A Psychological Study of Stress and Self-esteem Among Students Preparing for Competitive Exams

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Abstract- The main objective of the research was to conduct a psychological study on stress and self-esteem among students preparing for competitive exams. The researcher selected two groups: one preparing for UPSC exams and the other preparing for GPSC exams. There are 240 students preparing for competitive exams in both the groups. Data was collected from Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. The scale used for data collection is the Personal Data Sheet and two Components of the psychological Well-being Scale. This scale was developed by Bhogle and Prakash (1885), the Gujarati translation of this scale was done by Suvera (2001). 2×2×2 factorial design was used. And the data was analyzed by 'F' test 'r' correlation. The findings show that there is a significant effect on the stress of students preparing for UPSC exams and students preparing for GPSC exams. Similarly, 6 to 12 months and 1 to 2 years of preparation time for the exam do not have any significant effect on the stress. But self-study and coaching study methods have a significant effect on the stress in students preparing for the exam. There is no significant effect on the self-esteem of students preparing for the UPSC exam and GPSC exam. Similarly, 6 to 12 months and 1 to 2 years of preparation time for the exam do not have any significant effect on the self-esteem. But self-study and coaching study methods have a significant effect on the self-esteem of students preparing for the exam. Correlation Analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between stress and self-esteem. Suggesting that if students feel low stress it slightly increase self-esteem.

Key words: Psychological well-being, Stress, Self-esteem Students preparing for competitive exams, Exam preparation time, Study method

I. INTRODUCTION

Today's era is becoming an era of competitiveness. Competition is seen in many fields everywhere. For which the desire to progress gradually increases for the youth. Due to which competitiveness is seen in many fields. The prevalence of which is increasing a lot. Due to which the youth across the country prepare for a long time with hard work, uncertainty and anxiety. For example, to succeed in many competitive examinations like UPSC, CPSC, Railway, Banking, they need to be strong not only academically but also emotionally and mentally. During this preparation, students have to face many situations. Such as the pressure of success in examinations, constantly increasing competition, time management, family pressure, social expectations increase the stress of the students. The increasing stress has a direct impact on the self-esteem of the students. Which affects their studies and life satisfaction.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1."Study of stress and coping strategies in competitive entrance exams aspirants attending medical and engineering coaching institutes in Delhi"-Vanita Mann, GN Tiwari, Loknath Mishra (2021).

The study by Mann, Tiwari, and Mishra (2021) examined 380 students preparing for medical and engineering entrance exams in Delhi to identify their sources of stress and coping strategies; results showed that academic pressure (48%) and parental pressure (39%) were the major stressors, along with some personal and environmental factors, and students coped through yoga, music, internet use, talking with

peers, outdoor games, communication with parents, and meditation; the researchers also suggested additional strategies such as visualization, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, organization, and self-hypnosis, highlighting the study's value for helping parents, teachers, and future researchers better support students facing competitive exam stress.

2."Examining the Impact of Emotional Intelligence and Self Efficacy on Stress of Students Preparing for Competitive Examinations" -Charvi Bajaj, Seema Singh (2025).

This study explores the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI), self-efficacy, and stress levels among students preparing for competitive examinations. Emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions (Goleman, 1995), plays a significant role in regulating stress, especially in high-pressure academic environments. Self-efficacy, described by Bandura (1977) as an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations, is hypothesized to affect how students cope with stress during exam preparation. This research investigates how emotional intelligence and self-efficacy predicts stress levels, with a particular focus on students preparing for competitive exams. A sample of university students was surveyed to assess their EI, self-efficacy, and perceived stress. Results suggest that higher emotional intelligence and stronger self-efficacy are negatively correlated with stress, meaning students with higher EI and self-efficacy experience lower stress levels. This research highlights the importance of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy in promoting better stress management among students and suggests that interventions targeting these factors could help reduce stress during exam preparations

III.   OBJECTIVE

1. To obtain information about the stress and self-esteem of students preparing for competitive exams.
 2. To obtain information about the stress and self-esteem of students in the context of the time of preparation for competitive exams.
 3. To obtain information about the stress and self-esteem of students in the context of the study method of competitive exams.

4. To obtain information about the stress and self-esteem of students in the context of the daily study hours of students preparing for competitive exams.
5. To obtain information about the stress and self-esteem of students in the context of family support of students preparing for competitive exams.

