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EXAM ANXIETY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract. Exam anxiety is a common psychological barrier that negatively affects students' academic performance. This study examines the cognitive and emotional aspects of exam-related anxiety and how it limits learners' ability to demonstrate their true knowledge and skills. Research shows that increased anxiety disrupts working memory, reduces concentration, and hampers information retrieval, leading to lower achievement. The thesis identifies key contributing factors—including poor preparation strategies, high-stakes testing, negative self-perceptions, and rigid, teacher-centered evaluation. Recognizing these influences helps educators apply effective interventions such as formative assessment, stress-management techniques, supportive feedback, and

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well-being programs. Reducing exam anxiety is crucial for creating fair learning conditions and ensuring that performance reflects competence rather than emotional distress.

Keywords: *exam anxiety, academic performance, student achievement, psychological factors, learning outcomes, assessment, stress management, education.*

Introduction

Today, considerable attention is being paid worldwide to improving educational quality and reforming student assessment systems in higher education institutions. While new curricula and changes in examination procedures have shown positive outcomes, they have also led to stress-related problems among students. Moreover, increasing expectations and pressure are placed on students to ensure that they can effectively perform their future professional roles. (Yusefzadeh, Amirzadeh Iranagh and Nabilou, 2019)

University teaching represents the highest level of professional training and knowledge evaluation. Therefore, it requires the implementation of comprehensive teaching mechanisms and practical training activities (Wadi et al., 2022). Consequently, students' academic achievements play an important role in the development of a country, as higher education constitutes the final and most advanced stage of formal learning (Norhidayah, A., Kamaruzaman, J., et al., 2009). The quality of education in these institutions is assessed through students' contributions to society and the state.

Indeed, pre-exam anxiety is one of the main factors that prevents students from adequately demonstrating their knowledge. Emotional tension manifests physiologically during examinations, such as increased blood pressure, rapid heartbeat,

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nausea, trembling, and even memory impairment. As a result, exam failure and, in some cases, suicidal behaviors are frequently reported. (Zhang and Henderson, 2014)

It is widely assumed that medical students experience more stress than their peers in other fields. This may be attributed to the high level of pressure and responsibility inherent in medical education. Test situations, in particular, are among the strongest triggers of psychological distress. Fear of exam results, low self-confidence, responsibility and pressure, as well as sensitivity to peers' performance, can severely affect students' psychological well-being (Shin et al., 2023). Consequently, academic difficulties and dropout cases become more common, negatively affecting societal and national development. Clear examples include insufficient time for exam preparation, dissatisfaction with grades, and a decline in academic performance. In some cases, students also report that exam questions do not align with the curriculum, which further increases test anxiety. When faced with unfamiliar topics, students may panic, feel fear and anxiety, and subsequently fail to answer even the questions they know well.

The purpose of this article is to examine the impact of pre-exam psychological conditions on students' academic performance. The paper analyzes the causes of pressure and anxiety before tests among medical and law students and compares research findings from previous studies.

Methodology

This research consists of two stages:

1. analysis of empirical findings, and
2. comparative evaluation.

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Both stages are based on the analysis of scholarly research and large-scale survey data.

Research object: social relations related to assessing the impact of students' pre-exam psychological states on their academic outcomes.

Research subject: the effect of stress-coping strategies, neuroticism, and resilience on academic productivity.

