

## The impact of the brazilian college admissions exam on the perceived stress of young adult



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### ABSTRACT

The first standardized selection instrument for university admission in Brazil was defined by Decree 8.659 on October 5, 1911. It approved the Organic Law of Higher and Fundamental Education

- also known as the Rivadávia Corrêa Reform - establishing: "To be granted enrollment, the candidate will undergo an examination that enables an overall assessment of their intellectual development and capacity to effectively undertake the study of the subjects that constitute the college curriculum." (RIBEIRO NETO, 1985, p. 41). It consisted of an oral examination of languages and sciences, as well as a written section in Portuguese that covered specific content.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS EXAM

The first standardized selection instrument for university admission in Brazil was defined by Decree 8.659 on October 5, 1911. It approved the Organic Law of Higher and Fundamental Education - also known as the Rivadávia Corrêa Reform - establishing: "To be granted enrollment, the candidate will undergo an examination that enables an overall assessment of their intellectual development and capacity to effectively undertake the study of the subjects that constitute the college curriculum." (RIBEIRO NETO, 1985, p. 41). It consisted of an oral examination of languages and sciences, as well as a written section in Portuguese that covered specific content.

However, it was only with the Rocha Vaz Reform, consolidated in 1925, that the college entrance exam approached the model known today. With this reform, the selection instrument became even more complex, including not only passing the exam but also ranking among the number of available slots established by each institution (VALLE; BARRICHELLO; TOMASI, 2010). Initially conceived as an assessment and guidance instrument for schools, with individual and confidential results, "the exam aimed to achieve four basic competencies, combining everyday life content and conceptual content from different disciplines, such as language proficiency, understanding of phenomena, problem-solving, argumentation, and proposing interventions in reality" (SILVA and ZANINI, 2011, p. 3). The objectives for the ENEM exam were announced as follows:



1. To provide a reference for each citizen to self-assess themselves because of their future choices, both regarding the job market and further studies;
2. To structure an evaluation at the end of basic education that serves as an alternative or complementary modality to the selection processes in different sectors of the job market;
3. To structure an evaluation at the end of basic education that serves as an alternative or complementary modality to entrance exams for post-high school vocational courses and higher education.

Nonetheless, adherence to the exam was extremely low, as students had no incentive to undergo it. It is reported that in the first exam, only 10% of the total high school graduates of that year registered for it. According to Maria Helena Guimarães de Castro, President of INEP during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government, "the participation of higher education institutions was essential to strengthen the credibility of the exam and decisively contributed to transforming it into a new reference in the search for alternatives to traditional selection processes" (BRASIL, 2000, p.25). From that point on, the college entrance exam morphed into a regulator of teaching plans, leading to the neglect of individuality, creativity, and personal interests of each student. The number of applicants increased exponentially, and the exam became the main criterion for admission to universities. If before the entrance exam was created for the school, now the school was molded for the entrance exam.

The main ideological justification associated with the implementation of the entrance exam, especially the Unified Selection System (Sisu) and the National High School Exam (Enem), was the possibility of democratic choice of public universities by students. Moreover, a burden was placed on the students who, while still in high school, are pushed to make immediate decisions about their career options and whether or not to continue their academic careers. Thus, an ideology of social mobility was produced, propagated by the current capitalist economic system, suggesting that "the only way to succeed in a meritocracy is to achieve the highest level of education possible" (CARNOY, 1986, p. 77). Once again, the burden on the students is evident, as they are shaped to perform well in the exam by studying subjects that have little relation to their culture and daily interests, which can lead to stress and anxiety.

## 1.2 MOOD CHANGES AND ANXIETY

In their studies, Peluso et al. (2010) demonstrated that mood changes experienced by adolescents, although starting before the college entrance exam, lasted for months after the event. Similarly, Calais et al. (2003) postulated that socio-emotional skills, such as the ability to cope with stressful and anxiety-provoking events, can be differential factors for exam performance - even more important than academic ability or subject knowledge.



In conducting a longitudinal study to investigate mood changes in young college aspirants, Peluso et al. demonstrated that the changes intensified as the exam approached. They experienced an increase in negative effects, while positive effects remained consistently low. Among the seven scales that showed a significant correlation with the time spent studying, all criteria (except attentiveness) pointed in the same direction: mood worsens as study time increases (PELUSO, 2010).