IV.   HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no difference in the stress and self-esteem of students preparing for competitive exams.
2. There is no difference in the stress and self-esteem of students with respect to the time spent preparing for competitive exams.
3. There is no difference in the stress and self-esteem of students with respect to the study method used by students preparing for competitive exams.
4. There is no difference in the type of preparation for competitive exams, the time of preparation, and the importance of mutual interaction on self-esteem.
5. There is no difference in the type of preparation for competitive exams, the emphasis on the study method, and the importance of mutual interaction on self-esteem.
6. There is no difference in the time of preparation for competitive exams, the emphasis on the study method, and the importance of mutual interaction on self-esteem.
7. There is no difference in the type of preparation for competitive exams, the time, the emphasis on the study method, and the importance of mutual interaction on self-esteem.
8. There is no difference in the stress and self-esteem of students with respect to the hours of daily study used by students preparing for competitive exams.
9. There is no difference in the stress and self-esteem of students with respect to family support used by students preparing for competitive exams.
10.there is no significant correlation between stress and self-esteem among students.

V.   METHODOLOGY

Sampling selection:
In this research, sample selection was done through stratified random sampling. 240 students preparing for competitive exams were selected as the sample. The respondents were selected from Ahmedabad and

Gandhinagar. 120 students preparing for UPSC and 120 students preparing for GPSC, 60 students preparing for the exam for 6 to 12 months and 60 students preparing for the exam for 1 to 2 years, 30 students preparing for the exam through self-study method and 30 students preparing for the exam through coaching method were selected as the sample.

Tool Used:
The following tools were used in the present Research.

Personal information Sheet
Information about the type of competitive exam, exam preparation time, and study method was collected from students preparing for competitive exams through a personal information form.

Scale for Psychological Well-being
This scale was developed by bhogle and Prakash (1885). this Questionnaire has been translated into Gujarati by Pankaj Suvera.

Statistical Analysis:
Statistical Analysis of the Present research was done by 'F' Test & Correlation.

VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF STRESS

Table-1 The mean and standard deviation of stress scores were calculated with reference to the type of competitive exam, time of preparation, and study method

Self- study			UPSC		GPSC	
			6 to 12 months	1 to 2 years	6 to 12 months	1 to 2 years
	Mean		0.80	0.73	0.63	1.40
	SD		0.85	0.83	0.81	0.77
Coaching	N		30	30	30	30
	Mean		1.47	1.27	1.53	1.77
	SD		0.78	0.83	0.73	0.63
	N		30	30	30	30

Table-2 The findings from the 2×2×2 factorial analysis of stress based on type of competitive exam, time of preparation, and study method are shown in the table below

Source of variables	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
type of competitive exam - A	4.267	1	4.267	7.020	**
Time of preparation- B	2.017	1	2.017	3.318	NS
study method- C	22.817	1	22.817	37.542	**
A×B	6.017	1	6.017	9.900	**
A× C	0.017	1	0.017	0.027	NS
B× C	1.667	1	1.667	2.742	NS
A×B×C	0.600	1	0.600	0.987	NS
SSW	141.000	232	0.608		
SST	178.400	239			

Table-3 The differences between the mean scores of psychological stress in relation to the type of competitive exam, time of preparation, and study method are presented in the table below

Independent variable	N	Mean	Difference Between mean
UPSC A1	120	1.07	-0.26
GPSC A2	120	1.33	
6 to 12 Months B1	120	1.29	-0.18

|			
1 to 2 years B2	120	1.11	
Self-Study C1	120	0.89	-0.62
Coaching C2	120	1.51	

- Students' Stress in relation to the type of preparation for competitive exams:
  When the value of 'F' test was examined in this study. As per Table No. 2, the value of 'F' is 7.020 which is significant at 0.01 level. As per Table No. 3, the difference in the mean score between the students preparing for UPSC exam and the students preparing for GPSC exam is 1.07 and 1.33 respectively. Which is statistically significant. Therefore, the first hypothesis is rejected here.

- Stress of students with respect to the time of preparation for competitive exam: -
  When the value of F-test was examined, as per Table No. 2, the value of 'F' is 3.318 which is not significant. As per Table No. 3, the difference in mean score between the times of preparation for competitive exam 6 to 12 months and 1 to 2 years is 1.29 and 1.11 respectively. Which is not statistically significant. So here the second hypothesis is accepted.

- Stress of students in terms of study method: -
  When the value of F test was checked. As per table no. 2 the 'F' value is 37.542 which is found to be significant at 0.01 level. As per table no. 3, the difference in stress between self-study and

coaching study method is 0.89 and 1.51 respectively. Which is statistically significant. So here the third hypothesis is rejected.

- Type of preparation for competitive exam, preparation time and stress:
  When the value of F test was checked. As per table no. 2 the 'F' value is 9.900 which is significant at 0.01 level. So here the fourth hypothesis is rejected.

