



A Study Of Examination Anxiety In Relation To Academic Achievement Among Secondary School Students

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Abstract

Examination anxiety is one of the most common psychological challenges faced by students, particularly at the secondary school level where academic pressure tends to be high. It refers to a set of emotional, cognitive, and physiological responses that arise in evaluative situations such as examinations. While a moderate level of anxiety may act as a motivating force, excessive anxiety can negatively influence students' academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being. The present study aims to examine the level of examination anxiety among secondary school students and to explore its relationship with their academic achievement. A sample of 200 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure representativeness. Data were collected through a standardized Examination Anxiety Scale and students' academic achievement scores were obtained from school records. The study focused on understanding how anxiety levels vary among students and how these levels impact their performance. The collected data were analyzed using statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, correlation, and independent samples t-test. The findings revealed that a significant proportion of students experience moderate to high levels of examination anxiety. A strong negative correlation was found between examination anxiety and academic achievement, indicating that students with higher anxiety levels tend to perform poorly in examinations. The study highlights the importance of addressing psychological factors in education and suggests the need for counseling services, stress management programs, and supportive learning environments to help students cope with examination-related stress.

Keywords: Examination Anxiety, Academic Achievement, Secondary Students, Stress, Psychological Factors

➤ Introduction

Education is a vital instrument for personal and societal development, serving as a foundation for intellectual growth, social progress, and economic advancement. It not only enhances knowledge and skills but also plays a significant role in shaping the personality, attitudes, values, and behavior of individuals. Through education, individuals develop critical thinking abilities, problem-solving skills, and a sense of responsibility, which are essential for active participation in society. In the modern education system, examinations are considered one of the most important tools for assessing students' knowledge, abilities, and academic progress. They act as a means of evaluation, certification, and selection, determining students' future academic and career paths. However, despite their importance, examinations often create a considerable amount of pressure and stress among students, giving rise to a psychological condition known as examination anxiety.

Examination anxiety is a complex psychological phenomenon characterized by feelings of tension, apprehension, worry, and fear that occur before or during examination situations. It involves multiple dimensions, including cognitive, emotional, and physiological components. The cognitive aspect includes negative thoughts, self-doubt, fear of failure, and lack of confidence. Emotionally, students may experience fear, panic, and helplessness, while physiologically, symptoms such as increased heart rate, sweating, trembling, and restlessness may be observed. These responses can interfere with students' ability to concentrate and perform effectively during examinations. At the secondary school level, students are particularly vulnerable to examination anxiety due to several factors. This stage of education is often marked by increased academic expectations, competitive environments, and high-stakes examinations such as board exams. Additionally, parental expectations, societal pressures, and fear of failure further intensify students' anxiety levels. Many students feel compelled to achieve high scores to secure future opportunities, which adds to their stress and emotional burden. While a moderate level of anxiety can act as a motivating force that encourages students to study and perform better, excessive anxiety can have detrimental effects on their academic performance and overall well-being. High levels of anxiety can impair concentration, disrupt memory processes, and hinder problem-solving abilities. Students experiencing severe anxiety may struggle to recall information they have learned, leading to poor performance despite adequate preparation. Furthermore, prolonged anxiety can negatively impact students' mental health, leading to issues such as low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and decreased motivation.

Therefore, it is essential to understand the nature, causes, and effects of examination anxiety in order to create supportive learning environments that help students manage stress effectively. Addressing examination anxiety is crucial not only for improving academic performance but also for ensuring the holistic development and well-being of students.

➤ Need of the Study

The issue of examination anxiety has gained significant attention in recent years due to its profound impact on students' academic performance, emotional well-being, and overall development. In the contemporary educational system, students are often subjected to intense academic pressure, high expectations from parents and teachers, and a competitive learning environment. As a result, many students experience elevated levels of stress and anxiety during examinations. This anxiety not only affects their performance in tests but also influences their confidence, motivation, and attitude towards learning.

Excessive examination anxiety can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including poor academic achievement, lack of concentration, memory disturbances, and reduced problem-solving ability. In some cases, it may also contribute to serious psychological issues such as depression, low self-esteem, and feelings of helplessness. Students who consistently experience high levels of anxiety may develop a fear of examinations, which can hinder their academic progress and limit their future opportunities. Despite its serious consequences, examination anxiety often remains unrecognized or inadequately addressed within the school system. Teachers and parents may focus more on academic results rather than the psychological challenges faced by students. Therefore, there is a strong need to study examination anxiety in a systematic manner to understand its nature, causes, and extent among secondary school students.

Furthermore, examining the relationship between examination anxiety and academic achievement is essential for identifying how psychological factors influence students' performance. Such understanding can help in developing effective strategies, interventions, and support systems to reduce anxiety and promote a healthy learning environment. Hence, the present study is important for improving both academic outcomes and the mental well-being of students.

➤ Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of examination anxiety among secondary school students.
- To evaluate the academic achievement of students.
- To determine the relationship between examination anxiety and academic achievement.
- To compare the performance of students with high and low anxiety levels.
- To suggest measures for reducing examination anxiety.

