

Research Paper

## Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress Among Competitive Exam Aspirants

R. Muthuselvi<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. J. Sujathamalini<sup>2</sup>, Dr. K. Gunasekaran<sup>3</sup>,  
K. Sheik Ahamed Imthiyas<sup>4</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Competitive exams have become a crucial milestone for individual to secure a job in various field. Every year, millions of candidates were competing on a challenging way to crack those exams. Aspirants frequently devote their time, energy and resources in order to secure a position they desire. Achievement Motivation refers to an individual's drive to succeed. Achievement Motivation plays a vital role in aspirant's effort and resilience. Subjective experience of difficult situation referred as Perceived Stress. Chronic stress may be leads to burnout, decreased motivation among Competitive Exam Aspirants. This study examines the relationship between Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants. Quantitative Survey design was adopted with using standardized measures. Muthee's and Thomas's Achievement Motivation scale and Sheldon Cohen et.al Perceived Stress scale were used. Sample of 62 Competitive Exam Aspirants were taken. The result of this study indicates that the competitive exam aspirants demonstrated moderate level of achievement motivation and perceived stress. Further, the data also resulted no correlation ( $r = -.014$ ) between Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants. Thus, the study implied that the need for training to improve their achievement motivation and to reduce their perceived stress of competitive exam aspirants.

**Keywords:** *Achievement Motivation, Perceived Stress and Competitive Exam Aspirants*

Today, motivation in the context of study has become extremely important. As a person moves through various stages, individual motivation condition or source constantly shift. People need to be motivated in order to work but occasionally, people experience lacking of their motivation. Every person has a driving force that inspires to accomplish their goals. Aspirants are seeking to attain a desired position or status. Exam

<sup>1</sup>M.Sc., Psychology, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Science, Alagappa University, Karaikudi.

<sup>2</sup>Professor and Head, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Science, Alagappa University, Karaikudi.

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Science, Alagappa University, Karaikudi

<sup>4</sup>Teaching Assistant, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Science, Alagappa University, Karaikudi.

\*Corresponding Author

Received: April 12, 2025; Revision Received: April 22, 2025; Accepted: April 26, 2025

## Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress Among Competitive Exam Aspirants

that meant to assess a candidate's knowledge, aptitude and skills in certain area are called competitive exams. Competitive exams are used to admit the individuals for career opportunities (i.e. TNPSC, RRB and SSC). Achievement motivation refers as behavior directed at developing or demonstrating high rather than low ability (Nicholls, 1984). According to McClelland (1961), identified three motivators that he believed we all have: a need for achievement, a need for affiliation, and a need for power. These dominant motivators are largely dependent on individual's culture and life experience. As stated by APA (2018), Stress referred as physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors. Stress causes changes in almost every bodily system, which affects how people feel and act. It could show up as palpitations, perspiration, dry mouth, dyspnea, an increase in negative emotions, and stress weariness, for instance. Phillips (2013) stated Perceived Stress is the feeling or thoughts that an individual has about how much stress they are under at a given point in time or over a given time period. Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress are critical psychological factors that may impact aspirant's performance and well-being. High level of motivation can occasionally reduce stress; people who have great goals for themselves may be better able to handle obstacles. The purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between Competitive Exam Aspirants' Perceived Stress and Achievement Motivation.

### *Need for the study*

The relationship between Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants is a significant area of study due to highly demanding and stressful endeavor for millions of aspirants. The pressure to succeed in competitive exams such as civil services can have the impact on an individual's psychological well-being and achievement motivation. Many studies were reviewed related to Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress. From the reviewed literature it is clear that studies were disseminated in relating both the variable of interest i.e Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress, whereas the population to be taken for the study is not explored anywhere. This proves the existence of research gap. **Pretty Rani and Geetha Reddy (2019)** studied how teenage students from various academic streams were motivated to achieve. In order to measure it, Norton (2006) developed a scale with 22 components. Using purposive sampling, 40 male and 40 female teenage undergraduate students (ages 13 to 20) from the Hyderabad district were selected for the study. Their findings emphasized significant differences in motivation levels among male and female students, as well as those pursuing arts and sciences. This indicates the necessity of considering individual differences when designing educational interventions.