- Type of preparation for competitive exam, study method and stress:
  When the value of F test was checked. As per table no. 2 the 'F' value is 0.027 which is not significant. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is accepted here.

- Exam preparation time, study method and stress:
  When the value of F test was checked. According to Table No. 2, the 'F' value is 2.742 which is not significant. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis is accepted here.

- Competitive exam preparation type, time, study method and stress:
  When the value of F test was checked. According to Table No. 2, the 'F' value is 0.987 which is not significant. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis is accepted here.

Chart no-1, demographic charactracteristics of students with reference to exam type, time and method
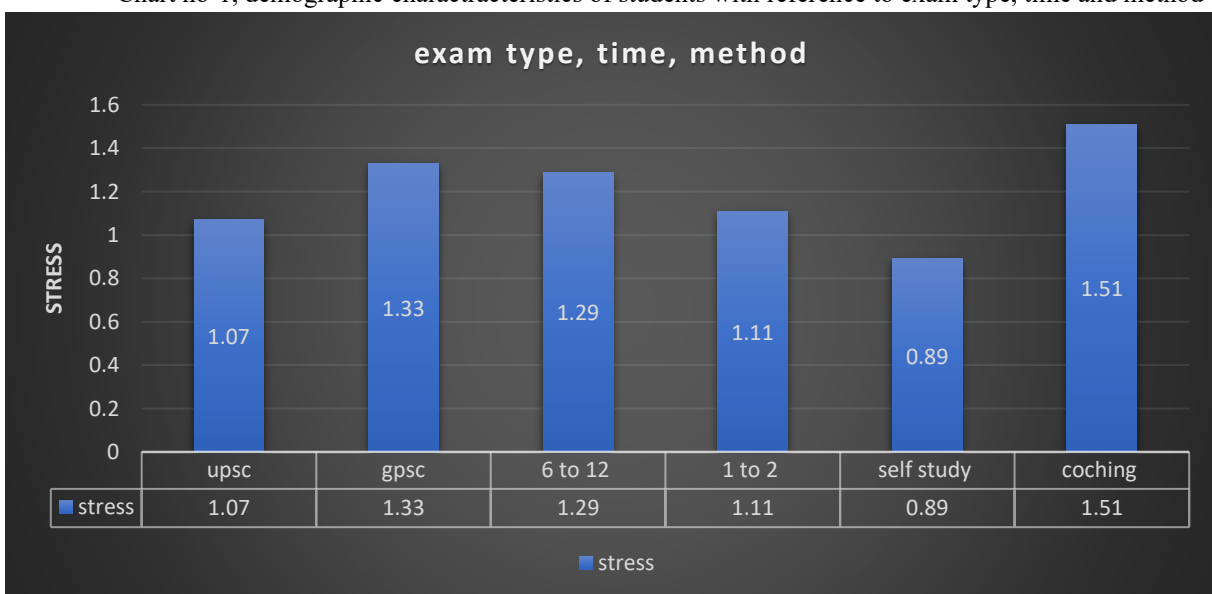
VII.   SELF-ESTEEM

Table-4 The mean and standard deviation of self-esteem scores were calculated with reference to the type of competitive exam, time of preparation, and study method

Self- study		UPSC		GPSC	
		6 to 12 months	1 to 2 years	6 to 12 months	1 to 2 years
	Mean	1.47	1.30	1.07	1.60
	SD	0.57	0.65	0.78	0.62
Coaching	N	30	30	30	30
	Mean	1.6	1.53	1.83	1.6
	SD	0.56	0.73	0.38	0.56
	N	30	30	30	30

Table-5 The findings from the 2×2×2 factorial analysis of stress based on type of competitive exam, time of preparation, and study method are shown in the table below

Source of variables	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
type of competitive exam - A	0.150	1	0.150	0.392	NS
time of preparation- B	0.017	1	0.017	0.044	NS
study method- C	4.817	1	4.817	12.575	**
A×B	1.067	1	1.067	2.785	NS
A× C	0.600	1	0.600	1.566	NS
B× C	1.667	1	1.667	4.351	**
A×B×C	2.817	1	2.817	7.353	**
SSW	88.867	232	0.383		
SST	100.000	239			

Table-6 *The differences between the mean scores of psychological stress in relation to the type of competitive exam, time of preparation, and study method are presented in the table below*

Independent variable	N	Mean	Difference Between mean
UPSC A1	120	1.47	-0.05
GPSC A2	120	1.52	
6 to 12 Months B1	120	1.51	
1 to 2 years B2	120	1.49	0.02
Self-Study C1	120	1.36	
Coaching C2	120	1.64	-0.28

> Students' self-esteem in relation to the type of preparation for competitive exams

In this study, the value of 'F' test was checked. As per Table No. 5, the 'F' value is 0.392 which is not significant. As per Table No. 6, the -0.05 difference in self-esteem between students preparing for UPSC exam and students preparing for GPSC exam is 1.47

and 1.52 respectively. Which is not statistically significant. So here the first hypothesis is accepted.

