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The Relationship Between Financial Conditions and Stress Levels Among College Students

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Abstract

Financial circumstances may contribute to psychological strain during university education, although their relationship cannot be established from descriptive summaries alone. This study described financial conditions and self-reported stress experiences among 30 university students using a quantitative cross-sectional design and a Google Forms questionnaire. Five financial-condition statements and five stress-experience statements were assessed using a five-point Likert scale. Respondents were predominantly female (83.3%), enrolled in their fifth semester (66.7%), living in student boarding houses (56.7%), unemployed (80.0%), and primarily supported by parents or family (70.0%). Descriptive analysis included response frequencies, percentages, weighted scores, and means. The overall financial-condition mean was 3.09, with the highest score for meeting daily needs (3.50) and the lowest for managing unexpected expenses (2.87). The overall stress-experience mean was 3.27, with difficulty relaxing and difficulty concentrating receiving the highest scores (3.50 each). The difference between the two overall means was 0.18 points, but the scales measured distinct constructs with different scoring directions. Because only aggregated item frequencies were available, individual financial and stress scores could not be paired, and correlation testing was not possible. Future studies require linked responses and validated instruments to determine whether financial conditions are associated with student stress in more diverse university populations.

Keywords: *Cross-Sectional Study, Financial Conditions, Financial Stress, Self-Reported Stress, University Students.*

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INTRODUCTION

Financial conditions have become an increasingly relevant dimension of university student health because access to adequate economic resources influences students' ability to manage educational responsibilities, daily living expenses, and psychological demands. University students must allocate limited resources across tuition fees, accommodation, transportation, food, internet access, and academic materials, while differences in family support, employment income, and scholarship availability produce unequal financial circumstances. Evidence from a multi-year university survey in the United Kingdom demonstrates that financial stress must be examined against changing economic conditions, including the disruptions associated with the pandemic and subsequent economic pressures (Bennett et al., 2023). Financial vulnerability also extends beyond insufficient income because student debt, inadequate emergency savings, and limited personal resources represent distinct dimensions of financial insecurity (Danahy et al., 2024). These economic pressures may interact with academic obligations, particularly when students must make decisions between meeting immediate living expenses and maintaining their educational participation. Research involving Lebanese higher education students has similarly examined financial stress in relation to student well-being, reinforcing the relevance of economic circumstances to university health research across different national settings (Nasr et al., 2024). From a healthcare perspective, understanding students' financial conditions is necessary for identifying socioeconomic pressures that may coexist with psychological distress and interfere with their capacity to maintain stable academic and personal functioning.

Contemporary research increasingly conceptualizes student financial difficulties as multidimensional experiences involving objective economic limitations, perceived financial insecurity, psychological responses, and individual coping resources. Studies addressing financial anxiety and

psychological distress have examined the mediating role of self-resilience, suggesting that psychological resources warrant consideration when interpreting financial difficulties among university students (Mat Hussin et al., 2023). Research on financial stress and mental health has also extended the discussion beyond economic hardship itself toward the psychological consequences associated with students' financial experiences (Mohamed et al., 2025). Nevertheless, financial conditions and psychological stress should not be treated as interchangeable constructs because economic circumstances describe resource availability and financial adequacy, whereas stress represents an individual's perceived difficulty in managing environmental and personal demands. Within the broader university environment, stress-related factors have been examined alongside perceived stress and mental well-being, establishing the relevance of academic and psychosocial conditions to students' psychological experiences (Slimmen et al., 2022). Longitudinal research involving emerging adults has additionally investigated relationships among financial stress, career-related optimism, and psychological distress, providing a temporal perspective that complements cross-sectional investigations (Wake & O'Donnell, 2024). Collectively, these research directions indicate that financial conditions and stress should be analyzed as conceptually distinct but potentially related dimensions of student experience, with appropriate attention to the indicators used to represent each construct.

Despite increasing scholarly attention, the existing literature does not provide a uniform operational framework for distinguishing students' everyday financial circumstances from their subjective experiences of financial stress. Research examining student loan debt, emergency savings, and financial resources emphasizes specific forms of economic vulnerability, but these dimensions do not necessarily capture students' perceived ability to meet routine educational and living expenses (Danahy et al., 2024). Conversely, studies of financial anxiety and psychological distress focus on emotional responses to financial circumstances, creating a conceptual distinction between economic conditions and their possible psychological manifestations (Mat Hussin et al., 2023). Evidence from Indonesia has addressed financial literacy, financial fragility, and financial well-being among Generation-Z university students, providing a relevant socioeconomic foundation without making these constructs equivalent to general perceived stress (Jasen & Kim, 2023). More recent Indonesian research has also examined financial self-efficacy and anxiety, indicating the relevance of psychological dimensions of financial management within local higher education populations (Syamsuyurnita et al., 2026). A further methodological issue arises when researchers interpret separately summarized financial and stress indicators as evidence of an individual-level relationship, although such an inference requires observations linking both constructs within the same respondents. The specific research gap addressed here concerns the need for an explicitly differentiated descriptive assessment of financial adequacy and stress experiences among students, while recognizing that aggregated response distributions cannot establish the magnitude or statistical significance of their relationship.

