

# The Psychosocial Impacts of Academic Stress in First to Second Generation Asian American Female Students Attending Barrett the Honors College at ASU

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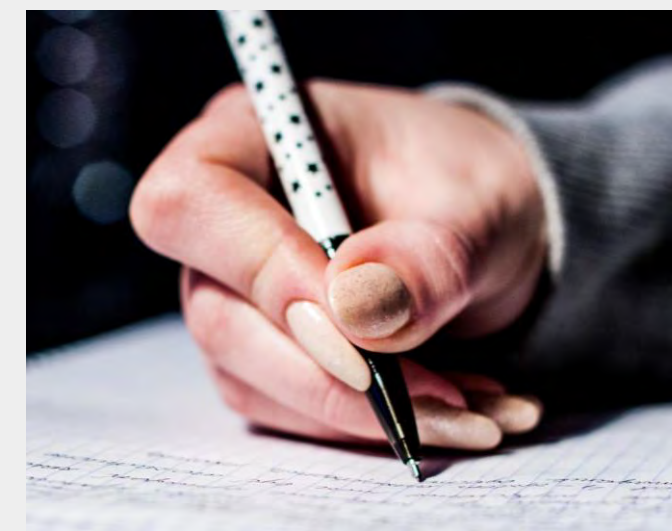
## Background

### College Stress in Asian American Students

- The purpose of this study was to determine the psychosocial implications of academic stress on Asian American students.
- The pursuance of higher education has always been a competitive feat and as the years progress competition amongst students becomes tighter.
- It is commonly known that many Asian cultures place a strict importance on academics due to the traditional expectations set on attaining excellence in education and career.
- According to a study across 40 universities, Asian American students experience the highest levels of psychological distress in comparison to other groups.
- Even when these students are experiencing such high levels of stress, they fail to seek mental health support

### Barriers to Mental Health in Asian American Cultures

- In 2010 only 8.6% of Asian Americans reported utilizing mental health services.
- Acculturation or adaptation to a host culture also plays a key role in the seeking of treatment.
- Most Asian families are dismissive of or overlook mental health as a real problem with real long term implications.
- South Asians are one of many Asian American groups susceptible to developing mental health disorders. The culture, like many other Asian cultures, is very dismissive of mental health and therefore many individuals manifest their psychological problems as physiological symptoms

