

# Peer Pressure, Academic Stress, and Self-Regulation Among College Students

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationships among college students' self-regulation, academic stress, and peer pressure. A suitable sample of 206 college students, aged 18 to 25, from different institutions in Bengaluru was used, and information was gathered using electronic and social media distribution of questionnaires. The Short Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SSRQ), Perception of Academic Stress (PAS), and Peer Pressure Questionnaire-Revised (PPQ-R) were utilized to collect data. To find correlations and regression effects, a quantitative research technique with a descriptive design was adopted, and data was analyzed using SPSS. The findings showed that among college students, there were notable correlations and variations between peer pressure and academic stress, academic stress and self-regulation, and peer pressure and self-regulation. Furthermore, academic stress was significantly impacted by peer pressure, while no discernible effect was seen on self-regulation. These results highlight the complex relationships that impact college students and highlight how crucial it is to deal with peer pressure and academic stress in order to promote healthy self-regulation and general well-being.

**Keywords:** Peer Pressure; Academic Stress; Self-Regulation; College Students.

## Introduction

Peer pressure is the substantial influence that people have over the ideas, feelings, and actions of other people. Peer pressure is defined by Clasen and Brown (1985) as a type of influence that peers use to either support or discourage a certain action or task, regardless of the individual's agreement. Kiran-Esen (2003), however, points out that in this situation, a person's desire or reluctance is irrelevant. Peer pressure may take many forms, direct and indirect, some of which cause behavioral changes without the subject's full knowledge (Ryan, 2000). Peer pressure may have negative consequences on young people, such as the onset of depression, elevated stress levels, behavioral issues, and a helplessness complex. It is one of the most common obstacles people face throughout their lifetimes.

When students are presented with academic expectations that exceed their ability to adjust, they suffer academic stress, which is defined as their physiological and psychological responses (Alsulami et al., 2018). Stress can be caused by high expectations from family or society, striving for perfection, having too many responsibilities, or having too much work to do. Students often encounter a range of academic difficulties, such as understanding lectures, competing with classmates, meeting expectations from parents and teachers regarding their academic performance, proving their subject-matter expertise, sometimes making accommodations, and choosing friends (Maqsood, S., Bano, S., Goraya, J. T., & Sher, I., 2023). Acute stressors can cause a variety of physiological and cognitive symptoms, such as headaches, tremors,

high blood pressure, heightened respiration rate, fast heartbeat, disturbed sleep patterns, and perceived stress, negative emotional states, such as anger, agitation, fear, anxiety, and guilt, as well as negative thoughts, concern, and emotions of uncontrollability (Garett et al., 2017).

The ability to properly control one's emotions during periods of emotional pain and to improve one's mood while feeling down is referred to as self-regulation. (2017) McClelland et al. People who are not proficient in self-regulation are more vulnerable to mental health problems. In 2017, Kauhoven and Dorjee. These skills also function as indicators of a number of health issues, socioeconomic standing, and a tendency to commit crimes. Both internal and external motivation that is consistent with one's objectives over an extended length of time is necessary for successful self-regulation. As a result, improved self-regulation is associated with better well-being, which includes mental health, the ability to sustain meaningful social relationships, and adaptive functioning in the home or the classroom (Buckner, Mezzacappa, & Beardslee, 2009).

### **Need and Significance of the Study**

Peer pressure has a big impact on developing minds, affecting stress related to school and self-control. While peers who are similar to you in terms of hobbies, age, upbringing, or social standing might offer insightful criticism and encouragement, too much peer pressure can erode your sense of independence and self-control. Anxiety and depression are two mental health problems that may arise from this. Peer expectations for academic performance might make students feel more stressed because they feel under pressure to reach or beyond these standards in order to be accepted by others or to avoid criticism. This strain can make stress worse and make it more difficult to cope. To support mental health, academic performance, and general well-being, research on peer pressure, academic stress, and self-regulation is essential. The purpose of this study is to better understand the connection—which is especially pertinent to the present generation of college students—between peer pressure, academic stress, and self-regulation. It is crucial to comprehend how peer pressure affects academic stress and self-control in order to support mental health and general well-being.

### **Review of Literature**

Joseph, M., & Dr. Sudheesh N T. (2023) investigated the connection between foreign students' social support, adjustment, and academic stress in India. Students from several Indian colleges and institutions participated in the study. The results showed a strong correlation between academic accomplishment, academic stress, academic lifestyle, and social support. Improved adaptability and strong social support networks were linked to lower levels of academic stress, according to the study. Academic motivation was directly correlated with an increase in academic stress, and academic lifestyle was proven to be a strong predictor of academic stress. The report does, however, admit its limitations and recommends more research that focuses on comparative studies and targets students from nations where immigration to India is more common.

