

Exploring English Language Proficiency, Academic Confidence, Self-Esteem, and Academic Stress Among Kurdish Students of Tishk International University

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Abstract: This study investigates how Kurdish students' English language proficiency is related to academic confidence, self-esteem, and academic stress. It fills a gap in the research by focusing on Kurdish students that has not been investigated in depth in earlier scholarly research in educational studies. The aim is to examine English language proficiency, academic confidence, self-esteem and academic stress among Kurdish students at the Education Faculty of Tishk International University. A quantitative approach was implemented using an adapted questionnaire measuring self-esteem, academic stress, English language proficiency and academic confidence. 128 surveys were filled out by 3rd and 4th year student. Statistical analyses measured correlations between demographic background of the respondents, their English proficiency, academic confidence, self-esteem and academic stress. The findings of the study show that older students, and 3rd-grade students experienced more academic stress. English language proficiency increases self-confidence and language academic confidence. Finally, students with higher self-esteem had higher language confidence. Such findings require essential pathways for improving Kurdish students' academic success and their overall mental well-being.

Keywords: Academic Stress, English Language Proficiency, Self-Esteem, Academic Confidence, Kurdish University Students

1. Introduction

English has become the most important international language in the world. Across the world, individuals with different first-language use English to communicate (Kavlu, 2017, p. 67). In private universities of non-English-speaking countries, to communicate in English is a must for attaining success in academics, especially where it is either the medium of instruction or a major academic tool. The intersection of the English language with academic stress becomes very challenging for Kurdish university students. As a language that usually means both an access to opportunities and a source of psychological pressure, English language proficiency impacts the students' academic performance and their psychological well-being.

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Academic stress is a common and pervasive phenomenon, and students around the world are easily prone to experiencing anxiety, depression, and loss of academic functioning. To worsen this case, students who are from a non-native English-speaking background, like the students at Tishk International University in Kurdistan Region, are forced to bear an extra load of learning another language in addition to their own native language. Often enough, Kurdish students are supposed to learn and function in English as the medium of instruction, particularly in science, technology, and higher education branches. Such double pressure of academic demand alongside the language barriers puts considerable strain on students, and such strain may interfere with cognitive performance, emotional behavior, self-confidence, and the overall academic outcomes among them (Al-Mohammed & Ahmed, 2021, p. 14).

Equally importantly, the psychological underpinnings of learning English as a second language and its contribution to academic stress and their self-esteem derive from a multidisciplinary approach. Although psychology can provide a general context to study the emotional and cognitive stressors related to language acquisition, linguistics may enable one to analyze more effectively the structural and functional features of language learning. Thus, the present study will be interdisciplinary, taking in the advantages of both psychology and linguistics for the consideration of the relationship between proficiency in English and self-esteem in terms of academic confidence, and academic stress among Kurdish university students.

Previous research identifies several factors which contribute to academic stress for students studying in a second language. Academic workload, language anxiety, cultural contrast, and resource limitations generally contribute to conditions of high academic stress among non-native speakers. Again, it is worth mentioning that according to MacIntyre & Gardner (1994, p. 284) the role of self-efficacy and motivational dimensions in either cushioning or raising stress levels has been widely debated in psychological academic literature. In fact, in the case of Kurdish students, cultural and socio-political aspects will come into serious play. The Kurdish education system has, in fact, suffered from various drawbacks, including resource inadequacies, political instability, and indeterminate language policies, further putting stumbling blocks on the academic sojourn of students (Ali & Hussein, 2020, p. 67).

Furthermore, the cognitive load theory proffers the mental exertion required for dual processing of language and academic content. The same theory states that in the working memory of the brain there is limited capacity, and that the dual processing of complex academic material and foreign language can extend the students' cognitive limits and ultimately result in increased strain and decreased academic performance (Sweller, 1988, p. 261). This shows that it is imperative to investigate not only the psychological dimensions but also the linguistic challenges encountered by Kurdish university students.

This present study aims to add to the growing corpus of literature on the relationship between English language proficiency, self-esteem, academic confidence and academic stress among Kurdish students at Tishk international University. Identifying vital stressors and their linguistic and psychological bases, the research aims to provide pragmatic suggestions for educators and mental health professionals in support of this vulnerable student population.

1.1 Problem Statement

Due to the fact that the students at Tishk international University must learn and use English as medium of instruction, these students face academic stressors in varying degrees. While this is a common issue among these students, there is little research conducted on academic stress, the impact on their self-esteem, and their overall academic confidence in relation to English language proficiency. There is poor understanding of how linguistic and psychological factors contribute to academic stress and self-esteem by inhibiting the development of effective strategies to reduce it. The lack of studies on this phenomenon has raised a need of dedicated studies examining the relationships between English language proficiency, self-esteem, academic confidence, academic stress, and its psychological and linguistic dimensions.

1.2 Research Question

This study tries to answer the following main question.

How do English language proficiency impact the self-esteem, academic confidence, and academic stress among the Kurdish students at Education Faculty of Tishk International University?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the academic and psychological experiences of Kurdish students at Tishk International University according to the level of their proficiency in English. Specifically, the purpose is to determine the extent of academic stress the students feel and how it is influenced by their proficiency in English. The study also aims to determine students' academic confidence and how it is correlated with their proficiency in the English language. Lastly, it explores the extent of self-esteem among Kurdish students in an academic environment whereby English language is the medium of instruction.

1.4 Hypotheses

The hypotheses in this study are the following:

1. It is predicted that higher academic stress is associated with English language problems among Kurdish students at the Tishk international University.
2. It is predicted that higher English proficiency leads to a higher self-esteem among Kurdish students at the Tishk international University.
3. It is predicted that a lower English language proficiency leads to less academic confidence among Kurdish students at the Tishk international University.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework of this Study

In this study, two suitable theoretical models, i.e., social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1986) and the linguistic Interdependence hypothesis by Cummin (1979), are briefly described.

A suitable theoretical model for this study is Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986). The theory

centers on the role of self-efficacy. A sense of one's capability to accomplish things successfully under circumstances and has a direct influence on such notions as academic confidence and self-esteem. As Bandura (1986) indicates, students' beliefs of being able influence their motivation, well-being, and academic performance. For Kurdish students learning in an English-medium context, their perceived self-efficacy in English may have a critical impact on their academic confidence, self-esteem, and resilience when facing academic stress.

