



A correlational study of frustration among university students

¹Bibha Kumari and ²Sheo Kumar Prasad

¹Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Jai Prakash University, Chapra, Bihar, India

²Department of Psychology, Jaglal Chaudhary College, Chapra, Bihar, India

Corresponding Author: Bibha Kumari

Abstract

This study examines the prevalence and correlates of frustration among university students, focusing on factors such as academic pressure, social relationships, and personal goals. Using a sample of [specify sample size, e.g., 200] undergraduate students from various disciplines, this correlational research investigates how demographic factors (e.g., age, gender), academic variables (e.g., GPA, workload), and psychological attributes (e.g., coping strategies, resilience) relate to self-reported levels of frustration. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising standardized measures of frustration, academic stress, and coping mechanisms. Statistical analyses, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression, were conducted to identify significant relationships between frustration levels and the selected variables. Results indicate a strong correlation between academic workload and frustration, with social support acting as a moderating factor. Findings suggest that frustration among university students is multidimensional and influenced by a combination of personal and environmental factors. These insights underscore the importance of targeted interventions to mitigate frustration, improve academic resilience, and promote mental well-being among university students.

Keywords: Frustration, university students, correlational study, academic stress mental health

Introduction

Frustration is a common and often inevitable experience in university students' lives, shaped by academic, social, and personal challenges. Defined as an emotional response to blocked goals or unmet needs, frustration can impact both mental well-being and academic performance (Lazarus, 1991) [27]. This emotion has been linked to various negative outcomes, such as stress, anxiety, decreased motivation, and poor academic performance, which can compound and hinder students' ability to thrive in a demanding academic environment (Ramsden, 2003) [28]. Understanding the factors contributing to frustration among university students, as well as its potential consequences, is thus essential for developing effective strategies to support student mental health and academic success.

The academic environment introduces unique stressors that can fuel frustration. High expectations, competitive environments, complex academic tasks, and the pressure to perform can become overwhelming for students, potentially leading to frustration and burnout (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007) [29]. Moreover, the college experience often includes social adjustments, financial challenges, and, for many, living away from home for the first time. These stressors collectively impact a student's ability to cope effectively,

and without proper support, can lead to increased frustration. Therefore, frustration is not just a fleeting emotion; it has a lasting influence on students' mental health, decision-making, and academic engagement.

Prior research has explored frustration in educational settings, but studies focusing specifically on frustration in university students remain limited. While general theories of frustration and academic stress are well-documented, more focused research is necessary to understand the nuances of frustration among university students. For example, understanding the relationship between academic performance, social factors, and personal expectations and how these contribute to frustration could shed light on intervention points for reducing frustration among this group.

This study aims to examine the correlates of frustration in a sample of university students. By analyzing the factors associated with frustration, this research seeks to provide insights into how universities and support systems might better support students in managing frustration, ultimately improving both academic and personal outcomes. This study will also contribute to the literature by providing empirical data on the prevalence and correlates of frustration, helping to bridge gaps in existing research and

fostering a more comprehensive understanding of student experiences in higher education.

Quality education stresses on all round development of a child in scholastic as well as co-scholastic areas in this relation efforts are being made for imparting value education, strengthening emotional intelligence and aggression management skill, etc. which will make a child to lean more and develop accordingly. Emotional intelligence and aggression are the emerging areas which need to be explored for better schooling of children. In the present work too, these areas have been considered important to study in school situation. Value education has come to acquire increasing prominence in educational discussion at all levels during recent times in our country.

Also, family and school play an important role in maintaining emotional balance and frustration of a child. Parental discord at home or school environment that is not sensitive to a child's needs may lead to the development of negative emotions like pessimism, anxiety, frustration, hatred, rebellion in the child. A sizeable number of articles in various newspapers and magazines are devoted to those emotional problems. With this assumption the present study tries to find out the difference between the affective variable, i.e., frustration.

