

# Mental health as a determining factor in students' academic performance

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated how students' mental health affects their academic performance and how mental health conditions can be reduced to improve learning outcomes. The researchers employed a systematic review and synthesized peer-reviewed journal articles. To ensure quality results and synthesis, the review involved several stages: selection of relevant research using databases and search keywords, assessment of study quality, synthesis of evidence, and interpretation of findings. The search for journal articles was conducted using ERIC, EBSCO, and Advanced Google Search. The inclusion criteria encompassed articles from 2015 to 2025. Articles focusing on the impact of students' mental health on academic performance were considered. Relevant information was obtained from these articles. The study revealed that students' mental health status significantly influences their academic performance. Students with good mental health tend to perform better academically than those with weaker mental health. Additionally, approaches such as counseling, creating a stress-free environment for open communication, and employing social-emotional learning (SEL) were identified as effective strategies that authorities can implement to reduce students' mental health issues. The findings suggest that school authorities should develop appropriate interventions to support students experiencing mental health problems. Educators are encouraged to adopt flexible teaching strategies to accommodate students with mental health challenges.

**Keywords:** Academic performance, Counseling, Social-emotional learning, Students' mental health, Students' mental health conditions, Learning outcomes.

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### Highlights of this paper

- The study examined how students' mental health affects their academic performance and how mental health conditions can be reduced to improve learning outcomes.
- Students with good mental health demonstrate better academic results than those students who have comparatively weaker mental health.
- Counseling, creating a stress-free environment for open communication, and employing social-emotional learning (SEL) can reduce students' mental health issues.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, rather than merely the absence of disease or disability (World Health Organization, 2024). It is also characterized as an equilibrium of an individual's self, others, and the environment, particularly within the framework of prevailing culture. Furthermore, the WHO underscores that mental health is a 'vague and imprecise' notion, with its meaning potentially differing between societies (World Health Organization, 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that over 450 million individuals are affected by mental diseases, underscoring the significance of this issue. Mental health is defined as emotional well-being, relative autonomy from mental health disorders, and the ability to form constructive relationships to manage life's stressors. Mental health issues such as interpersonal sensitivity, loneliness, sadness, and aggression may emerge during adolescence and can result in new disorders. Severe mental health disorders include psychosis, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, and schizophrenia. Studies in mental health indicate that adolescents are more susceptible to several distinct stressors and issues that can profoundly impact their psychological well-being (House, Neal, & Kolb, 2020). Emerging pressures, academic standards, and the social milieu can induce stress, particularly for students embarking on their educational journey. Research indicates that young individuals' preoccupations with fulfilling societal expectations, such as scholastic success and job advancement, render them more vulnerable to anxiety and depression (Jangmo et al., 2019).

Furthermore, contemporary technologies and changes in social dynamics may adversely affect the mental health of youth. The pervasive impact of social media, societal pressure to attain achievement, and the incessant utilization of digital gadgets can lead to feelings of isolation, social discontent, and consequently, elevated stress levels. Lee, Kim, Park, and Choi (2023) and Panayiotou and Humphrey (2018). In this context, acknowledging the significance of effective adaptation and learning within the student milieu is essential, necessitating their integration into research and practical interventions (Camshaid, Abdullah, & Farid, 2023; Nuryana, Fadillah, & Subarkah, 2023). To enhance students' development, several factors play a role. One of these factors is their mental health.

Mental health, therefore, influences significant aspects of life, including schooling and academic performance. An unstable mental health condition can adversely impact students emotionally and psychologically, diminishing their academic performance (Jabbarov, Azimzadeh, Namazova, Abbasova, & Guliyev, 2024). Numerous research studies demonstrate the correlation between academic achievement and students' mental health (Jadoon et al., 2011; Saipani, 2003; Sherina, Rampal, & Kaneson, 2004). Jamieson, Peters, Greenwood, and Altose (2016) demonstrate a significant influence of student anxiety and stress on academic performance. Research indicates that female students experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression compared to their male counterparts (Beiter et al., 2015). A comparable study by Rehmani, Khan, and Fatima (2018) reveals that higher stress levels correlate with diminished academic focus, leading to poor examination outcomes. Lyndon et al. (2017) assert a substantial correlation between students' academic proficiency and their mental health challenges, such as stress, anxiety, and depression, underscoring the necessity of effectively managing these issues to mitigate their effects on academic performance. Although certain studies indicate that mental health in isolation may not influence a student's academic performance.

However, McLeod, Uemura, and Rohrman (2012) identified a significant association between mental health challenges and academic and social achievement (Battaglia et al., 2017; Verboom, Sijtsema, Verhulst, Penninx, & Ormel, 2014; Waenerlund et al., 2016). The National Association of School Psychologists (2020) asserts that comprehending the correlation between students' mental health and academic performance is a primary concern for educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders. The academic achievement of students is significantly influenced by their mental state. A positive emotional condition can enhance academic success. A study conducted by Agnafors, Barmark, and Sydsjö (2021) titled "Mental health and academic performance: a study on selection and causation effects from childhood to early adulthood" demonstrated that mental health issues during early childhood and adolescence elevate the likelihood of subpar academic performance, underscoring the necessity for awareness and intervention to ensure equitable educational opportunities. Previously seen as separate areas, studies suggest that mental health and academic performance are interconnected (Jones, Brown, & Lawrence Aber, 2011; Moilanen, Shaw, & Maxwell, 2010). Promoting positive mental health in students has been demonstrated to improve academic performance, and various curricula are designed to enhance academic skills through social and emotional learning (Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, & Salovey, 2012; Denham & Brown, 2010; McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor, & McClowry, 2015).

