

STRESS, ANXIETY, AND BEHAVIOURAL TRENDS AMONG STUDENTS AWAITING ADMISSION

Kedar Prasad Soni^{1*}, Dr. Sandeep Shukla²

^{1*}Assistant Professor, Chitk, Research Scholar, Department of Management, Vikrant University, Gwalior, (M.P.), India. kedarsoni123@gmail.com

²Ph.D. Guide, Department of Management, Vikrant University, Gwalior, (M.P.), India. drsshukla4@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The transition phase between completing prior education and securing admission into higher institutions represents a critical psychological period for students. This study examines stress, anxiety, and behavioral patterns among students awaiting admission, with a reframed focus on workforce readiness, human resource (HR) implications, and managerial relevance. Drawing on contemporary research, the paper identifies uncertainty, competitive pressure, and career ambiguity as key stressors. These psychological states are found to influence behavioral tendencies such as withdrawal, over-preparation, and risk aversion, which extend into future workplace behavior. The study argues that early-stage psychological patterns significantly shape employability, job-seeking behavior, and organizational adjustment. It further highlights the role of HR professionals and managers in designing early interventions, mental health support systems, and talent development strategies. The paper concludes by proposing a conceptual framework linking pre-admission stress to long-term workforce outcomes.

Keywords: Stress, Anxiety, Admission Uncertainty, Workforce Readiness, HRM, Behavioral Trends, Employability

Received: 14/01/2025

Revised: 24/01/2025

Acceptance: 02/02/2025

Publication: 09/03/2025

1. INTRODUCTION

The phase of awaiting admission into higher education institutions is often overlooked in academic and organizational research. However, it represents a high-uncertainty transition stage, comparable to job-seeking or early career entry. Students in this phase face intense psychological pressure stemming from academic expectations, limited opportunities, and unclear career trajectories.

Stress is defined as a psychological response to perceived demands exceeding coping capacity, while anxiety refers to emotional responses to perceived threats or uncertainty. In admission contexts, both are amplified due to lack of control and future ambiguity.

From a workforce perspective, this stage mirrors pre-employment anxiety, which has been shown to influence career decision-making, job preparedness, and employability outcomes. Therefore, understanding student behavior during this phase provides valuable insights for HR professionals and organizational leaders.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Stress and Anxiety in Academic Transitions*

Research indicates that students experience stress due to performance pressure, fear of failure, and competitive environments. Academic stress has been strongly linked to anxiety and reduced psychological well-being.

2.2 *Employment Anxiety and Career Uncertainty*

Studies show that uncertainty about future opportunities significantly increases employment anxiety, which affects decision-making and motivation. Academic stress has been empirically proven to predict employment anxiety, often mediated by psychological resilience.

2.3 *Behavioral Trends in Transitional Phases*

Students facing uncertainty often exhibit:

- Avoidance behavior
- Over-dependence on external validation
- Increased preparation or overworking
- Emotional withdrawal

Such behaviors resemble workplace phenomena like burnout, presenteeism, and reduced engagement.

2.4 *HR and Organizational Perspective*

Modern HR research highlights stress as a major factor affecting productivity, retention, and organizational sustainability. Early psychological conditioning, even before workforce entry, influences employee adaptability and performance.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine stress and anxiety levels among students awaiting admission
2. To analyze behavioral trends emerging during this period
3. To establish the connection between pre-admission stress and workforce readiness
4. To explore HR and managerial implications of these psychological patterns

4. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

H1: Admission-related uncertainty significantly increases stress levels among students

H2: Stress positively correlates with anxiety levels

H3: Stress and anxiety significantly influence behavioral patterns (avoidance, over-preparation, withdrawal)

H4: Behavioral patterns developed during admission waiting period influence workforce readiness

H5: Psychological resilience moderates the relationship between stress and anxiety

5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Admission Uncertainty → Stress → Anxiety → Behavioral Trends → Workforce Readiness
With Psychological Resilience as a mediating/moderating variable.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 *Research Design*

Descriptive and analytical research design

6.2 *Data Collection*

- Primary data: Structured questionnaire (Likert scale)
- Secondary data: Journals, reports, and prior research studies

6.3 *Sample*

- Target: Students awaiting admission

- Sample size: 150–300 respondents

6.4 Variables

- Independent: Admission uncertainty
- Mediating: Stress, anxiety
- Dependent: Behavioral trends, workforce readiness

6.5 Tools for Analysis

- Correlation analysis
- Regression analysis
- Factor analysis

7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

7.1 Key Stressors

- Uncertainty of admission outcome
- Peer competition
- Parental expectations
- Financial concerns

These align with broader student stressors such as academic and environmental pressures .

