

# “I’m Training to Save Lives, but Debt is Consuming Mine.”

## The Perceived Impact of Financial Constraints on Academic Performance Among Medical Students

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### 1. Background

In 2024, the British Medical Association (BMA) surveyed over 3,500 medical students in England and found that 43% had considered leaving their course due to financial pressures. <sup>[1]</sup>

By their final year, medical students are £3,674 worse off compared to their previous years. <sup>[2]</sup>

Few studies, however, have examined how those who remain in medicine manage the academic demands alongside such financial hardship.

### 2. Aims

- Assess if financial constraints affect academic performance among medical students in the clinical years at Newcastle University.
- Recommend support and policy changes to promote equity.

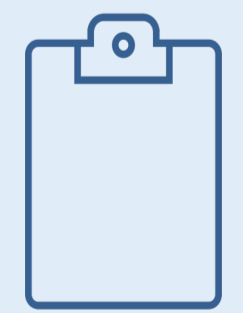
### 3. Methodology

**Who participated:**  
Newcastle University medical students in Years 3–5 (including intercalating students).

Years 1–2 were excluded. Nationally, 28.5% of clinical students get no travel reimbursement despite high placement costs. <sup>[3]</sup>

**What was done:**  
An online questionnaire piloted with peers and distributed via email, social media, and Newcastle University student societies.

#### What was asked:



**Multiple-choice questions:** demographics, finances, working hours, and study habits.



**Open questions** on personal experiences.



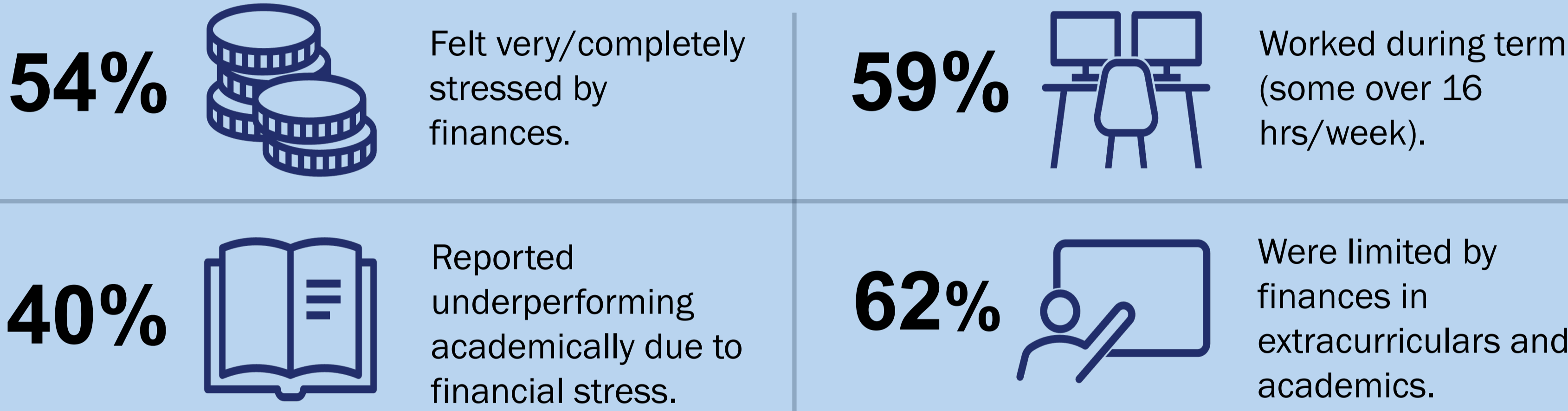
**Rating scales** (adapted from the IFDFW Financial Stress Scale.) <sup>[4]</sup>

### 4. Results

#### Participant Demographics

Variable	N (%)
Sample Size	N = 37
Widening Participation	32%
Parent in Higher Professional Role (at age 14)	46%
Year of Study	Year 3: 32% Year 4: 46% Year 5: 16% Intercalating: 5%
Ethnicity	White – British: 73% Black – African: 8% Asian – Any other Asian background: 5% Asian – Indian: 5% White – Other: 3% White – Irish: 3%