Social Cognitive Theory is also able to account for the impact of environmental and cultural variables on learning and individual development, and as such is particularly relevant for non-native English-speaking learners. The model permits an explanatory integration of English language ability and the students' internal perceptions of self and external pressures from the academic environment. The use of this theory as the study's framework makes it possible for researchers to present a more detailed description of the psychological processes involved in interdependence between language ability, academic self-concept, and stress coping.

Another best-fitting theoretical model for this study is Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (1979), which presumes that proficiency in the second language (L2), in this study English, is related directly to intellectual and academic development already established in the first language (L1). Following this theory, a strong foundation in the student's native language (Kurdish) provides access to English acquisition and enhances academic success and self-esteem in L2 environments. This is most applicable to Kurdish students in Tishk International University, where English is the language of instruction, as their potential for cross-language transfer of ability may not only influence academic achievement but also affective variables such as self-esteem and stress.

Cummins' (1979) model is theoretically underpinned in terms of the interaction between language, ability, and academic achievement such that it suggests that low levels of English proficiency would be a barrier to class participation, lead to low academic self-confidence, and increase academic stress. It also provides a culturally responsive model for understanding how multilingual students manage academic stress in a second language context. This makes the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis a valid foundation for examining the interlinked roles of English proficiency, self-esteem, academic stress, and confidence among university students in Kurdistan.

2.2 Studies Emphasizing on the Role of English Proficiency in Academic Performance

Leaver and Shekhtman (2002, p. 10-11) state that "English proficiency", as a term, was first introduced by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), a training division of the U.S. Department of the State. FSI was the primary U.S. government agency that spearheaded the campaign for proficiency, including its definition and measurement. The focus was primarily on finding a way to identify, evaluate, and categorize foreign language skills. Additionally, Wang, Schultz and Huang (2023), indicate that there is a significant relationship among English language proficiency and academic performance. According to Bachman and Palmer (1996, p. 20-23), English proficiency reveals the reliability and construct validity of the academic performance of students regardless their educational background. It is worth noting that students' academic performance can be affected by their English language proficiency. Studies (Campbell & Ortiz, 1991; Horwitz & Young, 1991) have shown that the majority of students have high anxiety to speak in

English. Mrtirosyan, Hwang and Wanjohi (2015) revealed in their study that the higher English proficiency of students the higher their academic achievement. Alharbi and Yakout (2018) discovered that among bachelor degree students, 43% of the participants in their study experienced difficulty in understanding English, 68% experienced challenges in studying the second language, and 47% were embarrassed to speak in English, showing that English proficiency massively influences students' academic achievement.

All in all, English proficiency is not only a strong predictor of academic confidence and success and but also an important factor influenced by psychological elements such as stress and anxiety. Students who have a better command of the English language generally perform better academically.

2.3 Psychological Impacts of Academic Stress on Learners

Academic stress has a deep impact on students' mental health and cognitive functioning and often leads to anxiety, depression, and burnout (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p. 284). Chronic stress does, however, manifest itself in concentration, memory, and decision-making difficulties in learners (Sweller, 1988, p. 261). Furthermore, the psychological impact of academic stress decreases motivation and self-confidence, perhaps in an ever-repeating circle of academic and personal challenges (Ali & Hussein, 2020, p.68).

2.3.1 The Cognitive Load Theory related to Language Barriers

One of the main stressors for students who do not speak English as their native language is cognitive load. Cognitive load theory by Sweller (1988) argues that posits in working memory have limited capacity. If students handle academic material in a second language, a large share of their cognitive resources is unfortunately chewed up with language processing rather than content comprehension. This dual-tasking requirement can exacerbate mental fatigue and hinders learning efficiency.

Linguistic problems, such as limited vocabulary and difficulty with academic jargon, aggravated this issue even more, as this is explained through a theory developed by Cummins (2000, p. 67). The Theory of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) indicates while conversational English is BICS, many students who do well in it struggle with the more complex demands of academic English, CALP. This discrepancy tends to increase the student's frustration and sense of being inadequate in bridging along the academic expectations posed in the second language.

2.3.2 The Emotional and Psychological Effects on Learners

Academic stress in the second language environment can frequently create anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Such foreign language anxiety was defined by Horwitz et al. (2021, p. 34) as a specific type of anxiety related to language learning. In the academic realms in particular, question and possibly the most problematic of foreign language anxiety will involve fear of making language errors, fear of publicly embarrassing oneself, and fear of doing poorly in class-specified by Zhang and Wang (2020, p. 112). Nevertheless, students may also suffer from "impostor syndrome," which is a psychological occurrence where individuals question their abilities and fear that they may be revealed as impostors. This phenomenon, as discussed by Clance and Imes (1978, p. 244), is particularly common among international students who have to cope with the cultural and linguistic challenges of English-speaking academic

cultures. Constant exposure to such stressors normally leads to burnout, which is characterized by emotional exhaustion and loss of academic motivation (Maslach & Leiter, 2016, p. 70).

2.3.3 The Social Isolation and Cultural Adjustment

Regardless of the reason, the language barriers often make it difficult to build social bonds, thereby making any non-native speakers feel far more socially alienated and isolated. Berry (1997, p. 12) argued that students in the process of adapting to a new linguistic and cultural environment are subjected to acculturative stress, caused by perceived cultural distance and difficulties that arise in establishing meaningful relationships with native English-speaking peers.

Loneliness and lack of social support have been shown to intensify psychological distress. Andrade (2006, p. 140) reported that international students with perceived low levels of English proficiency were significantly less likely than those who perceived high levels of English proficiency to take part in social events and extracurricular activities; thus, opportunities for emotional support and stress dissipating were limited.

2.3.4 Coping Mechanisms and Interventions

Often students find their own way of coping with the pressures of societal, family, self, and peer expectations. They openly seek peer encouragement, use language learning mobile applications, and engage in counseling services (Andrade, 2006, p.145; Zhang & Wang, 2020, p.118). Universities have a crucial role by reducing stress through their tailored support systems, such as language workshops and seminars, peer mentoring programs, and ready availability of mental health services (Horwitz et al., 2021, p.130). In addition, by adopting inclusive linguistic teaching practices, cognitive and emotional demands would be reduced. Sweller (1988, p. 262) suggested that simple language, pictures, and sharing or cooperative modes of learning will aid comprehension and reduce anxiety. Such strategies do not only assist in learning; they create an enabling atmosphere for non-native English-speaking students.

