



## Academic Stress in University Students: Systematic Review

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**ABSTRACT-** The objective of this review was to know how academic stress develops in university students, through a systematic review of the different studies carried out on the subject. For this, a search was carried out in important scientific databases such as Scopus, ProQuest, EBSCO, Google Scholar, among others; using the most important keywords of our problem; This in order to find the foundations raised and the theories given by various authors found between the years 2018 to 2020. Selection criteria will be applied to those works that do not meet the proposed characteristics, through a rigorous process specified through a search process flow PRISMA model, where 21 of 207 articles obtained from the aforementioned databases were chosen. The conclusions are that excessive academic load is one of the biggest stressors in university students, so it is extremely important to develop actions to prevent academic stress.

**Keywords:** Academic Stress; University Students; Excessive Academic Load.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Academic stress constitutes one of the health difficulties of an adaptive nature in the psychological field in the academic context, the same that many students have, who have greater academic overload or other similar factors; in which it is necessary to take actions in order to minimize its effects in the short and long term (Rodríguez, A. et al., 2020); since it routinely hinders the ability to concentrate and academic performance (Rodríguez, I. et al., 2020). We can also define it as the product of the affectation of various stressors, which produces a systemic imbalance with worrisome symptoms in university students, in this case, and that require actions to solve it (Valdivieso et al., 2020).

In this sense, students can find themselves in a situation of vulnerability to mental health problems, since they face a highly competitive environment. This mental health problem has been studied in Spain, where it was pointed out that women are more predictable to suffer stress, the first stressors being: competition between partners, interaction with the individual, confrontation with suffering and relationship professional. Similarly, in Chile, a study indicated that 95.6% of the students stated that the evaluation carried out by the teachers is one of the predictors of stress; while, in Brazil, the findings related average stress levels (74.4%) and thoughts of leaving the race due to multiple factors presented during the course. On the other hand, in Paraguay, a study indicated that students with a high perception of stress could be affected in their academic performance (Llorente et al., 2020).

The objective of the present work is to know how academic stress manifests itself in university students, for which a systematic review of the publications of scientific articles carried out between 2018 to 2020 is proposed. This with the purpose of giving know the factors that contribute to this problem and that will affect the personal and academic development of said students.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This research corresponds to a systematic review of academic articles from the period 2018 to 2020, on academic stress in university students. This compilation of information was carried out through an intensive search in the main scientific databases: Scopus, ProQuest, EBSCO, among others; using search descriptors or keywords in English such as: Academic stress and university students, academic stress in university students. This search was carried out essentially taking into consideration articles from indexed journals, which contained information related to the topic to be addressed, establishing as one of the criteria that they could have qualitative, quantitative and / or mixed approaches. It was possible to identify 207 articles related to the subject, in the first filter the articles were discriminated by duplication, obtaining 177 scientific articles. After carrying out the selection process according to the research inclusion and exclusion criteria, these were reduced to 21 articles related to academic stress in university students, as can be seen in figure 1. The coding process of the Selected data was carried out by transferring these in a matrix, regarding the name of the article, year of publication, categories, approaches, type of research, study objective, population, studied sample, applied instrument, the study result and the contribution achieved (Table 1).

