

# Impact and Factors of Academic Anxiety: A Review

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## ABSTRACT

*Opting education in itself is a big challenge mostly in developing and underdeveloped countries. Students' entering in higher education system of these countries comes across various issues like academic anxiety, academic depression, academic stress, socio-economic hardships, anxious about uncertainty of future outcomes due to the lack of employment opportunities, lack of life management skills, law and order problems in a particular society so on and so forth. What factors are responsible in our country (India) for those students who suffer from severe academic anxiety has attracted the researcher to approach this problem. The basic aim of the study was to know various factors which lead students towards severe academic anxiety and the impact of academic anxiety on academic achievement. The researcher has reviewed the related literature of academic anxiety to find out its effect on achievement and also to identify the factors which lead students towards severe academic anxiety. Exploratory type of research design was used for qualitative analysis. Results show that personal, familial, institutional, social & political factors were identified as potential threat to provoke severe academic anxiety among students. The need of the hour is to create awareness among students, so they can take help of professional at the right time.*

**Keyword:** - Anxiety, Academic Anxiety, academic achievement, social problems.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Next to China, India is the most populated country in the world. Naturally there is too much rush and competition in every field. India's education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China (Arunachalam, 2010). What's more, the nation suffers from both a crippling quantity, as well as quality challenge when it comes to education. For instance, the QS World University Rankings, an annual listing of the world's top universities had no Indian universities in the top 450 rank of its recently released global list for 2015-2016. However, Delhi University had occupied the 481 rank followed by rest of Indian universities. (QS World University Rankings, 2015-16). Also, India has low Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) in education. According to 2011-12 data, India's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) was 20.4 in education compared with global average of around 26 percent. Australia, Russia and the U.S., to name a few examples, have GERs upwards of 75 percent (All India Survey on Higher Education, 2011-12). India has a long road ahead in fixing its supply-demand imbalance in the education sector. The problems that confront education in India today are low rates of enrolment, unequal access, poor quality of infrastructure, lower level of teaching quality, lack of funding, traditional methods of teaching, inadequate facilities, unemployable graduates, low standards of academic research and that too declining (Chahal, 2015).

If any system is having so many drawbacks, off course its stake holders and clients face hindrance during the execution of different task. When hindrances are unbearable to its clients it leads them to maladjustment, anxious about output of tasks at hand so on and so forth (Coplan, 1999). As far as anxiety is concerned, it is a universal phenomenon that prevails in job sector, administrative sector and academic sector too as revealed by previous researchers like Agarwal, Malhan & Singh (1979).

Lazarus and Averill (1972) defined anxiety as "an emotion based on the appraisal of threat, an appraisal which entails symbolic, anticipatory and uncertain elements. Anxiety results when cognitive systems no longer enable a person to relate meaningfully to the world". Anxiety may explain student feelings of helplessness following failure. According to Cole, Joan, Lachan, Seroczynski & Jonathan (1999) those who suffer from severe academic anxiety tend to avoid academic settings. Feelings of anxiety are not inherently abnormal, but can become severe enough to impair functioning in some individuals. Trivedi (2008) studied academic anxiety and found that girls on the whole had more incidences and intensity of academic anxiety than boys. Level of aspiration has negative correlation with anxiety (Singh 1986). Study conducted by Ghaderi, Kumar & Kumar (2009) revealed that Indian

students were more prone to anxiety disorders as compared to Iranian post graduate students. Academic anxiety has also been studied on a sample of special need's children like visually disabled by Rani (2011) placed in inclusive and exclusive school settings. Her study revealed that students placed in inclusive and exclusive school settings have the same level of academic anxiety.

Taking into considerations of several articles published on the psychological distress of college students, one can safely conclude that 20 to 25 percent of student population worldwide is suffering from psychological distress (Vitasari, et.al. 2010; Kumaraswamy, 2012).

Most of the researches presented above were carried out on Indian population. It is also clear that anxiety is prevalent among students population, which is harmful for their overall wellbeing in general and ultimately it leads them to maladjustment in academics. If the problem of anxiety is not addressed in the meantime, it leads to consequences like Irritability, Insomnia, Impulsivity, Isolation and Impotency (The New Indian Express, 13/04/14). So, it can be concluded on the basis of findings of researches presented above that academic anxiety is prevalent among student population and work directly or indirectly in lowering academic performance. To solve this problem, one must consider the factors of academic anxiety, eventually the quest on how academic anxiety effect the academic performance had motivated the researcher to approach this problem.

## 2. ACADEMIC ANXIETY: MAKING OR BREAKING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

In 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. Academic achievement indicates the knowledge and skill of a student acquire in school subjects. Crow and Crow (1969) define academic achievement by the quantity to which a learner is profiting from instruction in a given learning area. Academic achievement defined by Kohli (1975) is the degree of skill in academic work or attained knowledge in school subjects which generally represented by percentage of marks. Academic achievement stands for intellectual growth and the capacity to take part in construction of knowledge at its best (Ladson, 1999). From these definitions it can be concluded that academic achievement in student's life is "Educational Growth". From research in academic field, researchers indicate that success in academic achievement increases the self-confidence and self-esteem of the students. So, for success in academic achievement it is necessary to provide the students a positive Environment but academic anxiety opposes this situation.

