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EXPLORING ACADEMIC STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN JIANGSU PROVINCE:

A Small-Scale Mixed-Methods Study

COURSE:
ECDE7021

PRESENTED BY:
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Introduction to the Topic

- Academic stress among Chinese high school students is a **growing concern** (CDC, 2020; Liu & Wang, 2021)
- Jiangsu is a **highly competitive** academic region (Gu & Zhong, 2021)
- Mental health among adolescents is **increasingly prioritized** in global and Chinese contexts (Chen et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2021)



Research Problem

- What is the relationship between academic stress and mental health across regions and demographics in Jiangsu?
- How do different students experience and cope with stress? (Zhao et al., 2022)

Purpose of the Study

- Identify sources of academic stress (Wang & Pomerantz, 2021)
- Measure psychological symptoms (Chen et al., 2022)
- Understand regional and demographic differences (Zhang et al., 2023)

Research Questions

Main Research Question:

- What is the **relationship between academic stress and mental health** among high school students in different regions of Jiangsu Province?

Sub-questions:

- What are the **levels of academic stress, anxiety, and depression** among students in Southern, Central, and Northern Jiangsu?

- How do academic stress and mental health outcomes **vary by gender and grade level**?

- What do students **identify as their main sources** of academic stress?







Aims and Objectives

Aims:

- Investigate academic stress and mental health in Jiangsu high schools

Objectives:

- Use validated tools to measure stress (ESSA; Sun et al., 2011), anxiety (GAD-7; Spitzer et al., 2006), and depression (PHQ-9; Kroenke et al., 2001)
- Compare patterns across regions, grades, genders (Zhang et al., 2023)
- Analyze open-ended responses for deeper insight

Literature Review Overview

Literature Review #1

Academic stress is linked to anxiety and depression (Chen et al., 2022)

Literature Review #2

Chinese students face high parental and societal expectations (Wang & Pomerantz, 2021)

Literature Review #3

Regional differences in education quality and intensity (Gu & Zhong, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023)



Methodological Paradigm

- Paradigm: Pragmatism
- Justification: Mixed-methods allow for both statistical comparison and exploration of subjective experience (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018)

Research Design

- Cross-sectional
- Online questionnaire
- Mixed-methods (quantitative dominant)

Sample and Setting

- Participants: 300-450 students from 3 regions
- Sampling: Stratified by region; within schools, voluntary response

Research Tools

- **Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA)** – 16 items measuring students' stress from workload, pressure, self-expectations, and emotional exhaustion (Sun et al., 2011)
- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)** – 7 items assessing anxiety symptoms (Spitzer et al., 2006)
- **Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9)** – 9 items screening for depression symptoms (Kroenke et al., 2001)
- **One open-ended question:** "What causes you the most stress?"



Ethical Considerations

- Parental consent + student assent
- No identifying data collected
- Culturally appropriate materials (Merriam et al., 2001)

Positionality and Power

- Researcher is a native of Jiangsu, former student of the local system
- Will not interact directly with participants
- All data collected anonymously online (Merriam et al., 2001)



Data Collection Timeline



Start Date	July 15
End Date	September 29
Tool	Wenjuanxing 问卷星 (Online Survey App)
Distribution channels	Via school contacts

Quantitative Data Analysis & Qualitative Data Analysis





Quantitative Data Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics
- One-way ANOVA (region, gender, grade)
- Correlation analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis:

- Thematic analysis of open-ended responses
- NVivo or manual coding

Anticipated Findings

- Regional and grade-based variation in stress (Zhang et al., 2023)
- Link between academic pressure and symptoms of anxiety/depression (Chen et al., 2022)
- Student comments provide insight into coping and perception (Wang & Pomerantz, 2021)



Contribution and Impact

- Fills gap on intra-provincial comparisons (Zhao et al., 2022)
- Informs regional education policy
- Supports teacher and parent awareness



Reflection and Limitations

- Not generalizable to all of China
- Risk of response bias
- Excludes students without digital access

Thank you

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