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Interaction between Academic Performance with Emotional and Cognitive Changes among Kosovo Undergraduate Students

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Abstract. The study aim is to explore and describe the level of impact that academic factors have on the emotional and cognitive changes among undergraduate students of the Hasan Prishtina University, in Prishtina, Kosovo. The main thesis of this analytical study is to identify whether signs of panic, anxiety or lack of motivation are more prevalent in students who are not fully satisfied with the assessment or evaluation methods used by their professors in comparison to other students who better evaluated their teacher assessments and methods. The second analytic thesis will certify whether the level of student satisfaction with their academic performance has an impact on their social life by isolating them or reducing their desire to socialize.

To identify the scope of this study, the quantitative research method has been used. The measuring instrument was designed in the form of a questionnaire that was conducted with the 1006 students who are currently pursuing their BA degree at Hasan Prishtina University. For the conduction of the research, students were selected from the 12 departments within the university.

Results of the study confirm the interaction between academic performance and signs of panic, anxiety and changes in the motivation to learn. Signs of psychological changes have been identified in a considerable number of students who participated in the research. Students, who were not very satisfied with their academic performance, have asserted to have signs of panic, anxiety, and a decrease in desire to learn several times a month. Moreover, in relation to the level of satisfaction with academic performance, feelings of isolation or lack of desire to socialize appeared to be higher in students who are moderately satisfied with their academic performance.

1. Introduction

The study aims to explore and describe the level of impact that academic factors have on the emotional and cognitive changes among undergraduate students of the University of Prishtina, Hasan Prishtina in Kosovo. The main thesis of this analytical study is to identify whether signs of panic, anxiety or motivation decrease are more prevalent in students who are not fully satisfied with the methods of assessments or evaluations used by their professors in comparison to other students who better evaluated their teacher assessment and methods. The second analytic thesis will certify whether the level of student satisfaction with their academic performance has an impact on their social life by isolating them or decreasing their desire to socialize.

2. Literature review

According to numerous theoretical perspectives, a combination of both academic and non-academic factors has an impact on students' academic performance. As influential predictors in the group of

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non-academic factors are considered the students psychosocial factors, such as, motivation and self-regulation, and family factors, such as attitude toward education, and the students' personal interest on studying the area they have chosen for their future career [1].

However, beside above-mentioned factors, the teaching and the assessment methods used by the professors are considered influential factors on students' academic achievements as well [2]. Moreover, it is suggested that teaching methods used by the teachers should be best for the subject matter because if the method is not aligned with the specific outcome, then the results will be either poor or a failure [3]. Other studies have also concluded that poor student achievement is attributed to poor teaching styles [4]. Moreover, according to another theoretical perspective, a similar conclusion was made that teaching experiences decrease students' motivation and their initiatives to learn. Students reply better in the courses, which are led by enthusiastic instructors, since they motivate students' learning, and increase their interest in the subject [5]. Therefore, these types of courses do motivate students learning as well, and help them become independent in creating their own concept on choosing what to learn[6].

Regarding the assessment methods used to evaluate student academic performances other theories argues that the evaluation is the most important part of the course since it evaluates the students learning outcomes [7]. However, the best model of assessment is considered the one that gives students the opportunity to list their estimated results and self evaluate their assessment results [8]. Other studies have also emphasized that most undergraduate student' concerns in relation to their academic performance are manifested with energy loss, mood changes, problems with eating and sleeping, decrease of motivation and self-esteem, isolation, suicidal thoughts, losing interest for social activities and other related anxiety and psychological change symptoms [9]. All these changes may further impact students' emotional wellbeing, academic performance, managing time, and affect students' loss of interest in continuing their education [10]. Therefore, all the above findings regarding the numerous factors that can impact students, clarify that these factors very possibly implicate in the students' education process, and therefore it is important to identify them and offer alternatives to enhance student learning.

3. Methodology

For the study, the quantitative research method has been used. The measuring instrument has been designed in the form of a questionnaire conducted with 1006 students who are currently pursuing their Bachelor degree at Hasan Prishtina University. Students were selected from the 12 departments of the University. The research sample was determined for 1006 students, or 10% of students of the departments selected. Student participation in the research was voluntary, and completion of the questionnaire was anonymous. Participants in various forms completed data collection by visiting the respective faculties, by contacting students directly after their lectures, exams, stay in the library, at their student center, cafeteria or student gatherings. The data collected from the questionnaire were processed through the statistical package SPSS. Interaction between the tested variables is presented through interactive analysis (cross-tabulation analysis), while the results for the standard deviation (SD) of the tested variables are tested and released through Pearson's chi-squared test ($\chi2$).

4. Results

The study results show that the largest number of students who participated in the survey, have declared that very seldom or never happens to them facing emotional or psychological changes. From the whole list of below declarations, in the most cases students have declared that it happens, however very rarely that they have signs of panic or anxiety, depression signs, deal with family conflict, emotional sensitivity, or have lack of desire for social activities or low self-esteem (table.1).

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Table 1
Level of emotional and psychological changes to the survey participants

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
	N (%)	N(%)	N(%)	N(%)
Panic or Anxiety Signs	64(6.4)	177(17.6)	262(26.0)	503(50.0)
Depression Signs	60(6.0)	141(14.0)	268(26.6)	537(53.4)
Emotional Sensitivity	184(18.3)	257(125.5)	360(35.8)	205(20.4)
Family conflicts	24(2.4)	70(7.0)	235(23.4)	677(67.3)
Lack of desire for social activities	42(4.2)	97(9.6)	229(22.8)	638(63.4)
Lack of self-confidence, sense of helplessness or uselessness	56(5.6)	98(9.7)	285(28.3)	567(56.4)

Note: N= represents the answer in numbers, while under (%) are presented the answers in percentages

According to the survey participant answers, most of the students have declared that it is rare for them to face with symptoms of burnout (table 2). However, from the below list of symptoms, from the survey results have also been noticed that a considerable number of students have declared that they are having sleeping problems (N=229, or 22.8%) or often have headaches (N=164, or 16.3 %).

