



Vol 1 No 2 2024

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION AND SCIENCE DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH

Email: arsypersadaquality@gmail.com

Home Page: <https://jurnal.asrypersadaquality.com/index.php/ijeisdr>

THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN REDUCING ACADEMIC STRESS IN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS

Interpersonal
Communication,
Academic Stress,
Teacher Strategies

ARTICLE INFO

Accepted: 1 Sep 2024

Revised: 23 Oct 2024

Approved: 28 Nov 2024

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers' interpersonal communication can help students cope with academic stress. In-depth interviews with educators were conducted as part of this qualitative study to determine the causes of academic stress, including pressure to perform well academically and the burden of subject matter. The study findings showed that, especially before exams, students exhibited symptoms of stress, including anxiety and behavioral disorders. Teachers used interpersonal communication techniques to address these issues by creating a relaxed environment and encouraging two-way dialogue. Students felt more comfortable discussing their emotions and difficulties thanks to these techniques. However, communication barriers such as differences in students' comfort levels require flexible and adaptive strategies. This study highlights the value of interpersonal contact in helping students manage their academic stress and shows how tailored strategies can improve students' academic achievement and overall well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Students often struggle with stress, especially in educational settings. Students' academic performance, mental health, and general well-being can all be negatively impacted by academic stress. Individuals experience stress as a result of interactions with their environment that cause them to perceive a discrepancy between their biological, psychological, and social resources and the physical and psychological demands of a scenario. Stress is personal and can be harmful if not balanced with the perceived burden and mental resilience of an individual (Mayasari & Susilawati, 2019). Interpersonal relationships and communication skills are among the elements that may have a major impact on students' stress levels.

According to research, between 10 and 30 percent of students experience some form of academic stress during their school years (Alsulami et al., 2018). Students experience more academic stress as a result of increased workloads related to assignments, exams, and performance expectations. According to Saleh Alsulami et al., there are a number of reasons why people experience stress, including giving oral presentations, having too much

schoolwork, not having enough time to complete assignments, and taking exams (Alsulami et al., 2018).

Furthermore, interpersonal relationships, especially disagreements with friends or partners, can create hostile and uncomfortable life situations, which can lead to chronic stress and interfere with students' ability to concentrate in class. For example, Hamaideh claims that students under academic pressure often exhibit symptoms of stress, including fatigue, worry, and irregular sleep patterns (Hamaideh, 2011). Furthermore, a study by Michaela C. Pascoe et al. verified that stress is triggered by difficulties in achieving academic expectations and if not addressed, can have a negative impact on students' mental health (Pascoe et al., 2020).

Students' emotional and academic performance are greatly affected by their mental health. For example, Katherine Weare's research shows a direct correlation between poor mental health and low academic performance (Weare, 2009).

Students may find interpersonal communication to be a useful stress management strategy. Students' academic stress can be significantly reduced through effective interpersonal communication. Strong interpersonal relationships and effective communication skills can provide children with a support network, allowing them to better handle stress and seek help when needed.

People can feel more empowered when under stress thanks to the emotional support they receive from interpersonal interactions. Communicating with loved ones can increase social support, foster empathy, and reduce feelings of loneliness, all of which are important for reducing mental stress.

In addition, the learning process is one way teachers use interpersonal contact to help students solve the challenges they face. To ensure that teacher-student learning activities are successful, the field of education is responsible for providing important information about knowledge. In the classroom, teachers act as educators for students. The main responsibility of teachers is to instill values, knowledge, and skills in students so that they can grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally. In addition to helping students learn, teachers also play an important role in helping them overcome obstacles and problems that arise during the learning process and in developing strong bonds with their students (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

Building effective communication between teachers and students can sometimes make some of the problems faced by students easier to solve. Interpersonal communication is a general term used to describe this type of communication. Building stronger bonds, creating a positive self-concept, and cultivating a positive personality are the goals of interpersonal communication.

Given the importance of understanding interpersonal communication, this study can help educational institutions and schools in developing initiatives or environments that encourage constructive student social interactions. Students' motivation and mental health are positively influenced by school environments that encourage honest communication and respect for each other. This implies that constructive relationships can be a stress-reducing strategy in educational settings.

RESEARCH METHODS

A method for understanding subjective experiences and social events from the perspective of participants is qualitative research design. Meaning, context, and a holistic understanding of the phenomena being studied are the main focuses of qualitative research, in contrast to quantitative research, which is more concerned with numerical data and statistical analysis. Data collection techniques used in this research often include focus groups and in-depth interviews. Describing and understanding participants' experiences, opinions, and social interactions in a particular setting is the goal of qualitative research. This research investigates in depth the interpretations that people make of particular events or phenomena. Interpretive or constructivist methodologies are often the basis of qualitative research. While constructivism argues that social reality is created through human interpretation and social interaction, interpretive approaches concentrate on how people understand and give meaning to their experiences.