7.2 Anxiety Outcomes

- Fear of failure
- Career indecision
- Reduced confidence

High anxiety levels negatively impact job-seeking behavior and decision-making .

7.3 Behavioral Trends

Observed behavioral responses include:

- Hyper-preparation (skill overloading)
- Social withdrawal
- Risk aversion
- Digital dependency

These patterns mirror workplace stress responses such as low engagement and reduced productivity.

7.4 Workforce Linkages

Students experiencing prolonged stress:

- Show lower adaptability
- Exhibit higher job anxiety
- Have reduced decision-making ability

This directly impacts organizational onboarding and performance outcomes.

8. HR IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Talent Readiness

HR must recognize that employees enter organizations with pre-existing psychological conditions shaped during education transitions.

8.2 Recruitment Strategy

- Assess emotional intelligence and resilience
- Incorporate psychological screening
- Focus on adaptability over technical skills

8.3 Employee Well-being Programs

- Mental health support systems
- Stress management training
- Career counseling initiatives

8.4 Learning and Development (L&D)

Organizations should design:

- Resilience-building programs
- Decision-making workshops
- Emotional regulation training

9. MANAGERIAL RELEVANCE

Managers play a critical role in:

- Reducing uncertainty through clear communication
- Creating psychologically safe environments
- Supporting new employees during transition phases

Effective management reduces:

- Turnover intentions
- Workplace stress
- Productivity loss

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

For Educational Institutions

- Provide career counseling during admission waiting period
- Introduce stress management programs
- Enhance communication transparency

For HR Professionals

- Integrate mental health in onboarding
- Develop early intervention frameworks
- Focus on holistic employee development

For Students

- Build resilience and coping mechanisms
- Focus on skill development, not just outcomes
- Seek social and institutional support

11. CONCLUSION

Stress and anxiety among students awaiting admission are not isolated academic issues but early indicators of workforce behavior. These psychological patterns significantly influence employability, adaptability, and long-term organizational performance. By reframing this transitional phase through an HR and managerial lens, this study highlights the need for early intervention strategies. Organizations that proactively address these issues can build a more resilient, productive, and mentally healthy workforce.

REFERENCES

Introduction

1. Saleh, D., Camart, N., & Romo, L. (2017). Predictors of stress in college students. *Frontiers in psychology*, 8, 19.
2. Clabaugh, A., Duque, J. F., & Fields, L. J. (2021). Academic stress and emotional well-being in United States college students following onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 628787.
3. Fruehwirth, J. C., Biswas, S., & Perreira, K. M. (2021). The Covid-19 pandemic and mental health of first-year college students: Examining the effect of Covid-19 stressors using longitudinal data. *PloS one*, 16(3), e0247999.
4. Liyanage, S., Saqib, K., Khan, A. F., Thobani, T. R., Tang, W. C., Chiarot, C. B., ... & Butt, Z. A. (2021). Prevalence of anxiety in university students during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(1), 62.
5. Ahmed, I., Hazell, C. M., Edwards, B., Glazebrook, C., & Davies, E. B. (2023). A systematic review and meta-analysis of studies exploring prevalence of non-specific anxiety in undergraduate university students. *BMC psychiatry*, 23(1), 240.
6. Tan, G. X., Soh, X. C., Hartanto, A., Goh, A. Y., & Majeed, N. M. (2023). Prevalence of anxiety in college and university students: An umbrella review. *Journal of Affective Disorders Reports*, 14, 100658.
7. Lourie, A., Kennedy, S., Henshaw, E. J., & James, D. (2023). College transition Fall 2020 and 2021: Understanding the relationship of COVID-19 experiences and psychosocial correlates with anxiety and depression. *PloS one*, 18(7), e0287792.
8. Stokoe, M., Nordstokke, D., & Wilcox, G. (2024). First Year Students' Perceptions of the Transition to University: The Role of Informational, Instrumental, and Emotional Support. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, 10(2), 377-393.
9. Kwak, Y., Kim, Y., & Chae, H. (2025). Job search anxiety and flourishing among university students: the serial mediating effects of social support and strengths use. *BMC psychology*, 13(1), 652.
10. Yang, M., Li, X., Qin, X., Tian, X., Zhang, H., & Wen, H. (2025). The relationship between perceived academic stress and college students' employment anxiety: the mediating role of psychological resilience. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 16, 1602808.

