ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 4| April 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

EXPLORING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH FAMILY PRESSURE AND MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra20886
DOI No: 10.36713/epra20886

ABSTRACT
This study focuses on the impact of family pressure on students and their mental health as well as their well-being. The research highlights the various signs of stress, anxiety, depression, and other effects of pressure that youths, especially students, exhibit due to the expectations imposed on them by their parents. It explores different parenting styles and their consequences, emphasizing the importance of communication, motivation, relationships, and understanding in a healthier parent-child relationship. The study also talks about the negative effects of excessive pressure, such as mental illness, negative decisions, and bad habits. This study also has contents of coping strategies that students decide are helpful. The need and significance of this research lie in raising awareness about the harmful effects of parental pressure and encouraging open communication to address the issue effectively.
KEYWORDS: *Family Pressure, Mental Health, Coping Strategies, Stress, Parental Expectations.*

1. INTRODUCTION
Parents want the best for their children and have high expectations for their performance in school. Numerous factors, including cultural norms, social background, and parental experiences, may be the source of these expectations. According to Carly Seifert (2017), parental expectations help their children set good standards for themselves and encourages them to thrive with excellence and develop their self-esteem, however if parents tend to set unrealistic expectations to their children it tends to have a negative effect to their performances because of too much pressure their parents put on them. It was mentioned that to develop a child right, parents must balance their expectations especially on academics.

Stress has become part of students' academic life due to the various internal and external expectations placed upon their shoulders (Reddy, Menon, & Thattil, 2018). External expectations such as parental attitude and high parental expectations causes stress among school students (Putwain, 2007; Rao, 1954). Parents have high attitudes and expectations towards their children's education such as their children should perform well in all subjects and should be a topper in the class. Though parental involvement leads to better academic achievement (Holmes, 2013), high expectations of the parents lead to stress of students (Kumar & Jadaun, 2018; Ma, Siu & Tse, 2018). Parents usually set unrealistically high goals, it sometimes leads to drastic outbursts by students in the form of stress, depression and even suicides (Hazari, 2013).

In many countries, including the UK, there is evidence that rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide are rising among adolescents (Kõlves and de Leo, 2016). Family pressure is also one of these factors that leads to different kinds of problems, especially psychological problems. In a study in the UK, academic pressure was one of the most reported issues in coroner investigations (Rodway et al., 2020). There is evidence that levels of academic pressure have risen among youth's (Löfstedt et al., 2020), over a similar time-period to the increases in depression, anxiety, self-harm, and suicide. Psychosocial risk factors for mental health problems among secondary school students in China found that higher levels of academic pressure were associated with increased depressive symptoms (Tang et al., 2020). However, this study only investigated depressive symptoms and the findings are unlikely to generalize to other countries due to vast differences in educational systems.

In the Philippines, it's no surprise that the topic of parental pressure will always be relevant in this country. According to the study conducted by Lahey (2015), parents always want the best for their children. Life without parental support can be a disaster. They are the one who guides their children through hardship and success (Lahey and Lahey, 2015). They want their children to have a bright future to push them to excel in school. They want them to become the best among the rest, so they force them to spare their children from disappointment and feelings of failure that may come along if they don't study hard. Anxiety in a child can generate negative consequences for the child's functioning (Jacob et al., 2015). On the other hand, parental pressure impacts students (Chen, 2016). Mostly, it is negative that can harm children's emotional and physical, social, and moral aspects.

Recently, in Mandaue City, Cebu, a group of researchers of Jagobiao National High School has conducted research regarding this topic titled "Parental Pressure and Students Self-Efficacy". The result revealed that the parents hold high expectations from the students in terms of academic outcomes. While it was also revealed that the parents had a low attention span in which they inconsistently go to school to check their

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children's school grades and performance. Parental pressure on children to excel academically is helpful in motivating them to study (Ahmad et al., 2023). But students are terrified that they may not reach the level of expectation of their parents (Bui, 2015). Unrealistic expectations could put stress and anxiety on students, leading to sleep deprivation, eating disorders, excessive worrying, and cheating (Videbeck, 2016). There is limited research that explores the comprehensive impact of parental pressure on students, particularly in the context of Filipino high school learners. Most studies focus on academic outcomes while overlooking the mental, emotional, and physical challenges students face. Additionally, little attention is given to how students cope with this pressure.