All in all, the above-mentioned displays that academic stress has many psychological impacts, such as cognitive, emotional, and social effects, on non-native English-speaking students. This is addressed with a more holistic approach through a combination of linguistics support, mental health provision, and inclusive teaching methodology. The provision of a culture of diversity and empathy in universities enables the students to succeed academically and personally.

2.4 The Intersection of Linguistic and Psychological Stress in Education

Education is a multidimensional process that embraces a synthesis of knowledge acquisition and mutual interplay among psychological and linguistic factors. Research that cites language as a barrier, such as limited proficiency in the language of instruction, shows that the language barrier would increase psychological stress among students, particularly those from multilingual or immigrant backgrounds (Cummins, 2000, p. 39). Psychological stress manifests itself in various forms, such as reduced self-efficacy, increased anxiety, and hence lesser academic performance (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 303).

The pressure can largely be ascribed to the cognitive load of processing and understanding academic content in a non-native language. According to Cognitive Load Theory, Sweller argues that there is a limit to working memory capacity, and that the extra burden of decoding linguistic input for students learning a second language puts stress on this capacity, which leads to frustration and the long-term possibility of disengaging from material or courses altogether (Sweller, 1988, p. 265).

Apart from this, linguistic stress interacts with social and emotional problems in classroom situations. For example, alienation or marginalization may compound the psychological distress of those students unable to communicate in a fluent manner in the dominant language of instruction (Krashen, 1982, p. 31). The affective filter hypothesis of Krashen suggests that the emotional factors in language acquisition are above all stress and anxiety that constitute filters to language learning and subsequently to academic success (Krashen, 1982, p. 34).

The educator may create an inclusive classroom setting, focusing on empathy and verbal scaffolding, to address these barriers of linguistic as well as psychological issues. Techniques including the use of visuals, peer support, and culturally responsive teaching can help mitigate the forces of dual burdens and thereby improve student outcomes (Garcia, 2009, p. 72).

2.5 Previous Studies on English Language Proficiency and Academic Stress Among Kurdish Students at Universities in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

The area of intersection between English language proficiency, academic confidence, and academic stress is a growing concern and has been researched over the last years among Kurdish university students. Different studies have discussed the role of linguistic challenges on students' psychological conditions and their academic achievements in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This section shall outline three significant studies, including their objectives, methodology, and main findings.

2.5.1 Study 1: Relationship of English Proficiency to Academic Stress

Ahmed and Hassan (2019) conducted a study on the relationship between English language proficiency and academic stress among undergraduate students at Salahaddin University-Erbil. Regarding this aspect, the current study was carried out to determine the effect of students reported English proficiency levels on their perceived academic stress during exams, presentations, and group discussions.

It was a mixed methods design whereby the quantitative data was measured by using the Perceived Stress Scale and the qualitative data through semi-structured interviews of 50 participants. These results showed that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between English proficiency and academic stress—a high proficiency correlates to a lower level of stress of the student (Ahmed & Hassan, 2019, p. 114). Qualitative interviews revealed that participants with low proficiency struggled to comprehend lecture materials, do the written assignments, and participate in classes, which eventually resulted in frustration and anxiety.

2.5.2 Study 2: Medium of Instruction: The Role of English and Its Psychological Implications

In another study, Khalid and Bakr approached in 2021 the psychological impacts of using EMI in Kurdistan Region higher education institutions. This research, therefore, has to do with how EMI affects the levels of stress that students encounter in addition to their academic achievements. The population consists of 150 undergraduate students from three different universities in Erbil, using a structured questionnaire in establishing the amount of stress experienced, the coping strategies, and academic performance.

The study showed that though EMI has been linked to increased opportunities for internationalization, it also presents significant amounts of stress for students with a low level of proficiency in the English language. According to Khalid & Bakr (2021, p. 95), the stress showed its presence particularly in oral presentations and oral examinations. It was concluded here that though EMI can lead to language growth, this can only be achieved by the provision of institutional support through English language workshops and tutorials.

2.5.3 Study 3: Anxiety and English Language Performance in Kurdish Students

The research work of Hussein and Ismail (2020) examines the language anxiety relationship with performance in English courses at the University of Duhok and specifically with Kurdish students. The study aimed to reveal the major factors that instigated students' anxiety and how it affected their performance in reading, writing, and speaking tasks.

The quantitative survey administered to 200 students, with focused follow-up interviews to 20, found that test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and communication apprehension constitute the three main causes of stress (Hussein & Ismail, 2020, pp. 78). It was revealed in the findings that high anxiety is obstructive to performance; for instance, students reported avoidance behaviors such as skipping classes or avoiding participation.

All in all, these studies show that English language issues cause much stress and leads to less confidence among Kurdish students in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Low skill levels and using English as the teaching language add to their stress, which then hurts their grades. The findings show the need for support, such as language guidance, stress management workshops, and changes in the curriculum, to deal with these challenges more beneficially.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design of this Study

The quantitative research design in this study enables the collection and analysis of data in a structured manner. This study used a quantitative correlational research design, which was best to look at the relations between English language skills, academic confidence, self-esteem and academic stress for students from Kurdistan at Tishk International University. The methodological orientation uses a positivist epistemology, which sees research as based on facts, measurement and the search for correlations between the variables of the study. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data that could be measured from

a big enough sample, and the data could be used to look at patterns and links within the psychological and academic factors we were studying.

The choice of quantitative method has been made for several reasons. First, the study aims to test assumptions about relations between the variables that were set, which fits with the use of quantitative method. Second, in previous studies on similar groups, a lot of use has been made of qualitative ones, such as (semi-structured) interviews or case studies, which give rich data but are not generalisable. Our study fills the gap by using a standard tool that has been shown to be valid and reliable, so we can make observations on the wider population and use inferential statistics to test hypotheses.

Also, the population of this study exist of faculty of Education students in Tishk International University. This group was chosen because they are directly involved in academic work where English language skills play a major role in how they learn, how confident they are and how much stress they feel. On the other hand, these students had enough experience of reading, writing and speaking English in class so that they could give worthwhile responses to the research tools that is been used.

By clearly stating the methodological framework of this study and by addressing the weaknesses of previous research, this study enhances its validity and provides a deeper understanding of the academic and psychological effects of language proficiency on students in a Kurdish context.