### *1.1. Problem Statement*

Mental health disorders are escalating issues in the United States, with approximately one in five children experiencing a diagnosable mental health illness (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). In 2019, the World Health Organization reported that over 901 million individuals experienced mental health issues. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021), 1 in 6 children aged 2 to 8 years (17.4%) had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder, with prevalence increasing among students aged 12 to 17 years. This statistic suggests that an average elementary classroom will have students diagnosed with a mental health issue. With the increasing prevalence of mental health illnesses among students, administrators are apprehensive that teachers lack the training to recognize and assist these students (Ghandour et al., 2019). Numerous studies have documented trends in mental health difficulties among college and university students. Brandy, Penckofer, Solari-Twadell, and Velsor-Friedrich (2015) identify prevalent mental health concerns among American college students, including sadness, anxiety, loneliness, and feelings of being overwhelmed. College students exhibit greater rates of depression compared to the general population (Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams, & Glazebrook, 2013), and a significant proportion do not seek therapy (Garlow et al., 2008; Rosenthal & Wilson, 2008). Likewise, mental health concerns among university students are on the rise. Comprehensive research estimated that 12% to 46% of undergraduates experience difficulties due to mental health issues (Harrer et al., 2019). These reviews unequivocally demonstrate that mental health difficulties permeate across all levels of education.

Studies have demonstrated correlations between mental health issues and academic difficulties (Battaglia et al., 2017; Brännlund, Strandh, & Nilsson, 2017). Other research contends that mental health is not the primary factor influencing low academic performance (McLeod et al., 2012; Verboom et al., 2014). Research indicates that education is essential for social and personal development, making it imperative to investigate the correlation between students' mental health and academic performance (Baker et al., 2021). Therefore, the present study assessed the impact of students' mental health on academic performance and identified ways to reduce mental health conditions among students.

### *1.2. Research Questions*

The study provided answers to the following questions;

1. How does students' mental health influence their academic performance?
2. What are the interventions that effectively enhance students' mental health conditions?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *2.1. Theoretical Framework*

The research was underpinned by the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), formulated by [Ryan and Deci \(2000\)](#). The theory posits that individuals must fulfill their fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence to lead a fulfilling life. Individuals are more inclined to be self-motivated, engaged, and achieve positive outcomes when certain conditions are met. Furthermore, the theory suggests that psychological issues such as depression, stress, and anxiety can adversely impact students' autonomy, relatedness, and competence, subsequently leading to poorer academic performance ([Rehman et al., 2023](#)). The present study therefore employed this theory to determine the relation between mental health and academic performance, as well as finding ways to reduce students' mental health issues, which can positively affect their sense of autonomy, relatedness, and competence for learning. In this regard, since the theory focuses on the sense of autonomy, relatedness, and competence for learning, it guided the purpose of the present systematic review. It made it possible for the researchers to explore the influences of mental health on students' academic performance, as well as identifying mental health conditions and finding ways to reduce them.

### *2.2. Conceptual Framework: Mental Health and Academic Performance*

Mental health refers to a condition wherein individuals acknowledge their capabilities, manage life's stresses adeptly, engage in productive employment, and make significant contributions to their communities ([Ghani, 2013](#)). It includes emotional expressiveness, adaptation, and the ability for self-actualization, rendering it essential for both individual well-being and the functioning of social and institutional structures. The tripartite model proposed by [Clark and Watson \(1991\)](#) delineates depression, anxiety, and stress as fundamental, interrelated elements of mental health ([Clark, 1989](#)), providing a framework for comprehending the interaction of internalizing symptoms and their impact on functioning. Mental health is essential in influencing students' academic achievement in educational environments. Academic performance is a multifaceted concept that indicates the extent to which students fulfill educational objectives established by themselves, their educators, or academic institutions. It includes both objective metrics, such as grade point average (GPA), test scores, and course completion rates, as well as subjective factors like perceived academic ability, self-efficacy, motivation, and satisfaction ([Jeffries & Salzer, 2022](#); [Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018](#)).

The concept of academic performance has transformed over time. Initial educational frameworks focused on rote memorization and factual retention, whereas 20th-century reforms stressed standardized testing, IQ evaluations, and GPA as principal indicators of achievement ([Beerkens, 2022](#); [Peng & Kievit, 2020](#)). Currently, academic performance is comprehensively defined to include both quantitative metrics and qualitative results, such as critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and resilience ([Dalsgaard et al., 2020](#); [Morris, Perry, & Wardle, 2021](#)). Competency-based education and online learning environments have broadened this definition by incorporating behavioral and engagement metrics, including assignment submission patterns, participation rates, and self-regulation indicators into the assessment framework ([Díaz et al., 2024](#); [Yokoyama, 2024](#)). Academic performance is significantly influenced by a complex interaction of cognitive ability, personality traits, psychosocial factors, and contextual supports ([Grant et al., 2004](#); [Shin et al., 2023](#)). Mental health has emerged as both a determinant and a consequence of academic performance. Suboptimal mental health can deplete cognitive resources, diminish motivation, elevate absenteeism,

and hinder social functioning, potentially impacting academic performance indirectly (BlackDeer, Wolf, Maguin, & Beeler-Stinn, 2023; Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018). Perfectionistic striving may augment achievement; nevertheless, maladaptive perfectionism and anxiety can result in burnout or suboptimal performance (Shin et al., 2023).