Parental pressure creates challenges, causing students to feel very pressured and depressed. It has negative effects, like seeking validation, insecurities, and low self-esteem that could be the reason that the student wants to give up on school and suffer from depression and anxiety. Parents pressurize their children in different ways. Some parents verbally express their children's wishes for higher grades (Balli, 2018). Some other types of parents physically punish children, whereas some pressurize silently in the form of disappointment (Irfan and Hussain, 2018). Children should be motivated to explore the world in their own way.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

A. On students' description on experiences of family pressure in relation to their academic responsibilities

According to the study of the International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Science, that academic pressure caused by parent expectations had increased stress levels among today's students, making them more vulnerable to severe depression and suicidal tendencies (Poddar 2020). High pressure levels from parents may also lead adolescents to make bad decisions (York, 2000). Thus, based on the findings, we can see that parental pressure on a student's academic achievement, influenced by the parenting style, indeed impacts children's well-being and academic performance. It made children do better and not disappoint their parents significantly regarding academics, also leaving the fact that they feel incapable of becoming the ideal son or daughter to their parents. Moreover, parents' high expectations may cause emotional disturbance among students and drive students to drop out of school (Subramani & Venkatachalam, 2019; Dupéré et al., 2015). Parents pressure their children to succeed because they are concerned for the welfare of their children. As a result, children feel driven to meet their parent's expectations (Chow and Chu 2007). So they feel direct and indirect pressure to achieve academic success.

B. On family pressure can influencing students' mental health and emotional well-being

Students are a pillar of the future in building an educated society. For them, academic achievement is a big goal of life and can severely be affected if the students fall prey to depression (Abbas J, Kumari K, Al-Rahmi WM. 2021 & Mahmood HK, Hashmi MS, Shoaib DM, Danish R, Abbas J. 2014). There can be several reasons for this: family issues, exposure to a new lifestyle in colleges and universities, poor academic grades, favoritism by teachers, etc. Never-ending stress or academic pressure of studies can also be a chief reason leading to depression in students (Akinola M, Kapadia C, Lu JG, Mason MF. 2019). There is a high occurrence of depression in emerging countries, and low mental health literacy has been theorized as one of the key causes of escalating rates of mental illness (Álvarez-Huerta P, Muela A, Larrea I. 2021). Individuals experience different mental and physiological changes when encountering pressure, such as stress (Lazarus R. Coping theory and research 1993. & Abbas J, Muzaffar A, Shoaib M, Mahmood HK, 2014). The feelings of stress can be either due to factors in the external environment or subjective emotions of individuals, which can even lead to psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression. Excess stress can cause health problems. A particularly negative impact has been seen in students due to the high level of stress they endure, affecting their learning outcomes. Various methods are used to tackle stress. One of the methods is trying to pinpoint the causes of stress, which leads us to different terms such as family stress and academic stress. The two factors, stress and depression.

C. On coping of family pressure while managing their academic and personal lives

Two of the most widely studied resources are coping strategies and self-efficacy. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) thought of stress as an interactive process between the person and their surroundings, in which the influence of stressful events on physical and psychological well-being is determined by coping. There are many approach strategies that involve cognitive and behavioral mechanisms aimed at making an active response to the stressor, directly changing the problem (primary control) or the negative emotions associated with it (secondary control). Such as evasive strategies, which are those that involve cognitive and behavioral mechanisms used to evade the stressful situation, such as distraction, denial, and wishful thinking. Based on this classification, there is a broad consensus that approach strategies are related to good academic, physical, and psychological adjustment (Clarke, 2006; Syed and Seiffge-Krenke, 2015; Gustems-Carnicer et al., 2019), whereas evasive strategies usually mean maladaptive consequences for the students (Tavolacci et al., 2013; Deasy et al., 2014; Skinner et al., 2016; Tran and Lumley, 2019). There are two other ways of coping systems, such as engagement and disengagement; ways of coping can follow from adolescents' experiences of academic stress from workload, intrapsychic expectations for achievement, and/or external pressures (Morales-Castillo, 2022). Engagement ways of coping encompassed some of the most active approach responses appropriate for academic stressors, namely strategizing, help-seeking, comfort-seeking, self-encouragement, and commitment to the task or goal (Endler and Parker, 1990). Whereas , disengagement ways of coping align with avoidance or nonproductive forms of coping, were measured as confusion, concealment, self-pity, rumination, and escape.