Maqsood, S., et al. (2023) examined the effects of peer pressure, academic stress, and goal-adjusting strategies on college day scholars and hostelites. A total of 300 students participated in the study, of whom 129 were hostelers and 171 were day scholars. The findings demonstrated a strong relationship between academic stress and peer pressure, with day scholars showing the strongest link. These scholars were also more likely to reengage in realistic objectives after experiencing higher levels of academic stress and peer pressure.

Ramli, H., et al. (2018) have research titled "Migator Role of Mindfulness in Academic Stress and Self-Regulation Among University Students in Malaysia." 384 undergraduate students from the Klang Valley participated in the study. This shows that although mindfulness is linked to self-regulation and academic stress, it might not act as a mediator between these factors in this particular situation. The study recommends that rather than examining self-regulation in its broadest sense, future studies should concentrate on particular facets of self-regulation, such as impulsive control. This would offer a more sophisticated method of comprehending and managing self-regulation among college students in relation to academic stress and mindfulness.

Ding, et al. (2018) studied how 951 Chinese university physical education students' drinking habits were affected by peer pressure and self-efficacy. The findings demonstrated that students' drinking behavior was strongly impacted by their perception of increased peer pressure and inadequate self-efficacy for alcohol self-regulation. However, the study's shortcomings, such as its cross-sectional data and lack of specificity, indicate the need for more investigation.

Arabzadeh, et al., (2012) conducted a study titled "The Relationship of Self-regulation and Self-efficacy with Academic Stress in University Students." Despite the small sample size, the study indicated that self-efficacy and self-regulation had both positive and negative associations with academic stress in university students, with self-regulation and self-efficacy directly impacting academic stress.

## Method

### Objectives

- To understand the relationship between peer pressure and academic stress among college students.
- To understand the relationship between peer pressure and self-regulation among college students.
- To understand the relationship between academic stress and self-regulation among college students.
- To understand the influence of peer pressure on the academic stress of college students.
- To understand the influence of peer pressure on the self-regulation of college students.

### Variables and Operational Definitions

**Peer pressure** is the influence of people within the same social group. It is the influence on peers to conform or to be accepted by the group.

**Academic stress** is mental distress regarding academic challenges or failure, which eventually leads to academic burnout.

**Self-regulation** is the ability to understand and manage own behavior and actions. It enables them to remain calm in challenging situations and respond more effectively.

### Hypotheses

- There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and academic stress among college students.
- There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and self-regulation among college students.
- There is no significant relationship between academic stress and self-regulation among college students.
- There is no significant influence of peer pressure on the academic stress of college students.
- There is no significant influence of peer pressure on the self-regulation of college students.

**Sample**

A convenient sample of 206 college students (age group- 18 to 25) from different colleges in Bengaluru. Questionnaires could be distributed through social networks, with interested participants having the option of completing either a paper-pencil version or an electronic version.

**Inclusion Criteria**

College-going students aged 18 to 25 from different colleges in Bengaluru are included in this study.

**Exclusion Criteria**

Students who do not know English are excluded from the study.

**Tools for the Study**

Peer Pressure Questionnaire-Revised (PPQ-R), by Sunil Saini (2016), a 25-item scale that assesses peer influences in everyday life situations. It is a 5-point Likert scale with 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability and validity of the scale were found to be 0.942 and 0.971 respectively.

The Perception of Academic Stress (PAS) Scale, an 18-item scale developed by Bedewy and Gabriel in 2015, is used to assess the stress experienced by students. It is a 5-point Likert scale with 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The authors determined the tool's content validity based on expert review and item validity through item analysis. It was discovered that the test-retest correlation for 50 people with a 25-day interval was 0.82.

Short Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SSRQ), a 31-item scale developed by Brown et al. It was designed to assess self-regulation skills. Items are scored on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability of the SSRQ scale score proved satisfactory.

**Research Design and Statistical Technique**

A quantitative research approach was adopted, wherein a descriptive research design was employed, in which a *convenient sampling* method was used to collect the data. The *correlation* between the variables, and the influence (*regression*) of peer pressure on academic stress and self-regulation of college students was identified using *SPSS*.

**Results**

To test the first three hypotheses, the correlation method is used. The first hypothesis is that there is no significant relationship between peer pressure and academic stress among college students.

