

Role of Academic Pressure on Students Employability Intentions: Mediating Role of External Support (Family and Professionals)

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims to find out the role of academic pressure on students' employability intentions. As previous studies have done limited research on determining the impact of academic pressure and employability, the current study aims to find out the intentions of students to do jobs while having high academic demands, with the external support from family and professionals. The present study collects data through surveys from students at different universities. The proposed model is analyzed by using a structural modeling technique. Recent findings show that academic pressure and having no external support affect the employability of students, while it also shows that the mediating role of external support mitigates the negative impacts on students' employability. We hope to give full insight to policymakers to understand the role of academic pressure while making any decisions for practical implications.

Keywords: Academic pressure, Employability, External Support: Family and Professionals.

INTRODUCTION

For career sustainability, employability is a long-term learning method that replaces a job for a life (Ma & Bennett, 2021). The importance of employability is normally admitted by scholars and policy makers alike in our competitive global modern economy, where change is a persistent reality (Peeters et al., 2017). Moreover, employability has two approaches, which are objective and subjective. The objective approach shows the job offers and employment status (Somerville & Scholars, 2015), whereas the subjective approach means the perception of students' preferences for maintaining employability (Peeters et al., 2014). In addition, the main objective of this study is subjective employability, which is indicated by students' intentions. Particularly, this study shows the relationship between perceived employability and academic pressure among individuals with the mediating role of external support. Although few studies contribute to the aspects of perceived employability in the context of academic pressure. However, many students feel pressure related to academic demands like (workload, time restraints, academic self-perception, and pressure to perform which causes a huge impact on students' mental health and sustainable career adaptation. While external support from family and professionals helps them to overcome the academic demands, which encourages students to think about doing jobs.

Nowadays, employability has become a serious issue in competitive job markets, particularly for students transitioning from academic life to professional careers. The relationship between academic demands and perceived employability is unclear, whereas academic success and employability intentions can be influenced by external support in this context. Limited research has been done that can investigate the student employability intentions in a developing country like Pakistan (Alsubaie et al., 2019). Additionally, many times students face notable academic pressure, which can hamper the development of

skills required for employability. On the other hand, external support from professionals and family members may play an important role in reducing the negative effects of academic pressure and boosting the student's employability intentions. To overcome this problem, implementing such programs that would be beneficial regarding family engagement and professional counselling guides to support students in managing their academic demands to enhance their employability intentions. This study aims to find out the impact of academic pressure, the mediating role of external support in determining the students' employability intention, and the relationship between academic pressure and employability. The importance of this study is to measure the impact of academic pressure and students' employability intention with the mediating role of external factors, family, and friends. Nowadays, students are getting frustrated due to the lack of assistance with future jobs. This study helps the policy and decision makers to make a strategy that helps the students to manage their academic demands to enhance their employability intentions, as students play an important role in the economy and development of the country.

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the role of academic pressure on students' employability?
2. To evaluate the role of external support on students' academic stress?
3. To evaluate the role of external support on students' employability intentions?
4. To evaluate the mediating role of external support on relationship between academic pressure and employability?

Research Questions

1. Does the role of academic pressure determine the impact on students' employability?

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2. Does external support have an impact on students' academic stress?
3. Does the role of external support shape the student's employability intentions?
4. Does the role of external support mediate the relationship between academic pressure and employability?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Pressure and Employability

Prior studies have examined that students experiencing academic demands may emerge from academic expectations, workload, and constant examination (Agolla & Ongori, 2009; Azubuike, 2014). Meanwhile, pursuing employment and studies has an impact on students' psychological well-being (David, 2017). Continuation of studies may relate to psychological distress in students (Matthews, 2018). The university academic syllabus has been highly challenging and more concentrated, which can cause the risk of high mental stress in students and can affect employability (Leppink et al., 2016). Studies claim that employment may affect students' academic success, which also affects their job intentions (Benner & Curl, 2018).

H1: Academic Pressure positively and significantly impacts students' employability intentions.