However, the relationship between mental health and academic performance is not always straightforward. Studies suggest a reciprocal relationship: mental health predicts future academic performance, and academic performance, in turn, shapes mental health (Datu & King, 2018). McLeod et al. (2012), analyzing data from over 6,000 adolescents, found that depression alone did not directly predict lower academic achievement once behavioral problems like substance use and delinquency were accounted for. Similarly, Verboom et al. (2014), studying over 2,200 children aged 10–18, reported that while depressive problems impaired social and academic functioning, boys' academic performance remained largely unaffected. These findings suggest that it is often social difficulties associated with poor mental health, such as lack of support, strained peer relationships, or risky behaviors, that more significantly influence academic outcomes.

### *2.3. Reducing Mental Health Issues of Students*

Walter, Kaye, Dennery, and DeMaso (2019) examined the impact of a three-year MTSS mental health school-hospital collaboration. Local hospitals collaborated with six schools at each educational level: elementary, middle, and high school. Their findings revealed that students engaged in early intervention exhibited markedly enhanced social-emotional competence and coping skills. Students with mental health issues who engaged in clinical treatment showed improvements in symptoms and functioning. This study involved local hospitals working with schools to deliver mental health training for staff and families, as well as treatment for students, leading to an increase in the number of children receiving treatment. Walter et al. (2019) discovered that over the three-year cooperation, students experienced a wait time of only 1-2 weeks for individual therapy, in contrast to the 3-6 weeks required at local mental health clinics or partnered hospitals. It was also observed that children will seek care provided they have access. In this program, children participated in an average of 26 individual sessions, compared to 2 sessions when receiving treatment at a clinic or hospital. Walter and their team found that collaboration between hospitals and schools is both practical and advantageous for enhancing mental health care for children.

Similarly, Shoshani and Steinmetz (2014) conducted a study examining the effects of a school-based mental health intervention on 537 students in grades 7 to 9, compared to a control school with demographically similar students. During a two-year evaluation of the participants, it was observed that students engaged in the intervention experienced a reduction in overall distress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, alongside a notable enhancement in self-esteem and self-efficacy. The researchers highlighted the implementation of the program alongside modifications to the school routine, including a new school bell and a shift in parent-teacher conferences to a more positive framework.

In a comprehensive three-year study encompassing 24 elementary schools and 705 students in grades three to six, Schonfeld et al. (2015) discovered that the implementation of an evidence-based SEL program resulted in a moderate enhancement of students' academic performance. Despite the moderate advances in reading, mathematics, and writing, the program was deemed effective as it did not encompass any academic instruction. This demonstrates that the implementation of an SEL program can yield academic advantages without explicitly instructing academic subjects. It is noteworthy that schoolteachers received SEL program training, which varied from 0 to 20 hours in a particular academic year. According to Independent School Management (2023), schools should implement policies that empower teachers with more flexibility to accommodate students with special needs due to mental illness or disability, for example, allowing extra time on assignments or tests without penalty for late submissions.

Furthermore, educational institutions can instruct personnel in compassionate and considerate methods to assist and support students with mental health challenges, as stated by [Independent School Management \(2023\)](#). Schools must provide supplementary resources, such as counseling sessions, therapy groups, or telehealth services, to assist counselors and nursing personnel who are currently overwhelmed. Telehealth enables students to engage with professionals on their own terms, utilizing familiar technology, thus diminishing the social stigma adolescents may have when seeking mental health assistance. Moreover, telehealth enables adolescents to obtain care without the concern of being observed or the necessity of visiting a therapist's office accompanied by their parents ([Independent School Management, 2023](#)).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a systematic review, focusing on published journal articles. The systematic approach, described by [Liberati et al. \(2009\)](#), is designed to reduce bias and increase transparency by clearly specifying how studies are selected, how their quality is checked, and how their findings are incorporated into the review. To ensure strong and reliable conclusions, the process included several key steps: selection of relevant research using databases and search keywords, assessment of study quality, synthesis of evidence, and interpretation of findings ([Khan, Kunz, Kleijnen, & Antes, 2003](#)).

#### *3.1. Selection of Relevant Work*

The search for journal articles was conducted via databases such as ERIC, EBSCO, and Advanced Google Search. Journal papers were prioritized for review because, as highlighted by [Reeves and Crippen \(2021\)](#), they generally provide more comprehensive data analysis than conference proceedings, which often present only preliminary results. Keywords used in the search included “students,” “mental health,” “mental health issues,” and “academic performance.”

#### *3.2. Inclusion- Exclusion Criteria*

The inclusion criteria included articles from 2015 to 2025. Articles on the impact of students’ mental health on academic performance were considered. Articles written in English were also considered in the study. However, the exclusion criteria considered articles beyond the specified years. Articles in languages other than English were excluded. Lastly, articles on the mental health of patients rather than students were excluded.

#### *3.3. Assessing the Quality of Studies*

The researchers read the titles, literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusions of the articles retrieved, and each of the sections was critically examined. The articles were further given to an independent researcher to assess them.



Table 1. Reviews of articles on mental health and academic performance.

