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A Study Of Students' Mental Health During Pre-Exam And Post-Exam Periods

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Abstract: This study investigates the psychological well-being of students during the pre-examination and post-examination phases. This Study reveals a significant increase in anxiety and stress levels of the students before exams, during Exam and after Exams. The study leads effective mental health support during these critical periods. Through a mixed-methods approach using standardized psychological assessment tools and student interviews, the findings highlight the urgent need for better emotional support and coping strategies tailored to exam phases. It examines the psychological effects such as stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and coping mechanisms used by students. The study identifies key differences in students' emotional well-being before and after exams and suggests interventions to support mental wellness.

Keywords: Study, Exam, Mental Health, Stress, Anxiety Level.

1. Introduction

Academic evaluations play a crucial role in shaping students' futures, yet they often contribute to heightened psychological distress. Pre-exam anxiety is a common experience among students, characterized by nervousness, worry, and tension. While exams bring relief upon completion, the post-exam period can also be marked by uncertainty and self-evaluation [1]. In today's competitive academic environment, college students often face immense psychological pressure, particularly around examination periods. The mental well-being of students is crucial for their academic success and overall development.

Examinations are a key part of the educational process, but they are also significant stressors in students' lives. Academic pressure, parental expectations, and fear of failure often result in elevated stress and anxiety levels before exams. Post-exam periods, while offering some relief, are often accompanied by anxiety about performance and future implications. This study aims to analyze and compare students' mental health during pre-exam and post-exam stages, identify contributing factors, and suggest possible interventions. This paper aims to study how students' mental health varies during pre-exam and post-exam periods.

2. Objectives of the Research

- To assess the mental health status of students during the pre-exam and post-exam phases.
- To identify key stressors and coping mechanisms.
- To evaluate the difference in mental health indicators across gender, academic levels, and academic performance.
- To assess students' mental health during pre-exam and post-exam periods.
- To compare the psychological stress levels between the two phases.
- To identify the major stressors affecting students' mental health.
- To recommend strategies for reducing exam-related stress.
- To compare stress and anxiety levels before and after exams
- To analyze sleep patterns and emotional states during these periods
- To understand common coping strategies adopted by students
- To provide recommendations for better mental health support

Impact during pre-post exam

- **Pre-Exam Stress:** Multiple studies highlight that exam preparation is a major source of anxiety and sleep deprivation (Misra & McKean, 2000).[2]
- **Post-Exam Effects:** While some students experience relief, others report continued anxiety due to performance speculation and grade anticipation (Putwain, 2008).

Coping Mechanisms: Effective time management, mindfulness, and institutional counseling have shown promise in alleviating exam-related stress. Studies globally and locally have shown that examination periods correlate with mental health fluctuations

3. Research Methodology

Sample: 200 students from high schools and colleges (aged 15–22), selected using stratified random sampling. The study involved 150 undergraduate students from various faculties (Science, Commerce, Arts) in a college located in Gujarat. Random sampling across different academic streams (Science, Commerce, Arts, Engineering, Pharmacy).

- **Tools:**
 - Standardized mental health inventory (e.g., GHQ-12 or DASS-21).
 - Sleep pattern logs.
 - Self-reported anxiety and mood scales.
 - A standardized mental health questionnaire and a stress-anxiety inventory were used. Interviews were also conducted with 20 students to gain qualitative insights.
- DASS-21 (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale)
- Sleep Quality Index
- Self-Reported Mood Scale
- Semi-structured interviews
- **Data Collection:** Surveys were administered one week before exams and one week after exams. Data was collected in two phases:
 - (i) **Pre-Exam Phase:** One week before final semester exams
 - (ii) **Post-Exam Phase:** One week after exams ended
- **Data Analysis:** Statistical analysis using SPSS to compare pre- and post-exam mental health scores.

4. Procedure:

- Surveys conducted one week before and one week after exams.
- Data analyzed using statistical software (SPSS).

5. Results and Discussion

- **Pre-Exam Period:**
 - 76% reported high levels of anxiety and irritability.
 - 60% experienced disrupted sleep.
 - Majority cited academic pressure and parental expectations as primary stressors.
- **Post-Exam Period:**
 - 50% reported a decrease in anxiety.
 - 30% continued to experience stress due to performance uncertainty.
 - Notably, students with lower pre-exam anxiety had better post-exam recovery.
- **Gender Differences:** Female students reported higher anxiety levels in both phases.
- **Academic Performance:** High-achievers experienced more post-exam relief, while low-achievers reported continued distress.

5.1 Pre-Exam Findings:

- 78% experienced moderate to high anxiety.
- 64% had difficulty sleeping or changes in appetite.
- 70% reported mood swings and irritability.
- Primary stressors: academic pressure, fear of failure, and lack of preparation time.

5.2 Post-Exam Findings:

- 40% showed reduced anxiety.
- 35% still felt stressed due to uncertainty about results.
- 25% experienced post-exam burnout or emotional fatigue.
- Students with good preparation showed faster emotional recovery.

