators of mental health (such as stress and anxiety) significantly predict academic performance in university students, in addition to the traditional academic variables, indicating that psychological factors must be taken into account (Zhang et al., 2024). Lahore, a city in Pakistan, has its own distinctive educational and social stresses on university students. Students can frequently be taught in a highly competitive academic setting, encouraged to achieve good grades and become more reliant on digital technologies for learning and social interaction. In spite of the significance and importance of these factors, little research has been conducted to investigate the interaction effect of examination pressure and media consumption on psychological wellbeing and academic performance of Pakistani university students. Previous research often examines the impact of academic stress or the impact of digital media separately and does not look at the interaction between the two. To overcome this research gap, the present study is focused on the effect of examination pressure and media on the psychological wellbeing and academic performance of the university students of Lahore. The study seeks to offer evidence about the interplay between these variables, thereby examining how demands at school and digital behaviour are linked and affect students' mental health and learning outcomes. The knowledge of these relationships could help universities, teachers and policy makers design effective prevention-related strategies such as stress-management programmes, psychological support services, and awareness programmes on balanced media-use practices. These interventions could play a role in promoting students' wellbeing and supporting the likelihood of healthier patterns of academic achievement.

Problem Statement

With the rise in pressure from exams and the extensive use of media by university students, it is possible that this could affect the psychological well-being of the students and their academic performance. Academic stress negatively impacts students' emotional health and their learning potential, but media use can both have positive and negative impacts, depending on usage. But very little research has focused on the joint effect of examination pressure and media usage on psychological wellbeing and academic performance of the university students in Lahore. Thus, it is the purpose of this study to explore the correlation between these factors and how they affect students' academic and psychological outcomes.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the level of examination pressure experienced by university students in Lahore.
2. To assess the patterns and extent of media use among university students.
3. To investigate the relationship between examination pressure and psychological wellbeing among university students.
4. To examine the relationship between media use and psychological wellbeing among university students.
5. To determine the impact of examination pressure and media use on students’ academic achievement.

6. To identify whether examination pressure and media use significantly predict psychological wellbeing and academic achievement among university students.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of examination pressure experienced by university students in Lahore?
2. What are the patterns and extent of media use among university students?
3. Is there a significant relationship between examination pressure and psychological wellbeing among university students?
4. Is there a significant relationship between media use and psychological wellbeing among university students?
5. Do examination pressure and media use significantly influence academic achievement among university students?
6. To what extent do examination pressure and media use predict psychological wellbeing and academic achievement among university students?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Examination Pressure and University Students' Psychological Wellbeing

In recent years, academic pressure is a major psychological problem faced by college students, because of the growing academic competition, the high standards for students' academic performance, and the evaluation mechanism that relies on tests. Examinations are often a significant source of stress for students as they can also be important events that affect their academic journey and career prospects. The recent studies have shown that academic stress is highly correlated with emotional problems such as anxiety, depressive symptoms, decreased motivation, and decreased psychological functioning of university students (Benítez-Agudelo et al., 2025; Barbayannis et al., 2022; Pérez-Jorge et al., 2025). While academic stress usually comes from various sources, such as examination workload, assignment deadlines, fear of failure, lack of preparation time and pressure from family members and institutions. The stressors can have a negative impact on the capacity to manage emotions and psychological balance during challenging learning times (Kouroupetroglou et al., 2024; Barbbayannis et al., 2022). In recent years, longitudinal studies have shown that the effects of academic stress on students are not just immediate and short-term, but also have long-term psychological, physiological, and behavioral impacts, highlighting examination pressure as a critical factor in shaping student wellbeing beyond a mere academic issue (Benítez-Agudelo et al., 2025). There is a complex relationship between examination pressure and academic success, in that a moderate level of pressure might lead to greater motivation and, a higher level of pressure could have a negative impact on cognitive efficiency and effectiveness of learning. Those who are extremely nervous about exams may have problems with focusing, remembering, making decisions, and using appropriate study skills, which can affect their learning. University students' academic stress has been found to negatively affect their engagement in learning activities and academic performance when the stress is heavy for them to cope with (Barbayannis et al., 2022; Chongjin et al., 2025).

