

A Study on the Impact of Perceived Academic and Career Related Parental Expectations on the Mental Health of Women College Students in Nagercoil

***E. A. Abisha and J. Mary Deeba**

Department of Social Work, Holy Cross College (Autonomous), Nagercoil - 629004

Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli - 627012

*Corresponding Author - Email: kabi62958@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Mental health is an essential component of overall well-being, especially among students who are exposed to increasing academic and career-related pressures. In the present competitive educational environment, students are expected to achieve high academic performance and make appropriate career choices. Parents play a significant role in shaping these expectations, which can positively influence students' motivation and success. However, excessive and unrealistic parental expectations may lead to stress, anxiety, depression, and other psychological issues, particularly among women students. The present study aims to examine the impact of perceived academic and career-related parental expectations on the mental health of women college students in Nagercoil. A total of 55 respondents were selected from various colleges in Nagercoil using a purposive sampling method. The study adopts a descriptive research design, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire through Google Forms. The study focuses on understanding how women students perceive parental expectations and how these perceptions influence their mental health, including stress, anxiety, emotional well-being, and self-esteem. It also attempts to identify whether parental expectations act as a motivating factor or a source of psychological pressure. The findings of the study are expected to provide insights into the importance of balanced parental expectations and the need for supportive environments to promote students' mental well-being.

Keywords: Parental expectations, Mental Health, Academic stress, Career Pressure.

Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the personality, aspirations, and future of individuals. In the modern world, academic achievement and career success are often considered the primary indicators of an individual's worth and social status. With increasing globalization, technological advancements, and competitive academic environments, students are constantly under pressure to perform well and secure stable, prestigious careers. Among the various factors influencing students' academic and psychological well-being, parental expectations stand out as one of the most powerful and complex influences. Parents are the primary socializing agents in a child's life. From early childhood to adulthood, they

significantly influence their children's values, attitudes, goals, and decision-making processes. In many societies, particularly in India, parents play an active role in shaping their children's educational and career trajectories. They often hold strong beliefs about what constitutes success and expect their children to meet certain academic standards and career goals. While these expectations are often rooted in love, concern, and the desire to secure a better future for their children, they may sometimes become excessive or unrealistic, leading to unintended negative consequences. In the context of higher education, students frequently encounter a wide range of academic demands, including examinations, assignments, and competition for limited opportunities. Simultaneously, they are expected to make crucial decisions about their future careers. These challenges can be overwhelming, especially when combined with high parental expectations. The perception of these expectations—whether they are seen as supportive or pressurizing—plays a critical role in determining students' mental health outcomes. Another important aspect to consider is the role of communication between parents and children. Healthy communication can transform parental expectations into a source of motivation and support.

Objectives

- To identify the demographic profile of the respondents
- To examine the mental health status of women students.
- To analyse the relationship between parental expectations and mental health.
- To understand adolescent perception of parental expectations and emotional support.

Methodology

The nature of the study is descriptive. The universe of the study comprises women students studying in Arts and Science colleges in Nagercoil. A purposive sampling method was adopted for selecting the respondents. A total of 55 women college students were selected as the sample for the study. The data collection tools were developed based on a review of existing literature. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, including a socio-demographic sheet and self-prepared questions related to parental expectations and mental health. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, research articles, and other reliable sources. The gathered data were evaluated utilizing Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Analysis and Interpretation

Distribution of personal demographic of the respondent

S.No	Variable	Value level	Respondent	
			N-55	Percentage
1	Age	19	82	58.2%
		20	19	34.5%
		21	4	7.3%
2	Year of study	2 nd year	23	41.8%
		3 rd year	32	58.2%
3	Parents Occupation	Daily wages	44	80.0%
		Skilled work	5	9.1%
		Professionals	6	10.9%
4	Socio-economic status	Middle	47	85.5%
		Upper middle	5	9.1%
		Lower	3	5.5%
5	Family type	Nuclear	47	85.5%
		Joint	8	14.5%
6	Place of residence	Rural	24	43.6%
		Urban	19	34.5%
		Town	12	21.8%
7	Parents educational qualification	Primary	11	20.0%
		Middle school	19	34.5%
		Secondary	5	9.15%
		High school	10	18.2%
		Degree	10	18.2%
8	What Course are you currently pursuing	B.A	30	54.5%
		B.SC	15	27.3%
		B.COM	10	18.2%
9	What type of institution are you studying	Aided	42	76.4%
		Self-financing	7	12.7%
		Government	6	10.9%
10	Are you the first graduate learner	Yes	29	52.7%
		No	26	47.3%

The above table shows the general questions including age, year of study, parents' occupation, economic status, family type, residence, parents' education, course currently pursuing, type of institution, first graduate learner.