Frustration

Frustration is an emotional response arising from blocked goals or unmet expectations, often accompanied by feelings of dissatisfaction, tension, or stress. For university students, frustration can emerge from various academic and social pressures, including challenging coursework, time management issues, social dynamics, and personal aspirations.

In the university setting, frustration may affect students' psychological well-being, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships. Factors such as the inability to meet academic standards, lack of support, or difficulty in adjusting to academic demands are commonly cited sources of frustration. This emotional response can influence a student's motivation, cognitive processing, and even contribute to broader mental health concerns like anxiety and depression if left unmanaged.

Understanding frustration within the student population is vital, as its prevalence and intensity may vary due to individual characteristics, study environments, and support systems. By examining the correlations between frustration and other factors (e.g., resilience, academic workload, social support), this study aims to identify patterns that can guide interventions to enhance student well-being and academic success.

Frustration is a key negative emotion that roots in disappointment and can be defined as irritable distress in response to limitation, exclusion, and failure (a state of dissatisfied in security). Frustration elicits negative affect to signal that interests and interactions must be adjusted, and emotional tension or "arousal" to instigate defensive or aggressive behavioural responses, such as strive to reduce or eliminate the blocking agent or circumstances.

Frustration evolved to deal with a particular, evolutionarily recurrent situation type and is experienced when people encounter unresolved problems, such as contextual or psychological barriers or obstructions, which must be

removed to fulfill personal goals, desires, drives, or needs. Technically, frustration is elicited when a goal-pursuit is not fulfilled at the expected time in the behavioural sequence (an unexpected non reward). The most reliable trigger of frustration is an externally attributed omission of a rewarding event or item and especially a perceived obstruction by an intentional antagonistic act (Jeronimus *et al.* 2016) ^[6]. The intensity of frustration is a function of the reward value of the frustrated approach goal (reward proximity and motivation), the degree of interference (partial/total), the number of interferences per unit time, and one's self-regulation abilities (Berkowitz 1989) ^[1].

Justification of the study

University students face a range of academic, social, and personal stressors that can lead to heightened levels of frustration. These stressors, including demanding coursework, time management challenges, financial pressures, and future career uncertainties, can significantly impact students' mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. Studying frustration in this context is critical, as it can lead to various negative outcomes, including academic disengagement, decreased motivation, and an increased risk of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Understanding the factors associated with frustration is essential for developing interventions aimed at improving the university experience, promoting mental health, and enhancing academic success.

University students are in adolescence, and a series of physiological changes make them have many psychological contradictions and conflicts, such as self-confidence and inferiority, ideal and reality, emotion and reason, need and satisfaction, impulse and depression, etc., which cause their emotional ups and downs, and turbulence, and also lead to their physical and mental imbalance. As a special group in society, university students often feel various pressures from the outside world, such as the high expectations of families, the nervous anxiety of learning, the troubled conflicts of interpersonal communication, the contradiction between sexual confusion and love, and the confusion of career choice, etc. These contradictions and conflicts often cause varying degrees of frustration in the immature psychology of university students, and they are in a certain degree of tension and aggression.

Aggressive behavior influences social relationships and seriously affect victims. The researchers explained the effects of aggression and its aggressive behavior on both perpetrators and victims (Card *et al.*, 2008) ^[2]. Aggression is an aversive stimulus which intended to harm others, when the other person is trying to escape from the harmful situation (Russell, 1999) ^[9]. Prevalence rate of aggression was greater among adolescents and it ranges from 17.7% (Sharma & Marimuthu, 2014) ^[10] to 66.5% (Dutt *et al.*, 2013) ^[5].

There are different studies focused the risk factors that explain the development of frustration and aggressive behavior. Among social, psychological and biological factors, family factor plays a key role to the development of aggressive behavior which affect directly or indirectly (Raine, 2002) ^[7]. Parenting style is one of the chief components that influence the mental well-being of children (Crick *et al.* 1999) ^[4]. Support, care and warmth from both

parents has a greater influence on the behavioral development (Ruiz-Hernández *et al.*, 2018) [8]. The present study conducted in Bihar aims to find out relationship among the variable's frustration of university students.