Academic Stress and Psychological Wellbeing Outcomes

Psychological wellbeing is the capacity of an individual to function emotionally positively, manage stress, build healthy relationships and feel satisfied with their lives. Psychological wellbeing is directly related to the ability to adapt to academic demands and to keep performing well in learning tasks in universities. Research has shown that pupils under higher educational stress are more likely to experience lower wellbeing, emotional exhaustion and psychological distress (Abdul Aziz et al., 2024; Barbayannis et al., 2022). Academic stress can affect wellbeing in a few different ways: it can leave you feeling disheartened and lack in confidence, can cause you to think negatively, and can stop you from having as much social and academic interaction with your peers. These outcomes can perpetuate a vicious circle by diminishing students' wellbeing and their capacity to meet academic requirements, which can in turn increase their stress levels, thereby further compromising their wellbeing (Benítez-Agudelo et al., 2025; Pérez-Jorge et al., 2025). Empirical studies in recent years have consistently shown that academic stress is related to psychological wellbeing among university students. Abdul Aziz et al. (2024) found a significant correlation between academic stress and psychological wellbeing among the undergraduate students and

increased academic stress correlated with decreased psychological wellbeing. Likewise, Barbayannis et al. (2022) reported that academic stress had a negative impact on students' mental health, as it decreased their motivation and caused emotional problems among them.

Media Use and Psychological Wellbeing among University Students

With the rapid growth of digital technology, the use of media has become a part of the lives of university students in their academic, social and personal lives. Platforms, software, and tools of social media, communication, streaming, and digital learning allow students to share information, collaborate on learning, and connect socially. But more and more worries have surfaced about the excessive or problematic use of media and its possible impact on mental health. There were also recent systematic reviews showing that problematic social media use is related to anxiety and depression, loneliness, sleep problems, and lower psychological wellbeing in young adults (Ahmed et al., 2024; Ansari et al., 2024). Too much media use can have a negative impact on wellbeing, due to social comparison, lack of face-to-face interaction, and compulsive ways of using the Internet. Media effects on learning outcomes, therefore, rely on the behavioral patterns not only on media usage. Students who engage in controlled and purposeful digital interaction can benefit academically while those engaged in excessive social media interaction can experience negative academic consequences. Research on university students' digital behaviors indicates that self-regulated learning, time management, and knowledge of healthy technology use contribute to students' media use that either promotes or hinders academic performance (Godard & Holtzman, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). As a result, digital media is an educational opportunity and academic challenge in higher education contexts. There is growing recognition amongst universities of the value of providing support to students for academic stress as well as digital wellbeing. The interventions that have been shown to lead to healthier academic experiences include those on stress management, psychological support, development of resilience, and responsible use of technology, among others (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2025; Chongjin et al., 2025). It is crucial to understand these factors thoroughly, as the expectations of the university and their digital interaction are ever present and impact upon the emotional and educational experiences of students.

Theoretical Framework

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) is used to guide this study as it describes how people interpret and react to stressful situations. This theory posits that the cause of stress is when people perceive demands in the environment they are in that are greater than what they can cope with. As a university student, examination pressure can be seen as a major academic stress factor that affects academic performance and psychological well-being. Coping strategies may minimize negative impacts and students who feel overwhelmed by the exam may have anxiety, emotional distress, and may perform poorly academically. The study is also grounded in the Uses and Gratifications theory by Katz et al., 1973 which states that people seek out media to satisfy certain needs, including information, social interaction, emotional regulation, and entertainment. Whether there is a positive or negative impact on wellbeing depends on the purpose of and level of media use. Media use can be balanced and effective in learning and social engagement, but if not balanced and/or problematic, it can have a negative impact on psychological wellbeing and performance in the classroom.

Figure I: Conceptual Framework



III. METHOD

Participants

The study used a quantitative correlational research design to determine the influence of examination pressure and media use on the psychological well-being and academic performance of college students. The sample comprised University students of various Universities, Lahore. The sample size of 400 students from the university was determined using a suitable sampling method in order to obtain good representation of the study population.

