

Effect of Gender and educational status on the anxiety of the higher Secondary and College Students

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ABSTRACT

Gender differences in the educational level of anxiety students were examined. A standardized Gujarati version of Sinha's Comprehensive Test was administered to a total of 100 participants (25 male and 25 female students of class 12 and 25 male and 25 female students of third year B.A.). Anxiety scores were calculated for each participant and results were analyzed using a 2 x 2 factorial design. Results indicated that significant gender differences were reported. Whereas, the insignificant mean difference was revealed for the students' educational status, the significant interaction effect between gender and educational level of the students for the anxiety.

Keywords: Gender, Educational status, Anxiety, students

Health is an essential thing for human existence. Health does not mean only physical health or lack of disease due to due to deficiencies, but health also implies mental and psychological aspects. Psychological causes affect our physical health too. According to J.C. Coleman, the 17th century has been defined as the age of Enlightenment, 18th century as the age of reason 19th century as the age of progress and 20th century as the Age of Anxiety. With the advancement of science and technology, physical comforts and material affluence is achieved, but at the same time, stress and anxiety are also increasing. Modern human life is full of tensions, frustrations, conflicts, anxiety, depression, and fears. That is why Coleman defines modern age as the age of anxiety. The modern way of life has invited to anxiety disorder. Competitive modernity is the enemy of health. Too many expectations, ambitiousness, increased necessities etc. are making life more and more complex. Everyone, be it from high, low or middle socioeconomic strata, undergoes one or the other type of stress and anxiety. Psychologically anxiety is a complex phenomenon. The threat, doubt and uncertainty are associated with anxiety. Severe anxiety generates fear. Depression, passivity, indifference, inferiority, helplessness, sense of rejection, insecurity unease and lack of concentration are the characteristic features of anxiety.

There are two types of anxiety:

1. Realistic - Situational Anxiety,
2. Character - generated Anxiety.

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Anxiety is an emotion characterized by an unpleasant state of inner turmoil, often accompanied by nervous behavior, such as pacing back and forth, somatic complaints, and rumination. It is the subjectively unpleasant feelings of dread over anticipated events, such as the feeling of imminent death. Anxiety is not the same as fear, which is a response to a real or perceived immediate threat. Whereas anxiety is the expectation of future threat. Anxiety is a feeling of fear, uneasiness, and worry, usually generalized and unfocused as an overreaction to a situation that is only subjectively seen as menacing (Bouras, N.; Holt, G., 2007). It is often accompanied by muscular tension, restlessness, fatigue and problems in concentration. Anxiety can be appropriate, but when experienced regularly the individual may suffer from an anxiety disorder. People facing anxiety may withdraw from situations which have evoked anxiety in the past. There are various types of anxiety. Existential anxiety can occur when a person faces against, an existential crisis, or nihilistic feelings. People can also face mathematical anxiety, somatic anxiety, stage fright, or test anxiety. Social anxiety and stranger anxiety are caused when people are apprehensive around strangers or other people in general. Furthermore, anxiety has been linked with physical symptoms such as IBS and can heighten other mental health illnesses such as OCD and panic disorder.

Anxiety can be either a short term "state" or a long term "trait". Whereas trait anxiety represents worrying about future events, close to the concept of neuroticism, anxiety disorders are a group of mental disorders characterized by feelings of anxiety and fear. Anxiety disorders are partly genetic but may also be due to drug use, including alcohol, caffeine, and benzodiazepines (which are often prescribed to treat anxiety), as well as withdrawal from drugs abuse. They often occur with other mental disorders, particularly bipolar disorder, eating disorders, major depressive disorder, or certain personality disorders. Common treatment options include lifestyle changes, medication, and therapy.

