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**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS ON STUDENTS'
PLACEMENT ANXIETY**

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ABSTRACT:

The transition from academia to employment is a critical phase in a student's life, often accompanied by significant psychological stress. This study explores the influence of social and institutional factors on placement-related anxiety among students. Social pressures from family, peers, and societal expectations can heighten anxiety levels, particularly when success is narrowly defined by immediate job acquisition. Simultaneously, institutional elements such as placement policies, competition-driven environments, inadequate career support, and unrealistic academic expectations contribute to heightened stress and uncertainty. Through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and in-depth interviews with undergraduate and postgraduate students, this research identifies key triggers of placement anxiety and examines how different socio-institutional dynamics interact to influence student mental health. Findings highlight the need for more supportive institutional frameworks and a broader societal understanding of career success to mitigate placement-related stress. The study emphasizes the importance of holistic career preparation and mental health support systems in higher education institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from academic life to professional employment represents a pivotal milestone in a student's educational journey. For many, this period is not only characterized by anticipation and ambition but also by intense psychological stress, particularly in relation to placement and job acquisition. Placement anxiety, a form of performance-related stress, has become increasingly prevalent among students, driven by a complex interplay of social expectations and institutional pressures.

On the social front, students are often influenced by familial aspirations, peer comparisons, and broader societal norms that equate success with immediate and high-profile employment. Students who may not fit traditional success narratives may feel rushed and inadequate as a result of these expectations. Simultaneously, academic institutions contribute to this anxiety through competitive placement systems, limited career guidance, rigid performance metrics, and a lack of emotional or psychological support.

While previous research has focused on general academic stress or mental health issues in university environments, there remains a gap in understanding how specific social and institutional forces shape the psychological experience of placement anxiety. This study seeks to bridge that gap by examining the influence of both external social pressures and internal institutional mechanisms on students' emotional well-being during the placement phase.

By exploring the sources and nature of placement anxiety, this research aims to inform better institutional practices and promote a more supportive environment for students navigating the challenging transition from education to employment. Through this inquiry, the study contributes to the growing discourse on mental health in higher education and highlights the need for reforms that address both systemic and cultural contributors to student stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The transition from academia to professional life is often considered one of the most significant milestones in a student's career trajectory. Reviews the existing literature on placement fear and its psychological effects, particularly on mental health, academic performance, and career decision-making.

According to a study by Masten et al. (2020), placement fear is particularly acute in highly competitive fields where students feel constant pressure to outperform their peers. Placement anxiety also correlates with students' perceptions of job market uncertainty, leading to an increase in stress as

they approach graduation. Beaudry and Savoie (2020), students with placement fear often engage in catastrophic thinking, where they expect the worst possible outcomes from placement-related activities, such as failing interviews or not securing a job offer.

Research by Liu and Liao (2018) suggests that students with low self-esteem are particularly vulnerable to experiencing placement anxiety, as they view job placement as a direct reflection of their worth. The fear of rejection and failure can significantly undermine their confidence and self-concept, making the placement process even more daunting.

Johnson et al. (2020), students who receive support from peers or mentors report lower levels of placement anxiety and greater confidence in their job-searching abilities. Peer support networks provide both emotional encouragement and practical advice, which can reduce uncertainty and promote adaptive coping mechanisms. Universities have begun to incorporate mental health resources into placement programs, offering workshops on stress management, career coaching, and coping skills. These initiatives have been found to improve students' ability to manage placement-related anxiety and improve their job-searching success (Gao et al., 2020). Studies by Heffernan et al. (2021) demonstrate that MBIs, which include techniques like meditation and breath control, help students reduce anxiety and improve emotional regulation.