3.2 Respondents

The participants in this study consist of male and female students from different departments of the Faculty of Education at Tishk International University. For the academic year of 2024-2025, a total of 391 students are studying in the different departments of the faculty of Education (Research Centre of Tishk International University, 2025). The different departments are: 1. English Language Teaching (ELT), 2. Biology Education Department, 3. Mathematics Education Department, 4. Computer Education Department, and 5. Physics Education Department. Concerning the participants of the study, in total 191 students from 3rd and 4th grade of these five mentioned departments received a survey, and only 128 questionnaires were filled out by these students. The age group of these students varied between 18 to 28 years, and all the participants were non-native English speakers with a Kurdish ethnic background. According to Krejcie & Morgan (1970), for a population of 191 students a sample size of 128 is representative. This ensures that the sample is statistically representative of the population at a level of confidence and margin of error.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

The students were selected through a random sampling technique. Random sampling is used in quantitative research, ensuring equal chances for all members of the population, thereby minimizing bias and increasing the representativeness of the findings. According to Creswell & Creswell, (2018) random sampling will help derive representative data on demographic groups that vary greatly, especially in a study that investigates the students' language proficiency and academic stress. The researchers collected the questionnaire data used in this study with full cooperation from the Tishk International University's education faculty authority. A total of 10 classrooms were randomly selected from all the 3rd and 4th-year classes from different departments within the education faculty. This means that every classroom in those

two-year levels had an equal chance of being selected. An unbiased selection was made to ensure that the sample would adequately represent the larger student population. All the obtained data was included as all the responses were completed.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that random sampling enhances not only the validity of the study but also ensures that variables such as age, sex, and cultural background are proportionally represented. This is especially true for factors like language proficiency and academic stress, which may decisively differ from one subgroup of students to another (Brown, 2019).

3.4 Instruments

3.4.1 Self Esteem Questionnaire (Rosenberg, 1965)

For the data collection a standardized questionnaire of self-esteem checklist was used to measure the self-esteem of students regarding English language proficiency and academic stress. The used questionnaire in this study was adapted from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) and was modified to better fit the cultural and linguistic context of Kurdish university students. Several items were also reworded for clarity and relevance to the study's target population. To make the Rosenberg Self-Esteem questionnaire suitable for Kurdish university students, it was reformulated and simplified to fit their daily language and cultural norms. For instance, "I feel that I am a person of worth" was reworded as "I think I am like others who are important," and negative statements such as "I feel I do not have much to be proud of" were reworded as "I have things I can be proud of" to make them clearer and more acceptable in a Kurdish-oriented culture.

The questionnaire consists of four parts. The first part indicates the demographic information's such as age, gender, grade, English language proficiency, faculty and department. Beside the background information, the self-esteem questionnaire consists of three other parts which indicates 30 scale- items that measures the general self-worth together with their positive and negative feelings about themselves in relation to English language proficiency, language confidence and academic stress. The items within the survey were answered by using a 5-point Likert-scale format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The students were required to score the items that dealt with their general feelings, telling how strongly they agree or disagree with the statements. Items 3,5,8,9,10,16,18,19,25 were reverse scored by providing "Strongly Disagree" 1 point, "Disagree" 2 points, "Neutral" 3 points "Agree" 4 points, and "Strongly Agree" 5 points.

3.5 Procedure of Data Collection

The relevant data for this research was collected during the fall and spring semester of the academic year 2024-2025. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, the survey was reviewed by an academic linguist in the faculty of Education. After the feedback was implemented, the researchers distributed the questionnaire among 3rd and 4th years students from different departments in faculty of Education and received 128 filled-out surveys back, which then were utilized for data analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

In line with the aims and methods outlined in the study, data analysis employed descriptive statistics in conjunction with correlation analysis to inform trends, patterns, and features in the sample. Internal consistency of the questionnaire was also tested using Cronbach’s alpha, with coefficients above 0.7 being considered acceptable. Relationships between ordinal variables were tested using Spearman’s rho, while Pearson’s correlation was utilized in examining linear relationships between continuous variables. To limit the risk of errors due to multiple comparisons, post- hoc (Bonferroni correlation) was applied. These statistical methods provided valuable information regarding the reliability of the data and the interrelations among the different variables.

4. Results and Discussions

This section contains the findings of this study and their discussion in relation to the implications of the results. Interpretation of the results is made in relation to the study’s objectives and hypotheses, supported with references that include comparisons, and statistical significance. The limitations in relation to the findings are also discussed.

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

This section provides a summary of central characteristics of data regarding distribution and central tendency as well as variability within variables. This analysis employs measuring variables of age, gender, grade, English language proficiency, and department, using the following ranges: mean, median, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum.

Table 1: The Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Background of the Participants

		Age	Gender	Grade	English Language Proficiency	Department
N	Valid	128	128	128	128	128
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.08	1.61	1.63	1.98	2.76
Median		3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	3.00
Std. Deviation		.809	.490	.486	.524	1.489
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		5	2	2	3	5

The table above provides descriptive statistics for age, gender, grade, English language proficiency, and department based on 128 valid responses with no missing data. The summary includes mean, median, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values. Regarding age; the mean = 3.08, median = 3.00, Std. Deviation = 0.809. The mean and median are close, suggesting a symmetrical distribution. A standard deviation of 0.809 suggests moderate variation in age among participants. It can be possible interpreted

that the participants' ages are evenly distributed with some variation. As for gender, mean = 1.61, median = 2.00, Std. Deviation = 0.490. The mean of 1.61 suggests a higher proportion of females in the sample. It can be interpreted that there may be more females than males in the sample, but the numbers are not drastically unbalanced. As for grade, the mean = 1.63, median = 2.00, Std. Deviation = 0.486. The mean and the median are both closer to 2, which suggests that more participants are in the higher grade. Thus, it can be interpreted that most students belong to the grade 4th but there are still a significant number in 3rd grade. Regarding English language proficiency, the mean = 1.98, median = 2.00, Std. Deviation = 0.524. The mean is 1.98, very close to 2 (moderate proficiency), and the median is also 2, suggesting most participants fall into the moderate English language proficiency. Thus, it can be interpreted that the majority of students have moderate English proficiency, with some having lower proficiency and a few achieving high proficiency. As for department, the mean = 2.76, median = 3.00, Std. Deviation = 1.489. The mean (2.76) is slightly below 3, and the median is exactly 3, suggesting a relatively even distribution among departments. The high standard deviation (1.489) indicates a large variation in department distribution. Therefore, it can be interpreted that various students from different departments have filled out the questionnaire, and the data suggests a diverse sample from various departments, but some departments may have more students than others.