A job applicant with a worried facial expression. Anxiety is distinguished from fear, which is an appropriate cognitive and emotional response to a perceived threat. Anxiety is related to the specific behaviors of fight-or-flight responses, defensive behavior or escape. It occurs in situations only perceived as uncontrollable or unavoidable, but not realistically so. David Barlow defines anxiety as "a future-oriented mood state in which one is not ready or prepared to attempt to cope with upcoming negative events," and that it is a distinction between future and present dangers which divides anxiety and fear. Another description of anxiety is agony, dread, terror, or even apprehension. In positive psychology, anxiety is described as the mental state that results from a difficult challenge for which the subject has insufficient coping skills. Fear and anxiety can be differentiated in four domains : (1) duration of emotional experience, (2) temporal focus, (3) specificity of the threat, and (4) motivated direction. Fear is defined as short lived, present focused, geared towards a specific threat, and facilitating escape from threat; anxiety, on the other hand, is defined as long acting, future focused, broadly focused towards a diffuse threat, and promoting excessive caution while approaching a potential threat and interferes with constructive coping. Anxiety can be experienced with long, drawn out daily symptoms that reduce quality of life, known as chronic (or generalized) anxiety, or it can be experienced in short spurts with sporadic, stressful panic attacks, known as acute anxiety. Symptoms of anxiety can range in number, intensity, and frequency, depending on the person. While almost everyone has experienced anxiety at some point in their lives, most do not develop long-term problems with anxiety. The behavioral effects of anxiety may include withdrawal from situations which have provoked anxiety in the past. Other effects may include changes in sleeping patterns, changes in habits, increase or decrease in food intake, and increased motor tension (such as foot tapping). The emotional effects of anxiety

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may include "feelings of apprehension or dread, trouble concentrating, feeling tense or jumpy, anticipating the worst, irritability, restlessness, watching (and waiting) for signs (and occurrences) of danger, and, feeling like your mind's gone blank" as well as "nightmares/bad dreams, obsessions about sensations, déjà vu, a trapped in your mind feeling, and feeling like everything is scary." The cognitive effects of anxiety may include thoughts about suspected dangers, such as fear of dying. "You may ... fear that the chest pains are a deadly heart attack or that the shooting pains in your head are the result of a tumor or aneurysm. You feel an intense fear when you think of dying, or you may think of it more often than normal, or can't get it out of your mind."

Anxiety is a state of mind in response to some stimulus in the environment which brings in the feelings of apprehension or fear. When the person is exposed to the cause of anxiety the next time, the conditioning effect causes a repeat response and the person will try to avoid the cause. All the responsibilities of being an academic brings with it a state of mind referred to as "academic anxiety". This can be associated with almost all the tasks associated with academics i.e. starting from attendance to classes to the biggest cause of academic anxiety-exams. It doesn't stop there, though. Students can be anxious about everything from their reading speed to their performance in gym class. Academic anxiety arises out of the apprehension of rebuke from teachers, parents and peers regarding the failures of performing the responsibilities of an academic properly. Developing a state of academic anxiety causes a decrease in attention span, concentration and memory which can result in having a negative effect on the performance of the individual. It is now been learnt that some level of anxiety is required for the person to take up all the responsibilities seriously but both high levels of academic anxiety or too low a level has deleterious effects on academic performance, which in turn may lead to more academic anxiety. The era of competition makes students more anxious and the eagerness of whether they can do well in their academic part or perform well in academic activities may adversely affect the mental health of students. It is the painful uneasiness of mind while doing or focusing on academic activities in school or at home. It is a kind of state anxiety which relates to the impending danger from the environment of the academic institutions including teaching certain subjects like mathematics, science, English etc. Academic anxiety afflicts students during school-related situations. If academic anxiety isn't properly addressed, it can have many serious and lasting consequences, such as causing a student to procrastinate, perform poorly on school work, fail in classes and withdraw from socializing with peers or pursuing activities that interest him. Academic anxiety is, to a certain extent, unavoidable, necessary, and even productive, since it motivates to spend time for academic tasks. Its stress or pressure that you experience based upon school related functions, such as presenting in front of a class. The method of reducing your anxiety depends upon which of these you are experiencing. Although anxiety is a normal, even healthy part of our lives, it can be counterproductive when not managed well. Academic anxiety is a common issue that students cannot ignore if they want to succeed in school. It often leads to problems concentrating while studying and remembering information while completing tests, which makes the student, feel helpless and like a failure. If academic anxiety isn't properly addressed, it can have many serious and lasting consequences, such as causing a student to procrastinate, perform poorly on schoolwork, fail classes and withdraw from socializing with peers or pursuing activities that interest him. Academic anxiety in children and adolescents can be challenging to recognize since it can have much in common with other disorders. Academic anxiety has four components – worry, emotionality, task-generated interference, and study skills deficits. The method of reducing your anxiety