No.	Authors and year	Title	Study design	Sample	Findings
1.	<a href="#">Agnafors et al. (2021)</a>	Mental health and academic performance: a study on selection and causation effects from childhood to early adulthood.	longitudinal birth cohort study	1700 children	The presence of mental health issues during early childhood and adolescence significantly heightens the likelihood of subpar academic outcomes, underscoring the imperative for heightened awareness and intervention to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities.
2.	<a href="#">Rehman et al. (2023)</a>	Exploring the Relationship Between Mental Health and Academic Performance: An Analysis of Depression, Stress, and Anxiety in Cambridge School Students	survey-based research design	150 students	The results showed that senior-level students at Cambridge University experienced mental health issues such as sadness, anxiety, and stress, which had a negative impact on their ability to learn and perform on exams. Additionally, the study found that pupils whose mental health was relatively strong outperformed their peers whose mental health was somewhat poor. In addition, compared to male students, female students reported higher levels of stress and depression during exams. Students' grades had a larger impact on their admittance to professional colleges at the senior Cambridge level, when counseling sessions were proposed as a potentially highly beneficial intervention.
3.	<a href="#">Lee, Griffin, Ragavan, and Patel (2024)</a>	Adolescent mental health and academic performance: determining evidence-based associations and informing approaches to support in educational settings	cross-lagged modeling approach	266 secondary school students	Better mental health over time was linked to higher baseline academic performance, but academic success was not linked to improved mental health. As a result, the association was not reciprocal as anticipated. The authors hypothesize that, in light of these data, adolescent academic achievement may be a predictor of their mental health state, on the other hand, and vice versa.
4.	<a href="#">Duncan, Patte, and Leatherdale (2021)</a>	Mental health associations with academic performance and education behaviors in Canadian secondary school students.	Survey	57,394 adolescents	Better grade levels in language and math classes, as well as better educational practices, were linked to lower depression and greater psychosocial well-being ratings. Higher course grades were then linked to stronger educational practices. After adjusting for educational behaviors, depression and psychosocial well-being scores were still linked to

					better grades, but the strength of the relationship decreased. The findings show that educational behaviors partially mitigated the effects of mental health factors, indicating that while poor homework adherence and lower class attendance were linked to both academic outcomes and mental health, they do not fully explain the relationship between poorer grades and worse mental health.
5	Wyatt, Oswalt, and Ochoa (2017)	Mental health and academic performance of first-year college students	Secondary data analysis	66,159 undergraduate students	First-year students reported higher rates of self-injury and seriously contemplating suicide, as differences in mental health diagnoses were identified by classification. Upperclassmen have reported higher rates of academic impact from mental health factors.
6	Joseph (2023)	The impact of mental health on academic performance: a comprehensive examination	Survey	206 undergraduate students	While some students are able to effectively manage stress and challenges, others may experience difficulty, which can ultimately have a detrimental influence on their academic performance and, in some cases, result in the discontinuation of their studies. The study emphasizes the critical significance of addressing mental health concerns among university students, as these issues were discovered to have a negative impact on their academic performance.
7	Das and Dhar (2023)	Impact of Mental Health on Academic Achievement- Qualitative Study	Qualitative research methodology	Qualitative	The significance of mental health is paramount in influencing cognitive functioning, emotional well-being, and overall engagement, all of which are essential components of academic success. Students who maintain good mental health demonstrate heightened cognitive abilities, such as better attention, memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. It is crucial to implement thorough interventions and strategies that emphasize mental health as a vital element of achieving educational success. Educational institutions should implement diverse strategies that include mental health awareness, accessible counselling services, stress reduction initiatives, and fostering a culture of open



					communication. Equipping students with resources to oversee their mental health enables educational institutions to foster an atmosphere where academic success is bolstered by emotional strength, cognitive energy, and significant relationships.
8	Ren (2017)	Effects of Mental Health on Student Learning	Literature review	66887 college students	The mental health of students can impede the learning process. The impact of mental illness on student success and degree persistence is detrimental.
9	Chu, Liu, Takayanagi, Matsushita, and Kishimoto (2022)	Association between mental health and academic performance among university undergraduates: The interacting role of lifestyle behaviors	Survey	1823 undergraduate students	The mental health status during the first semester of university study was a significant predictor of an increased risk of poor academic performance throughout the entire undergraduate period.
10	Zavaleta et al. (2021)	Relationship between stress and academic performance: an analysis in virtual mode	Mixed approach	109 undergraduate students	It is evident that there is no correlation between academic performance and tension. Students are observed to utilize tension as a form of fuel to accomplish their academic objectives.
11	Jabbarov et al. (2024)	The Impact of Mental Health on Students' Academic Performance	Diagnostic Assessment Methodology and Diagnostic Methodology for Achievement Motivation in Personality	Self-130 undergraduate students	Anxiety, frustration, rigidity, and learning motivation are all strongly correlated with students' mental health, yet academic achievement is not significantly correlated with any of these factors. Nonetheless, a significant relationship between students' mental health and their willingness to learn was found.
12	Evans (2021)	The Effects of Mental Health on Students' Academic and Social Success	Literature review	Qualitative	Perhaps the most effective way for schools to support children's mental health is to include social-emotional development. Additionally, staff training in evidence-based social-emotional learning programs may help students with their mental health issues.
13	Keong, Ibrahim, and Lee (2015)	The relationship between mental health and academic achievement among university students – a literature review	A Literature Review	Qualitative	Mental health can be understood as a state of emotional well-being influenced by factors such as depression, anxiety, and stress. A multitude of existing research findings has elucidated the correlation between mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, stress, and academic performance. The promotion of heightened awareness regarding mental health is essential, as

