

# Student Motivation and Mental Health in Structured Academic Systems: An Analytical Study among Undergraduate, Graduate, and Postgraduate Students

Author1 name : **Ayesha Husna Najeeb**

MBA student , Vidya Vikas Institute of Technology and Engineering , Mysore

Author2 name: **Madhunayaka**

Assistant Professor, Vidya Vikas Institute of Engineering and Technology, Mysuru

[madhunayaka@vidyavikas.edu.in](mailto:madhunayaka@vidyavikas.edu.in)

## Abstract :

Student motivation and mental health are essential determinants of academic success and overall well-being in higher education. Structured academic systems, characterized by organized curricula, assessment methods, attendance requirements, and academic regulations, can significantly influence students' learning experiences and psychological health. This study aims to examine the impact of structured academic systems on student motivation and mental health among undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students. A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 57 respondents using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, and the Chi-square test through SPSS. The findings indicate that the academic environment, faculty support, and institutional practices have a significant influence on students' motivation and mental well-being. The Chi-square analysis confirmed a statistically significant relationship between structured academic systems, student motivation, and mental health, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concludes that educational institutions should adopt student-centered approaches and strengthen mental health support services to enhance both academic performance and psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** Structured Academic Systems, Student Motivation, Mental Health, Higher Education, Academic Environment, Student Well-being, SPSS, Chi-square Analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, besides being an institution for knowledge acquisition, higher education is increasingly perceived as a special environment that can considerably impact psychological well-being. Students' motivation, which is considered a major factor responsible for academic success and professional goals, is intricately connected with their mental condition. In the context of highly organized and rigid education systems, the psychological component becomes crucial. Demanding curriculums, regular assessment methods, and high-stakes grading are supposed to enhance competency skills; nevertheless, at the same time, they can become the sources of serious academic pressure and psychological strain.

Academic pressure is inevitable throughout the higher education experience, though it is manifested differently in the institutions of various levels. The beginning of university studies can be particularly challenging for undergraduates due to problems with identity establishment, independence, and adaptation to the academic life in general. In terms of graduate and postgraduate education, these stressors are transformed into much more serious and complicated pressures associated with special research deadlines, professional rivalry, publishing and employment requirements.

Understanding how system-imposed academic architectures impact the mental equilibrium and intrinsic drive across these varying developmental stages is an institutional necessity. Deteriorating mental health directly correlates with

diminished cognitive performance, lost academic motivation, and increased attrition rates, which threatens the quality of the nation's forthcoming skilled workforce. Compounding this crisis is the reality that traditional support systems within these rigid learning frameworks often fail to adapt to the evolving emotional needs of the student body. Consequently, this analytical study seeks to address this critical gap by investigating the intricate correlations between structured academic environments, motivational shifts, and resulting mental health indices through a comparative lens among undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Pascoe et al. (2020)** argues that continuous evaluation models systemically force higher education students to accept chronic stress and sleep deprivation as standard academic milestones. **Putwain (2024)** observes that aggressive, heavy-handed institutional messaging around testing targets fuels extreme worry, prompting vulnerable students to adopt self-critical, counterproductive safety behaviors. **Haritay et al. (2025)** assert that navigating hyper-structured academic programs functions as a mechanism of social exclusion, as coping with intense workloads requires external financial security. **Mohamed et al. (2025)** indicate that undergraduate students typically face sudden campus adaptation shocks, whereas advanced graduate and postgraduate scholars suffer from professional isolation. **Maji (2023)** demonstrates that rigid, metric-driven grading systems systematically destroy a student's internal passion, shifting their psychological profile from healthy curiosity to survival-driven anxiety. **VM Anantha Eashwar et al. (2025)** emphasize that unmanaged academic pressure and toxic institutional environments directly drive soaring university dropout rates and drastically reduce research output. **Chaudhry et al. (2024)** contend that contemporary institutional research relies far too heavily on standardized GPA metrics while completely sidelining underlying student mental wellness. **Goel (2026)** highlights that university faculty members frequently lack the essential mental health literacy required to effectively identify and support psychologically distressed students. **Kharwar (2024)** reveals that despite possessing high academic literacy, deep-rooted cultural stigmas within universities continue to actively prevent students from seeking institutional counseling. **Shrivastava (2024)** proves that high anxiety triggers severe academic avoidant behaviors and procrastination, creating a destructive feedback loop that rapidly degrades student competence.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main concern here is the inability of such rigid systems in higher education to keep the motivation of learning of the students intact without compromising their psychological well-being. These conventional systems depend a lot on evaluation systems, compulsory attendance, and grading curve system that have been proven to alter the mindset of students from intrinsic motivation to stress-induced fear. This concern is exacerbated by the fact that sources of stress in academics vary in nature throughout their academic experience; starting from the initial shock in university level up to isolation in research at the graduate and postgraduate levels. In spite of the increase in student stress level, the only aspect that institutional policies concern about is different student levels, universities will continue to suffer from high attrition rates and compromised student competence.