Another study conducted by Lacey et al. found that while changes in cortisol levels in the blood of young individuals typically occur just before the administration of an important exam, changes in the immune system occur just before the exam is scheduled (usually 6 to 8 weeks in advance). This demonstrates that psychological stress begins many weeks before the actual exam (LACEY, 2000).

### 1.3 MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG ADULTS

It is known that adolescence is a fragile period for individuals, as they are exposed to hormonal changes, mood fluctuations, are more susceptible to crises, and undergo psychological, physical, social, and cultural changes (WAGNER, FALCKE, SILVEIRA, & MOSMANN, 2002). It is precisely during this time that young people are exposed to tremendous academic pressures, whether they are students in public or private schools.

According to Perrenoud (2003, p. 14), teenagers are immersed in the concept of school excellence, which is built upon a socially situated evaluation process, involving complex transactions according to the forms and norms of school excellence anchored in the current curriculum and the cultural perspective to which the evaluation belongs. Along the same lines, Bourdieu (1998) argues that the culture produced by schools is the same as that of the dominant class - highlighting that disparities in educational outcomes are not based on differences in abilities but on the level of similarity between school culture and the students' family culture.

Insofar as we can observe the discrepancy in the results of college entrance exams between public and private schools. The college-oriented school culture aligns with the interests of the dominant classes, which see maximum education as the only instrument of success and directs the education system toward this single goal. In this manner, technical and vocational courses, among other viable career options, are neglected. Both groups, students from public and private schools, experience excessive pressure: either to continue the family's history of excellence or to break the cycle of low education and poverty.

The similarity between students from both school networks lies in the way the college entrance exam intensifies family expectations, thereby guiding young people to operate at constantly high levels of stress, greatly affecting their self-esteem. Specifically for students from public schools, who do not have specialized preparation for the exam, it is common for them to lack interest in taking the exam due to a belief that they will not be able to compete with students from other schools (BARROS, 2014).



According to Mozart Neves Ramos, a member of the Governance Council of Todos Pela Educação, "it is natural for them to distrust their ability to reach higher education" (BORGES, 2011). It is theorized that this stems from the lack of confidence that students have in the educational system they are part of. Most public school students do not have the opportunity to study the necessary content, due to factors such as curriculum disorganization within the school. On that account, we can see that all college aspirants - in one way or another - attribute tremendous importance to the exam as a means of social mobility, making it even more anxiety-provoking, classifying, and exclusionary (SILVESTRE, 2004). For low-income youth, it is an opportunity for change. For upper-class youth, it is a condition for maintaining family status.

## 2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Is there an impact of the educational system oriented toward the *vestibular* exam on the stress levels of 16 to 19-year-old candidates in the city of São Paulo, Brazil? What is the magnitude in which the effects of stress are felt and reproduced?

Based on previous research studies, it is hypothesized that the impact of the vestibular exam on the mental health of young individuals is significant, and it is a stressor that affects various aspects of the student's life, including self-esteem, self-confidence, and socio-emotional skills. This research also aims to reflect on possible coping mechanisms that can be used to alleviate these negative effects on the mental, social, emotional, and physical health of students, evaluating strategies and techniques that can be implemented in schools to promote student well-being.

## 3 OBJECTIVES

### 3.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To evaluate whether there is an impact of the educational system oriented toward the vestibular exam on the perceived stress levels of candidates in the city of São Paulo, Brazil.

### 3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Through this research, three specific objectives are intended to be achieved. These are: to identify the effects of the vestibular exam on the development of student's self-esteem and self-confidence, to define coping strategies and mechanisms that can help maintain the mental health of candidates, and to propose a methodology for the preparation for the vestibular exam.

## 4 JUSTIFICATION

The reflection on the current educational system in public and private schools in Brazil is urgent and of utmost importance in the current scenario. Mental health is one of the most important



components for determining the quality of life and directly influences the biopsychosocial experience of individuals. Therefore, it is necessary to contribute research that investigates possible sources of psychological distress for young adults, as they will be the next leaders and professionals in the country. Intending to draw attention to this issue and propose instruments to address the problem, this work seeks to understand the effects of the educational system and, at the same time, assess the possible impacts on the psychological lives of students within it. In this context, the research can prove to be a valuable tool for studying the gaps in the vestibular exam system and encouraging critical thinking about it.