Measures

The data were gathered with the use of a structured questionnaire comprising of standardized and previously used and validated scales to assess examination stress, media use, psychological wellbeing and academic performance. Participants shared responses for academic stress experiences, media usage habits, psychological well-being, and academic performance metrics. Ethical principles were adhered to throughout all aspects of the process of research, informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and protection of personal information of participants.

Procedure

Data collected were analysed with the assistance of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Demographic characteristics and study variables were summarized by descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations). Two data were analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation method to find out the relationships among examination pressure, media use, psychological wellbeing, and academic achievement. Moreover, multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyze the predictive effects of the examination pressure and media use on psychological wellbeing and academic achievement.

IV. RESULTS

Table I: Demographic Characteristics of University Students

Demographic Variables	Categories	n	%
Gender	Male	210	52.5
	Female	190	47.5
Age	18–22 years	245	61.3
	23–27 years	125	31.2
	Above 27 years	30	7.5
Academic Level	Undergraduate	320	80.0
	Postgraduate	80	20.0
Type of University	Public	230	57.5
	Private	170	42.5

Descriptive variables of the major study variables (examination pressure, media use, psychological wellbeing and academic achievement) are presented in Table 1. Students' mean score for examination pressure was 3.74 (SD=0.71), suggesting that students felt a relatively high level of examination pressure. The mean score for media use was 3.56 (SD = 0.82) indicating moderate to high use of media platforms among university students. Mean score for psychological wellbeing was 3.21 (SD = 0.76), which suggest that the participants were at a moderate level of psychological wellbeing. Academic achievement scores were generally positive with a mean score of 3.68 (SD = 0.65). The standard deviations reflect the acceptable range of variation of the responses within the group of participants, and suggest that there are differences in the experiences of academic pressure, media usage, psychological wellbeing and achievement. Table 1 also shows the demographic information of the 400 university students who participated in this study. The analysis revealed a total of 210 (52.5%) men and 190 (47.5%) women, and there was a relatively even gender balance. As age distribution, most of the students (61.3%) were in the range of 18–22 years, 31.2% were in the age group of 23–27 years and only 7.5% were above 27 years. Academic level of the respondents, most of them were undergraduate students (80%), and 20% were post-graduate students. In addition, 57.5% of participants were enrolled in public universities while 42.5% of them were enrolled at private

universities. The overall profile reveals that the sample was mainly composed of young Under-graduate students from both public and private Higher Education Institutions in Lahore.

Table II: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables and Reliability Analysis of Research Instruments

Variables	Number of Items	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Examination Pressure	10	3.74	0.71	0.86
Media Use	12	3.56	0.82	0.82
Psychological Wellbeing	14	3.21	0.76	0.88
Academic Achievement	8	3.68	0.65	0.79

Based on the results of the measurement of the research instruments in Table 2, the instruments were reliable. All scales had good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.79 to 0.88. The 10 items of examination pressure scale and 12 items of media use scale obtained reliability coefficient of α = 0.86 and α = 0.82 respectively. The highest reliability was achieved for the psychological wellbeing scale, where α = 0.88 with 14 items, which is considered good reliability. The internal consistency for the academic achievement scale (8 items) was acceptable (α = 0.79). The overall Cronbach alpha of the questionnaire was 0.89 indicating that the instrument had high reliability and could be used to measure the study variables.

Table III: Pearson Correlation between Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Examination Pressure	--			
2. Media Use	.31**	--		
3. Psychological Wellbeing	-.52**	-.38**	--	
4. Academic Achievement	-.41**	-.29**	.55**	--

***p* < .01

Table 3 shows the Pearson correlation analysis of the relationships between examination pressure, media use, psychological wellbeing and academic achievement. Overall, the results revealed a significant correlation between media use and examination pressure (r = .31, p < .01), which implies that greater use of media among students corresponded to the increase in examination pressures. There was a significant negative correlation between examination pressure and psychological wellbeing (r = -.52, p < .01), suggesting that higher examination pressure was associated with lower psychological wellbeing. A similar negative correlation was found between examination pressure and academic achievement (r = -.41, p < .01), indicating that increased academic pressure could have a detrimental effect on students' academic performance. Additionally, media use had substantial negative correlations with psychological wellbeing (-.38, p < .01) and academic achievement (-.29, p < .01), suggesting that greater levels of media use may be associated with poorer psychological and academic outcomes. However, there was a strong positive correlation between psychological wellbeing and academic achievement (r = .55, p < .01) indicating that those with higher psychological wellbeing tended to achieve higher academic outcomes.