➢ Self-esteem of students with respect to the time of preparation for competitive exam: -
When the value of F-test was checked. As per Table No. 5, the 'F' value is 0.044 which is not significant. As per Table No. 6, the 0.02 difference in self-esteem between the times of preparation for competitive exam 6 to 12 months and 1 to 2 years is 1.51 and 1.49 respectively. Which is not statistically significant. So here the second hypothesis is accepted.

➢ Self-esteem of students with respect to study method: -When the value of F test was checked. As per Table No. 5, the 'F' value is 12.575 which is found to be significant at 0.01 level. As per Table No. 6, the difference in self-esteem between self-study and coaching study method is 0.28, 1.36 and 1.64 respectively. Which is statistically significant. Therefore, the third hypothesis is rejected here.

➢ Type of preparation for competitive exam, preparation time and self-esteem:
When the value of F test was checked. As per table No. 5, the 'F' value is 2.785 which is not significant. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is accepted here.

➢ Type of preparation for competitive exam, study method and self-esteem:
When the value of F test was checked. As per Table No. 5, the 'F' value is 1.566 which is not significant. So here the fifth hypothesis is accepted.

➢ Exam preparation time, study method and self-esteem:
When the value of F test was checked. As per Table No. 5, the 'F' value is 4.351 which is significant at 0.01 level. So here the sixth hypothesis was rejected.

➢ Competitive exam preparation type, time, study method and self-esteem:
When the value of F test was checked. As per Table No. 5, the 'F' value is 7.353 which is significant at 0.01 level. So here the seventh hypothesis was rejected.

Chart no-2, demographic charactracteristics of students with reference to exam type, time and method
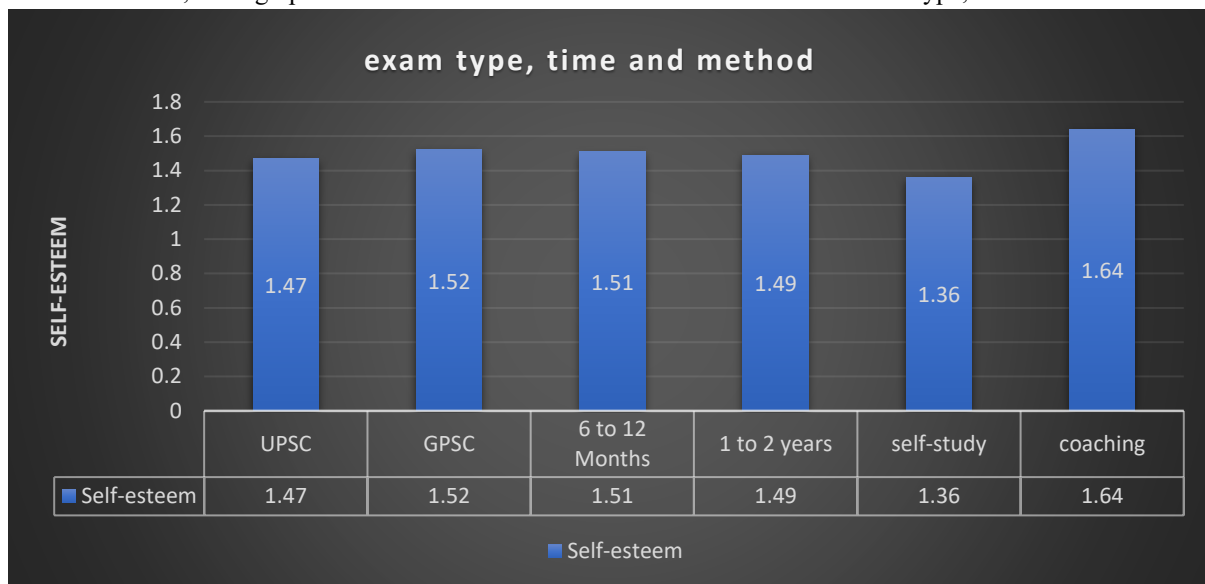

VIII.   CORRELATION

Table-7

		stress	self-esteem
Stress	pearson Correlation	1	0.187**
	sig.(2-tailed)		0.004
	N	240	240
self-esteem	pearson Correlation	0.187**	1
	sig.(2-tailed)	0.004	
	N	240	240

Table-8

	N	mean	std.deviation
Stress	240	1.20	0.864
self-esteem	240	1.50	0.647

➢ The Pearson correlation between stress and self-esteem is r=0.187 Which is Significant at 0.01 level, which indicate a week positive correlation was found between stress and self-esteem. The significant value P=0.004 which is less than 0.01, so here hypothesis no.10 is rejected.

