

*One Approach to Reducing of Stress during and before the Iranian Entrance Examination
(Concours)*

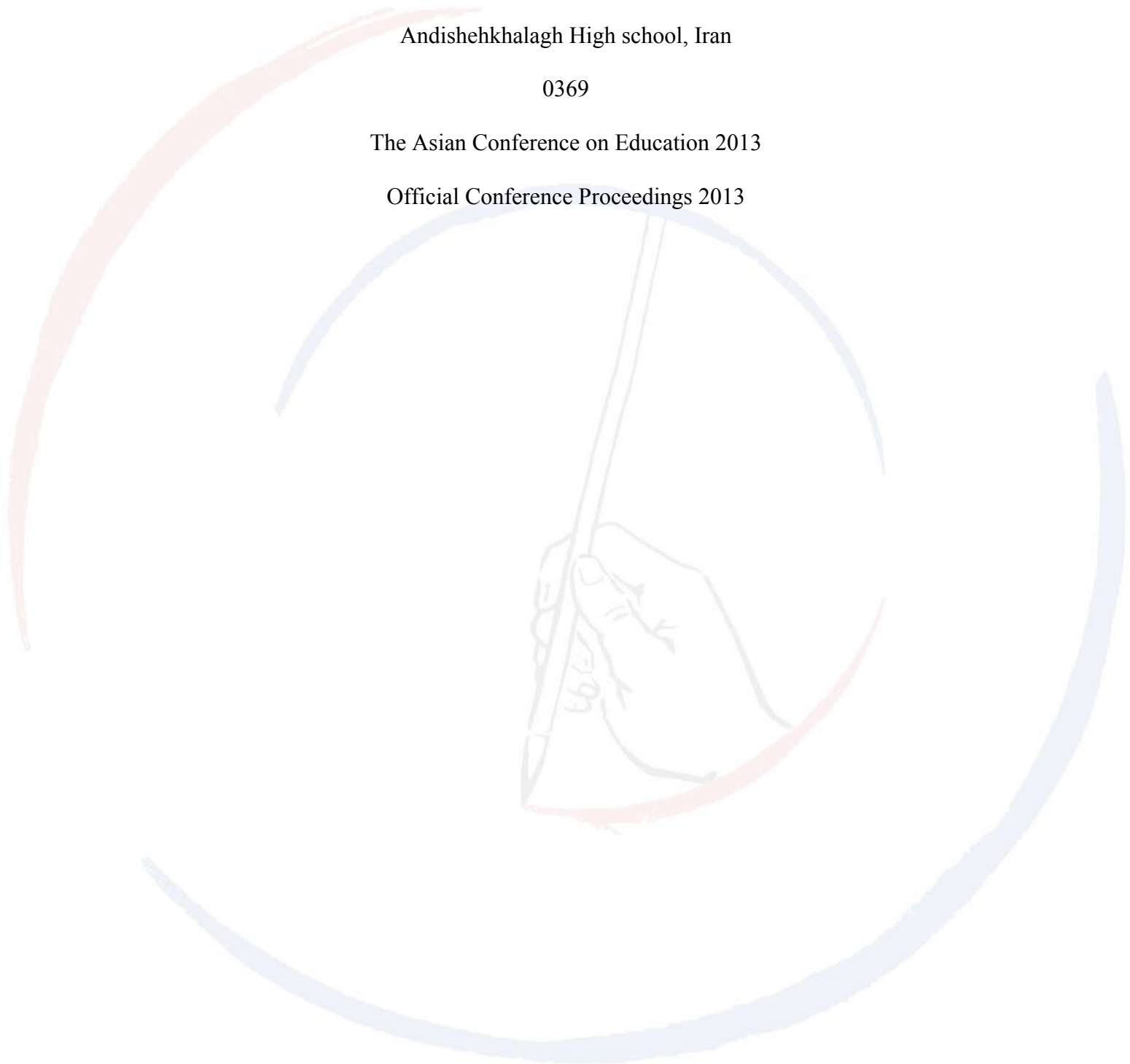
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Introduction

The story of "concoors" or the Iranian entrance university exam is not for current generation of Iranian students. Since 50 years ago, once a year, Iranian eager students to higher education, have engaged with challenges of more educated position in universities. Alternatively, other choices are full of risk for middle and poor classes: just doing business or hard work encompasses rest of their life.

