

Original Article

Perceived Level of Academic Stress and Pornography Viewing of Male College Students

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Abstract. This study examined the perceived level of academic stress and pornography viewing among male college students and determined the significant relationship between the two variables. Although academic stress and pornography consumption have independently been associated with students' psychological and behavioral outcomes, the relationship between these variables remains insufficiently understood, particularly in relation to how students utilize behavioral coping mechanisms in response to academic pressure. Amid increasing global, national, and local concerns regarding pornography consumption and its possible effects on students' psychological and academic functioning, a research gap exists on how perceived academic stress relates to pornography viewing, particularly in the Philippine higher education context, where the topic remains highly stigmatized and underexplored. The study specifically aimed to determine (1) the perceived level of academic stress in terms of frequency and awareness, (2) the level of pornography viewing in terms of acceptance, frequency, and motivation, and (3) the relationship between academic stress and pornography viewing among respondents. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed involving 69 male students selected through stratified random sampling from a population of 83. Data were gathered using the Student Academic Stress Scale (SASS) and a validated researcher-made questionnaire, and analyzed using means, standard deviations, and Pearson product-moment correlations at the 0.05 level of significance. Results revealed a high level of academic stress ($M = 3.88$) and a high level of pornography viewing in terms of acceptance and motivation, with moderate frequency ($M = 3.55$). A moderate, positive, significant relationship was found between academic stress and pornography viewing ($p < 0.05$), indicating that higher academic stress is associated with increased pornography viewing. The findings suggest that pornography may serve as a coping mechanism for academic stress among male students, highlighting the need for interventions that promote healthier coping strategies and student well-being.

Keywords: Academic stress; College students; Pornography viewing; Stress coping; Students' behavior

Academic stress has become an increasingly prevalent concern among college students, particularly in academically demanding programs such as science education (Prajapati & Fatma, 2025). It refers to the psychological strain resulting from academic demands, including heavy workloads, time pressure, high

expectations, and fear of failure. When prolonged or unmanaged, academic stress can negatively affect students' cognitive functioning, emotional stability, and overall academic performance (Granada-Granada et al., 2025).

In parallel with this issue, the rapid expansion of digital technology has significantly increased students' exposure to online content, including pornography (Dou & Shek, 2021). Pornography viewing, defined as the consumption of sexually explicit materials for stimulation, has become more accessible, affordable, and anonymous in the digital age (Camilleri et al., 2021). Recent studies suggest that young adults, particularly male college students, are among the most frequent consumers of such content, driven by curiosity, social influence, and ease of access (Samson et al., 2019).

Emerging research indicates that academic stress and pornography viewing may be interconnected in complex ways. Some scholars argue that students may engage in pornography viewing as a coping mechanism to relieve stress and emotional discomfort (Vanmali et al., 2020). However, other studies highlight potential negative consequences, including decreased academic engagement, reduced concentration, and lower academic performance (Lim et al., 2019). Furthermore, excessive consumption has been associated with mental health concerns, including anxiety, loneliness, and decreased well-being (Zattoni et al., 2020).

Gender differences also play a crucial role in understanding this phenomenon. Research consistently shows that male students are more likely to engage in pornography viewing compared to females and tend to have higher acceptance of such behavior (Kohut et al., 2019). At the same time, students in science-related programs report higher levels of academic stress due to the rigorous, multidisciplinary nature of their curricula (Aihie & Ohanaka, 2019). These factors suggest that male science students may be particularly vulnerable to the combined effects of academic stress and exposure to pornography.

Despite the growing body of international literature, there remains a significant gap in localized empirical research examining the relationship between academic stress and pornography viewing, particularly within the Philippine higher education context (Privara & Bob, 2023). This gap may be attributed to the sensitive and stigmatized nature of pornography, which discourages open academic investigation despite its relevance to student behavior and well-being (Okabe et al., 2021). Consequently, there is limited evidence that can guide educators, administrators, and policymakers in addressing this issue effectively.