- More than half of the respondents (58.2%) are 20 years old, while nearly half of the respondents (34.5%) are 21 years, and (7.3%) respondents are 19 years old.
- More than half of the respondents (58.2%) are in the 3rd year, whereas nearly half of the respondents (41.8%) are in the 2nd year.
- The majority of the respondents (80%) have parents working as daily wage workers, (9.1%) respondents belong to skilled work and professional jobs (10.9%).
- The majority of the respondents (85.5%) belong to the middle socio-economic group, (9.1%) respondents are from upper middle and lower class (5.5%).
- The majority of the respondents (85.5%) from nuclear families, (14.5%) respondents belong to joint families.
- Nearly half of the respondents (43.6%) are from rural areas, (34.5%) respondents from urban areas, and (21.8%) respondents from town areas.
- 34.5% of parents had middle school education, 20% of parents had primary education, while 18.2% had higher secondary and degree-level education.
- More than half of the respondents (54.5%) are pursuing B.A, while nearly (27.3%) are in B.Sc., and (18.2%) are in B.Com.
- The majority of the respondents (76.4%) are studying in aided institutions, while (12.7%) respondents are in self-financing and government institutions (10.9%).
- More than half of the respondents (52.7%) are first-generation learners, while nearly half of the respondents (47.3%) are not.

Distribution of Mental health of respondent

SI. No	Variable	Value level	Respondents	
			N-55	Percentage
1	Frequently feel stressed due to academic pressure	Yes	25	45.5%
		No	30	54.5%
2	Do you feel emotionally exhausted	Yes	30	54.5%
		No	25	45.5%
3	Sleep disturbance due to academic stress	Yes	24	43.6%
		No	31	56.4%
4	Feel low self-esteem when you fail to meet expectations	Yes	38	69.1%
		No	17	30.9%
5	Feel emotionally supported by your parents	Yes	45	81.8%
		No	10	18.2%

6	Have you sought counselling for stress	Yes No	22 33	40.0% 60.0%
7	Feel comfortable discussing your mental health with your parents	Yes No	34 21	61.8% 38.2%
8	Parental expectation affects your social life	Yes No	23 32	41.8% 58.2%
9	Experience physical symptoms due to stress	Yes No	32 23	58.2% 41.8%
10	Parental expectations motivate you positively	Yes No	41 14	74.4% 25.5%
11	How do you cope with academic stress	Spending time with favourite Crying and sleep Relaxation Others	16 17 14 8	29.1% 30.9% 25.5% 14.5%
12	Seek support from friends	Yes No	46 9	83.6% 16.4%
13	Teachers provide guidance to help you manage parental pressure	Yes No	38 17	69.1% 30.9%
14	Attended any stress management programs	Yes No	19 36	34.5% 65.5%
15	Do you feel institutional support system are adequate	Yes No	33 22	60.0% 40.0%
16	Do you believe counselling services should be strengthened in college	Yes No	43 12	78.2% 21.8%

The above table shows Mental health of respondents including feel stressed due to academic pressure, emotionally exhausted, Sleep disturbance, low self-esteem, emotionally supported, counselling for stress, Parental expectation affects your social life, physical symptoms due to stress, cope with academic stress, Seek support from friends, stress management programs.

- More than half of the respondents (54.5%) reported that they do not frequently feel stressed due to academic pressure, while 45.5% said they do feel stressed.
- More than half of the respondents (54.5%) feel emotionally exhausted, while 45.5% do not.
- More than half of the respondents (56.4%) reported that they do not experience sleep disturbances due to academic stress, while 43.6% do.

- The majority of the respondents (69.1%) feel low self-esteem when they fail to meet expectations, while 30.9% do not.
- The majority of the respondents (81.8%) feel emotionally supported by their parents, while 18.2% do not feel supported.
- More than half of the respondents (60.0%) have not sought counselling for stress, while 40.0% have sought counselling.
- More than half of the respondents (61.8%) feel comfortable discussing mental health with their parents, while 38.2% do not.
- More than half of the respondents (58.2%) stated that parental expectations do not affect their social life, while 41.8% said it does affect them.
- More than half of the respondents (58.2%) experience physical symptoms due to stress, while 41.8% do not.
- The majority of the respondents (74.4%) reported that parental expectations motivate them positively, while 25.5% said they are not motivated.
- Regarding coping strategies, more than one-third of the respondents (30.9%) cope through crying and sleep, 29.1% spend time on favourite activities, 25.5% use relaxation methods, and a small number of respondents (14.5%) use other methods.
- The majority of the respondents (83.6%) seek support from friends, while 16.4% do not.
- The majority of the respondents (69.1%) reported that teachers provide guidance to manage parental pressure, while 30.9% said they do not.

Suggestion

- Parents should talk openly with students.
- Parents should avoid high pressure and set realistic expectations.
- Colleges should provide counselling services.
- Teachers should support and guide students.
- Students should seek help from friends and others.
- Parents should appreciate students' efforts, not only results.
- Students should practice relaxation techniques like meditation or exercise.
- Colleges should create a friendly and stress-free environment.
- Regular mental health check-ups can be arranged for students.

Conclusion

This study concludes that parental expectations significantly influence students' mental health, academic performance, and career choices. Although these expectations are often intended to motivate and guide students toward success, they can also result in stress and anxiety when they become excessive. The findings highlight the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between expectations and students' well-being. Encouraging open communication between parents and students, along with strengthening support systems such as counselling services, is essential. By creating a supportive and understanding environment, students can achieve their goals without experiencing overwhelming pressure.

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