Literature Review

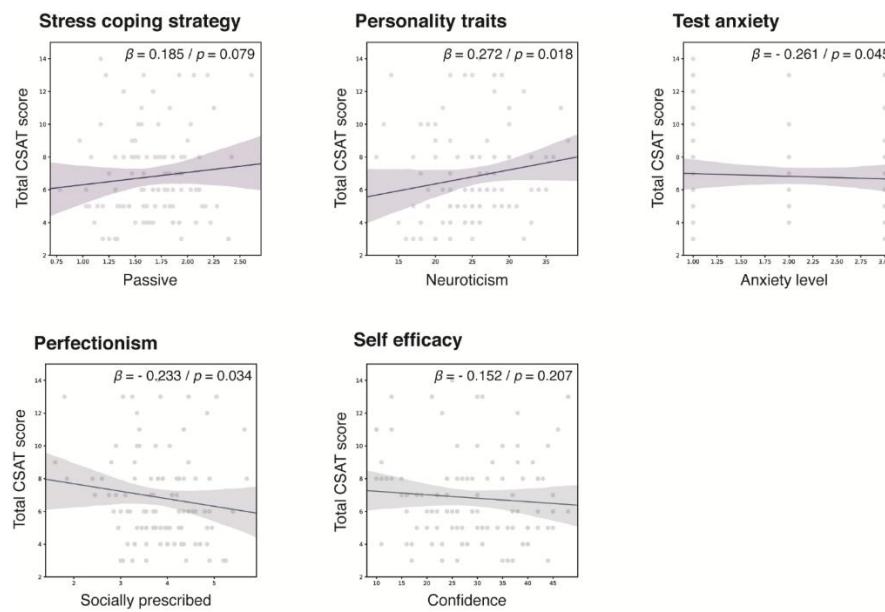
Researchers Yusefzadeh, H., Amirzadeh Iranagh, J., and Nabilou, B., in their article "The effect of study preparation on test anxiety and performance", evaluated the impact of pre-exam excitement and pressure on academic results and conducted a large-scale study in Iran. They emphasized the importance of this issue for national development and mainly focused on medical students, who are considered the most vulnerable to stress during their studies (Yusefzadeh, Amirzadeh Iranagh and Nabilou, 2019).

Wadi, M., Yusoff, M.S.B., Abdul Rahim, A.F., and Lah, N.A.Z.N. (2022), in their article "Factors affecting test anxiety: a qualitative analysis of medical students", examined the psychological and physiological effects of test situations on learners. Their findings revealed two groups of students: positive-minded and negative-minded. The researchers concluded that positive-minded students cope more easily with exam pressure and often achieve better results, while negative-minded students frequently face learning difficulties and experience a more challenging preparation process. Additionally, constant exposure to stress and the inability to manage it may contribute to various health problems (Wadi et al., 2022).

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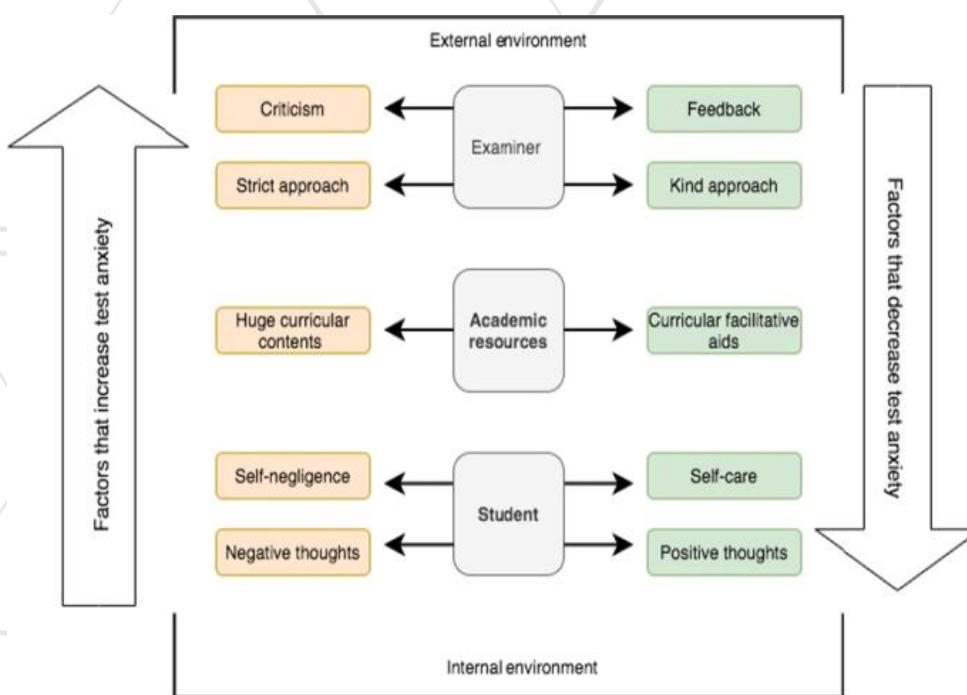
Psychologists such as Shin, J., Lee, H.J., Park, H., Hong, Y., Song, Y.K., Yoon, D.U., and Oh, S. (2023) conducted a study in Korea using cluster analysis. They found that perfectionists formed a distinct group—these students experienced the highest level of pre-exam psychological strain and were often dissatisfied with their results. The psychological factors showed significant differences between the AHA and comparison groups after adjusting for gender (all p-values < 0.05), and these differences remained significant after controlling for both age and gender (all p-values < 0.01) (Shin et al., 2023).

