

Exam Anxiety and Its Relationship with Stress Coping Strategies: A Descriptive Correlational Study on a Sample of Baccalaureate Students

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to explore the nature of the relationship between exam anxiety and stress coping strategies. The study relied on the descriptive correlational method and used two scales: the Exam Anxiety Scale by Dr. Gharbi Abdel Nasser and the Stress Coping Strategy Scale. The tools were applied in their final form to a sample of 114 male and female students. The data was collected and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), with Pearson's correlation coefficient and Cronbach's alpha.

The study reached the following results:

There is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the problem-solving strategy among high school (baccalaureate) students.

- There is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the avoidance strategy among high school (baccalaureate) students.
- There is no statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the positive evaluation strategy among high school (baccalaureate) students.
- There is no statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the self-blame strategy among high school (baccalaureate) students.

Keywords: Exam anxiety, strategy, stress coping strategy, baccalaureate.

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. I Introduction:

The baccalaureate exams are considered a crucial step toward entering a new educational phase and transitioning to a different academic environment. This transition often causes students to fear failure and the possibility of not passing the exams. The exam period is typically accompanied by psychological pressures that affect students during the test-taking process, leading to a constant feeling of anxiety that becomes closely associated with the exam and persists throughout this period. Exam anxiety is a psychological state characterized by fear and anticipation, involving emotional responses such as tension and worry, which arise due to the psychological pressures exerted on students.

These pressures often stem from parental enthusiasm for their child's success, which, in many cases, becomes excessive. Additionally, students are driven by their personal future goals and aspirations, which they work hard to achieve. This pressure can negatively affect their academic performance, leaving them in a state of constant discomfort, as they feel the need not only to succeed but to excel. Such expectations create significant pressure, prompting students to seek out strategies to cope with these pressures and reduce their anxiety levels.

1- Problematic

The third year of high school is considered one of the most important stages students go through in their academic journey, as it serves as a transition to university. This stage represents their future plans, shaping their roles, positions in society, and aspirations. However, success in the baccalaureate exam is often accompanied by various problems that may hinder students' success and cause a form of anxiety that negatively impacts their academic achievement. Exam anxiety is one of the significant topics that has been extensively researched by scholars such as Sarason, Spielberger, and Ahmed Abdel-Khaleq, who described it as a type of general anxiety that occurs in temporary, situational contexts related to academic exams. These exam situations trigger fear in individuals when faced with the challenge of exams.

Exam anxiety has become a serious problem, not only impeding a student's academic progress but also placing considerable pressure on their family. The psychological pressure experienced by some students stems from the family's desire for success, which sometimes exceeds the student's own ambition. This results in situations where students who perform well in studying are unable to recall the information they learned when taking exams. This forgetfulness is attributed to exam-related fear, as emotional distress disrupts cognitive processes.

This is supported by the findings of Saihi's (2004) study, which examined the effectiveness of a counseling program aimed at reducing exam anxiety among third-year high school students. The study sought to understand the extent to which the program could lower exam anxiety among a sample of second-year female students and to explore whether the anxiety persists when the program is not applied. The research sample consisted of 109 female students, and the study results showed that the counseling program had a lasting effect in reducing exam anxiety and led to a slight improvement in academic performance (Saihi, 2004, p. 102).

Additionally, a study by Kamal Ibrahim Morsi (1977), which explored the relationship between anxiety and academic achievement among high school students in Kuwait, found that the general trend of the correlation between students' anxiety scores and their exam results was negative.

The psychological pressures that baccalaureate students face, particularly at this time, are challenging in various ways. As a result, students must seek strategies to alleviate these pressures. The strategy

for coping with psychological stress is an experience that every individual goes through. It is not only influenced by external environmental factors but is also shaped by the individual themselves, which may have a significant impact on their mental well-being. Therefore, students must learn to adapt to stressful situations, as these pressures are an inevitable part of their lives.

This idea is supported by Darwish's (1993) study, which aimed to uncover the strategies used by high school students to cope with psychological stress. The study sample consisted of 195 male and female students, and the questionnaire on coping with psychological stress was utilized. The study concluded that male students tended to use physical exercise, seek social support, and engage in verbal aggression more frequently than female students, who were more inclined to express emotions, maintain balance, and avoid the situation.

Thus, stressful events are factors that prompt individuals to seek strategies to reduce the disturbances caused by them. This includes the dimensions of coping strategies, such as problem-solving, which serves as a way for students to tackle the academic challenges they face, and positive evaluation. Shaaban's (1992) study further confirmed this, as it aimed to explore coping strategies for psychological stress and their relationship to personality traits and adjustment. The study sample consisted of 29 students aged 18-22, who were assessed using a stress management scale. The results revealed a relationship between coping methods and poor personal and social adjustment in both genders, as well as a relationship between emotional stability in females and the logical analysis approach.

Exam anxiety holds significant importance in managing stressful and challenging situations. Its importance becomes even more apparent as it serves as the primary driver behind an individual's performance. A person cannot achieve their goals unless they have the motivation to learn, but this motivation and desire can be affected by the level of stress encountered.

As baccalaureate students approach their exams, they typically face various psychological pressures in their academic lives. These pressures can stem from external sources, such as the school environment and family, as well as internal sources related to the student's goals and future aspirations. These factors lead to psychological tensions due to exam anxiety, and the intensity of this anxiety increases as the importance of the exam grows for the student and as it becomes a determinant of their future. This anxiety can have either a positive or negative impact on the student's academic results.