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depends upon which of these you are experiencing. Read the following descriptions and identify which of these are causing you problems:

1. **Worry:** Thoughts that prevent you from focusing on and successfully completing academic work. For example, predictions of failure, self-degrading thoughts, or preoccupation with the consequences of doing poorly. Some effective techniques for managing this component include: using positive mental imagery, disputing negative and self-defeating thoughts with more productive, realistic thoughts, and self-hypnosis.
2. **Emotionality:** Biological symptoms of anxiety. For example, fast heart-beat, sweaty palms, muscle tension. The most effective strategies for dealing with emotionality are muscle and breathing relaxation exercises.
3. **Task-generated interference:** Behaviors related to the task at hand, but which are unproductive and prevent successful performance. For example, constantly checking the clock during an exam, or spending a lot of time on a test question you cannot answer. Since these behaviors can take on many forms, the best management technique is to work with a study skills instructor or a counselor to identify the specific behaviors that cause problems and create a plan to reduce or change them.
4. **Study skills deficits:** Problems with your current study methods which create anxiety. For example, last-minute cramming resulting in not knowing answers to test questions or poor note-taking during lecture resulting in confusion about a major assignment. Many students experience the first three components of academic anxiety as a result of study skills deficits. If this is the case, then your grades will not improve unless study skills are addressed. A study skills instructor can help you with this.

Types of Anxiety

Existential:

The Philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, in *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), described anxiety or dread associated with the "dizziness of freedom" and suggested the possibility for positive resolution of anxiety through the self-conscious exercise of responsibility and choosing. In *Art and Artist* (1932), the psychologist Otto Rank wrote that the psychological trauma of birth was the pre-eminent human symbol of existential anxiety and encompasses the creative person's simultaneous fear of – and desire for – separation, individuation and differentiation. The theologian Paul Tillich characterized existential anxiety as "the state in which a being is aware of its possible nonbeing" and he listed three categories for the nonbeing and resulting anxiety : antic (fate and death), moral (guilt and condemnation), and spiritual (emptiness and meaninglessness). According to Tillich, the last of these three types of existential anxiety, i.e. spiritual anxiety, is predominant in modern times while the others were predominant in earlier periods. Tillich argues that this anxiety can be accepted as part of the human condition or it can be resisted but with negative consequences. In its pathological form, spiritual anxiety may tend to "drive the person toward the creation of certitude in systems of meaning which are supported by tradition and authority" even though such "undoubted certitude is not built on the rock of reality". According to Viktor Frankl, the author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, when a person is faced with extreme mortal dangers, the most basic of all human wishes is to find a meaning of life to combat the "trauma of nonbeing" as death is near.

Test and Performance:

According to Yerkes-Dodson law, an optimal level of arousal is necessary to best complete a task such as an exam, performance, or competitive event. However, when the anxiety or level of arousal exceeds that optimum level, it results in the decline of the performance. Test anxiety results in uneasiness, apprehension, or nervousness felt by students who have a fear of

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failing in an exam. Students who have test anxiety may experience any of the following: the association of grades with personal worth; fear of embarrassment by a teacher; fear of alienation from parents or friends; time pressures; or feeling a loss of control. Sweating, dizziness, headaches, racing heartbeats, nausea, fidgeting, uncontrollable crying or laughing and drumming on a desk are all common. Because test anxiety hinges on fear of negative evaluation, debate exists as to whether test anxiety is itself a unique anxiety disorder or whether it is a specific type of social phobia. The DSM-IV classifies test anxiety as a type of social phobia. While the term "test anxiety" refers specifically to students, many workers share the same experience with regard to their career or profession. The fear of failing at a task and being negatively evaluated for failure can have a similarly detrimental effect on the adult. Management of test anxiety focuses on achieving relaxation and developing mechanisms to manage anxiety.