The distinction between financial circumstances and psychological responses has practical implications for university health promotion, student support services, and the interpretation of psychosocial risk indicators. Research examining financial health as a mediator between financial stress and financial well-being highlights the importance of considering financial functioning rather than interpreting economic pressure solely through subjective worry (Mawadah & Sumiati, 2024). At the same time, studies of university students' perceived stress and mental well-being demonstrate that psychological difficulties arise within a broader environment of concurrent academic and personal stressors (Slimmen et al., 2022). University support policies based exclusively on reported financial hardship may consequently overlook students who experience substantial psychological pressure despite having relatively adequate economic resources. Similarly, interventions addressing stress without considering students' capacity to meet educational and daily living costs may fail to identify relevant sources of financial insecurity. Research on student financial stress during changing economic circumstances further demonstrates the value of examining financial experiences in relation to the conditions under which students pursue higher education (Bennett et al., 2023). Longitudinal evidence connecting financial stress with psychological distress also strengthens the rationale for considering financial circumstances within broader approaches to student well-being, although it does not establish that every financially disadvantaged student experiences elevated stress (Wake & O'Donnell, 2024).

The present study is positioned at the intersection of student financial conditions, perceived stress, and university health assessment, with an emphasis on distinguishing descriptive evidence from statistical evidence of association. Whereas previous research has examined financial stress in relation

to mental health outcomes, the present investigation organizes students' financial circumstances through indicators of expenditure adequacy, educational costs, resource sufficiency, unexpected financial needs, and overall financial evaluation (Mohamed et al., 2025). Psychological experiences are considered separately through reported difficulty relaxing, irritability, concentration difficulties, tension, and perceived difficulty managing pressure, allowing both domains to be described without treating their aggregate distributions as paired observations. Indonesian research on financial literacy and financial fragility provides a relevant basis for recognizing the diversity of students' financial circumstances, although these financial constructs should not be interpreted as direct measures of psychological stress (Jasen & Kim, 2023). The conceptual justification for separating financial circumstances from psychological outcomes is also consistent with research that investigates financial stress and student well-being as related but analytically distinguishable dimensions (Nasr et al., 2024). The proposed contribution therefore lies in a transparent item-level examination that identifies prominent financial and psychological indicators within the available student responses, rather than claiming a new causal mechanism or an independently established financial–stress association. This positioning also responds to the relevance of financial self-efficacy and anxiety identified in Indonesian higher education research by avoiding the assumption that financial capability, financial security, and psychological experiences represent identical phenomena (Syamsuyurnita et al., 2026).

This study aims to describe the financial conditions and reported stress experiences of college students and to examine their possible conceptual relationship within the limitations of the available descriptive data. Specifically, the investigation characterizes respondents according to sex, age, academic semester, accommodation, employment status, and primary source of financial support. Financial conditions are assessed through five indicators addressing the ability to meet daily expenses, educational expenditure, monthly resource sufficiency, unexpected costs, and overall financial circumstances. Stress experiences are described through five indicators reflecting difficulty relaxing, irritability, concentration problems, feelings of tension or pressure, and difficulty managing perceived demands. The analysis is intended to identify patterns in the distribution of financial and stress responses without interpreting aggregate frequencies as evidence of a statistically verified relationship between the two variables. Its scientific contribution consists of clarifying the operational distinction between financial adequacy and self-reported stress while establishing the descriptive boundaries within which the findings can be interpreted. Practically, the study may provide preliminary information for university student support and health promotion initiatives, while identifying the need for subsequent investigations using paired individual-level data to determine the direction, strength, and statistical significance of the relationship between financial conditions and stress levels.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive design with a cross-sectional approach to examine financial conditions and stress-related experiences among university students. Data were collected through a Google Forms questionnaire administered during a single survey period to 30 university students recruited using non-probability voluntary participation sampling, while the specific collection dates and sampling frame were not documented. The questionnaire comprised three sections covering respondent characteristics, perceived financial conditions, and stress-related experiences, with demographic information including sex, age, academic semester, accommodation, employment status, and primary financial support. Financial conditions were assessed using five statements concerning daily expenditure adequacy, educational expenses, monthly financial sufficiency, unexpected financial obligations, and overall financial circumstances, reflecting the importance of financial security in evaluating students' economic well-being (Jasen & Kim, 2023). Stress-related experiences were measured through five statements addressing difficulty relaxing, irritability, concentration difficulties, feelings of tension or pressure, and difficulty managing perceived demands, consistent with the multidimensional nature of stress among university students (Slimmen et al., 2022). All ten statements employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), with higher financial-condition scores representing more favorable financial circumstances and higher stress-experience scores indicating stronger endorsement of stress-related experiences, while maintaining the conceptual distinction between financial well-being and financial stress (Sorgente et al., 2023).