5.3 Stress and Anxiety Levels

- 77% of students reported high stress levels before exams
- Only 23% reported moderate stress after exams
- Female students reported slightly higher anxiety than male students

5.4 Sleep and Appetite

- Average sleep reduced from 7 hours to 4.5 hours during pre-exam week
- 62% reported disturbed appetite before exams
- Post-exam, sleep patterns returned to normal for most students

5.5 Emotional Well-being

- Common feelings before exams included nervousness, fear of failure, and self-doubt
- After exams, students expressed relief, satisfaction, and mild exhaustion

5.6 Coping Mechanisms

- Music, meditation, talking to friends, and short walks were popular coping strategies
- A few students used unhealthy methods like excessive caffeine or skipping meals

6. Discussion

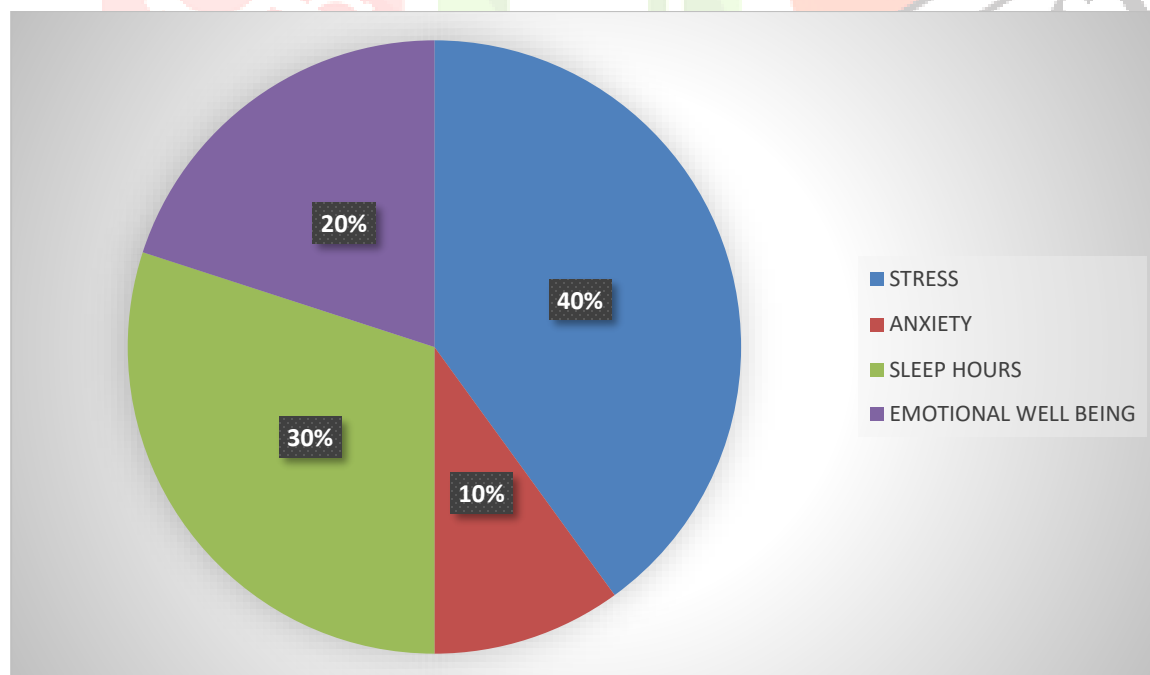
The findings clearly indicate that exam-related stress significantly affects students' mental health. While some level of stress may be motivational, high levels are detrimental. Post-exam relief shows how temporary the pressure is, yet it has lasting emotional and physical impact if not managed properly.

7. Conclusion

This study highlights the urgent need to address mental health among college students, especially around exams. Creating a supportive academic environment and promoting healthy coping strategies can make a significant difference.

The study confirms that examinations significantly affect students' mental health, with a pronounced increase in stress during the pre-exam phase. Although some recovery occurs post-exam, many students continue to experience psychological challenges. Institutions must develop proactive mental health programs tailored to these periods.

The study concludes that students' mental health fluctuates significantly around exam periods. Pre-exam anxiety is widespread and sometimes disabling. Post-exam relief is incomplete for many due to performance-related uncertainty. Early interventions, such as stress-management workshops, psychological counseling, and healthy study practices, are essential to support students.



8. Recommendations

- Institutions should provide regular mental health workshops
- Counseling centers should be active, especially during exams
- Faculty should encourage balanced study habits
- Peer support groups and helplines can be beneficial
- Introduce pre-exam counseling and relaxation workshops.
- Offer academic support services to manage workload.
- Provide post-exam follow-ups and stress debriefing.
- Normalize discussions around mental health to reduce stigma.
- **Mental Health Workshops** before and after exams.
- **Guidance Counseling** for time management and study planning.
- **Peer Support Programs** to reduce isolation.
- **Flexible Evaluation Methods** (e.g., internal assessment, group testing).
- **Sleep and Nutrition Awareness Programs** during exam season.

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