
Academic Anxiety and Achievement of Secondary School Students – A Study on Gender Differences

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Abstract: The present study is undertaken with a view to find out the academic anxiety and academic achievement of secondary school students. It was hypothesized that there exists a significant difference in academic anxiety and academic achievement of male and female secondary school students. For verification of these hypotheses, the data was collected from 200 secondary school students of Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh by adopting lottery method of random sampling by administering ‘Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC)’ and their marks of class 9th were taken as academic achievement. . The statistical technique used was t-test. The findings of the present study revealed that there exist significant differences in academic anxiety and academic achievement of male and female secondary school students. Girls found to be more academically anxious and had better academic achievement than boys.

Key Words: *Achievement, Academic Anxiety, Gender and Secondary School Students.*

Introduction:

Anna Freud characterizes adolescence as a period of internal conflict, psychic disequilibrium and erratic behaviour. Adolescents are on one hand egoistic regarding themselves as the sole object of interest and the center of the universe but on the other hand also capable of self-sacrifice and devotion. Youth today are living in an increasingly anxiety ridden atmosphere. They live in a world where nothing seems to be guaranteed with certainty and at the same time they are expected to perform at every front, the main being the academics. Adolescents often lack in academic motivation and performance, as their attention is divided among a lot many things especially at creating an identity for themselves. Anxiety is one of the most studied phenomena in psychology. It is normal human response to stress. The concept of anxiety is differentiated from fear as it is a normal human response to stress. Anxiety is a mental feeling of uneasiness or distress in reaction to a situation that is perceived negatively. According to Cornell University,

anxiety is similar to a messenger because it alerts your body when something is wrong or worth your attention. Academic anxiety is a kind of anxiety which relates to the impending danger from the environments of the academic institutions including teacher and certain subjects like mathematics, science, English etc. it is a mental feeling of uneasiness or distress in reaction to a school situation that is perceived negatively. Academic anxiety is not a bad thing. It is true that a high level of anxiety interferes with concentration and memory which are critical for academic success, however, without any anxiety, most of us would lack the motivation to study for exams, write papers or do daily homework. A moderate amount of anxiety actually helps academic performance by creating motivation. If academic anxiety is not properly addressed, it can have many serious and long lasting consequences such as causing a student to procrastinate, perform poorly on school work, fail classes and withdraw from socializing with peers or pursuing activities that interest him.

In our society academic achievement is considered as a key criterion to judge one's total potentialities and capacities. Hence academic achievement occupies a very important place in education as well as in the learning process. Academic achievement is defined by Crow and Crow (1969) as the extent to which a learner is profiting from instruction in a given area of learning i.e. achievement is reflected by the extent to which skill and knowledge has been imparted to him. Academic achievement also denotes the knowledge attained and skill developed in the school subject, usually designed by test scores. Gender issue has become the talk of today's forum. Although the literacy rate is more among the boys than girls; it is quite interesting to observe that girls are securing better ranks than boys in almost all competitive examinations. From the last ten years, it is very fascinating to note the girl's figure to be more often in top ten two ranks in tenth class examination. Earlier some of the researchers reported that intelligence was the only factor that causes gender variations among high achievers.

Review of Related Literature:

With reference to Indian culture Pramod (1996) concluded that boys manifest more future orientations than girls, therefore boys had more academic anxiety. Mnicholas and Lewiensohn (1998) inferred that at age 6, females were already twice more likely to have experienced anxiety disorders than males. Bryme (2000) suggested that males present significant decrease of anxiety and fear in 12th grades instead of girls who show increase in anxiety and by this time both males and females use different coping strategies in order to deal with fear and anxiety. Pomerantz et al, (2002) studied the pattern of gender differences. Girls out performed boys across all four

subjects but were more prone to internal distress than boys were. Girls doing poorly in school were the most vulnerable to internal distress. However, even girls doing well in school were more vulnerable than boys were. Even a study conducted by Ojha (2005) revealed that 25% boys have extremely high anxiety whereas only 6.7% girls have high academic anxiety. Yousefi et al. (2010) determined the relationship between test- anxiety and academic achievement among adolescents in Iran. Results showed that there was a significant correlation between test anxiety and academic achievement. Mattoo and Nabi (2012) found that there was no significant difference in the academic anxiety scores between male and female respondents.

