

Does test anxiety affect the academic performance of IX standard students?

Dr. S. Emimah

*Assistant Professor of Education Annammal College of Education for women, Thoothukudi,
Tamil Nadu - 628 003.*

Abstract—The present study investigated the effect of test anxiety on the academic performance of IX standard students in Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu. Using a stratified random sampling technique, 135 secondary school students were selected, and their test anxiety was measured using the Test Anxiety Scale developed by V. P. Sharma (1997). The study examined differences in test anxiety and academic performance with respect to gender, medium of instruction, type of school, nature of school, and locality. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in test anxiety across any of the background variables. However, significant differences were found in academic performance, with female students, English-medium students, government-aided school students, and students studying in single-sex schools achieving higher academic performance than their counterparts. Further analysis showed no significant relationship between test anxiety and academic performance among male students, whereas a significant relationship was observed among female students. The study concludes that test anxiety can influence academic achievement, particularly among female secondary school students, highlighting the need for appropriate interventions by teachers, parents, and schools to help students manage anxiety and improve academic outcomes.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the present scenario, anxiety is a common phenomenon of everyday life. It plays a crucial role in a human's daily life because people are victims of anxiety in different ways (Goodstein & Lanyon, 1975). Academic examinations and tests are considered to be the most stressful events of adolescent's life because the academic achievements and accomplishments of the students are measured through tests and examinations. Many students experience stress or anxiety before an exam. Feeling nervous about exams is a normal feeling among school students. In fact, a little nervousness can actually help to perform the best. However, extreme feelings of anxiety and stress before and during an exam can have unhealthy results. Anxiety can be problematic when it interferes with performance on an exam and prevents the students from doing the best. Test

anxiety is a combination of physical symptoms and emotional reactions that interfere with the ability to perform well on tests. Many students experience varying levels of test anxiety for a number of different reasons.

Test and examination anxiety prevent some students from reaching their academic potential. It has been found that students consistently perceive examination as a source of increase in anxiety and a situation engulfed with uncertainty/ unfairness in letting them demonstrate their true achievements (Zollar & Ben-chain, 1990; Spielberger, 1985). Such feelings among students limit their potential performance during the test situation, resulting in higher test anxiety (Hill & Wigfield, 1984) directly causing drop in the student achievement. In India, the situation is so bad that each year many students overburdened by the syllabus and terrified of failure, end up taking their own lives. Unfortunately, India has one of the highest teenage suicide rates in the world, and the number of students attempting suicide because of exam fear and pressure is increasing. According to the National Crime Record Bureau, 2013, Tamil Nadu tops the list not only with highest suicide rates, but also with the suicides reported due to exam failure.

Significance of the Study

Secondary education is an important stage of the entire educational system because it acts as a feeder for the higher level of education. It is a stage where a student enters adolescence. Periodic tests and examinations at all levels of education have become an integral part of evaluating students in our competitive education system. Students are subjected to a extensive variety of testing situations, such as school examinations, scholastic-achievement tests, intelligence tests and entrance examinations. Although tests and examinations are necessary and no educational system can be complete without examination. At the same time it is an accepted fact that some students get scared of examination. Some excitement for examination is normal and even beneficial. But somewhat a bit of examination anxiety is probably the result of pressure to maintain or get good scores. According to the American Test anxieties association “schoolwork” and “exams” are reported by students as the most stressful thing in their lives.

Research has shown that there is a decline in the performance of the students, who experience high levels of anxiety in tests and examination. This anxiety acts as a hindrance in learning and performance of the students. High test anxiety has been closely associated with low self-esteem, inadequate studying and accomplishment, low scores, troublesome classroom activities and undesirable behaviour in school as a result of an intense fear of failure. Test anxiety may have broader consequences, negatively affecting a student’s social, emotional and behavioral development, as well as their feelings about themselves and school. Many researches have already been conducted, in the area of test anxiety of students. This area of research has a great concern to identify the impact of test anxiety on academic performance of secondary school students. The findings of this study may also provide valuable information to students, teachers, parents, counselors and other stakeholders in the education sector about test anxiety. It may help

teachers to guide and motivate students according to their requirements and the school authority to guide the need based education programs.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To assess the test anxiety of secondary school students with respect to Gender, Medium of Instruction, Type of School, Nature of School, Locality of School
2. To assess the relationship between test anxiety and academic performance of secondary school students.

Sample

By using stratified random sampling technique a sample of 135 IX standard students were selected from various schools in Thoothukudi district.