## III. RESULTS

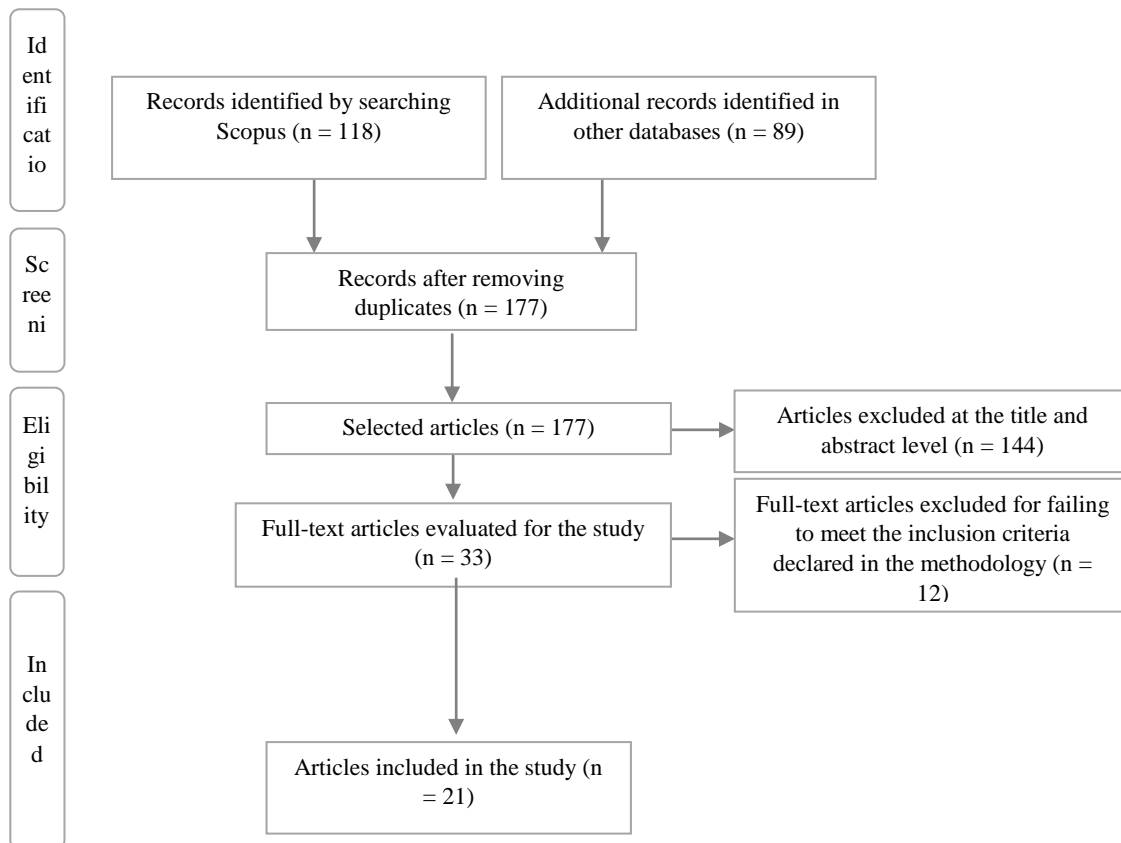


Figure 1. Adaptation of PRISMA flow

N <sup>o</sup>	AUTHORS	Academic stress in college students				Methodology	
		Academic overload	Family problems	Social aspects	Psychological aspects	Type of study	Instrument, technique or method
1	(Suárez et al., 2020)	x				Quantitative	Survey
2	(Oblitas et al., 2019)	x			x	Quantitative	Questionnaire
3	(Alania et al., 2020)	x				Quantitative	Survey
4	(I. Rodríguez et al., 2020)	x				Quantitative	Survey
5	(Cobiellas et al., 2020)	x			x	Quantitative	Survey
6	(Valdivieso et al., 2020)	x			x	Quantitative	Questionnaire
7	(Llorente et al., 2020)	x				Quantitative	Survey
8	(Aldana et al., 2020)	x				Quantitative	Survey
9	(A. Rodríguez et al., 2020)	x	x	x	x	Quantitative	Survey
10	(Montalvo & Montiel, 2020)	x	x		x	Quantitative	Survey
11	(Jaramillo, 2020)	x	x	x	x	Quantitative	Survey
12	(Arkin et al., 2018)	x		x		Quantitative	Questionnaire
13	(González et al., 2018)	x			x	Quantitative	Survey
14	(Caballero & Suarez, 2019)	x	x	x	x	Quantitative	Survey
15	(Chávez & Peralta, 2019)	x			x	Quantitative	Questionnaire
16	(Teque et al., 2020)	x		x	x	Quantitative	Survey
17	(Arce et al., 2020)				x	Quantitative	Survey
18	(Sarduy et al., 2020)	x	x		x	Quantitative	Survey
19	(Freire & Ferradás, 2020)	x		x	x	Quantitative	Survey
20	(Mendieta et al., 2020)	x				Quantitative	Survey
21	(Montenegro, 2020)				x	Quantitative	Survey

Table 1. Articles chosen for the systematic review

According to Table 1, 90.48% of the studies belong to the academic overload subcategory (14 of the 19 studies show an interrelation with the other subcategories). 23.80% of the subcategory of family problems (5 of the studies show an interrelation with the other subcategories). 28.57% belong to the social aspects subcategory (6 of the studies are within the other subcategories). Finally, 66.67% of the studies include the psychological aspects subcategory (13 of the 19 studies are interrelated with the other categories). 100% of the incorporated studies had a quantitative approach.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