## NEED FOR THE STUDY

The need for this study arises from the alarming rise in student burnout and anxiety within highly structured university systems. Because academic stressors transform drastically from undergraduate adaptation shocks to advanced postgraduate research isolation, a comparative approach is urgently required. Ultimately, this research provides the empirical insights needed to reform rigid evaluation models and construct healthier, more sustainable higher education environments.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the influence of structured academic systems on student motivation.
2. To assess the mental health status of undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students.
3. To analyze the relationship between student motivation and mental health.

4. To compare the levels of motivation and mental health among undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students.

## HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis):

There is no significant relationship between structured academic systems, student motivation, and mental health among undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students.

H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative Hypothesis):

There is a significant relationship between structured academic systems, student motivation, and mental health among undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students

## Research Methodology

The study adopted a **quantitative research approach** to examine the relationship between structured academic systems, student motivation, and mental health among students. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Chi-square test with SPSS.

## Research Design

The study employed a **descriptive research design** to describe and analyze the impact of structured academic systems on student motivation and mental health among undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students.

## Sampling Method

The study used **Convenience Sampling**, a non-probability sampling technique, in which respondents were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the survey.

**Sample Size:** 57 respondents.

## Sources of Data Collection

### Primary Data

- Data were collected directly from undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms.

### Secondary Data

- Secondary data were collected from research journals, books, published articles, websites, conference papers, and other relevant academic sources related to student motivation, mental health, and structured academic systems.

## Limitations of the Study

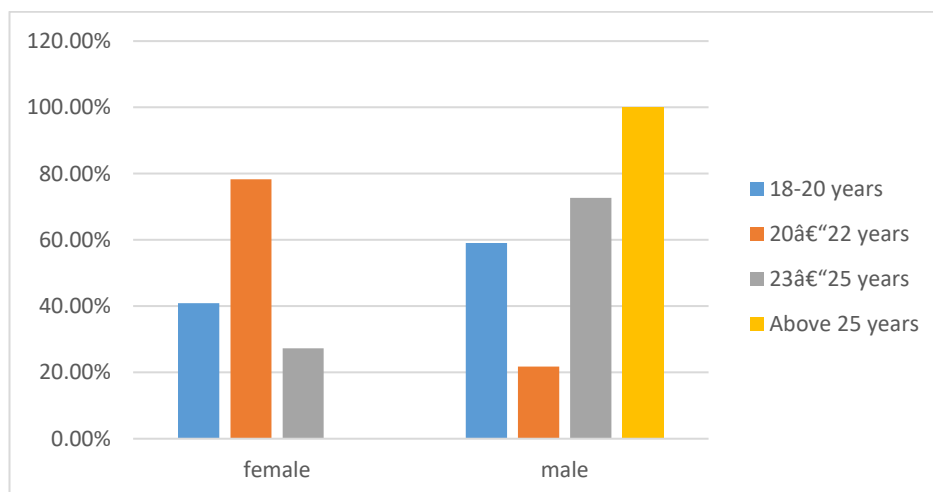
1. The study was limited to **57 respondents**, which may not fully represent the entire student population.
2. The research relied on **self-reported responses**, which may be influenced by respondents' personal opinions and biases.
3. The study was conducted within a **limited time period**, restricting the scope of data collection.
4. The findings are limited to the selected respondents and **cannot be generalized** to all higher education students.
5. The study focused only on **structured academic systems, student motivation, and mental health**, while other factors that may influence students were not considered.