Any person who wants to be more educated is interwoven his/her destiny with this exam, but beside of its crucial role in life of Iranian people, actually it is very hard and complicated, with more than 300 multi choice questions that must be answered around 4 hours.

For showing of its statistical aspects, in the following table No.1 with a little focus on "chance of acceptance" column, each person can feel the hard time of applicants for succeeding, especially experimental and art applicants.

Table No.1

Fields of study	Number	Chance of Acceptance
Math	250,000	%87
Experimental	500,000	%31
Humanities	290,000	%81
Art	150,000	%43
Language	100,000	%33

It must be added that just 15 percents of majors with limited capacity are highly concerned by the students. These majors are supposed to have the better occupations and incomes after graduation of the students. Sometimes, these discussions about the majors are true and sometimes they are just public opinions of the families without any touchable facts.

Anyway, these rumors and invalid information about the small-capacity majors plus reality of the majors with better social position have led to increasing stress among the students.

On the other hand, there are just 15 top universities all around Iran. It duplicates the stress of students and motivates them to be competitive with other students and friends not only scientifically but also mentally. It makes them aggressive because the source of successful such as top universities and the top majors is limit. The final result is stress.

This competitive sphere cause more control and educational planning for students but unfortunately without attention to mental health of students. The following table (table No.2) shows the gradually increased tension of Iranian entrance exam from first year of high school till its fourth year:

Table No.2

Years of Study	Main Educational Policy
First Year	General learning
Second Year	Choosing of majors in math, experimental and humanities
Third Year	Diploma exam (25% of entrance exam score)
Fourth Year	One year intensive education planning and testing plus entrance exam of universities

Toward the problem

Beside of this competitive condition, with attention to two factors of intelligence and endeavor, it is possible for students to be aware of their abilities. Also, in our high school, they can estimate their level and possibility of succeeding in base of their endeavor, practicing and regular educational planning except of just inclination to their intelligence. As follows, my experience shows that the students can be categorized with considering of endeavor and intelligence in four groups:

- 1- **Most of** the high intelligence with endeavor can entrance to top governmental universities of Tehran and main cities and their top majors
- 2- **Most of** the high intelligence but without endeavor can entrance to private universities of Tehran and main cities and their top majors
- 3- **Most of** the middle intelligence with endeavor accepts in non-popular majors but in top governmental universities of Tehran and main cities.
- 4- **Most of** the middle intelligence without endeavor also continuing of their studies in expensive private universities is possible.

This categorization is valid but as a third factor, mental tension and disturbance before and during the entrance exam causes the students couldn't get the predicted result. It's the main question of this article: How can the students' stress be reduced?

Practical Solutions

In accordance with each sort of stress-based disturbance of students, the different solution has been expanded. Actually, at high school, suddenly and ceaselessly, stresses with different causes have been occurred. The students more or less show their anxiety off exaggeratedly, sometimes as a victim of educational competitive structure and sometimes due to confused and conflictual atmosphere of their families.

Through the involvement with these tensions, a variety of our caring and attention to students' mental needs were collected. In this point, these practical experiences for reducing of the student's tension were formed at three below issues:

- 1- Interfamily problems
- 2- School-related problems
- 3- Society-related problems

1- Interfamily Problems

i) Non-emotional relationships between the parents

In first case, the emotional conflicts of family are projected to high school. For example, this projection can be traced: "My father doesn't like my mother anymore". Truly, this emotional problem is true but not new. It means that student wants to release her stress by engaging to different matters such as disagreements between her parents.

So, students must be convinced about the old roots of family contention. It is not supposed to solve during one day, three months or even more than one year. Specially, preparing time of entrance exam cannot afford extra concentration on old unresolved problems of family.

Accepting of this reality must be parallel with advises to parent of student. For short time of before the entrance exam, advises vary from maximally loving in relationship till minimally having a respectful manner of parent. Candidly, the last one is better considered by parents during the preparing time of students even temporally.

ii) Sensitivity of students about compare with other persons by their parents

In some cases, parents judge the educational progress of their girl students naively, harshly and unfairly. Although, the student is high intelligent or weak in lessons, in both of them, fear from being in comparison and judgment by their parents can intensify the effects of stress.