D. On strategies students find helpful in dealing with family pressure

Dealing with family pressure can be a daunting and overwhelming experience for students. Too many family

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expectations can create anxiety, stress, and burnout. These pressures are something students have various strategies for managing. Having open family discussions regarding feelings and concerns can help alleviate stress and clarify any underlying issues (Helsen et al., 2020). This means actively communicating your thoughts, feelings, and needs to family members, which can help clarify misunderstandings and ease tension. When it comes to family, setting boundaries can also help students put their own needs first and feel less overwhelmed (Kaplan, 2014). That might mean setting clear boundaries on what one is able and willing to do — and expressing that clearly but respectfully. Finding support from friends, teachers, or counselors also can serve as an emotional protective net and generate new perspectives and coping mechanisms (Wang et al, 2018). Talking to someone who is not directly involved in the family dynamics can yield a refreshing and objective perspective to assist students with reframing their thinking and developing more effective mechanisms to cope. Also, self-care activities like going to the gym, reading, or spending time in nature can buffer the pressure from family (Kessler et al., 2012). There are the wellness practices that offer stress and anxiety relief, mood improvement, and overall well-being enhancement. It can also be liberating to reframe expectations and realize another cannot control outside expectations but can control expectations of how one responds to it (Bandura, 1997). It means understanding that the expectations of family members are often a projection of their own needs, desires, and shortcomings, often not in alignment with the student's own needs and capability. This awareness allows students to start releasing the expectations of others and turn their focus toward their own goals, values and aspirations. Developing coping skills, such as problem-solving, adaptability, and emotional regulation, can also help students deal with family pressure (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

Research Questions

This study aims to examine parental expectations and pressures and how they impact students' academic progress and psychological well-being (Negru & Sava, 2023). It seeks to understand how these factors shape students' experiences, aspirations, and overall mental health."

- How do students describe their experiences of family pressure in relation to their academic responsibilities?
- In what ways does family pressure influence students' mental health and emotional well-being?
- How do students cope with the challenges of family pressure while managing their academic and personal lives?
- What support systems or strategies do students find helpful in dealing with family pressure?

3.METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed qualitative design with a phenomenological approach, focusing on significant events or experiences within a particular group (Creswell et al., 2007). It seeks to understand the lived experiences of students affected by parental pressure, exploring the meaning they assign to this phenomenon. Using interviews, the study aims to illuminate complex psychosocial issues and address key questions such as "what," "why," and "how" (Marshall, 1996). Participants were selected through purposive sampling, based on the assumption that specific individuals hold valuable insights relevant to the study's objectives (Mason, 2002; Robinson, 2014; Trost, 1986). The study ensured confidentiality, and data collection included the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scales (DASS-21) to assess participants' mental states (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

Sample / Participants

The target respondents are the students of Sto. Tomas College, Danao City, Inc.. Specifically, the grade 10 and 12 students. Before the start of the interview, the researchers made sure that the respondents have consent before the interview. The students will provide their perspectives on how parental pressure can affect their mental health. The researchers have provided a criteria for the respondents.

- Must be a graduating student (e.g., grade 10 and grade 12)
- Currently experiencing or have experienced family pressure
- Encountered mental health challenges (e.g., anxiety, depression, stress)
- Willing to share their experiences voluntarily
- Provides informed consent

The study will take place in Sto. Tomas College, Danao City, Inc.. where students are fostered to learn academic development, personal growth, and career preparation. This educational institution helps students to engage in study groups, collaboration, activities, etc..

Instrument(s)

The research examines the impact of family pressure on the mental well-being and health of students through semi-structured interviews. The process of interviews allows participants to provide their individual experiences and expound on how family expectations affect their feelings, mental well-being, and academic performance in school. Clarification questions will be used to expound on answers and get more detailed information on how the students experience family pressure. This instrument helps to understand the psychological and emotional impact of family expectations on students and how it influences their daily life and well-being.

Data Collection Procedures

The researchers formally submitted a letter of approval to Sto. Tomas College, Danao Inc., seeking permission to conduct the study. Once approved, the researchers prepared questionnaires for the interview. The researchers carefully selected respondents from Grade 10 and Grade 12 students, ensuring they met the study's criteria. To maintain confidentiality, the researchers assured respondents that their answers would remain private and respected their right to remain anonymous.