Academic Pressure and External Support

External support from family and professionals has a significant role in academic performance (Li et al., 2024). Bronfen Brenner's ecological systems theory claims that individual development can be influenced by multi-level external support that is the mesosystem (professionals) and the microsystem (family). Previous studies have shown that students experiencing academic demands may emerge from academic expectations, workload, and constant examination. (Agolla & Ongori, 2009; Azubuike, 2014). Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) claims that due to insufficiency of perceived personal resources in the increasing demands of the environment, an individual may be led toward stress. Due to a shortage of resources, students face severe discomfort for student roles. There is a significant risk of distress among the students in the absence of social support, as the academic demands may increase beyond the normal level (Alsubaie et al., 2019). While it shows that if students have no external support from their family and professionals, they face many problems balancing their academic and professional life together.

H2: Academic pressure is positively and significantly linked with external support.

External support and Employability

External support is important for learning motivation, enhancing professional engagement, and employability among individuals (Cui, 2023). The support has specific domains, which are career support and social support. Career support means support that an individual receives after being unsuccessful in an interview, including advice and information about career planning, comfort and financial support for the job search, and other networks, like parents, teachers, and friends, can be a social network (Zhijin et al., 2010). Furthermore, external support helps the students in a way that they overcome all the challenges they are facing in finding a job. The connection of their family with reputable

people, their support, and financial support shapes their intentions in such a way that they become confident that they are able to do a job.

H3: External support is positive and highly significant in shaping students' employability.

Mediating Role of External Support

Prior literature concludes that external support helps individuals with practical and emotional resources. Social support enhances individual confidence and stimulates positive behavior towards employability and helps them to overcome and encounter setbacks and stressful events (Cui, 2023). Moreover, Social support from family, friends, and significant others can enhance self-confidence, well-being, and self-esteem, which can lead to reducing stress, loneliness, anxiety, and depression (Anda et al., 2025). This can also contribute to career development and individual learning. It can polish individuals' academic performance, learning motivation, job satisfaction, vocational interest, and adaptation (Sarnowska et al., 2025). This literature shows the positive relation between academic pressure and employability.

H4: External support is positive and highly significant, and it mediates the relationship between academic pressure and employability.

Underpinning theory

This present study is based on Social Cognitive Career Theory by Lent, Brown, and Hackett, which explains the career choices as well as the personal development of students regarding their job fields (Lent et al., 2002). This theory has its own 3 different perceptions, which are self-efficacy, outcome expectation, and personal goals. Self-efficacy refers to students' self-concept about their own personality, such as the abilities in which they are not good enough, so as a result, they become pressured for not having good skills (Zhang, 2026). On the other hand, outcome expectations refer to the future outcome of their actions, such as becoming frustrated due to a lack of family support in the future regarding their profession. Lastly, the personal goals refer to the job that students already assume is more secure compared to other professions, so when students cannot become eligible for that specific job, then they take mental stress and pressure about their future (Lent et al., 2002).

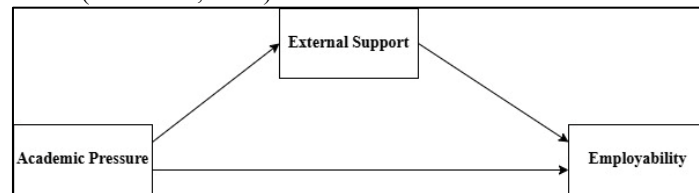


Figure1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This current study is based on the primary data collection through structured survey methods, using Google Forms from students at different universities. This research is based on positivist philosophy, as results are revealed by measuring the external support, academic stress, and employability of students. The following research follows a deductive approach, as we are executing existing theories to test hypotheses, based on the

relationships between the variables (external support, academic stress, and employability). The research uses statistical methods to measure the correlation between the given variables (external support, academic stress, and employability) and the mediating effect that measures and analyzes a wide sample of students. This method concludes with a larger audience by answering the research queries. This research acquires the cross-sectional time horizon, which collects data approximately (one month) from students to understand the recent perspective of students on academic pressure and employability. This approach provides the original understanding of students' recent perceptions of how academic pressure influences their employability. The research is using non-probability sampling techniques to ensure representation across different demographics. This approach ensures that the sample efficiently reflects the diversification of the students in order to make the results more generalized. We target approximately (300-550) students, which will drive adequate data for statistical analysis and check its reliability.