As a solution, talking with parents about their judgments is first step. Firstly parents ignore comparing of their children directly with other students. They name their judgments advice. In this way, sometime, parents unconsciously under cover of advising compare their children. So, because of indirect judgment of advices, it must be cleared for parent that neither judgment, nor advice should be considered.

In these cases, one parent accepts to stop their harsh evaluation verbally, but continue it mentally. Finally, with finding of their mental blaming and wanting them to stop it, the stress of students reduced.

iii) Be anxious about the high expense of studying at fourth years of high school

In this topic, students blame themselves or are blamed by their parents because the high price of high school's tuition fee. After blaming, students not like the first case, depressively go inside of themselves and find themselves guilty.

With considering of their parents, showing the opposite results of their approach, must be explained through the students' scores, their mental disorder, tensional and scattered learning. Talking seriously and pose deniable facts of their children's stresses make them more responsible about their critical harsh approach.

Parallely, the student must cut off their idle thoughts of guiltiness. It is very hard but its feasibility can be increased with mutual simultaneously dialogue with students and their parents.

iv) Nagging hints and blaming of parents

Sometimes, the weight of parents in nagging and making the tensional sphere is more than the students who are questioned their minimum activities pessimistically. For example, student says: "Every time for break, I get up from my study desk, my mother said me that you spoil time for learning."

The reason of this strict control is underlain this belief that after low score of students, just more studying is the solution of parents! In addition, parents do not attention to abilities of their children.

Most of the times, individually talking with parents about their unbalanced approach do not have effect. But as a solution, discussing about this problem in public session with other parents lead to better results. Indirectly, referring to different cases of strict control and subsequent student's failure at entrance exam, motivate the parents to think of their nagging and its consequences more seriously.

In this way, bolding of the each small success of students beside of ensuring parents that their blaming can disorder abilities of their children is more effective.

2- School-related Problems

i) Tensional actions of teachers

During the preparation for entrance exam, some of teachers want students to assign more time for studying of just their own lessons. Due to weak self-management of the students, result is unbalanced educational progress. So, score of some courses increase and another decrease.

Toward the balanced curriculum, weekly checking of the students' grade, their weekly schedule and students' assigned time to each courses, are monitored exactly. With analysis of the students' score data and talking with low-score students, teacher's overweighed assignments can be traced. Finally, through the weekly session with teachers, their educational schedules and assignments are replanned cooperatively.

ii) Friendship problems (sensitivity, disarranged relationship, exaggerated emotions)

In this case, students need to be approved by their friends in high school. With losing of their individualities, disapproval of their kindness and attention by their friends may lead to collapsing of their personality and in some sensitive students can cause the emotional trauma. So, this emotional turmoil substitutes for concentrated studying of studying and final result is educational failure and distress.

But isolation of the students in home or high school with full time assignments or more control on their educational schedule cannot reduce their emotional crisis. Keeping of their warm friendship in high school not in their homes but with modest manner and more rational attitude strongly is suggested.

For example, not studying of the students with their friend or reducing of its level until acceptance in universities can reshape their emotional sphere of friendship. Now with this new atmosphere of modest thinking in high school, simultaneously sympathy with their sad feelings help them to positively relieve what occurred between them and greaten what they did gently for their friends before cutting of their friendship.

iii) Impassive and unfeeling relationships between staff members, manager, counselor and students

As a basic factor in high school, mental security among the students implicitly relates to warm dialogue and cooperation between the high schools colleagues from manager and teachers till counselors and staff members.

This calm atmosphere of high school with their friendly but respectful relation of staff members with students, help students to deeply assimilate their behavioral patterns and find similarities with their teachers and manager, especially with younger teachers. Generally this mental security and intimate relationship between the high school's staffs release the stresses of the students before the entrance exam.

With this approach in our high school, whenever student like their high school, prefer to stay and study in high school until night and after graduation come back to high school.

3- Society-related problem

i) Advertise on entrance exam

Advertising is one of the most intangible factors that increase anxiety in students. During the years of secondary school, private institutes and semi-hero teachers show off their exaggerated unreal abilities through the billboards in the streets, on the radio and even s.m.s. form of advertising messages. Therefore, mentality of the students before they reach high school is filled with this competitive stressful anxiety and fear about teacher's competences in and outside high school and their suspended educational future.