Given these concerns, this study aimed to investigate the perceived level of academic stress and pornography viewing among male Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Science students and to determine whether a significant relationship exists between these variables. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the understanding of students' coping behaviors and provide a basis for developing interventions, policies, and support systems that promote academic success and psychological well-being among college students.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between academic stress and pornography viewing among male college students. The descriptive component was used to determine the levels of academic stress and pornography viewing, while the correlational component assessed the degree of association between the two variables. This design was deemed appropriate because it allows measurement of naturally occurring variables without manipulation and enables statistical analysis of relationships (Ntumi et al., 2025).

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants of the study were $n = 69$ male students, selected from a population of $N = 83$ students enrolled in the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Science at Davao del Sur State College during the School Year 2022–2023. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula. A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to ensure proportional representation across year levels. The population was divided into strata by year level, and respondents were randomly selected within each stratum. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure that participants were appropriate for the study's objectives and that the collected data were relevant and reliable.

The inclusion criteria specified that respondents must be: (1) male Bachelor of Secondary Education major in

Science students at Davao del Sur State College, and (2) willing to participate in the study voluntarily. These criteria were applied because the study specifically aimed to investigate academic stress and pornography viewing among male BSEd Science students, who were considered the target population of the research.

On the other hand, the exclusion criteria included: (1) female students, (2) students enrolled in programs other than BSEd Science, and (3) students who declined participation or submitted incomplete responses. Female students and non-BSEd Science students were excluded to maintain the study population's specificity and consistency. Respondents with incomplete questionnaires were also excluded to ensure the accuracy, completeness, and reliability of the data gathered for statistical analysis.

Research Instrument

The study utilized two instruments: (1) Student Academic Stress Scale (SASS), developed by Busari (2011), an established tool designed to measure students' academic stress in terms of awareness and frequency. The instrument has been widely used in academic research and demonstrates acceptable validity and reliability. (2) A researcher-made questionnaire consisting of 19 items to assess pornography viewing in terms of acceptance, frequency, and motivation. The instrument underwent content validation by field experts to ensure the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items. Necessary revisions were incorporated in response to expert feedback. A pilot test was conducted to ensure reliability, yielding acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq .70$), indicating that the instrument was suitable for data collection. Both instruments utilized a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of the measured variables. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the study variables.

Table 1. *Interpretation of the Academic Stress*

Likert Scale	Scale Range	Descriptive Interpretation	Descriptive Meaning
5	4.20 – 5.00	Very High	This means that students always possess academic stress.
4	3.40 – 4.19	High	This means that students often possess academic stress.
3	2.60 – 3.39	Moderate	This means that students sometimes possess academic stress.
2	1.80 – 2.59	Low	This means that students rarely possess academic stress.
1	1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	This means that students never possess academic stress.

Table 2. *Interpretation of the Level of Pornography Viewing*

Likert Scale	Scale Range	Descriptive Interpretation	Descriptive Meaning
5	4.20 – 5.00	Very High	This indicates that students demonstrate an extremely high level of engagement with pornographic content.
4	3.40 – 4.19	High	This indicates that students demonstrate a high level of interest in or engagement with pornographic content.
3	2.60 – 3.39	Moderate	This indicates that students' level of engagement with pornographic content is average or moderate.
2	1.80 – 2.59	Low	This indicates that students exhibit a low level of interest in or engagement with pornographic content.
1	1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	This indicates that students demonstrate very minimal or almost no interest in pornographic content.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, formal permission was obtained from the institution. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights as respondents. Data were collected via Google Forms, enabling efficient and anonymous participation. The survey link was distributed to selected respondents, and data collection was conducted within a specified period. Respondents were instructed to answer honestly and were given the option to withdraw at any time without penalty. Completed responses were automatically recorded and organized for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) were used to determine the levels of academic stress and pornography viewing among the respondents. To examine the relationship between the two variables, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was employed. The level of significance was set at 0.05. All statistical tests were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance.

Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to ethical research standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants

before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents had the right to withdraw at any point. To ensure anonymity, no personally identifiable information (e.g., names, addresses, email accounts) was collected. All responses were treated with strict confidentiality and were used solely for academic purposes. The study complied with the provisions of Republic Act 10173 (Data Privacy Act of 2012), ensuring the protection and security of all collected data. Additionally, participants were informed that the study does not promote pornography but aims to understand its relationship with academic stress for research purposes.

Results and Discussion

Perceived Level of Academic Stress of BSEd Science Students

Table 3 shows that male BSEd Science students have a high level of awareness of academic stress, with a mean of $M = 3.77$ ($SD = 0.86$). This emphasizes that the respondents had difficulty adjusting to their academic stress and were aware that they were not satisfied with their academic performance. Moreover, the respondents recognize that they are academically stressed due to pressure from their family and peers.

Table 3. *Perceived Level of Academic Stress of Male College Students*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Level of Awareness			
1. I am having a hard time adjusting to my academic environment.	3.72	0.86	High
2. I am pressured academically by my parents and peers.	3.41	0.96	High
3. I lost interest in finishing my school projects.	3.71	1.02	High
4. It pains me to see my failing marks and scores.	3.90	0.79	High
5. I feel stress academically.	4.03	0.81	High
6. I am not satisfied with my academic performance.	3.94	0.78	High
Column Mean	3.77	0.86	High
Frequency of Academic Stress			
1. I have been having poor academic performance lately.	3.94	0.64	High
2. I encounter academic stress every month.	4.00	0.91	High
3. Sometimes I feel demotivated to answer my online modules.	4.14	0.73	High
4. I encounter academic stress every time my teacher gives us major academic tasks.	4.06	0.80	High
Column Mean	4.04	0.78	High
Grand Total	3.88	0.86	High

The results are consistent with those of Graves et al. (2021), who found that undergraduate students are increasingly aware of the challenges posed by their environment and the various stressors they face in college. Among the most common stressors are peer pressure, which can significantly influence students' behavior, and family pressure, which often imposes high standards that may constrain students' confidence. As a result, students tend to overthink and become anxious about meeting social expectations and norms.

As illustrated above, BSEd Male Science students report a high level of perceived academic stress, with a mean score of $M = 4.04$ ($SD = 0.78$). The results indicate that most respondents experience academic stress monthly, particularly when teachers assign major academic tasks alongside the demands of a rigorous curriculum and program design. Moreover, students sometimes feel demotivated when completing academic requirements, especially in relation to their online modules. Based on the research instrument used in this study, students frequently experience academic stress. A study by Abd-Alrazaq et al. (2023) suggests that frequent exposure to academic stress is not beneficial for students, as it may be associated with mental health concerns and could potentially lead to emotional breakdowns when the pressure becomes overwhelming. A highly demanding academic environment may also lead to serious health issues that can undermine the expected benefits of completing a university education.

The overall mean score on awareness and frequency, as indicators of perceived academic stress among male BSEd Science students, is $M = 3.88$ ($SD = 0.86$). This indicates that students experience a high level of perceived academic stress and frequently encounter it during the 2022–2023 school year. Specifically, students report difficulty adjusting to their academic environment and experience stress regularly, especially when teachers assign unexpected major tasks. Additionally, students often feel demotivated when completing modules and may lose interest in finishing school projects. Feelings of disappointment due to low or failing grades also contribute to their stress levels.

The findings on the stress levels of BSEd Science students are consistent with those reported by Chyu & Chen (2022), who found that academic stress is prevalent among undergraduate students in Hong Kong. In particular, the data suggest that BSEd Science students experience considerable stress in their academic pursuits, especially during examination periods in their major subjects. However, some studies involving similar respondents indicate that BSEd Science students also achieve high academic performance. This suggests that the academic stressors experienced by students may, in some cases, function as positive stress (eustress), motivating them to improve their academic performance. Furthermore, a study conducted by Nguyen-Thi et al. (2024) in China revealed that students tend to perform better when given deadlines and pressured to meet quality standards, as this can enhance their flexibility and creativity within a limited timeframe.