In relation to the academic overload category, it is found that the situations inherent to the learning environment led by teachers cause it, differing according to the area of knowledge they may receive, such as the responsibility they must assume in other personal contexts and in achieving the objective in their professional training (Suárez et al., 2020). In this sense, the context where the future professional receives the pertinent knowledge is fundamental since the university teacher is the facilitating entity that contributes to the academic experience, as the mentor who leaves traces in the university experience of the future professional, who will contribute to the community with his wisdom. Studies show that emphasis should be placed on elements that support university teachers such as mindfulness, which was initially presented as an attentional cognitive strategy, but is currently considered a widely used technique in universities, because it facilitates the reduction of overload academic in the development of curricular activities, eliminating stress in the professional training process (Oblitas et al., 2019). Therefore, university teachers should pay special attention to the psychological aspect of the university student using methodological strategies to deal with situations of academic stress. It is not only the fact of giving knowledge but also seeing the future professional in their comprehensive training, simply being committed because, as is known, the university student when deciding on a professional career, is aware that the path is complicated and will be there all the time exposed to academic stress either due to pressure from teachers, academic work, and other activities such as scientific research (Alania et al., 2020).

Students should have freedom when deciding on a professional career, without family pressure or the influence of friends, because already being in the process of their studies there are difficulties in which they will have to overcome them and if they decided by vocation what to study, it will be easier for them to achieve career goals. For this reason, it is important to know when an individual develops stress as a result of various situations throughout the process of his life, thus hindering the possibilities of effectively undertaking and thus meeting the objectives previously envisioned (Rodríguez et al., 2020). This stress as a mental health problem is not only in academic life, it also affects in various contexts especially in the family, economy, interpersonal relationships, without neglecting the confinement that is experienced by this juncture of the pandemic, causing states negative moods, discouraging production at work. Obviously academic and university life; important to consider mental health. Definitely, academic stress is reflected in the emotional, physical, and mental component of each student in a high way, but the experience helps to overcome these manifestations. Therefore, the older the students are, the better they handle complex situations (Cobiellas et al., 2020).

In various family contexts it is thought that the decline in health is only physical, this being a gross error because it ignores mental health, which is decisive for the emotional health of all human beings, addressing various factors, such as age or developmental stages. Student coping with stress and the ability to be resilient is important. However, the older the students, the lower the perception of stress, there is a controversy about it. In this sense, there are several elements that must be taken into account in the result of academic stress that are based on cognitive and affective processes that involve students in academic work, causing a series of demands called stressors (Valdivieso et al., 2020).

Academic stress must be analyzed from different contexts, to facilitate the learning process of the university student, a fundamental role of the university teacher, leaving the attitudes that discourage good academic performance and at the same time contribute to the strengthening and motivation, uprooting from the mind the called stressors. For many students, the academic field contains the opportunity to be able to perform as professionals despite the academic overload that ranges from daily concern, to isolated manifestations, in both cases various investigations are carried out to find the reason for it and provide solutions to reduce this higher student problem (Llorente et al., 2020).

It is important to investigate why university students are easily stressed in the face of academic overload, the reasons could be lack of preparation in the (secondary) classrooms, family reasons, choosing the wrong profession, poorly prepared teachers unable to facilitate learning effectively, national and private universities, which do not comply with the established standards, to carry out research on the subject; are reasons that influence the academic stress of the university student. Rodríguez et al. (2020) states that

university students are continually faced with stressful academic, personal, work, family contexts, which wear themselves out physically and psychologically even more when starting family and social university work to which their professional life must adapt in the future. In this sense, it is important that academic institutions take into account the need to create programs, workshops, or other activities in which they can assist students in stressful situations, as a result of academic overload.

Academic overload is triggered by the academic stress of the students, observing a certain influence on the development of the research work, especially in a negative way throughout the process, affecting mental and physical health and coexistence related to their environment (Aldana et al., 2020), along the same lines, another study proposes that university teachers should reflect their added values in teaching by reducing academic overload through dynamics in the health faculty, strengthening the standards required by the university, such as motivation their students achieving the objectives that allow controlling or reducing academic stress (Mendieta et al., 2020) Academic overload has an unfavorable influence on each objective set by the university student, but as observed in the reviewed literature, not only It is about finding stressors, but rather looking for alternatives that favor the future professional, where the teaching task is to promote a positive attitude and promote self-esteem and self-worth of students.

