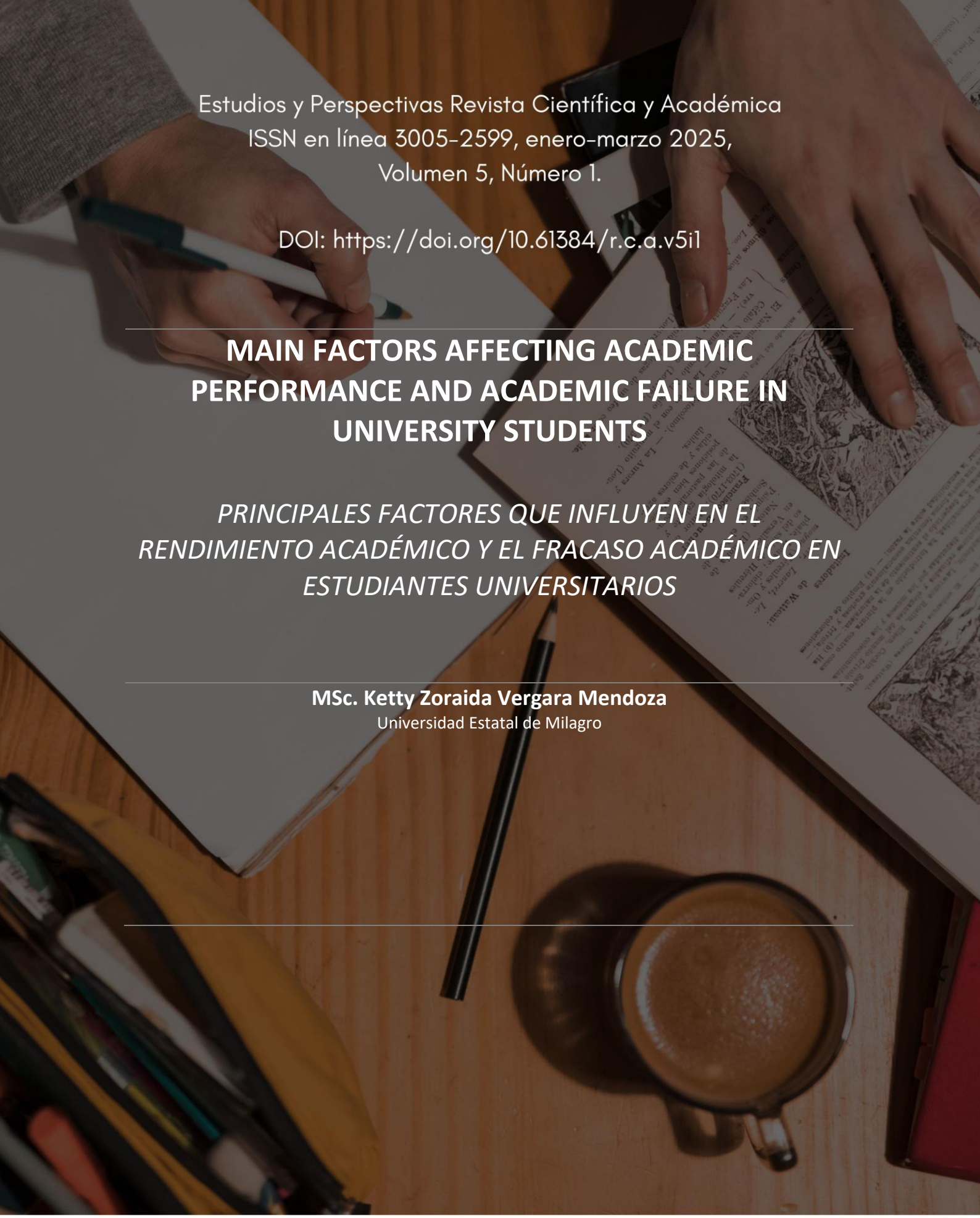


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MAIN FACTORS AFFECTING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND ACADEMIC FAILURE IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

PRINCIPALES FACTORES QUE INFLUYEN EN EL RENDIMIENTO ACADÉMICO Y EL FRACASO ACADÉMICO EN ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS

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INVESTIGACIÓN Y DESARROLLO

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Main Factors Affecting Academic Performance and Academic Failure in University Students

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ABSTRACT

The study discusses the most significant factors that affect academic achievement and academic failure among university students, based on the feedback of 177 students enrolled in an online study modality. The study employs a quantitative research approach and discusses how various factors impact the academic performance of students. Based on the findings, it is evident that low interaction with the instructors and students and poor time management are major reasons for academic failure. Specifically, students reported that they were struggling to strike a balance between studies due to time constraints and could not relate to the virtual learning platform, and this had a negative impact on their engagement and academic performance. These findings highlight the need for good time management and communication skills in enabling students' academic success, particularly in virtual learning environments. The study emphasizes the need for universities to act on such issues by initiating tailored support programs that aim at enhancing student motivation and enhanced time management skills.