➤ Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between examination anxiety and academic achievement.

H₀2: There is no significant difference between high and low anxiety students in academic achievement.

➤ Significance of the Study

The present study holds considerable significance for various stakeholders in the field of education, including teachers, parents, school administrators, counselors, and policymakers, as it brings attention to the crucial role of psychological factors—particularly examination anxiety—in influencing students' academic performance and overall well-being. In traditional educational settings, greater emphasis is often placed on academic achievement, while the emotional and psychological challenges faced by students tend to be overlooked. This study helps in bridging that gap by highlighting how anxiety can directly and indirectly affect learning outcomes.

For teachers, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the behavioral and emotional difficulties experienced by students during examinations. It enables them to adopt more supportive teaching strategies, create a stress-free classroom environment, and identify students who may require additional guidance or counseling. Teachers can also incorporate relaxation techniques, time management skills, and confidence-building activities into their teaching practices to help students manage anxiety effectively.

For parents, the study emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balanced and supportive approach towards their children's education. It encourages parents to understand the negative impact of excessive expectations and pressure, and to provide emotional support that fosters confidence and resilience in students. From a policy perspective, the study offers evidence-based insights that can assist policymakers in designing student-centered educational policies. It supports the inclusion of mental health programs, school counseling services, and stress management interventions within the education system. Overall, the study is significant as it contributes to improving academic performance, promoting mental well-being, and ensuring the holistic development of students by addressing the psychological dimensions of education.

➤ Research Design

The present study was conducted using a **descriptive and correlational research design** to examine the nature of examination anxiety among secondary school students and to analyze its relationship with their academic achievement. The descriptive component of the design enabled the researcher to systematically describe the existing level of examination anxiety among students, while the correlational aspect helped in determining the degree and direction of relationship between examination anxiety and academic performance. This design was considered appropriate as it allows for the study of variables in their natural setting without any manipulation.

The study employed the **survey method** for data collection, as it is one of the most effective methods for gathering information related to students' attitudes, feelings, and psychological conditions. The population of the study consisted of secondary school students, from which a sample of 200 students was selected. The selection of the sample was carried out using the **simple random sampling technique**, ensuring that each student had an equal chance of being included in the study, thereby minimizing bias and enhancing the reliability of the findings.

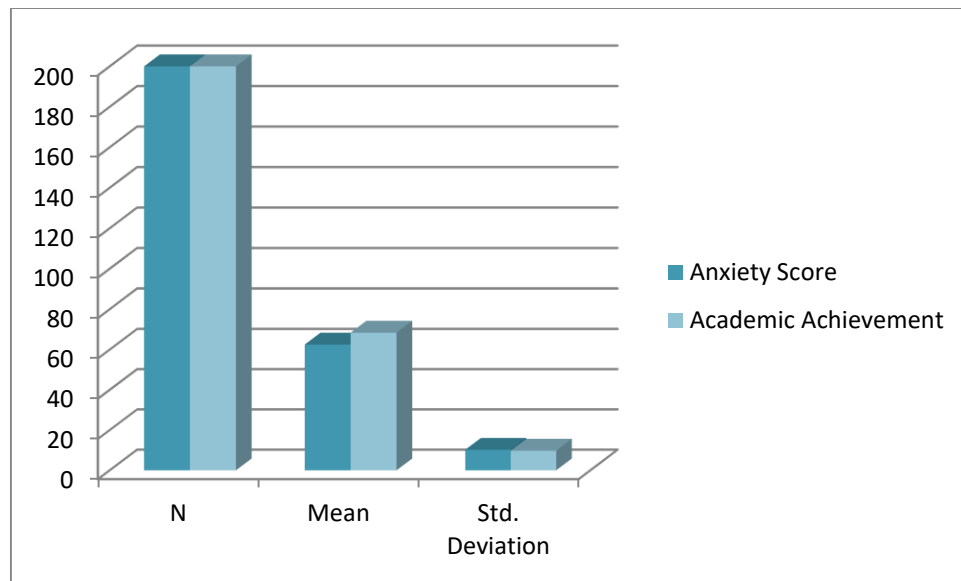
Data were collected using a **standardized Examination Anxiety Scale**, which measured different dimensions of anxiety such as worry, emotionality, and physiological responses. In addition to this, students' academic achievement was assessed through their previous examination records obtained from school data.

For the analysis of data, appropriate statistical techniques such as **mean and standard deviation** were used to describe the data, while **correlation analysis** was applied to examine the relationship between examination anxiety and academic achievement. Furthermore, the **independent samples t-test** was used to identify significant differences between groups, if any. These statistical tools ensured accurate interpretation and meaningful conclusions from the collected data.

➤ **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

• **Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Anxiety Score	200	62.50	10.20
Academic Achievement	200	68.40	9.75



Students show moderate anxiety levels.

