Academic Anxiety of Secondary School Students in Relation to their Parental Encouragement

DR. GOURAV MAHAJAN
Assistant Professor,
Sri Sai College of Education, Badhani
Punjab (India)

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. Sengupta (1998) and Parental Encouragement Scale by Kusum Aggarwal (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.

Keywords: *Academic Anxiety, Parental encouragement*

1. Introduction

Anxiety and stress are universal aspects of existence that are shared by individuals in all societies. They have always been and always will be an inescapable part of life. In order to understand academic anxiety, a few constructs must first be identified. Putnam (2010) defined anxiety as "a complex psychological condition that affects various cognitive, behavioral, and psychological states". Anxiety can then be separated into three classifications: state, an emotional condition that is temporary and initiated by a certain experience, trait, a stable aspect of one's personality (Tohill & Holyoak, 2000), and situation-specific. Academic anxiety is therefore a situation-specific form of anxiety related to the educational contexts. Academic anxiety encompasses not only test anxiety, but also anxiety about certain education subjects in general. For instance, anxiety has been observed in students taking math, reading, science, and foreign language classes (Cassady, 2010).

Academic anxiety, thus, is a kind of anxiety which relates to the imminent danger from the environment of the educational institutions together with teacher, certain subjects, co-curricular activities, etc. It is a mental sensitivity of uneasiness or distress in response to school or college circumstances that is perceived negatively. They feel anxious in academic field in the form of panic, helpless, hypertension and mental disorganization. Academic anxiety leads to academic difficulties through irrelevant thoughts, preoccupation and reduce attention and concentration (Eysenck, 2009).

Academic anxiety is the result of biochemical processes in the body and the brain that make students' attention level increase when they occur. The changes happen in response to exposure to a stressful academic situation, such as completing school assignments, presenting a project in class or taking a test. When the anxiety becomes too great, the body recoils as if threatened, which is a normal fight-or-flight reaction.

Dr. Gourav Mahajan [Subject: Education] International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences [I.F.= 0.352]

Vol. 3, Issue: 4, April: 2015

ISSN:(P) 2347-5404 ISSN:(O)2320 771X

There are four main components of academic anxiety: emotionality, study-skills deficits, task-generated interference and worrying. Emotionality is linked to biological signs, such as a fast heartbeat, nausea, sweaty palms and tense muscles. Study skills deficits result from inadequate study techniques that trigger anxiety. Task-generated interference is an outcome of unproductive behaviors that impede academic performance, such as spending too much time on questions you can't answer. Worry undermines academic success by distracting students from focusing on what needs to be done to perform well.

In the present education system, academic achievement is the students' performance in school, measured by grade reports, teachers' observation and self-perception. It is outcome of the education and determine the level to which a student or institution can achieve their educational goals. In secondary level, a high academic achievement is necessary for the students as it will decide their further better educational scope and future life. Academic achievement indicates the knowledge and skill of a student acquired in school subjects. So, for success in academic achievement it is necessary to provide the students a positive environment but academic anxiety opposes this situation. Due to academic anxiety students result poor at end of test which causes' achievement stresses throughout their academic life. Academic achievement of young pupils is, thus, hampered by anxiety. Both parents and teachers agree that there is lot of pressure on students in the way of their academic achievement (Eysenck , 2009).

Academic anxiety is totally not a bad thing. Academic anxiety is a common issue that students cannot ignore if they want to achieve academic success in school. It is true that a high level of anxiety interferes with concentration and memory which are critical for day to day academic performance and success, however, it is also true without any anxiety, majority of us would lack the enthusiasm and motivation to study for exams, do everyday homework or write any research papers. Moderate academic anxiety provides the motivation students require to exert effort completing assigned schoolwork and preparing to take examinations. Academic anxiety only becomes a problem that needs a solution when the amount experienced grows so excessive that a student is no longer able to function productively. If academic anxiety is not properly addressed, it can have many serious, severe and long lasting consequences such as causing a student to start hating a subject or a teacher, procrastinate, tell lies to parents, perform poorly on school work, absent classes to pursue activities that interest him and withdraw from socializing with peers or friends and may drop school.