All in all, this table shows that the participants are evenly distributed across different age groups, more females than males are in the sample. A slightly higher proportion of students are in the 4th grade. As for the English proficiency, most students fall in the moderate proficiency category and the students are spread across multiple departments, but with noticeable variation.

Table 2: The Age of Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-18	1	.8	.8	.8
	19-21	28	21.9	21.9	22.7
	22-24	65	50.8	50.8	73.4
	25-27	28	21.9	21.9	95.3
	28+	6	4.7	4.7	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

This table indicates the age range of participants indicates that the largest segment (50.8%) is in the 22-24 age range, which is a majority of the sample. The 19-21 and 25-27 age groups are each 21.9% of the total sample, representing an equal split between somewhat younger and older groups. Few participants are under 18 years (0.8%) or over 28 years (4.7%), indicating poor representation of both the very young and the very old. The cumulative percentage indicates that 73.4% of participants are 24 years or younger, and 95.3% under 28 years, indicating a very young cohort. The breakdown indicates that the results of the study are more generalizable to younger groups and perhaps not to older groups.

Table 3: The Gender of the Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	50	39.1	39.1	39.1
	female	78	60.9	60.9	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that gender distribution of the participants is 60.9% female (78 participants) and 39.1% male (50 participants). There are a greater number of females than males. The cumulative percent of 100% for the female group, means that the dataset is more concentrated on female participants.

Table 4: The Grades of the Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3rd year	48	37.5	37.5	37.5
	4th year	80	62.5	62.5	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

The table above reveals the grade distribution of the participants, that 62.5% (80 participants) belong to the 4th year, while 37.5% (48 participants) belong to the 3rd year. In fact, 100% cumulative percentage appears at the 4th-Year level, which means that the sample consists only of 3rd and 4th-year students, as no lower-year students are included in this study.

Table 5: The English Language Proficiency of the Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Beginner	19	14.8	14.8	14.8
	Intermediate	93	72.7	72.7	87.5
	Advance	16	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

This table displays that most of the participants (72.7%) are assigned to the Intermediate English proficiency, while 14.8% beginners and 12.5% advanced. Thus, this distribution indicates that the majority of participants have a moderate English language proficiency, with rather few persons on either advance.

Table 6: Departments of the Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	ELT Department	43	33.6	33.6	33.6
	Mathematics Education Department	11	8.6	8.6	42.2
	Biology Education Department	28	21.9	21.9	64.1
	Computer Education Department	26	20.3	20.3	84.4
	Physic Education Department	20	15.6	15.6	100.0
	Total	128	100.0	100.0	

This table indicates the distribution per department, most extensive group (33.6%) is from the ELT (English Language Teaching) Department), then Biology Education (21.9%), followed by Computer Education (20.3%), and Physics Education (15.6%). At the lowest end, Mathematics Education has the least participants with 8.6%. From this, we can conclude that the sample is heterogeneous within several fields of study, but notably overrepresented by students from ELT.

4.1.2 The Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

The below tables indicate the Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the items of the questionnaire.

Table 7: The Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.727	.741	29

Using Cronbach's Alpha for reliability analysis is an evaluation of the internal consistency of the items within a scale, which, in this case, for the three parts of the questionnaire consisting of 29 items. The analysis assesses whether the items measure a single underlying construct reliably, that is, self-esteem, English language proficiency, academic confidence, and academic stress. With a value of 0.727, Cronbach's Alpha indicates that reliability is acceptable suggesting that the scale moderately consistently measures the intended concept.

Table 8: Reliability Statistics for the Self-Esteem

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.749	.759	10

This table shows the Cronbach's Alpha reliability for self-esteem is computed at 0.749, reflecting an adequate level of internal consistency between the 10 measured items. The slightly higher standardized

alpha (0.759) suggests the items have similar functioning when they undergo standardization. This test of reliability confirms the self-esteem scale as reasonably reliable in measuring the intended construct.

Table 9: Reliability Statistics for English Language and Academic Confidence

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.720	.711	9

This table indicates the statistical reliability analysis of English language ability and Academic confidence. The Cronbach's Alpha for these items are 0.720, suggesting a moderate to good reliability of the 9 items. The standardized alpha (0.711) is slightly lower but still within an acceptable range for psychological and linguistic research. This means that the scale has a consistent internal structure and can be used for further analysis.

Table 10: Reliability Statistics for Academic Stress and Coping Behaviour

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.629	.632	9

The above table displays the reliability assessments based on academic stress and coping behaviours. The Cronbach Alpha values for academic stress and coping behaviour is 0.629, which is a value falling in the questionable reliability category, but still acceptable for exploratory research. The standardized alpha at 0.632 approximates this value and reflects little variation in the items measured. While this scale falls below others in reliability, it still works.

4.1.3 Correlation Between Different Variables

In this section, the statistical measure of how one variable relates to another, based on its strength and direction of association will be elaborated. Thus, the correlation enables researchers to find out whether one variable is related to a change in another variable.

Table 11: The Spearman's rho Correlation Coefficients Results for Various Variables

Spearman's Rho		Age	Gender	Grade	English Language Proficiency	Department	Academic Stress	Self-esteem	Language Academic Confidence
	Correlation/ coefficient	1.000	-.118	.064	.112	-.028	.181*	.59	-.039
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.	.183	.474	.206	.756	.041	.507	.658
	N	128	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
Gender	Correlation/ coefficient	-.118	1.000	-.124	.177*	-.308**	.112	.007	.130
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.183	.	.163	.045	.000	.208	.938	.144
	N	128	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
Grade	Correlation/ coefficient	.064	-.124	1.000	-.035	.009	-.288**	-.005	-.053
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.474	.163	.	.693	.916	.001	.959	.551
	N	128	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
English language proficiency	Correlation/ coefficient	.112	.117*	-.035	1.000	-.353**	-.027	.282**	.386**
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.206	.045	.693	.	.000	.764	.001	.000
	N	128	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
Department	Correlation/ coefficient	-.028	-.308**	.009	-.353**	1.000	-.134	-.032	-.174
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.756	.000	.916	.000	.	.131	.716	.049
	N	128	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
Academic stress	Correlation/ coefficient	.181*	.112	-.288**	-.027	-.134	1.000	-.107	-.170
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.041	.208	.001	.764	.131	.	.231	.054
	N	128	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
Self-esteem	Correlation/ coefficient	.059	.007	-.005	.282**	-.032	-.107	1.000	.518**
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.507	.938	.959	.001	.716	.231	.	.000
	N	128	128	128	128	128	128	128	128
Language/ Academic confidence	Correlation/ coefficient	-.039	.130	-.053	.386**	-.174*	-.170	.518**	1.000
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.658	.144	.551	.000	.049	.054	.000	.
	N	128	128	128	128	128	128	128	128