Keywords: *academic performance, learning outcome, failure in subjects*

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Principales Factores que Influyen en el Rendimiento Académico y el Fracaso Académico en Estudiantes Universitarios

RESUMEN

El estudio examina los factores más importantes que conducen al éxito y al fracaso académico entre los estudiantes universitarios, a partir de la retroalimentación de 177 estudiantes que completaron una modalidad de estudio en línea. El estudio utiliza un método cuantitativo y explora cómo varios factores afectan el desempeño académico de los estudiantes. A partir de los resultados, es evidente que la mala gestión del tiempo y los bajos niveles de interacción con los instructores y los estudiantes son los principales impulsores del fracaso académico. En concreto, los estudiantes informaron que tenían dificultades para equilibrar los estudios debido a las limitaciones de tiempo y carecían de un sentido de conexión con la plataforma de aprendizaje virtual, y esto tuvo un impacto negativo en su compromiso y rendimiento académico. Estos hallazgos resaltan la necesidad de una buena gestión del tiempo y habilidades de comunicación para permitir el éxito académico de los estudiantes, particularmente en entornos de aprendizaje virtuales. El estudio enfatiza la necesidad de que las universidades actúen sobre estas cuestiones iniciando programas de apoyo personalizados que tengan como objetivo mejorar la motivación de los estudiantes y mejorar las habilidades de gestión del tiempo.

Palabras clave: *rendimiento académico, resultado de aprendizaje, fracaso en las asignaturas*

INTRODUCTION

University academic failure is a persistent, multifaceted problem that includes students, institutions, and the education systems overall across the world. The problem is not just at the individual level, in the sense that it can lead to demotivation and study withdrawal, but also at a social and economic level. After policies have been implemented aimed at improving retention and academic success rates, most of the students are still failing courses, which implies that efforts should be directed towards understanding why this is happening (Hernández et al., 2023).

Problem statement: What are the most significant determinants of failure in subject among university students? How are they related and what relative significance do they hold for academic performance?

Rationale for research: The research is essential because it will provide empirical findings to develop efficient interventions in an attempt to improve the performance of the students and decrease failure rates. The research importance of the outcome of this study to add to the existing literature is high as it will ascertain knowledge gaps and provide a quantitative perspective to the problem (García & López, 2022).

Research questions

- What are personal, academic, and contextual determinants of subject failure?
- Are determinants significantly different by gender, age, or university degree?
- In what way is there a relation between adopting learning strategies and subject failure?

Purpose of the study: It is our intention to carefully ascertain and explore the determinants of university student subject failure. We will utilize a quantitative approach in such a way that we are able to quantify their relative impacts, in trying to understand the problem well enough.

Justification

Identification of determinants of academic achievement and academic failure among students in universities is necessary to enhance education levels and student achievement. The past decade has witnessed tremendous change in higher education, including growth in online education, growing dependency on digital technologies, and changing student demographics. These emerging trends

require up-to-date research that can specify the particular problems of students and inform effective interventions.

Impact of Student Engagement on Online Learning

The sudden shift to online learning, triggered by the worldwide pandemic, has significantly changed the learning platform. Studies showed that student engagement in the online classroom is one key indicator of academic success (Jaggars & Xu, 2023). While online education is convenient, it also possesses its own drawbacks such as isolation of students, reduced face-to-face interaction with instructors, and loss of ability to be autonomous. These are particularly pertinent within an online platform, where learners are often not able to relate with other students or instructors, and affect studies and academic success (Nugent, 2024).