Table 1. Questionnaire Response Scale

Score	Response category
1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neither agree nor disagree
4	Agree
5	Strongly agree

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics comprising frequencies, percentages, frequency-weighted total scores, and mean scores to characterize respondents and summarize financial-condition and stress-experience indicators. Each respondent answered five statements for each construct, generating 150 item responses for financial conditions and 150 item responses for stress experiences, with individual item means calculated by dividing frequency-weighted scores by 30 and overall construct means calculated by dividing the corresponding total scores by 150. The interpretation of financial-condition scores focused on perceived economic adequacy rather than objectively verified income or expenditure, consistent with research distinguishing financial circumstances from subjective financial well-being (Mawadah & Sumiati, 2024). Stress indicators were interpreted as self-reported psychological experiences rather than clinical diagnoses, acknowledging that financial difficulties and mental health outcomes represent related but analytically distinct dimensions of university student well-being (Mohamed et al., 2025). Although previous research has examined relationships between financial stress and psychological well-being among university students, the available dataset contained only aggregated response frequencies without paired financial-condition and stress scores for individual respondents, preventing the calculation of Pearson or Spearman correlation coefficients (Nasr et al., 2024). Consequently, the analysis was restricted to descriptive comparisons without inferential significance testing or causal interpretation, and the absence of documented instrument validation, reliability coefficients, and clinical thresholds was recognized when interpreting the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics and Socioeconomic Profile

The demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents provide an empirical basis for interpreting financial conditions and stress-related experiences among university students. The study involved 30 participants whose characteristics were classified according to sex, age, academic semester, accommodation, employment status, and primary source of financial support. These variables were examined descriptively to identify the composition of the participating group rather than to establish relationships between demographic characteristics and psychological outcomes. Socioeconomic characteristics are relevant to student financial assessments because differences in available resources, financial responsibilities, and economic dependence may influence perceptions of financial security (Jasen & Kim, 2023). Research on university student financial stress has also identified personal and social resources as relevant considerations when examining economic vulnerability (Danahy et al., 2024). The respondent profile therefore provides contextual information for interpreting the subsequent financial and stress indicators without assuming that demographic characteristics directly determine individual psychological responses.

The distribution of respondents reveals considerable differences across demographic categories, particularly regarding sex, academic semester, employment, and financial support. Female students accounted for 25 respondents (83.3%), whereas male students represented five respondents (16.7%), indicating a predominantly female sample. Participants aged 20 and 21 years constituted the largest age groups, with nine respondents (30.0%) in each category, while 20 students (66.7%) were enrolled in their fifth academic semester. Accommodation patterns showed that 17 respondents (56.7%) lived in student boarding houses, 12 (40.0%) lived with their families, and one (3.3%) occupied rented accommodation. The sample also exhibited substantial financial dependence, with 24 respondents (80.0%) reporting no employment and 21 (70.0%) identifying parents or family members as their primary funding source. Previous research has emphasized the relevance of financial behavior,

economic resources, and financial socialization in understanding university students' financial well-being (Marchyta et al., 2024). The complete distribution of respondent characteristics is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of Study Respondents (n = 30)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	5	16.7%
	Female	25	83.3%
Age	17 years	2	6.7%
	18 years	1	3.3%
	19 years	3	10.0%
	20 years	9	30.0%
	21 years	9	30.0%
	22 years	4	13.3%
	23 years	2	6.7%
Semester	1	3	10.0%
	2	1	3.3%
	3	0	0.0%
	4	0	0.0%
	5	20	66.7%
	6	2	6.7%
	7	4	13.3%
	8	0	0.0%
Accommodation	Family home	12	40.0%
	Student boarding house (kos)	17	56.7%
	Rented accommodation	1	3.3%
Employment	Not employed	24	80.0%
	Part-time	6	20.0%
	Full-time	0	0.0%
Primary funding source	Parents/family	21	70.0%
	Scholarship	1	3.3%
	Own income	2	6.7%
	Parents/family and own income	6	20.0%

The predominance of female respondents constitutes an important feature of the sample composition, although it does not independently explain variations in financial conditions or reported stress. As presented in Table 2, female participants represented 83.3% of the sample, producing an unequal distribution that limits meaningful comparisons between male and female respondents. Such demographic imbalance should be considered when interpreting the findings because the resulting descriptive patterns primarily reflect the experiences of the more extensively represented group. Research examining financial strain and mental health among university students has incorporated gender as a potentially relevant dimension of psychological responses to economic difficulty (Fagbenro et al., 2026). Nevertheless, the present dataset does not provide sex-specific financial-condition or stress scores, preventing direct examination of whether reported experiences differed between male and female participants. Any interpretation of gender-related vulnerability would consequently exceed the available empirical evidence. The observed distribution is more appropriately treated as a characteristic affecting sample representativeness than as evidence of gender differences in financial or psychological outcomes.

The age distribution indicates that respondents were concentrated within the developmental period commonly associated with emerging adulthood, particularly at ages 20 and 21 years. Eighteen participants (60.0%) belonged to these two age categories, whereas the remaining respondents were distributed between 17 and 19 years and between 22 and 23 years. This concentration suggests that the reported financial and stress experiences primarily represent students navigating university responsibilities during a relatively narrow age range. Emerging adulthood is relevant to financial

research because individuals may experience changing expectations regarding economic independence, educational investment, and preparation for future employment. Longitudinal research has examined financial stress and psychological distress during emerging adulthood, including the relevance of career-related optimism to these experiences (Wake & O'Donnell, 2024). Studies of financial health among young adults have also considered how financial stress relates to financial well-being, demonstrating the importance of distinguishing financial functioning from subjective economic pressure (Mawadah & Sumiati, 2024). However, age-specific financial and psychological responses were unavailable in the aggregated dataset, so the observed concentration cannot establish whether particular age groups experienced greater financial difficulties or stress.