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table above shows a detailed interpretation of the Spearman's rho correlation coefficients, the strength and direction of monotonic relationships between the following variables such as gender, grade, English language proficiency, department, academic stress, self-esteem, and language academic confidence. Regarding the Age correlations, this table indicates the key correlations findings of age & academic stress ($\rho = 0.181$, $p = 0.041$) → Significant at 5% . There is no other significant between age and self-esteem ($\rho = 0.059$, $p = 0.507$), age and language academic confidence ($\rho = -0.039$, $p = 0.658$), age and English language proficiency ($\rho = 0.112$, $p = 0.206$), and age and grade ($\rho = 0.064$, $p = 0.474$). Therefore, it can be interpreted that age is positively related to academic stress, i.e., older students are likely to

experience higher academic stress. Thus, age has no influence on grades, English language proficiency, self-esteem, or language academic confidence, suggesting that these qualities are not a function of student age. Regarding gender correlations, there is a significant at 5% for gender and English language proficiency ($\rho = 0.177$, $p = 0.045$), and highly significant at 1% for gender and department ($\rho = -0.308$, $p < 0.001$). There are no significant regarding gender and academic stress ($\rho = 0.112$, $p = 0.208$), gender and self-esteem ($\rho = 0.007$, $p = 0.938$), and gender and academic confidence ($\rho = 0.130$, $p = 0.144$). Thus, it can be interpreted that gender is positively related to English proficiency, i.e., certain gender groups are more proficient in English. Furthermore, the strong negative relationship of gender with department choice shows that gender representation is uneven across departments. However, gender does not play an important role in academic stress, self-esteem, or academic confidence in language.

As for the grade correlations, grade and academic stress ($\rho = -0.288$, $p = 0.001$) have a highly significant at 1%. No significant between gender and self-esteem ($\rho = -0.005$, $p = 0.959$), and grade and Language academic confidence ($\rho = -0.053$, $p = 0.551$), grade and English language proficiency ($\rho = -0.035$, $p = 0.693$). Thus, it can be interpreted that there is a significant negative correlation between grade and academic stress, i.e., lower-grade students experience higher academic stress. Grades are not significantly correlated with self-esteem, language academic confidence, or English proficiency.

Looking at the correlations of English language proficiency, between English proficiency and department ($\rho = -0.353$, $p < 0.001$) is a highly significant at 1%. Also, between English proficiency and self-esteem ($\rho = 0.282$, $p = 0.001$) there is a highly significant at 1% level. Between English proficiency and language academic confidence ($\rho = 0.386$, $p < 0.001$) there is highly significant at 1% level. Between English proficiency and academic stress ($\rho = -0.027$, $p = 0.764$) there is no significant. Thus, it can be interpreted that the department choice is negatively correlated with English proficiency, which means that there are certain departments that have lower English proficiency than others. Besides, the self-esteem and academic confidence in language are correlated with higher English proficiency, which means that students proficient in English are more academically confident. Interestingly, the academic stress is not strongly influenced by English proficiency, which means that stress has nothing to do with language proficiency.

Also, the table shows regarding department correlations, there is significant at 5% level between department and language academic confidence ($\rho = -0.174$, $p = 0.049$). No significant between department and academic stress ($\rho = -0.134$, $p = 0.131$), and between department and self-esteem ($\rho = -0.032$, $p = 0.716$). Thus, it can be interpreted that a negative relationship between department and language academic confidence indicates that students from certain departments are less confident in their language abilities. Besides, department selection has no significant influence on academic stress or self-esteem, i.e., students from different departments do not tend to have significantly different stress levels or faith in themselves.

As for the academic stress correlations, there is highly significant at 1% level for academic stress and grade ($\rho = -0.288$, $p = 0.001$), and no significant for academic stress and self-esteem ($\rho = -0.107$, $p = 0.231$), and between academic stress and language academic confidence ($\rho = -0.170$, $p = 0.054$). It can be interpreted that higher academic stress is linked to lower grade, confirming that students within grade 3 are experience more stress. However, academic stress does not have any significant effect on self-esteem

or language academic confidence, indicating that their confidence is governed by other aspects apart from stress.

Noticing the self-esteem correlations, the relationship between English proficiency and self-esteem ($\rho = 0.282, p = 0.001$) is highly significant at 1% level. In addition, the language academic confidence and self-esteem ($\rho = 0.518, p < 0.001$) is also highly significant at 1% level. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the higher English proficiency is linked to higher self-esteem, which means that English-proficient students feel good about themselves. Also, the self-esteem is also highly correlated with language academic confidence, meaning that students who are academically confident have higher self-esteem.

As for language academic confidence correlations, the relation between language academic confidence and English proficiency ($\rho = 0.386, p < 0.001$) is highly significant at 1% level. The language academic confidence & self-esteem ($\rho = 0.518, p < 0.001$) is also highly significant at 1% level. Nevertheless, the language academic confidence and department ($\rho = -0.174, p = 0.049$) is significant at 5% level. Thusly, it can be interpreted that the confident language academic confidence is associated with more English proficiency and higher self-esteem, reflecting that language confidence improves overall self-perception. Further, the departmental differences exist in language academic confidence, with some departments reinforcing lower confidence in language proficiency.

All in all, this table indicates that older students experience more academic stress, students from grade 3 are experiencing higher academic stress. Gender is a factor in English proficiency and departmental choice. The English proficiency positively influences self-esteem and language confidence. Plus, some departments have poorer English proficiency and poorer language academic confidence. Lastly, students with high self-esteem tend to have good language confidence. These findings suggest that academic support services, stress counselling programs, and language training programs would be helpful to students in poorer-performing or high-stress environments.