## DATA ANALYSIS:

| Count of 1.Gender |             |             |             |                |  |             |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|--|-------------|
| Column Labels     |             |             |             |                |  |             |
| Row Labels        | 18-20 years | 20-22 years | 23-25 years | Above 25 years |  | Grand Total |
| female            | 40.91%      | 78.26%      | 27.27%      | 0.00%          |  | 52.63%      |
| male              | 59.09%      | 21.74%      | 72.73%      | 100.00%        |  | 47.37%      |
| Grand Total       | 100.00%     | 100.00%     | 100.00%     | 100.00%        |  | 100.00%     |

## Analysis:

The table presents the distribution of respondents based on gender and age. Female respondents constituted **52.63%** of the total sample, while male respondents accounted for **47.37%**. The highest proportion of female respondents belonged to the **20–22 years** age group (78.26%), whereas the majority of respondents in the **23–25 years** and **above 25 years** categories were male.



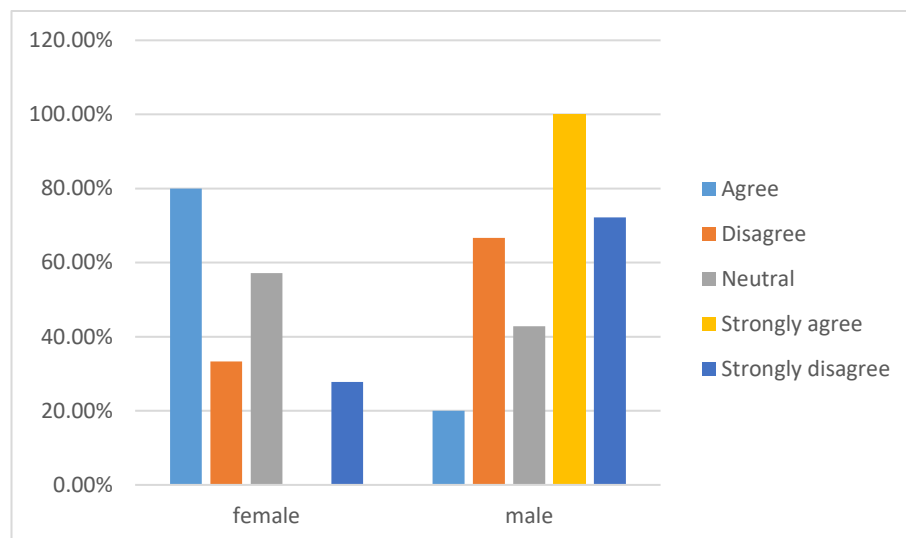
## Interpretation:

The sample consists of a nearly balanced representation of male and female students, with a slightly higher proportion of females. Most respondents fall within the 20–22 years age group, indicating that the study mainly represents students in the early stages of higher education.

| The overall college environment motivates me to perform well academically |        |          |         |                |                   |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------|---------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Column Labels                                                             |        |          |         |                |                   |             |
| Row Labels                                                                | Agree  | Disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree | Strongly disagree | Grand Total |
| female                                                                    | 80.00% | 33.33%   | 57.14%  | 0.00%          | 27.78%            | 52.63%      |
| male                                                                      | 20.00% | 66.67%   | 42.86%  | 100.00%        | 72.22%            | 47.37%      |

### Analysis :

The responses indicate varying perceptions regarding the motivational role of the college environment. A larger proportion of female respondents agreed that the college environment motivates them academically, whereas a comparatively higher proportion of male respondents expressed disagreement or strong disagreement.