Tool used in the study

The investigator has adopted Test-Anxiety-Scale developed by V.P.Sharma (1997) to measure the Test-Anxiety of the sample

III. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Table 1: Difference in the Test Anxiety of Secondary School Students with Respect to background variables

Variables	Categories	Count	Mean	S.D.	Calculated 't' Value	p value	Remarks at 5% level
Gender	Male	44	66.61	11.895	0.564	0.6	NS
	Female	91	67.88	11.915			
Medium of Instruction	English	37	70.65	8.810	1.932	0.056	NS
	Tamil	98	66.27	12.681			
Type of School	Govt.	75	68.67	12.357	1.316	0.190	NS
	Govt. Aided	60	65.97	11.175			
Nature of School	Single sex	62	67.37	11.526	0.086	0.932	NS
	Co education	73	67.55	12.250			
Locality of School	Rural	16	67.56	6.821	0.034	0.973	NS
	Urban	119	67.45	12.423			

Table 2: Difference in the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students with Respect to background variables

Variables	Categories	Count	Mean	S.D.	Calculated 't' Value	p value	Remarks at 5% level
Gender	Male	44	45.33	14.552	4.146	0.0	S
	Female	91	56.66	15.046			
Medium of Instruction	English	37	58.07	13.868	2.350	0.020	S
	Tamil	98	51.04	16.067			
Type of School	Govt.	75	47.76	13.821	4.607	0.0	S
	Govt. Aided	60	59.48	15.717			
Nature of School	Single sex	62	59.32	13.873	4.630	0.0	S
	Co education	73	47.58	15.333			
Locality of School	Rural	16	49.31	10.728	0.988	0.325	NS
	Urban	119	53.46	16.292			

Table 3: Relationship between Test Anxiety and Academic Performance of Male Secondary School Students

Variables	Calculated 'γ' value	p value	Remarks at 5% level
Test Anxiety	0.092	0.554	NS
Academic Performance			

Table 4 : Relationship between Test Anxiety and Academic Performance of Female Secondary School Students

Variables	Calculated 'γ' value	p value	Remarks at 5% level
Test Anxiety	0.212	0.043	S
Academic Performance			

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Test Anxiety of Secondary School Students

- No significant difference exists in the Test Anxiety of Secondary School Students with Respect to Gender, Medium of Instruction, Type of school, Nature of School and Locality of school

Subhashini Akurathi & MVR Raju (2018) found that no significant difference exists between boys and girls and private and government school secondary grade Students. The result of the present study is in agreement with the above studies. Indian education system is more inclined towards memorization and takes long systematic study hours thus leaving less time for recreational activities, and socialization which is an essential part of the development of a child. Pressure from school and parents, the lengthy format of central and state government board exams and heavy subject contents are some important factors that contribute to increased test anxiety among students. The above reasons may reflect in the Secondary School Students test anxiety irrespective of their Gender, Medium of Instruction, Type, Nature and Locality of school

Academic Performance of Secondary School Students

- Female secondary school students have high academic performance than the male students. Girls consistently do better than their male peers in academic performance. School success requires much more than intelligence. High academic performance requires study & hard work, and this is where girls may gain an advantage. Girls read more, are more attentive in class, take better notes, spend more time on homework, and show greater persistence on boring or frustrating academic tasks. Conversely Hartley and Sutton (2013) have recently reported that especially boys develop gender stereotypes according to which girls are perceived as academically superior with regard to motivation, ability, performance, and self-regulation. The above discussion may be the reason for the female secondary school student's high academic performance.

- English medium students have high academic performance than Tamil medium students. Majority of the English medium students are studying in Government aided schools. These schools have better infrastructure required for the physical and mental development of the child than the government schools. The infrastructure can help them to have a practical approach to education and to learn their lessons in a better way.

- Govt. aided school students have high academic performance than the govt. school students. Although technology and other facilities vary according to schools, government schools generally have fewer facilities than private schools. Private schools usually have better infrastructure facilities and up-to-date technology when compared with government schools. This will help the government aided schools to achieve more than the government schools.

- Students who are studying in single sex schools have high academic performance than the Coeducation school students.

Research and reports from educators suggest that single-sex education can widened the educational prospects for both girls and boys. Co-ed schools may tend to reinforce gender stereotypes, while single-sex schools can break down gender stereotypes. Students of the opposite sex can be a distraction for the adolescents' which hinder the performance of either male or female students. Single-sex education also enhances student success when teachers use techniques geared toward the gender of their students. The above discussion may be the reason for the high academic performance of single sex school students.

Relationship between Test Anxiety and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students

- Significant relationship exist between Test Anxiety and Academic Performance of female Secondary School Students

Generally girls tend to perceive exams as threatening and respond with intense emotional responses. In assessment situations also they evoke worry responses that interfere with their ability to show their academic and cognitive capabilities.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following are some recommendations to prevent or minimize test anxiety and to improve academic performance

- The students should be trained to study for the test ahead by working on sections of the content each day until they feel comfortable with the material. Being prepared will boost the confidence of the students, which will lessen the test anxiety.
- The parents and teachers should motivate the students to push the anxious or defeated thoughts away and replace them with positive thoughts. This will help them to manage their stress level when taking a test.
- The students are advised to have a good night's sleep as it will help them to improve their concentration and memory during the examination.
- The parents and teachers should not expect their students to be perfect and they should be trained to do their best and not to be a perfection seeker.
- The students should be trained to pay attention to their own test and pace, and forget about the other students in the room.
- Training programs should be given for the teachers to understand the mindset of students and also enable them to ameliorate student anxiety.

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