					early diagnosis has the potential to avert the onset of mental health issues.
14	Nayak (2025)	The impact of mental health challenges on academic performance in college students	Mixed-methods approach		Many college students suffer from anxiety and depression, but those in their last year and those from low-income families are especially at risk. Low GPAs and test scores are indicators that mental health issues have a substantial negative impact on academic achievement.
15	Awadalla, Davies, and Glazebrook (2020)	A longitudinal cohort study to explore the relationship between depression, anxiety, and academic performance among Emirati university students.	Longitudinal cohort study	404 university students (aged 17–25) from a UAE university	Approximately 34% of individuals screened indicated a positive result for major depressive disorder (MDD), while 22% screened positive for generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). Elevated levels of depression were associated with diminished GPA at both baseline and the six-month follow-up, indicating a potentially adverse causal relationship. Anxiety exhibited a diminished and gender-influenced correlation with GPA, impacting females to a greater extent. The research highlights the critical need to prioritize mental health in order to foster academic achievement.
16	Campos, Oliveira, Mello, and Dantas (2017)	Academic performance of students who underwent psychiatric treatment at the students' mental health service of a Brazilian university	Cross-sectional study using medical record review and academic performance comparison	1,237 university students (769 undergraduates, 468 postgraduates) at Unicamp, Brazil, compared with 2,579 matched controls	In light of more pronounced psychiatric diagnoses such as depression, anxiety, and psychotic disorders, it is noteworthy that students engaged in psychiatric care exhibited marginally diminished undergraduate performance scores. However, they demonstrated enhanced course completion rates and reduced dropout rates in comparison to their non-patient counterparts. Interestingly, postgraduate students reflected analogous outcomes across both groups. The findings indicate that mental health services on campus could play a role in enhancing academic retention.
17	Deng and Li (2024)	The impact of university freshmen's mental health on academic performance: an empirical study based on M University in Fujian Province, China	Longitudinal regression analysis using mental health surveys and academic performance data	9,189 freshmen (enrolled 2016–2018) at M University,	Both short- and long-term academic performance were substantially influenced by mental health factors, including somatization, anxiety, and depression. Moderate anxiety and social aggression occasionally improved scores, while somatization and depression had detrimental effects. The need for

				Fujian, China	early, tailored mental health interventions to enhance academic outcomes was underscored by the fact that the effects varied by gender and enrollment year.
18	<a href="#">Grafton (2020)</a>	The Effects of Knowledge and Perceptions of Campus Mental Health Services on College Students' Academic Performance	Cross-sectional analysis using OLS regressions on survey data	67,389 undergraduate and graduate students from 60 U.S. universities (2017–2018 Healthy Minds Study)	While personal stigma has a negative impact on GPA, greater awareness of campus mental health facilities is positively correlated with GPA. Though therapeutic use showed inconsistent results, possibly indicating underlying severity more than immediate GPA improvement, depression and anxiety had severe detrimental consequences on academic performance. There were no discernible interactions between mental health disorders, therapy, knowledge, or stigma. To improve academic results, recommendations include raising awareness and de-stigmatizing.
19	<a href="#">Asher BlackDeer et al. (2023)</a>	Depression and anxiety among college students: understanding the impact on grade averages and differences in gender and ethnicity.	Cross-sectional analysis using national survey data (American College Health Association NCHA, n = 117,430)	117,430 undergraduate students (mostly U.S. institutions, aged 18–21)	The prevalence of depression and anxiety symptoms was notable, affecting 30% and 49% of individuals, respectively, and was associated with diminished GPA, particularly among those who were either untreated or merely diagnosed. The intervention resulted in a modest enhancement of GPA; however, it did not entirely eliminate the existing performance disparity. Differences related to gender and ethnicity became apparent: females exhibited a greater propensity to report symptoms and pursue treatment, whereas Asian and minority students demonstrated a lower likelihood of receiving diagnoses or treatment, despite a significant prevalence of symptoms. The findings illuminate the inequalities in help-seeking behaviors and emphasize the necessity for culturally specific mental health interventions to foster academic achievement.
20	<a href="#">Dalsgaard et al. (2020)</a>	Association of Mental Disorder in Childhood and Adolescence with Subsequent Educational Achievement	Nationwide population-based cohort study using Danish registry data	629,622 individuals born in Denmark (1988–1999);	Students diagnosed with mental disorders exhibited a markedly reduced likelihood of participating in the mandatory ninth-grade final examination (52% compared to 88%). Furthermore, those who did engage in the examination achieved lower academic

					38,001 had a mental disorder diagnosis before age 16	performance, with male students scoring an average of $-0.30$ standard deviations and female students $-0.24$ standard deviations. Most mental disorders were associated with diminished academic performance, with the exception of anorexia nervosa and obsessive-compulsive disorder, which correlated with marginally elevated grades. Research indicates that female students diagnosed with anxiety, attachment issues, and ADHD tend to perform academically at a lower level compared to their male counterparts. The findings highlight the imperative for specialized educational assistance tailored to adolescents experiencing mental health challenges.
21	Bruffaerts et al. (2018)	Mental health problems in college freshmen: prevalence and academic functioning	Cross-sectional survey and multilevel modeling using administrative academic records	4,921 first-year students at KU Leuven, Belgium		Approximately 35% of first-year students reported having mental health issues, and internalizing and externalizing problems were associated with poorer academic year percentages ( $\approx 0.2$ – $0.3$ GPA decline) of 2.9–4.7%. In departments with lower performance, externalizing effects were more pronounced. Substance abuse and antisocial issues did not significantly correlate. The findings emphasize how crucial it is to address behavioral and emotional problems to enhance academic performance.
22	Frazier, Gabriel, Merians, and Lust (2019)	Understanding Stress as an Impediment to Academic Performance	Cross-sectional survey with ANOVA and regression analyses	8,997 undergraduate students from 20 two- and four-year colleges in Minnesota		The most commonly cited factor affecting academic performance was stress; however, the only students with lower GPAs were those who believed that stress was detrimental. It is interesting to note that the students with the best GPAs were those who felt that stress had no effect on their performance. Perceiving stress as detrimental was associated with high levels of stress, low resilience, low coping self-efficacy, and low social support. Though they did not necessarily correspond with real GPA disparities, gender, sexual orientation, and school type influenced views, highlighting the need for specific interventions that address resilience and mentality rather than just demographic risk factors.