Academic semester distribution reveals a pronounced concentration in the fifth semester, accounting for 20 of the 30 respondents (66.7%). Students in the seventh semester comprised four respondents (13.3%), while the first, second, and sixth semesters accounted for three, one, and two respondents, respectively. No participants were recorded in the third, fourth, or eighth semesters, indicating that the sample did not represent all stages of undergraduate study. Academic progression may involve differences in coursework intensity, educational expenditure, practical assignments, and preparation for employment, although the present data do not quantify these demands. Research examining financial stress and educational outcomes has demonstrated the relevance of financial precarity when investigating students' educational experiences (Andrews et al., 2024). The concentration of respondents in a single semester consequently restricts the extent to which the findings can be interpreted as representative of university students across different academic stages. This sampling pattern also limits the possibility of distinguishing financial pressures associated with academic progression from pressures associated with broader economic circumstances.

Accommodation represents another socioeconomic characteristic that may influence the structure of students' routine expenditure and access to household resources. The largest group consisted of 17 students (56.7%) living in boarding houses, followed by 12 students (40.0%) residing in family homes and one student (3.3%) living in rented accommodation. Students residing outside family homes may encounter accommodation-related expenses and additional responsibilities for managing daily consumption, transportation, and personal necessities. Living with family may alter these financial arrangements, although residence at home does not necessarily indicate lower expenditure or greater financial security. Research on financial worry has emphasized the relevance of economic circumstances when examining subjective financial concerns, supporting the importance of considering differences in students' living arrangements (Magwegwe et al., 2023). The available questionnaire summaries do not include accommodation costs, geographical distance from campus, or respondent-level financial scores categorized by residence. Consequently, the accommodation distribution provides information about potential differences in expenditure structures but cannot establish whether boarding-house residents experienced greater financial pressure than students living with their families.

Employment status and funding arrangements provide additional evidence regarding the respondents' degree of economic dependence during their university education. As presented in Table 2, 24 students (80.0%) were not employed, six (20.0%) worked part-time, and none reported full-time employment. Parental or family contributions represented the principal funding source for 21 respondents (70.0%), while six students (20.0%) combined family support with personal earnings. Two respondents (6.7%) identified personal income as their primary funding source, and one student (3.3%) relied primarily on a scholarship. Research on financial literacy and financial behavior among university students indicates that financial resources and individual financial management are relevant dimensions of financial well-being (Respati et al., 2023). Nevertheless, employment and funding categories alone do not indicate whether available financial resources were sufficient, because income adequacy also depends on expenditure requirements, financial obligations, and resource stability. The descriptive findings establish a predominantly family-supported student sample but do not demonstrate a direct relationship between employment status, financial dependence, and perceived stress.

The socioeconomic profile identifies several characteristics that warrant consideration when interpreting the subsequent distributions of financial conditions and stress experiences. The predominance of female respondents, concentration in the fifth semester, extensive residence in boarding houses, and substantial dependence on family financial support indicate that the sample represents a relatively specific segment of the university student population. These characteristics may shape students' exposure to financial responsibilities, although their independent or combined

associations with stress cannot be evaluated using the aggregated demographic frequencies. Research on financial well-being among Indonesian university students has emphasized the contribution of financial behavior and related individual characteristics to differences in economic functioning (Gunawan et al., 2025). Evidence concerning financial education and student financial well-being further suggests that economic experiences should be interpreted through more than demographic classifications or income sources alone (Aliffansyah et al., 2024). Methodologically, the voluntary recruitment procedure, limited sample size, and uneven respondent distribution constrain the generalizability of the descriptive findings beyond the participating students. The financial-condition and stress-experience indicators reported in the following analyses provide a more direct account of respondents' perceptions, while the demographic profile remains contextual evidence rather than a basis for unsupported statistical associations.

Financial Conditions and Economic Vulnerability Among College Students

Financial conditions among the participating students were examined through five indicators representing their perceived ability to meet routine expenses, finance educational needs, maintain sufficient resources throughout the month, manage unexpected expenditures, and evaluate their current economic circumstances. Each indicator was measured using a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores representing more favorable perceptions of financial adequacy. The analysis involved 30 respondents who completed all five statements, generating 150 item-level responses for the financial-condition construct. Differences across indicators were considered descriptively to identify aspects of financial circumstances that respondents evaluated more or less favorably. Research on financial well-being has emphasized the importance of distinguishing objective economic resources from individuals' subjective evaluations of financial security (Sorgente et al., 2023). Studies examining financial worry have similarly highlighted the relevance of economic circumstances and subjective perceptions when evaluating financial pressure (Magwegwe et al., 2023). The resulting distributions provide an empirical basis for examining financial vulnerability within the sample without assuming that individual financial experiences are uniform across expenditure categories.

The distribution of financial-condition responses reveals differences in the perceived adequacy of regular expenditure, educational costs, monthly financial resources, and emergency spending capacity. The highest mean score was recorded for the ability to meet daily needs (3.50), indicating relatively more favorable responses to routine expenditure adequacy than to the remaining financial indicators. Conversely, the ability to manage unexpected expenses received the lowest mean score (2.87), suggesting that respondents expressed comparatively weaker confidence in addressing unplanned financial obligations. The indicators concerning educational expenses and sufficient funds until the end of the month produced identical mean scores of 3.07, while the general evaluation of financial circumstances yielded a mean of 2.97. Across the five indicators, the total weighted score was 464, corresponding to an overall mean of 3.09 based on 150 responses. Previous research concerning financial stress among college students has identified emergency savings and access to personal resources as relevant components of financial vulnerability (Danahy et al., 2024). The complete response distributions and weighted mean scores are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution and Mean Scores for Financial Conditions

#	Financial-Condition Indicator	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total Score	Mean
1	Able to meet daily needs	0	5	7	16	2	105	3.50
2	Able to meet educational expenses	2	7	10	9	2	92	3.07
3	Sufficient money until month-end	1	8	10	10	1	92	3.07
4	Able to manage unexpected expenses	2	10	9	8	1	86	2.87
5	Overall financial situation is adequate	3	8	8	9	2	89	2.97
	All responses	8	38	44	52	8	464	3.09

Note. SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neither agree nor disagree; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. Total mean = 464/150 = 3.09 (rounded).