**Shah et al. (2021)** investigated the connection between university students' achievement motivation, coping mechanisms, and stress in Islamabad. In this study, the cross-sectional survey approach was employed. The technique of stratified random sampling was employed. 756 students from two Islamabad institutions made up the sample. Coping mechanisms (David & Alexandra, 1995), achievement motivation (McInerney, 2003), and the stress scale (Barreca & Hepler, 2000) were all employed. The results of the study showed a substantial correlation between students' stress levels and their drive for achievement, as well as a significant variation in answers between male and female university students regarding coping mechanisms and motivation. Their study underscored that coping mechanisms play a crucial role in mitigating stress and enhancing motivation, suggesting the need for structured stress management programs and guidance initiatives within educational institutions.

## Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress Among Competitive Exam Aspirants

**Sefidan (2021)** found the impact of leadership on achievement motivation among recruits during their Basic Military Training. The sample consisting of 525 male recruits were assessed. Findings demonstrated that positive leadership styles significantly enhance motivation and organizational citizenship behavior while reducing stress. This highlights the importance of leadership dynamics in shaping motivation and well-being in structured training environments.

A study on stress management in competitive test candidates (Banking, SSC, and RRB) was carried out by **Madkani in 2022**. In this study, 120 samples from various institutions were chosen using stratified purposive sampling and the descriptive survey method. V. Kaushik and N.A. Charpe's standardized stress management scale was applied. The study found no discernible differences in stress management across the various competitive exam groups or between the sexes (male and female). However, the interaction of gender and examination type was found to influence stress management patterns, indicating that aspirants may benefit from personalized stress management interventions.

**Roy (2023)** studied 70 students' motivation for achievement, tension, and anxiety. The Achievement Motivation Scale (AMS), Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) were employed. While students with low achievement motivation have low anxiety, those with high and medium levels of stress have low motivation for achievement. Concluding that stress negatively impacts motivation, while anxiety does not significantly influence it. The study also noted gender differences in stress and anxiety levels, further reinforcing the necessity of gender-sensitive psychological support programs.

**Mokashi and Bapu (2023)** investigate the relationship between psychological health and sleep quality in both competitive exam candidates and non-applicants. In addition to showing no difference between aspirants and non-aspirants for both variables, their findings indicated no significant association between sleep quality and psychological well-being among competitive exam candidates.

**Ma et al. (2024)** examined the mediating role of perceived stress and self-esteem in the relationship between mental health and achievement motivation. They used the Achievement Goal Orientation Scale, Self-Esteem Scale, Perceived Stress Scale, and Depression-Anxiety-Stress Scale to administer the measures to 530 medical postgraduate students (66.04% female and 33.96% male). The results showed that perceived stress and self-esteem mediated the relationship between depression/anxiety and achievement motivation. Their findings provided insight into the psychological mechanisms linking motivation with depression and anxiety, offering valuable implications for mental health education among medical postgraduate students.

### *Achievement Motivation*

The American Psychological Association (2018) defines achievement motivation as the drive to succeed and perform well. The drive to succeed in challenging tasks and conquer barriers.

The operational definition of **accomplishment** motivation in this study is the striving inclination of competitive exam aspirants who want to succeed and achieve in several facets of their lives.

## Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress Among Competitive Exam Aspirants

### *Perceived Stress*

According to Cohen (1983), Perceived stress is defined as how individual understand the amount of stress he or she is exposed to in a period of time.

In this study the term Perceived stress is operationally referred as the aspirant's experience of stress including emotional, cognitive and physiological response to stressful situations.

### *Objectives*

- To find out the level of Achievement Motivation among Competitive Exam Aspirants.
- To find out the level of Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants.
- To find the relationship between Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants.