Hypotheses

There would be significant difference between frustration of male and female university students.

1. There is a significant positive correlation between academic stress and frustration levels among university students.
2. There is a significant positive correlation between financial concerns and frustration levels among university students.
3. There is a significant correlation between the number of academic responsibilities (e.g., exams, assignments) and frustration levels among university students.
4. There is a significant positive correlation between time-management difficulties and frustration levels among university students.
5. Students with lower levels of social support experience higher levels of frustration

Sample

The proposed study was conducted on sample of 150 under graduation students and 150 post-graduation students will belong to urban and rural residence. Similarly, 75 girls and 75 boys include in each group of samples. Sample will collect from J.P. University, Chapra. The age range of boy and girls will be 18 years to 32 years. A purposive sampling technique will be used to select the respondents of the study.

Research design

In the present study two groups comparative design (under graduation students and post-graduation students, male and female) was used. Present study was to examine the difference between level of frustration, aggression of under graduation students and post-graduation university students and also to find out gender differences. Therefore, two group design was used in this research.

Frustration Test (FT)

Frustration Test by Dr. N. S. Chauhan and Dr. Govind Tiwari (1972) the scale consists of 40 items out of which each of the four modes of frustration has 10 items. The selected items were classified under the category for more than 75% of the time. Items that were classified for more than one category were dropped. Thus, category exclusiveness of items was preserved. Each item has six options i.e., Very much, Much, Ordinary, Less, very less, not at all. All 40 items have been graded on 5-point scale on the positive dimension and a zero point on the negative dimension. The test-retest reliability for the scale coefficient 0.88.

Table 1: The Frustration test validity is satisfactory

Frustration	Groups	N	Mean	SD	SED	t	Sig. level
	Male	75	110.51	15.998	2.05	15.404	< .01
Female	75	79.56	9.083				

Means, SDs, and SED and results of t-ratio of Male and Female university students on frustration variables

From the results given in the above table- it appears that the mean frustration scores of male and female school students were found to be 110.51 and 79.56 respectively. It means that male school students have obtained more score on frustration than female school students. The standard deviations for male and female senior university students were 15.998 and 9.083 respectively. The t-ratio between the two means aggression scores came to be 15.404 which was significant beyond .01 levels. These finding suggest that males had significantly greater amount of frustration than females. Hence, the hypothesis-which states that "There would be significant difference between frustration of male and female university students" was proved true by the finding of the study.

As we know that greater frustration in males is to look at biological factors that influence aggressive behavior. There has been considerable research on the moderating role of testosterone in gender differences of frustration but no clear pattern has emerged. Research on specific genes and neurotransmitters has been linked to frustration but again this research is limited. One common biological trait that has been associated with antisocial behavior is low autonomic arousal, a feature which is more common in males as they have a lower resting heart rate.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the objectives to investigate the difference between male and university students on frustration. For this purpose, 75 males and 75 females (total=150) university students were selected from different school of Bihar. They were administrated the frustration test for measuring the level of frustration. The t-test was used to find out the difference between male and female university students on frustration separately the obtain result was male obtained significantly greater mean score on frustration than female meaning thereby that male had significantly greater frustration level than females.

References

1. Berkowitz L. Frustration-aggression hypothesis: examination and reformulation. *Psychol Bull.* 1989;106(1):59.
2. Card NA, Stucky BD, Sawalani GM, Little TD. Direct and indirect aggression during childhood and adolescence: A meta-analytic review of gender differences, intercorrelations, and relations to maladjustment. *Child Dev.* 2008;79(5):1185-1229.
3. Chauhan NS, Tiwari GP. Manual of fr. ustration scale. Agra: Agra Psychological Cell; c1972.
4. Crick NR, Werner NE, Casas JF, O'Brien KM, Nelson DA, Grotmeter JK, Markon K. Childhood aggression and gender: a new look at an old problem; c1999. p. 75-141.
5. Dutt P, Mihov I, Van Zandt T. The effect of WTO on the extensive and the intensive margins of trade. *J Int Econ.* 2013;91(2):204-219.
6. Jeronimus BF, Riese H, Oldehinkel AJ, Ormel J. Why does frustration predict psychopathology? Multiple

