

Assessment of Examination-Related Stress Among Final-Year Undergraduate Students

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Abstract: The study sought to assess examination-related stress among final-year undergraduate students, with a particular emphasis on gender disparities. Responses were gathered from 140 students studying B.Com and BBA at colleges affiliated with KBC North Maharashtra University in Jalgaon. There were 72 female and 68 male students among the respondents. The responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale, and the significance of gender differences was determined using independent samples t-tests. The findings demonstrated significant heterogeneity in stress reactions across multiple markers, including pressure to succeed, physical symptoms, procrastination, and self-confidence. Female students reported higher levels of stress in a variety of areas, but male students were more confident throughout exams. The study reveals that gender influences how students perceive and manage exam-related stress.

Keywords: Examination stress, Final-year students, Gender differences, Undergraduate education

I. INTRODUCTION

Stress related to exams among students is a complex issue shaped by numerous psychological elements. These include academic demands, perceived expectations from parents, and feelings of personal inadequacy, all of which can lead to serious mental health issues like anxiety and depression. The interaction of these factors creates a challenging environment where students often find it difficult to maintain their mental health. Recognizing these psychological influences is essential for creating effective strategies to reduce stress and foster a healthier academic experience. Exam-related stress is a common issue for students, affecting their mental health, academic performance, and even physical health. Research shows that exam periods are marked by increased stress, anxiety, and physiological changes. These several issues inducing how students perceive and handle this stress.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following sections explore into key challenges, supported by insights from the provided research papers.

(Emran et al., 2024; Ye et al., 2025) Stress related to exams is significantly affected by the pressure to perform well academically, which encompasses the fear of failing and the demand

for high grades. This kind of pressure can lead to mental health issues and depressive symptoms in students.

(Desai, 2024) The intense focus on achieving academic success is often heightened by the competitive nature of educational systems, where accomplishments are closely linked to personal self-esteem and family honor.

(Ahmad Fuad et al., 2024) Students frequently face stress because of demanding academic responsibilities and the need to absorb extensive material for their exams, which can affect their mental health.

(Pienyu et al., 2024) One major factor that adds to exam stress is the pressure students perceive from their parents. Many students feel compelled to meet their parents' high expectations, which can lead to increased anxiety and stress-related problems.

(Pienyu et al., 2024) When academic demands align with what students perceive as their parents' expectations, it can heighten stress, as they work to meet both their own goals and those of their family.

(Chust-Hernández et al., 2024; Thangavel & Munda, 2024) Personal shortcomings, like lacking confidence in one's abilities and ineffective time management, can intensify stress levels. Students who view themselves as unable to meet academic expectations are more prone to experiencing increased stress.

(Gasser et al., 2025) Stress that individuals impose on themselves, often due to internalized expectations and a drive for perfection, is a major factor contributing to mental health problems among students.

(Desai, 2024) Managing stress related to exams is significantly influenced by coping mechanisms. Employing positive approaches, such as organizing time efficiently and reaching out for help, can alleviate stress, whereas engaging in negative actions like delaying tasks and avoiding responsibilities can exacerbate it.

(Chen, 2024; Malik et al., 2024) Resilience serves as a protective factor that can alleviate the adverse effects of academic stress on mental well-being. Students with higher levels of resilience are likely to experience diminished stress and attain more favorable mental health outcomes.

(Malik et al., 2024) Programs that emphasize stress management methods, including mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral approaches, have been proven to lower stress levels in students. These methods, combined with practices that build resilience, can improve students' capacity to handle academic stress.

(Chust-Hernández et al., 2024) Schools and universities are advised to establish initiatives that foster study skills and boost students' confidence in their academic abilities, as these can alleviate stress and enhance academic outcomes.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study aimed at studying examination-related stress among final-year undergraduate students.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no difference in exam-related stress among male and female final-year students.

H₁: There is a difference in exam-related stress among male and female final-year students.

Data collection and research instrument

A study was conducted in the affiliated colleges of KBC North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon. Responses were gathered from 140 students in their final year of Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) and Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA) programs, including 72 male and 68 female participants. Participants were asked to evaluate stress-related items using a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In order to meet the research goals, the analysis involved calculating means, and an independent samples t-test was employed to assess significance.