Therefore, we can raise the following question:

Main Research Question:

Is there a relationship between exam anxiety and the strategies for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students?

Sub-questions:

- Is there a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the problem-solving strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students?
- Is there a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the avoidance strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students?
- Is there a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the positive evaluation strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students?

- Is there a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the self-blame strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students?

2- Study Hypotheses:

General Hypothesis:

There is a correlation between exam anxiety and the strategies for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.

Specific Hypotheses:

- There is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the problem-solving strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.
- There is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the avoidance strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.
- There is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the positive evaluation strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.
- There is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the self-blame strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.

3- Study Significance:

- The significance of the current study lies in its focus on the anxiety caused by the baccalaureate exam, which represents a crucial threshold that students must overcome to transition to higher education.
- The study aims to explore the relationship between exam anxiety and the strategies used to cope with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.
- Additionally, the study seeks to shed light on some of the conditions experienced by students while preparing for the baccalaureate exam, particularly those related to exam pressure and how they manage to cope with it.

4- Study Objectives:

- To investigate the relationship between exam anxiety and the strategies for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.
- To understand the relationship between exam anxiety and the different dimensions of stress-coping strategies.
- The study aims to develop a scale for assessing students' coping strategies for psychological stress, drawing on real-world experiences to provide a more realistic view of the coping strategies that students use to manage stress.

5- Operational Definitions:

Exam Anxiety: A state of tension, fear, and discomfort experienced by students preparing for the baccalaureate exam, either during the exam or in the preparation period. It is measured by the score a student obtains on the Exam Anxiety Scale.

Coping Strategy for Psychological Stress: The method or approach used by students to deal with psychological stress, aiming to confront, overcome, and reduce its effects. It is measured by the score a student obtains on the Stress Coping Strategy Scale.

– **Previous Studies on Exam Anxiety:**

- **Sud and Sethi Study (1980):**

This study examined the impact of test anxiety and intelligence on academic achievement across various school curricula among high school female students in the United Kingdom. The study focused on four academic subjects. Anxiety was measured using a Test Anxiety Scale, and the General Mental Abilities Test was used to assess intelligence. The sample was divided into three levels based on their test anxiety scores: high, medium, and low, which served as independent variables, along with three levels of intelligence: high, medium, and low. Each condition included 22 ninth-grade students. The results indicated a significant negative effect of test anxiety on academic achievement. Furthermore, a statistically significant interaction between anxiety and intelligence was observed across the subjects, suggesting that an optimal level of test anxiety can enhance achievement across different levels of ability (Mazoughi, B.S., p. 96).

- **Al-Hawari and Al-Shanawi Study (1987):**

This study aimed to explore the relationship between test anxiety and study habits and attitudes among students at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia. A random sample of 140 psychology students from different academic levels was selected. The study employed the descriptive-analytical method. The results showed a negative correlation between test anxiety and the students' academic adjustment. Additionally, there was an insignificant negative correlation between test anxiety and both study habits and attitudes, as well as academic adjustment (Al-Khuja, 2013, p. 78).

- **Yaqub and Ibrahim Study (1993):**

Titled "*The Factorial Structure of the Swiss Test Anxiety Scale among a Sample of 10th Grade Students in Basic Education in Jordan*", this study aimed to identify the factorial structure of one of the test anxiety scales, namely the Swiss Test Anxiety Scale. The researcher employed a descriptive method on a sample of 332 tenth-grade students, consisting of 170 male and 162 female students, randomly selected from various schools and classes. The study used the Swiss Test Anxiety Scale and the Pierce-Harris Self-Concept Scale. Data were analyzed using factor analysis of principal components, correlation coefficients, and the t-test.

The study found that the number of factors with an eigenvalue of one or more was ten, accounting for 58.5% of the variance. Additionally, the number of factors that could be identified and interpreted was four, explaining approximately 37.1% of the total variance (Gharbi, 2014, p. 134).

–**Previous Studies on Coping Strategies for Psychological Stress:**

- **Ragab Ali Shaaban Study (1992):**

The aim of this study was to investigate coping strategies for stress and their relationship with personality traits and adjustment. The sample consisted of 39 female students aged between 18 and 22. The study applied the Stress Coping Strategies Scale and the California Personality Scale. The results revealed a correlation between emotional stability in females and the use of logical analysis and positive re-evaluation. Among males, activity and order were linked to proactive coping strategies. The study also found a relationship between coping strategies and personal and social adjustment for both genders (Yousfi, 2001, p. 130).

- **Aribat and Khrabsha Study (2007):**

Titled "*Psychological Stress Experienced by High-Achieving Students and Coping Strategies*", this study aimed to define the psychological pressures faced by high-achieving students and how they cope with them. The sample included 256 high-achieving students from educational institutions established by the Ministry of Education in Jordan. The results indicated that high parental expectations were the main source of psychological stress, while the least significant factor was the students' feeling of being unloved or disrespected by their peers. The most commonly used coping strategy was the use of tranquilizers, while the least used was learning from past experiences. The study also found gender differences in stress exposure, with male students being more affected (Abu Habib, 2010, p. 81).

- **Ahmed Nabil El-Bahrawi Study (2003):**

This study aimed to explore coping strategies for psychological, social, and academic stress among middle school students. It sought to identify differences in coping strategies between male and female students from high and low socioeconomic backgrounds. The sample included 200 middle school students. The Stress Coping Strategy Scale and the Social and Economic Status Form were used. The results showed that male students were more likely to face stress than females, while females were more inclined toward withdrawal as a coping strategy. Additionally, students from high socioeconomic backgrounds exhibited more effective coping strategies than those from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Abu Habib, 2010, pp. 83-84).

