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Predicting Stress Based on Energy Drink Use and Academic Pressure in Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the predictive roles of academic pressure and energy drink consumption on perceived stress levels among university students in Bangladesh. A correlational descriptive design was used involving 490 undergraduate students selected using stratified random sampling. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), the Academic Stress Inventory (ASI), and the Energy Drink Consumption Questionnaire (EDCQ) were administered to assess stress, academic pressure, and energy drink use, respectively. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships between the dependent variable (stress) and each independent variable (academic pressure and energy drink use). A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the joint predictive ability of the two independent variables on perceived stress. All assumptions for regression analysis were tested and confirmed. Results revealed significant positive correlations between perceived stress and both academic pressure (r = .64, p < .01) and energy drink use (r = .42, p < .01). The multiple regression model was statistically significant, F(2, 487) = 216.12, p < .001, explaining 47% of the variance in stress scores ($R^2 = .47$). Both academic pressure ($\beta = .61$, $\beta = .01$) and energy drink use ($\beta = .27$, $\beta = .001$) were significant predictors of perceived stress, with academic pressure showing a stronger influence. The findings indicate that academic pressure is a dominant predictor of stress among university students, while energy drink consumption also contributes significantly to elevated stress levels. These results highlight the need for institutional strategies that target both academic workload management and healthrisk behaviors to promote student mental well-being.

Keywords: Academic pressure, energy drink use, student stress, university students, coping behaviors.

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Introduction

Academic stress is defined as the mental distress resulting from anticipated academic challenges or failure, such as examinations, assignment deadlines, or interpersonal conflicts with peers or faculty. Numerous studies have explored the triggers and effects of academic stress, highlighting its strong association with anxiety, burnout, and decreased academic performance (1, 2). The stress levels experienced by students are often mediated by individual coping strategies, institutional support, and socio-cultural



norms (3, 4). Particularly in post-pandemic academic settings, students have faced heightened levels of stress due to hybrid learning modalities, inconsistent routines, and reduced face-to-face interactions with faculty and peers (5). These challenges are compounded by external lifestyle factors that may either mitigate or exacerbate stress.

One increasingly prevalent coping behavior among university students is the consumption of energy drinks. Marketed as quick-fix solutions for fatigue and reduced alertness, energy drinks are widely used by students to manage late-night studying and academic performance pressure. However, while these beverages may offer short-term cognitive stimulation, their regular consumption has been associated with increased stress, anxiety, and sleep disturbances (6, 7). Research suggests that the physiological effects of energy drinks—particularly the high caffeine and sugar content—can disrupt the body's stress response system and contribute to heightened emotional reactivity (8). Despite these risks, energy drink consumption remains normalized within academic cultures where productivity is often prioritized over well-being.

Academic pressure remains one of the most potent and direct stressors in student life. It encompasses a range of internal and external demands such as self-imposed performance expectations, parental or societal expectations, and the structural demands of academic institutions (9, 10). In several studies, students reported that their primary source of stress stemmed not from the complexity of academic content but from the overwhelming volume of tasks and the fear of academic failure (11, 12). The effects of academic stress are further intensified by time constraints, competitive grading systems, and inadequate coping resources, all of which can have long-term implications for students' emotional health and academic success.

Understanding the predictors of stress is essential for developing targeted interventions in academic institutions. While many studies have examined either academic pressure or lifestyle behaviors separately, fewer have explored how these variables jointly influence students' stress levels. The integration of energy drink consumption as a behavioral variable with academic pressure as a cognitive-emotional stressor offers a more holistic framework for examining student well-being. Previous research has found correlations between maladaptive coping behaviors and increased psychological distress, suggesting that the frequent use of energy drinks may function not as a buffer but as a contributor to chronic stress (13, 14).