There are many factors which generate pressure on students to perform better in curricular as well as the co-curricular areas and hence increase their academic anxiety. One factor which has come in for considerable emphasis is the degree to which the child perceives his parents as encouraging or even pressuring him to have high level of educational attainment. Kahl first suggested the importance of parental encouragement in his study. After finding that intelligence and social class position accounted for the major variations in college aspirations of boys of common-man or working-class origins, he noted that the attitude of the parents regarding the importance of occupational success for personal happiness was the critical factor.

Parental behaviors, most notably over control, lack of warmth and expressed anxiety, have been implicated in models of the development and maintenance of anxiety disorders in children and young people. Theories of normative development have proposed that different parental responses are required to support emotional development in childhood and adolescence, yet age has not typically been taken into account in studies of parenting and anxiety disorders.

Effective parents are skilled at providing home environments that nurture maturity in their children. They set appropriate examples, provide age appropriate standards and hold their children accountable to those

Dr. Gourav Mahajan [Subject: Education] International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences [I.F.= 0.352]

Vol. 3, Issue: 4, April: 2015
ISSN:(P) 2347-5404 ISSN:(O)2320 771X

standards. This involves setting limits and abiding by these limits, ideally in a non-punitive way. As children learn to interact with their parents in age appropriate ways they typically carry these behavioural skills over to their interactions with their siblings and peers. Moreover, emotional maturity is a surprisingly important ingredient when it comes to the development of patience and the ability to deliberately delay gratification in the pursuit of long term goals.

Gottfried, Fleming, and Gotfried (1998) observed that home environment had a statistically positive and significant effect on academic intrinsic motivation. Children whose homes had greater emphasis on learning opportunities and activities were more academically intrinsically motivated. Bansal, Thind and Jaswal (2006) based on 100 eleventh grade students drawn from 10 senior secondary schools in Ludhiana City of India showed that good quality of home environment had significant positive correlation with 'high' level of achievement motivation among high achievers. It was found that as the quality of home environment deteriorates, the level of achievement motivation also deteriorates.

Thergaonkar and Wadkar (2007) studied the relationship between test anxiety and parenting style and found that there was a significant negative correlation between test anxiety and democratic attitude of parents and acceptance of parents. Statistically significant negative correlations were also observed between the worry and emotionality components of test anxiety and democratic attitudes of parents worry rather than the emotionality components of test anxiety had a statistically significant negative correlation with acceptance of parents. There was no statistically significant correlation between test anxiety and attitude and expectation of mother towards their child's academics and gender stereotypes perception of mother regarding academics.

Singaravelu (2009) studied the test anxiety and academic achievement in Mathematics of high school students. The study found that the relationship between test anxiety and scholastic achievement in Mathematics of high school students. The study found that the higher the test anxiety, lesser was the academic achievement in Mathematics and vice-versa. No significant difference was found in relationships between test anxiety and academic achievement in Mathematics of boys and girls. Also it was found that the difference in the relationships between test anxiety and academic achievement in Mathematics of rural and urban school student was not significant.

Mahato & Jangir (2012) studied the academic anxiety among adolescents. The study found that majority of the student's experienced academic anxiety. Gender was not found to have any impact on the anxiety scores. It was revealed that the type of school and the environment had a significant relation with the academic anxiety.

2. Justification of the Study

Anxiety is one of the most common psychological disorders in school aged children and adolescents worldwide. Academic anxiety is associated with substantial negative effect on children's social, emotional and academic success. Its specific effect includes poor social and coping skills often leading to avoidance of social interaction, loneliness, low self esteem, perception of social rejection, difficulty in forming friendship and lower academic achievement (Hudson & Rapee, 2006). The prevalence rate of anxiety ranges from 4% - 25% with average of 8% (Costello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler & Angold, 2003). These emotional problems are often neglected as they are not easy to be detected by the parents or by teachers. These figures could be underestimation since anxiety among a large number of children and adolescent goes undiagnosed owing to the internalized nature of its symptoms (Tomb & Hunter, 2004). In India main documented cause of anxiety among school children and adolescents is parent's high educational expectation and pressure for academic achievement (Deb, 2001). According to the report of

National Crime Records Survey (2010) it is relevant to mention here that in one year alone, 2520 children, or more than six children per day, committed suicide because of failure in examination.