- **Commentary on Previous Studies:**

The previous studies align with our current research in their use of the descriptive methodology, but they differ in terms of the sample, statistical methods, tools used, and the variables measured. Some focused on psychological stress, others on coping strategies for stress, and some on exam anxiety. However, none of the studies we reviewed examined both variables exam anxiety and coping strategies for psychological stress together in a single study.

6- Theoretical Aspect:

6.1- Exam Anxiety:

Definition of Exam Anxiety:

Exam anxiety is defined as a personality trait in a specific situation, characterized by discomfort and emotional arousal. Discomfort is described as cognitive concern manifested in the fear of failure, while emotional arousal refers to the responses of the nervous system (Al-Sanbati, 2009, p. 58).

According to Ahmed Zahran, exam anxiety is a type of anxiety linked to examination situations, which evoke feelings of discomfort and emotional agitation in individuals. It is an emotional state that disrupts the individual before or during the exam itself, characterized by feelings of tension and fear of the exam (Ibrahim, 1994, p. 58).

Moreover, exam anxiety is considered a form of pathological fear that significantly impacts an individual's behavior and mental state, particularly close to or during exams. This type of anxiety is associated with test situations and can be present at a high level, affecting an individual's performance, termed as "debilitating anxiety." Conversely, moderate levels of exam anxiety are considered normal and do not significantly affect performance, referred to as "facilitating anxiety" (Al-Marzouqi, 2011, p. 94).

6.2- Classifications of Exam Anxiety:

Most psychologists view exam anxiety as an abnormal condition that negatively affects performance. However, some experts argue that exam anxiety is not always detrimental; it can serve as a motivator for competition and effort. Based on these opposing viewpoints, exam anxiety can be classified as follows:

6.2.1- Facilitating Exam Anxiety:

This is a moderate level of exam anxiety that has a positive and motivating effect. It encourages students to study, prepare, and achieve high academic performance. It energizes and motivates them to get ready for exams and facilitates their exam performance. It is observed that moderate exam anxiety, combined with the ability to manage negative emotions, can lead to improved performance in exams.

6.2.2- Debilitating Exam Anxiety:

This type refers to high levels of exam anxiety that have a negative and hindering effect. It leads to increased nervousness, fear, discomfort, and apprehension, triggering inappropriate responses that impede a student's ability to remember and understand. It overwhelms them as they prepare for the exam and makes performing the exam more difficult.

It is noted that high exam anxiety (debilitating) negatively impacts academic achievement and exam performance compared to moderate (facilitating) anxiety. Thus, debilitating exam anxiety (excessive or high) is unnecessary and should be reduced and managed (Zahran, 2000, p. 98).

From this, it is clear that exam anxiety can be divided into two types: the first type is activating and facilitating exam anxiety, which positively influences achievement. This anxiety arises from competition among students and the desire for success. The second type is negative exam anxiety, which inhibits and complicates exam performance, leading students to respond inappropriately, such as by feeling tense and fearful, which adversely affects academic achievement.

6.3- Symptoms or Manifestations of Exam Anxiety:

Individuals with high exam anxiety exhibit a range of symptoms, some of which can be observed directly, while others can be inferred from individual behaviors or through noticeable differences in their cognitive abilities in class and their performance in formal exams. These symptoms can be classified as follows:

6.3.1- Physical Manifestations :

- Increased heart rate.
- Sweating.
- Headaches.
- Dry throat and lips.
- Feelings of nausea.
- Digestive disturbances (Qahhtani, p. 7).

6.3.2- Cognitive Manifestations :

- Lack of desire to study.
- Unjustified fear of the future.

- Feelings of incompetence.
- Low self-confidence and frequent hesitation.
- Poor academic performance.
- Difficulty focusing and weak ability to recall information (Al-Harabi, 2011, p. 29).

6.3.3- Psychological or Emotional Manifestations:

- Increased anxiety.
- Emotional instability.
- Tension, apprehension, and lack of joy.
- Intense psychological distress before and during the exam.
- Nervous behaviors and disobedience (Abassi, 1995, p. 22).

7- Causes of Exam Anxiety:

Experts in mental health and educational specialists attribute exam anxiety to various causes, among which the most prominent are:

- Lack of knowledge about the study subjects.
- Insufficient desire to succeed and excel.
- Problems in learning, organizing, or reviewing information before the exam, or retrieving it during the exam itself.
- Association of exams with past experiences of failure and repeated instances of failure.
- Inadequate preparation for the exam and a lack of test-taking skills.
- Self-centeredness and low self-confidence.
- Negative attitudes towards exams from students, teachers, and parents.
- Difficulty of exams and the perception that the future depends on exam results.
- Environmental pressures, particularly from family, to achieve unrealistic aspirations that do not match the student's abilities.
- Direct pressures, such as threats or facing failure.
 - The need to please parents and teachers and compete with peers.
 - The acquisition of exam anxiety when coupled with unpleasant stimuli, such as negative social evaluation and uncomfortable physiological responses.
 - Learned helplessness, expectation of failure, and a lack of control (Zahran, 2000, p. 99).