Relationship between self-esteem and placement fear suggests that interventions aimed at boosting self-worth, such as promoting growth mindset approaches and self-compassion, can be beneficial in reducing anxiety and improving overall resilience during placement searches (Kirkpatrick et al., 2022). psychological outcomes can further impair students' ability to engage in job-searching activities, resulting in a cycle of avoidance and withdrawal that worsens their mental health (Smith et al., 2020).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In today's competitive academic and professional landscape, students face mounting pressure to secure employment immediately after graduation. This pressure often culminates in placement anxiety, a psychological condition marked by stress, fear, and uncertainty related to job placement outcomes. Even though this anxiety is becoming a bigger problem in higher education, little is known about what causes it in the first place. This is especially true when it comes to how social and institutional environments influence it. Social expectations, including pressure from parents, peers, and societal norms, often place unrealistic demands on students to succeed quickly and visibly. At the same time, institutional structures, such as rigid placement policies, performance-driven environments, lack of career support, and inadequate attention to student mental health, further intensify this anxiety. These factors can collectively impair students' emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall readiness for the workforce.

Despite increasing awareness around mental health in academic settings, there is limited empirical research specifically addressing the dual influence of social and institutional factors on placement anxiety. Without a deeper understanding of these contributors, efforts to support students through the placement process remain insufficient and reactive. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the extent and nature of the influence that social and institutional factors exert on students' placement anxiety, with the goal of informing more effective support strategies and institutional policies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the social and institutional impact on students' placement anxiety.
- Provide insights and recommendations to educational institutions and policymakers for developing region-specific support systems to reduce placement fear.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was constructed based on mixed methods approach to study the above objectives in-depth with regard to the specific target respondents. The study was conducted on a basis of the sample of 721 respondents those who firsthand experience with placement-related anxiety, ensuring in-depth insights from those most affected.

AREA OF STUDY

The area of study chosen was Pollachi, a town in the Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, is known for its serene environment, agricultural economy, and as an emerging educational hub with numerous colleges and training institutes. The unique socio-cultural and economic landscape of Pollachi provides an interesting backdrop for studying the psychological effects of placement fear on students. While not as urbanized as cities like Coimbatore or Chennai, Pollachi have seen a rise in educational institutions, attracting students from rural and semi-urban areas. The traditional values and family expectations prevalent in Pollachi might influence students' stress levels and coping mechanisms related to placements.

SAMPLING DESIGN

For the purpose of the study, the data have been collected from 271. The stratified random sampling method was used to collect the primary data. The study will focus on undergraduate students, particularly those in their final year or just before the placement season, as they are the most likely to experience placement anxiety. Students from a variety of academic programs (management, commerce, arts, will be included to account for differences in placement pressures across disciplines. The study will also consider students from both urban and rural backgrounds, which may have different levels of placement-related stress.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This part of the study examines the level of impact of placement anxiety to students preparation. This includes a set of 6 statements of Academic performance, Emotional well-being, Sleep patterns, Social interactions, Confidence in facing interviews, and Decision-making about career paths during the placement anxiety. The students were asked to rate each statement on a Likert five-point scale, where 1=Strong Impact, 2=Moderate Impact, 3=Neutral, 4=Low Impact, and 5=No Impact. All the opinions are used to calculate individual and total scores to assess the overall level of impact of placement Anxiety. Therefore, the score will range from 5 to 30. The score value with less than 18 is considered as strong impact, the score value equal to 18 is considered neutral, and more than 18 is considered as no impact. Initially, descriptive statistics is executed to examine level of impact of placement Anxiety to student Preparation, the results are described below.

Table 1: Level of Impact of Placement Anxiety-Descriptive Statistics

Level of Impact of Placement Anxiety	N	% of Total N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Strong Impact	82	11.4%	1094.00	13.3415	3.69925	13.684
Neutral	73	10.1%	1314.00	18.0000	.00000	.000
No Impact	566	78.5%	13884.00	24.5300	3.17763	10.097
Total	721	100.0%	16292.00	22.5964	4.92944	24.299

Source: Primary Data

Table-1 exhibits that level of impact of placement anxiety. Out of 721 students mean score found between 13.34 and 24.53. It is executed to check the significant difference in mean of score of UG students' general profile with regard to the impact of placement and Anxiety. The hypotheses are proposed to test at 5 % level of significance.