Related to psychological aspects, academic stress affects students, being vulnerable due to complex situations such as lack of resources, excessive work and the desire to achieve academic goals (Montalvo & Montiel, 2020). In this sense, the mismanagement of the psychological aspects of the students will impede the development of their personality and the optimal achievement of academic performance. Jaramillo (2020) mentions that one of the stress factors is attributed to the evaluation, since as a result of this it brings with it anxiety and negative causes in the psychological, affective and behavioral, being one of the factors of academic abandonment; This aspect results in the student having great concern about the performance results, which, having serious problems to achieve the desired objectives, suffer psychological problems and that in the end, they will be reflected in physical problems. In this sense, the effect of academic stress in university students must be controlled through specialist treatments, providing a socio-emotional support that allows them to achieve their objectives in the face of academic responsibilities and not cause damage to their integrity (Gonzalez, 2020), especially in university students who choose the health profession, such as doctors, dental nurses, among others, since they relate to life itself, reflecting responsibility and commitment between two lines (Arkin et al., 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the actions of mental health care of students, especially when they belong to health careers. The studies consulted recommend monitoring the health conditions of students, implementing psychological care services, taking into account the high symptoms of mental health problems, creating detection and prevention strategies, as well as protection and social support measures; in addition, implementation of resources to improve the meaning of life and develop actions for adequate mental health. Also, provide family support so that they can assist their children when these psychological problems arise (Caballero & Suarez, 2019; Sarduy et al., 2020), placing emphasis on their self-esteem, strengthening assertiveness in stressful contexts, highlighting sex and permanence in their studies (Chávez & Peralta, 2019), where the teacher must also be trained to accompany the university student permanently, especially in their emotional state (Teque et al., 2020). It is then that, as actions of mental health care are developed in university students by academic institutions, they will improve in academic performance, as well as the development of personality and appreciation of the meaning of life.

University students at all times are pressured by stressors such as in subjects and assessments with a moderately high level of the psychological aspect influencing and presenting itself as an essential characteristic of the female sex (Arce et al., 2020). Students, throughout the learning process, must receive emotional support (tutoring) in this way, strengthen their attitudes in all subjects without making differences in sex, equality must prevail and university teachers must be focused on the established objectives, But consider all the elements that are involved in the training of the future professional, facilitating those resources related to their mental health, and thus avoid anxiety, depression in the academic process and outstanding professional development, therefore, emotional support is important before starting choose a profession to study (Montenegro, 2020). Intelligence can be a disadvantage or favor academic stress when it is not on the right track. Therefore, every institution must have a mental health professional, it could be said that universities lack or have these professionals in a minimal number. Various authors mention the problems caused by academic stress, such as lack of interest in studies, demotivation in most cases, but special treatment should be given to mental health.

Regarding the category social aspects, the social aspect and its relationship with academic stress, it is found that university students with self-esteem and effective coping are prepared to face academic stress by developing the training process during the university stage, strengthening leadership and thus the relationship in various contexts (Freire & Ferradás, 2020). To achieve this, it is important to strengthen the security, confidence, enjoy the smallest of their achievements, motivation; As a result, self-efficacy is activated, a product of all the aforementioned. It is important to highlight the students' coping, demonstrating the power to overcome the difficulties of the social aspect in various contexts, becoming resilient and leading to being able to reduce academic stress, enrich university leadership and professional fulfillment as a superior goal in the life project of the students.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The academic stress that occurs in many cases in the university environment, is an element that affects the learning and emotional well-being of the future professional, even more so in the health faculty, presenting as categories the academic overload, social aspects, family aspect and most importantly the psychological aspect.

The most important factors in academic stress are framed in academic overload and the psychological aspect that are the first stressors, therefore, they disadvantage the entire academic training process in university students.

The problem of mental health in students, hinders the projection of the future professional; therefore, university educational institutions, especially teachers, must apply strategies and added value that make a difference, breaking routine schemes and ensuring that future professionals do not give in to their vocational motivations.

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