

## **Estimation Impact of Socio-economic Factors on Anxiety in Graduate & Post Graduate Students**

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### **Abstract**

Anxiety among students is a major problem affecting the learning deeds of university graduates. The problem is augmented by socio-economic snags faced by the students and their families. We investigated the major sprints causing stress and anxiety among graduate and postgraduate students. To analyze the issue, we proposed a new theory named “The Theory of Household Stress”. The theory is based upon three major elements; kinfolk’s conflicts, economic vulnerability and the extent to which students can manage the workload. Primary data collected via well-structured questionnaire from graduate and post graduate students of economics. The results support the statement proposed. The theory entails for areas having similar cultural, moral and religious values and has some policy lesson.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Economic Vulnerability, Workload Management, Kinfolk’s Conflicts.

### **1. Introduction**

Human being is supreme at the sphere of earth. God has blessed him some intrinsic characteristics to learn about the nature at each and every stage of life. At early age human being particularly remains specific to learning at some formal or informal institutions. But after spending minimum number of years at school and college, the students get enrolled in universities. This is the core period of study when students are ready to excel in their professional areas. Especially students from poor families start their careers at early age. The study with job becomes little hard to carry-out it parallel. Today, the era of individualism also motivate students to earn side by side with their educational aims. The extent is little more in technologically advanced countries as compared to developing countries.

The worries, irritability and panic in behavior is referred as anxiety. Anxiety was defined by Freud (1924) as “something felt,” an emotional state that included feelings of apprehension, tension,

nervousness, and worry accompanied by physiological arousal[10]. The process of learning at university level gets them stressed sometimes. The university graduates face many obstacles to achieve their educational aims. Their ultimate goal is to perform well by Grade Point Average (GPA). Many stress factors like economic conditions, living standard, standing in the class, relations with teachers, family members, relatives and other students, distance to educational institution, conveyance, institution norms and culture, social and religious values, class assignments, quizzes, presentations, writing project reports, too frequently exams, trade-off between study hour, work hour and leisure hour. All is concerned with efficient time management. Hatcher and Prus (1991) termed them “academic situational constraints[12].

A lot of students at graduate and post graduate level are married. They parallel care their children, parents and focuses on their educational deeds also. The married couples are more vulnerable

to anxiety as compared to unmarried (Kyle & Falbo, 1985)[14]. Norris and Uhl (1993) termed marital, filial, financial, occupational, ecological and physical factors are domain of the chronic stress[20]. These factors are associated with lower GPA. It is surveyed that most of students are performing part-time jobs to finance their outlays. Taking time from study hours to working hour exert pressure on their grades. Trade-off between working hour (Working hour may be study hour or job work hour because graduate students mostly prefers part time jobs) and leisure hour is also strong element of anxiety. Cohen and Janicki-Deverts (2012) found that females are more stressed as compared to males and stress increases with decrease in income, education and age[5]. Higher the rates of unemployment, greater will the extent of anxiety.

There are some social factors that cause anxiety among students. The relations with class fellows, friends, teachers and community members in which he or she is dwelling; Interpersonal relationship, coping style and their associations are more important for depressing the individuals (Eberhart & Hammen, 2010)[7]. Martin and Burks (1985) found that family and non-family social support significantly reduce the stress but non-family social support is more effective[17]. Any imbalance or mismatch between personality traits causes the anxiety and affects learning process. Fairbrother and Warn (2003) concluded that educational workload is a source of academic stress[9]. They identified that poor relationship between other class fellows and teachers, perception of knowledge, too much assignments and maintaining competition are major reasons. Education system in universities is different as compared to schools and colleges. Students are required to take mid-term exam, final term exam, minimum attendance requirement and much more in too short time.

The stress may be adaptive or negative. The adaptive stress helps the students to rise up to face the challenges of the life (Frueh, 1924)[10]. Students put all their energies and remain alert and feel free. The students can work even faster as they normally would. While negative stress prevents students from better performance. Study work piles up. Students wait for the eleventh hour to prepare assignments, quizzes and exam. But the result is failure to complete work assigned. The workload they receive cause anxiety among students. They have less time for family and friends to enjoy when they are overwhelmed with study material. The less time for sleep affects the students' abilities to judge right and wrong effectively. In short, numbers of factors are responsible for anxiety among students. The study

does not entail the anxiety caused by nutritional and health issues.

## 2. Literature Review

Anxiety is a multidimensional phenomenon. In literature various aspects are considered as promoting factors. Altbach (1970) determined that faculty pressure is an important source of stress among graduate students [2]. He postulated that faculty exert pressure over the lives of the students and students feel that they are living in the biosphere of substantial powerlessness. Elder and Caspi (1988) developed linkage between macro-social changes and its direct effect on children development through household economy and personal relationship [8]. They traced deprivational effects by interactional model of families. In their study of stress on children and their families is ultimately micro-social marvel that stress the children and their families.