#### Key Results



#### Themes Identified

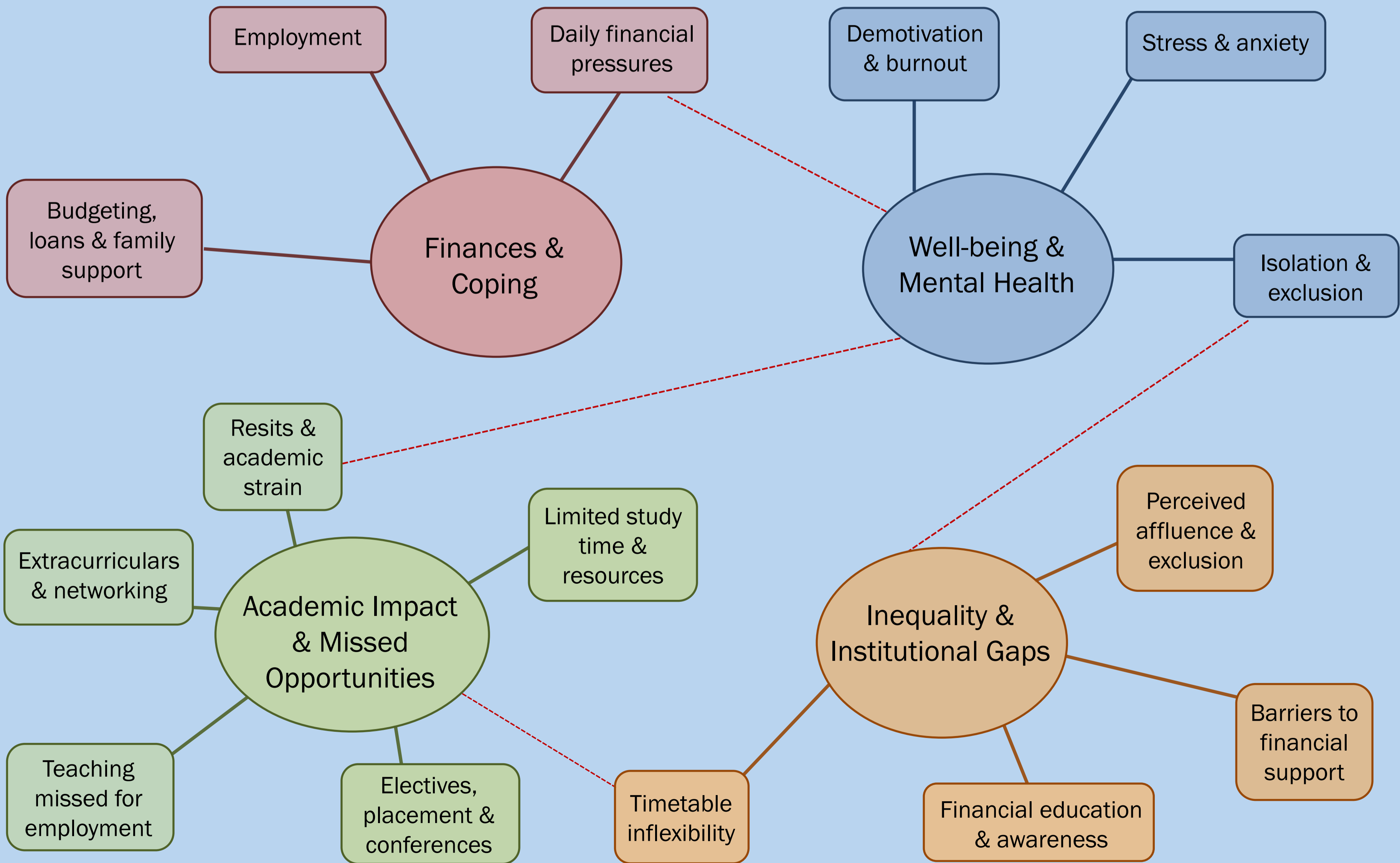


Figure 1: A thematic map showing how financial constraints affect medical students’ academic performance, well-being, and experiences.

Financial stress has a significant impact on medical students’ study time, well-being, and career opportunities.

### 5. Discussion

Financial stress affected all economic backgrounds – financial support, not socioeconomic status, predicted outcomes.



With support (family, bursaries, flexible work) → stability, study time, opportunities.  
*“I presented at a conference ... without family support, I’d have missed it.”*



Without support → stress, long work hours, disrupted study.  
*“I sometimes went hungry ... I worked alongside uni and had to resit the year.”*

Financial stress is an academic issue – support is key to equity.

### 6. Recommended Improvements

- Integrate financial well-being into the curriculum.
- Peer mentoring to share coping strategies and reduce isolation.
- Create flexible, accessible paid work opportunities – for example, HCA shifts or campus-based roles – that align with students’ academic schedules.
- Encourage students and staff to support campaigns (e.g., BMA) that advocate for fairer funding and lessen financial pressures.

For More Information:



### References

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