So, students are under effects of deceptive advertising and they go to schools that have not clear justification about these ads. In this way, it is considered a stressor.

In this condition, in our high school and at first year of study, diagnostics and deceptive aspects of educational advertisement are explained clearly. Wanting them to judgment about the differences between the inside and outside of high school and fairly compare both of them freely. Also, they are convinced the money is aimed at promoting greater.

ii) Problems in social networks, the Internet, between the fourth-year students.

Now, Internet use among students has become an addiction. The dependence of the charm of this space is like "face book". Experience has shown that most students spend their exam period in Internet and to escape the stress of their own, the internet takes refuge and then spends more time in virtual space and more will be stress. In fact, their stress is increased.

But different from semi-official policy of most high schools, web space is not forbidden in our school solution, but the high school staffs plans to use the internet offers limited, for example: Allow students to use the internet midday weekend. However, our experience shows that successful students are completely cut off their communication with the internet in fourth grade.

iii) Emotional or sexual relationships with boys in high school.

Although present in Iran, we are in a period of transition from tradition society to modern society, most families cannot accept remiss relationships with boys and these connections are blocked. We have students as young girls aged 15 to 18 years are not allowed to have relationships. Our discussion here is not the truth or falsity. However, our experience shows, during the fourth year, students who have relationships outside of school often do not succeed in entrance exam. Because, they are forced to hide their relationship and it will increase students' stress.

Another problem is students often do not talk about it and they fear for speaking and this makes the emotional and sexual abuse, that this is a great stress. In our high school, students are aware of the damage these hidden relationships. We can try to create a safe space to talk about these issues with us. Then the advisory role at this stage is highlighted.

On the others, if we encounter such a student, we talk about, with her parents - if the parents are reasonably well – and with regard to her feelings of being valued, we are aware of the dangers related to her. This will enhance his confidence to us, in 70% of cases. And after succeed in entrance exam highlighting the positive sense to spend more time for their personal interest in the university. Then, they are motivated to studding and encouraged to finish their education.

Conclusions

Here, I present common solutions to relieve stress on the students:

It is important to create loving relationships between our students, For example: with Get hands, warmly. With look deep and loving. With Heart wishes success. Staffs of high school try always nice to hear what they say. All of these behaviors are reduced the entrance exam problems and increase motivation of students. To be important in emotional behavior, especially by those who have mastered all aspects of the test is important.

Patience in the face of stress and anxiety related behaviors, they are very helpful. Sometimes they are lying to us, if instead we deny bad behavior, we understand their stress, and we have a lot of help to our students. The thing we do to build good relationships at school: Camp and student travel! We create good memories for them to build better relationships. Due to their

important lessons and low time in the fourth grade, there is no possibility of a long travel, but day camps, going to the theater, museums and poetry readings are possible. Children's memories of previous years in this space and the space of their own mental nostalgic well-being make the atmosphere for their again experiencing of these travels in near future after succeeding in entrance exam.

On the other hand, other techniques are practiced them, such as proper breathing exercises to reduce stress in their intensity. Just breathe, the body will absorb more oxygen and increase alertness.

The other side, experienced principal, skilled assistants and young teachers work to our high school. Young teachers recently have gone through the stress and anxiety of the exam and have been successful in the entrance examination, so they can better understand their students. And good relations between persons of school teachers together with teachers, principal teachers and administrators are there. Although the school does not have a high salary, but all of us feel good about being in the school. Because to be built into all aspects, is important for the emotional needs and principal tries to put a lot of time to problems with teachers like: family, personal and financial problems and to hear and help them. In our high school, the teachers come to school even on holidays!

Here's what the doctor William Glasser refers to:

They believe that in this world there are four important relationships. These include relations between husband and wife, between parent and child, teacher and student and the manager and employee. He believed that if these relations do not improve, problems cannot be solved. Paper provided an overview of the role of these relationships in reducing the anxiety and stress of entrance exam. We see that each of these relationships, are large role in this problem. School can be a place, using emotional relationship and reduce student stress.

Reference

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