McCubbin et al (1990) investigated the major causes of stress due to family conflicts [18]. He argue that four factors; the family response to non-normative and normative events, resources and perception, and social support are coping the stress. Abouserie (1994) notified that anxiety is the result of too many exams in very short period of time [1]. Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz and Simons (1994) proposed a model of family conflicts that relates with stress among the family members [6]. He demonstrated that job satisfaction, role ambiguity, family conflicts and emotional fatigues are inter-related. He found that conflicts between working and home domain causes the stress in the workers.

Rawson, Bloomer, and Kendall (1994) study shows that social factors, economic factors and career building factors are most responsible for anxiety among students [23]. Building social connections, maintaining social connections are core problems in social relations in similar social, cultural and religious values. In Islamic societies it's more crucial to main social relationship with entire family and friends. Economic factors are also responsible in backward areas of developing countries and slum urban areas as predicted in literature.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1995) examined that work-family conflicts arises due to time devoted to particular role that don't fulfill the requirements of others, cause stress and detracting from participation in that role [11]. Towbes and Cohen (1996) found that chronic stress is caused by interpersonal conflicts, economic problems and self-esteem evils [24]. According to their analysis first year students are more affected as compared to second and third

year students. Arnett (1999) specified the three dimensions of the problem [3]. He considered “conflicts with parents, mood disruptions and risk behavior” are the major storm of stress in adolescent. He views that storm and stress are usually low in traditional cultures and high in individualism societies.

McLennan and Sutton (2005) analyzed the issue in veterinary students of first year, second year, third year, fourth year and fifth year [19]. According to them; first, third and fourth year students are facing academic stress while second and fifth year students are facing stress due to lifestyle and financial constraints. But the study sampled only for undergraduate students. Fifth year students were supposed to be more mature and rational. They revealed out that financial needs, less time for part-time job work, time to family and socialization are major on-going stress factors. Mostly students complain economic vulnerability produce substantial stress. Their families are unable to finance their heavy university dues and daily pocket expenditures (Mao and Yanxia, 2005) [16].

Larson (2006) found the strong relationship between academics, being come too late in college, financial and social problems [15]. The environment of an educational institution is different from that of our ordinary domicile. Chang and Lu (2007) compared the work settings between educational institutions and other working environment [4]. They concluded that difference is the source and cause of stress among college students. Pryjmachuk and Richards (2007) classified the sources of stress in four major categories [22]. They state that stress may be due to academics, clinical, interpersonal and social reasons. They found that 56.6 percent of students

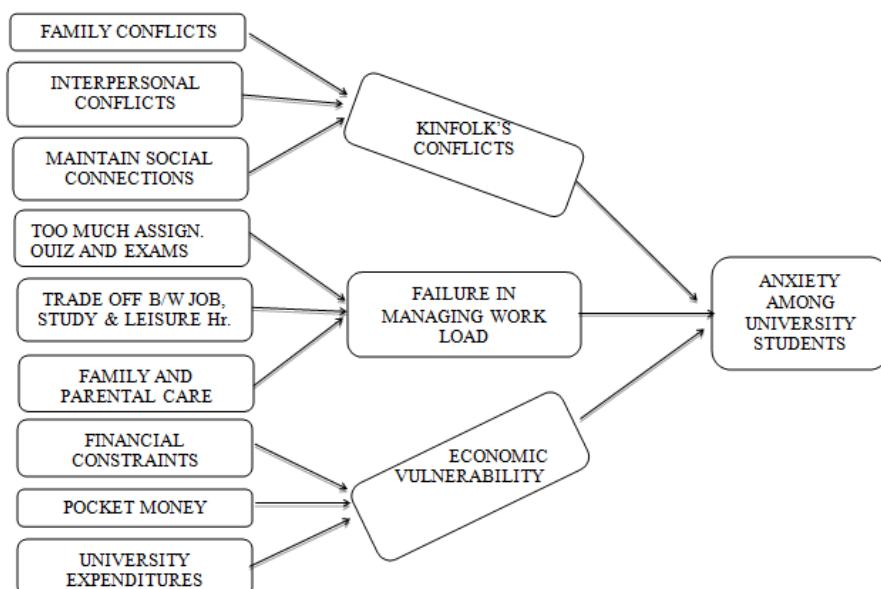
qualifying their subjects were found to be stressed by these factors.

