



# “A study on Examination Anxiety among Secondary school students”

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## ABSTRACT

Examination anxiety is a self-demanding factor that negatively affects students and their performances. The student is unable to give maximum productivity and the result would be critical. Many types of research have already been conducted in the area of students' anxiety about examinations. Keeping in view the situation and the previous studies conducted in the field of examination anxiety, provided the researcher with a sound ground to conduct a research study in the Indian scenario. The present study, “A study on Examination Anxiety among Secondary School Students” was carried out by the researcher to determine the level of examination anxiety among secondary school students in Hyderabad city. In a comparative study, a sample of 120 students was selected using a random sampling technique and tested with the Examination Anxiety Scale (EAS). Data were analyzed using an Independent t-test to test the hypotheses. Results indicated that there is no significant difference between boys and girls in secondary school in their examination anxiety and there is not much variation in the level of exam anxiety. Furthermore, the results revealed that the level of examination anxiety in boys and girls students was the same. The conclusion is that both boys and girls show examination anxiety but are not significant enough though.

**KEYWORDS:** *Examination, Anxiety, Secondary school students*

## INTRODUCTION

Education is the process through which efforts are made to change the thinking and behavior of an individual in a desirable direction. To find out how much this objective has been achieved, it is measured by conducting tests on students. This process of testing is called an examination.

Examination plays a very vital role to assess the abilities of students. Through examination, the teacher can also analyze the strengths and weaknesses of students. It is the only tool for the evaluation of different aspects

related to the teaching-learning process. It is a source of inspiration for students to do well in examinations and get praised by teachers and parents. Through examination, the effectiveness of the curriculum and the performance of teachers can be judged. "Examination is employed to bring about qualitative improvement in education. (Qureshi, 1996).

The secondary level is an important sub-sector of the entire educational system. On one hand, it provides a middle-level workforce for the economy; on the other hand, it acts as a feeder for higher education. It is a stage where a student enters adolescence. The basic perception and modes of behavior start taking shape and the problem of adjustment to the new roles in life.

Although examinations are necessary and no educational system can be complete without examination. At the same time, it is an admitted fact that some students get fearful of examinations. Some fall ill before starting of examination due to fear of examination. For students' fear of examinations, psychologists use different terms like examination phobia, fear of exams, examination anxiety, etc.

### **Examinations' Anxiety**

Examination anxiety is a combination of physiological over-arousal, tension, and somatic symptoms, along with worry, dread, and fear of failure, that occur before or during test situations. It is a physiological condition in which people experience extreme stress, anxiety, and discomfort during/or before taking a test. This anxiety creates significant barriers to learning and performance. Research suggests that high levels of emotional distress have a direct correlation to reduced academic performance and higher overall student drop-out rates. Test anxiety can have broader consequences, negatively affecting a student's social, emotional, and behavioral development, as well as their feelings about themselves and school.

Highly test-anxious students score about 12 percentile points below their low-anxiety peers. Test anxiety is prevalent among the student populations of the world. It has been studied formally since the early 1950s beginning with researchers George Mandrel and Seymour Sarason. Sarason's brother, Irwin G. Sarason, then contributed to the early investigation of test anxiety, clarifying the relationship between the focused effects of test anxiety, other focused forms of anxiety, and generalized anxiety.

Test anxiety can also be labeled as anticipatory anxiety, situational anxiety, or evaluation anxiety. Some anxiety is normal and often helpful to stay mentally and physically alert. When one experiences too much anxiety, however, it can result in emotional or physical distress, difficulty concentrating, and emotional worry. Inferior performance arises not because of intellectual problems or poor academic preparation, but because

testing situations create a sense of threat for those experiencing test anxiety; anxiety resulting from the sense of threat then disrupts attention and memory function. Researchers suggest that between 25 and 40 percent of students experience test anxiety. Students with disabilities and students in gifted education classes tend to experience high rates of test anxiety. Students who experience test anxiety tend to be easily distracted during a test, experience difficulty comprehending relatively simple instructions, and have trouble organizing or recalling relevant information.

Anxiety is a normal human emotion that everyone experiences at times. Many people feel anxious, or nervous when faced with a problem at work, before taking a test or making an important decision. Anxiety disorders, however, are different. They can cause such distress that it interferes with a person's ability to lead a normal life.