The ability to meet daily needs emerged as the most favorably evaluated component of financial conditions, with a mean score of 3.50. Table 3 indicates that 16 respondents agreed and two strongly agreed that they could meet daily expenses, representing 60.0% of the participating students. Seven respondents selected the neutral category, while five disagreed, demonstrating that the comparatively favorable mean did not reflect uniform financial security across the sample. Routine expenditure adequacy may indicate that students possess sufficient resources for predictable consumption requirements, although it does not establish their capacity to absorb irregular or unexpected costs. Research on student financial well-being has emphasized that financial behavior and financial literacy contribute to understanding how individuals manage available economic resources (Margasari et al., 2024). Similar research involving Generation-Z students has examined financial literacy as a relevant factor in promoting financial well-being, supporting the analytical distinction between financial capability and resource availability (Bayu Putra et al., 2024). The relatively high score for daily expenditure adequacy should consequently be interpreted as a favorable assessment of routine financial functioning rather than evidence that respondents were free from broader economic vulnerability.

Educational expenditure and month-end financial sufficiency displayed identical mean scores of 3.07, although their response distributions differed. For educational expenses, nine respondents agreed and two strongly agreed that they could meet the required costs, whereas seven disagreed and two strongly disagreed. Ten respondents selected the neutral category, indicating substantial variation in perceived educational expenditure adequacy within the sample. Regarding financial sufficiency until the end of the month, ten respondents agreed and one strongly agreed, while eight disagreed and one strongly disagreed. These findings indicate that the two indicators produced similar average evaluations despite measuring different dimensions of economic adequacy, namely educational affordability and the continuity of available financial resources. Research involving Indonesian university students has examined financial fragility and financial well-being as distinguishable aspects of students' economic circumstances, emphasizing that financial adequacy cannot be represented by a single indicator (Jasen & Kim, 2023). The equivalent mean scores therefore do not demonstrate that the same respondents experienced difficulties with both educational expenditure and month-end financial sufficiency, because the available distributions do not establish individual-level correspondence.

The capacity to manage unexpected expenses represented the least favorably assessed financial indicator, with a mean score of 2.87 and a total weighted score of 86. Ten respondents disagreed and two strongly disagreed with the statement that they could manage unexpected costs, while eight agreed, one strongly agreed, and nine selected the neutral category. The 12 unfavorable responses represented 40.0% of the sample, exceeding the nine favorable responses and indicating that emergency expenditure capacity was a relatively prominent area of perceived financial difficulty. This distribution contrasts with the more favorable evaluation of daily expenditure adequacy, suggesting that the ability to meet predictable expenses does not necessarily imply comparable preparedness for unforeseen financial obligations. Research on college student financial stress has identified insufficient emergency savings as a relevant financial concern, providing a conceptual basis for interpreting the observed difference between routine expenditure adequacy and emergency financial capacity (Danahy et al., 2024). Economic research has also distinguished subjective financial stress from the financial circumstances contributing to it, indicating that resource limitations should not automatically be interpreted as equivalent to psychological distress (Simonse et al., 2024). The difference between the highest and lowest financial-indicator means was 0.63 points, illustrating the descriptive variation in respondents' evaluations of their financial circumstances without establishing a statistically significant difference.

The item-level mean scores provide a concise representation of the relative strengths and limitations identified in the financial-condition responses. As presented in Table 3, daily expenditure adequacy had the highest mean (3.50), followed by educational expenditure and month-end sufficiency (3.07 each), overall financial adequacy (2.97), and unexpected expenditure capacity (2.87). These values indicate that the respondents' financial evaluations were not equally favorable across the five measured dimensions. Research examining financial stress and financial well-being among young adults has considered financial health as an intervening component, highlighting the need to distinguish perceived financial pressure from broader financial functioning (Mawadah & Sumiati, 2024). Studies

addressing financial education, financial stress, and financial technology have likewise examined financial well-being through multiple related factors rather than a single measure of economic resources (Balatif et al., 2024). The overall mean of 3.09 represents average agreement with the favorable financial statements and should not be interpreted as a validated classification of financial security or economic vulnerability. Figure 1 presents the original five indicators and their corresponding mean scores, preserving the numerical values used in the descriptive analysis.