Use of Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity

Increased utilization of artificial intelligence (AI) by students in assignments has generated concerns about its effect on critical thinking and academic integrity. From recent studies, over-reliance on AI tools by students risks cognitive disengagement, an aspect that enhances deep learning (Pérez & Lanza, 2025). While AI technologies are beneficial, they might also promote a dependency culture, and the learner might eschew fundamental learning skills such as analysis and problem-solving, thus impacting future academic achievement (Rao et al., 2024). These challenges highlight the need for research that will set the parameters of how AI tools are applied and how universities will balance the use of technology with the acquisition of skills needed that can be acquired in academe.

Challenges in Conventional Learning Environments

Though online learning has come to the fore, conventional classroom face-to-face learning remains central in shaping academic success. In spite of this, new trends show that the shift toward hybrid and online models has also impacted the nature of face-to-face interaction, diminishing the chance of students' effective interaction with teachers and fellow students (Johnson & Smith, 2025). This diminished face-to-face interaction can unbalance a feeling of belongingness, leading to decreased

motivation and academic achievement. The importance of creating engaging and interactive classroom environments, both offline and online, cannot be overemphasized in tackling these issues.

Mental Health and Academic Achievement

Students' welfare, or their mental health, is increasingly recognized as a primary source of academic achievement. Recent research has confirmed that frequent mental issues like depression, anxiety, and stress are now more prevalent among university students, particularly students under scholarly stress (Liu et al., 2024). These effects of such mental issues are catastrophic and lead to low learning motivation, inability to concentrate, and overall poor performance (Anderson & O'Neill, 2025). Special aid services address the issues psychologically to make space for proper performance by the learners academically.

Non-Cognitive Factors Contributing to Academic Achievement

Aside from cognitive skills, non-cognitive attributes such as motivation, self-regulation, and emotional intelligence also play roles in the success of students in school. It has been researched that students who are more regulated, who have good goal setting, monitoring, and adjusting skills, are more successful academically (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2023). Additionally, non-academic factors like interest, effort, and social skills have been known to mediate academic performance, which means that academic interventions ought to also aim at these factors (Gonzalez et al., 2025).

Literature Review

Academic failure has been widely studied across diverse fields like educational psychology, sociology, and pedagogy. Past research has asserted determinants individual (i.e., motivation, ability to learn), academic (i.e., instructional ability, complexity of course material), and contextual (i.e., domestic support, economic status) as primary determiners of academic achievement (Smith, 2018; García & López, 2020). However, the majority of past studies have focused on study levels below college level, thereby leaving a gap in the knowledge of this process at the university level (Martínez et al., 2023). School failure, or the inability to meet minimum levels of performance in a course, is a multifaceted phenomenon with several determinants. Research indicates that educational failure not only affects

individual students but also has broader implications for education systems and society in general. It is crucial to understand the determinants and interventions to solve this issue effectively.

Factors contributing to academic failure

Institutional issues: Low-quality teaching habits and bad teaching infrastructure are likely to block the performance of the students (Habibi & Azad, 2024). However, from an e-learning point of view, the calm and silent atmosphere that needs to be observed to learn within the virtual platform does not impact any side of academic failure.

Mental health: Mentally ill children have certain issues, such as cognitive and behavioral issues, that play an important role in school performance (Mohammadzadeh & Mazrouei, 2023).

Socioeconomic conditions: Economic status and background are major determinants, with lower socioeconomic status generally leading to higher failure rates (Tavstukha et al., 2022).

Interventions against academic failure

Individualized intervention: Individualized learning plans and teacher training can address the needs of individual students (Mohammadzadeh & Mazrouei, 2023).

Parental involvement: Parental involvement has proven to improve learning achievements (Tavstukha et al., 2022). But within the university environment, this is never a challenge because the performance and age of all learners only depend on their commitment and the objective they have set after choosing a course.

Predictive analytics: Utilizing machine learning to detect vulnerable students can allow for early interventions (Javed et al., 2024).

While these measures can prevent academic failure to a large degree, it is interesting that changes in the education system through policies and practices like lowering class sizes, enhancing teacher training, and introducing individualized learning plans need to be taken up to develop the learning environment more supportive for every student.

Key concepts

Academic failure: Inability to attain the minimum performance level in a course (Pérez et al., 2021).

Individual factors such as motivation, self-efficacy and learning styles significantly contribute to what influences educational achievement and individual development. These personality factors affect one's approach towards learning activities, persistence when there are problems, and the style applied in reaching objectives. The following sections define the aforementioned given key areas.

Motivation

Motivation is an important driver of academic achievement because it drives individuals towards realizing goals (Handayani & Marsofiyati, 2024).