Feingold (1988) found moderate differences favoring girls in spelling and language, while Hyde and Linn (1988) and Hedges and Nowell (1995) reported effect sizes close to zero in studies on reading comprehension and vocabulary. In effect size studies of mathematical abilities, Hyde, et al. (1990), Hedges and Nowell (1995) and Feingold (1988) found no or small effect sizes for gender differences in overall mathematics achievement, numerical ability, mathematics computation, concepts, and problem solving. In contrast, Linn & Peterson (1985) found moderate to large differences in spatial abilities that favored males. Whereas the studies by Wang et al (2008), Prakash and Coplan (2007) and Kiuru et al (2009), were based on student populations where girls achieve better academically.

Objectives:

1. To study academic anxiety of male and female secondary school students.
2. To study academic achievement of male and female secondary school students.

Hypothesis:

1. There will be no significant difference in academic anxiety of male and female secondary school students.
2. There will be no significant difference in academic achievement of male and female secondary school students.

Method:

For conducting the present investigation, 'Survey Technique under Descriptive Method of Research' was used.

Sample-

In the present study, a representative sample of 200 students studying in class 10th from Mandi

districts of Himachal Pradesh. For this purpose, the investigator used purposive sampling for the selection of schools. But students were selected by adopting lottery method of random sampling.

Research Tool-

Academic Anxiety Scale For Children (AASC) developed and standardized by Dr. A.K. Singh and Dr. (KM) A. Sen Gupta was used for measuring academic anxiety and the marks of sampled students in their previous examination i.e. marks of class 9th were taken as their academic achievement.

Statistical Technique-

In order to obtain empirical verification of the proposed hypotheses, the data was analyzed by applying t-test.

Result and Interpretation:

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviation and t – values on Academic Anxiety and Academic achievement scores of male and female secondary school students

Gender	Academic Anxiety N =100		Academic achievement N =100	
Male	M = 9.25	t= 9.78** **significant at 0.01	M = 46.01	t =3.48* *significant at 0.05
	S.D.= 3.02		S.D.= 9.59	
Female	M = 12.69		M = 50.89	
	S.D.= 1.80		S.D.= 10.22	

It is evident from the table 1 that first 't' value (9.78) was highly significant ($P < 0.01$, $df = 198$). Which mean that there exists significant difference in academic anxiety of male and female secondary school students. Hence first null hypothesis is rejected. Further Mean score (12.69) of female students were higher than mean score (9.25) of male students on academic anxiety. From that it may be inferred that female students experienced more academic anxiety than their counterparts. Table 1 further shows that the second 't' (3.48) was significant at 0.05 level. Which mean that there exists significant gender difference in academic achievement of secondary school students. Hence second null hypothesis is also rejected. Also, Mean score (50.89) of female students were higher than mean score (46.01) of male students on academic achievement. Hence, it may be concluded that female students are better in their academic achievement than that of male secondary school students.

Discussion:

Academics are the major source of tension amongst the youth nowadays. In today's competitive world, it is not uncommon to find academic achievement playing the most important role in a child's growing up. Being academically successful and making a place for oneself in the society is their priority. It is also true that youth today, often lacks academic motivation as their attention is diverted and divided among many things like peer group, heterogeneous relations, fashion and incessant entertainment. It appears that desiring and requiring academic achievement on one hand, and getting diverted from thorough academic efforts, creates a situation of continuous stress and anxiety for the adolescents. The present research too, reported difference in academic anxiety amongst adolescents, thus confirming hypothesis 1. Adolescence is a connecting stage between childhood fantasies and practical adult world, and according to Erickson the central issue and occupation during this stage is establishing one's identity. For today's adolescent self-identity includes one's academic identity too. During adolescence gender also comes up as an important factor in the intensity and types of emotional problems faced. Even in the present study significant gender difference are observed. Pramod (1996) concluded, with reference to Indian culture, that boys manifested more futuristic orientation than girls and therefore boys have more academic anxiety than girls. Contradictory results are also reported in a study by Ojha (2005), where they found that boys had higher academic anxiety as compared to girls. But in the Present research it is revealed (table 1) that girls suffer significantly more with Academic Anxiety than boys. Right from early childhood differential environment provided to girls and boys reflects in their personality. The sources of tension for girls are more than boys. Girls are more prone to depression, be it their looks, marriage or the self – esteem. But today's girls are getting involved in the frenzy of competitions and career worries too. As a result even for girls, the emerging source of depression is the increasing dreams and aspirations regarding their independence and career along with the usual concerns regarding looks, mate selection and marriage. All these make them more vulnerable to emotional pressures and problems one of which is found to be the high academic anxiety. Parents and teachers in collaboration with school guidance workers should work together for the better development of children. Timely encouragement and motivation is very important and should be efficiently used by both teachers and parents.

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