Results



These findings are based on the research conducted by Shin, J., Lee, H.J., Park, H., Hong, Y., Song, Y.K., Yoon, D.U., and Oh, S. (Shin et al., 2023)

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These findings represent the analytical results presented by Wadi, M., Yusoff, M.S.B., Abdul Rahim, A.F., and Lah, N.A.Z.N. (Wadi et al., 2022)

When comparing the two sets of results, it becomes clear that students with a positive mindset are generally more capable of coping with academic pressure than those with predominantly negative thoughts. Students who frequently internalize negative emotions can, in many cases, be compared to perfectionists. This is because highly responsible students who place intense pressure on themselves for the sake of achievement tend to experience negative emotions more quickly and easily. Consequently, their productivity and academic performance decline. (Wadi et al., 2022).

Discussion

Nowadays, ensuring access to quality education has become one of the highest priorities within the governance systems of many countries. In this regard, strengthening

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young people's respect for education, increasing their sense of personal responsibility, and creating all necessary conditions for their academic development are considered key obligations of the state. Although interest in higher education among the youth of Uzbekistan has been steadily increasing, in some cases, heightened exam-related anxiety and pressure lead to various difficulties. As a result, signs of excessive depression and stress can be observed among young members of society. Such psychological changes and pressures inevitably influence both societal and national development. For example, weakened problem-solving skills, difficulties in teamwork, persistent irritability, and health issues (such as high blood pressure, heart conditions, or abnormal hemoglobin levels) may occur.

Previous studies have shown that achieving high academic performance requires additional psychological characteristics. Resilience serves as a protective factor against test anxiety and academic burnout. Resilience refers to the ability to reduce stress and to remain less affected by stressful circumstances. Subscales such as self-regulation, social skills, and positivity constitute important components of resilience. Individuals with higher resilience are capable of overcoming difficulties, transforming them into positive experiences, and ultimately achieving stronger academic outcomes.

Although numerous studies have provided theoretical and scientific explanations regarding the factors that reduce stress and the sources of stress itself, practical mechanisms for effectively implementing these findings are still lacking.

In this context, it is also crucial for young people to maintain a healthy level of self-discipline and personal expectations. Indeed, examination processes may be challenging and stressful; however, they can also serve as a stimulus for growth. For instance, some students tend to study seriously only immediately before examinations,

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showing low engagement with learning beforehand. Therefore, instead of focusing solely on pre-exam interventions, it is important to introduce support mechanisms after the exam as well. In particular, working individually with students who have underperformed and developing strategies to improve their academic motivation would be beneficial.

Recommendations:

1. Organize dedicated counseling or guidance sessions to help students manage psychological changes before examinations, and provide brief explanations regarding the exam structure.
2. Monitor students who show a high tendency toward stress.
3. Pay special attention to the construction of exam questions, arranging them hierarchically from easy to difficult.
4. Provide official clarification to counteract baseless rumors regarding the difficulty of upcoming exams and ensure that test content remains within the curriculum.

If these measures are implemented systematically, students who are just beginning to contribute to society will receive the necessary support to maintain their motivation for learning. In addition, such efforts will help them develop resilience against psychological pressure and academic stress.

Conclusion

In conclusion, anxiety and fear experienced during the exam preparation period hinder students' ability to concentrate and manage their study time effectively. If this condition escalates beyond control, students may even cause harm to themselves, which

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ultimately affects societal development. In many cases, individuals who are more prone to stress are also the ones who are highly responsible—indicating that the risk associated with this issue is genuinely significant. The findings confirm that physiological reactions during examinations—such as increased blood pressure and rapid heart rate—negatively influence performance, and these effects may also extend to students' future success.

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