Stress, as a construct, is complex and multidimensional. It is influenced by personality traits, cultural norms, academic environment, and coping efficacy. Students adopt diverse coping mechanisms to manage academic stress, ranging from problem-focused strategies like time management to emotion-focused approaches such as seeking social support or using distraction techniques (15, 16). However, research indicates that when these coping mechanisms are underdeveloped or misaligned with the stressor, students may turn to avoidance behaviors or stimulant use, both of which are associated with poorer academic and psychological outcomes (17, 18).

Moreover, several demographic and contextual factors moderate students' stress experiences. For example, gender differences have been documented in the selection and success of coping strategies. Female students are more likely to seek emotional support, while male students may engage in risk-taking behaviors such as excessive caffeine consumption or skipping rest to meet deadlines (18, 19). Cultural expectations and religious values also play a role in shaping stress perception and coping styles. In some contexts, patience and spiritual practices are employed as religious coping mechanisms, which may offer psychological buffering against stress (16).

In Bangladesh, where the present study is situated, academic competition is intense and deeply influenced by socio-economic and familial pressures. University students often report struggling with the balance between academic achievement and mental well-being, leading to increased vulnerability to stress-related disorders. The expanding availability of energy drinks in urban and semi-urban areas adds another dimension to the coping behaviors commonly adopted by students. Despite this, few studies in the South Asian context have examined how these variables—academic pressure and energy drink consumption—interact to predict psychological stress. This gap in the literature underscores the need for empirical studies that investigate these relationships in culturally relevant settings.

The theoretical foundation of this study is informed by the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which posits that stress is a product of the interaction between environmental demands and the individual's perceived coping resources. According to this model, when individuals perceive academic challenges as exceeding their available resources, stress arises. The use of coping strategies—adaptive or maladaptive—then determines the outcome of this stress response (3, 4). Energy drink consumption can be interpreted within this framework as a behavioral coping mechanism that may temporarily enhance alertness but ultimately fails to reduce underlying academic pressures.

Recent literature also supports the importance of investigating coping strategies in diverse student populations. For instance, a comparative study of public and private university students revealed that adaptive coping mechanisms such as structured routines, peer support, and time management were linked to lower stress levels, while reliance on stimulants or avoidance was correlated with higher stress scores (5, 12). Furthermore, emotional exhaustion—a key component of academic burnout—has been shown to increase with the frequency of energy drink use and with the perception of academic unfairness or overload (2, 6).

In light of these findings, the current study aims to investigate the relationship between stress, energy drink consumption, and academic pressure among undergraduate students in Bangladesh.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

This study employed a correlational descriptive design to examine the relationship between stress, energy drink use, and academic pressure among university students. A total of 490 undergraduate students from various public and private universities in Bangladesh participated in the study. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for a population size exceeding 10,000, ensuring adequate statistical power and generalizability. Participants were selected through a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation across gender and academic disciplines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and ethical approval was secured from the relevant institutional review board.

Data Collection

To assess students' levels of stress, the study employed the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein in 1983. This widely used instrument measures the degree to which individuals perceive their lives as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded during the past month. The PSS-10 consists of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (very often), with higher total scores indicating greater perceived stress. The scale includes items that reflect both positive and

negative experiences, with four items reverse-scored. The total score ranges from 0 to 40. The scale has demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha typically > 0.80) and has been validated across diverse populations, confirming its reliability and construct validity in both clinical and non-clinical samples.

Energy drink use was measured using the Energy Drink Consumption Questionnaire (EDCQ), originally developed and validated by Malinauskas et al. in 2007 to examine patterns of consumption among college students. The questionnaire assesses frequency, quantity, and context of energy drink use, including motivations for consumption (e.g., energy boost, study aid, recreational use). The EDCQ includes 10 items and utilizes both categorical and frequency-based response formats (e.g., times per week, number of cans). It offers a composite score that reflects overall energy drink consumption patterns. The EDCQ has been widely used in student health studies and shows good content validity and test-retest reliability (r > 0.80) as reported in subsequent peer-reviewed studies.