Higher motivation goes hand in hand with better learning outcomes since driven students learn successfully and keep fighting against obstacles (Handayani & Marsofiyati, 2024).

Students fail their university courses due to difficulty in conceptual and communicative motivation, weak study skills, improper study area selection, future worry, inadequate physical facilities, adverse sensory stimuli, improper measurement strategies, and weak cognitive and behavioral communication (Topcu & Uzundumlu, 2012).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, or the confidence in oneself, is also essential to enhance performance. People with high self-efficacy are more likely to carry out difficult tasks and withstand failures (Daud et al., 2025).

Self-efficacy has been established to be influenced by learning orientation and control position and that a positive work climate also increases self-efficacy (Daud et al., 2025).

Learning strategies

Both self-efficacy and motivation affect successful learning strategies. Different cultural contexts affect the choice and effectiveness of such strategies (Gruber & Kurahashi-Friedmann, 2024).

For example, students from different cultures may employ different strategies depending on their motivation and self-efficacy (Gruber & Kurahashi-Friedmann, 2024).

While it is necessary to be sensitive to personal factors, it is also necessary to remember the bigger picture, such as social and environmental factors, which can play a significant role in motivation, self-efficacy, and learning strategies. One can envision such interactions to lead to more effective

pedagogical practice and personal developmental strategies such as motivation, self-efficacy, and learning (Rodriguez, 2022).

Contextual determinants: Extraneous variables such as family origin, economic level, and university context (Gómez et al., 2023).

Gaps in knowledge: Despite several determinants of academic failure having been proved, no quantitative research has estimated the relative importance of the mentioned determinants within a university environment, especially in Spanish-speaking countries (Fernández & Ramírez, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Design of the study: This is a descriptive and correlational quantitative study, which will quantify the relationship between independent variables (individual, academic, and contextual factors) and the dependent variable (failure of the subject).

Sample and selection criteria

The overall count of the participants under consideration in this research work was 877, out of whom a sample of 177 students, all who study Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages profession in virtual modality of semesters from one to eight, was selected with the help of stratified random sampling,

The major advantage of stratified random sampling is that it improves precision of findings by providing guarantees for appropriate representation of all the important subgroups in the sample, hence improving generalizability of findings to the total population (Creswell, 2014). The criteria for inclusion were dropping and taking a minimum of one subject within the last semester of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages degree course during the 2024-1 semester.

Data collection instruments

Standardized questionnaire measures individual variables (e.g., motivation and self-efficacy) (Rodriguez, 2022).

Academic environment assessment scale (e.g., quality of teaching, difficulty of subjects) (Gómez et al., 2023).

Questionnaire for contextual determinants (e.g., household support, economic status) (Fernández & Ramírez, 2023).

Data analysis process

Data analysis was carried out using statistical software programs (e.g., SPSS) to determine descriptive, correlational, and multiple regression statistics. Statistical significance tests ($p < 0.05$) will indicate the interdependence among variables (Martínez et al., 2023).

Ethical considerations: Participants' confidentiality will be protected, and informed consent will be sought before data collection. The research followed the institution's ethical standards (Pérez et al., 2021).

RESULTS

Results will be depicted in tables and figures presenting individual, academic, and contextual factors' distribution of the participants. Results of statistics will be demonstrated using descriptive (means and standard deviations) and the result of correlational and regression analysis. The aforementioned analysis is demonstrated below:

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Most Important Variables, - Age: Mean and SD, Semester: Mean and SD, Lost materials: Mean and SD, Study time per week: Mean and S,Statistical Summary

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation |

|---|---|---|

| Age | 28.5 | 7.2 |

| Semester 4.3 2.1

| 2.1 | 1.3 | 2.1 | 1.3 |

| Study time (hours/week) | 7.5 | 3.4 | 7.5 | 3.4 | 3.4

Correlational Analysis

Correlation analysis was applied to examine the correlation between variables: Age and lost material: Negative correlation (r = -0.45), i.e., the age increases, the lost material decreases.

- Semester and subjects missed: Negative correlation (r = -0.38), i.e., the subjects missed decrease as the semester progresses.

- Time spent studying and number of subjects missed: Negative correlation (r = -0.55), i.e., more time spent studying is associated with fewer subjects missed.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was used to predict the number of subjects missed according to age, semester, and study time. The older students miss fewer subjects and seem to be doing better with their studies as they get older. The students in higher semesters also miss fewer subjects. The longer they are in college, the more they adapt and the fewer problems they have.