Table IV: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Psychological Wellbeing by Examination Pressure and Media Use

Predictor Variables	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	4.82	0.21	—	22.95	<.001
Examination Pressure	-0.42	0.05	-0.46	-8.40	<.001
Media Use	-0.21	0.06	-0.24	-4.15	<.001

Model Summary				
R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p
.58	.34	.33	102.41	<.001

Dependent Variable: Psychological Wellbeing

The multiple regression analysis result on examination pressure and media use predicting psychological wellbeing among university students is presented in table 4. The regression model was statistically significant, $F = 102.41$, $p < .001$, explaining 34% of the variance in psychological wellbeing ($R^2 = .34$). The findings revealed that examination pressure was a significant negative predictor of the students' psychological wellbeing ($\beta = -0.46$, $p < .001$), which means that student's examination pressure has a significant negative effect on psychological wellbeing. Also, there was a negative significant association between media use and psychological wellbeing ($\beta = -0.24$, $p < .001$), indicating that increased media use was linked to decreased psychological wellbeing. The examination pressure was more strongly related to psychological wellbeing than any other predictor, with a larger standardized beta coefficient. The results indicate that the academic pressure and media behaviour have significant effects on the students' psychological health.

Table V: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Achievement by Examination Pressure and Media Use

Predictor Variables	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	4.15	0.18	—	23.05	<.001
Examination Pressure	-0.31	0.06	-0.34	-5.42	<.001
Media Use	-0.17	0.05	-0.21	-3.38	.001

Model Summary				
R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p
.47	.22	.21	56.38	<.001

Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement

The results of multiple regression analysis of the effects of examination pressure and media use on academic achievement are shown in Table 5. The regression model was statistically significant, $F = 56.38$, $p < .001$, with 22% of the variance in academic achievement accounted for by the model ($R^2 = .22$). Academic achievement was significantly and negatively predicted by examination pressure ($\beta = -0.34$, $p < .001$), suggesting that examination pressure was negatively associated with academic achievement. Likewise, media use was a key negative predictor of academic achievement ($\beta = -0.21$, $p = .001$), indicating that media use will have a negative impact on students' academic achievement with increased use. The examination pressure showed a higher beta value reflecting the better predictive effect of examination pressure than that of media use. The findings suggest that academic stress and media use patterns can affect students' learning outcomes: high academic stress and overuse of media can lower academic achievement.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlighted that examination stress and media had significant effects on psychological well-being and academic performance of university students. The results showed that there was a negative correlation between psychological wellbeing and academic success with increased examination pressure, which implies that excessive demands of the academic field can lead to psychological problems and negatively affect students' educational results. The results are consistent with recent studies that have identified academic stress as one of the most prominent psychological factors experienced by university students, which can impact emotional stability, motivation, concentration and mental health (Barbayannis et al., 2022; Pérez-Jorge et al., 2025). Academic stress usually occurs when students feel that the demands of academic life, the expectations for exams, and the expectations for performance are greater than the coping resources that they have. This stress can lead to anxiety, fatigue, sleep difficulties, and decreased academic participation (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2025). This study's findings of a negative correlation between examination pressure and psychological wellbeing are in line with the previous study, which found that academic stress plays a significant role in psychological distress among students at the university. The results of regression analysis indicated that examination pressure was the strongest predictor of psychological wellbeing, suggesting that academic needs are an important factor that influences students' mental wellbeing. The results align with those of Barbayannis et al. (2022) which found that academic

stress was a central factor in the poor mental wellbeing of college students. Similarly, Pérez-Jorge et al. (2025), identified assessment pressure, overwork and problems balancing academic and personal activities as the most significant stressors impacting the psychological functioning of students. These results indicate that examination pressure should not be considered as only a short-term academic challenge but as a factor that can impact students' emotional and psychological lives.