**Table 1 Correlation between Peer Pressure and Academic Stress.**

| Variables               | N   | M     | SD    | 1      | 2 |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|-------|--------|---|
| 1. Peer Pressure (PP)   | 206 | 65.68 | 20.72 | -      |   |
| 2. Academic Stress (AS) | 206 | 61.01 | 9.27  | .361** | - |

\*\**p* < 0.01 (two-tailed)

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the correlation between peer pressure and academic stress among college students. The mean and standard deviation of the variable peer pressure is 65.68 and 20.72

respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the variable academic stress is 61.01 and 9.27 respectively. Here mean of peer pressure is higher than that of academic stress.

The correlation coefficient obtained is .361, and the significance value is .000, which is less than .01. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. And accepts the alternate hypothesis that a significant strong positive relationship exists between peer pressure and academic stress among college students.

The second hypothesis is that there is no significant relationship between peer pressure and self-regulation among college students.

**Table 2 Correlation between Peer Pressure and Self-Regulation.**

| Variables               | N   | M     | SD    | 1     | 2 |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|---|
| 1. Peer Pressure (PP)   | 206 | 65.68 | 20.72 | -     |   |
| 2. Self-regulation (SR) | 206 | 105   | 11.21 | .151* | - |

\* $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed)

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the correlation between peer pressure and self-regulation among college students. The mean and standard deviation of the variable peer pressure is 65.68 and 20.72 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the variable self-regulation are 105 and 11.21 respectively. Here the mean of self-regulation is higher than that of peer pressure.

The correlation coefficient obtained is .151, and the significance value is .030, which is less than .05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. And accepts the alternate hypothesis that a significant positive relationship exists between peer pressure and self-regulation among college students.

The third hypothesis is that there is no significant relationship between academic stress and self-regulation among college students.

**Table 3 Correlation between Academic Stress and Self-Regulation.**

| Variables                | N   | M     | SD    | 1       | 2 |
|--------------------------|-----|-------|-------|---------|---|
| 1. Academic Stress (AS)  | 206 | 61.01 | 9.27  | -       |   |
| 2. Self- Regulation (SR) | 206 | 105   | 11.21 | -.422** | - |

\*\* $p < 0.01$  (two-tailed)

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the correlation between academic stress and self-regulation among college students. The mean and standard deviation of the variable academic stress is 61.01 and 9.27 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the self-regulation are 105 and 11.21 respectively. Here the mean of self-regulation is higher than that of academic stress.

The correlation coefficient obtained is -.422, and the significance value is .000, which is less than .01. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. And accepts the alternate hypothesis that a significant strong negative relationship exists between academic stress and self-regulation among college students.

The fourth hypothesis is that there is no significant influence of peer pressure on academic stress among college students.

**Table 4 Regression Table Predicting Academic Stress with Peer Pressure.**

| Variable        | B    | $\beta$ | SE    | t    | p |
|-----------------|------|---------|-------|------|---|
| Academic Stress | .154 |         | 2.021 | 5.25 |   |

|                 |      |      |      |      |       |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| (Constant)      |      |      |      |      |       |
| Peer Pressure   | 50.9 | .345 | 0.03 | 25.2 | 0.000 |
| R <sup>2</sup>  | .119 |      |      |      |       |
| ΔR <sup>2</sup> | .115 |      |      |      |       |

Table 4 shows the regression table predicting academic stress with peer pressure. The R<sup>2</sup> is .119, the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is .115, and the B and β values of academic stress are 0.72 and 0.345 respectively. The significance value is 0.000, it was found that there is a significant influence of peer pressure on academic stress with a significance level of 0.01. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. And found that the change in peer pressure has an 11.5% influence on academic stress.

The fifth hypothesis is that there is no significant influence of peer pressure on self-regulation among college students.

**Table 5 Regression Table Predicting Self-Regulation with Peer Pressure.**

| Variable        | B       | β    | SE    | t     | p    |
|-----------------|---------|------|-------|-------|------|
| Self-Regulation | .015    |      | 2.603 | 39.91 |      |
| (Constant)      |         |      |       |       |      |
| Peer Pressure   | 103. 87 | .032 | .038  | .453  | .651 |
| R <sup>2</sup>  | .001    |      |       |       |      |
| ΔR <sup>2</sup> | .004    |      |       |       |      |

Table 5 shows the regression table predicting self-regulation with peer pressure. The R<sup>2</sup> is .001, the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is .004, and the B and β values of self-regulation are 0.059 and 0.032 respectively. The significance value is 0.651, which is greater than 0.05, which means there is no significant influence of peer pressure on self-regulation. Hence the null hypothesis was accepted.