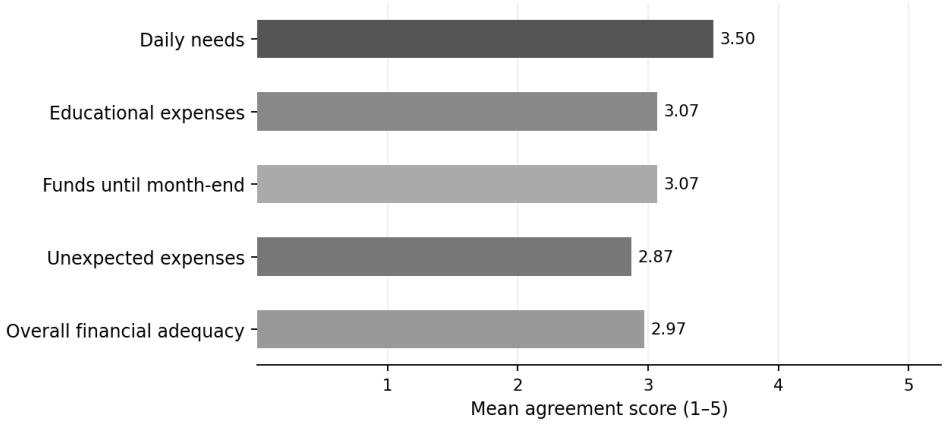


Figure 1. Mean Agreement Scores Across Financial-Condition Indicators

The pattern illustrated in Figure 1 demonstrates that perceived financial adequacy was strongest for routine expenditure and weakest for unexpected financial obligations. This difference suggests that students' assessments of their economic circumstances depend partly on the type and predictability of the expenditure being considered. The overall financial evaluation, with a mean of 2.97, was lower than the means for daily needs, educational costs, and month-end sufficiency, indicating that respondents' general financial assessments were not reducible to their perceptions of routine affordability. Previous research involving Indonesian students has identified financial behavior, financial socialization, and financial literacy as relevant components of financial well-being, providing a broader framework for understanding variations in subjective economic evaluations (Marchyta et al., 2024). Research on financial anxiety and financial knowledge has also examined their relationship with students' financial behavior, supporting the relevance of psychological and behavioral dimensions in financial assessment (Abdillah & Adi, 2025). Nevertheless, the current questionnaire did not directly measure financial knowledge, financial literacy, saving behavior, or household income, preventing these factors from being evaluated as explanations for the observed response patterns. The descriptive results establish variation across financial-condition indicators but do not identify the behavioral or structural mechanisms responsible for that variation.

The observed financial-condition patterns should be interpreted in relation to the socioeconomic characteristics of the participating students while maintaining the distinction between contextual information and directly measured financial outcomes. Most respondents were not employed and relied primarily on parental or family support, yet these characteristics do not establish financial insufficiency because the adequacy, consistency, and distribution of family contributions were not independently measured. The relatively favorable responses concerning daily expenditure suggest that routine financial requirements were manageable for a substantial proportion of participants, although the weaker evaluation of unexpected expenditure capacity indicates a possible limitation in financial flexibility. Research examining financial well-being among Indonesian university students has emphasized the role of financial behavior in understanding differences in financial outcomes, reinforcing the need for more detailed financial information when evaluating economic vulnerability (Gunawan et al., 2025). Studies of financial management behavior have also considered financial literacy, financial anxiety, and self-control as relevant factors, illustrating the broader behavioral dimensions that remain outside the present questionnaire (Utami & Mufidah, 2026). The small sample, non-probability recruitment procedure, and absence of respondent-level financial and stress score pairs restrict the interpretation of these findings to the participating students and prevent statistical examination of financial conditions as predictors of psychological stress. The empirical contribution

lies in identifying the specific dimensions of perceived financial adequacy that received comparatively favorable or unfavorable evaluations, providing a descriptive foundation for examining stress experiences without claiming an untested association between the two constructs.

Stress Experiences and the Descriptive Relationship With Financial Conditions

Stress-related experiences among the participating university students were examined through five indicators reflecting difficulties with relaxation, emotional regulation, concentration, daily tension, and management of perceived pressure. Each statement was assessed using a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement with the reported stress-related experience. The analysis included responses from all 30 participants, producing 150 item-level observations across the five indicators. These measurements were intended to describe subjective psychological experiences rather than establish clinical diagnoses or standardized categories of psychological distress. Research examining stress-related factors among university students has demonstrated the relevance of perceived stress and psychological well-being to understanding students' experiences within higher education environments (Slimmen et al., 2022). Systematic evidence has also identified multiple stress-related factors associated with academic functioning, supporting the need to examine psychological experiences without attributing them exclusively to financial circumstances (Lisnyj et al., 2023). The resulting distributions provide a descriptive basis for identifying prominent stress indicators and evaluating their conceptual relevance to the financial conditions reported by the participating students.

The distribution of stress-experience responses revealed variation in the frequency and intensity of agreement across the five questionnaire statements. Difficulty relaxing or calming down and difficulty concentrating because of numerous concerns received the highest mean scores, with each indicator recording a value of 3.50. Irritability or becoming easily upset produced a mean of 3.30, followed by difficulty managing experienced pressure at 3.17. Feeling tense or pressured during daily activities received the lowest mean score of 2.90, indicating comparatively weaker endorsement of this statement. The cumulative weighted score across all five stress indicators was 491, corresponding to an overall mean of 3.27 based on 150 responses. Previous research investigating financial stress and mental health among university students has examined psychological difficulties alongside economic pressures, although such associations cannot be inferred directly from the present aggregated responses (Mohamed et al., 2025). The complete response frequencies and mean scores are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution and Mean Scores for Stress Experiences

#	Stress-Experience Indicator	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total Score	Mean
1	Difficulty relaxing or calming down	0	5	9	12	4	105	3.50
2	Irritability or becoming easily upset	0	6	13	7	4	99	3.30
3	Difficulty concentrating due to many concerns	0	5	10	10	5	105	3.50
4	Feeling tense or pressured in daily activities	2	9	10	8	1	87	2.90
5	Difficulty managing experienced pressure	0	8	12	7	3	95	3.17
	All responses	2	33	54	44	17	491	3.27

Note. SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neither agree nor disagree; A = agree; SA = strongly agree. Total mean = 491/150 = 3.27 (rounded).