23	Hinkson et al. (2022)	An Examination of the Mental Health and Academic Performance of Student Veterans	Nationwide cross-sectional survey	487 U.S. student veterans (20–61 years old; 20.3% female) across multiple postsecondary institutions	The study reported high rates of depression (40.9%), insomnia (35.5%), suicidal ideation (17.8%), and PTSD (51.3%). Insomnia, depression, and suicidal ideation were all negatively correlated with GPA, whereas PTSD had a mixed relationship. Late work, missed classes, and inadequate exam performance comprised academic obstacles. However, the average GPAs were marginally greater than those of the general student population, despite the mental health burdens. To enhance retention and well-being, the research underscores the necessity of mental health and academic support services that are tailored to the needs of veterans.
24.	Jeffries and Salzer (2022)	Mental Health Symptoms and Academic Achievement Factors	Baseline analysis from a randomized controlled trial	U.S. college students (18–50 years) with serious mental illnesses (major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia-spectrum disorders)	In comparison to general student samples, students with severe mental illness (SMI) reported higher procrastination, inadequate study habits, and lower academic self-efficacy. Higher levels of mental health symptoms were associated with decreased self-efficacy, inferior study skills, and increased procrastination, but they were not substantially correlated with campus engagement. The research indicates that educational outcomes may be enhanced by interventions that address these academic factors in conjunction with clinical treatment.
25.	Lipson and Eisenberg (2018)	Mental Health and Academic Attitudes and Expectations in University Populations: Results from the Healthy Minds Study	Cross-sectional survey analysis	3,556 undergraduate and graduate students from four U.S. campuses	Compared to their flourishing peers, students with mental health issues (depression, anxiety, eating disorders) reported substantially lower academic satisfaction, self-efficacy, motivation, and perceived less faculty support. Additionally, they expressed more doubts about the value of higher education. Mental health issues were associated with increased likelihoods of academic dissatisfaction and decreased confidence in the completion of degrees, underscoring the necessity of integrating academic support services with mental health services.

26.	Shin et al. (2023)	Perfectionism, test anxiety, and neuroticism determine high academic performance: a cross-sectional study	Cross-sectional study with regression and cluster analyses	102 high-achieving medical students (Seoul National University) and 120 comparison students from other Seoul universities	Individuals with exceptional academic achievements exhibited diminished levels of neuroticism, reduced test anxiety, less socially prescribed perfectionism, and an increased inclination towards task preference. Regression analysis indicated that moderate levels of perfectionism and test anxiety, coupled with reduced neuroticism, were associated with enhanced performance outcomes. Cluster analysis revealed that students exhibiting balanced levels of perfectionism and anxiety attained the highest CSAT scores, implying the existence of an “optimal zone” as opposed to extreme levels.
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### *3.4. Summarizing the Evidence*

The relevant information was obtained from the articles. The elements of the articles that pertained to the study were identified and presented in [Table 1](#). The various designs employed in each of the articles and their samples were included in the presentation. In addition, the study findings were clearly shown in [Table 1](#).

### *3.5. Interpreting the Findings*

26 out of the 46 identified journal articles were considered after critical examination. The excluded articles numbered 20. The findings of the 26 journal articles were then presented in [Table 1](#).

Anxiety and depression are prevalent mental health issues encountered by students across all educational levels. These issues influence the rate at which students comprehend, engage, and achieve requisite scores in assessments. [Table 1](#) indicates that mental health issues impact students throughout all educational levels, from primary to university. Research shows that mental health issues in early childhood and adolescence increase the likelihood of subpar academic performance among young children. Furthermore, academic performance may serve as an indicator of adolescents' mental health status, although mental health may not necessarily predict adolescents' academic performance. [Table 1](#) further indicates that reduced depression and greater psychosocial well-being scores correlate with improved academic performance in both mathematics and language courses, as well as enhanced educational behaviors at the college and university level. Mental health can be defined as emotional well-being influenced by factors such as sadness, anxiety, and stress. Anxiety and depression significantly impact college students, particularly final-year students and those from low-income backgrounds, as indicated by [Table 1](#). Senior students experience despair, anxiety, and tension, adversely affecting their academic performance. Moreover, improved educational habits are associated with higher course grades. A robust relationship exists between students' mental health and their levels of anxiety, frustration, rigidity, and learning motivation; however, no significant relationship is observed with academic performance ([Table 1](#)).

The table indicated an absence of correlation between stress and academic performance. Nonetheless, certain research has demonstrated that mental health significantly influences cognitive functioning, emotional well-being, and overall engagement, which are essential components of academic achievement. Students with robust mental health have heightened cognitive capabilities, encompassing enhanced attention, memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. Students with robust mental health exhibit superior outcomes compared to those with comparatively poorer mental health. Consequently, methods of improving mental health as a crucial element of academic achievement must be adopted. Educational institutions must implement comprehensive strategies that include mental health awareness, accessible counseling services, stress reduction initiatives, and a culture of open communication ([Table 1](#)). Integrating social-emotional learning may be the most effective strategy for schools to address students' mental health issues. Ultimately, counseling sessions can serve as highly beneficial therapies, as demonstrated in [Table 1](#).