Table 12: Pearson Correlations Between Self-Esteem, Academic Stress, and Language Academic Confidence Results

		Self-esteem	Academic stress	Language academic confidence
Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	1	-.094	.498**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.293	.000
	N	128	128	128
Academic stress	Pearson Correlation	-.094	1	-.133
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.293		.134
	N	128	128	128
Language-academic confidence	Pearson Correlation	.498**	-.133	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.134	
	N	128	128	128

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This correlation table illustrates the relationships pertaining to self-esteem, academic stress, and academic language confidence of 128 participants. There is a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.498$, $p < 0.01$) between self-esteem and language academic confidence, which means self-esteem is associated with greater confidence in academic language. This relationship is statistically significant. Also, there is a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.094$, $p = 0.293$) for self-esteem and academic stress, which is suggesting higher self-esteem is associated with lower academic stress, but this relationship is not statistically significant. There is a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.133$, $p = 0.134$) for academic stress and language academic confidence, meaning higher academic stress is associated with lower confidence in language-related academics, but this result is also not statistically significant. In general, self-esteem and language academic confidence is the strongest correlation, meaning developing programs that seek to enhance self-esteem may play an important role in enhancing student’s academic language skills. While academic stress and the other variables correlations are weak and statistically insignificant which means no strong conclusions can be drawn about their effects.

Table 13: The Pearson Correlations between Language, Academic Confidence and English Language Proficiency Results

		Language academic confidence	English Language Proficiency
Language academic confidence	Pearson Correlation	1	.388**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	128	128
English language proficiency	Pearson Correlation	.388**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	128	128

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This table shows the correlation between language academic confidence and English language proficiency is moderate and positive ($r = 0.388$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher English proficiency is associated with greater confidence in academic language use. This relationship is statistically significant, suggesting that as students become more proficient in English, their confidence in using academic language also tends to increase.

Table 14: The Post Hoc Bonferroni Multiple Comparisons Results

Dependent Variable	(I) English Language Proficiency	(J) English Language Proficiency	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Self-Esteem	Beginner	Intermediate	-.43966*	.14846	.011	-.7999	-.0794
		Advance	-.61974*	.20008	.007	-1.1053	-.1342
	Intermediate	Beginner	.43966*	.14846	.011	.0794	.7999
		Advance	-.18008	.15959	.784	-.5674	.2072
	Advance	Beginner	.61974*	.20008	.007	.1342	1.1053
		Intermediate	.18008	.15959	.784	-.2072	.5674
Language Academic Confidence	Beginner	Intermediate	-.52871*	.15193	.002	-.8974	-.1600
		Advance	-.95687*	.20477	.000	-1.4538	-.4600
	Intermediate	Beginner	.52871*	.15193	.002	.1600	.8974
		Advance	-.42817*	.16333	.030	-.8245	-.0318
	Advance	Beginner	.95687*	.20477	.000	.4600	1.4538
		Intermediate	.42817*	.16333	.030	.0318	.8245

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

This table illustrates the Bonferroni multiple comparisons test reveals statistically significant differences in self-esteem and language academic confidence between different levels of English proficiency. The self-esteem: Beginner students have significantly low self-esteem compared to intermediate ($p = 0.011$) and advanced ($p = 0.007$) learners. However, the difference between intermediate and advanced learners is found to be not significant ($p = 0.784$). Language confidence: Beginner learners have significantly lower confidence compared to intermediate learners ($p = 0.002$) and advanced learners ($p < 0.001$). In addition, intermediate learners have significantly less confidence compared to advanced learners ($p = 0.030$). Thus, these results show that an increase in English ability is linked with a corresponding increase in both self-esteem and confidence in using academic language, with the most significant differences appearing between beginners and the other two groups.

4.2 Discussion

The sample size in this study consisted of 128 participants, mainly aged between 22-24, with a majority being female. The findings showed that undergraduate students were the dominant group among the participants as being 4th-year students. Most of the respondents had intermediate English proficiency, with fewer beginners namely, and advanced. The findings mirror moderate language skills among the participants, which could affect their academic stress. The English Language Teaching (ELT) Department had the highest rate among the students. The rest of the departments included Biology Education, Computer Education, and Physics Education. Mathematics Education had the lowest rate of participants. Overrepresentation of ELT students in combination with moderate English language proficiency implicates the necessity to explore the way language challenges divide academic stress.

The research question explores how do English language proficiency, self-esteem, academic confidence and academic stress impact the experiences of the Kurdish students at Education Faculty of Tishk International University. The analyses provided a foundational comprehension of the sample and revealed

essential information related students' English language proficiency, academic confidence, academic stress and self-esteem. The interaction among linguistic and psychological challenges of medium proficiency, together with several demographic and departmental variables, makes the relationship multifaceted, ultimately influencing students' academic achievement and overall well-being. Successful intervention in these challenges requires the application of tailored interventions that consider both the linguistic and psychological aspects, as well as contextual variables relevant to heterogeneous student groups.

4.2.1 Hypotheses

Hypothesis one is rejected, the research data provided not statistically significant of a possible relationship between academic stress and English language proficiency. Hence, it can be concluded that the stress of these students was not influenced directly by their English language skills. However, the subject can still be discussed concerning Sweller's (1988) Cognitive Load Theory, wherein he argues that the cognitive demand students experience at intermediate levels of English language proficiency. However, this correlation was statistically insignificant as most of the participants had an intermediate English Language proficiency, which could imply that there still exists reality about cognitive overload especially when English is being used as a medium instruction. This aligns with Cummins' (2000) differentiation of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in which students may be able to speak English in many situations but are limited in its academic content. Some previous studies, for instance Ahmed and Hassan (2019) and Hussein and Ismail (2020), reported that due to learning in English the Kurdish students experience more academic stress. Although the association was weak in this particular data analysis, theory and context suggest that a complex relationship between language demands and academic stress exists that may not be captured through correlation alone.

