

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS AMONG COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION ASPIRANTS

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Abstract

This study focuses on the examination of stress management among aspirants preparing for competitive examinations. The researchers have outlined objectives such as assessing the level of stress management among the aspirants. To highlight the modifications in stress management between male and female aspirants and computing the differences in stress management among those preparing for UPSC, TNPSC and Railway exams. A descriptive survey method was employed and stratified purposive sampling was used to select 120 participants from various institutions in Chennai city. The results were analyzed through percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and ANOVA. The analysis revealed no significant difference in stress management between male and female aspirants nor among those preparing for UPSC, TNPSC, and Railway exams. Nonetheless, a significant interaction was observed between gender and the type of competitive aspirants regarding their stress management.

Keywords: Stress Management, Competitive Aspirants

I.INTRODUCTION

Stress is a common yarn knitted into the material of human existence. From farmers to presidents, everyone experiences stress in their daily existence. According to Webster's dictionary, "Stress encompasses bodily or mental tension and can lead to various diseases among individuals. In medical terminology, stress is associated with physical and psychological issues that contribute to bodily and metal tension". The body's structure can be altered due to stress, which may arise from internal or external sources. These issues can adversely impact an individual's health, manifesting as heart problems, high blood pressure, a compromised immune system, stomach ulcers, strokes, asthma, and heart disease. When it comes to preparing for competitive exams in pursuit of better job opportunities, aspirants often encounter elevated levels of stress. This is primarily due to the high number of competitors and the limited availability of rewarding jobs. A moderate level of stress can serve as a motivator for aspirants, enhancing their effectiveness and helping them achieve

their objectives. However, excessive stress can have detrimental effects on their preparation, impacting their health, goals, and interpersonal relationships, ultimately leading to mental tension among the aspirants.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Graves., et al (2021) have performed a study on the topic of "Gender difference in perceived stress and coping among college students" by implementing convenience sampling and utilizing the Standardised Perceived Stress Scale and Brief Cope for sample selection and administration. The study revealed that female students engaged in more emotion-focused coping strategies than male students, utilizing four specific strategies: self-distraction, emotional support, instrumental support, and venting.

Satpathy., et al (2021) explored the "Prevalence of stress, stressors, and coping strategies among medical undergraduate students in a medical college located in Mumbai," with objectives to assess perceived stress and various stress sources among medical undergraduates. They utilized a cross-sectional approach and purposive sampling to select a sample of 450 students from the first year to the final year. Their results were perceived stress was higher among female medical students, with academic factors being the most significant perceived cause of stress among undergraduate medical students.

Babicka.,et al (2021) conducted a study titled "University students' strategies of coping with stress during the Coronavirus pandemic." The study aimed to explore the coping strategies most frequently employed by students during the pandemic and to examine the relationship between socio-demographic variables and the predominant coping strategies among students. They selected a sample of 577 Polish students from various universities and discovered that the most commonly used coping strategies among these students included acceptance, planning, and seeking emotional support.

Rangarajan (2020) demonstrated research on the "stress, depression, and anxiety levels of UGC-NET aspirants and its impact on their performance." Using a simple random sampling technique, he selected a sample of 100 participants from different coaching institutions. The findings indicated that the participants experienced moderate levels of stress, depression, and anxiety, and there was no significant impact of these factors on their performance.

Samudra (2020) researched the study on "Examination stress, stress management strategies and counselling needs of college level students in Sri Lanka" with the goals of evaluating the factors that lead to exam stress among students, as well as their management strategies and counselling requirements. The research employed a survey method, utilizing a random sampling technique to select a sample of 168 students from the Arts, Science, and Commerce departments. The findings indicate that students experienced mild to moderate levels of stress in the month leading up to their examinations. It was also found that female students faced higher levels of both psychological and physical stress compared to their male counterparts.

