



Original Article

Academic Anxiety and Academic Achievement of Higher Secondary School Students: A Gender-Based Study in Gwalior City, Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

The present study has examined the academic anxiety and academic achievement of higher secondary school students, focusing on the gender difference. The descriptive survey method was used, and 200 students from Gwalior City from government higher secondary schools were selected using a multistage random sampling technique. The Scale of Sharma and Shakir (2019) was used to assess academic anxiety, and the data of academic achievement was obtained from the records of the school. Percentages and a t-test were used in the analysis of the data. The results revealed that the mean scores of students were moderate in both academic anxiety and academic achievement in the study. There was no significant gender difference in academic anxiety, but a significant difference was obtained in academic achievement, with female students outperforming male students. In general, it is found that there is no difference in the level of academic anxiety experienced by either men or women, but that women excel in academic achievement.

Keywords: Academic Anxiety, Academic Achievement, Adolescents, Higher Secondary Students, and Gender.

Introduction

Adolescents have a number of very different challenges to face, from the school work they are expected to be able to manage to the expectations placed on them by their families, to their friends, and by their future. They can often lead to anxiety and stress. Anxiety is a psycho-physiological phenomenon involving worry, nervousness, uncertainty, and tension caused by the expectation of encountering a threat or difficult circumstance (Callahan, 2001; Spielberger, 1983). Academic anxiety represents one of the most troubling anxiety types among adolescents and has been linked to academic stressors and can have negative effects on students' academic performance and emotional state, self-confidence, and motivation to learn. Moderate academic stressors are positive: they will keep students focused, prepared, and motivated to reach their academic objectives. Anxiety, however, can have a negative impact on learning and mental health when it is too high or is excessive and persistent. Students in the current highly competitive education context are required to manage a vast curriculum, several subjects, new learning technologies, continuous monitoring and evaluation, and higher expectations from parents, teachers, and society.

Many of these requirements can contribute to substantial academic worries amongst young people. Academic anxiety is a feeling of apprehension, tension, worry, and uneasiness that occurs from different educational circumstances, including in the classroom, at exams, with teachers, from ineffective study skills, and from fears of failing. Those who are very anxious about their studies often feel less capable of doing them and are more worried about their results. Excessive academic stress has been shown to cause a number of problems. It can lead to a decrease in concentration, attention, memory, and retention; may cause procrastination and ineffective studying; and can ultimately lead to low academic performance.

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Extended heart rate, sweaty palms, sleep disorders, loss of appetite, restlessness, and general discomfort are also physical symptoms, in addition to psychological symptoms, of academic anxiety (Robinson et al., 2013; Hubuty, 2012; Fatma and Aqil, 2017; Saplavaska and Jerkunkova, 2018). Anxiety is a natural response to difficult circumstances, but how it affects you depends on how strong your anxiety is. There is a positive link between moderate academic anxiety and motivation to prepare well and perform to the best of one's ability. Too much academic anxiety, on the other hand, can have a negative impact on academic achievement by making it difficult to focus, pay attention, and remember and apply what one has learned or studied. So, it is crucial to gain insight into the nature and magnitude of academic anxiety in adolescents to design suitable educational and psychological programs that foster academic achievement and general mental health.

Review of related literature:

1. Singh (2015) examined the association between anxiety and academic achievement among students and reported that students with low to moderate levels of anxiety tended to perform better academically. In contrast, high levels of anxiety were associated with poorer academic achievement, indicating that excessive anxiety can adversely affect students' learning and performance. The study also found gender differences in anxiety, with girls having higher anxiety.
2. Shakir (2014) explored a correlational analysis to examine the connection between academic anxiety and academic achievement with reference to males and females. The findings reflected a substantial negative association among the variables under study, indicating that learners having higher academic anxiety are inclined to perform poorly in their studies. The study also found that gender influenced anxiety levels, with girls having higher academic anxiety than boys.
3. Mokashi et al. (2012) examined gender differences in anxiety and scholastic achievement amid students studying in chosen residential high schools. Their findings indicated that students generally experienced high levels of anxiety while also demonstrating good academic achievement. The study further revealed significant gender differences, with boys reporting higher levels of anxiety than girls, whereas girls outperformed boys in academic achievement.

Significance of the study

With the competitive education system of today, grades can be a significant measure of students' success. There is a strong focus on students' academic success from the early years through to higher education. But the pressure to excel can also raise academic anxiety, which can result in anxiety, decreased concentration, decreased self-confidence, and lower academic performance (Aronen et al., 2005). This impairs learning and, in turn, raises anxiety, which then compounds the problem (Huberty, 2009). Concurrently, a moderate level of academic anxiety can be beneficial since it can encourage students to perform better (Neelam, 2013). Academic anxiety is known to have a detrimental effect on students' learning and achievement (Slavin, 2012); therefore, it is important to study the relationship between two variables among students with special reference to gender in Gwalior City.

Objectives

1. To examine the levels of academic anxiety and academic achievement among higher secondary school students.
2. To compare the academic anxiety among higher secondary school students with respect to gender.
3. To compare the academic achievement among higher secondary adolescent students with respect to gender.

Null Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference among higher secondary school students with respect to gender on academic anxiety.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference among higher secondary adolescent students with respect to gender on academic achievement.

Method and Sample

The present study used a descriptive method in investigating the selected variables. A multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select the respondents from different government higher secondary schools of Gwalior city, Madhya Pradesh. The total sample size was 200 class XI students, of which 200 students were selected from the target population randomly. In order to ensure equal representation of both genders, the sample consisted of 100 male and 100 female students.