8- Coping Strategies for Psychological Stress:

8.1- Definition of Coping Strategies:

- **Stoneman (1984) Definition:** Coping is defined as a term that encompasses all the behavioral and cognitive efforts that individuals consciously employ to achieve or reduce the effects of stressful situations (Ragab, 2001, p. 67).
- **Lazarus and Folkman (1984) Definition:** Coping refers to the ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts that individuals make to manage specific external or internal demands that either match or exceed their capabilities (Jamil, 2009, p. 204).
- **Jaber and Kafani (1989) Definition:** The term coping signifies a way to face personal problems and overcome difficulties. Coping behavior is a successful response or struggle, representing either a conscious or unconscious adaptation that reduces tension in stressful situations and experiences (Abdel-Maati, 2006, p. 98).
- **Spielberger Definition:** Coping is a scientific function aimed at reducing or eliminating stimuli that the individual perceives as threatening (Nail, 2009, p. 119).

8.2- Characteristics of Coping Strategies:

According to Hanah Ahmed Al-Shuwaikh's study (2010), the characteristics of coping strategies are as follows:

- They are attributed to the individual themselves, meaning they are not imposed by others nor do they rely on someone else to cope with the pressure they feel.
- They are behaviors aimed at adapting to stressful situations.
- They are adaptable and can be modified as the intensity of stressors changes over time and context.
 - They focus on the problem or involve controlling actions.
 - They may be overt, such as avoiding the problem, or covert, involving positive thinking about the problem.
 - They are diverse and can be cognitive, behavioral, or emotional in nature (Al-Shuwaikh, 2010, p. 269).

8.3- Features of Coping Strategies:

Coping strategies are characterized by several features, including:

- Coping is a complex process where individuals often use various fundamental strategies in response to stressful situations.
- Coping is linked to the assessment and evaluation of what can be done to change situations; it focuses on the problem. If the evaluation concludes that nothing can be done, coping then shifts to emotional responses.
- When the stressor is constant, such as health or family issues, men and women tend to exhibit similar coping strategies.
- Coping strategies serve as a powerful mediator of emotional outcomes; some strategies are associated with positive results, while others may lead to negative outcomes.

- The effectiveness of any type of coping strategy is related to the specific stressor, the individual's cognitive style of dealing with pressure, physical health, social functioning, and self-existence (Journal of Psychology, 200, Issue 53).

9- Psychological Stress:

9.1- Definition of Psychological Stress:

Defining psychological stress is a complex task fraught with scientific difficulties, as it involves identifying the phenomenon of stress itself. A scientific definition consists of words that carry specific scientific connotations, aiming to precisely capture the nature of the phenomenon in a comprehensive manner. Psychological stress is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, with a dialectical and circular relationship among its dimensions. Scholars have not agreed on a single definition that adequately reflects both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of psychological stress. The definitions provided are attempts to grasp some facets of this phenomenon and its underlying aspects (Al-Rashidi, 1999, p. 14).

Thus, psychological stress is considered one of the most complex phenomena. According to Parks and Coleman (1995), this complexity arises from the fact that the term "stress" is a hypothetical construct rather than a clearly defined, measurable entity. Consequently, it remains shrouded in a significant degree of ambiguity (Murshidi, 2008, p. 15).

Selye (1980) defined psychological stress as a non-specific response to any demand placed on an individual (Aribat and Khrabsha, 2007, p. 15).

Atkinson et al. (1990) defined psychological stress as a state that occurs when individuals face events they perceive as threatening to their psychological and physical well-being, while feeling uncertain about their ability to cope with these events (Jumaa, 2001, p. 259).

Psychological stress consists of a combination of psychological, environmental, and genetic factors, personal responses to crises and tensions, and harsh health conditions that individuals experience. Its intensity varies and changes over time based on the frequency of challenging situations encountered. It can persist for a long time if the constraining circumstances continue, leaving negative effects on the individual (Desouki, 1996, p. 46).

S.D. Spielberger affirmed that stress refers to differences in environmental conditions characterized by a certain degree of objective danger (Osman, 2001, p. 100).

Kandari defines psychological stress as a state of emotional tension arising from life-threatening events (Al-Rashid, 1999, p. 36).

9.2- Types of Psychological Stress:

According to the Source Type: Research and studies generally agree that psychological stress encompasses two distinct situations based on its type and source. The causes of psychological stress are not solely negative events; they can also include positive events, whether internal or external, that individuals experience. These events activate internal systems to adapt to the stressful situations they face. According to Selye, the types of stress sources are divided into two categories:

- **First Type: Positive Stress:**

This includes pleasant events that generate feelings of joy and happiness, motivating individuals to work productively. It stimulates their drives and needs, often referred to as arousal, through the hormones released by glands. Positive events encountered by individuals can occur in various aspects

of life, whether in familial, educational, or professional environments. Examples include promotions at work, success in exams, or obtaining academic degrees, all of which benefit individuals in adapting to their external environment (Fath, 2005, p. 44).

- **Second Type: Negative Stress**

This category encompasses various types of stress based on their causes:

Family Stress: Such as familial discord, separation, loyalty issues, and poverty.

Aggression Stress: This includes negative treatment from family members, friends, or relatives.

Physical Stress: Relating to physical, punitive, or social deficiencies (Hamdati, 2008, p. 168).

- **According to the Nature of the Source:**

Some researchers argue that psychological stress is based on the nature of the source and the stimuli causing it. For instance, researcher B. Brown refers to a general framework for stress that includes environmental stress, along with other types:

Psychological Stress: Such as loss of love or personal conflicts.

Social Stress: Such as cultural constraints.