Participants were given 5 to 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire, with the researchers ensuring they felt secure and comfortable throughout the process. The collected data was handled with care, accessible only to trusted researchers to maintain its confidentiality. Finally, the researchers gathered, interpreted, and analyzed the data.

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Data Analysis

To analyze the data gathered, the researchers used descriptive phenomenology by Giorgi (2012) and Moustakas (1994). This method has four key steps. (1) Bracketing. This involves the researchers consciously setting aside their own preconceived notions, biases, and assumptions about the phenomenon under study to focus solely on the participants' experiences. (2) Horizontalization. This step emphasizes the importance of treating every statement or expression from the participants as equally important and relevant, ensuring that no detail is overlooked. (3) Clustering. Here, the researcher analyzes the data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and common experiences that emerge from the participants' descriptions. (4) Textualization. Finally, the researchers create a detailed and descriptive account of the phenomenon, capturing the essence of the participants' lived experiences and the meanings they ascribe to them. Descriptive phenomenology is chosen for its ability to provide deep, nuanced, and holistic insights into human experiences, making it a valuable approach in qualitative research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. How do students describe their experiences of family pressure in relation to their academic responsibilities?

A. Students' experiences on family pressure affecting their academic responsibilities

Students often face intense family pressure due to their parents' high expectations, which lead them to take their academics very seriously in an effort not to disappoint their families. However, this pressure negatively impacts their academic responsibilities and overall well-being. As a result, students experience heightened stress, anxiety, isolation, and, in many cases, depression.

"*I'd say it somewhat affects my life, because instead of enjoying my life specially in my teenage years, instead of enjoying it, I focus on achieving certain things just to attain my parent's standards." (Respondent #1)*
"I describe family pressure as a motivation to my studies." (Respondent #2)
"I described this as a big responsibility and a challenge for me." (Respondent #6)

The responses highlight the complex connection between family expectations and individual experiences. It demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of how family expectations can affect both a person's academic and personal life.

"*I would describe mine as discouraging. I tend to lose motivation in doing well in school when I feel a lot of pressure, especially when it comes from my family." (Respondent #19)*
"*It's hard as a student to deal with family problems and academics, it's not easy for us to come up with a solution." (Respondent #17)*

The researcher observed that many respondents described their experiences with family pressure in a negative light, reflecting the significant impact it had on them. These responses indicate that family pressure, particularly in relation to academics, is a major factor affecting students' well-being. The pressure has severely affected them, with academic stress being one of the most frequently reported factors in coroner investigations (Rodway et al., 2020). This highlights the severity of the issue and the considerable challenge it poses for students.

2. In what ways does family pressure influence students' mental health and emotional well-being?

B. Parental influence and students' mental health and emotional well being.

Family pressure has a significant influence on students, often leading to poor decision-making, low self-esteem, and other negative effects. Parents play a crucial role in a child's life, serving not only as caregivers but also as teachers and mentors. Their influence is deeply influenced in the child's mindset, shaping their thoughts, behaviors, and overall development.

"It will give us to a hard time doing our activities when there is pressure, especially from our families, because they expect us to be a good student." (Respondent #3)
"*For me, it affects my mental health. It causes anxiety and sudden breakdowns." (Respondent #16)*
"*It can cause discomfort and anxiety, leading to competitiveness of the students." (Respondent #18)*

The responses highlight the negative impact of family pressure on students' mental health and overall well-being. Collectively, they illustrate how such pressure can be harmful, leading to stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges, ultimately affecting students' ability to succeed both academically and personally.

"*I think the students won't have the motivation to go to school and that they can decide to commit negative things anytime." (Respondent #11)*
"*They put a lot of expectations on a child's academic performances, and if they don't reach the family's standard they will see the student as a disappointment." (Respondent #15)*

This study emphasizes that family pressure and expectations can significantly impact a student's mental well-being. Students who experienced distractions and the silent pressure of family expectations often face the effects of parents who may physically punish their children or casually express disappointment. These actions contribute to the emotional pressure and pressure students endure (Irfan and Hussain, 2018).

3. How do students cope with the challenges of family pressure while managing their academic and personal lives?

C. Students' coping ways of family pressure.

Students cope with family pressure through various strategies, including open communication, time management, seeking support, adjusting their goals, and setting boundaries with family members. These approaches help them balance academic responsibilities, personal well-being, and family obligations, ultimately reducing stress and promoting a healthier mental state.