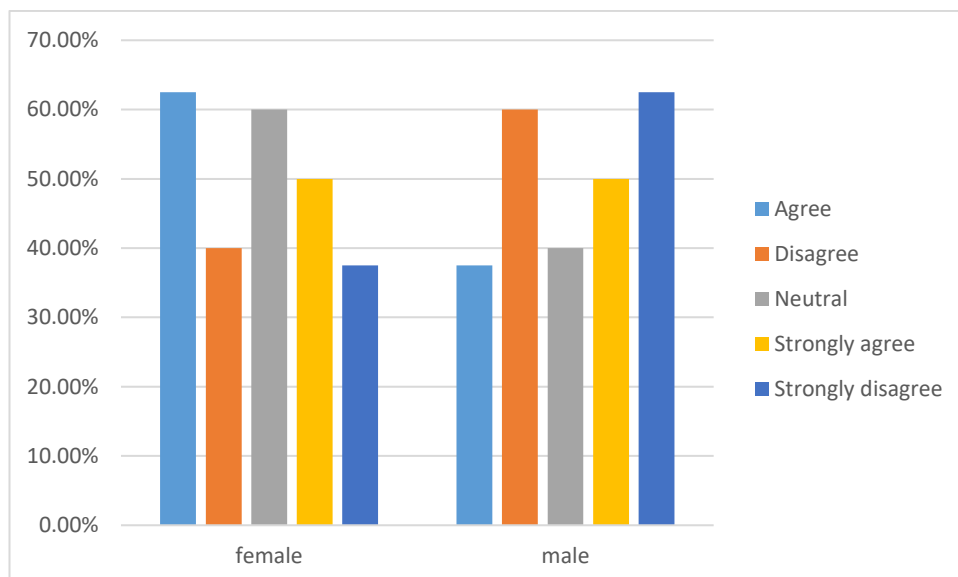
### Interpretation:

The findings suggest that the college environment positively influences academic motivation for some students, particularly females. However, the presence of huge disagreement indicates that institutional environments does not equally motivate all students.

| My lecturers encourage me and support me in my learning process |         |          |         |                |                   |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Row Labels                                                      | Agree   | Disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree | Strongly disagree | Grand Total |
| female                                                          | 62.50%  | 40.00%   | 60.00%  | 50.00%         | 37.50%            | 52.63%      |
| male                                                            | 37.50%  | 60.00%   | 40.00%  | 50.00%         | 62.50%            | 47.37%      |
| Grand Total                                                     | 100.00% | 100.00%  | 100.00% | 100.00%        | 100.00%           | 100.00%     |

### Analysis:

The responses indicate varying perceptions regarding lecturer support. A larger percentage of female respondents agreed that lecturers encourage and support their learning, while a comparatively higher percentage of male respondents reported disagreement.



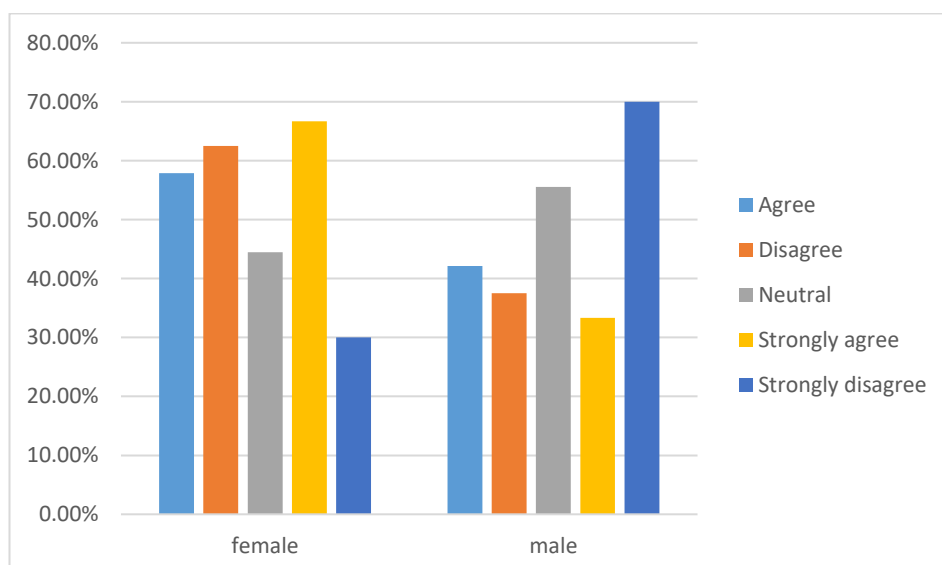
### Interpretation :