Anxiety is complicated psychological situations which have an effect on cognitive, behavioural and psychological states (Putnam 2010). Anxiety disorders are common mental health conditions among all children in almost every field of their life, especially in the academic field. From very beginning of children's education, they are trained to acquire more knowledge and high scores in academic field. To achieve the target, students are bound to carry extra educational load compare to their age. This type of pressure creates psychological stress on them. As a result they feel anxious in academic field in the form of panic, helplessness, hypertension and mental disorganization. Anxiety while study is a major predictor of academic performance (McCraty, 2007; McCraty, Dana, Mike, Pam and Stephen, 2000) and various studies have demonstrated that it has a detrimental effect. Researchers found that students' high level of anxiety achieved low academic performance (Luigi, Francesca, Maria, Eleonora, Valentina and Benedetto, 2007; McCraty, 2007). Academic (test) anxiety leads to academic difficulties through irrelevant thoughts, preoccupation and it reduces attention and concentration (Eysenck, 2001). Due to test anxiety students results poor at end of test which causes "achievement stresses" throughout their academic life (Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds, & Coy, 2002). When academic anxiety in the students is high, it interferes with concentration and memory which is critical for academic success. Academic achievement of young pupil is hampered by anxiety (Reilly and Lewis, 1991, p.104). Nadeem, et.al. (2011) studied impact of anxiety on the academic achievement of students having different mental abilities at University level in Bahawalpur (Southern Punjab) Pakistan and found that when anxiety increases, academic achievement decreases both in male and female students. Whereas on completely different note, there were some more researches which revealed some findings which were complete against these aforesaid findings. According to Farhan et. al. (2011), subjects who were familiar with the academic tests were less exposed to anxiety as compared with the ones those were less familiar. Jain (2012) and Sridevi (2013) opposed that academic anxiety was negligibly negatively correlated with academic achievement and Cheraghian (2008) found no meaningful relationship between academic anxiety and academic performance. Toibas (1979) suggests that anxiety plays important role in students' learning and academic performance. Alam (2017) found that the academic achievement of the students decreased in case of the high and low anxious students but the moderately anxious students did better in Academic Achievement. So, from the above conclusion of psychologists, researchers consider that there has some negative relation between Academic Anxiety and Academic Achievement. In addition to that, an average level of anxiety is useful in keeping pupil motivated in

learning.

### 3. FACTORS

There are many factors which are responsible in provoking academic anxiety like personal, familial, social and institutional. Personal factors include emotional disorders, health disorders, maladjustment, low self concept, low aspiration level, intelligence levels etc. (Kaur 1991, Verma 1992, Dagur 1988, Gupta 1992, Joshi 1988, Thilagavathi 1990). Familial factors include low socio economic status, lack of guidance, indifferent attitude of parents and other family problems (Gautam 2011, Sabapathy 1986, Vandana 1988, Barinder 1985, Yadav 1989). Social factors include irrational norms imposed on someone, castism, unequal distribution of resources, illiterate locality etc. (Sridevi 2013, Pant *et. al.*, 2013). Institutional Factors may be related to the school type (Government-Private School), school environment, curricular and co-curricular aspects, teacher student relationship etc. (Mohanty 1985, Mahtao & Jangir 2012, Mattoo & Nabi 2012, Singh & Jha 2013, Neel 2011, Deb 2010).

Barinder (1985) and Deb & Walsh (2010) studied anxiety among adolescents to found out whether gender of the students had any impact on formation of anxiety or not and observed that more boys were anxious than girls. Gautam (2011) found that academic anxiety of adolescent female is affected by their socio-economic status. Yadav (1989) attempted to investigate the effects of socio-economic status and cultural settings as factors on anxiety, frustration and neuroticism of students having different levels of achievement and found that rural high achievers had more anxiety and neuroticism, whereas urban failures had more frustration than their respective counterparts. Low achievers and failures belonging to and middle socio economic status had more frustration than those who belonged to high socio economic status. Lower the socio economic status of girls the higher was their test anxiety. Sabapathy (1986) explored the relationship between manifest anxiety, emotional maturity and social maturity of tenth standard students to their academic achievement and reported that socio economic status was significantly and positively related with all areas of achievement. Ghaderi, Kumar and Kumar (2009) in a comparative study of Indian and Iranian students found that depression, anxiety and stress level of Indian students are significantly more than those of Iranian students. However, gender differences are not found significant. Bhasin, Sharma & Saini (2010) studied depression, anxiety and stress among adolescents belonging to affluent families and reported that depression was significantly more among females than males. Class in which the students are studying has an immense effect on anxiety formation. Anxiety was found to be significantly associated with the number of adverse events in the student's life that occurred in last one year. Kumar (2013) found that the academic anxiety and home environment of adolescents correlated significantly. Joshi, Gumashta, Kasturva & Deshpande (2012) studied academic anxiety a growing concern among urban mid adolescent school children and found that mild, moderate and severe academic anxiety in majority of students shows high pressure for academic performance and therefore related anxiety level.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In a nutshell, it emerges from this study that there are five factors personal, familial, institutional, social and political which lead students towards severe anxiety disorders sometimes. Severe anxiety disorders leads to cognitive distortions, dysfunctional schema, psychosomatic complaints, headaches, stomach ache, fainting etc. The educational psychology literature reports that consequences of severe anxiety include cautious or rigid thinking, limited responsiveness, interference with cognitive processes, diminution of complex intellectual processing and problem solving, heightened susceptibility to persuasion, higher likelihood of imitating models and increased attention to oneself rather than to the environment. It also indicates that academic anxiety has its very high impact on students' academic achievement and there is a negative correlation between them.. Anxiety mostly works as hindrance in students' academic performance. So many non-clinical and clinical preventive measures are available in order to handle the problem of severe academic anxiety prevalent among students but the need of the hour is to create awareness among students and teachers about them by organizing seminars, conferences, workshops, symposiums etc. Child centered and life centered curricula should be implemented in schools for promoting student's interest in learning. Teachers and Parents should not coerce students for achievements beyond their intellectual ability.

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