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"I just take a break If I can't handle the pressure, but if I can handle it, then I will do my best because it's a matter of time if I want to or not. What's important is that I get to rest." (Respondent #2)
"For me, All I have to do is escape reality for a little bit so that I can enjoy what I want to do." (Respondent #13)
"Students use different strategies to manage family pressure. Some focus on time management and setting priorities to balance their responsibilities. Others talk to friends or trusted individuals for emotional support. Moreover, engaging in hobbies, self-care, and relaxation activities also help students manage stress and maintain a healthy mindset." (Respondent #20)

Students use different strategies to cope with family-related stress, such as prioritizing self-care, managing their time well, and seeking support from others. They also take breaks from stress by engaging in leisure activities and focusing on self-care to help them feel better.

"I usually deal with them one at a time. For me, dealing with them at the same time will just make it more difficult and draining for me to handle." (Respondent #19)
"Exploring new hobbies that are fun to do and can eradicate themselves from pressure for a while." (Respondent #18)

Students have developed coping strategies to solved the effects of family pressure, employing methods such as strategizing, help-seeking, comfort-seeking, self-encouragement, and commitment (Endler and Parker, 1990). These approaches allow them to manage their responsibilities more effectively and seek additional support systems, helping to ease all the situational pressure imposed by their families.

D. What support systems or strategies do students find helpful in dealing with family pressure?

4. Strategies in dealing with family pressure

Based on the interviews, the researchers gathered that students employ various strategies to cope with family pressure. These include open communication with family members, seeking understanding and empathy regarding personal goals and challenges, and utilizing kin social support. Such strategies help moderate the effects of family economic pressure and race-related stress.

"The support system that I find helpful are my friends and also my goals. My friends often help me cope up with the pressure and my goals that help me motivate and push through the pressure and stress because it can help me motivate myself." (Respondent #1)
"Open communication with family members is one of the most effective ways to deal with pressure. Students also benefit from having supportive friends, teachers, or mentors who can offer guidance. Additionally, developing self-confidence, setting personal goals, and practicing stress-relief techniques like exercise, meditation, or journal can also help in handling family expectations in a positive way." (Respondent #20)
"I realized that I am different compared to other students because in this generation, students will take the pressure too seriously and take it as a negative energy instead of learning from it. Some students like that and I just try to avoid being like them." (Respondents #2)

The responses revealed that the students use various strategies to manage family pressure while balancing their academics and personal lives. These strategies reflect a combination of adaptive behaviors, aimed at effectively managing stress, and avoidance behaviors, which help them cope with overwhelming situations.
"I think either talking it to my parents, having proper conversations to have a right future, because communication is the key." (Respondents #8)
"My strategy is to not get affected by your family, because you have the right to choose whatever you want to do." (Respondents #4)
Students' support systems, including their personal goals and efforts to improve academic performance, help motivate them to take control of their own lives rather than being held back by family pressure. Open family discussions play an important role in relieving pressure, allowing students to share their thoughts and feelings. This helps reduce stress, clear up misunderstandings, and ease tensions (Helsen et al., 2020).

4.CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, while parental expectations help their children set good standards for themselves and encourages them to thrive with excellence and develop their self-esteem, however if parents tend to set unrealistic expectations to their children it tends to have a negative effect to their performances because of too much pressure their parents put on them (Carley Seifret, 2017). Although, parents can motivate students to excel, excessive pressure can lead to negative effects such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Research conducted in Mandaue City indicates that when parents have high expectations but fail to provide adequate support, these issues can become even more severe. Therefore, it is crucial for parents to balance their expectations with emotional support to help their children succeed academically and in life.

Studies show that family pressure significantly impacts students' mental health. When students feel overwhelmed by high expectations, they often lose motivation to perform well in school. While parental pressure can serve as a source of motivation, it can also contribute to stress, anxiety, and sadness. To foster a healthier learning environment, families must be mindful of their expectations and provide open communication and emotional support to their children. By doing so, they can help reduce stress and promote overall well-being.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Students need more emotional support from their parents. While parents have authority over their children, it is important to recognize that students also have rights as individuals. Parents cannot and should not make every decision for their children, as everyone has personal boundaries and limitations. They must understand that school is not always easy—students often face overwhelming tasks and responsibilities. This is why parental support and care are crucial. When a child feels loved and encouraged, they gain motivation to work harder without feeling the crushing weight of pressure.

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ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 4| April 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

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