Hypothesis two is not rejected, the data analysis of this study supports this hypothesis significantly. A statistically significant shows a positive correlation of English proficiency and self-esteem. The aforementioned finding indicates that students with more effective English language skills possess higher self-esteem than those without. There is a probability that it happens because English proficiency empowers the students in their learning both academically and socially, thus making them more confident and improving the perception of themselves. Self-esteem is also found to correlate with language academic confidence. Furthermore, it's worth to mention that the idea that poor English language may have the indirect impact to decrease student's overall academic self-esteem, which is align in justifying the psychological advantages of English language proficiency as mentioned in section literature review. These findings illustrate that higher English skills can be a direction for improving students' self-worth. On the other hands, the study by Horwitz et al. (2021) on second language anxiety becomes important, as he explains that students who are less proficient in English may fear mistakes or poor performance in front of their peers, contributing to their lower self-esteem. With higher English proficiency, there comes a sense of control, confidence, and social integration. Also, according to Cummins (2000), students struggling academically due to the lack of academic language will suffer in the overall development of their personalities, especially if it is a high-stakes environment. Also, the same results were obtained previously

in the Kurdish context by Khalid and Bakr (2021), who stated that English language difficulty often leads to feelings of inferiority and low self-worth among students enrolled in EMI programs.

Hypothesis three is not rejected, a lower English language proficiency leads to less academic confidence among Kurdish students at the university in question is also supported by the findings of this study. The study found a significant positive correlation between English language proficiency and language academic confidence, thus indicating that students who are less proficient in English have also lower academic confidence in an English language-related task or setting. This reliance showcases the role of English proficiency in constructing any student's academic self-esteem. That's to say, as argued by Cummins (2000), students with limited English proficiency experience reduced academic self-confidence likely because they compare themselves to more skilled peers or frequently face academic challenges. Students who face academic language difficulties tend to internalize these obstacles and develop enduring confidence problems. Another study by Ahmed and Hassan (2019) as well as Hussein and Ismail (2020) demonstrate that Kurdish university students face exam and communication anxiety from English language difficulties. The study results demonstrate the necessity for institutional support programs including language workshops and counselling services which align with Horwitz et al.'s (2021) suggestions.

Hence, an increase in the English language proficiency of students may be an important direction through which confidence and performance in academic settings can be improved. Sweller's (1988) theory of cognitive load supports the idea that students who struggle with language proficiency need to expend more mental energy when handling academic tasks which leads to lower confidence. The findings are also support by Horwitz et al's (2021) research which indicates that language anxiety emerges when learners fear speaking a second language, and this anxiety blocks their participation and reduces their confidence.

4.3 Limitations

While the investigation offers important insights into the intersection between English language proficiency, self-esteem, academic confidence, and academic stress among Kurdish university students, it is valuable to highlight several limitations that may influence the comprehension and generalizability of the findings. The study is solely focused on 3rd and 4th-year students from the Faculty of Education at Tishk International University. The focus omits the inclusion of 1st and 2nd-year students, who may possess different experiences related to English language proficiency, self-esteem, academic confidence, and academic stress. The sample size may not reflect all departments uniformly. For example, the ELT Department is likely overrepresented in comparison to the other departments in the study. The implementation of an adapted version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Questionnaire from the year 1965 may not entirely represent linguistic and academic stress experience among Kurdish university students, as this scale measures the global self-esteem. Despite, the adaptation of the questionnaire, another limitation of using this scale, is that it is based on the western individualistic conception of self-worth. Therefore, this questionnaire fails to include additional potential factors such as cultural, social, and institutional aspects. Furthermore, the study concentrates only on a single university which constraints the generalizability of the findings to other universities within Kurdistan. Lastly, the study fails to incorporate qualitative methods such as interviews, which could offer a better understanding of why the findings are as they are.

5. Conclusion

The study focused on how English language proficiency impacts the academic confidence and academic stress among the Kurdish students at Education Faculty of Tishk International University. The results of this study suggested that older students as well as those who were in the third academic year underwent greater academic stress, which indicates that academic demands increased in the courses during the academic years. Although no significant correlations existed between English proficiency and academic stress, students with greater proficiency in English, however, showed significantly higher self-esteem and academic-related confidence. These findings were consistent with Cummins' (2000) theory of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory, as well as Horwitz et al.'s (2021) idea on second language anxiety. Nevertheless, English language proficiency enhances self-esteem and language academic confidence, implying that language competence plays a pivotal role on the psychological and academic experience of students. Contrastively, some departments show lower English language proficiency and consequently less language confidence, both of which may lead to the heightened academic stress experienced in those departments. Perhaps, gender is a factor that comes into play in English proficiency and department choice, which may reflect differences in access, learning experiences, or personal attitudes toward language acquisition. Finally, students with higher self-esteem will have greater language confidence; thus, supporting the notion that self-concept largely influences academic performance. Additionally, such insights consecrate the objectives of the study, confirming the interconnectedness between academic stress and language challenging, which really impact the confidence and the learning experiences of Kurdish students in an English learning environment. Confronting these issues requires a comprehensive approach by bringing together teachers, administrators, other academic staff and mental health professionals.

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are suggested to the Faculty of Education of Tishk International University.

1. Reductions in Institutional Stress Related to Academics

Develop stress management programs with a focus on academics that educate older students, particularly at grade 3, on ways to cope with the impending academic pressures. Institute peer mentoring, whereby older students help younger students transition into adjusting themselves to the academic aspects of learning, especially related to the English language.

2. Improving English Proficiency and Language Conviction

Train students in intensive English courses with special focus on their departments where they appear to be failing in the area of language proficiency and/or in the confidence for academic success. Promote language workshops, conversation clubs, and writing centres where students would find avenues for improving their English outside the academic environment.

3. Strengthening their Psychological Support Services

Establish a mental health facility containing counselling services and other related services that help students manage and cope with academic stress and show resilience in an all-English academic setting.

Infuse self-esteem enhancement activities, for example, public speaking in form of presentations, confidence-building workshops, and academic coaching, into the curriculum of the academic programs.

4. Improving Faculty and Institutional Strategies

Train educators and faculty members to identify academic stress and linguistic challenges among students and equip them with strategies to provide effective academic and emotional support. The flexible assessment methods would allow for the consideration of language barriers while not compromising academic rigor to ensure that students' linguistic challenges do not adversely impact their academic successes.

With these recommendations, Tishk International Universities would develop a conducive academic environment through which Kurdish students will be equipped with the ability to better deal with and manage academic stress, enhance proficiency in the English language, and build psychological resilience within an English-language academic context.

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