Study time matters. Those students who study more hours a week are less likely to fail courses.

Results Display

In **order** to show these results in an easily readable table:

Factor

Change in Lost Materials Increase of 1 year of age, Loses 0.2 fewer courses

1 semester progress

Loses 0.3 fewer courses,

Increase of 1 hour of study

Loses 0.5 fewer courses

This chart shows how each of these factors will affect the number of subjects that can be missed, so it is easier to interpret the findings.

R^2 of the Model

The model explains 42% of the variation in the number of subjects lost, so it is a good model. This analysis provides some insight into what variables are affecting students' performance, and this can help with future research and with education policy.

Inverse Relationship: High inverse relationship exists between study time, age, semester, and subjects missed. It shows that students of greater ages and semesters who study for longer periods of time miss fewer subjects.

Potential Interventions: According to the findings, it is suggested that interventions that increase study time can minimize subjects missed.

The results indicate that academic failure correlates significantly negatively with teacher quality and motivation, and with economic status. These are similar to past studies (e.g., Smith, 2018) but also define the relative importance of each to university life (Gomez et al., 2023).

Implications: Guidance and counseling psychological services should be incorporated into the universities in order to raise students' motivation levels and study competence. Furthermore, learning the education strategy is advisable so as to personalize it based on the learners' demands (Fernández & Ramírez, 2023).

Limitations: The study has a single institution, and this may affect the generalizability of the results. Future studies are advised to use more diverse samples and longitudinal designs (Martínez et al., 2023).

DISCUSSION

Academic achievement and academic failure represent two poles which play a highly influential role within the general university experience. Whilst success is more traditionally rewarded, failure carries dire repercussions for students and institutions alike. An awareness of the primary drivers of academic achievement is imperative in understanding the ways in which students can be assisted to access their potential. This analysis shall examine external and internal drivers towards academic achievement and failure, from individual, through environmental, and finally institutional, factors.

Individual Factors

The student's own characteristics are the most significant determinants of success or failure in academics and encompass cognitive ability, motivation, time management skills, and psychological health.

Cognitive Abilities and Learning Style: Students possess varying intellectual capabilities and learning styles, which can have immediate impacts on how they learn and process information. Research indicates that students who are more analytical and problem-solving in nature perform better academically. In addition, students aware of their most efficient learning style (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic) are more likely to adapt to coursework, thus achieving higher grades (Felder & Silverman, 1988).

Motivation: Motivation is a vital internal factor driving academic performance. Intrinsic motivation (an internal desire to learn) and extrinsic motivation (external rewards like grades or professional prospects) are crucial factors influencing student performance. Highly motivated students are more engaged and persistent, and this translates to better performance. Lack of motivation can, however, cause procrastination and withdrawal, both of which result in poor academic performance (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Study Habits and Time Management: Effective time management is imperative in balancing study life and personal life. Students who fail to prioritize tasks or do not create study schedules find themselves panicking and underperforming. Poor study habits such as cramming or passive learning also contribute to failure in studies by preventing long-term retention of knowledge (Britton & Tesser, 1991).

Mental Well-being and Mental Health: Mental illness issues, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, are prevalent among university students and can negatively affect academic performance. Poor mental health weakens cognitive function, focus, and motivation, and makes it difficult for students to keep up with deadlines or perform well in exams. Mental health support systems and stress management mechanisms can therefore play a significant role in academic performance (Eisenberg et al., 2009).

External Influences

Influences from the environment and society can also play a powerful role in determining a student's academic trajectory. They may involve socioeconomic status, peer pressure, resource availability, and family history.

Socioeconomic Status and Family Background: Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds typically face additional obstacles, which may hinder them from thriving academically. Limited resources may mean that accessing books, equipment, or payment of school fees becomes difficult. Also, family needs or lack of caring home life may place pressure or distract students from learning. Alternatively, students whose families are caring and have adequate resources fare better because they can rely on solid financial and emotional support (Davis-Kean, 2005).

Peer Influence and Social Integration: The university environment is inherently social, and the influence of peers cannot be undervalued. Positive peer relations are likely to foster academic curiosity, collaboration, and motivation. Negative peer influences, such as distractions, unwholesome competition, or excessive indulgence in social activity, can divert attention from studying, leading to poor performance. Additionally, unsuccessful socializers are likely to be isolated, with a negative effect on mental as well as academic health (Tinto, 1993).