The results also indicated that the examination pressure negatively predicted the academic achievement. While a certain amount of academic pressure can motivate students to work harder and prepare themselves, too much pressure might lower the learning efficiency and academic achievement. Examination anxiety can be a problem for students in terms of their concentration, memory, problem solving skills and confidence during the examination time. The latest studies have shown that academic stress is correlated with lower academic performance, as students under constant pressure may find it difficult to adopt positive learning strategies and cultivating their academic motivation (Chongjin et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). Moreover, Chongjin et al. (2025) noted that the academic stress is related with other factors, including self-efficacy and coping ability; students who have less coping ability are more likely to suffer from negative academic outcomes. The correlation results also showed that there was a positive relationship between psychological wellbeing and academic achievement. This means that high functioning emotionally and psychologically students are more likely to have higher academic results. Improved psychological wellbeing could help students to cope better with academic tasks, stay motivated to learn, adopt effective learning strategies and stay involved in learning activities. Recent studies have also demonstrated that positive mental health is associated with academic success, as positive mental health students have the better ability to adapt to the demands of university and maintain positive study habits (Zhang et al., 2024; Chongjin et al., 2025). Hence, promoting psychological well-being is integral part of enhancing educational performance in Higher Education Institutions.

The results identify the close relationship between examination pressure, media use and psychological wellbeing, as well as academic performance among university students. Exam stress can make them vulnerable; too much exposure to the media can make them even more vulnerable and cause problems in learning and well-being. Meanwhile, students who experience poor psychological wellbeing may be more likely to engage in avoidant behaviours, such as using too much of the media as a coping mechanism. In recent times, a call for implementing integrated strategies to address not only academic performance but also academic stress management, psychological support, and responsible digital engagement have been echoed in the literature (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2025; Ahmed et al., 2024). These can involve counselling, stress-management programmes, media-awareness initiatives and coping strategies interventions. The findings of this study offer more proof that the academic journey of university students is linked to their psychological and digital surroundings. The demands of examination and media behaviours are important factors that affect students' wellbeing and learning performance. The results underscore the need for positive university settings that help students set and meet academic expectations successfully and have healthier technology use patterns.

Recommendations

The Universities should offer stress management and examination preparation programs for their students, to enhance counselling service to assist students under academic pressure and psychological problems. Pupils should be encouraged in the cultivation of healthy and balanced media use. Universities need to raise awareness of the impacts of over-consumption of digital media. Academic institutions should implement time management and effective study strategies workshops. Parents and teachers must develop supportive environments, but not more performance pressure. Interventions in the future should be geared toward improving psychological wellbeing to impr Table 1 shows the demographic information of the 400 university students who participated in this study. The analysis revealed a total of 210 (52.5%) men and 190 (47.5%) women, and there was a relatively even gender balance. As age distribution, most of the students (61.3%) were in the range of 18–22 years, 31.2% were in the age group of 23–27 years and only 7.5% were above 27 years. Academic level of the respondents, most of them were undergraduate students (80%), and 20% were post-graduate students. In addition, 57.5% of participants were enrolled in public universities while 42.5% of them were enrolled at private universities. The overall profile reveals that the sample was mainly composed of young Under-graduate students from both public and private Higher Education Institutions in Lahore.

Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations in this study. The research design employed was quantitative-cross sectional, this did not allow for causal relationship between examination pressure, media use, psychological wellbeing, and academic achievement to be established. Data were collected by self-reported questionnaires, the responses to which could have been influenced by personal perceptions and response bias of the participants. Also, the study was conducted on the students of the university in Lahore and hence might not be applicable to other students of other regions or educational systems. Longitudinal designs and varying samples could be used in future studies to gain a better understanding of these relationships.

VI. CONCLUSION

It was found that psychological wellbeing and academic achievement of university students were significantly affected by the examination pressure and media use. Increased examination pressure was linked to decreased psychological wellbeing and academic results, and excessive media usage was found to have a negative impact on students' psychological wellbeing and academic performance. The results underscore the significance of the academic stress management and the balanced use of media in order to secure students' overall wellbeing and learning.

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