An anxiety disorder is a serious mental illness. For people with anxiety disorders, worry and fear are constant and overwhelming, and can be crippling.

### **Signs and symptoms**

Researchers believe that feelings of anxiety arise to prepare a person for threats. In humans, anxiety symptoms are distributed along a continuum and different symptom levels of anxiety predict outcomes. Responses consist of increased heart rate, stress hormone secretion, restlessness, vigilance, and fear of a potentially dangerous environment. Anxiety prepares the body physically, cognitively, and behaviourally to detect and deal with threats to survival. As a result, a person's body begins to hyperventilate to allow more oxygen to enter the bloodstream, divert blood to muscles, and sweat to cool the skin. In individuals, the degree to which an anxiety response is developed is based on the probability of bad things happening in the environment and the individual's ability to cope with them. In the case of test taking, this might be a failing exam grade that prevents the student from being accepted to a post-secondary institution. A person's beliefs about their competencies are a form of self-knowledge, which plays an important role in analyzing situations that might be threatening. When a person has feelings of low competence about their abilities they are likely to anticipate negative outcomes such as failure, under uncertain conditions. Thus, evaluative situations including tests and exams are perceived as more threatening by students who have low competencies.

### **Causes of Examination Anxiety**

Research shows that parental pressure is associated with greater worry, test-irrelevant thoughts, and stronger bodily symptoms relating to anxiety during a test. Other causes of test anxiety may include fear of

failure, procrastination, and previous poor test performance. As well, characteristics of the test environment such as the nature of the task, difficulty, atmosphere, time constraints, examiner characteristics, mode of administration, and, the physical setting can affect the level of anxiousness felt by the student. Researchers Putwain & Best (2011), examined test performance among elementary children when the teacher put pressure on the students in an attempt to create a more high-stress environment. Their findings showed that students performed worse in high-threat situations and experienced more test anxiety and worrisome thoughts than when in a low-threat environment.

Test anxiety is known to develop into a vicious cycle. After experiencing test anxiety on one test, the student may become so fearful of it happening again that they become more anxious and upset than they would normally, or even than they experienced on the previous test. If the cycle continues without acknowledgment, or the student seeks help, the student may begin to feel helpless in the situation.

People who experience test anxiety often have parents or siblings who have test anxiety or other types of anxiety. Anxiety does seem to have some genetic components.

### **Significance of the study**

Anxiety is one of the most studied phenomena in psychology. It is the normal human response to stress. The concept of anxiety is differentiated from fear as it is a normal human response to stress. Today anxiety is a common phenomenon in everyday life. It plays a crucial role in human life because all of us are victims of anxiety in different ways.

Anxiety is a state of mind in response to some stimulus in the environment that brings in 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.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

**Muhammad Javed and Imran Khan, 2018:** The survey of examination phobia amongst students at the secondary school level was taken up by Muhammad Javed and Imran Khan, in the year 2018. Variables of the study were secondary school students and examination phobia. The sample of the survey consists of 350 boys and 350 girls, sample constitutes 770 students. The researcher used a self-developed tool, a questionnaire to collect the data. T-test & SPSS version 16.0 was used for statistical treatment. . The comparative results showed that the students suffer from exam phobia to some extent. Furthermore, the results revealed that the level of exam phobia in male and female students was the same.

**Dr. Taruna Malotra, 2015:** Exam Anxiety among senior secondary school students was taken up by Dr, Taruna Malhotra, in the year 2015. The variables of the study were senior secondary school students, locality, and exam anxiety. The sample comprised 180 students selected randomly. Data were analyzed by adopting the criterion Mean SD and using two-way ANOVA, and t-test. Results indicated that (i) most senior secondary school student has a comparatively moderate level of exam anxiety; (ii) there is a significant independent effect of variables viz, gender and locality on exam anxiety among senior secondary school students; and (iii) there is the significant two-factor interactive effect of variables on the level of exam anxiety among senior secondary school students.