Difficulty relaxing or calming down emerged as one of the most frequently endorsed stress-related experiences, with a mean score of 3.50 and a weighted total score of 105. As presented in Table 4, 12 respondents agreed and four strongly agreed that they experienced difficulty relaxing, representing 53.3% of the participating students. Nine respondents selected the neutral category, while five disagreed, indicating that the experience was not uniformly reported across the sample. Difficulties with relaxation may reflect persistent cognitive or emotional engagement with everyday concerns, although

the questionnaire did not identify the specific circumstances responsible for these experiences. Research examining university students' psychological well-being has highlighted the relevance of perceived stress and concurrent personal demands when interpreting difficulties associated with psychological functioning (Slimmen et al., 2022). Investigations into financial anxiety and psychological distress have also considered the role of self-resilience, suggesting that students' psychological responses to financial difficulties may vary according to individual coping resources (Mat Hussin et al., 2023). The elevated mean for difficulty relaxing consequently identifies a prominent self-reported experience without demonstrating that financial limitations were responsible for the respondents' difficulties.

Difficulty concentrating because of numerous concerns produced an identical mean score of 3.50, although its response distribution differed from that observed for relaxation difficulties. Ten respondents agreed and five strongly agreed that they experienced concentration difficulties, while ten selected the neutral category and five disagreed. The 15 favorable responses represented 50.0% of the sample, indicating that half of the participants endorsed the statement at either the agreement or strong-agreement level. Concentration difficulties may interfere with the processing of academic information, sustained attention during lectures, and completion of educational assignments, although these consequences were not directly assessed in the questionnaire. A systematic review addressing stress and academic success among postsecondary students has identified stress-related factors as relevant considerations in evaluating students' educational functioning (Lisnyj et al., 2023). Research examining financial precarity and educational outcomes has similarly positioned economic difficulties within the broader conditions affecting students' academic experiences (Andrews et al., 2024). The observed concentration-related responses establish the prominence of perceived attentional difficulty but cannot determine whether academic demands, financial concerns, interpersonal circumstances, or other factors contributed to the reported experiences.

The remaining stress indicators displayed comparatively lower mean scores, revealing differences in how respondents evaluated emotional reactivity and perceived pressure. Irritability or becoming easily upset recorded a mean score of 3.30, with seven respondents agreeing, four strongly agreeing, and 13 selecting the neutral category. Difficulty managing experienced pressure produced a mean of 3.17, whereas feeling tense or pressured during daily activities received the lowest mean of 2.90. The relatively large neutral-response frequencies for these indicators suggest that many respondents neither clearly endorsed nor rejected statements describing emotional difficulties and pressure management. Research examining financial stress and psychological distress during emerging adulthood has considered the relationship between economic concerns and emotional functioning, providing a conceptual basis for investigating these experiences among university students (Wake & O'Donnell, 2024). Studies of subjective happiness and mental health under financial strain have also considered psychological differences in responses to economic challenges, indicating that financial circumstances should not be interpreted as producing uniform emotional outcomes (Fagbenro et al., 2026). The 0.60-point difference between the highest and lowest stress-indicator means demonstrates descriptive variation across psychological experiences without establishing statistically significant differences or clinically meaningful severity thresholds.

The distribution of mean scores presented in Table 4 indicates that difficulties with relaxation and concentration were more strongly endorsed than feelings of daily tension and difficulty managing pressure. Both relaxation and concentration difficulties recorded mean scores of 3.50, followed by irritability at 3.30, difficulty managing pressure at 3.17, and daily tension at 2.90. These values represent differences in average agreement with the questionnaire statements rather than differences in independently validated psychological symptom severity. Research examining student mental health has emphasized the relevance of multiple psychological and environmental demands, reinforcing the need to interpret stress-related experiences without assuming a single underlying cause (Slimmen et al., 2022). Studies involving financial stress and student well-being have also investigated economic pressure as a relevant dimension of psychological functioning, supporting its consideration alongside other potential stressors (Nasr et al., 2024). The overall stress-experience mean of 3.27 provides a descriptive summary of the five questionnaire indicators but does not independently establish whether participants experienced low, moderate, or high clinical stress. Figure 2 presents the five indicators and their corresponding mean agreement scores using the values reported in the original questionnaire summary.

