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Learning Under Financial Pressure: The Impact of Financial Stress on Senior High School Academic Performance

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Abstract

Financial stress is a significant factor that influences students' academic performance, particularly in senior high school, where financial burdens may affect learning experiences and overall well-being. This study explores the impact of financial stress on students' academic achievements, identifying key stressors and their effects on study habits, concentration, and overall performance. Using a mixed-methods approach, data was collected through surveys and interviews with senior high school students facing financial difficulties. The findings reveal a strong

correlation between financial stress and decreased academic performance, with students experiencing challenges such as limited access to resources, increased work obligations, and psychological distress. The study highlights the need for institutional support systems, including financial aid programs and counseling services, to mitigate the adverse effects of financial pressure on students. By understanding these challenges, educational institutions and policymakers can develop strategies to support financially burdened students and improve academic outcomes.

Keywords: Financial Stress, Academic Performance, Senior High School, Coping Mechanisms, Student Well-Being, Support Programs

Introduction

Financial stress is a state of worry, anxiety, or distress caused by economic events that increase students' concerns. This stress often comes from limited family income, rising educational costs and personal financial burdens that significantly affect student academic performance. Nasr *et al.* (2024)^[18] found that unemployment, lack of income, and financial dependence were significant contributors to financial stress, which negatively affected students' mental health and well-being. This indicates that addressing financial stress is essential for improving students' academic performance and well-being.

According to Danahy *et al.* (2024)^[5], higher loan debt and limited savings contributed to higher levels of financial stress among college students. Researchers have also discovered that, especially for students from lower socioeconomic status, financial strain and longer work hours affect sleep quality, which in turn increases depressive symptoms. This emphasizes the effect that financial stress has on both academics and mental health (Peltz *et al.* 2021). However, while these studies provide valuable insights into the causes of financial stress on college students, there is still a lack of study on senior high school students' experiences with financial stress and how it affects their academic performance. This gap underscores the need for research focusing on the impact of financial stress on senior high school students' academic performance.

While existing studies have examined financial stress in college students, there is limited research focused on senior high school students, a group facing unique academic transitions under financial pressure. Unlike college students, senior high school learners must prepare for future education or the workforce while managing financial hardships, which may have distinct impacts on their academic performance. Examining the effects of financial stress on younger learners can offer opportunities for earlier interventions to address academic challenges.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the relationship between financial stress and the academic performance of senior high school students, as well as explore the coping mechanisms they use and their impact on academic outcomes. Specifically, it will assess the levels of financial stress, analyze its correlation with academic performance, and identify coping strategies and support systems. The findings are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how financial stress affects students' academic achievements and offer actionable recommendations to help schools better support students in managing financial stress. This paper includes a review of related literature, a detailed methodology, and concludes with recommendations to assist students facing financial challenges.

Methods and Materials

This research explores the impact of financial stress on the academic performance of senior high school students. This study uses a mixed-method research design to better understand how financial stress affects the academic performance of senior high school students. The quantitative part focuses on using surveys to find the relationship between financial stress and academic performance through statistical analysis. Meanwhile, the qualitative part explores students' personal experiences and feelings about how financial stress impacts their studies, focus, and motivation, as well as the coping mechanisms they use to manage financial stress. By combining these two approaches, the study provides a clearer and more complete understanding of the issue.

The study employed both correlational research designs as part of its quantitative methods. Correlational analysis will be used to examine data collected from surveys. This method will identify relationships between financial stress and academic performance, such as its effects on study habits, motivation, attendance, and overall grades. By analyzing these relationships statistically, the study will quantify how financial stress influences students' academic outcomes (Hamed Taherdoost, 2022).

To better understand students' experiences, the study used a phenomenological approach in the qualitative phase. This method will identify relationships between financial stress and academic performance, such as its effects on study habits, motivation, attendance, and overall grades. By analyzing these relationships statistically, the study will quantify how financial stress influences students' academic outcomes (Hamed Taherdoost, 2022).

Purposive sampling will be employed throughout the quantitative phase to ensure that the participants are selected based on their relevance to the study's focus on financial stress and academic performance. This method will categorize the 60 respondents based on their levels of financial stress and its perceived impact on their academic performance, allowing the study to explore how varying degrees of financial strain influence academic outcomes. By using purposive sampling, the study will analyze patterns across different student experiences, resulting in a detailed understanding of the relationship between financial stress and academic performance. The quantitative data will be gathered via a structured survey that will assess financial stress levels, study habits, academic motivation, and overall performance.

For the qualitative phase, purposive sampling will be used to select 10 participants from the 60 respondents in the quantitative phase. This method ensures that participants with significant experiences of financial stress and its impact on their studies are chosen. Interviews will be conducted to understand the deeper reasons behind how financial stress affects their academic lives. These conversations will help explain the emotional, psychological, and practical challenges students face, adding more depth to the survey results.

Results and Discussion

1. How can different digital storytelling tactics (such as the usage of multimedia, story themes, and social media platforms) affect consumer interaction with small enterprises in Noveleta, Cavite?

Consumer Interaction with Digital Storytelling

The study found that consumer interaction with small businesses' digital storytelling is moderate. The mean score for engagement frequency is 3.5 ("Sometimes"), indicating that while consumers interact with digital content, the level of engagement is not highly consistent. This suggests that while digital storytelling has the potential to engage consumers, the execution of content and the quality of the narrative play significant roles in sustaining interest.