Academic pressure was measured using the Academic Stress Inventory (ASI), developed by Kohn and Frazer in 1986. The ASI evaluates the intensity and sources of academic stress among students through 35 items grouped into several subscales: workload and examinations, time constraints, self-expectations, teacher interactions, and peer competition. Respondents rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with higher scores reflecting greater academic stress. The total score can be calculated as well as subscale-specific scores for more detailed analysis. The ASI has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, including high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > 0.85) and has been validated in various educational and cultural contexts, confirming its reliability and construct validity.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were used to summarize participant demographics and variable distributions. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to examine the bivariate relationships between the dependent variable (stress) and the independent variables (energy drink use and academic pressure). Subsequently, a standard multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive power of energy drink use and academic pressure on students' stress levels. All assumptions related to linear regression—normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity—were tested and confirmed prior to analysis.

Findings and Results

Of the 490 students who participated in the study, 276 (56.33%) identified as female and 214 (43.67%) as male. The majority of participants (n = 312; 63.67%) were between the ages of 18 and 22 years, while 178 (36.33%) were aged 23 and above. Regarding academic level, 205 students (41.84%) were enrolled in their first or second year of undergraduate study, and 285 (58.16%) were in their third or fourth year. Participants were drawn from a range of disciplines, with the highest representation from social sciences (n = 198; 40.41%), followed by natural sciences (n = 156; 31.84%) and humanities (n = 136; 27.75%).

All assumptions required for linear regression were examined and satisfied. The normality of residuals was confirmed through the Shapiro-Wilk test (p = 0.094) and inspection of the Q-Q plot. Linearity and

homoscedasticity were verified by visual examination of scatterplots showing a random distribution of residuals around the mean. Multicollinearity was ruled out, as tolerance values were above 0.80 and Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) were below 1.25 for all predictors. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.91, indicating no serious autocorrelation among residuals. These results confirmed the suitability of the data for linear regression analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	
Perceived Stress	21.68	5.94	
Academic Pressure	28.42	6.11	
Energy Drink Use	14.87	4.38	

As shown in Table 1, the mean score for perceived stress among students was 21.68 (SD = 5.94), indicating a moderate level of stress based on the PSS-10 scale (range: 0-40). The average academic pressure score was 28.42 (SD = 6.11), suggesting a relatively high perceived academic burden. For energy drink use, the mean score was 14.87 (SD = 4.38), indicating a moderate frequency of consumption among the student sample.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Between Perceived Stress and Predictor Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Perceived Stress	_		
2. Academic Pressure	.64**	-	
3. Energy Drink Use	.42**	.37**	

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the study variables. Perceived stress was significantly and positively correlated with academic pressure (r = .64, p < .01) and energy drink use (r = .42, p < .01), indicating that higher academic pressure and more frequent energy drink consumption are associated with greater stress levels. Academic pressure and energy drink use were also significantly correlated (r = .37, p < .01), suggesting these behaviors may co-occur in stressed students.

Table 3. ANOVA Summary for Multiple Regression Model

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
Regression	3421.26	2	1710.63	.69	.47	.47	216.12	< .001
Residual	3880.47	487	7.97					
Total	7301.73	489						

The regression model was statistically significant, F(2, 487) = 216.12, p < .001, indicating that the predictors (academic pressure and energy drink use) reliably predicted perceived stress levels. The model accounted for 47% of the variance in stress scores ($R^2 = .47$), with an adjusted R^2 also at .47, suggesting strong explanatory power and minimal overfitting.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients Predicting Perceived Stress

Predictor	В	SE	β	t	p	
Constant	5.31	1.12	_	4.74	< .001	
Academic Pressure	0.58	0.05	.61	11.42	< .001	
Energy Drink Use	0.33	0.07	.27	4.71	< .001	