## 5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Educational Psychology has developed relevant discussions in recent decades regarding the role of psychologists in the field of education and the creation of public policies aimed at educating Brazilian youth. Questions arise about the social role of interventions in this field, seeking perspectives that go beyond subjective models of understanding the educational phenomenon (PATTO, 1990). Patto argues that the role of psychologists in the construction of a democratic and quality public school should be guided by the purposes that guide the development of educational public policies. They must materialize in practices that determine the school's daily life (Souza, 2010) and reveal the social demands that support the presence of these professionals in the area. It is precisely in the combination of School and Educational Psychology with Cognitive Neuropsychology that the necessary tools can be acquired to address the issue of excessive stress experienced by young individuals preparing for the vestibular exam.

The manifestation of stress typically goes through three phases: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. The alarm phase occurs when the organism experiences stressors, activating reactions of the sympathetic nervous system. Second, there is the resistance phase, which occurs when the stressor persists for prolonged periods or is of great magnitude. Finally, there is exhaustion when stress exceeds the individual's capacity to cope with it, leading to long-term health problems (such as ulcers, gingivitis, psoriasis, hypertension, depression, and anxiety). Each of the phases listed above has its symptomatology, accompanied by hormonal changes (SELYE, 1956).

D'Avila and Soares (2003) state that the vestibular exam generates conflicts, doubts, fear, anxiety, and stress for adolescents. These effects, on a large scale, stem from the fear of failing, facing the expectations of family and society, as well as the possibility of failure and uncertainties associated with career choice (LEVENFUS, 1993). Choosing a profession is a delicate process, especially when it is associated with crises and conflicts typical of adolescence. Bianchetti (1996) states that "young people do not possess the necessary self-awareness or sufficient maturity for the actual career choice.



Henceforth, adolescents undergoing the *vestibular* exam are subjected to both family and social pressures, as well as personal ones. This high level of psychological pressure can trigger a state of anxiety and stress that impairs academic performance and the psychosocial skills of the student. According to Oliveira and Duarte (2004), this tension fosters a sense of apprehension about the future, which is a key component of anxiety that interferes with learning. These authors theorize about the role of the grading system in this phenomenon, which can lead students to compete for personal achievement. Coelho (2002) also suggests that the conflicts and problems to which adolescents are subjected involve significant emotions and multiple situations marked by strong emotional implications among them.

Considering that stress is elevated during the preparation period for the vestibular exam, it is evident that this test is a stressor of great magnitude for most young people - a fact that may raise questions about the adequacy of a competitive system to which young people are subjected to continue their education. In his writings, Campos (1996) emphasizes the relevance of implementing support programs for research on stress experienced by students at all levels. According to the author, it is of paramount importance to monitor the academic community and provide support to all its members.

As attested by the texts of Lassance, Grocks, and Francisco (1993), the act of entering a university has assumed an "evolutionary task character in itself, as if entering higher education was a natural continuation to be assumed by those who finish high school and the only alternative available for entering the job market." The overemphasis on higher education, especially in more traditional courses, has a significantly negative influence on the guidelines that guide high school education. As a result, it neglects its role in preparing young people for the adult world in general and transforms itself into a vehicle for preparing for the vestibular exam.

In light of this, the need for a change in the conception of what comprises a quality education must be emphasized. When the sole criterion for evaluating education is approval in the university admissions exam, it hinders the proper development and biopsychosocial adaptation of adolescents. It creates an education that is disconnected from life and everyday reality, guided by formulas and content that, for the most part, become unnecessary after the exam. Rubem Alves theorizes on the subject, noting that "it is the vestibular exams that determine the direction of schools. The teachers who prepare the exam questions do so in ignorance that their choices will determine the course of schools in the Brazilian educational system and the destiny of children and adolescents. That is why "strong" schools dedicate themselves to training their students with previous vestibular exam questions" (ALVES, 2013).

In a study conducted with 960 individuals on psychological well-being in adolescents, carried out by Silva, Horta, Pontes, Faria, Souza, Cruzeiro, and Pinheiro (2007), it was found that there is a tendency for well-being to decrease with age. The identified trajectories showed that younger



adolescents (12 to 13 and a half years old - early adolescence) have values that indicate greater well-being. From this age onward, these values change, with a decrease observed in the group of 16 to 17 and a half years old (late adolescence). "Based on the results, it is possible to identify an ageing period in which young people can be considered more vulnerable to changes in psychological well-being and, consequently, at greater risk" (SILVA, HORTA, PONTES, FARIA, SOUZA, CRUZEIRO, 2007, p. 1117).