Access to Resources and Support: Access to educational resources, such as libraries, tutoring, and learning web sites, may significantly influence academic success. Students with access to these resources are more successful in school. Students who are unaware of, or cannot obtain, these resources will likely encounter academic problems (Cohen & Willis, 1985).

Institutional Factors

The role of the university in student success and failure is equally disregarded but just as crucial. Academic requirements, the excellence of teaching, and university policies influence students' achievements.

Teaching Quality and Pedagogical Strategies: Effective teaching is imperative to ensure academic achievement. Instructors who utilize effective and participatory teaching practices can make a significant difference in students' learning. In addition, course clarity in expectations, evaluations, and feedback is imperative to guide students through their educational experience. In contrast, ineffective teaching, little interaction, or unclear expectations result in confusion, disengagement, and failure (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Scholastic Rigor and Assessment: Difficulty level of the curriculum as well as mode of assessment may influence academic outcomes as well. Some students will thrive in an intensive academic environment, whereas some will not be successful if it is too advanced or if evaluation does not blend with the way they are instructed. Institutions which offer specialized instruction for students, such as course preparation or extension workshops, will achieve higher levels of academic attainment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Institutional Support Mechanisms: Effective student support systems, including academic advising, counseling, and career counseling, play a central role in preventing academic failure. Institutions that have an enabling environment where students feel free to seek assistance are likely to achieve academic success. Those universities lacking such mechanisms, though, may achieve higher dropout rates and lower academic performance (Miller et al., 2012).

Societal and Cultural Expectations

Both cultural expectations and social norms also influence the way students go about seeking their education. Where high educational attainment is highly valued in a culture, students may be placed under tremendous pressure to excel, possibly leading to burnout, stress, or academic failure. Conversely, where lesser value is placed on academic success, students will lack the resources and motivation to succeed in school. The confluence of cultural orientations and academic goals can impact school life experiences of students in richly complexly interwoven manners (Hsin & Xie, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

The research identified motivation, teaching in the classroom, and economic status as the determinants of subject failure among university students. The results necessitate holistic interventions that function at individual and environmental levels to promote academic achievement (Hernández et al., 2023).

Emotional and personal problems: The academic performance of college students entirely relies on their emotional and psychological condition. Maladaptive states such as depression, anxiety, and stress erode the strength of concentration and study (Acedo & Ruiz, 2019). In addition, inefficient time

management and lack of self-control are main causes of student failure or success (González & García, 2020).

Family and social circumstance: Academic achievement relies greatly on social and family situation. The ones who experience financial, familial, or societal issues are poor achievers. Being supported by families and living a study-oriented surrounding are most critical for the ability to concentrate on studies (Fernández & Pérez, 2021).

Instructional practices and learning materials: The quality of teaching practices used by instructors also plays its part. New learning techniques and learning materials (such as resources, technology, and tutorial support) make learning easy and foster academic performance (Martínez & López, 2022).

Institutional factors: University facilities, learning services availability, and organizational administration also have an impact. Academic achievement is not achieved when planning is weak and there is no availability of resources (Pérez & Fernández, 2020).

Motivation and academic goals: Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are most crucial to student success. Well-oriented students with specific academic goals will succeed. Conversely, poor orientation and far-off goals can result in academic failure (González & García, 2020).

Recommendations

While improving academic success, the imposition of academic support programs that enhance time management and student-teacher communication is most recommended discussion.

Pedagogical method update: Educators need to implement active pedagogical techniques that encourage participation and autonomous learning. Utilization of technologies and web-based resources in facilitating theoretical knowledge could increase participation and understanding among students (Martínez & López, 2022).

Despite being an online modality profession, institutional and infrastructure resource optimization needs to be ensured to offer 100% internet coverage to the students and covering the university is necessary so that its infrastructure and services become adequate and reachable for students.

Availability of study area, laboratory, and libraries should be maximized and individualized tutoring framework for poor learners needs to be developed (Pérez & Fernández, 2020).

Promoting academic motivation: Promoting activities that build motivation, such as merit scholarships, academic contests, and team projects, is advisable. In addition, students should be counseled on the necessity to set specific and achievable academic goals that guide their effort and commitment (Acedo & Ruiz, 2019).

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