Joseph., et al. (2020) conducted a study titled "Assessment of academic stress and its coping mechanisms among medical undergraduate students in a large Mid-Western university" aimed at analyzing the complexities of academic stress, its underlying factors, sources, and the array of coping styles that students adopt to alleviate academic pressure. In addition, 3.8% of students reported inadequate coping strategies, 95% maintained average coping strategies, and 1.2% displayed proficient coping strategies.

Venkatraman (2019) conducted research aimed at identifying the sources of stress and assessing the coping strategies utilized by students preparing for competitive entrance exams in medical and engineering coaching institutes in Delhi. The study's findings indicated that 48% of the stress originated from academic pressures, while 39% was attributed to parental expectations, along with 8% from personal issues and 5% from environmental factors. To cope with this stress, aspirants employed various strategies, including practicing yoga, listening to music, browsing the internet, engaging in conversations with like-minded individuals, participating in outdoor games, communicating with their parents and practicing meditation.

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III. NEED OF THE STUDY

In this highly competitive world, everyone aspires to reach the highest point. The competitive mentality among individuals generates various types of issues among them. These issues may be psychological, physiological or personal. Research has revealed that aspirants preparing for competitive exams often suffer from psychological problems such as anxiety, depression and stress. It is important to alleviate these psychological issues or to provide guidance on how to manage the stress. As a result, researchers have resolved to carry out a study focused on "Strategies for Managing Stress among Competitive Examination Aspirants."

On another note, most studies have been carried out in the domains of medicine, engineering, UGC-NET and examinations for school and college students, as well as young employees to assess stress, depression, anxiety and strategies for managing stress. Hence, the current study places emphasis on stress management among different competitive examination aspirants, including UPSC, TNPSC and Railway. The theoretical framework elucidates the conceptual underpinnings that inform the research and guide the analysis.

IV. OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the level of stress management in individuals preparing for competitive examinations.
2. To identify the differences in stress management practices between male and female aspirants for competitive examinations.
3. To evaluate the differences in stress management among aspirants from UPSC, TNPSC and Railway competitive examinations.
4. To study how gender interacts with various groups (UPSC, TNPSC and Railway) of competitive examination aspirants in terms of their stress management strategies.

V. HYPOTHESES OF STUDY

H01: No significant interaction in stress management between male and female aspirants preparing for competitive examinations.

H02: No significant interaction in stress among UPSC, TNPSC and Railway competitive aspirants.

H03: No significant interaction in stress management between gender and the type of competitive aspirants.

VI. METHODOLOGY

Method: The current study has adopted a descriptive survey method to investigate the variations in stress management practices between males and females, as well as among aspirants for UPSC, TNPSC and Railway competitive examinations.

Sample and sampling technique: In this study, the researcher has chosen 120 samples from various coaching institutions located in the Chennai district through stratified purposive sampling. The methodology employed in this investigation adheres rigorously to established protocols, ensuring the validity of the results.

Table1: Distribution of Sample

Data Categories	Levels	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	60	50%
	Female	60	50%
Type of Competitive Aspirants	UPSC	40	33.33%
	TNPSC	40	33.33%
	Railway	40	33.33%

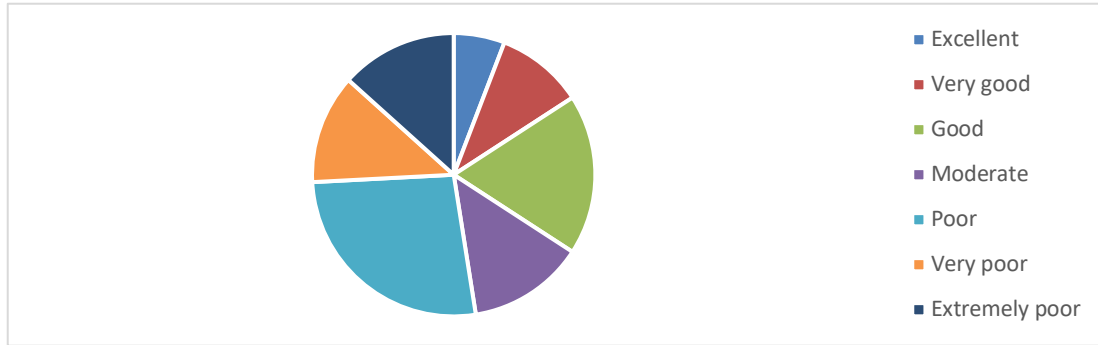
VII. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