Considering the history of several children in a primary public school in the city of São Paulo, Maria Helena Patto studied the construction of power strategies that sought to erase the roots of the problem. Ideologically, the author cites, students and their families were convinced that the problem of failure was exclusively their fault. The theories about school failure fail to take into account the school mechanisms that produce these learning difficulties, resulting in an educational system that creates obstacles to the achievement of its objectives. Thus, it becomes necessary to study this system in-depth, which emphasizes only one specific intelligence (PATTO, 2015).

A critical examination of school failure and its subsequent exams (such as the ENEM) leads to a review of the prejudices that guide professional practices in schools. We are reminded of the words of Paulo Freire, who emphasized the need to denounce and announce - that is, to think about alternative work and dialogue with teachers. Thus, the causes of failure in schools can be reconsidered, and practices that contribute to improving the quality of the schooling process can be proposed. In line with this idea, we emphasize the words of Patto (1990), who characterizes the school as a social institution that must be understood within the social relations of production and, thus, within the social structure that includes it.

Rocha et al. investigated students in the second and third year of high school, as well as students in pre-university courses who had already completed high school. The participants were evaluated using the Self Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ), which allows for the screening of mood disorders. The presence of indicators of depressive disorder was reported in 45.7% of the students. "Pre-university course students showed indicators of depression in 59.4% of cases, third-year students in 51.4%, while second-year students in 35.8%" (ROCHA et al., 2006, p.101). These authors found a correlated increase in these symptoms with age and the progress of academic advancement, demonstrating that the older and closer to the vestibular exam a subject is, the more depressive symptoms they present (GUZINSKI; PELISOLI, 2008).

Research in the field is extensive. Calais et al. (2003), investigating perceived stress in young adults with varying levels of education, found higher stress scores in pre-university course students compared to first and third-year high school students. The feeling of unpreparedness for the exam influences the process of anxiety, leading to difficulties in concentration, restlessness, headaches, muscle aches, and dizziness. An important factor that contributes to the worsening of the situation is



that young people, even when realizing that something is not right with their mental health, hesitate to seek help or psychological preparation for the exam (D'AVILA and SOARES, 2003).

In a study derived from Calais et al.'s research (2003), Guzinski Rodrigues and Pelisoli (2008) found that 90% of participants reported having their lifestyle habits altered during exam preparation. The changes occur in all areas of life, from relationships to simple activities and basic needs such as eating and sleeping. The life of Young people goes through a process of change, and many priorities become secondary to the exam (GUZINSKI; PELISOLI, 2008).

The resurgence of the political nature present in psychological practice should lead to an uncompromising commitment to the search for instruments for the consolidation of a quality democratic school. Thus, as Souza (2010) asserts, it is necessary to break with adaptationist conceptions and build a psychological praxis in the face of school complaints.

## 6 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The main methodological procedure used for this research was the Perceived Stress Scale, developed by Cohen et al. (1983). The scale is one of the main instruments cited in the literature for estimating stress (Lee, 2012). The advantage of the instrument, according to its creators, is the estimation of the "degree to which individuals believe that their life has been unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded during the month before the assessment" (COHEN et al., 1983). Thus, the evaluation occurs from three perspectives: the presence of specific stress-causing agents, physical and psychological symptoms of stress, and overall perception of stress. This evaluation occurs regardless of the causal agent. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14) is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14)

Item	Question
1	In the past month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2	In the past month, how often have you felt unable to control the important things in your life?
3	In the past month, how often have you felt nervous or stressed?
4	In the past month, how often have you coped successfully with the problems and hassles of everyday life?
5	In the past month, how often have you felt that you were effectively dealing with the significant changes happening in your life?
6	In the past month, how often have you felt confident in your ability to handle your problems?
7	In the past month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
8	In the past month, how often have you realized that you couldn't handle all the things you needed to do?
9	In the past month, how often have you been able to control the irritations in your life?





10	In the past month, how often have you felt that you were in control of things?
11	In the past month, how often have you gotten upset over things that happened that were beyond your control?
12	In the past month, how often have you found yourself thinking about the things you have to do?
13	In the past month, how often have you been able to control how you spend your time?
14	In the past month, how often have you felt that difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

The application was conducted with 63 students of both sexes, aged between 16 and 19, residing in the city of São Paulo, who were preparing to take the college entrance exam. The test was administered through the Google Forms platform. Fourteen items were used to assess how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overwhelmed respondents perceive their lives. The interpretation of the results is divided into two factors: 1) negative perception and 2) positive perception. The 14 questions have response options ranging from 0 to 4, corresponding to:

0 = never

1 = rarely

2 = sometimes

3 = almost always

4 = always

Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 14 have a positive connotation - therefore, their scores are inversely summed, as follows:

0 = 4

1 = 3

2 = 2

3 = 1

4 = 0

The remaining questions are negative and directly summed. The total scale score is the sum of the scores of the 14 questions, ranging from zero to fifty-six. In addition to the stress scale, a structured questionnaire composed of 5 questions will be distributed to investigate more specifically the role of the college entrance exam as a stressor for the evaluated youth. The form will follow the Likert Scale and will be administered through the Google Forms platform, targeting young college applicants between 16-18 years in the city of São Paulo, SP. Before administering the tests, the presented criteria were submitted to the Ethics Committee of Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie, as well as to the Plataforma Brasil for prior approval.

Regarding the qualitative aspect of the research, the content analysis method formulated by Laurence Bardin will be used. According to the author, content analysis is "a set of techniques for



analyzing communications aimed at obtaining, through systematic and objective procedures for describing the content of messages, indicators (quantitative or not) that allow inferences about the production and reception conditions of these messages" (Bardin, 2009, p. 44). The exploration of the material is the longest stage of the process. It involves the coding and categorization of the entire corpus selected for the project, as well as the construction of indicators that allow for inferences. The categorization of the material is done in two stages: inventory and classification. This classification can be done a priori or a posteriori. Finally, in the last stage, the treatment of the results, inference, and interpretation takes place. Simple and more complex statistical operations are used, such as percentages, diagrams, tables, and models that condense and highlight the information provided during the analysis.

## 7 RESULTS

Table 1: General Sample Data

Gender	Institution		Total Participants
	Public	Private	
Female	10	31	41
Male	3	19	22
Total	20.6%	79.4%	63

Table 2: Average Perceived Stress of Sample

Gender	Institution	Average total score	Average perceived stress score
Female	Public	37.9	High
	Private	38.3	High
Male	Public	37.0	High
	Private	38.2	High

The average scores appear to be higher in private institutions compared to public institutions, regardless of gender. However, all participants fall into the "High" classification on the average perceived stress scale, indicating that there is no significant difference in perceived stress between the institutions. It can be inferred, therefore, that the young individuals involved in the context of preparing for the college entrance exam are experiencing a state of chronic high stress, regardless of other variables such as gender and previous type of educational institution.



Table 3: Utilization of Coping Resources and Exam Impact on Perceived Stress

Gender	Institution	Feels that stress will lower after the exam			Utilizes coping resources to deal with stress	
		Yes	No	Maybe	Yes	No
Female	Public	40%	0%	60%	70%	30%
	Private	71%	3.2%	25.8%	100%	0%
Male	Public	66%	0%	33%	100%	0%
	Private	84.2%	5.3%	10.5%	100%	0%

Among women in public institutions, 40% strongly believe that stress can decrease after the college entrance exam. In private institutions, the majority (71%) hold this belief. Among men in public institutions, 66% are convinced of this decrease, while 84.2% of men in private institutions believe that stress will decrease after the exam.

Regarding the use of coping mechanisms to deal with stress, only females from public institutions reported not using any mechanisms, while 100% of the other participants reported using stress management tools.

Table 4: Average Perceived Stress and Performance Pressure on the Exam on a 0-5 Scale

Gender	Institution	The average impact of the exam in other areas of life	Average pressure felt to perform well in the exam
Female	Public	4.8	4.0
	Private	4.7	3.2
Male	Public	4.0	1.3
	Private	4.42	2.6

For both genders, the average impact of the college entrance exam on other areas of life is relatively high, with values close to 4.0 or above. However, there is no significant difference in the perceived impact between students from public and private institutions. Regarding the average pressure felt to perform well in the exam, we observed higher numbers for females in public institutions. Among male participants, there is a similar trend where the average pressure felt is higher in public institutions compared to private institutions.



Table 5: Reported Coping Mechanisms

Coping mechanism	Frequency
Physical activity	63,3%
Music	76,2%
Video games/Computer	20,6%
Social and group activities	14,3%
Does not use coping resources	4,8%

Physical activity and music are the most commonly used coping mechanisms, with usage frequencies of 63.3% and 76.2%, respectively. Video games and computers are used as a coping mechanism by 20.6% of the participants. Social and group activities are the least used coping mechanisms, accounting for approximately 14.3% only. A small percentage of participants reported not using any specific resources to cope with stress, and they were all females from public institutions.