The findings imply that faculty support positively influences many students' learning experiences. Nevertheless, differing responses indicate that students' experiences with lecturer support are not uniform across the sample

| I am able to manage stress effectively |         |          |         |                   |             |
|----------------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|-------------------|-------------|
| Row Labels                             | Agree   | Disagree | Neutral | Strongly disagree | Grand Total |
| female                                 | 61.11%  | 60.00%   | 60.00%  | 28.57%            | 52.63%      |
| male                                   | 38.89%  | 40.00%   | 40.00%  | 71.43%            | 47.37%      |
| Grand Total                            | 100.00% | 100.00%  | 100.00% | 100.00%           | 100.00%     |

### Analysis

The responses reveal mixed opinions regarding students' ability to manage academic stress. More female respondents agreed that they were able to cope with academic stress effectively, whereas a larger proportion of male respondents selected the strongly disagree option.



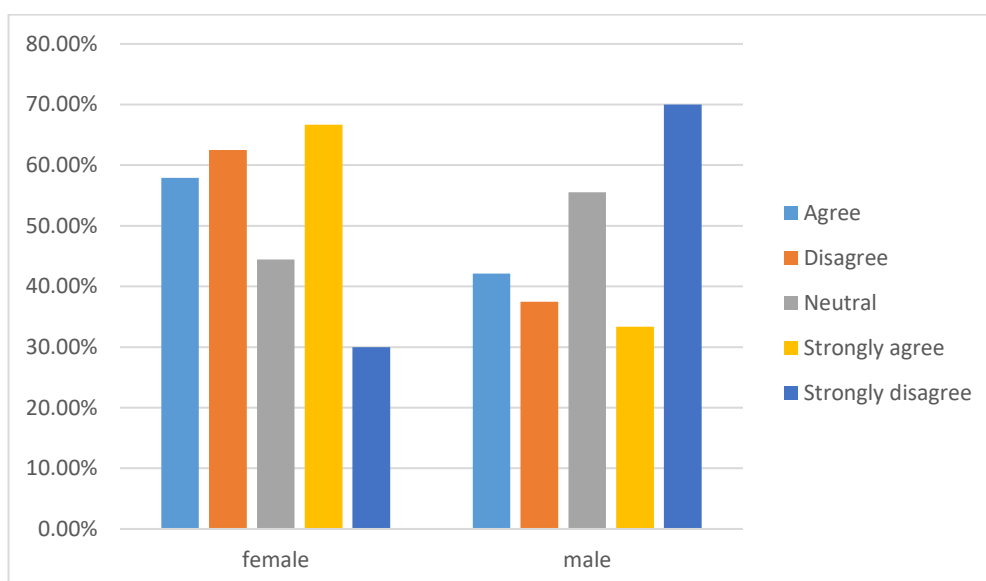
## Interpretation

The findings indicate that while many students are able to manage academic stress effectively, a considerable number continue to experience stress-related challenges. This highlights the importance of providing adequate stress management and counselling support in educational institutions.

| I can maintain a healthy balance between academic and personal life |         |          |         |                |                   |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Row Labels                                                          | Agree   | Disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree | Strongly disagree | Grand Total |
| female                                                              | 57.89%  | 62.50%   | 44.44%  | 66.67%         | 30.00%            | 52.63%      |
| male                                                                | 42.11%  | 37.50%   | 55.56%  | 33.33%         | 70.00%            | 47.37%      |
| Grand Total                                                         | 100.00% | 100.00%  | 100.00% | 100.00%        | 100.00%           | 100.00%     |

## Analysis

The table shows that respondents have varied opinions regarding their ability to maintain a balance between academic and personal life. Female respondents reported relatively higher agreement, whereas a greater percentage of male respondents expressed strong disagreement.



## Interpretation

The findings suggest that maintaining a healthy balance between academic responsibilities and personal life remains a challenge for many students. Educational institutions should promote practices that support student well-being and work-life balance.