Ji and Zhang (2011) identified four sources of stress; economic conditions of the students, personal factors, study and employment problems [13]. They found that there exists a positive relationship between mental stress and above cited four sources. Personal issues and economic conditions are strongly correlated. College and university going age is critical and academic stress may be the reason of students’ failure (Oaten and Cheng, 2005) [21]. Students are at the stage of their cognitive learnings and any anxiety exerts pressure on the student’s health. Their interpersonal communications becomes complicated, self-care problems, depression, physical victim’s ad family economic conditions cause stress.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Literature predicts a large number of factors promoting anxiety in university students. But for the sake of parsimony, we considered only socio-economic problems faced by graduate and post graduate students. Among social problems, kinfolk’s conflicts are used as a proxy variable while from economic variables, economic vulnerability is considered a major factor for anxiety among students. Another relevant variable failure in managing workload has two dimensions; first is concerned with whether students are overloaded with class work (workload pressure) and second is about how the students get stressed further by the failure of time management. The schematic diagram represents the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

**Flow chart-1: The Household Model of Anxiety**



### 3.1 Hypothesis

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There exist a positive relationship between kinfolk's conflicts and anxiety among students.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Failure in managing workload causes anxiety among students.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Economic vulnerability positively influences the level of anxiety among students.

### 4. Data Issues

The primary data were collected from a total of hundred students from Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan. 40 % respondents were

taken from main campus and 20% respondents from each of three sub campuses. Out of total, 3/5 is taken male students and 2/5 is taken female students. Only graduate and post graduate students were considered as a respondent because they are mature, well aware, rational and familiar to the problem under consideration. The problem of biasness is mitigated too much extent because of the assumption of rationality. An equal weightage is given to urban and rural students for the purpose of analyzing anxiety among students.

**Table-1: Reliability Statistics of Questionnaire**

Reliability Statistics	Anxiety	Kinfolk Conflicts	Failure in Managing Workload	Economic Vulnerability
Cronbach's Alpha	0.785	0.763	0.699	0.771

A well-structured questionnaire comprised of questions is developed to collect relevant information. The SPSS-17 is used for empirical analysis. The value of Cronbach's Alpha is depicting the relevancy of questionnaire to the problem under consideration. The value is given above in table-1.

contributing the anxiety. Correlation analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA) techniques are utilized for depth analysis. According to regression output, the coefficient of economic vulnerability and managing workload are statistically significant while the coefficient of kinfolk's conflicts is statistically significant at 5.6 percent. All sign are according as predicted by theory. The value of coefficient of determination is not very high but satisfactory for cross sectional data.

### 5. Empirical Analysis

A simple ordinary least square regression is carried out to quantify the extent of factors

**Table-2: Dependent Variable: Anxiety**

	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Value	p-Value	Correlation	
Constant	0.902	0.390	2.313	0.023	Zero-order	Partial
Economic Vulnerability	0.633	0.081	7.815	0.000	0.636	0.624
Kinfolk Conflicts	0.262	0.136	1.926	0.056	0.108	0.193
Managing Workload	0.191	0.079	2.417	0.018	0.337	0.328
R <sup>2</sup>	0.463	R	0.681		Durbin-Watson	1.786

The correlation matrix suggests strong correlation between anxiety and its contributing factors. The magnitude of zero-order and partial correlation coefficient for kinfolk's conflicts is very low and suggests very low correlation but all other variables have moderate values. The results are portrayed in table-2 above. The output of ANOVA is

presented in table-3. The results are highly significant as depicted by F-statistics and p-value. Analysis of variance shows overall significance of the model used. It means socio-economic factors are explaining the stress and anxiety in university graduates and post graduates.

**Table-3: ANOVA**

Model-Anxiety	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Sum of Square	F	p-Value
Regression	37.666	3	12.555	27.617	0.000
Residual	43.644	96	0.455		
Total	81.310	99			

### 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study results show that economic vulnerability and workload management factors are responsible for anxiety among graduates and post graduate students of economics. The kinfolk's conflicts contribute up to some extent at 10 percent significance level. There exist a moderate correlation between anxiety and all stress causing factors. All techniques; regression analysis, correlation analysis and analysis of variance support the argument.

Household factors like economic vulnerability, workload management and kinfolk's conflicts together originate "the theory of household stress".

The students can mitigate the extent of stress by spending fewer working days at formal educational institutions. The students may prefer to pursue master and doctoral studies via distance learning either on campus or by e-learning. In such a way they will have much time to finance their education and families by working more job hours.

The parents may implement a better expenditure management strategy to save for their children so that they can complete their education with due course and time. The government may take initiatives for providing better job opportunities to the nation's manpower. It will better if the government provide subsidized higher education to his nationals. The universities must take consideration to the purchasing power of peoples of particular area in which they are operating before setting dues and other educational overheads. The social and non-government sectors should promote and facilitate the students for their excellence.

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