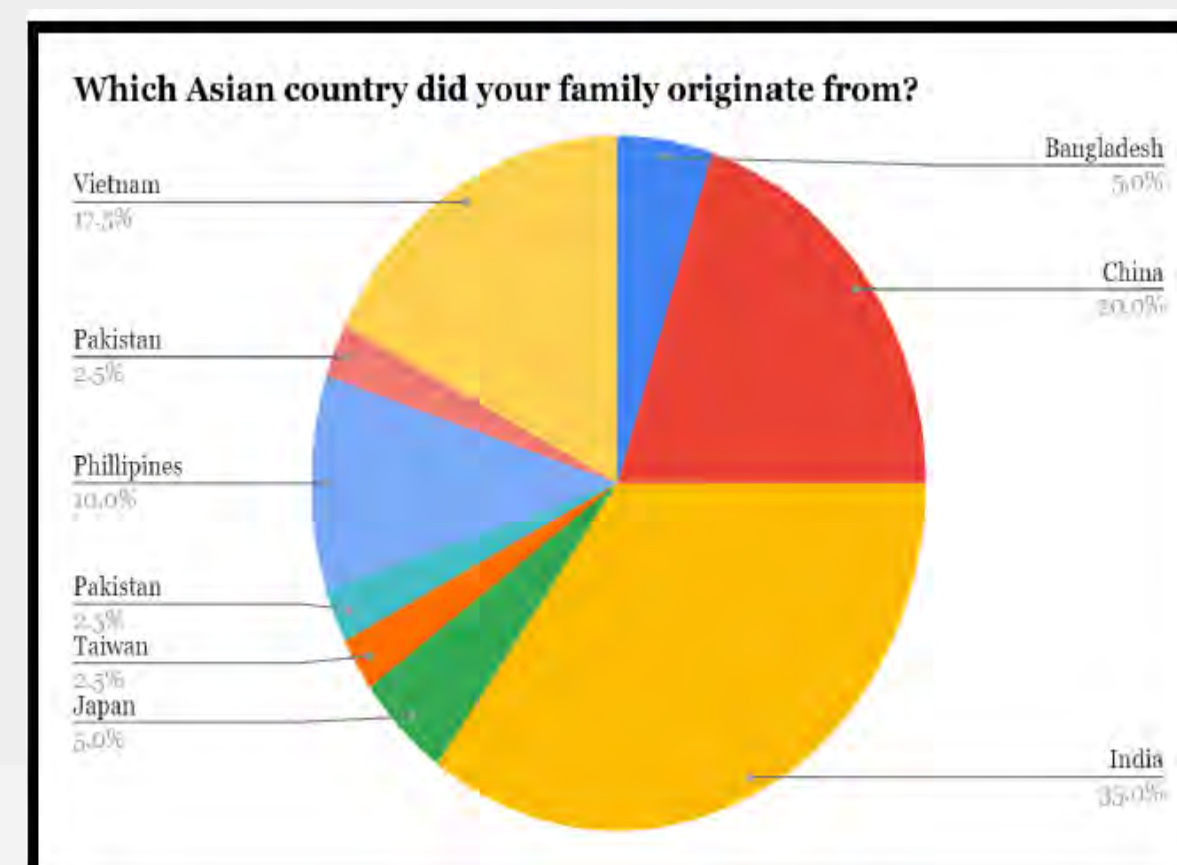


## Method

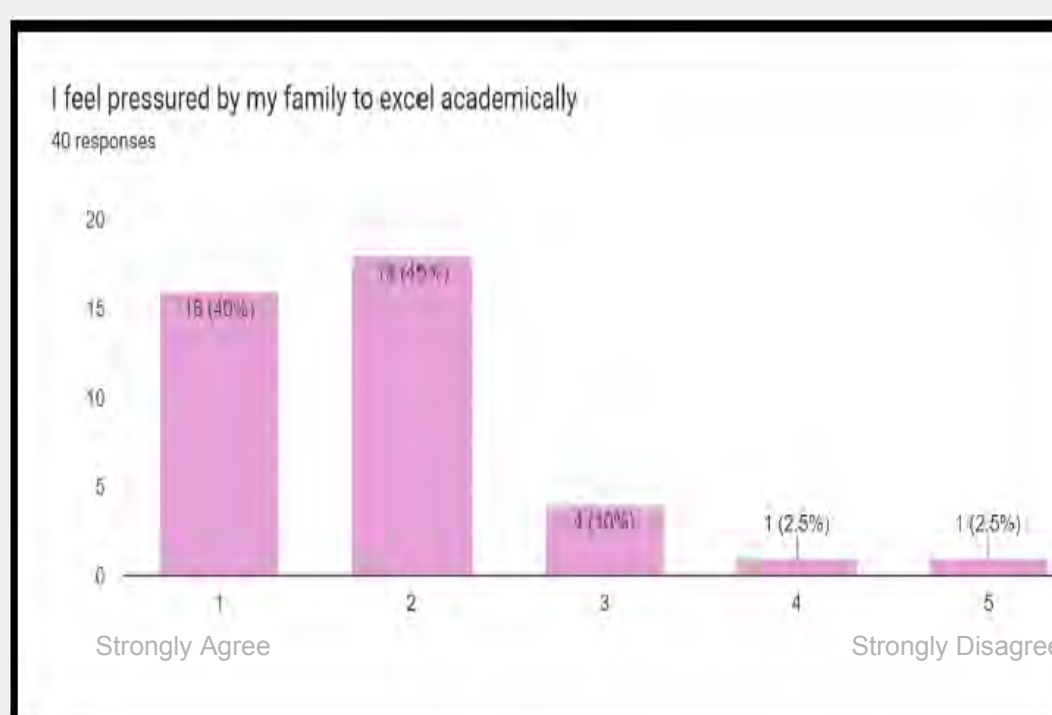
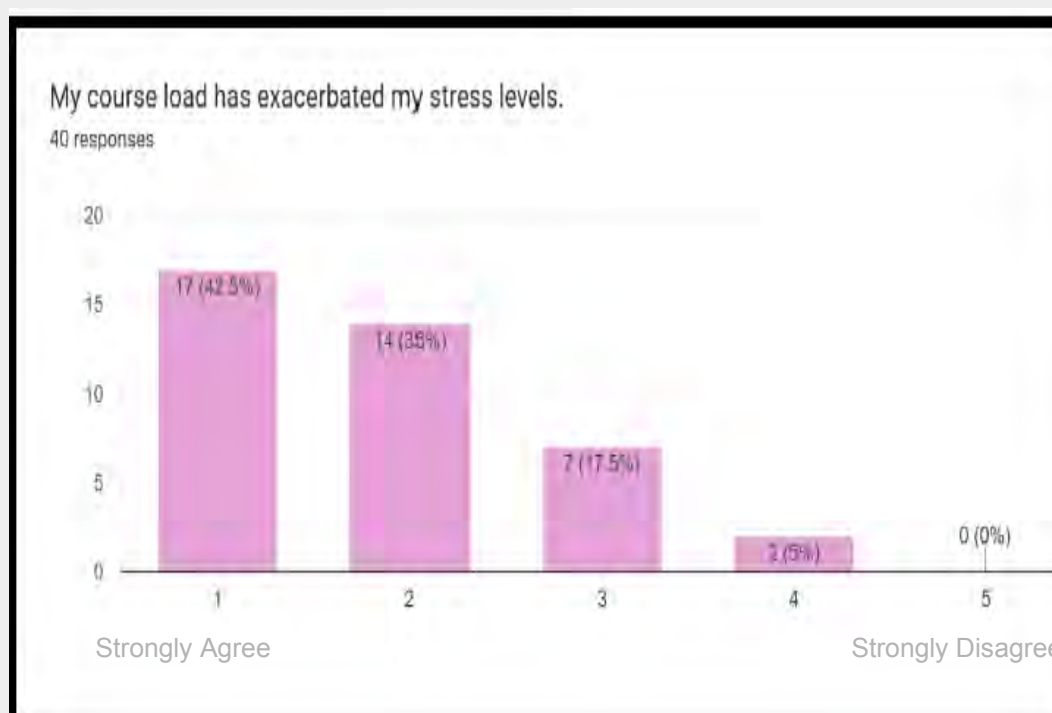
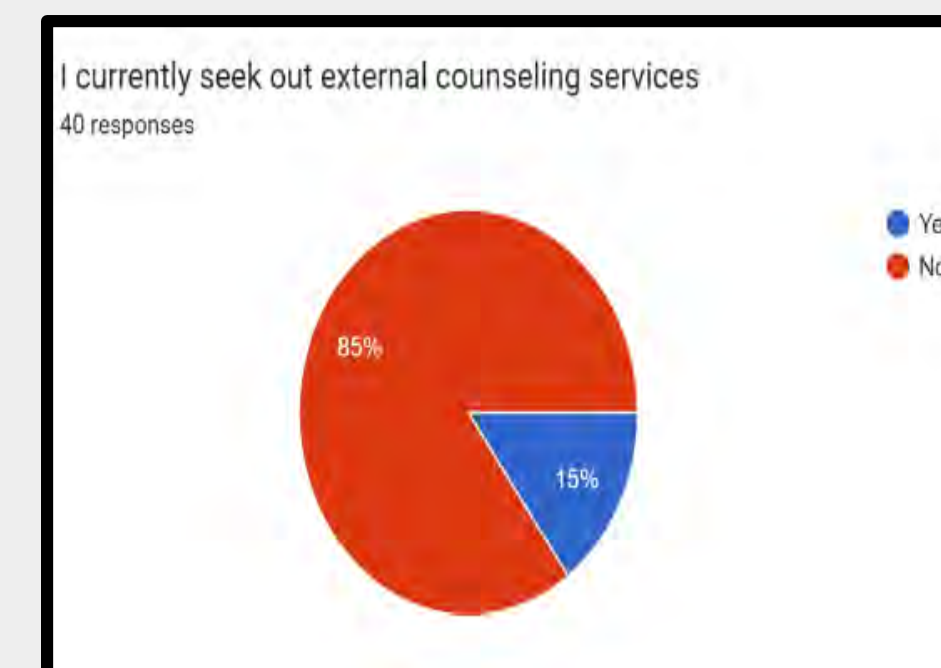
- The initial data collection was conducted via surveys sent out through the ASU Barrett Newsletter.
- The survey questionnaire was designed to take between 5-7 minutes and focused on collecting the quantitative data. The survey aimed to collect a minimum of 25 responses.
- Upon the completion of the survey collection, 10 individuals who chose to participate in the interview section were invited to make appointments for the interviews. The interviews were scheduled to take 45-60 minutes over Zoom.
- The interviewee were also given the option to keep their answers to the interview anonymous to help protect the confidentiality of the participants and to ensure more accurate responses.
- Given that past studies have determined that female Asian American students in particular experienced higher levels of psychological distress and test anxiety, we focused on this population.
- The interview portion of the project involved 10 individual interviews with willing participants delving into the details of their knowledge, attitudes and approach towards mental health and mental health seeking attitudes