### Discussion

The current study looks at the relationship between college students' peer pressure, academic stress, and self-regulation. There are 206 students in the sample that are between the ages of 18 and 25. Data collection was done using an easy-to-use sampling technique. The Peer Pressure Questionnaire-Revised (PPQ-R), the Short Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SSRQ), and the Perception of Academic Stress (PAS) Scale are the instruments utilized in this study. SPSS was used to analyze the gathered data.

The findings of the present study show that there is a significant relationship between peer pressure and academic stress among college students. As peer pressure increases, academic stress also increases. Similar research revealed a favorable association between academic stress and peer pressure (Mangat & Kaur, 2022). Additionally, research showed that day scholars were more exposed to academic stress and peer pressure, both of which had an impact on their academic performance (Maqsood, S., Bano, S., Goraya, J. T., & Sher, I., 2023). According to another survey, a sizable percentage of students dealt with moderate to severe academic stress; female students reported greater levels of stress because of peer pressure (Alsadah, F., Haque, T., Afroz, M., & Barayan, R., 2023).

The present study found that there is a significant relationship between peer pressure and self-regulation among college students. The capacity to recognize and control one's actions and behavior is known as self-

regulation. Positive and negative peer pressure can both be possible. Higher levels of self-regulation will result from positive peer pressure. Peer support fosters a sense of community and encourages people to improve their self-regulation abilities by helping one another with time management, learning, and stress management. Contrary to the current study, Ding et al. (2018) claim that students' perceptions of increasing peer pressure and low self-efficacy for alcohol self-regulation had a significant influence on their drinking behavior. The kind and caliber of peer contacts influence the link between self-regulation and peer exposure. While social connections can influence fundamental cognitive functions, the quality of these interactions is the primary determinant of more complex processes like mood management and decision-making (King et al., 2018).

The present study found that there is a significant relationship between academic stress and self-regulation among college students. Similar research indicates a detrimental relationship between self-regulation and academic stress. Students who are better at self-regulation typically have lower levels of academic stress. Conversely, pupils who are always stressed out could find it hard to manage their conduct since they can't adjust their arousal level to fit the circumstances. In addition to self-regulation, improved adaptability and strong social support networks were linked to lower levels of academic stress (Joseph & Sudhesh N.T., 2023).

The present study found that there is a significant influence of peer pressure and academic stress among college students. According to a related study, peer pressure is a strong predictor of academic stress, and academic stress is also significantly influenced by the family environment and peer groups. (Sharma, 2014). Also, the current study revealed that there is no significant influence of peer pressure on self-regulation among college students. Peer pressure often leads people to imitate the attitudes or behaviors of their peers, even when those actions or attitudes go against their goals or ideals. People could so find it difficult to control themselves (King et al., 2018).

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The study seeks to explore the correlation between peer pressure, academic stress, and self-regulation in college students. The sample consists of 206 college students from different colleges in Bengaluru. Data collection is done by a convenient sampling method. Peer Pressure Questionnaire-Revised (PPQ-R), Perception of Academic Stress (PAS) Scale, and Short Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SSRQ) are the tools used to collect data. The collected data underwent statistical analysis utilizing SPSS software.

The findings of the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between peer pressure and academic stress among college students. There is a significant relationship between peer pressure and self-regulation among college students. There is a significant relationship between academic stress and self-regulation among college students. There is a significant influence of peer pressure on academic stress among college students. And there is no significant influence of peer pressure on self-regulation among college students.

### **Implications**

By grasping the impact of peer pressure and academic stress on students' capacity to control their actions and feelings, universities can devise specific interventions and support systems. These measures might include introducing programs to manage stress, establishing networks where peers can provide support, or enforcing policies that foster a positive academic atmosphere. By tackling these issues, colleges can assist students in handling difficulties more adeptly, resulting in enhanced well-being and academic

achievements. Furthermore, the study could spark additional research aimed at finding efficient methods to aid students in handling peer pressure and academic stress.

### Limitations

- A convenient sampling method was employed to choose the participants for the study.
- Requiring participants to fill out the questionnaire online could have potentially affected their focus, possibly resulting in less accurate responses.

### Suggestions For Future Research

- Employing a random sampling approach could enhance precision.
- Conducting studies with larger sample sizes could improve the robustness of the findings.

### Ethics Followed

- Participants provided consent before the study commenced.
- The study avoided questioning participants' emotions.
- Confidentiality was maintained for participants' details and responses.
- Anonymity was preserved for individuals involved in the study.
- Participant data were solely utilized for the designated research purposes and not for any other reason.

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