Stranger, Social, and Intergroup:

Humans generally require social acceptance and thus sometimes dread the disapproval of others. Apprehension of being judged by others may cause anxiety in social environments. Anxiety during social interactions, particularly between strangers, is common among young people. It may persist into adulthood and become social anxiety or social phobia. "Stranger anxiety" in small children is not considered a phobia. In adults, an excessive fear of other people is not a developmentally common stage; it is called social anxiety. According to Cutting, social Phobic's do not fear the crowd as such but the fact that they may be judged negatively.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Senthil Kumaran & S. Kadhiravan (2015): Personality and Test Anxiety of School Students: Abstract - Present-day students experience a cut-throat competition at all levels of education. They have been sensitized well in home and school to excel at all academic pursuits. Further, Teachers as well as parents exert their own influence on the academics of students. In these circumstances, students generally become anxious and unable to perform up to their fullest potential. It is understood from researches that 'test anxiety' is an important construct which influence the academic success of a student. Personality being the dynamic organization, not only determine the nature of our general behavior but also our behavior at each and every places which ultimately would aid in dealing with test anxiety. The present study tries to explore the relationship between test anxiety and personality of school students since it is a crucial stage. 128 students from ninth standard in Salem educational district were selected through stratified random sampling and the data was collected through survey. Fried-Ben test anxiety scale and Big five locator were utilized for collecting data. Results revealed that the negative emotionality dimension of personality is significantly correlated with all the dimensions of test anxiety and some significant inverse correlations are found between the rest of personality factors and test anxiety. It is also found that students differ in their test anxiety on the basis of gender and type of family they belong to. It is suggested from the findings that the school authorities and psychologists should consider these relationships and differences while alleviating test anxiety among school students.

SaketBihari (2014): Academic Anxiety among Secondary School Students with reference to Gender , Habitat and Types of School. Abstract: In the present study an attempt is made by the investigator to study the academic anxiety of secondary school students of North East Delhi. 114 secondary school students from 4 government and two private schools were drawn by employing simple random techniques. The value of the sample was

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assessed using Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC) constructed and standardized by Dr. A.K.Singh and Dr. A. Sen Gupta (2013). The objective of the study was to study the significant differences in the mean scores of secondary school students on the basis of gender, habitat and types of school. The obtained data were quantitatively analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that no significant difference were found between the overall mean scores of secondary school boys and girls and rural and urban students on their academic anxiety while significant difference was found between the mean scores of government and private secondary school students on their academic anxiety.

Gourav Mahajan (2015): Academic Anxiety of Secondary School Students in Relation to their Parental Encouragement. Abstract: The present study was undertaken to study the relationship between academic anxiety of secondary school students and their parental encouragement. A total sample of 120 X grade students were selected through stratified sampling technique according to gender and type of school from 12 secondary schools for the present study. For the collection of data the investigator used Academic Anxiety Scale for Children by A. K. Singh and A. Sen Gupta (1998) and Parental Encouragement Scale by Kusum Agarwal (1998). The results of the study showed that academic stress was significantly and negatively correlated with parental encouragement. No significant difference was found between academic anxiety of male and female secondary school students. A significant difference was found between academic anxiety of govt. and private secondary school teachers.

Pandey (1998) conducted a multidimensional study exploring personality correlates of adjustment problem among adolescents. He concluded that emotional maturity of ego-strength, submissiveness, expressiveness, conventionality, self-sufficiency, society residences, concernedness, higher super-ego strength, carefulness, premise, sensitivity, help seeking, imaginative a life, group dependency, low sentiments, formation of low urtic tensions and higher intelligence are the outstanding characteristics of the generally better adjusted adolescents personality make up. He further states that “the poorly adjusted adolescents are characterized by following traits: Cyclothymiacs, dissatisfied emotionally, dominance, surgency, lack of rigid internal standard of weal superego parmia, thick skinnedness, unpretentious guiltprone, conservative in temperament self-centered high urtic tension and lower in intelligence.”