## Participants

- Forty survey responses were collected and 10 participants were selected for interviews regarding their personal experiences regarding the topic of mental health. Participants were all over the age of 18, female Asian Americans and either first or second generation immigrants as these were the requirements to participate in this study

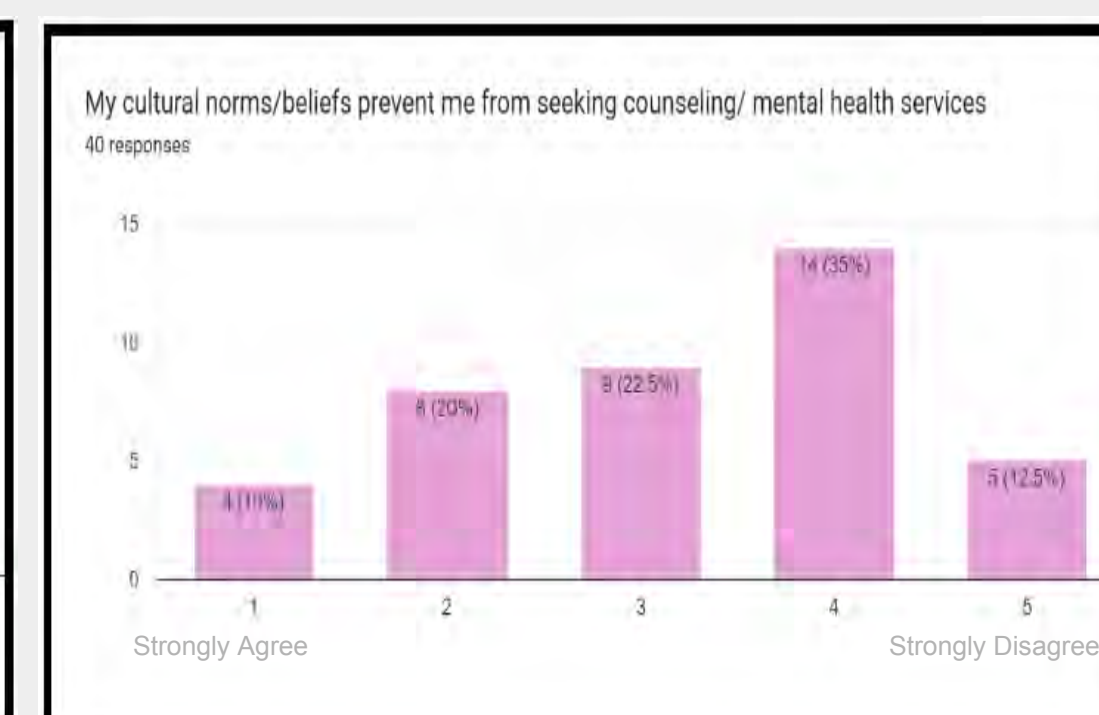
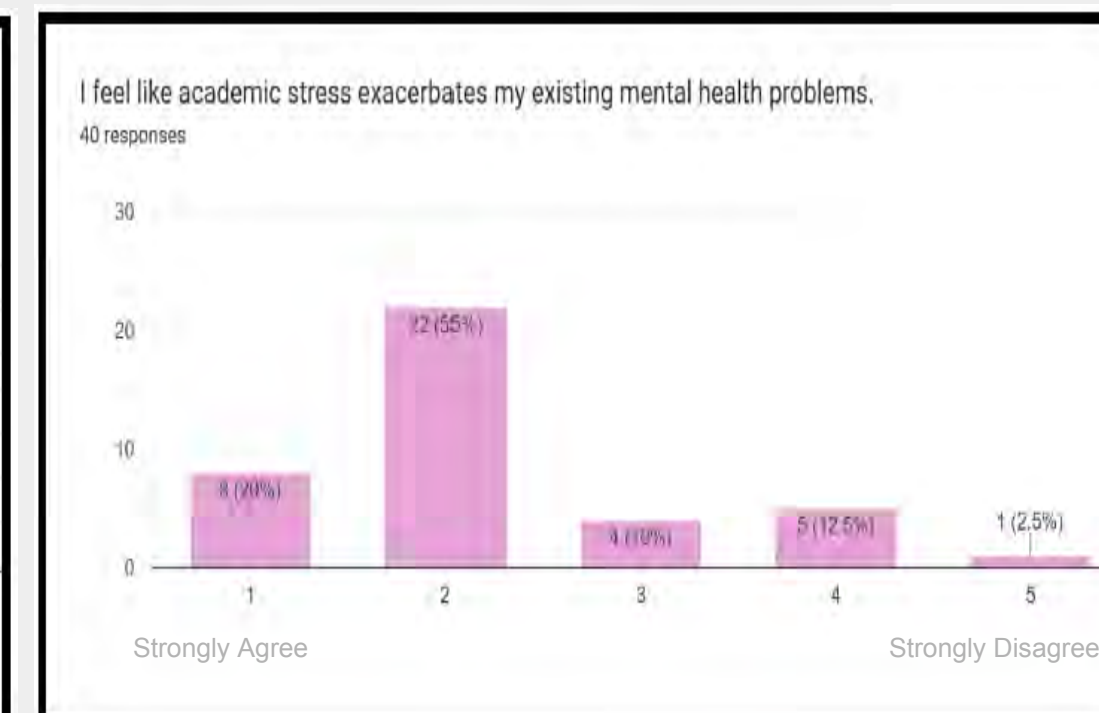