The tendency to structure one's time and leisure satisfaction, careful planning of learning activities, balanced level of aspirations, study habits etc. may be some of the important factors in determining academic anxiety among students. The present study was therefore, undertaken to study the relationship between academic anxiety of secondary school students and their parental encouragement.

3. Statement of the Problem
Academic Anxiety of Secondary School students in Relation to their Parental Encouragement

4. Objectives of the Study
1. To study the academic anxiety of secondary school students in relation to their parental encouragement.
2. To study the difference in the academic anxiety of male and female secondary school students.
3. To study the difference in academic anxiety of govt. and private secondary school students.

5. Hypotheses of the Study
Ho_1. There exists no significant relationship between academic anxiety and parental encouragement of secondary school students.

Ho_2. There exists no significant difference in academic anxiety of male and female secondary school students.

Ho_3. There exists no significant difference in academic anxiety of govt. and private secondary school students.

6. Methodology
6.1 Design of the Study
In the present study the Descriptive Survey Method was used.

6.2 Sample of the Study
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 (6 govt. and 6 private) of Tehsil Nurpur.

6.3 Tools Used
For the present study, the investigator used the following tools.
1. Academic Anxiety Scale for Children by A. K. Singh and A. Sengupta (1998).
2. Parental Encouragement Scale by Kusum Aggarwal (1998).

7. Collection of Data
With a view to collect data for the present research, the researcher visited the 12 secondary schools (selected for present study) in Tehsil Nurpur. The purpose of the study was discussed with the students. Thereafter, two questionnaires (one for Academic Anxiety and another for Parental Encouragement) were administered individually to them. The filled up questionnaires were collected on the spot by the investigator.

8. Analysis and Interpretation of Data
The hypothesis-wise analysis and interpretation of the data is as below.

8.1 Hypothesis-Ho_1
There exists no significant relationship between academic anxiety and parental encouragement of secondary school students.

To test this hypothesis the investigator computed the academic anxiety scores and the parental encouragement scores for the selected sample. Thereafter, Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation method was applied to calculate the correlation between both the variables. i.e. academic anxiety and parental encouragement.

Table 1: Table Showing Correlation between Academic Anxiety and Parental Encouragement of Secondary School Students

Variable	Correlation	Level of Significance
Academic Anxiety Parental Encouragement	-0.093	Significant at 0.5 level

The above table shows that the coefficient of correlation between the variables i.e. role conflict and emotional intelligence is -0.093 which is negative but significant. From this it may be inferred that the academic anxiety is negatively correlated with parental encouragement.

Therefore, the hypothesis- there exists no significant relationship between academic anxiety and parental encouragement of secondary school students stands rejected.

The negative correlation between academic anxiety and parental encouragement of secondary school students indicates that level of support, guidance and responsiveness by parents lessen the academic anxiety among the secondary school students. Without parental approval or support, children are not able to deal with the pressure generated by academic related activities and hence are not able to perform well in studies.

8.2 Hypothesis- Ho$_2$
There exists no significant difference in academic anxiety of male and female secondary school students. In order to test this hypothesis the investigator found the mean academic anxiety scores and standard deviation (SD) of male and female secondary school students.

Table 2 Significance of Difference between Mean Academic Anxiety Scores of Male and Female Secondary School Students

Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	Level of Significance
Male	60	18.71	2.88	0.22	Not Significant at 0.05 level
Female	60	19.10	3.15		

It is quite clear from table 2 that the mean academic anxiety score of male secondary school students is 18.71 and S.D. is 2.88.The mean academic anxiety score of female secondary school students is 19.10 and S.D. is 3.15. The 't' value is found to be 0.72 which is less than the corresponding table value at 0.05 level of significance.

Therefore, the hypothesis- there exists no significant difference in academic anxiety of male and female secondary school students stands accepted.

It may be attributed to the explanation that academic anxiety i.e. a feeling of worry, nervousness or uneasy about academic activities is only a subjective trait and not influenced by personal characteristics like gender, age, etc.

Hypothesis- Ho$_3$
There exists no significant difference in academic anxiety of govt. and private secondary school students.