Economic Stress: Including poverty and unemployment.

Physiological Stress: Involving chemical changes in the body (Shaaban, 1999, p. 23).

9.3- Symptoms of Psychological Stress:

Excessive exposure to psychological stress can lead to hormonal imbalances, resulting in a range of symptoms that affect both physical and psychological well-being. These symptoms can be detailed as follows:

9.3.1- Physical Symptoms:

Psychological stress can adversely affect the body, making it susceptible to various disorders, including:

- Changes in sleep patterns, including insomnia.
- Fatigue and increased thyroid gland secretion leading to physical collapse.
- Digestive changes.
- Headaches along with pain in various parts of the body.
- Loss of sexual drive.
- Increased adrenaline levels in the blood.
- Digestive disturbances.
- Muscle tension in the neck and shoulders (Shihani, 2003, p. 18).

9.3.2- Psychological Symptoms:

This aspect typically arises from a student's inability to cope with stressful situations through behavioral responses. When these behavioral responses fail to resolve the problem and instead complicate it further, the level of stress increases. As a result, the student may respond negatively, leading to the emergence of psychological and behavioral symptoms such as fatigue, lack of vitality, withdrawal, boredom, and anxiety that occurs even when facing the simplest of problems..

9.3.3- Cognitive Symptoms:

Stress impacts an individual's cognitive framework, leading to a decline in the effectiveness of many mental functions. The effects of stress manifest in the following symptoms:

- Decreased attention, difficulty concentrating, and weakened observational skills.
- Inability to make decisions and forgetfulness.
- Loss of the ability to accurately categorize the situation.
- Reduced problem-solving capabilities and difficulty processing information.

9.3.4- Behavioral Symptoms:

- Decreased motivation.
- Lower academic achievement.
- Language disturbances, such as stuttering and difficulty in communication.
- Sleep disorders and neglect of appearance and health.
- Withdrawal from others and a tendency towards isolation.
- Increased alcohol consumption and excessive avoidance of social interactions.

9.3.5- Emotional and Affective Symptoms:

Emotional states also reflect the impacts of psychological stress, which can manifest in the following ways:

- Episodes of depression and intense anger.
- Increased physical and psychological tension, leading to a reduced ability to relax.
- Heightened feelings of illness, where stress symptoms may mimic physical health issues, overshadowing feelings of well-being (Shihani, 2003, p. 19).

10- Methodology and Tools:

10.1- Method: We utilized a descriptive correlational approach to investigate the relationship between exam anxiety and coping strategies for psychological stress among baccalaureate students.

10.2- Study Sample: The study sample consisted of third-year high school students enrolled at Al-Shahid Daqa Ali Secondary School in Al-Hamrayah and Al-Sassi Al-Ridwani Secondary School in Al-Ruqaybah, totaling 114 male and female students.

10.3- Data Collection Tools: Two questionnaires were employed:

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The first was the Exam Anxiety Scale developed by Dr. Gharbi, consisting of 33 items divided into three dimensions (anxiety related to exam preparation, performance anxiety during the exam, and anxiety about waiting for exam results).

The second questionnaire focused on coping strategies for psychological stress. We combined the Psychological Stress Scale with the Coping Strategies Scale, resulting in a Coping Strategies Scale consisting of 27 items divided into four dimensions (problem-solving, self-avoidance, positive evaluation, and self-blame).

10.3.1- Exam Anxiety Scale:

The Exam Anxiety Scale consists of 33 items distributed across three dimensions, which are:

The scale was developed based on these concepts by formulating three (3) items for each of the aforementioned ideas. The first item relates to anxiety regarding exam preparation (before the exam), the second item pertains to performance anxiety during the exam, and the third item addresses anxiety about waiting for exam results (after the exam). Below is a table detailing the number and item numbers for each dimension of the Exam Anxiety Scale:

Dimension	Items	Number of Items
1-Anxiety Related to Exam Preparation	31-28-25-22-19-16-13-10-7-4-1	11 items
2-Performance Anxiety During the Exam	32-29-26-23-20-17-14-11-8-5-2	11 items
3- Anxiety About Waiting for Exam Results	33-30-27-24-21-18-15-12-9-6-3	11 items
Total Scale	From item number 1 to item number 33.	33 items

The final version of the Exam Anxiety Scale consists of 25 positive items and 8 negative items, as shown in the following table:

Table 02 :Positive and Negative Items in the Exam Anxiety Scale:

	Negative Items	Positive Items
Item Numbers	30-25-21-18-16-10-7-4	Remaining Items
Number of Items	08	25
Total Number	33 items	

The scale is administered to individuals aged 11 and older, who are asked to respond to all items by marking an (X) next to one of the five available alternatives (No, Rarely, Often, Yes). After individuals complete their responses to all items, the answers are collected, and a score is assigned to each response based on the selected alternatives, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 03 :Scoring for the Exam Anxiety Scale Alternatives:

Alternative	Yes	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	NO
Positive Items	05	04	03	02	01

Negative Items	01	02	03	04	05
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Based on this, the levels of exam anxiety are classified into three categories, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 04 : Classification of Exam Anxiety Levels in the Total Scale:

Classification	Score
Low Level of Exam Anxiety	From 33 to 50
Moderate Level of Exam Anxiety	From 26 to 40
High Level of Exam Anxiety	From 41 to 55

The Sub-levels of Exam Anxiety (Dimensions) are as follows:

Table 05 : Classification of Exam Anxiety Levels in Each Subscale (Dimension):

Classification	Score
Low Level of Exam Anxiety	From 11 to 25
Moderate Level of Exam Anxiety	From 26 to 40
High Level of Exam Anxiety	From 41 to 55

The psychometric properties of the scale were confirmed by calculating content validity, discriminative validity, self-validity, and concurrent validity (Sambati et al.). Internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha, and split-half reliability were also assessed, all indicating the validity and reliability of the scale (Gharbi, 2014).