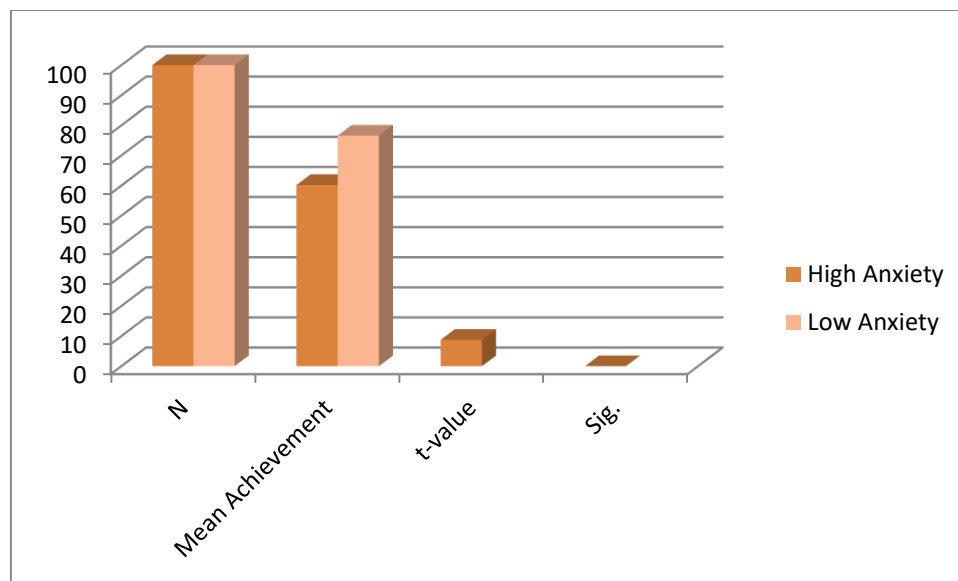
- Correlation Analysis**

Variables	Correlation (r)
Anxiety & Achievement	-0.65

Strong negative relationship exists.

- t-test Analysis**

Group	N	Mean Achievement	t-value	Sig.
High Anxiety	100	60.20	8.75	0.000
Low Anxiety	100	76.60		



Significant difference found.

➤ Interpretation

The analysis indicates that students with high anxiety perform significantly lower than those with low anxiety. The negative correlation confirms that anxiety adversely affects academic performance.

➤ Major Findings

The analysis of the collected data reveals several important findings regarding examination anxiety and its relationship with academic achievement among secondary school students. Firstly, it was found that a majority of students experience **moderate to high levels of examination anxiety**. The descriptive statistics indicate that the mean anxiety score of students was **62.50 with a standard deviation of 10.20**, which suggests that examination anxiety is prevalent among students and cannot be ignored. This level of anxiety reflects the academic pressure and psychological stress that students commonly face during examinations.

Secondly, the study found a **strong negative correlation between examination anxiety and academic achievement**. The correlation coefficient was calculated as $r = -0.65$, which clearly indicates that as the level of anxiety increases, academic performance tends to decrease. This inverse relationship highlights the detrimental impact of excessive anxiety on students' ability to perform effectively in examinations.

Furthermore, the results of the **independent samples t-test** also support the finding that anxiety significantly affects academic performance. Students were categorized into high anxiety and low anxiety groups, and their mean academic scores were compared. The mean score of students with high anxiety

was found to be **60.20**, whereas students with low anxiety had a significantly higher mean score of **76.60**. The calculated **t-value of 8.75** with a significance level of **p = 0.000 (p < 0.05)** indicates that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant.

These findings clearly demonstrate that examination anxiety has a substantial negative impact on students' academic performance. Students with lower anxiety levels tend to perform better, while those experiencing higher anxiety face difficulties in concentration, memory recall, and overall test performance. Therefore, it is essential to address examination anxiety to improve students' academic outcomes and psychological well-being.

➤ **Conclusions, Educational Implications and Suggestions**

The present study concludes that examination anxiety is a significant psychological factor that has a direct and meaningful impact on students' academic achievement. The findings clearly indicate that students experiencing higher levels of anxiety tend to perform poorly in examinations compared to those with lower levels of anxiety. Excessive anxiety affects students' concentration, memory retention, and problem-solving abilities, which are essential for effective performance in examinations. It also lowers students' confidence and creates a sense of fear and self-doubt, ultimately hindering their academic potential. Therefore, examination anxiety cannot be ignored and must be addressed as an important component of the educational process to ensure better academic outcomes and overall student well-being.

The study further highlights several important educational implications. There is a strong need for the provision of counseling services in schools to help students identify and manage their anxiety effectively. Professional guidance and counseling can assist students in developing coping strategies and improving their emotional stability. Additionally, schools should strive to create a stress-free and supportive learning environment where students feel safe, motivated, and encouraged rather than pressured. Teachers play a crucial role in this process, and their support, understanding, and positive reinforcement can significantly reduce students' anxiety levels and enhance their confidence.

In light of these findings, the study suggests that practical measures should be implemented to help students cope with examination anxiety. Schools should introduce relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and mindfulness practices to help students manage stress. Regular workshops and awareness programs on stress management and study skills should be organized to equip students with effective coping mechanisms. Furthermore, providing psychological support services, including access to school counselors and mental health programs, is essential for addressing students' emotional needs. These efforts will not only reduce examination anxiety but also contribute to improving students' academic performance and overall development.

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