### *Hypotheses*

- **H1-** There is no difference in the level of Achievement Motivation among Competitive Exam Aspirants.
- **H2-** There is no difference in the level of Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants.
- **H3-** There is no significant relationship between Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample*

Survey has been carried out based on the objectives of the present study. Karaikudi was specifically chosen for the current study. Competitive Exam Aspirants were selected from the nearby centers. Samples comprise of 62 Competitive Exam Aspirants under the age group of 18-25 and 25-30 were randomly selected through Simple Random Technique.

### *Inclusion Criteria*

- Aspirants of Competitive Exams in age range of 18-30
- Individual who are currently preparing for competitive exam aspirants i.e., TNPSC, RRB
- Aspirants who have appeared for such exam or will be taking them in upcoming schedules.

### *Exclusion Criteria*

- Individuals above 30 years were excluded.
- Individual who are not currently preparing for competitive exam aspirants i.e., TNPSC, RRB
- Aspirants who have not appeared for any competitive exam.

### *Tools*

In this study Achievement motivation inventory was used. Muthee and Thomas developed the tool to assess the achievement motivation among learners. Among 32 items from the scale, 18 were positive and 14 were negative question. The scoring scheme ensured that above 111 which indicates high level of achievement motivation and below 94 which indicates low level of achievement motivation. The reliability and validity of the scale was 0.732 and 0.855.

## Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress Among Competitive Exam Aspirants

Sheldon Cohen et al. (1988) developed perceived stress scale were used. This tool assessed the individual's perceived stress among aspirants. Among 10 items from the scale, 4 were positive and 6 were negative question. The test re-test reliability score was 0.86 and good validity.

### *Procedure*

This study was conducted on the competitive exam aspirants in Karaikudi region through survey method. The data were manually collected. Participants were chosen through random selection procedure. Then, they were approached individually and explained with the objectives of the study. They were assured that the data would be kept confidentially and it is purely for research purpose. They were prompted to answer all the questions from the tool without missing any items and to work rapidly. Data gathering and analysis were completed. Calculations are performed to determine the mean, median, mode and standard deviation of the Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress. Next, the level of each variable is computed. It carried out to see how these variables relate with one another. Using Pearson Correlation, the statistics for the two variable's relationship were investigated.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Table 1: The mean, median, mode and standard deviation of Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants*

Variables	Sample Size	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Achievement Motivation	62	104.7	104	96	11.35	0.08	-0.63
Perceived stress	62	19.93	20	19	4.44	0.42	1.61

From the descriptive statistics, the achievement motivation's mean, median, mode, standard deviation, skewness and Kurtosis are 104.7, 104, 96, 11.35, 0.08 and -0.63 and the Perceived Stress's mean, median, mode, standard deviation, skewness and Kurtosis are 19.93, 20, 19, 4.44, 0.42 and 1.61. Achievement motivation was positively skewed and platykurtic and the Perceived stress was positively skewed and leptokurtic. The study can proceed because the descriptive statistics follow the normality distribution.

*Table 2: Level of Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants.*

Variables	Sample size	High	Moderate	Low
Achievement Motivation	62	16	38	8
Perceived Stress	62	9	46	7

The data regarding the Competitive Exam Aspirants in Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress is displayed in table 2. In Achievement Motivation the participants who scored above 111 falls under high level, scored between 111-94 falls under the moderate level and scored below 94 falls under low level. The levels were calculated using the mean  $\pm$  SD of Perceived stress respectively. In perceived stress the participants who scored above 24 falls under high level, scored between 24-15 falls under moderate level and scored 15 below falls under low level.

## Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress Among Competitive Exam Aspirants

The findings indicate that out of 62 participants, 16 participants had a high, 38 participants had a moderate, and 8 participants had a low Achievement Motivation and 9 participants had a high, 46 participants had a moderate and 7 participants had a low Perceived Stress. Based on the results, the study clearly reveals that a very strong significant difference exists in the level of Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants. Hence the stated hypotheses H1, H2 were rejected.