Literature Review

1. Pascoe, M. C., Hetrick, S. E., & Parker, A. G. (2020). The impact of stress on students in secondary school and higher education. *International journal of adolescence and youth*, 25(1), 104-112.
2. Son, C., Hegde, S., Smith, A., Wang, X., & Sasangohar, F. (2020). Effects of COVID-19 on college students' mental health in the United States: Interview survey study. *Journal of medical internet research*, 22(9), e21279.
3. Odriozola-González, P., Planchuelo-Gómez, Á., Iruetia, M. J., & de Luis-García, R. (2020). Psychological effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown among students and workers of a Spanish university. *Psychiatry research*, 290, 113108.
4. Aristovnik, A., Keržič, D., Ravšelj, D., Tomaževič, N., & Umek, L. (2020). Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on life of higher education students: A global perspective. *Sustainability*, 12(20), 8438.
5. Wang, C., & Zhao, H. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on anxiety in Chinese university students. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 1168.
6. Cao, W., Fang, Z., Hou, G., Han, M., Xu, X., Dong, J., & Zheng, J. (2020). The psychological impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on college students in China. *Psychiatry research*, 287, 112934.
7. Boo, S., Wang, C., & Kim, M. (2021). Career adaptability, future time perspective, and career anxiety among undergraduate students: A cross-national comparison. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 29, 100328.
8. ĀžeĀĀen, H. (2021). A Comprehensive Study on University Students's Perceived Employability: Comparative Effects of Personal and Contextual Factors. *SAGE Open*, 11(3), 21582440211036105-21582440211036105.
9. Zhang, Z., Yu, X., & Liu, X. (2022). Do I decide my career? Linking career stress, career exploration, and future work self to career planning or indecision. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 997984.
10. Atikah, D. N., Kurniawati, F., & Rifameutia, T. (2023). Students' career anxiety: a systematic literature review. *Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif*, 13(3), 1366-1381.

Discussion

1. Auerbach, R. P., Alonso, J., Axinn, W. G., Cuijpers, P., Ebert, D. D., Green, J. G., ... & Bruffaerts, R. (2016). Mental disorders among college students in the World Health Organization world mental health surveys. *Psychological medicine*, 46(14), 2955-2970.
2. Rudolph, C. W., Lavigne, K. N., & Zacher, H. (2017). Career adaptability: A meta-analysis of relationships with measures of adaptivity, adapting responses, and adaptation results. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 98, 17-34.
3. Bruffaerts, R., Mortier, P., Kiekens, G., Auerbach, R. P., Cuijpers, P., Demyttenaere, K., ... & Kessler, R. C. (2018). Mental health problems in college freshmen: Prevalence and academic functioning. *Journal of affective disorders*, 225, 97-103.
4. Auerbach, R. P., Mortier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Cuijpers, P., ... & Kessler, R. C. (2018). WHO world mental health surveys international college student project: Prevalence and distribution of mental disorders. *Journal of abnormal psychology*, 127(7), 623.
5. Ebert, D. D., Mortier, P., Kaehlke, F., Bruffaerts, R., Baumeister, H., Auerbach, R. P., ... & WHO World Mental Health—International College Student Initiative collaborators. (2019). Barriers of mental health treatment utilization among first-year college students: First cross-national results from the WHO World Mental Health International College Student Initiative. *International journal of methods in psychiatric research*, 28(2), e1782.
6. Karyotaki, E., Cuijpers, P., Albor, Y., Alonso, J., Auerbach, R. P., Bantjes, J., ... & Kessler, R. C. (2020). Sources of stress and their associations with mental disorders among college students: results of the world health organization world mental health surveys international college student initiative. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 1759.
7. Karyotaki, E., Klein, A. M., Ciharova, M., Bolinski, F., Krijnen, L., de Koning, L., ... & Cuijpers, P. (2022). Guided internet-based transdiagnostic individually tailored Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for symptoms of depression and/or anxiety in college students: A randomized controlled trial. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 150, 104028.
8. Madigan, D. J., Kim, L. E., & Glandorf, H. L. (2024). Interventions to reduce burnout in students: A systematic review and meta-analysis: DJ Madigan et al. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 39(2), 931-957.
9. Jochmann, A., Gusy, B., Lesener, T., & Wolter, C. (2024). Procrastination, depression and anxiety symptoms in university students: a three-wave longitudinal study on the mediating role of perceived stress. *BMC psychology*, 12(1), 276.
10. Ansari, S., & Iqbal, N. (2025). Association of stress and resilience in college students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 236, 113006.