**Table 2.** Summary of synthesis themes, conceptual focus, and supporting studies in the systematic review.

Synthesis theme	Description of focus	Studies mapped
Mental health factors influencing academic performance	Outlines the impact of depression, anxiety, stress, somatization, perfectionism, and neuroticism on academic performance, student retention, engagement levels, motivation, and future aspirations. Emphasizes the extensive and consistent influence of mental health on academic performance.	<a href="#">Agnafors et al. (2021)</a> ; <a href="#">Awadalla et al. (2020)</a> ; <a href="#">Asher BlackDeer et al. (2023)</a> ; <a href="#">Bruffaerts et al. (2018)</a> ; <a href="#">Chu et al. (2022)</a> ; <a href="#">Dalsgaard et al. (2020)</a> ; <a href="#">Deng and Li (2024)</a> ; <a href="#">Frazier et al. (2019)</a> ; <a href="#">Grant et al. (2004)</a> ; <a href="#">Lipson et al. (2017)</a> and <a href="#">Shin et al. (2023)</a>
Bidirectional vs. unidirectional effects	Investigates the nature of the relationship between mental health and academic performance, examining whether it is mutual (with each influencing the other) or if it operates in a singular direction.	<a href="#">X. Lee et al. (2024)</a> ; <a href="#">Agnafors et al. (2021)</a> and <a href="#">Dalsgaard et al. (2020)</a>
Protective factors (Resilience, coping, self-efficacy)	Explores elements that enable students to mitigate or endure the adverse impacts of poor mental health on their academic performance, including resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and robust academic self-beliefs.	<a href="#">Frazier et al. (2019)</a> ; <a href="#">Joseph (2023)</a> ; and <a href="#">Shin et al. (2023)</a>
Role of awareness, access to services, stigma	Investigates how help-seeking behaviours are impacted by perceptions of stigma, access, and service awareness, and how these factors influence academic performance and retention.	<a href="#">Campos et al. (2017)</a> ; <a href="#">Grafton (2020)</a> ; <a href="#">Asher BlackDeer et al. (2023)</a> ; <a href="#">Awadalla et al. (2020)</a>
Recommended interventions (Counseling, SEL, mindfulness)	Comprehensive, evidence-based strategies delineated in the literature to enhance students' mental well-being and academic achievement encompass counseling, mindfulness practices, social-emotional learning, and resilience training.	<a href="#">Das and Dhar (2023)</a> ; <a href="#">Evans (2021)</a> ; <a href="#">Hinkson et al. (2022)</a> ; <a href="#">Jeffries and Salzer (2022)</a> ; <a href="#">Rehman et al. (2023)</a> and <a href="#">Shin et al. (2023)</a>
Gender-specific findings	Emphasizes the variations in how mental health influences academic performance across genders, encompassing the prevalence of symptoms, trends in seeking assistance, and distinct academic repercussions.	<a href="#">Awadalla et al. (2020)</a> ; <a href="#">Asher BlackDeer et al. (2023)</a> ; <a href="#">Dalsgaard et al. (2020)</a> ; <a href="#">Jabbarov et al. (2024)</a> and <a href="#">Shin et al. (2023)</a>

[Table 2](#) presents an overview of the main themes identified in the review, a description of the conceptual focus of each theme, and the studies that informed the themes.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This systematic review synthesized findings from 26 studies conducted across North America, Europe, Asia, and South America. We examined how students' mental health affects academic performance and identified evidence-based strategies for reducing mental health burdens in educational contexts. We drew on studies that span diverse populations, methodologies, and educational levels to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between mental health and academic success. We presented the results and discussion organized around two guiding research questions: (1) How does students' mental health influence their academic performance? (2) What are the interventions that effectively enhance students' mental health conditions?

Finally, we offered streamlined, actionable implications derived from the findings of this study.

### 4.1. How Does Students' Mental Health Influence Their Academic Performance?

We found across the reviewed studies that mental health consistently emerged as a critical determinant of academic success. Depression, anxiety, stress, somatization, and other internalizing symptoms were significantly associated with diminished grade point averages (GPAs), decreased motivation, increased absenteeism, impaired

retention, disengagement, and a heightened risk of dropout (Asher BlackDeer et al., 2023; Awadalla et al., 2020; Chu et al., 2022; Frazier et al., 2019; Lipson et al., 2017). Longitudinal studies have substantiated that early mental health issues in childhood or adolescence forecast persistent academic deficits, highlighting the necessity for early identification and care (Agnafors et al., 2021; Dalsgaard et al., 2020).

Notably, the relationship between mental health and academic performance is complex and reciprocal. Although enhanced mental health typically fosters improved academic results, certain research indicates that elevated academic performance may subsequently enhance mental well-being, whereas the opposite is not consistently observed (Lee et al., 2024). Moreover, moderate anxiety and perfectionism were found to enhance performance by increasing arousal and concentration, but extreme levels hindered functioning, indicating an "optimal zone" for stress and anxiety (Deng & Li, 2024; Shin et al., 2023). Numerous research studies have indicated an absence of a direct correlation between stress and performance. This indicates that when stress is viewed as a challenge instead of a threat, it can serve as a motivational impetus (Jabbarov et al., 2024; Zavaleta et al., 2021). Resilience, adaptive coping, and academic self-efficacy were identified as significant modifiers that mitigated the adverse impacts of poor mental health on students (Frazier et al., 2019).

Students' emotional states directly influence their classroom engagement, which is a key driver of academic achievement. This aligns with Schonert-Reichl (2017), who noted that when teachers fail to address students' social-emotional needs, both academic performance and behavior suffer. Teachers have the capacity to foster nurturing and empathetic classroom atmospheres and develop constructive student-teacher relationships. By adeptly integrating SEL programs into their methodologies, they can facilitate beneficial outcomes for their students (Konadu, 2025). Rather than a linear relationship, the link between mental health and academic success is bidirectional and moderated by contextual factors such as resilience and emotional regulation. These findings are well explained by Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as essential psychological needs. Mental health issues often indicate that these needs are unmet; for instance, poor perceived competence can increase anxiety around academic tasks, while lack of social connection may foster depression. Therefore, effective interventions should not only address psychological symptoms but also aim to restore these foundational needs and support academic engagement.