**Table 3: Correlation between Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants.**

VARIABLES	RELATIONSHIP
Achievement Motivation	r = -.014
Perceived Stress	

The result shows that there is no statistical relationship between Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants ( $r = -.014$ ). Hence the stated null hypothesis H3 is accepted ( $r = -.014$ ) as shown in Table 3.

### CONCLUSION

This study was carried out to explore the relationship between Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants. The results of this study show that among competitive exam candidates, there is no relationship between perceived stress and achievement motivation. There could be a few reasons for this. People have different types of motivation, environmental stress and specific exam pressures might be affecting factor to describe how Achievement Motivation relates to Perceived Stress. The group is more or less similar, with everyone showing the same levels of Achievement Motivation and stress. The sample size may be too limited to detect the significant relationship between Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress among Competitive Exam Aspirants. Furthermore, conducting research with larger samples may be helps to investigate the relationship between two variables.

### REFERENCES

- Cohen, S. (1988). Perceived stress in a probability sample of the United States. *The social psychology of health/Sage*.
- Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of health and social behavior*, 385-396.
- Hsu, H. Y., Chen, S. H., Yu, H. Y., & Lou, J. H. (2010). Job stress, achievement motivation and occupational burnout among male nurses. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 66(7), 1592-1601.
- Ma, M. Y., Li, Y., Guo, L., & Yang, G. E. (2024). Achievement motivation and mental health among medical postgraduates: the chain mediating effect of self-esteem and perceived stress. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1483090.
- Madkani, G., Behera, R. K., & Padhan, A. Stress Management among Competitive Examination Aspirants.
- McClelland, D.C. (1961). *The achieving society*. Van Nostrand.
- Mokashi, S. N., & KG, V. B. (2023). A Comparative Study of Sleep Quality and Psychological Well-Being Among Competitive Exam Aspirants and Non-Aspirants. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(2).
- Muthee, J. M., & Thomas, I. (2009). Achievement motivation inventory. *Department of Psychology, University of Kerala, Kariavattom, Thiruvananthapuram*.

## Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress Among Competitive Exam Aspirants

- Nicholls, J. G. (1984). Achievement motivation: conceptions of ability, subjective experience, task choice, and performance. *Psychological review*, 91(3), 328.
- Rani, P., & Reddy, R. G. (2019). A study on achievement motivation of adolescent students of different academic streams. *International Journal of Current Microbiology and Applied Sciences*, 8(2), 228-233.
- Roy, A. (2023). A Comparative Study to Explore the Effect of Perceived Stress and Anxiety on Achievement Motivation of Students. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches in Psychology*, 1(4), 89-144.
- Rücker, J. C. (2012). *The relationship between motivation, perceived stress and academic achievement in students* (Bachelor's thesis, University of Twente).
- Schlottz, W., Phillips, D. I., & Hertfordshire Cohort Study Group. (2013). Birth weight and perceived stress reactivity in older age. *Stress and Health*, 29(1), 56-63.
- Sefidan, S., Pramstaller, M., La Marca, R., Wyss, T., Roos, L., Sadeghi-Bahmani, D., ... & Brand, S. (2021). Transformational leadership, achievement motivation, and perceived stress in basic military training: a longitudinal study of swiss armed forces. *Sustainability*, 13(24), 13949.
- Shah, N. H., Nazir, N., Syed, M. A., Shaheen, M. N. K., & Nabi, G. (2021). Correlation of Stress and Coping Strategies with Achievement Motivation of University Students. *Multicultural Education*, 7(4)
- Tavakoli, N., Hadanzadeh, R., & Emadian, S. O. (2022). Investigating the mediating role of mindwandering between achievement motivation and perceived academic stress in nursing students. *Razavi International Journal of Medicine*, 10(1), 44-50.

### **Acknowledgment**

This article is written under RUSA 2.0 Theme-Based Research Project.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Muthuselvi, R., Sujathamalini, J., Gunasekaran, K. & Imthiyas, K.S.A. (2025). Achievement Motivation and Perceived Stress Among Competitive Exam Aspirants. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(2), 931-937. DIP:18.01.080.2025 1302, DOI:10.25215/1302.080