Chart no-3, demographic charactracteristics of correlation between stress and self-esteem
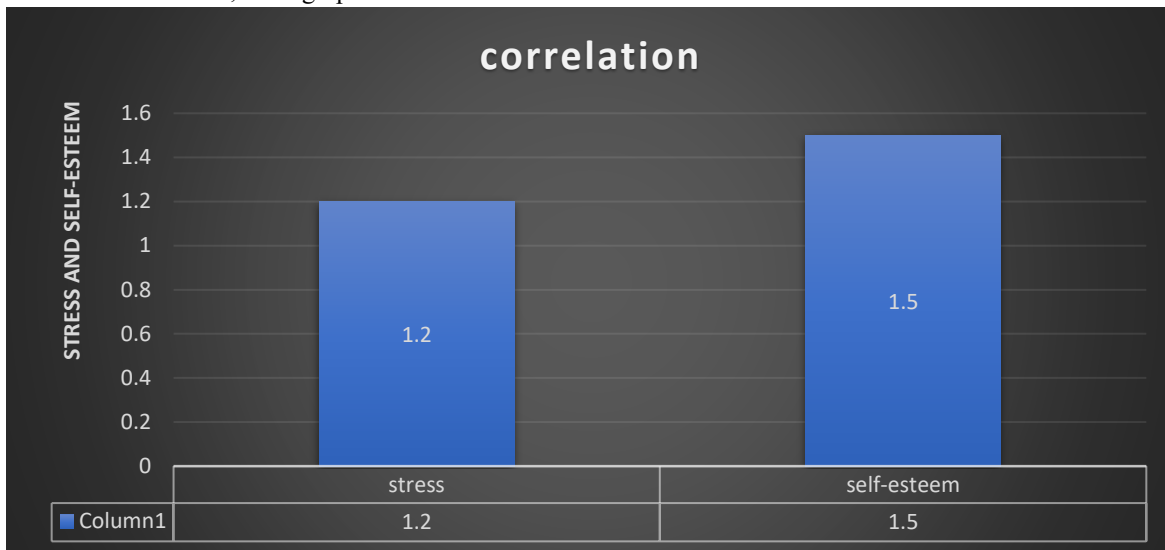
IX.   CONCLUSION

1. There is no significant difference in self-esteem between students preparing for UPSC exam and GPSC exam.
2. There is no significant difference in self-esteem between students preparing for exam for 6 to 12 months and 1 to 2 years.
3. Students preparing for exam through coaching have higher self-esteem than self-study.
4. Type of competitive exam, preparation time and self-esteem are not significantly affected.
5. Type of competitive exam and study method are not significantly affected on self-esteem.
6. Time of preparation for competitive exam and study method are significantly affected on self-esteem.
7.Type of competitive exam, preparation time and study method are significantly affected on self-esteem.
8. There is a significant difference in the stress level of students preparing for UPSC exam and GPSC exam.

9. There is no significant difference in the stress level of students preparing for the exam for 6 to 12 months and 1 to 2 years.
10. There is a significant difference in the stress level of students preparing for the exam through self-study and coaching.
12. There is a significant effect on the type of competitive exam, preparation time and stress level.
13. There is no significant effect on the stress type of competitive exam and study method.
14. There is no significant effect on the stress time of preparation and study method.
15. There is no significant effect on the stress type of competitive exam, preparation time and study method.
16. there is significant correlation between stress and self-esteem.

X.   LIMITATIONS

1. This study includes only students preparing for competitive examinations in Gandhinagar and

Ahmedabad, so the findings cannot be generalized to students from other regions.

2. The outcomes of the study are relevant specifically to individuals preparing for UPSC and GPSC exams.

3. The sample consists only of students who have been preparing for 6–12 months or 1–2 years and who follow either self-study or coaching methods; therefore, the results may not apply to students with different preparation durations or study approaches.

4. Only students who are originally from Gujarat were included, which limits the applicability of the findings to students from other states or regions.

5. Students with physical or mental disabilities were excluded from the study, so the conclusions may not be applicable to these groups.

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