## 8 DISCUSSION

Given the presented data, interesting trends can be observed. Notably, the average scores are higher in private institutions compared to public institutions, except regarding the pressure felt by the students from their families to perform well on the exam. It is worth discussing this finding by referring to Carnoy's writings (1986), which discuss the production of an ideology of social mobility that suggests "the only way to succeed in a meritocracy is to achieve the highest level of education possible" (p. 77).

Despite the score differences, all participants fall into the "High" classification on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14), indicating that there is no significant difference in perceived stress between students from different institutions. It seems that young individuals involved in the context of college entrance exam preparation face a situation of chronic high stress, regardless of other variables such as gender and previous type of educational institution.

Regarding the belief in stress reduction after the college entrance exam, differences are observed between genders and educational institutions. Both males and females in private institutions are more likely to believe in stress reduction after the exam compared to their peers in public institutions. It is theorized that this phenomenon arises from other psychosocial factors that young individuals from lower social classes need to deal with beyond the context of the college entrance exam in their daily lives. It may also be related to factors such as the perception of higher academic pressure in public institutions or greater confidence in the ability to cope with stress in private institutions.



Another interesting aspect is the use of coping mechanisms to deal with stress. The majority of participants reported using instruments for stress management, especially physical activity and music. However, it is important to note that only females in public institutions reported not using any coping mechanisms. This may indicate a need for greater support or awareness of effective stress-coping strategies for this specific group.

When it comes to the impact of the exam on other areas of students' lives, there is a significant and widespread impact, with very high average values. There is no significant difference between public and private institutions, suggesting that the college entrance exam equally affects students from all institutions, highlighting the importance of adequate support for students during this challenging period.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the pressure felt to perform well on the exam also shows some differences between genders and educational institutions. Women in public institutions report higher average pressure compared to women in private institutions. This trend is also observed among male participants, although to a lesser extent. These results may reflect sociocultural expectations and individual perceptions of academic performance and competition within each educational context.

## 9 CONCLUSION

The study aimed to answer the research question: Does the college entrance exam impact students' perceived stress? In summary, it can be concluded that students experience a high level of chronic stress during college entrance exam preparation and perceive it as a significant factor contributing to their everyday stress, regardless of gender and the type of educational institution they attended.

A widespread belief that perceived stress will decrease after the college entrance exam was observed, with a higher proportion of students in private institutions expressing this conviction. Additionally, gender differences were identified, where women, both in public and private institutions, have a higher perception of pressure and lower utilization of coping mechanisms compared to men.

While physical activity and music are the most commonly used coping mechanisms, it is important to highlight the need for support and adequate coping strategies for women in public institutions who reported not using any specific mechanisms. Psychological support interventions, such as coping skills training programs, family support, and career guidance, can help students cope with stress effectively during college entrance exam preparation. These practices involve teaching specific techniques such as relaxation, problem-solving, cognitive restructuring, and communication skills, empowering students to deal more effectively with the emotional and academic challenges they face. This enables students to develop a more adaptive and constructive mindset in the face of stress, improving their emotional well-being and academic performance.



It is also important to emphasize that family support plays a crucial role in reducing students' stress during exam preparation. Providing emotional support and understanding from family members can help alleviate perceived pressure and create an environment that promotes balance between studies and other daily activities.

While there is preliminary evidence suggesting the effectiveness of coping strategies, it should be noted that each individual is unique and support needs vary. Therefore, it is essential to adapt interventions to better meet the specific needs of each student.

Despite the robust discussion provided by the data and theoretical framework of the research, it is important to mention some limitations that may affect the generalization and interpretation of the results. The sample used (63 participants) was not equally distributed among genders and educational institutions, which may not be representative of the target population, reducing the external validity of the findings. Additionally, the self-report nature of the research relies on subjective measures, which may be subject to memory or interpretation biases of the participants. Finally, the data does not consider other variables that may influence stress and participants' perceptions, such as family support, social expectations, or study load. The lack of control over these variables may limit the comprehensive understanding of factors related to stress during college entrance exam preparation.

Further research is suggested to follow participants longitudinally, measuring perceived stress from the beginning of preparation until the exam time. This would allow for comparisons within individuals' stress patterns, capturing changes and fluctuations in participants' perceptions and coping strategies used. By addressing these recommendations, future research will provide a deeper understanding of factors related to stress during the college entrance exam preparation process, contributing to the development of more effective support strategies for college entrance exam candidates.



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