Level of Pornography Viewing of BSEd Science Students

Table 4 shows that the overall mean for Acceptance is $M = 3.68$ ($SD = 1.00$), interpreted as high, indicating that students generally demonstrate a high level of acceptance toward pornography. Similarly, the overall mean for Motivation for Pornography Viewing is $M = 3.53$ ($SD = 1.06$), which also falls within the high range, suggesting that students are strongly driven by various personal and emotional reasons in engaging with such content. In contrast, the overall mean for Pornography Viewing is $M = 3.30$ ($SD = 1.19$), interpreted as moderate, indicating that while students engage in pornography, the frequency is not consistently high.

The total mean of $M = 3.55$ ($SD = 1.07$) is interpreted as high, which generally indicates that pornography-related acceptance, behaviors, and motivations are prevalent among the students. This suggests that students are not only aware of and accepting of pornography but are also influenced by various factors that encourage engagement, even if the actual frequency of viewing remains moderate. The findings imply that pornography plays a noticeable role in students' experiences, particularly in terms of attitudes and motivations, and may have potential implications for their behavior and academic functioning.

Table 4. *Perceived Level of Pornography Viewing of Male College Students*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Acceptance			
1. I consider watching pornography as normal as being male.	3.97	1.03	High
2. I lost my concentration in academics when I encountered sexually explicit materials.	3.43	1.10	High
3. My productivity decreases after watching porn.	3.41	0.94	High
4. I encounter academic stress every time my teacher gives us major academic tasks.	3.70	0.94	High
5. Pornography viewing provides an opportunity to be distracted from life's challenges.	3.42	0.96	High
6. I watch pornography to feel physical pleasure.	3.71	0.89	High
7. Pornography gives me a sense of excitement.	3.88	0.90	High
8. I watch pornography when I am alone.	4.09	0.87	High
9. Watching pornography negatively affects my academic performance.	3.51	1.09	High
Overall	3.68	1.00	High
Pornography Viewing			
1. I watch pornography every month.	3.74	1.11	High
2. I watch pornography every week.	3.33	1.15	Moderate
3. I watch pornography every day.	2.62	1.21	Moderate
4. I am having a hard time focusing after watching pornography.	3.49	1.04	High
Overall	3.30	1.19	Moderate
Motivation for Pornography Viewing			
1. I sometimes watch pornography to sexually arouse myself.	3.72	1.03	High
2. I find myself having fun by watching pornography.	3.81	0.94	High
3. Pornography has been my outlet for academic stress.	3.39	1.06	Moderate
4. Pornography has been my outlet for psychosocial stress.	3.59	1.10	High
5. When I feel pressure in studies, I engage myself in looking at pornographic materials.	3.25	1.06	Moderate
6. I watch pornography when I am feeling down, sad, or lonely.	3.43	1.10	High
Overall	3.53	1.06	High
Grand Total	3.55	1.07	High

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Kumar et al. (2021), which revealed that pornography viewing among college students varies according to different intentions. The results suggest that respondents are aware of the effects of viewing pornography and that frequent exposure is associated with experiential avoidance. This indicates that students tend to regulate or moderate their consumption. Furthermore, motivations for viewing pornography are linked to factors such as sexual pleasure, curiosity, excitement-seeking, and entertainment.

Moreover, students tend to perceive pornography viewing as a normal behavior, particularly among males.

Relationship Between Academic Stress and Pornography Viewing

Table 5 presents the correlation between academic stress and pornography viewing. The computed r-value of 0.500 indicates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. This suggests that as the level of academic stress increases, the tendency for pornography viewing among students also increases. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.001 is less than the standard significance level (0.05), indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This implies that academic stress is significantly related to pornography viewing and may influence students' engagement in such behavior.