## Results



## Survey Results

- For most participants, course load does exacerbate their stress levels.
- Exactly half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt helpless/overwhelmed whilst the rest of the respondents either remained neutral or disagreed.
- A majority (75%) of participants agreed that academic stress has heightened their existing mental health problems.
- A vast majority of participants (85%) felt pressured by family to excel academically
- Responses varied; however, the majority of responses (47.5%) indicated that they do not feel as though their cultural norms have hindered their help seeking behaviors



## Interview results

- When it came to coping with their mental health problems, many simply did not cope whilst others preferred to cry in private or ignore it.
- Most students stated that they felt comfortable talking to their close friends about their mental health problems.
- The majority of respondents stated that they did not feel comfortable with talking to their family both about academics and mental health.
- The majority of the participants stated that they have not sought out therapy services before, others stated that they previously attempted to seek therapy services but did not continue.
- Most participants agreed that there also exists an unwritten expectation on them to do better than their counterparts in classes

## Conclusions

- Participants perceived academic stress has having a significant impact on the mental well being of most Asian American students
- Participants indicated that major stressors are due to a combination of self-induced, familial and societal pressures.
- About 75% of participants who state that academic stress exacerbates their existing mental health problems
- Self-induced pressure was very high among this population with over 97.5% of participants claiming that they place pressure on themselves to excel in their academics
- A majority (62.5%) of participants did not feel comfortable talking to their family about their mental health problems



## Major Contributions of the Study

- Students' reports indicated that due to the high importance given to academics in the communities studied, they exhibited high levels of perceived stress.
- Factors such as course load, pressures induced by family, self and society and the expectations set by the Model Minority myth act as additional contributors to the mental burden experienced by students from this community.
- Based on responses from students, some of the factors that contribute to the avoidant attitude towards mental health services include: family judgment, lack of counselor availability and diminished sense of need for counseling.

## Sample references

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