1. To assess the level of stress management in individuals preparing for competitive examinations.

Table-2

Rangescore	Stress Management Level	Frequency	Percentage
146 and above	Excellent	7	5.83
134 – 145	Very good	12	14.4
121 - 133	Good	22	26.4
105 – 120	Moderate	16	13.33
92 - 104	Poor	32	26.66
80 – 91	Very poor	15	12.5
79 and below	Extremely poor	16	19.2

Fig - 1



From the analysis of table-2 and figure-1, it is clear that 5.83% of aspirants achieve an excellent level of stress management. Additionally, 14.40% are rated as having a very good level, 26.405% are recognized for having a good level, and 13.33% are at a moderate level. Moreover, 26.66% of aspirants are identified as having a poor level, while 12.50% are categorized as very poor. Lastly, 19.20% of aspirants are classified as having an extremely poor level of stress management.

2. To identify the differences in stress management practices between male and female aspirants for competitive examinations.

Table 3

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Remark
Stress Management	Male	60	108.12	28.55	118	0.47	Not Significant
	Female	60	105.85	23.57			

From the above table 3, it is clear that the t value for stress management is 0.47, which is not significant at the 0.05 level with $df=118$. This indicates that the mean scores of stress management between male and female aspirants did not differ significantly. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the mean score of stress management between male and female aspirants is not rejected. Conversely, from a mean perception, male aspirants (108.12) reveal a greater level of stress management compared to female aspirants (105.85).

3. To evaluate the differences in stress management among aspirants from UPSC, TNPSC and Railway competitive examinations.

Table 4

Sources of variation	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F value	Remark
Between Groups	686.817	2	343.408	0.503	Not significant
Within groups	7984.775	117	682.460		
Total	80534.592	119			

It is seen from the above table 4 that the mean score of stress management among UPSC, TNPSC and Railway competitive examination aspirants is not significant (0.503; $df=118$; $P>0.05$). Thus, we embrace the null hypothesis indicating that there is no considerable variation in stress management practices among those preparing for the UPSC, TNPSC, and Railway competitive examinations.

4. To study how gender interacts with various groups (UPSC, TNPSC, and Railway) of competitive examination aspirants in terms of their stress management strategies.

Table 5

Source	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Correct model	5132.642 ^a	5	1026.528	1.552	.179
Intercept	1377520.408	1	1377520.408	2082.669	.000
Gender	541.875	1	541.875	.819	.367
Type of competitive aspirants	686.875	2	343.408	.519	.596
Gender* type of competitive examination aspirants	3903.950	2	1951.975	2.951*	.056
Error	75401.950	114	661.421		
Total	1458055.000	120			
Corrected total	80534.592	119			

Upon reviewing the table, it is clear that the f value for gender is recorded at 0.819, which is not significant at the 0.05 level of significance. The f value for the type of competitive aspirants among students is 0.519, which also does not achieve significance at the 0.05 level. On the contrary, the f value for the interaction between gender and the classification of competitive aspirants in relation to stress management is 2.951, which is significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis

is rejected. It is concluded that any differences noted in the interaction between gender and the type of competitive aspirants are due to sampling error.

VIII. CONCLUSION

It is indisputable that psychological issues have been on the rise in the human sphere. Students and those preparing for various examinations are grappling with these challenges in their routine lives. How can we resolve these issues? What approaches can be taken to eradicate these difficulties? What protocols should students follow to ensure these problems are effectively addressed? To overcome these challenges, we should aim to instill a comprehension of various stress management strategies among aspirants, allowing them to resolve their issues independently. This study examines the stress management strategies utilized by aspirants of various competitive examinations.

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