J. A. Akande, Dr. A.O. Olowonirejuaro, Dr. C. E. Okwara-Kalul (2014): This study investigated the level and sources of stress among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The study was a descriptive survey and the population comprised all senior secondary school students in the FCT. A sample of 18 secondary schools out of the 59 public senior secondary schools in the FCT was involved in the study with a total of 540 respondents made up of male and female students. A questionnaire was designed by the researchers and validated through expert judgment to collect relevant data. The data collected were analyzed using percentages, statistically weighted mean, and standard deviations for the research questions while a t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The results indicated that secondary school students had a medium level of stress and some of the significant sources of stress include: academic, intra-personal, and environmental. There was a significant gender difference in the level of stress and also some sources of stress among secondary school students

**Lohaus and Klein-Hessling (2003):** utilizing progressive muscle relaxation to reduce test anxiety in 160 fourth and fifth-grade students. They found that relaxation techniques can have a more significant calming effect on children over the short-term (i.e., five sessions) as compared to additional training sessions (i.e., ten sessions). These results suggested that children are capable of learning relaxation techniques over a relatively short period. It is clear from previous research on both young adults and children, that relaxation techniques can reduce test anxiety. The present study test three hypotheses: 1) the pre-test and post-test differences for the experimental group will show a significant decrease in anxiety level; and 2) the pre-test and post-test differences for the control group will show no significant decrease in anxiety levels 3) there will be a significant post-test difference in anxiety levels between the experimental and control groups.



**Rasid and Parish (1998):** conducted a study examining the effects of two types of relaxation training on 55 high school students 'level of anxiety using an experimental–control group design. Results showed that both behavioral relaxation and progressive muscle relaxation techniques produced significantly lower anxiety scores in the experimental group as compared to the control group.

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To measure the causes related to examination anxiety among boys and girls in secondary school
- To study the level of examination anxiety among boys and girls in secondary school
- To study the influence of gender on examination anxiety among secondary school students

#### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- There will be no significant difference in examination anxiety between girls and boys.
- There will be no significant difference in the level of examination anxiety between girls and boys.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### Research Design of Present study

The researcher adopts a quantitative research design to carry out the research study

##### Population and Sample

The population of this study comprises secondary school students of IX and X classes in Hyderabad city.

##### Sample- and sampling Technique

A representative sample is taken for the research because it is not possible to study the entire population due to constraints like time or cost. Also, a sample permits the measurement of the subjects with greater precision and accuracy.

The sample of the present study is IX and X-grade students of secondary schools in Hyderabad.

#### DATA AND SOURCES OF DATA

In the present study, the researcher adopts a questionnaire method for the collection of data. The researcher visited different secondary schools in Hyderabad and personally administered the questionnaire to boys and girls. The purpose of the study was explained to the students and asked them to give a response after reading the instructions carefully given in the questionnaire. It was a speed test and time had been allotted to answer the questions.

#### TOOL FOR MEASUREMENT

The researcher used a standardized tool for collecting data, the Examination Anxiety Scale (EAS). The Examination Anxiety Scale is a standardized scale developed by Dr.Subhash Sarkar for measuring the examination anxiety of secondary school students. The scale includes 50 statements. The EAS is a Three-point scale in which the respondent

has to either show his/her Agreement or Disagreement as two extremes and Undecided in the middle. The score was 2 for agree, 1 for undecided, and 0 for disagree.

### RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE TOOL

Dr. Subhash Sarkar's EAS- Examination Anxiety Scale is a standardized tool. The reliability of this scale was calculated by the Split-Half method; their coefficient of correlation is 0.79 and the significant level is .001. The validity of the scale was established on three levels-experts opinions were the first criterion of selection-elimination of the item, first try-out, selection and elimination of items as per difficulty level, and item analysis by finding out the t-difference between the mean of the high-scoring group and low-scoring group, and on this basis elimination of items and final selection of the items.

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The researcher treated the data using an independent sample t-test as it was apt and relevant.

**Independent t-test-** The independent t-test, also called the two-sample t-test, independent-samples t-test, or student's t-test is an inferential statistical test that determines whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means in two unrelated groups.

The Independent Samples t Test compares the means of two independent groups to into determining whether there is statistical evidence that the associated population means are significantly different.

The Independent Samples t Test is a parametric test.

### DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics uses the data to provide descriptions of the population, either through numerical calculations or graphs, or tables.