Table 2
Level of burnout symptoms

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Decrease of energy and motivation to finish their studies;	78 (7.8)	199 (19.8)	269 (26.7)	460(45.7)
Sleeping problems;	229(22.8)	244(29.3)	219 (21.8)	314(31.2)
Eating problems;	29(12.8)	229(29.3)	251 25.0)	397(39.5)
General health changes;	48 (4.8)	168(16.7)	329(32.7)	461(45.8)
Headaches;	164(16.3)	314(31.4)	285(29.3)	243(24.2)
Problems with the heart beat, blood pressure;	61(6.1)	110(10.9)	155(15.4)	680(67.6)

Note: N= represents the number of participants, while under (%) are presented the answers in percentages

Furthermore, the research data analysis show that there is an interaction between academic factors, or how students evaluated the fairness of the exam and work evaluation they receive from their professors, with the psychological and emotional changes of the students. From the above results it can be noticed that students who have declared that the evaluation methods used by their professor are correct and fair, never or very seldom dealt with insecurity issues or a sense of helplessness, in comparison to the others students who disagreed on the fairness of their received evaluations (Table 3).

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Table 3

Comparison between students evaluation regarding the fairness of their work evaluation from the professors with the lack of confidence: sense of helplessness or insufficient validity

Professors evaluate our work and exams correctly ↓	Often	Sometimes ←	Seldom	Never
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Do not agree	10(17.9%)	11 (11.2%)	39 (13.7%)	81(14.3%)
Do not agree in any way	21(37.5%)	37(37.8%)	86 (30.2%)	200 (35.2%)
Agree	15 (26.8%)	32 (32.7%)	117 (41.1%)	176 (31%)
Totally agree	5 (8.9%)	10 (10.2%)	26 (9.1%)	61 (10.8%)
Neutral	5 (8.9%)	8 (8.2%)	17 (6%)	49 (8.6%)

Note: according to results analysis using Pearson Chi-Square, standard deviation in this case is (SD=.235)

Study results also prove the connection or interaction between academic performance and signs of panic and anxiety. Students, who are moderately satisfied with their academic performance, have asserted that it happens to them often (once a week) or several times a month to have signs of panic or anxiety (table 4).

Table 4.

The comparison between the level of student satisfaction with their academic performance and level of panic or anxiety signs

The level of students satisfaction		Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
		N (%)	**N (%)**	**N (%)**	**N (%)**
Not satisfied at all		7(10.9%)	5(2.8%)	7(2.7%)	16(3.2%)
Satisfied		7(10.9%)	38(21.5%)	32(12.2%)	77(15.3%)
Mediocre		38(39.4%)	81(45.8%)	129(49.2%)	228(45.3%)
Quite satisfied		8(12.5%)	39(22%)	68(26%)	134(26.6%)
Very satisfied		4(6.3%)	14(7.9%)	26(9.9%)	48(9.5%)

Note: according to results analysis using Pearson Chi-Square, standard deviation in this case is (SD=.008)

The data collected from the survey participants also show that despite the fact that more than half of the participants, agreed that the quality of teaching and assessment of their professors' are above average, still the level of student satisfaction with their academic performance is not quite satisfactory. From all students who took part in the survey, (N=476 or 47.3%) have declared that they are 'above average' satisfied with their academic performances, (N=249, or 24.8%) have declared that are 'quite satisfied' with their academic achievements, (N=154, or 15.3%) have answered to be 'satisfied', (N=92, or 9.1%) are 'satisfied', and (N=35, or 3.5%) have declared that they are 'not satisfied' at all with their academic performance.

A correlation between students' level of satisfaction with their academic performance and psychological changes has been noticed too. The sense for being isolated or the lack of desire to be

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part of the social activities, is bigger in the group of students who have declared to be normally satisfied with their academic performance, in comparison to other students who have answered to be more satisfied (table 5).

Table 5
Comparison between students level of satisfaction with their academic performance with the sense of isolation or lack of desire for social life

The level of students satisfaction		Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
		N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Not satisfied at all		5(11.9%)	4(4.1%)	8(3.5%)	18 (2.8%)
Satisfied		4(9.5%)	21(21.6%)	52(22.7%)	77(12.1%)
Average		25(59.5%)	47(48.5%)	105(45.9%)	229(46.9%)
Quite satisfied		5(11.9%)	17(17.5%)	45(19.7%)	182(28.5%)
Very satisfied		3(7.1%)	8(8.2%)	19(8.3%)	62(9.7%)

Note: according to results analysis using Pearson Chi-Square, standard deviation in this case is (SD=.000)

5. Conclusion

Results of the study confirm the interaction between academic performance and signs of panic, anxiety and changes in the motivation to learn level. Signs of psychological changes have been identified among a considerable number of students who participated in the research. Patterns throughout the research reflect that students, who were not very satisfied with their academic performance, have asserted to have signs of panic, anxiety, and a decrease in desire to learn several times a month. Moreover, in relation to the level of satisfaction with academic performance, feelings of isolation or lack of desire to socialize appeared to be higher in students who are moderately satisfied with their academic performance. Ultimately, the research data analysis show that there is an interaction between academic factors, or how students evaluated the fairness of the exam and work evaluation they receive from their professors, with the psychological and emotional changes of the students.

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