#### *4.2. What are the Interventions that Effectively Enhance Students' Mental Health Conditions?*

The review identified several evidence-based strategies for addressing students' mental health challenges and supporting academic success. First, institutional initiatives aimed at diminishing stigma and enhancing awareness of accessible mental health care were fundamental. Students with greater awareness of campus resources and reduced stigma were more inclined to seek assistance, resulting in increased retention rates and, in certain instances, better academic performance (Asher BlackDeer et al., 2023; Awadalla et al., 2020; Campos et al., 2017; Grafton, 2020).

In addition, interventions designed to cultivate resilience, adaptive coping mechanisms, and constructive stress evaluation were often recommended. Programs that integrate cognitive-behavioral strategies, mindfulness training, stress management workshops, biofeedback, and resilience training have proven effective in enhancing psychological well-being and academic performance (Frazier et al., 2019; Joseph, 2023; Shin et al., 2023). Approaches that combined psychological support with practical academic skills, including the enhancement of study habits, improvement of time management, and promotion of academic self-efficacy, were particularly beneficial (Hinkson et al., 2022; Jeffries & Salzer, 2022).

The need to foster supportive and inclusive learning environments, particularly in K-12 contexts, was highlighted. Schools that adopt social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks, offer staff training in evidence-based

SEL programs, and promote open communication have been demonstrated to mitigate students' mental health challenges (Das & Dhar, 2023; Evans, 2021). Tailored interventions for at-risk or underrepresented populations, such as student veterans, minority students, low-income individuals, and perfectionistic high achievers, are crucial for providing culturally sensitive and equitable support (Hinkson et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2023).

These findings underscore the importance of viewing mental health not as a supplementary service but as essential to educational equity and success. Embedding well-being initiatives, academic flexibility, and culturally competent mental health services within institutional structures can yield both psychological and academic benefits. This approach aligns with Self-Determination Theory by fostering autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Furthermore, social-emotional learning (SEL) has been found to directly improve mental health by developing five key competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. This aligns with findings by Ahmed, Hamzah, and Abdullah (2020), who highlight SEL's role in promoting social-emotional competence. Such competence, in turn, has been shown to enhance academic achievement and prosocial behavior (Alzahrani, Alharbi, & Alodwani, 2019).

## 5. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This systematic review offers several critical implications for educational policy, institutional practice, and future research. First, the study will encourage school authorities to develop appropriate interventions to support students with mental health problems. Educators will adopt flexible teaching strategies that accommodate students with mental health issues. Academic success cannot be effectively pursued without addressing students' psychological well-being. Institutions should embed mental health services within academic advising and support systems, creating accessible, destigmatized pathways that directly align with students' educational goals. Integrated support models ensure that mental health care is not seen as separate or secondary but as foundational to academic achievement. In addition, early intervention is paramount. Given the long-term effects of childhood and adolescent mental health problems on academic trajectories, schools and universities should invest in robust early detection systems and preventative programs that identify and support at-risk students before academic challenges escalate.

Equally important is the promotion of resilience and self-efficacy. Interventions that cultivate these capacities offer promising avenues for achieving dual gains in mental health and academic performance. By embedding resilience-building, adaptive coping, and self-efficacy elements into curricula, workshops, and mentoring programs, institutions can proactively equip students with the skills to navigate academic stressors, sustain engagement, and maintain performance under pressure. Addressing structural inequities further strengthens these efforts. Gender, cultural, and socioeconomic disparities in mental health access and help-seeking behaviors highlight the urgent need for culturally competent, equity-focused initiatives. Institutions must actively dismantle the barriers that prevent marginalized or underserved students from accessing the support they need, ensuring that interventions are tailored to diverse student populations.

Finally, advancing research remains essential to solidify the evidence base. Longitudinal, mixed-methods, and intervention studies are needed to clarify the causal mechanisms underlying the mental health academic performance relationship, evaluate the long-term impacts of interventions, and explore contextual moderators across educational levels and cultural settings. Taken together, this review underscores that promoting student success requires a holistic, multifaceted approach, one that recognizes the deeply intertwined nature of emotional resilience, cognitive functioning, and educational achievement.

## 6. LIMITATIONS

The study reviewed articles from 2015 to 2025 and considered only articles published in English. Thus, all articles outside these specified periods and not in English were not considered. Also, mental health issues affect all individuals. However, the present study considered only articles published on students' mental health and their academic performance and disregarded those on individuals in hospitals.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that students' mental health has an impact on their academic performance. Good mental health has been seen to have a positive impact on students' academic performance, and weak mental health has a negative impact on academic performance. Students' capacity to assimilate information is contingent upon their mental health status. Consequently, implementing strategies such as counseling, fostering open communication in a stress-free atmosphere, and integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) have been shown to mitigate mental health difficulties among students across all educational levels. Maintaining students' mental health is essential for their academic success and overall well-being. Educational institutions can adopt many interventions and techniques to foster a supportive environment that emphasizes mental health. Educational administrators and policymakers should implement on-campus counseling facilities staffed by qualified experts capable of delivering individual and group treatment, as well as offering a confidential environment for students to address their issues and challenges. Educators must promote constructive peer relationships, teamwork, and collaboration via group projects and extracurricular activities. Mentoring ties among upperclassmen, instructors, and entering students should be encouraged. Policymakers and educational administrators should instruct educators and staff to identify indicators of mental distress and direct students to suitable resources.

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