Among different storytelling formats, videos (18.33%) emerged as the most preferred content type. This finding reflects the growing importance of visual content in consumer engagement, as videos are more dynamic and emotionally engaging compared to text or static images. Consumers reported being more likely to engage with brands that use authentic video-based narratives that reflect the brand's values and mission.

2. Which major characteristics of content quality (e.g., emotional appeal, relevance, and authenticity) have the most impact on customers' judgements of brand trust and authenticity?

Content Quality and Brand Trust

The study highlighted that the perceived quality of content plays a critical role in shaping consumer trust and perceptions of brand authenticity. Respondents were asked to identify which content qualities they valued the most, and the most frequently selected characteristics were relevance and authenticity (20%).

The importance of authenticity in digital content received a mean score of 3.7 ("Important"), indicating that consumers place significant value on truthful and transparent content. Authentic storytelling includes showing behind-the-scenes footage, customer testimonials, and real-life applications of the brand's products or services.

Trust in small businesses based on their digital storytelling, however, was moderate, with a mean score of 2.1 ("Somewhat Trust"). This suggests that while digital storytelling can enhance brand trust, consumers also rely on additional signals of credibility, such as positive customer reviews, social proof, and consistent communication.

3. How do consumers' attitudes to small businesses' digital storytelling efforts differ depending on their access to digital tools and technological skills?

Consumer Attitudes and Digital Access

The study explored how consumers discover small businesses and their attitudes toward digital engagement. The results showed that social media (31.66%) is the most common platform for discovering small businesses. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram were identified as key channels for interacting with brands, particularly for younger consumers.

Confidence in engaging with businesses through digital storytelling received a mean score of 2.22 ("Sometimes"), indicating that while some consumers feel comfortable interacting with brands online, others remain hesitant. The hesitation may stem from concerns about security, the authenticity of the brand, and the perceived quality of the content.

Challenges related to digital access were also identified, with a mean score of 1.92 ("Some Difficulties"). Respondents reported issues such as slow internet connections, lack of digital literacy, and difficulty navigating complex content formats. This highlights the need for businesses to create user-friendly and accessible content that caters to consumers with varying.

4. How well does customer engagement with digital storytelling predict loyalty outcomes such as repeat purchases, brand advocacy, and long-term preference?

Engagement and Consumer Loyalty

The study examined the relationship between consumer engagement with digital storytelling and loyalty outcomes, such as repeat purchases and brand advocacy. The findings showed that most respondents had made a purchase due to a brand's digital storytelling, but only once or twice, with a mean score of 2.2.

The most common loyalty behavior reported was recommending the brand to others (20%). This indicates that while digital storytelling may not immediately drive repeated purchases, it effectively encourages word-of-mouth marketing and brand advocacy.

The overall influence of digital storytelling on consumer loyalty was rated at 2.2 ("Neutral"). This suggests that while digital storytelling increases brand awareness and consumer engagement, other factors such as product quality, customer service, and price competitiveness also influence long-term loyalty.

5. What problems do customers have when engaging with small businesses' digital storytelling, and what solutions may be adopted to increase consumer loyalty?

Challenges and Solutions in Digital Storytelling

The study identified several challenges consumers face when engaging with small businesses' digital storytelling. Poor content quality, including low-resolution images and unclear product details, makes it difficult for consumers to assess products accurately. Inconsistent and irregular posting reduces engagement and trust, as consumers prefer businesses that provide regular updates. A lack of transparency and authenticity, such as misleading product images and exaggerated claims, creates a disconnect between consumer expectations and reality. Slow response times and poor customer service frustrate potential buyers, making it difficult to inquire about products or place orders. Additionally, product and service issues, such as

discrepancies between advertised and received items or receiving damaged and incomplete products, lead to dissatisfaction and diminished trust in the brand. Lastly, the lack of social proof, including authentic customer reviews, testimonials, and interactive content, makes it harder for businesses to establish credibility and attract more customers. Addressing these challenges through high-quality content, consistent engagement, transparency, responsive customer service, product accuracy, and social proof can significantly enhance the effectiveness of digital storytelling for small businesses.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the role of digital storytelling in shaping consumer loyalty among small businesses in Noveleta, Cavite. While digital storytelling is an effective tool for consumer engagement, its impact on long-term brand loyalty remains moderate. Engagement levels fluctuate depending on the quality, authenticity, and consistency of content. Among various formats, video-based storytelling emerged as the most preferred, emphasizing the need for visually dynamic content to capture consumer attention. However, trust in small businesses using digital storytelling is only moderate, as consumers also rely on credibility signals like reviews, consistent communication, and strong customer service to establish confidence in a brand.

These findings imply that while digital storytelling can enhance brand recognition and attract consumers, it is not sufficient to sustain long-term loyalty on its own. Small businesses must go beyond content creation and focus on improving product quality, customer service, and pricing to convert engagement into repeat purchases. The moderate trust levels observed suggest that businesses should integrate transparency, timely responses, and authenticity in their storytelling strategies to build stronger consumer confidence.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of addressing challenges such as inconsistent posting, lack of transparency, and poor content quality, as these factors hinder the effectiveness of digital storytelling in fostering loyalty. To maximize its potential, small businesses in Noveleta should consider leveraging consumer feedback, adopting structured content planning, and combining storytelling with loyalty programs or personalized engagement strategies. Future research may explore how advanced digital marketing techniques, such as AI-driven content recommendations and interactive storytelling, can further enhance consumer trust and retention.

By refining their digital storytelling approach and aligning it with broader customer experience strategies, small businesses can create meaningful connections that drive long-term success.

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