Table 4 shows that both academic pressure and energy drink use were significant predictors of perceived stress. Academic pressure had a larger standardized beta coefficient (β = .61, p < .001) compared to energy drink use (β = .27, p < .001), indicating it had a stronger impact on stress levels. For every unit increase in academic pressure, stress increased by 0.58 units, while a one-unit increase in energy drink use predicted a 0.33 unit increase in stress, controlling for other variables.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which energy drink consumption and academic pressure predict perceived stress levels among university students in Bangladesh. Pearson correlation analyses revealed significant positive relationships between both independent variables—academic pressure and energy drink use—and stress. Furthermore, the results of the linear regression analysis confirmed that academic pressure and energy drink consumption were significant predictors of perceived stress, with academic pressure emerging as the stronger of the two. These findings reflect the increasing psychological burden faced by university students and the potential compounding effects of lifestyle behaviors on mental health outcomes.

The significant relationship observed between academic pressure and perceived stress aligns with a substantial body of literature that documents the emotional toll of academic demands on students' well-being. Prior studies consistently report that workloads, examinations, time constraints, and competitive academic cultures are primary sources of chronic stress among university students (1, 10). The current findings echo those of Samong (2024), who found that nursing students facing clinical workload and performance anxiety reported high levels of psychological distress directly tied to academic pressures (11). Similarly, Gou (2024) concluded that academic stress had a significant impact on both academic performance and overall psychological functioning among students, reinforcing the notion that academic environments are key determinants of stress levels (6).

Academic pressure also emerged as the strongest predictor of stress in this study's regression model. This finding is consistent with research by Jia and Chu (2024), who identified academic obligations as more predictive of student distress than other contextual or demographic factors in their study on Chinese undergraduates (3). In parallel, Ardiana and Soetjiningsih (2024) highlighted the pervasive nature of academic stress during thesis writing, a process which encapsulates the culmination of many academic pressures such as deadlines, supervisor expectations, and self-imposed perfectionism (19). These findings underscore the notion that academic expectations serve as both situational and existential stressors for students, particularly in cultures where academic success is linked with social mobility and family honor.

In addition to academic pressure, energy drink consumption was also positively correlated with stress. Although this relationship was weaker than that of academic pressure, it remained statistically significant. This is in line with findings by Ambarwati et al. (2024), who noted that students often resort to caffeine-based stimulants to compensate for reduced sleep and increased academic workload, despite the risk of long-term psychological consequences (7). Frequent consumption of energy drinks, while initially perceived as a productivity aid, has been linked to symptoms of restlessness, irritability, and sleep disruption—factors known to exacerbate psychological stress. Yu and Cheng (2024) similarly emphasized that while stimulant

use can temporarily mitigate the physical signs of fatigue, it tends to increase physiological arousal, which in turn can worsen stress responses (8).

The use of energy drinks as a coping strategy fits within the broader literature on maladaptive behaviors adopted by students under pressure. Dahanayake et al. (2024) found that medical students experiencing high levels of distress were more likely to use avoidance-based coping mechanisms, including overreliance on stimulants or disengagement from studies (13). While such strategies may offer temporary relief, they often fail to address the root causes of stress and may even exacerbate them in the long term. Lim et al. (2024) noted similar trends among Filipino students in the post-pandemic academic landscape, where burnout and academic fatigue drove students to seek quick-fix solutions such as caffeine or late-night study marathons, further eroding their psychological resilience (5).

Notably, both predictors—academic pressure and energy drink use—appear to be interconnected in practice. High academic stress may lead students to consume energy drinks as a coping mechanism, inadvertently heightening their vulnerability to psychological strain. This interplay reflects the transactional nature of stress, as described by several studies in this field. For instance, Dabholkar et al. (2024) emphasized the role of personality traits in moderating the relationship between coping mechanisms and academic outcomes, noting that students with low emotional regulation were particularly susceptible to maladaptive strategies such as substance use (15). Likewise, Vetrivel et al. (2024) observed that the adoption of ineffective coping strategies—including excessive stimulant consumption—often occurs in response to overwhelming academic demands and poor institutional support (14).