## SPSS TEST

### Descriptive Statistics

|                                                                            | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| 7. My lecturers encourage and support me in my learning process.           | 57 | 1       | 5       | 2.84 | 1.333          |
| 8. The teaching methods used in my classes keep me interested and engaged. | 57 | 1       | 5       | 2.68 | 1.365          |
| 12. I feel emotionally stable while handling my academic responsibilities  | 57 | 1       | 5       | 2.75 | 1.214          |
| 13. I can maintain a healthy balance between academic and personal life.   | 57 | 1       | 5       | 2.81 | 1.231          |
| Valid N (listwise)                                                         | 57 |         |         |      |                |

**6. The overall college environment motivates me to perform well academically. \* 11.I am able to manage academic stress effectively. Crosstabulation**

Count

|                                                                               |   | 11.I am able to manage academic stress effectively. |    |    |    |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|-------|
|                                                                               |   | 1                                                   | 2  | 3  | 4  | Total |
| 6. The overall college environment motivates me to perform well academically. | 1 | 13                                                  | 3  | 2  | 0  | 18    |
|                                                                               | 2 | 0                                                   | 3  | 0  | 0  | 3     |
|                                                                               | 3 | 0                                                   | 1  | 7  | 6  | 14    |
|                                                                               | 4 | 1                                                   | 3  | 6  | 10 | 20    |
|                                                                               | 5 | 0                                                   | 0  | 0  | 2  | 2     |
| Total                                                                         |   | 14                                                  | 10 | 15 | 18 | 57    |

## Chi-Square Tests

|                                 | Value               | df | Asymptotic<br>Significance<br>(2-sided) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square              | 55.646 <sup>a</sup> | 12 | .000                                    |
| Likelihood Ratio                | 56.833              | 12 | .000                                    |
| Linear-by-Linear<br>Association | 30.777              | 1  | .000                                    |
| N of Valid Cases                | 57                  |    |                                         |

## Hypothesis Test Summary

|   | Null Hypothesis                                                                             | Test                       | Sig. | Decision                    |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | The categories defined by 1. Gender = male and female occur with probabilities 0.5 and 0.5. | One-Sample Binomial Test   | .791 | Retain the null hypothesis. |
| 2 | The categories of 2. Age occur with equal probabilities.                                    | One-Sample Chi-Square Test | .000 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 3 | The categories of 3. Level of Education occur with equal probabilities.                     | One-Sample Chi-Square Test | .008 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 4 | The categories of 4. Year of Study occur with equal probabilities.                          | One-Sample Chi-Square Test | .000 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 5 | The categories of 5. Type of Institution occur with equal probabilities.                    | One-Sample Chi-Square Test | .000 | Reject the null hypothesis. |

## KEY FINDINGS:

- The study found that the majority of respondents perceived the structured academic environment as having a significant influence on their academic motivation.
- Lecturer encouragement and academic support were identified as important factors that positively influenced students' motivation and engagement in learning.
- The findings revealed that students experience varying levels of academic stress, with many reporting difficulties in managing stress and maintaining emotional stability.
- The study indicated that maintaining a healthy balance between academic and personal life remains a challenge for several students.
- The Chi-Square analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between structured academic systems, student motivation, and mental health, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

## SUGGESTIONS:

1. Educational institutions should organize regular mental health awareness programmes, counselling sessions, and stress management workshops for students.
2. Faculty members should adopt supportive teaching approaches by providing constructive feedback, guidance, and encouragement to improve student motivation.
3. Colleges and universities should promote a balanced academic environment by reviewing workload, assessment schedules, and deadlines to reduce unnecessary stress.
4. Institutions should encourage extracurricular activities, mentoring programmes, and peer support groups to enhance students' emotional well-being.
5. Regular assessment of students' motivation and mental health should be conducted to identify concerns at an early stage and provide timely interventions.

## CONCLUSION :

The present study examined the impact of structured academic systems on student motivation and mental health among undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students. The findings indicate that academic environment, faculty support, and institutional practices play an important role in influencing students' motivation and psychological well-being. Although structured academic systems promote discipline and academic achievement, excessive academic pressure and workload may negatively affect students' mental health and their ability to maintain a healthy academic–personal life balance. The statistical analysis confirmed a significant relationship between structured academic systems, student motivation, and mental health. Therefore, educational institutions should adopt student-centred approaches that promote both academic excellence and psychological well-being, thereby creating a healthier and more supportive learning environment.

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