Table 5. *Correlation Between Academic Stress and Pornography Viewing*

Variables	r-value	p-value	Remark	Decision
Academic Stress and Pornography Viewing	0.50	<.001	Significant	Reject H_0

This finding is supported by Tewogbola et al. (2025), who found that students experiencing higher levels of academic stress are more likely to engage in pornography viewing. Similarly, Antons et al. (2023) reported a positive relationship between academic stress frequency and pornography use, suggesting that students may turn to pornography as a coping mechanism to relieve stress. In the same way, Pouralijan et al. (2022) emphasized that pornography may be used as an emotional outlet for academic pressure, providing temporary relief from stress.

Furthermore, Bóthe et al. (2022) highlighted that students' awareness of academic stress may influence their motivation to engage in pornography viewing as a form of emotional regulation or coping strategy. Camilleri et al. (2021) also noted a possible bidirectional relationship, where academic stress can lead to increased pornography use, while frequent viewing may also contribute to stress due to guilt, shame, or conflict with personal values.

Conclusion

The study found that BSEd Science students experience high levels of academic stress, characterized by difficulty adjusting to academic demands, pressure from family and peers, and persistent demotivation toward academic tasks. In addition, students demonstrated a generally high level of acceptance toward pornography viewing, although the frequency of engagement remained moderate. The study further established a significant moderate positive relationship between academic stress and pornography viewing, suggesting that students experiencing higher levels of academic stress are more likely to engage in pornography viewing as a behavioral coping response. While such behavior may provide temporary emotional relief, prolonged or excessive engagement may affect students' psychological well-being, behavioral functioning, and academic engagement.

The findings of the study may also be explained through the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping developed by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984), which views stress as a dynamic interaction between individuals and their environment. According to the theory, stress occurs when individuals perceive that environmental demands exceed their available coping resources, prompting them to adopt coping mechanisms to reduce emotional strain. In this study, male college students may perceive academic demands, such as deadlines, pressure, poor performance, and high expectations, as overwhelming. Consequently, pornography viewing may function as an emotion-focused coping strategy that temporarily alleviates stress, anxiety, loneliness, or emotional discomfort. The significant relationship identified in this study, therefore, supports the assumption of the theory that heightened academic stress may influence students' behavioral coping responses, including potentially maladaptive coping behaviors such as pornography viewing.

The findings underscore the importance of addressing academic stress not only as an educational concern but also as a psychosocial issue that may influence students' coping behaviors and overall well-being. In educational practice, higher education institutions may strengthen student-centered learning environments by promoting balanced academic workloads, reasonable deadlines, accessible academic advising, and supportive instructional approaches that minimize unnecessary stress. Integrating mental health education, stress management interventions, and digital wellness programs into the curriculum may also help students develop healthier, more adaptive coping strategies.

From a policy perspective, institutions may enhance psychosocial support systems by expanding counseling services, implementing peer-support initiatives, and conducting regular mental health assessments to identify at-

risk students and provide early intervention. Establishing confidential, non-judgmental support mechanisms is likewise essential for encouraging help-seeking among students, particularly for sensitive psychological and behavioral concerns.

The study also carries implications for students and parents. Students are encouraged to adopt healthier coping mechanisms such as physical activity, time management, social engagement, and mindfulness practices, while parents may contribute by fostering emotionally supportive environments and maintaining realistic academic expectations. Future research may explore additional psychological and social variables related to pornography viewing, including anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and social support, using broader populations and longitudinal or intervention-based research designs to gain a deeper understanding of students' coping behaviors over time.

Contributions of Authors

Royd Momo, LPT: Writing – Review & Editing; Research Administration; Data Curation
Darwin E. Lawi-an, LPT: Writing – Review & Editing
Meliza P. Alo, Ed.D: Writing – Review & Editing

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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