The findings of this study also reinforce the gendered and cultural dimensions of academic stress. While gender differences were not a focus of this investigation, prior research offers insight into how stress manifests differently across demographic groups. Kuragama et al. (2024) highlighted significant gender disparities in coping mechanisms among undergraduates, with male students more likely to engage in behavioral avoidance and stimulant use, while female students relied more heavily on emotional and social coping strategies (18). Furthermore, Ramdani et al. (2024) discussed the role of religious and spiritual coping mechanisms in moderating academic stress, suggesting that faith-based strategies may buffer psychological strain in certain cultural contexts (16).

The broader context of higher education also plays a role in shaping students' stress experiences. According to Rodríguez et al. (2024), the neoliberal model of academia—characterized by competition, self-regulation, and individual accountability—has exacerbated emotional burnout and prompted the rise of self-care practices that are often superficial or performative in nature (17). Students navigating these environments may feel pressure to perform academically while simultaneously maintaining an image of wellness, often leading to internal conflict and emotional exhaustion. This pressure is especially pronounced in regions like South Asia, where academic achievement is deeply tied to future career prospects and familial expectations.

The results of this study have significant implications for academic institutions and student support systems. As the regression analysis indicates, both academic pressure and behavioral coping patterns like energy drink consumption contribute meaningfully to perceived stress. It is therefore crucial for universities to implement preventive strategies that address not only academic workloads but also students' health-related behaviors. Interventions such as time management workshops, peer mentoring programs, and

accessible mental health services can equip students with healthier coping strategies. As highlighted by Wan (2024), institutional support plays a pivotal role in shaping how students respond to stressors and whether they are likely to adopt adaptive or maladaptive coping behaviors (4).

Finally, the coping strategies adopted by students in this study must be interpreted through the lens of environmental and psychological support. Research by Arquero et al. (2024) illustrates that students in both public and private educational institutions differ in the way they respond to stress based on their access to resources, peer networks, and administrative flexibility (12). These findings support the idea that stress is not solely a function of individual disposition but also reflects institutional context and environmental pressures. Similarly, Muhunthan (2024) emphasized the importance of early identification of key stressors and the implementation of school-based coping interventions to mitigate long-term psychological damage (20).

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. First, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias, particularly regarding sensitive topics such as stress levels and energy drink consumption. Participants may have underreported or overreported their behaviors due to social desirability or recall errors. Second, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal inferences between variables. While correlations and predictions were statistically significant, the directionality of the relationships cannot be definitively established. Additionally, the sample was confined to university students in Bangladesh, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or educational contexts. Finally, the study did not account for potentially confounding variables such as sleep quality, diet, or substance use beyond energy drinks, which could have influenced the results.

Future research should consider longitudinal designs to assess how stress, academic pressure, and stimulant use evolve over time, especially across different stages of university life. Tracking students from the start to the end of their academic programs could provide deeper insight into when and why maladaptive coping strategies emerge. It is also recommended that future studies include a more diverse sample, incorporating students from different regions, educational systems, and socio-economic backgrounds. This would allow for a more nuanced understanding of cultural influences on stress and coping. Moreover, future work could benefit from integrating physiological or behavioral data—such as cortisol levels or sleep tracking—to complement self-reported measures and enhance validity. Finally, examining the role of protective factors such as social support, emotional intelligence, and institutional resources could help build a more comprehensive model of student well-being.

Academic institutions should prioritize mental health education and promote awareness of both adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms. Faculty and administrative staff should be trained to recognize signs of academic distress and refer students to appropriate support services. Counseling centers should offer workshops on stress management, sleep hygiene, and nutritional awareness, including the risks of excessive caffeine consumption. Additionally, course scheduling and examination practices should be reviewed to ensure that academic expectations remain challenging yet manageable. Encouraging open conversations about mental health, reducing stigma, and integrating well-being into the academic curriculum can foster a more supportive and sustainable learning environment for students.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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