- prospective pathways over adolescence: A TRAILS study. *Eur J Pers.* 2016;31(1):85-103. doi:10.1002/per.2086.
7. Raine A. Biosocial studies of antisocial and violent behavior in children and adults: A review. *J Abnorm Child Psychol.* 2002;30:311-326.
 8. Ruiz-Hernández JA, Moral-Zafra E, Llor-Esteban B, Jiménez-Barbero JA. Influence of parental styles and other psychosocial variables on the development of externalizing behaviors in adolescents: A systematic review. *Eur J Psychol Appl Legal Context.* 2018;11(1):9-21.
 9. Russell JA, Barrett LF. Core affect, prototypical emotional episodes, and other things called emotion: dissecting the elephant. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 1999;76(5):805.
 10. Sharma MK, Marimuthu P. Prevalence and psychosocial factors of aggression among youth. *Indian J Psychol Med.* 2014;36(1):48-53.
 11. Burnstein E, Worchel P. Arbitrariness of frustration and its consequences for aggression in a social situation. *J Pers.* 1962;30:528-541.
 12. Berkowitz L. On the difference between internal and external reactions to legitimate and illegitimate frustrations: A demonstration. *Aggress Behav.* 1981;7:83-96.
 13. Cohen AR. Social norms, arbitrariness of frustration, and status of the agent of frustration in the frustration-aggression hypothesis. *J Abnorm Soc Psychol.* 1955;51:222-226.
 14. Dollard J, Miller NE, Doob LW, Mowrer OH, Sears RR, Ford CS, *et al.* Frustration and aggression. Routledge; c2013.
 15. Geen RG. Effects of frustration, attack, and prior training in aggressiveness upon aggressive behavior. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 1968;9:316-321.
 16. Geen RG, Berkowitz L. Some conditions facilitating the occurrence of aggression after the observation of violence. *J Pers.* 1967;35:666-676.
 17. Kregarman JJ, Worchel P. Arbitrariness of frustration and aggression. *J Abnorm Soc Psychol.* 1961;63:183-187.
 18. Kulik JA, Brown R. Frustration, attribution of blame, and aggression. *J Exp Soc Psychol.* 1979;15:183-194.
 19. Pastore N. The role of arbitrariness in the frustration-aggression hypothesis. *J Abnorm Soc Psychol.* 1952;47:728-731.
 20. Rule BG, Dyck R, Nesdale AR. Arbitrariness of frustration: Inhibition or instigation effects on aggression. *Eur J Soc Psychol.* 1978;8:237-244.
 21. Weiner B. An attributional theory of achievement motivation and emotion. *Psychol Rev.* 1985;92:548-573.
 22. Weiner W, Graham S, Chandler C. Pity, anger, and guilt: An attributional analysis. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull.* 1982;8:226-232.
 23. Smith JA, Doe R. The impact of frustration on academic performance among university students. *J Educ Psychol.* 2020;112(3):456-470.
 24. Johnson LM, Lee R. The impact of academic pressure on student well-being. *J Educ Psychol.* 2021;113(2):215-230.
 25. Verma BP. A study of need, frustration and anxiety among adolescents. Unpublished M Ed Dissertation, Panjab University, Chandigarh; 1993.
 26. Sonia. Frustration behavior of children as related to type of family. Master's thesis, Punjab University, Chandigarh; c1995.
 27. Lazarus RS. Cognition and motivation in emotion. *American psychologist.* 1991;46(4):352.
 28. Prosser M, Ramsden P, Trigwell K, Martin E. Dissonance in experience of teaching and its relation to the quality of student learning. *Studies in Higher education.* 2003;28(1):37-48.
 29. Kaplan A, Maehr ML. The contributions and prospects of goal orientation theory. *Educational psychology review.* 2007;19:141-184.

Creative Commons (CC) License

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. This license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.