Factors Influencing Placement Anxiety

The regression model aims to evaluate how various general profile of students on impact on placement anxiety scores. These predictors like age, gender, residential area, CGPA/Percentage, First-generation graduate, participation in placement training or workshop, number of placement interviews attended, type of job preferred.

Table 2: Regression Analysis on Factors Influencing Placement Anxiety Scores

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	20.028	2.055		9.748	.000

Age	1.595*	.589	.102	2.705	.007
Gender	-.355	.386	-.036	-.919	.358
Residence	.066	.211	.012	.314	.753
Current CGPA/Percentage	.029	.214	.005	.134	.893
first-generation Graduate	-.180	.376	-.018	-.478	.633
Participation in Placement Training or Workshops	-.149	.450	-.013	-.331	.741
Number of Placement Interviews Attended	-.271	.373	-.028	-.728	.467
Type of Job Preferred	.402	.276	.055	1.458	.145
R	.128				
R Square	.016				
Adjusted R Square	.005				
F	1.485				.159

Source: Primary data *Significant at 1% level.

The table-2 indicated that the relationship between various general profile of students and perceived impact of placement anxiety. The R² and adjusted R² values are found at 0.016 and 0.005 respectively. As a result, the general student profile accounted for 1.6% of the variation in relation to the impact of placement anxiety. The regression model shows that age is the only significant predictor of placement anxiety. The other variables like gender, residential area, CGPA/Percentage, First-generation graduate, participation in placement training or workshop, number of placement interviews attended, type of job preferred, do not show significant relationships with placement anxiety.

Factors Contributing to Placement Anxiety

The ranking of various factors contributing to placement anxiety, based on responses from 721 students is analysis with Friedman Test and presented in the table-3.

Table 3: Ranking of Factors Contributing to Placement Anxiety and Friedman Test Results

Factors Contributing to Placement Anxiety	Level of Rank						Friedman Test			
	Most Significant	Very Significant	Moderately Significant	Less Significant	Least Significant	N	Mean Rank	Rank	Test Statistics	
Peer competition	231	259	162	44	25	721	2.70	5	N	721
Lack of preparation	137	290	201	69	24	721	3.09	2	Chi-Square	79.017
Family pressure	197	177	195	65	87	721	3.24	1	df	4
Limited job opportunities	174	248	178	75	46	721	3.06	3	Asymp. Sig.	0.000
Lack of communication skills	223	208	174	56	60	721	2.91	4		

Source: Primary data

Table 3 showed that the ranking of various factors associated to placement anxiety of 721 students. The factors were ranked on a scale from 1 (Most Significant) to 5 (Least Significant). To determine whether the ranks' significant differences could be determined, the Friedman Test results were also calculated. Family pressure is the most significant factor in placement anxiety, with a mean rank of 3.24, making it at the top of the list. This indicates that a considerable number of students feel that family expectations are a primary source of stress during the placement process. Lack of preparation follows closely with a mean rank of 3.09, suggesting that students feel insufficient preparation is a highly impactful factor in causing placement anxiety. Limited job opportunities rank third with a mean rank of 3.06, highlighting that students perceive the availability of job options as a significant source of stress. The lack of communication skills and peer competition are ranked fourth

and fifth, with mean ranks of 2.91 and 2.70, respectively. Despite the fact that both of these things increase anxiety, they are thought to be less important than family pressure and a lack of preparation. The Friedman Test statistics, with a Chi-Square value of 79.017 and an asymptotic significance of 0.000, indicate that there are statistically significant differences between the ranks assigned to these factors. This result suggests that the students perceive these factors differently in terms of their contribution to placement anxiety, and the variation in their rankings is not due to chance.