Method of collecting data

- a. In-depth Interviews: Gathering information by talking directly with participants. These interviews are often semi-structured, where the researcher asks a series of questions but is free to probe into any subject that comes up.
- b. Observation: Studying interactions and behavior in the natural environment. Participant observation involves the researcher actively participating in the daily activities of the participants, while non-participant observation involves the researcher simply observing from a distance.
- c. Document Analysis: Examining publications, records, and reports relevant to the research problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

According to interviews with educators, pressure to perform academically and excessive study load are two common causes of academic stress among students. Teachers see behavioral changes (becoming more withdrawn, nervous, or restless) and decreased enthusiasm for learning as indicators of academic stress. The importance of teacher support is demonstrated by the tendency for this stress to increase as exams or assignment deadlines approach.

Teachers also use a variety of interpersonal communication techniques to support students who are stressed in their lessons. Creating a comfortable environment when talking to students, encouraging two-way communication, and giving them space to express their emotions without feeling pressured are some of the strategies used. To ease tension and help students feel more at ease, teachers can start the conversation by making a joke or asking how they are doing. Teachers then ask about any challenges students may be having with their lessons or assignments once they have started to open up. The resource person emphasized the need for two-way communication, encouraging students to share their thoughts and feelings without fear of being judged. Teachers also give shy students the opportunity to write down their concerns.

Students' reluctance to open up and the variation in communication styles are some of the difficulties teachers face when implementing this communication. Teachers must adapt their methods to each student because they understand that not all students feel comfortable talking about their problems openly. To help students feel more comfortable opening up, teachers try to build stronger bonds with students and prioritize them. In order to help children before their problems get worse, teachers also try to be more aware of stress indicators, such as changes in attitude or decreased desire to learn. After class, professors sometimes host informal tutoring sessions where students can discuss their challenges in more detail. Using this method, educators help students not only with academics but also with stress management and mental readiness.

DISCUSSION

Some conclusions drawn from the results of the teacher interviews can be linked to the theory of academic stress and interpersonal communication explained earlier. Teachers have found that students' academic stress is often caused by pressure to perform well academically and the amount of subject matter. This is consistent with the definition of academic stress given by (Laia et al., 2022), which defines stress as a condition resulting from a misalignment between an individual's biological, psychological, or social systems and an ideal scenario. In terms of education, students must adapt to time management, pressure to advance in class,

lengthy study sessions, test anxiety, and the requirement to choose a major and a job. Scholastic stress is a type of stress that results from scholastic demands.

According to Sriati in (Rosanti et al., 2022) Indonesian: Academic stress is characterized by the emergence of the following symptoms, which correspond to the behavioral, emotional, and physical indicators that students exhibit when they are experiencing stress, such as becoming more withdrawn, anxious, or irritable.

- a. Physical Reactions. Stomach aches, fatigue, gripping objects too tightly, muscle tension, headaches, cold sweats, frequent urination, rapid heartbeat, and cold hands are examples of physical reactions.
- b. Mind. Confusion or chaos of thoughts, forgetfulness, lack of purpose in life, pessimistic thoughts, decreased achievement, loss of hope, feelings of worthlessness, lack of enjoyment of life, difficulty concentrating, difficulty making decisions, and lack of priorities are some of the symptoms associated with the mental element.
- c. Actions. Students experiencing academic stress may exhibit the following behaviors: anxiety, lying, skipping school, lack of discipline, disinterest in the subject matter, complaining, difficulty concentrating, being lazy about studying, not completing assignments, taking shortcuts, lacking skills or competencies, isolating themselves, avoiding stressful situations, having trouble sleeping, and blaming others.
- d. Sensual Response. Students experiencing scholastic stress may exhibit the following emotional responses: anxiety, fear, lack of humor, panic attacks, and irritability.

Stress has a number of negative impacts on students, including disrupting their ability to focus and perform well in any task, including studying; causing excessive and irrational fears (phobias); anxiety that can arise for no apparent reason; making them feel depressed; causing them to act aggressively out of anger when under pressure; lowering their immunity, making them more susceptible to illness; and having a detrimental effect on their mental health (Rosanti et al., 2022).

Teachers use interpersonal communication techniques to help students manage their learning stress..Stewart L. Tubbs and Sylvia Moss in (Hidayat, 2012)describes three models of interpersonal communication, namely as follows:

- a. One-way communication is represented by the linear model. There is only one way for communication to occur: from a sender to a passive receiver. In education, the learner is the receiver and the teacher is the sender. Teachers exclusively use the lecture format. This suggests that students only passively receive information given and never send messages. Students may nod, grimace, grin, appear engaged or bored, and so on.

Furthermore, the linear model incorrectly depicts communication as a series of events in which speaking occurs before listening. However, in real-world interactions, speaking and listening often occur simultaneously or overlap. Participants in interpersonal communication are always sending and receiving messages at the same time while also adjusting to each other.