- **Psychometric Properties of the Scale:**

First: Reliability:

The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is 0.912, which is statistically significant. Thus, the Exam Anxiety Scale is considered reliable. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the individual scores and the paired scores before adjustment is estimated at 0.52. After adjustment using the Spearman-Brown correction formula, it increased to 0.68, which is significant at the 0.01 level (Gharbi, 2014, p. 164).

Second: Validity:

(Please provide details for the validity section if needed!)

- **Self-Validity:** Since the reliability coefficient of this test is 0.68, its self-validity is estimated at 0.8.

- **Discriminative Validity:** Based on the calculated validity results, the computed t-value is 21.48, which is greater than the critical t-value of 2.75 at the significance level of 0.01. Thus, it is valid and suitable for application on the main study sample.
- **Concurrent Validity:** The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between the original Exam Anxiety Scale and the benchmark scale (by Al-Sayed Mustafa Al-Sambati, Omar Ismail Ali, and Ahlam Abdel-Sami Al-Aqbawi). The results showed that the correlation coefficient between the sample scores on the two scales is 0.72. Referring to the statistical tables, with degrees of freedom $(N-1) = 198$, the value is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that the scale is valid and suitable for application in the main study (Gharbi, 2014, p. 157).

10.3.2- Coping Strategies for Psychological Stress Scale

The Coping Strategies for Psychological Stress Scale consists of 27 items distributed across 4 dimensions.

The scale is administered to the study sample of third-year high school students, who are asked to respond to all items by marking an (X) next to one of the alternatives (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). After the students complete their responses within the designated time, the answers are collected, and scores are assigned to each response based on the selected alternative, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 05 : Representing the Test Alternatives:

Alternative	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Positive Items	05	04	03	02	01
Negative Items	01	02	03	04	05

The Table Below Illustrates the Dimensions of the Coping Strategies for Psychological Stress Scale:

Table 06 : Dimensions of the Coping Strategies for Psychological Stress Scale

Dimension	Items
Problem-Solving Strategies	7-6-5-4-3-2-1
Avoidance Strategies	14-13-12-11-10-9-8
Positive Evaluation Strategies	20-19-18-17-16-15
Self-Avoidance Strategies	27-26-25-24-23-22-21

The total score for each individual in the study sample is calculated by summing the scores for all the items on the scale.

After obtaining the scores for each item, the scores are aggregated to yield the overall total score.

Psychometric Properties of the Scale:

First: Reliability:

Table 07: Reliability of the Coping Strategies for Psychological Stress Scale Using Cronbach's Alpha

Cronb Ach s Alpha	N of item
.683	19

The results presented in the previous table indicate that the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is 0.683, which is statistically significant. Therefore, the Coping Strategies for Psychological Stress Scale is considered reliable.

Second: Validity:

1. Self-Validity: Since the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.683, the self-validity is estimated at 0.8.

Table 08: Correlation Coefficient of Each Item in the Coping Strategies for Psychological Stress Scale with Its Corresponding Dimension

t	First Dimension		Second Dimension		Third Dimension		Fourth Dimension
Item	Correlation Coefficient	Item	Correlation Coefficient	Item	Correlation Coefficient	Item	Correlation Coefficient
1	.614	08	.348	15	.712	21	.498
2	.491	09	.442	16	.136	22	.195
3	.490	10	.514	17	.339	23	.323
4	.448	11	.648	18	.518	24	.137
5	.515	12	.668	19	.645	25	.458
6	.581	13	.159	20	.339	26	.376
7	.455	14	.505			27	.620

The results presented in the previous table indicate that each item in the Coping Strategies for Psychological Stress Scale has a statistically significant correlation with the dimension to which it belongs. Items that were not statistically significant were removed from the scale, and they are as follows by dimension:

- Second Dimension: Removed Items= 08/13
- Third Dimension: Removed Items= 16/ 17/ 20

10.3.3- Statistical Methods:

Statistics assist researchers and readers in accurately interpreting scores and drawing conclusions. Therefore, this study relied on the SPSS statistical software to verify the validity of the tool used for data collection in terms of its reliability and validity, as well as to test the hypotheses of the study.

- **Pearson Correlation Coefficient:**

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to investigate the correlational relationship between two variables (Mahmoud, 2000, p. 118).

The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two quantitative variables, while the Spearman correlation coefficient is used for measuring the strength of correlation between two ordinal variables. In our case, we employed the Pearson correlation coefficient because both variables are quantitative (Al-Zoubi & Al-Talafha, 2003).

11- Presentation and Discussion of Results:

11-1 Presentation and Interpretation of the Results for the First Partial Hypothesis:

11.1-1 Presentation of the Results for the First Partial Hypothesis:

The first partial hypothesis states that there is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and problem-solving strategies for coping with psychological stress among third-year high school students. To verify this hypothesis, the relationship between exam anxiety and problem-solving strategies was calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results are as follows:

Table 09 : shows the relationship between exam anxiety and problem-solving strategies for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.