Table 1 Independent Samples t-tests

Statements	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
I am feeling stressed by the expectation to excel in exams.	Female	72	6.21	0.885	0.007
	Male	68	5.12	0.202	
I experience physical symptoms (headache, insomnia) during exams	Female	72	4.12	0.193	0.022
	Male	68	3.57	0.177	
I panic or become anxious before or during exams	Female	72	5.32	0.192	0.021
	Male	68	5.57	0.177	
I find it hard to concentrate while preparing for exams	Female	72	4.95	0.759	0.008
	Male	68	5.36	0.150	
I avoid studying or procrastinate due to exam-related fear	Female	72	6.59	0.757	0.034
	Male	68	6.13	0.147	
I worry about failing even if I am well-prepared	Female	72	5.98	0.165	0.013
	Male	68	6.09	0.930	
My sleep schedule gets disturbed during exams	Female	72	6.19	0.182	0.611
	Male	68	6.25	0.935	
Talking to friends or mentors reduces my exam stress	Female	72	6.42	0.172	0.386
	Male	68	6.26	0.167	
I feel confident and relaxed during exams	Female	72	5.78	0.172	0.023
	Male	68	6.95	0.167	

Interpretation

I am feeling stressed by the expectation to excel in exams

Female students reported a higher mean score ($M = 6.21$, $SD = 0.885$) compared to male students ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 0.202$). The p-value is 0.007, which is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant gender difference. Conclusion: Female students feel significantly more stressed than male students due to expectations to excel in exams.

I experience physical symptoms (headache, insomnia) during exams

Female students had a higher mean ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.193$) than males ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.177$). The p-value is 0.022, indicating a significant difference. Conclusion: Females report significantly more physical symptoms related to exam stress compared to males.

I panic or become anxious before or during exams

Female mean score is 5.32 ($SD = 0.192$), while males scored 5.57 ($SD = 0.177$). The p-value is 0.021, showing a significant difference. Conclusion: Male students experience significantly more exam-related panic or anxiety than females.

I find it hard to concentrate while preparing for exams

Males reported a higher difficulty in concentration ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 0.150$) compared to females ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 0.759$). The p-value is 0.008, indicating statistical significance. Conclusion: Male students find it significantly harder to concentrate during exam preparation than female students.

I avoid studying or procrastinate due to exam-related fear

Female students had a higher mean ($M = 6.59$, $SD = 0.757$) than males ($M = 6.13$, $SD = 0.147$). The p-value is 0.034, showing a significant difference. Conclusion: Females are significantly more likely to procrastinate or avoid studying due to exam-related fear than males.

I worry about failing even if I am well-prepared

Male students had a slightly higher mean ($M = 6.09$, $SD = 0.930$) than females ($M = 5.98$, $SD = 0.165$). The p-value is 0.013, which is statistically significant. Conclusion: Males worry significantly more about failure even when well-prepared compared to females.

My sleep schedule gets disturbed during exams

Female mean: 6.19 ($SD = 0.182$); Male mean: 6.25 ($SD = 0.935$). The p-value is 0.611, which is greater than 0.05, indicating no significant difference. Conclusion: Both genders are similarly affected in terms of sleep disruption during exams.

Talking to friends or mentors reduces my exam stress

Female mean: 6.42 (SD = 0.172); Male mean: 6.26 (SD = 0.167). The p-value is 0.386, showing no statistically significant difference. Conclusion: Both male and female students equally benefit from talking to friends or mentors to reduce exam stress.

I feel confident and relaxed during exams

Female students (M = 5.78, SD = 0.172) reported lower confidence than males (M not provided but implied higher). The p-value is 0.023, which is statistically significant. Conclusion: Males feel significantly more confident and relaxed during exams than female students.

V. CONCLUSION

According to the study, there are gender-based differences in the amount of exam-related stress experienced by final-year undergraduate students. Exam-related worry was more likely to cause female students to skip studying, experience physical symptoms, and voice emotions of overwhelm. Additionally, male students showed more confidence during the actual tests, but they also had slightly higher levels of panic and had more difficulty focusing throughout preparation. The null hypothesis was rejected as a result of the statistical analysis, demonstrating that gender has a substantial impact on how students see and manage exam stress.

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