FINDINGS

- It is executed to check the significant difference in mean of score of UG students' general profile with regard to the impact of placement and Anxiety. The hypotheses are proposed to test at 5 % level of significance.
- The other variables like gender, residential area, CGPA/Percentage, First-generation graduate, participation in placement training or workshop,
- Number of placement interviews attended, type of job preferred, do not show significant relationships with placement anxiety.
- The Friedman Test statistics, with a Chi-Square value of 79.017 and an asymptotic significance of 0.000, indicate that there are statistically significant differences between the ranks assigned to these factors.
- This result suggests that the students perceive these factors differently in terms of their contribution to placement anxiety, and the variation in their rankings is not due to chance.

SUGGESTIONS

- The findings could provide crucial insights into the mental health challenges faced by students during the placement process and helps in developing strategies to reduce the negative psychological impact and promote overall well-being.
- Educators and career counselors can provide more targeted support by understanding how placement fear influences academic performance and career decision-making. The study, ultimately help students manage their fears, allowing them to perform better in school and make better career decisions.
- The research could lead to actionable recommendations for educational institutions to revise or enhance their support systems, such as offering more effective career counseling, stress management programs, and mental health resources to help students navigate the placement process with confidence.
- By exploring students' coping mechanisms, the study can identify strategies that work and those that need improvement for the development of programs that equip students with practical skills to cope with future career-related stress, fostering greater resilience.
- Addressing placement-related anxiety could reduce dropout rates caused by overwhelming career concerns. If students feel supported and capable of handling placement stress, they are more likely to persist in their academic journeys, leading to higher graduation rates.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- The findings could provide crucial insights into the mental health challenges faced by students during the placement process and helps in developing strategies to reduce the negative psychological impact and promote overall well-being.
- Educators and career counselors can provide more targeted support by understanding how placement fear influences academic performance and career decision-making. In the end, the study helps students deal with their fears, allowing them to do better in school and choose a career with more knowledge.
- The research could lead to actionable recommendations for educational institutions to revise or enhance their support systems, such as offering more effective career counseling, stress management programs, and mental health resources to help students navigate the placement process with confidence.

- By exploring students' coping mechanisms, the study can identify strategies that work and those that need improvement for the development of programs that equip students with practical skills to cope with future career-related stress, fostering greater resilience.
- Addressing placement-related anxiety could reduce dropout rates caused by overwhelming career concerns. If students feel supported and capable of handling placement stress, they are more likely to persist in their academic journeys, leading to higher graduation rates.

SHORT COMING OF THE STUDY

- Limited to specific colleges in Pollachi, which may not represent the entire student population.
- Captures data at a single point in time, limiting the ability to observe changes in placement fear over time.

SCOPE OF FURTHER RESEARCH

The study of placement fear among students in Pollachi offers a broad scope for further research, with numerous avenues to explore. Future studies could focus on comparative analyses between urban and rural students, examining how placement fear differs across regions with varying cultural and economic contexts. From the beginning of college to post-placement experiences, longitudinal studies could provide insight into how placement anxiety develops over time and evaluate the long-term effects of interventions like counseling or career workshops. Related psychological factors, such as the impact of social media, personality traits like resilience and self-efficacy, and academic factors, such as curriculum design and faculty mentorship, could also be investigated by researchers. Gender and diversity studies would be valuable to understand how placement fear affects different groups, including marginalized communities. Finally, policy-oriented research could investigate how students' psychological well-being during placements is affected by institutional and governmental support systems. These directions not only enrich the understanding of placement fear but also contribute to developing targeted interventions and supportive educational environments.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that both social and institutional factors play a significant role in influencing students' placement-related anxiety. Stress levels are frequently exacerbated by peer competition, family expectations, and social comparisons, particularly in students with lower academic performance or limited support systems. Institutional efforts, such as faculty guidance, counseling services, and structured placement training programs, have shown to significantly reduce anxiety by improving preparedness and confidence. However, disparities in access to these resources—based on factors like gender, background, or location suggest the need for more inclusive and targeted support strategies. Students can greatly benefit from institutional support for their emotional and academic well-being in managing placement anxiety and improving their recruitment performance as a whole.

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