STROBE Statement—checklist of items that should be included in reports of observational studies

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|  | Item No. | Recommendation | Page  No. | Relevant text from manuscript |
| **Title and abstract** | 1 | (*a*) Indicate the study’s design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstract | 2 | A cross-sectional study was conducted |
| (*b*) Provide in the abstract an informative and balanced summary of what was done and what was found | 2 |  |
| Introduction | | | |  |
| Background/rationale | 2 | Explain the scientific background and rationale for the investigation being reported | 10 | there is a gap in the literature regarding the roles of self-esteem and stress in mediating biological and social factors with anxiety among undergraduate students. In recent years, a growing number of new social factors associated with anxiety have emerged, including problematic internet use, which aligns with the advancements in technology and increased internet usage (Poorolajal et al., 2019). Exploring the roles of self-esteem and stress in mediating these social factors is crucial as it elucidates the primary mechanisms through which these factors contribute to anxiety. Moreover, there is a scarcity of studies investigating the mediating effect of self-esteem and stress within theoretical frameworks. Therefore, this study offers valuable insights into the predictors and mediators of anxiety, enhancing our understanding of the causal pathway leading to anxiety beyond mere associations between variables. |
| Objectives | 3 | State specific objectives, including any prespecified hypotheses | 10 | our hypothesis posited that biological and social factors could lead to anxiety, mediated by psychological factors among undergraduates. |
| Methods | | | |  |
| Study design | 4 | Present key elements of study design early in the paper | 11 | Employing a cross-sectional study design, data collection occurred from June 19, 2023 to August 25, 2023. |
| Setting | 5 | Describe the setting, locations, and relevant dates, including periods of recruitment, exposure, follow-up, and data collection | 11-15 |  |
| Participants | 6 | (*a*) *Cohort study*—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants. Describe methods of follow-up  *Case-control study*—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of case ascertainment and control selection. Give the rationale for the choice of cases and controls  *Cross-sectional study*—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants | 11 | All students enrolled in undergraduate programmes were included in the study, except those who had participated in the study's pretest or had deferred their enrolment in undergraduate programmes. |
| (*b*)*Cohort study*—For matched studies, give matching criteria and number of exposed and unexposed  *Case-control study*—For matched studies, give matching criteria and the number of controls per case | NA |  |
| Variables | 7 | Clearly define all outcomes, exposures, predictors, potential confounders, and effect modifiers. Give diagnostic criteria, if applicable | 11 |  |
| Data sources/ measurement | 8\* | For each variable of interest, give sources of data and details of methods of assessment (measurement). Describe comparability of assessment methods if there is more than one group | *11-14* |  |
| Bias | 9 | Describe any efforts to address potential sources of bias | 33 | The study is also subject to biases. |
| Study size | 10 | Explain how the study size was arrived at | 11 | The sample size calculation was conducted using Soper’s online power analysis tool, |

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| Quantitative variables | 11 | Explain how quantitative variables were handled in the analyses. If applicable, describe which groupings were chosen and why | 15-16 |  |
| Statistical methods | 12 | (*a*) Describe all statistical methods, including those used to control for confounding | 16 |  |
| (*b*) Describe any methods used to examine subgroups and interactions | 16 |  |
| (*c*) Explain how missing data were addressed | NA |  |
| (*d*) *Cohort study*—If applicable, explain how loss to follow-up was addressed  *Case-control study*—If applicable, explain how matching of cases and controls was addressed  *Cross-sectional study*—If applicable, describe analytical methods taking account of sampling strategy | NA |  |
| (*e*) Describe any sensitivity analyses | 20-21 | Sensitivity analysis was conducted to robustly examine various structural models using individual items instead of their aggregated constructs. |
| Results | | | | |
| Participants | 13\* | (a) Report numbers of individuals at each stage of study—eg numbers potentially eligible, examined for eligibility, confirmed eligible, included in the study, completing follow-up, and analysed | 17 |  |
| (b) Give reasons for non-participation at each stage | NA |  |
| (c) Consider use of a flow diagram | NA |  |
| Descriptive data | 14\* | (a) Give characteristics of study participants (eg demographic, clinical, social) and information on exposures and potential confounders | 18 |  |
| (b) Indicate number of participants with missing data for each variable of interest | NA |  |
| (c) *Cohort study*—Summarise follow-up time (eg, average and total amount) | NA |  |
| Outcome data | 15\* | *Cohort study*—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures over time | *NA* |  |
| *Case-control study—*Report numbers in each exposure category, or summary measures of exposure | *NA* |  |
| *Cross-sectional study—*Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures | *17-18* |  |
| Main results | 16 | (*a*) Give unadjusted estimates and, if applicable, confounder-adjusted estimates and their precision (eg, 95% confidence interval). Make clear which confounders were adjusted for and why they were included | 17-19 |  |
| (*b*) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized | 17-18 |  |
| (*c*) If relevant, consider translating estimates of relative risk into absolute risk for a meaningful time period |  | NA |

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| Other analyses | 17 | Report other analyses done—eg analyses of subgroups and interactions, and sensitivity analyses | 18-21 |  |
| Discussion | | | | |
| Key results | 18 | Summarise key results with reference to study objectives | 22-31 |  |
| Limitations | 19 | Discuss limitations of the study, taking into account sources of potential bias or imprecision. Discuss both direction and magnitude of any potential bias | 32 |  |
| Interpretation | 20 | Give a cautious overall interpretation of results considering objectives, limitations, multiplicity of analyses, results from similar studies, and other relevant evidence | 22-31 |  |
| Generalisability | 21 | Discuss the generalisability (external validity) of the study results | 32 |  |
| Other information | |  | | |
| Funding | 22 | Give the source of funding and the role of the funders for the present study and, if applicable, for the original study on which the present article is based | NA |  |

\*Give information separately for cases and controls in case-control studies and, if applicable, for exposed and unexposed groups in cohort and cross-sectional studies.

**Note:** An Explanation and Elaboration article discusses each checklist item and gives methodological background and published examples of transparent reporting. The STROBE checklist is best used in conjunction with this article (freely available on the Web sites of PLoS Medicine at http://www.plosmedicine.org/, Annals of Internal Medicine at http://www.annals.org/, and Epidemiology at http://www.epidem.com/). Information on the STROBE Initiative is available at www.strobe-statement.org.