In order to test this hypothesis the investigator found the mean academic anxiety scores and standard deviation (SD) of govt. and private secondary school students.

Table 3: Significance of Difference between Mean Academic Anxiety Scores of Govt. and Private Secondary School Students

Type of school	N	Mean	S.D	't'-Value	Level of Significance
Govt.	60	12.39	2.02	2.93	Not Significant at 0.05 level
Private	60	14.18	3.09		

It is quite clear from table 3.3 that the mean academic anxiety scores of govt. secondary school students is 12.39 and S.D. is 2.88.The mean academic anxiety scores of private secondary school students is 11.14 and S.D is 3.20. The 't' value is found to be 2.93 which is greater than the corresponding table value at 0.05 level significance.

Therefore, the hypothesis- there exists no significant difference in academic anxiety of govt. and private secondary school students stands rejected.
It is inferred that the private school students are more anxious than the govt. school students in relation to their academic activities. It may be due to the reason that the private school students feel more pressure from parents as well as from teachers to perform well which cause the increased level of academic anxiety among them.

9. Main Findings
- 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. It was, therefore, concluded that gender did not account for any variation in academic anxiety of secondary school students.
- A significant difference was found between academic anxiety of govt. and private secondary school teachers. In other words type of school was found to be a source of academic anxiety among secondary school teachers.

10. Educational Implications
The present study points out that the high level of parental encouragement lessens the academic anxiety among students. Therefore, parents should provide them a supportive, responsive and congenial environment at home so that the children feel free to share themselves and also to seek guidance for the difficulties which they experience in their learning process. The over ambitious parents always generate excessive pressure on their child and hence make him anxious. The parents should, therefore, need to be aware about the strength and weakness of their child so that they may not except beyond the potential of their child. This will also help them to develop in their child the balanced level of aspiration.

Teachers should help students in overcoming the anxiety caused by academic activities in variety of ways like educate students about anxiety, provide an open-communication in classroom, teach and discuss positive coping skills with students, allow students opportunities to practice and apply coping strategies etc. For this conducting seminars & workshops for teachers to help them learn how to identify students' psychological problems and their probable solutions can be of great help.

There should also be a provision of regular workshops for students also on stress management, time management, and assertive training and communication skills.

References

1. Bansal S, Thind SK, Jaswal S (2006). Relationship between Quality of home environment, Locus of Control and Achievement Motivation among High Achiever Urban Female Adolescents. Journal of Human Ecology, 19(4), 253-257.
2. Cassady, J.C. (2010). Anxiety in the schools: The causes, consequences and solutions for academic anxieties. NY: Peter lang.
3. Eysenck (2009). The effect of anxiety on academic achievement of students. Retrieved from http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/06/090623090713.htm
4. Gottfried AE, Fleming JS, Gottfried AW (1998). Role of cognitively stimulating home environment in children's academic intrinsic motivation: A longitudinal study. Child Development, 69, 1448-1460.
5. Mahato, B., & Jangir, S. (2012). A study on academic anxiety among adolescents of Minicoy Island. International Journal of Science and Research (online), 1(3), 12-14
6. Putman, S. M. (2010). The debilitative effects of anxiety on reading affect. In J. C. Cassady (Ed.), Anxiety in schools: The causes, consequences, and solutions for academic anxieties. NY: Peter Lang. Retrieved from http://academicanxiety.org/?page_id=89
7. Singaravelu, S. (2009). Test anxiety and academic achievement in Mathematics of high school students. Journal of Community Guidance and Research, 26 (3), 293-299.
8. Thergaonkar, N.R., Wadkar, A.J. (2007). Relationship between test anxiety and parenting style. Journal of Indian Association of Child Adolescent Mental Health, 2, 10-12.
9. Tohill, J. M., & Holyoak, K. J. (2000). The impact of anxiety on analogical reasoning. Thinking and Reasoning, 6(1), 27-40.
10. Waite, P. (2015). Observing interactions between children and adolescents and their parents: The effects of anxiety disorder and age – research gate. Available at: http://www.researchgate.net/publication/273782095_Observing_Interactions_between_Children _and_Adolescents_and_their_Parents_The_Effects_of_Anxiety_Disorder_and_Ag [accessed May 27, 2015].