The questions in the questionnaire for the current study were collected from earlier studies. The questionnaire contains 3 sections. Employability: This section comprises dimensions that are related to employability, which contain a total of 5 items. A Likert scale of 5 points ranking from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree has been used for the measurement of this variable. This section of the questionnaire measures the students' mindset and their perspectives on employability while studying. Academic pressure has a correlation with students' employability. The questions related to academic pressure can measure the actual reason that is causing stress for students, whether it is the curriculum, workload, or unrealistic expectations of parents. This section comprises a total of 4 items. For the measurement of this variable, a Likert scale of 5 points ranking from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree has been used. External support, the mediating variable in this study, is External support from family and professionals. This dimension is measured through 3 items with the help of a Likert scale, codified by 5 points that are strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. This dimension is used to measure whether the student can count on the family and professionals or not.

RESULTS

All Cronbach's Alpha, rho-A, and CR values are greater than 0.87, which indicates strong internal consistency, while the most dominant relation is academic pressure, with the highest validity of 0.922. On the other hand, all values of AVE show a strong relation with its construct. Strong representation of Academic pressure (0.809) has the highest average variance. All the above results show that this construct is valid and reliable for the analysis.

As the above table shows, academic pressure has a significant contribution with the highest factor loading AP-3 (0.93) and the lowest factor loading AP-4 (0.875), which shows that academic pressure has a strong association. EM-2 (0.876) is the highest, and EM_5 (0.809) is the lowest item loading, showing the significant contribution of all factors. All three factors of external support

show a strong and significant relationship with the highest item loading of ES_2 (0.922) and the lowest item loading of ES_3 (0.864). Each variable supports the validity of the measurement scale, which is well defined and significant.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity

	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability	Average Variance Extract
AP_1	0.91	0.922	0.944	0.809
AP_2	0.882			
AP_3	0.93			
AP_4	0.875			
EM_1	0.831	0.897	0.923	0.707
EM_2	0.876			
EM_3	0.846			
EM_4	0.84			
EM_5	0.809			
ES_1	0.888	0.871	0.921	0.796
ES_2	0.922			
ES_3	0.864			

Table 2 shows the values of discriminant validity measured by using smart PLS, and its measuring criterion is 0.85 so, the table shows a low relation for all construct that means all are below the 0.5, which indicates that the discriminant model has a strong relation.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

	Academic Pressure	Employability	External Support
Academic Pressure			
Employability	0.324		
External Support	0.325	0.4	

Table 3 presents the results of the hypothesis through the values of co. Efficient, standard deviation, t value, and p value. Moreover, the above table shows the highly significant relationship between the suggested relationships of the variable. H1: The AP is directly linking EM ($\beta=0.212$, $t=4.384$, $p=0.00$), which is highly significant, so it is accepted. Academic pressure is impacting positively on employability as academic pressure increase the stress, anxiety, depression in the students because an individual is not able to do their work on time, a lot of assignments and project can stop them to learn skills because all the time they are just too busy in completing their academic demands in this way individual not think to do a job. H2: AP is directly linked with ES ($\beta= 0.300$, $t=5.729$, $p=0.000$), which is highly significant, so it is accepted.

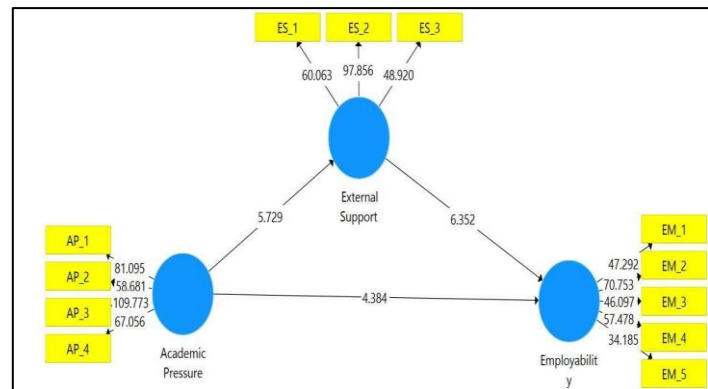
AP shows that if students have no external support from their teachers and family to manage their academic demands, it affects their well-being and their failure in their studies. Lack of resources like emotional and financial support from family and assistance from professionals may lead to pressure on individuals to struggle alone to complete their academic demands on time. On the other hand, family and professionals' expectations also affect their academic performance.

