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Abstract

To date, a few studies have investigated changes in exam-related emotions across different stages of a university exam (e.g. Zeidner, 1998). Despite the need for a longitudinal analysis, however, previous studies were either limited to single measurement points or they focused on state anxiety only. In response, the current study investigates daily changes in both positive and negative emotions across two stages of a university exam.

Extrapolating from three classic studies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Carver & Scheier, 1994; Raffety et al., 1997), participants reported four classes of emotions (threat, challenge, harm and benefit) starting 7 days before until 2 days after the exam. To capture trait test anxiety, participants completed the TAI-G (Hodapp, 1991) three weeks before the exam. Since data collection has not been completed yet, the main hypotheses are given.

Threat is expected to rise until the exam with a significant decline thereafter. In contrast, benefit will increase after the exam. Levels of harm and challenge should remain stable. In line with Ringeisen et al., (2005) test anxiety is expected to be a good predictor of threat and challenge before the exam. The closer the exam, the weaker such relationship should become. Harm and benefit are expected to be independent of test anxiety. Implications for further research and timing of measurement will be discussed.