- b. Two-way communication, or interaction model. Feedback, or reaction to the message, is given by the listener during the communication process. Students respond to messages from the teacher and provide feedback during the learning process. Thus, teachers and students play the same role as givers and receivers of reactions.
- c. Transactional model, which involves two-way communication. The complexity of interpersonal communication and the various roles played by the participants are highlighted by the transactional model of interpersonal communication. Along with the dynamic interaction between students and teachers, this transactional model also includes dynamic relationships among students. The learning process results in the development of ideal student activities, which in turn encourages students to engage (Hidayat, 2012).

According to the study's findings, teachers use interpersonal communication techniques to help students cope with academic stress by creating a calm environment where they can express their emotions without fear of criticism. According to Tubbs and Moss (Hidayat, 2012) Indonesian language: The interactive communication model is a process in which the listener responds to the message by providing feedback. This method describes the interaction model in communication. Students respond to messages from the teacher and provide feedback during the learning process. As a result, teachers and students play the same role as reactors and recipients, which relieves stress during communication.

The importance of involvement, mutual understanding, and feedback functions in understanding the overall communication process is emphasized by Schramm's communication model. This method suggests that communication is a dynamic process in which all participants share information, interpret it, and respond to it. In addition, Schramm's communication model highlights a number of important components, including: (1) Source: The individual or organization requesting that information be communicated; (2) Message: The information the source wishes to share with the receiver; (3) Channel: The way in which communication is sent from the sender to the receiver. This can be communicated orally, in writing, visually, or by a combination of these methods. Fourth, the receiver is the person or object receiving the words from the source and attempting to understand them. (5) Reaction or feedback from the person

sending the message. This is important because it indicates how well the message has been absorbed or understood. Thus, in order to understand the overall communication process, Schramm's model highlights the value of involvement, mutual understanding, and feedback. This method suggests that communication is a dynamic process in which all parties exchange information, interpretations, and responses.(Maulani et al., 2024).

Barnlund's interpersonal communication model, which emphasizes that understanding students' psychological backgrounds is necessary for effective communication, is reflected in the teacher's strategy of establishing a relaxed environment prior to discussion. According to(Rahmawati et al., 2024), the teacher also uses the advice and discussion strategy, which states that the instructor builds interpersonal communication by giving good advice to students that will help them change their behavior. The teacher then uses discussion as a strategy. In this case, the instructor does not simply provide guidance in one area, by expressing his or her point of view or opinion; rather, the instructor investigates the student's circumstances and history to consider their perspective (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

However, teachers also have to deal with issues such as students' varying communication styles and increasing comfort levels. These difficulties highlight the need for adaptive communication strategies, where educators try to understand each student's unique characteristics and modify their methods, such as by offering opportunities to submit complaints in writing.

Guidance counselors can teach students effective time management techniques so that they can allocate their time efficiently between studying, extracurricular activities, and leisure time. These methods not only help students in academics but also help them manage stress. Students can improve their quality of life and reduce stress by implementing effective time management techniques. Effective study can be hampered by stress. Guidance counselors can help students identify symptoms of stress and offer coping mechanisms. These methods, which can help students manage stress and improve their mental health, can include yoga, meditation, and relaxation exercises (Sudiansyah et al., 2023).

Counseling service programs must be created with broad guidance elements. As stated by Fauzan in Mugiarto in (Fergina et al., 2022) Teachers can also use counseling strategies with the Trait & Factor approach to help students develop skills, change mindsets, and adapt better. The Trait & Factor approach, especially Forcing Conformity, which is forcing to adjust to the situation, is one of the counseling strategies that can be used. Change Attitude is the process of redirecting one's thinking towards more optimistic ideas to change negative attitudes into positive ones. Acquiring the necessary talents, which is acquiring the necessary skills.

Choosing the right atmosphere is the first step in choosing the right atmosphere. Modifying the environment, which is changing the environment around us to achieve the results we want. In addition, a spiritual religious approach can be used as a counseling service for students. This includes reading holy verses and their meanings, practicing muhasabah (self-introspection), and engaging in intense devotion according to their different religions and beliefs to become closer to Allah SWT.

In line with various theories on interpersonal communication and student stress management, the findings of these interviews emphasize the important role that interpersonal communication plays in helping students manage academic stress through a tailored and flexible approach.

CONCLUSION

The study's conclusion shows that pressure to perform academically and the amount of subject matter have an impact on students' academic stress. Teachers recognize symptoms of stress, such as behavioral changes, anxiety, and decreased desire to learn, especially around exams or assignment deadlines. To manage this stress, educators use interpersonal communication techniques that foster a relaxed environment and encourage reciprocal conversations, allowing students to express their emotions without feeling pressured to do so. Difficulties in communication, such as students' reluctance to open up and differences in communication styles, are also recognized by teachers. Therefore, in order to reach each student individually, a flexible approach is needed. Teachers help students manage their stress and mental readiness in addition to academics through counseling and emotional support sessions. All things considered, this study highlights the value of interpersonal communication in helping students manage their academic stress and the need for teachers to use a flexible and individualized approach. This approach improves children's academic achievement in addition to their general well-being.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On this occasion, the author would like to thank those who have helped in the preparation and publication of this paper, who have been willing to cooperate in this qualitative research so that this scientific journal can be compiled.

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