External support helps the students in reducing academic pressure. Emotional and financial support, guidance from external support may help them to overcome academic demands, which ultimately increases their employability intentions. H3: External support with EM ($\beta=0.297$, $t=6.352$, $p=0.000$), which is highly significant, so it is accepted. External support helps a student with various resources and guidance, which may result in positive employability intentions. Emotional support and encouragement, and career counselling push the students to do better in their job intentions. H4: ES is indirectly linked with AP and EM ($\beta=0.089$, $t=0.000$), which is highly significant, so it is accepted.

The mediating role of external support shows that academic pressure and employability have positive but low and significant relationships, which help the students to overcome academic pressure, which ultimately diverts their attention to a job, which may result in a positive outcome.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing

	Coeff.	S. D	t-values	P Values	Decision
Academic Pressure -> Employability	0.212	0.048	4.384	0.000	Accepted
Academic Pressure -> External Support	0.300	0.052	5.729	0.000	Accepted
External Support -> Employability	0.297	0.047	6.352	0.000	Accepted
Academic Pressure -> External Support	0.089	0.023	3.830	0.000	Accepted



The above picture shows that academic pressure is positively affecting employability and a small channel of external support is mediating their relationship which may result in higher intentions for students' employability. Academic pressure is directly related to employability which has a positive impact on students' job readiness.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Previous literature shows that Academic pressure leads stress, depression in students due to the workload, not meeting deadlines in time, a lot of projects and assignment affect their well-being which result in low intentions of doing jobs because they have no time to think of the jobs while, testing the proposed hypothesis shows the result positive which means that academic pressure affect the employability intentions of students. Secondly, prior study shows that Academic expectations from family and professional leads pressure on students to perform well in their studies as a result students more focus on getting high grades

means pressure to perform well in studies and no emotional and financial and concealing from family and professionals affect their well-being and academic performance thus current study shows that Academic pressure and external support have positive relation which prove that students are unable to learn new skills for their jobs to compete in job market. Thirdly, the mediating role of external support shows the positive relationship between academic pressure and employability, and the current study also shows that external support mitigates the academic pressure and increases students' employability intentions. External support positively shapes the students' intentions of doing jobs by providing emotional, financial, career support, advice, and provide resources to compete in job competitive markets in this way, students feel more confident of doing jobs while executing studies and they efficiently manage both studies and jobs which will help them to build positive skills, and this may lead to positive outcome.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the impact of academic pressure and the employability of students under the influence of external support. The current research proposed a hypothesis and tested the hypothesis about students' employability intentions by collecting data from students at different universities. The results show that all the hypothesis accepted, which shows that academic pressure and with no external support, affects the students' employability intentions. On the other hand, the mediating role of external support between academic pressure and employability increases their intentions, which helps them to learn new skills and upgrade their abilities. As the result reveals that most the students facing stress related to academia and with no proper guidance does not increase their job intentions mean while meditating factor shows that if students have support so their intention will be increase they can balancing both studies and job together so to keep them motivated the policy makers and decision makers should launch a program that can help students to stay motivated for doing a job in competitive market. These programs can help students to boost their ability to compete in the job market as well as focus on their studies and can help students to be aware of the competition and stay motivated to balance both academic pressure and employability together. Furthermore, provide them with full assistance by launching programs like family engagement programs, skill development and mentorship programs, as the results show that external support is also a big reason for their motivation.

Implications

This study will provide future implications for policymakers and researchers to launch programs like counselling, skill developing and stress management programs by deeply understanding the role of academic pressure to enhance their employability intentions and make them motivated. Additionally, external support must be tried to reduce the pressure and provide resources to help them balancing their academic work and well-being to overcome the challenges and become confident to do better jobs in competitive markets. Students are the most important assets for the future market that will contribute positively to the development and success of the country.

Limitations

AI-through this study provide insightful information but still this study has limitations so, current study is collecting the data from 108 students at different universities which focus on only three variables which are academic pressure, employability and external support. As the research is based on cross-sectional data to show the relationship between these variables so researcher can take longitudinal data to find out the long impacts of academic pressure on students' employability intentions with external support. Furthermore, future researchers can consider AI career guidance tools to know about the impact of student's employability outcomes by reducing academic pressure.

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