**Hypothesis 1 testing: There will be no significant difference in examination anxiety between boys and girls.**

**Table: 1 Group Statistics**

VAR002	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001.1.00			
2.00	60	48.2000	17.02620
	60	48.8833	17.95106

Frequency	Degree of freedom	Alpha value	t-calculated value	t-critical value	significance
120	118	0.05	-0.214	1.98	.831

**Interpretations:** At the degree of freedom 118, at alpha value=0.05, t -critical value is 1.98, but the t-calculated value i.e.; -0.214 is less than the critical value therefore null hypothesis is accepted. Thus there is a significant difference between boys and girls in secondary school in their examination anxiety.

**Hypothesis 2 testing: There will be no significant difference in the level of examination anxiety between boys and girls.**

VAR002	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001.1.00			
2.00	60	48.2000	17.02620
	60	48.8833	17.95106

**Interpretations:** From the above table boy's mean is 48.2 and the girls' mean is 48.8 in their approximately equal examination anxiety and the standard deviation of boys is 17.9 and girls are 17.9 which is also approximately the same. By that, I can conclude that there is not much variation in the level of examination anxiety among them.

### 3.3 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics use a random sample of data taken from a population to describe and make inferences about the population. Inferential statistics are valuable when the examination of each member of an entire population is not convenient or possible. Inferential statistics make inferences and predictions about a population based on a sample of data from the population in question.

The data collected in the study was analyzed by using SPSS version 16. The data was interpreted using an Independent t-test. The Independent t-test is used to measure the level of examination anxiety among secondary school students.

### CONCLUSION

Finally, based on the study results, the following conclusions were drawn: among students in secondary school there is no significant difference in the level of examination anxiety between boys and girls. This anxiety creates significant barriers to learning and performance. Examination anxiety has broader consequences, negatively affecting a student's social, emotional, and behavioral development as well as their feeling about themselves and school. As the results indicated that there is no significant difference between boys and girls



in secondary school in their examination anxiety and its level. Hence, the researcher can conclude that there is not much variation in their level.

### EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

There are many ways that schools can help children with generalized anxiety disorder succeed in the classroom. Meeting between parents and school staff, such as teachers, guidance counselors, or nurses, will allow for collaboration to develop a helpful school structure for the students. The students may need particular changes (accommodations/modifications) within a classroom. Examples of some accommodations, modifications, and school strategies include the following:

- Establish check-ins on arrival to facilitate transition into school.
- Accommodate late arrival due to difficulty for these children; allow extra time for moving to another activity or location. When a child with anxiety refuses to follow directions, for example, the reason may be symptoms of anxiety rather than intentional compositionality.
- If the child is avoiding school, determine the cause of the child's reluctance and address it, and initiate a plan for him or her to return to school as quickly as possible. It may help ease anxiety if the child attends a shorter school day temporarily.
- Identify a "safe" place where a child may go to reduce anxiety during stressful periods. Developing guidelines for the appropriate use of the safe place will help both the student and staff.
- Develop relaxation techniques to help reduce anxiety at school. Employing the techniques developed at home can be useful.
- Provide alternative activities to distract the child from physical symptoms. Calming activities may be helpful
- Encourage small group interactions to develop increased areas of competency.
- Assist with peer interactions. An adult's help may be very beneficial for both the child and his or her peers.

Encourage the child to develop interventions. Enlisting the child in the task will lead to more successful strategies and foster the child's problem-solving ability.

## Suggestions for Further Studies:

Students may be given frequent tests so that they may take examinations as routine work. A healthy competitive environment among students within the class may be promoted, where the position loser is not humiliated, and remedy teaching may be provided to low achievers to minimize the fear of failing in the final examination. Parents should encourage their children to do better performance in exams. Internal examination systems may be introduced at the secondary level to minimize examination anxiety among students. A complete portfolio of each student may be prepared about class attendance, class behavior, class tests, and co-curricular activities, 40% of marks may be reserved for the portfolio, and 60% may be awarded through external examination. A semester system comprising six months in each semester may be introduced at the secondary level to maximize students learning. The Internal Evaluation Committee may be introduced in each secondary school to conduct internal evaluations and maintain students' portfolio records. The present study was conducted on boys and girls in secondary schools. Further research can be conducted on Examination Anxiety among senior secondary students and on university graduates and postgraduates.

A comparative study can be done on secondary school students concerning different boards (CBSE, IGCSE, IB, etc.)

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