Objectives:

1. To evaluate and compare the level of anxiety among boys and girls with reference to educational status.

Hypotheses:

H01: There is no significant gender difference in anxiety.

H02: There is no significant in the anxiety of students with reference to educational status.

H03: There is no significant difference in the interaction of gender and educational status of students for anxiety.

Research Design:

The present study was not possible experimentally because of the nature of the research work. The pollster adopted quantitative descriptive research for gaining the objectives of the present study. It was quantitative survey research in which the event has already occurred, and the effects of the variables were studied by qualitative analysis.

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Independent Variable:

Gender: with two levels of Males and Females.

Educational status: with two Level of higher secondary and last year of B.A college Students.

Dependent Variable:

Anxiety scores obtained by subjects.

Sample:

The participants of the present study were selected based on the random sampling method. 25 male and 25 female students, studying in the Higher Secondary School of Darbhanga Town and 25 male and 25 female students studying in Third Year B.A. of the M.L.S.M College, Darbhanga were taken as a sample of the study.

Tool:

Sinha's Comprehensive Anxiety Scale was translated and standardized in Hindi by A.K.P. Sinha and L.N.K. Sinha in 1995 was used for the present study.

Scoring:

Scoring of the obtained data was completed with the anxiety scale manual's help in the present investigation. The data have been arranged in the respective tables according to the statistical test employed.

Procedure:

The researcher visited these two academic institutions selected purposively. Taking the principals' permission, the researcher approached the students, established rapport with them, explained them about the study's purpose, took their consent and then each of the students was given the questionnaire measuring anxiety. They were given one hour to share their responses in the questionnaires.

Statistical Analysis:

For the present research study to determine the significant mean difference between male and female students' scores for anxiety, statistical measures like the F- test and Mean were employed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Table 1:- Showing Mean and F values for anxiety of students with reference to gender and educational status.

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	F	Sig. Level
Gender	Girls	25	30.42	10.225	p<.01
	Boys	25	22.40		
Educational Status	Higher Secondary	25	23.32	2.250	NS
	Graduate	25	27.56		

The results are shown in Table 1 that the mean scores for girls and boys student are 30.42 and 22.40, respectively. Based on this result that female students scored significantly higher mean on anxiety as compared to male students. Thus, *H₀₁* is firmly rejected. The female students showed significantly higher anxiety than male students. However, the present finding is consistent with the commonly held belief that females are more emotional, sensitive and

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anxious than males. The result of the present study is contradicting the previous finding of *Raskiwitz and Henric* (1999). Whereas, the educational status of the students does not influence the anxiety level of students. This means the students of 12th standard and the students of the third year of the college do not differ significantly in their anxiety. The students of 12th standard and the students of the third year of the college are 23.32 and 27.56. Hence, **H02** is firmly accepted. The reason might be that after 12th and after completion of graduation, the students might be feeling equal anxiety as both lead to specific turn to their career. Thus from the career decisiveness point-of-view, both are same. Both levels give a definite arc to their profession. So there may not be significant differences in their anxiety level of the students of both these standards.

Table 2: Showing Mean and F values for the interaction of gender and educational status with reference to the anxiety of students.

Gender	Educational Status	N	Mean	F	Sig. Level
Girls	Higher Secondary	25	30.260	2.89	p<.01
	Graduate	25	31.220		
Boys	Higher Secondary	25	20.160		
	Graduate	25	26.240		

Finally, it is important to note here that the interaction between gender and educational level significantly affected students' anxiety. As the results show, Female students of higher secondary, i.e. of 12th standard and higher anxiety (30.260) than that the Third year B.A. female students (31.220) while the male students of Third year B.A. (26.240) had higher anxiety scores than the 12th standard male students (20.160). Thus interaction effect of gender and educational level was significant. Therefore, **H03** was strongly rejected.

CONCLUSION:

The study investigated the level of anxiety of the college and school students with reference to gender. The study's descriptive results indicate those female students have high levels of anxiety than male students. Similarly, the interaction between gender and educational status was also reported significant. Results showed that the students of 12th standard and the students of the third year of the college do not differ significantly in their anxiety.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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