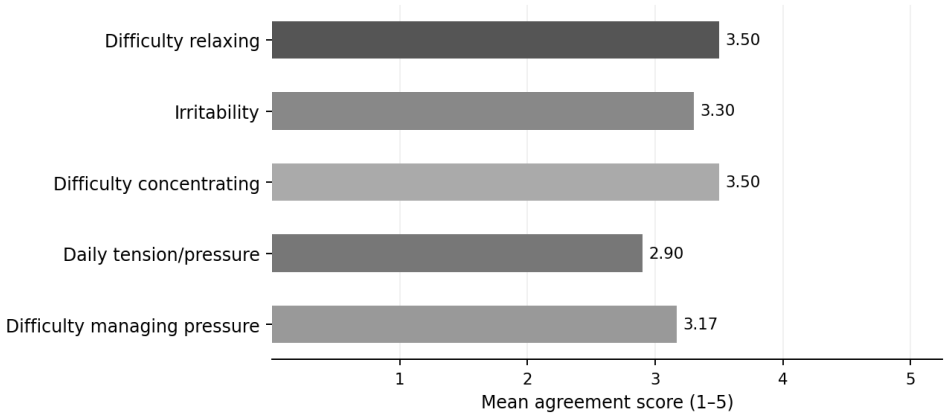


Figure 2. Mean Agreement Scores Across Stress-Experience Indicators

The descriptive comparison between financial conditions and stress experiences identifies differences in the patterns of agreement across the two measured constructs. Financial conditions produced an overall mean of 3.09, whereas stress experiences produced an overall mean of 3.27, representing a numerical difference of 0.18 points. However, the two scales have opposite conceptual directions because higher financial scores indicate greater perceived economic adequacy, while higher stress scores indicate stronger endorsement of stress-related experiences. The comparatively low financial score for managing unexpected expenses (2.87) and the relatively high stress scores for relaxation and concentration difficulties (3.50 each) identify potentially relevant issues for subsequent individual-level investigation. Research investigating changes in student financial stress has highlighted the importance of economic circumstances in understanding university students' experiences, although its findings do not establish a relationship within the present sample (Bennett et al., 2023). Evidence concerning financial worry has also distinguished economic predictors from the subjective experience of financial stress, indicating that financial circumstances and psychological responses require separate empirical assessment (Simonse et al., 2024). Because the available data consist of aggregated item frequencies rather than paired observations for each respondent, the difference between construct means cannot demonstrate a correlation, predictive relationship, or causal association.

The interpretation of the findings requires recognition of several methodological limitations associated with the available data and the characteristics of the participating students. The sample comprised only 30 respondents recruited through voluntary participation, with a predominance of female students and participants enrolled in the fifth academic semester, restricting the generalizability of the descriptive distributions. The questionnaire consisted of researcher-assembled statements for which validated clinical thresholds, psychometric reliability coefficients, and documented construct-validation procedures were not available. Although research examining financial anxiety and psychological distress supports investigating the relationship between economic and psychological experiences, the present dataset does not provide the paired individual-level scores required to estimate that relationship statistically (Mat Hussin et al., 2023). Longitudinal evidence concerning financial stress and psychological distress further indicates the relevance of temporal relationships, but the present cross-sectional design cannot determine the direction or causality of any possible association (Wake & O'Donnell, 2024). Subsequent studies should retain anonymized respondent-level financial and stress scores, evaluate instrument validity and reliability, recruit more diverse student samples, and account for relevant academic and socioeconomic characteristics before conducting appropriate association tests. The empirical findings establish that perceived difficulty managing unexpected expenses coexisted with relatively prominent relaxation and concentration difficulties at the sample level, while the existence, direction, and strength of an individual-level relationship between financial conditions and stress remain undetermined.

CONCLUSION

In this sample of 30 university students, most respondents were female, enrolled in the fifth semester, lived in student boarding accommodation, were not employed, and relied primarily on financial support from their parents or families. Financial conditions had an overall mean score of 3.09,

indicating the average level of agreement with five statements assessing perceived financial adequacy rather than a standardized classification of financial well-being. The ability to meet daily needs received the highest financial-item mean (3.50), whereas the capacity to manage unexpected expenses recorded the lowest mean (2.87), revealing differences between routine expenditure adequacy and preparedness for unforeseen financial obligations. Self-reported stress experiences had an overall mean score of 3.27, with difficulty relaxing and difficulty concentrating receiving the highest means (3.50 each), while feelings of tension during daily activities recorded the lowest mean (2.90). These findings indicate that limitations in emergency financial preparedness and difficulties involving relaxation and concentration were relatively prominent within their respective measurement domains. The study contributes descriptive evidence concerning students' perceived economic circumstances and psychological experiences without establishing clinical stress categories or attributing reported psychological difficulties to financial conditions.

Although the overall stress-experience mean exceeded the financial-condition mean by 0.18 points, this numerical difference cannot be interpreted as evidence of a statistically significant relationship because the two measures represent conceptually distinct constructs with different scoring directions. The available dataset contained aggregated response frequencies rather than paired individual-level financial and stress scores, preventing correlation analysis and determination of the existence, direction, or magnitude of an association between the variables. The small sample, voluntary recruitment procedure, uneven demographic composition, and absence of documented instrument validation further restrict the generalizability and interpretation of the findings. From a practical standpoint, the descriptive patterns suggest that university student support services may benefit from considering emergency financial preparedness alongside psychological concerns involving relaxation and concentration, without assuming that these experiences are causally connected. Future research should employ larger and more diverse samples, validated measurement instruments, and linked individual responses to evaluate the relationship between perceived financial adequacy and stress using appropriate inferential statistical procedures. The principal contribution of this study lies in identifying specific financial and stress-related experiences that warrant further investigation while maintaining a clear distinction between descriptive patterns, statistical associations, and causal explanations.

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