Variables	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Level of Significance
Exam Anxiety	93.1491	11.41202	0.26	0.01
Problem-Solving Strategies	25.1842	4.22920		

Based on the results recorded in the table above, the Pearson correlation coefficient is estimated at 0.26, which is significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, there is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and problem-solving strategies for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.

11.1.2- Discussion of the Results for the First Partial Hypothesis:

Based on the results in Table No. 09, there is a correlation between exam anxiety and problem-solving strategies for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students. It appears that problem-solving strategies are adopted by these students as they strive to address academic challenges. They continually seek plans to overcome difficulties, such as turning to tutoring sessions, educational videos, and collaborative learning with peers, all aimed at achieving their primary goal of obtaining the baccalaureate certificate.

This is supported by the study conducted by Ragab Ali Shaaban (1992), which aimed to investigate coping strategies and their relationship with personality traits and adjustment. The study sample consisted of 39 female students aged 18 to 22, using the Coping Strategies Scale and the California Personality Scale. The findings revealed a relationship between emotional stability in females and the use of logical analysis and positive re-evaluation. In males, activity and organization were linked to proactive coping strategies. Additionally, the study found a correlation between coping strategies and personal and social adjustment in both genders (Yousfi, 201, p. 130).

These findings highlight the significance of problem-solving approaches in helping students manage exam-related stress effectively.

11.2 Presentation and Discussion of the Results for the Second Partial Hypothesis:

11.2-1 Presentation of the Results for the Second Partial Hypothesis:

The second partial hypothesis states that there is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and avoidance strategies for coping with psychological stress among third-year high school students. To verify this hypothesis, the relationship between exam anxiety and avoidance strategies was calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results are as follows:

Table 10: Relationship Between Exam Anxiety and Avoidance Strategies for Coping with Psychological Stress Among Baccalaureate Students

Variables	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Level of Significance
Exam Anxiety	93.1491	11.41202	0.198	0.05
Avoidance Strategies	25.1842	4.22920		

Based on the results recorded in the table above, the Pearson correlation coefficient is estimated at 0.198, which is significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, there is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and avoidance strategies for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.

11.2.2- Discussion of the Results for the Second Partial Hypothesis:

The results in Table 10 indicate a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and avoidance strategies for coping with psychological stress among third-year high school students. It appears that avoidance strategies are often the most effective means for baccalaureate students, as they attempt to steer clear of anything that may be unproductive for them.

These students seek to avoid distractions in their studies, including the pressure from parents regarding the need to succeed or excel in the baccalaureate exam, as well as the anxiety associated with the exam itself. This avoidance is a way for them to achieve balance and mental calmness in the face of the pressures related to success.

This notion is supported by the study conducted by Aribat and Khrabsha (2007), which examined the psychological stress experienced by high-achieving students and their coping strategies. The study highlighted that high parental expectations are among the primary causes of psychological stress, while feelings of being unloved or disrespected by peers were less significant. The findings also indicated that the most commonly used coping strategy for managing psychological stress was the use of tranquilizers, while learning from past experiences was the least utilized strategy. Furthermore, the research revealed differences in the exposure to psychological stress based on gender, with male students showing greater exposure to stress (Abu Habib, 2010, p. 81).

In summary, the use of avoidance strategies appears to be a common response among students facing exam anxiety, reinforcing the need for effective coping mechanisms to manage the pressures of academic success.

11.3- Presentation and Discussion of the Results for the Third Partial Hypothesis:

11.3.1- Presentation of the Results for the Third Partial Hypothesis:

The third partial hypothesis states that there is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the positive evaluation strategy for coping with psychological stress among third-year high school students. To verify this hypothesis, the relationship between exam anxiety and the positive evaluation strategy was calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results were as follows:

Table 11 shows the relationship between exam anxiety and the positive evaluation strategy for coping with psychological stress among high school students (Baccalaureate students).

Variables	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Level of Significance
Exam Anxiety	93.1491	11.41202	- 0.64	0.05
Positive Evaluation	21.6053	3.51134		

From the table, we observe that the Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.64. This value is not significant at the 0.05 level, indicating an inverse relationship due to the negative sign. Therefore, we can conclude that there is no statistically significant relationship between exam anxiety and the positive evaluation strategy for coping with psychological stress among Baccalaureate students.

11.3.2 Discussion of the Results for the Third Partial Hypothesis:

From the results of Table 11, we find that there is no statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the positive evaluation strategy for coping with psychological stress among Baccalaureate students. This is because these students are often unable to accurately assess their own efforts and perseverance as well as their teachers do. As a result, many students are shocked by their results, expecting higher achievements based on their self-assessment. However, the actual results tend to be lower than expected despite the significant effort they put in.

Students are not adequately equipped to positively evaluate themselves, especially in exam situations. A student may put in considerable effort in preparing for an exam, but due to factors like anxiety, fear, stress, or pressure from parents, they lose the ability to focus and respond appropriately. Thus, it can be said that exam anxiety negatively impacts the positive evaluation strategy.

This situation underscores the need for material and moral support from the family, school, and community. As noted by Lazarus's model, which emphasizes the importance of evaluation, this is seen as a fundamental element in the theoretical framework for coping with psychological stress (Taha, Salama, 2006, p. 92).

11.4 Presentation of the Results for the Fourth Partial Hypothesis:

11.4.1- Presentation of the Results for the Third Partial Hypothesis:

The third partial hypothesis states that there is a statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the self-blame strategy for coping with psychological stress among Baccalaureate students. To verify this hypothesis, the relationship between exam anxiety and the self-blame strategy was calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results were as follows:

Table 12 shows the relationship between exam anxiety and the self-blame strategy for coping with psychological stress among Baccalaureate students.