Data collection tools:

1. **Academic Anxiety Scale by Sharma and Shakir (2019).** This scale consists of 48 items divided into six dimensions, viz., 1. "Teacher," 2. "A Learning Environment," 3. "Cognitive Component," 4. "Study Habits," 5. "Symptom of Academic Anxiety," and 6. "Examination Anxiety."
2. **Academic Achievement:** The students' academic achievement was assessed using their total marks obtained in all subjects in the Class 11 final examination.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Collected data was analyzed using SPSS Statistics 26. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe the data; the t-test was used to test for any significant differences in the mean scores of the study variables between the two sexes.

Descriptive statistics

Table 1: Frequency of Academic Anxiety among Students (N=200).

Levels Of Academic Anxiety	N	Percentage
Extremely High	10	5
High	17	8.5
Above Average	33	16.5
Average	97	48.5
Below Average	31	15.5
Low	9	4.5
Extremely Low	3	1.5
Total	200	100%

Table 1 shows the frequency levels of academic anxiety among the 200 students included in the study. The findings indicate that 5% of the students experienced an **extremely high** level of academic anxiety, while 8.5% reported a **high** level. Additionally, 16.5% of the students had **above-average** academic anxiety, whereas the largest proportion (48.5%) fell within the **average** range. Further, 15.5% of the students exhibited **below-average** academic anxiety, while 4.5% and 1.5% reported **low** and **extremely low** levels of academic anxiety, respectively. Overall, the results suggest that most of the students experienced a moderate level of academic anxiety.

Table 2: Prevalence of Academic Achievement among students (N=200).

Grade	N	Percentage
Grade A (91-100)	3	1.5
Grade B (81-90)	29	14.5
Grade C (71-80)	97	48.5
Grade D (60-70)	41	20.5
Grade E (Below 60)	30	15
Total	200	100%

Table 2 shows the distribution of academic achievement levels among the 200 students included in the study. The findings indicate that only 1.5% of the students attained Grade A, while 14.5% achieved Grade B. Nearly half of the students (48.5%) fell under Grade C, making it the most common level of academic achievement. In addition, 20.5% of the students secured Grade D, whereas 15% were placed in Grade E. These results suggest that the majority of students demonstrated a moderate level of academic achievement, with comparatively fewer students achieving the highest grade.

Comparative analysis

Table 3: Test of significance on Academic Anxiety

Gender	N	Mean	S. D	t-Value	p	Significance
Male	100	136.16	19.47	.291	.367	Not Significant
Female	100	136.92	17.41			

Table 3 depicted no significant difference in academic anxiety on the bases of gender ($t = .291, p > .05$). Although females achieved a marginally higher mean score ($M = 136.92$) than male students ($M = 136.16$), the observed difference is too small to be considered statistically meaningful. Therefore, it can be summed up that gender does not substantially influence academic anxiety among the students included in the study. Accordingly, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted.

Table 4: Test of significance on Academic Achievement

Gender	N	Mean	S. D	t-Value	p	Significance
Male	100	70.02	10.13	4.02	.001	Significant at 0.01 level
Female	100	75.41	5.67			

Table 4 shows a significant difference in academic achievement with respect to gender ($t = 4.02, p < .01$). The findings show that girl students obtained a higher mean score ($M = 75.41$) than their male counterparts ($M = 70.02$), suggesting that girls performed better academically. Therefore, the observed difference is significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0). This finding indicates that gender is associated with differences in academic achievement among the students.

Discussion

The descriptive analysis revealed that the academic anxiety and academic achievement of the adolescent students were at an average level. This indicates that most students have a moderate level of academic anxiety, which is typically positive rather than negative. Some anxiety is good and will help students stay attentive, work hard, study for exams, and strive to improve their grades. Academic anxiety can, therefore, be a motivating tool that promotes learning and achievement. But excessive anxiety can have a negative impact on students' wellness and success in academic studies, and therefore, awareness and proper management of academic anxiety are crucial (Shakir, 2013). The results of the t-test also showed that there was no significant difference between academic anxiety for gender. The levels of anxiety for both genders were found to be similar on the dimensions of examination

anxiety, teacher anxiety, anxiety related to the learning environment, and study habit anxiety. This means that academic anxiety is felt by both males and females in the same way. The findings are similar to Rather (2019), Baro and Mishra (2022), and Mahato and Jangir (2012), who found that there was no significant association between academic anxiety and gender. Gender differences in academic achievement were observed, however, in contrast. The mean Scholastic achievement scores of the females were higher than those of the males, which shows that they performed better academically. From this finding it could be inferred that the female students performed better than the male students in their academic endeavors. Mokashi et al. (2012), Das (2024), Daliya and Bhogle (2013), and Mohd Hasan and Salahuddin Khan (2015) also found that girl students performed better than boys in academics.

Conclusion

The present study showed that there was a high proportion of pupils who did have some degree of academic anxiety in higher secondary school. High levels of anxiety can have a negative impact on learning and academic success; therefore, it is critical to intervene with this issue at an appropriate time. Schools should arrange counseling and awareness campaigns for students, teachers, and parents to educate them about the negative effects of academic anxiety on students' health and learning. It is also important that teachers and parents become aware of early indicators of anxiety and be able to offer the necessary support. Recognizing and managing academic anxiety early can help to prevent the escalation of more severe academic and emotional issues and improve students' academic achievement. Regularly, motivational talks, life skills and stress management sessions should be held in schools to boost students' self-confidence, resilience, and capacity to handle academic pressures. These programs can help to create a positive educational atmosphere that supports students' success and growth, encourages them to take responsibility for their learning, and helps them feel valued and included.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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