Variables	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Level of Significance
Exam Anxiety	93.1491	11.41202	- 0.42	0.05
Self-reproach strategy	22.9298	3.83906		

From the table, we observe that the Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.42. This value is not significant at the 0.05 significance level, and thus, it is not statistically significant. Therefore, there is no correlation between test anxiety and the self-reproach strategy for coping with psychological stress among high school students.

11.4.2 Discussion of the Results of the Fourth Sub-hypothesis:

From the results in Table 12, we find that the Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.42, indicating no statistically significant correlation between exam anxiety and the self-reproach strategy for coping with psychological stress among high school students. This is because the obtained result is not statistically significant, allowing us to conclude that this hypothesis is not confirmed.

We often observe that some high school students resort to the self-reproach strategy and blame themselves, unlike other students. Despite their efforts to achieve their goals, they adopt this strategy. The self-reproach strategy makes the individual passive and immobile in stressful situations, blaming themselves for the problems they face. Additionally, the constant pressure from parents to obtain the high school certificate and their insistence on high grades frustrates students as they bear pressures beyond their capabilities. This results in a loss of interest in studying, and eventually, they gradually abandon their studies. Consequently, they do not feel guilty because they place the blame on their parents for their failure.

11.5 Presentation and Discussion of the General Hypothesis Results:

11.5.1 Presentation of the General Hypothesis Results: The general hypothesis states that there is a correlational relationship between exam anxiety and the stress coping strategies among third-year high school students. To verify the hypothesis, the relationship between exam anxiety and stress coping strategies among baccalaureate students was calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results were as follows:

Table 13 shows the relationship between exam anxiety and stress coping strategies among baccalaureate students.

Variables	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Level of Significance
Exam Anxiety	93.1491	11.41202	0.981	0.01
stress coping strategies	97.7632	10.31821		

Based on the results recorded in the table above, we find that the Pearson correlation coefficient value is estimated at (0.981), and this value is significant at (0.01). Therefore, there is a strong significant correlational relationship between exam anxiety and stress coping strategies among baccalaureate students.

11.5.2 Discussion of the General Hypothesis Results:

From Table No. 13, the results obtained from the study and the answer to the general question confirm the existence of a statistically significant positive correlational relationship at a significance level of (0.01), with the Pearson correlation coefficient reaching (0.981), between exam anxiety and stress coping strategies among baccalaureate students. This proves the existence of a relationship between exam anxiety and stress coping strategies.

This result is consistent with Pearson and Roe's study (1985), which indicated a positive relationship between the intensity of stress, anxiety, and depression. It also aligns with several studies conducted on university students in the United States, which found a positive relationship between the intensity of exposure to psychological stress. In Arab studies, we find Shahat's study in Egypt (2002), on football juniors in Minya governorate, which showed positive and significant correlational results between psychological stress and anxiety as a state. Similarly, it agreed with Khneish's study in Algeria (2015), whose results indicated a significant direct relationship between psychological stress and exam anxiety (Dr. Salem, 2016, p. 334).

This can be attributed to the fact that the baccalaureate exam represents a significant concern that worries and stresses baccalaureate students, despite all the efforts and strategies they employ to alleviate this psychological pressure. This stress negatively affects them, leading to persistent exam anxiety throughout the school year. As a result, they resort to various coping strategies, such as support lessons, educational videos, peer interaction, and group study based on cooperative learning methods, among others. Furthermore, parental pressure on students to achieve the dream of obtaining the baccalaureate certificate with a high enough score to secure admission into a suitable university specialization also directly impacts them.

Conclusion:

From what has been presented throughout the details of this study, we observed that exam anxiety stems from students' belief that the baccalaureate certificate is a crucial step that qualifies them for university admission. This belief places significant pressure on them, as they constantly fear failure and underperformance in exams. Consequently, the exam period is accompanied by considerable psychological stress, which affects students, leading to numerous psychological problems characterized by fear and the expectation of failure, accompanied by tensions and anxieties.

Thus, what can be concluded from this study is that there is a correlational relationship between exam anxiety and stress coping strategies among baccalaureate students. Based on the study's problem, hypotheses, theoretical framework, fieldwork, and methodological procedures used to verify these hypotheses, the following results were reached:

- There is a statistically significant correlational relationship between exam anxiety and the problem-solving strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.
- There is a statistically significant correlational relationship between exam anxiety and the avoidance strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.
- There is no statistically significant correlational relationship between exam anxiety and the positive evaluation strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.

- There is no statistically significant correlational relationship between exam anxiety and the self-blame strategy for coping with psychological stress among baccalaureate students.

12- Recommendations:

- Work on providing a suitable and conducive environment that contributes to achieving the best results, which in turn helps enhance the academic and cognitive efficiency of the students.
- Reduce the fear and intimidation surrounding the baccalaureate exam and treat it as just another transitional stage like other exams.
- Ensure that baccalaureate students are supported by providing psychological and material assistance throughout the school year.
- It is necessary to carefully select teachers who will teach the baccalaureate level.
- Pay attention to the mental health and behavior of students within educational institutions through guidance and counseling.
- Design preventive training programs where students can learn how to deal with the stress they face, practice self-control, and develop motivation.
- It is essential to give more opportunities to psychological specialists to assist students, without imposing restrictions by the school administration or its duties.

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