



A STUDY ON EXAM STRESS AND ANXIETY AMONG GRADUATE AND POST GRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Exam anxiety among college students has long been a source of discussion. Due to a variety of factors, including poor planning, their study habits, and a lack of necessary knowledge, college students often suffer significant levels of stress. When stress is seen negatively or is experienced in excess, it causes anxiety before and during exams, which ultimately has an impact on students' academic performance. The goal of the current research was to find out how stressed college students in the arts, sciences, and business fields felt about their upcoming exams.

The degree of stress experienced by college students enrolled in undergrad and graduate programs was further compared. 90 college students from two girl's institutions were included in the sample, which was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The researcher created a questionnaire to gauge college students' stress and anxiety related to exams. The findings indicate a connection between college students' test stress and anxiety.

When comparing the levels of stress and anxiety across students from various streams, it was shown that arts students had the greatest levels of stress and anxiety during exams, followed by students from commerce. The stress and anxiety levels of undergraduate and graduate students did not significantly vary.

Key Words: Examination Stress, Anxiety, College students, Arts, Science, Commerce

INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is a student's interactions between environmental stressors, cognitive evaluation and dealing with academic-related stresses, and psychological or physiological reaction to stressors (Lee & Larson, 2000; Lou & Chi, 2000). Academic stress is a global issue that needs context (Wong, Wong, & Scott, 2006). Every pupil wants academic achievement for respect, family pride, and social mobility (Gow, Bella, Kember, & Hau, 1996). Students, especially teens, are under enormous academic pressure (e.g., Bossy, 2000; Ho, 1996).

Stress and pressure to do well in exams make academic life miserable for pupils. Stress is any physical, physiological, or emotional condition that creates bodily or mental turmoil and may cause illness. Trauma, infections, poisons, diseases, and injuries are physical and chemical stressors. Emotional stressors are many. A little stress may be good.

For instance, modest tension during a project or assignment typically motivates us to perform well, concentrate, and work hard. However, high stress before and during exams might harm mental and somatic health (Lee & Larson, 2000; Verma & Gupta, 1990). According to Banerjee (2001), 25,000 18–20-year-olds commit suicide during exam month (i.e. March to June). Due to test stress, students spend less time socializing and more time on passive and active leisure, which may exacerbate exam stress (Lee and Larson, 2000).

Stress generates anxiety. It is natural until it overwhelms and isolates a person. Exam stress shows that pupils worry about their grades. It encourages hard labor. However, when test stress reached clinical or sub-clinical levels, it hindered student performance. Performance failure increased anguish (Raina, 1983). Fear of failing may cause test stress and lower a student's self-esteem. Exam anxiety may impair memory and recall.

Academic success is positively correlated with achievement motivation and negatively correlated with anxiety (Alam, 2001). Stress before and during exams may cause insomnia, fatigue, depression, stomach distress, restlessness, and memory loss. Panicking when you cannot answer a question. It's common in typical pupils and easy to control. Following a good strategy makes it easy.

Four key factors might trigger pre-exam anxiety. Lifestyle issues poor rest, diet, and time management are the first. Students will worry if they don't arrange time to cover the material. Even if he/she reads the whole material and has little time for review, he/she may mistake one subject with another, making the student feel like he knows nothing or lost everything. Prioritizing your obligations may reduce stress. Second, know the test dates, place, course topic, and paper before the exam to reduce stress. Pre-exam tension might result from missing information.

Many students stress themselves by memorizing textbooks, studying all night before tests, inefficient and uneven material covering, and not taking revision notes. Other psychological issues before exams may cause tension or anxiety. "If I don't achieve a decent grade, I'll lose my respect or be worthless" is a rare student belief. Some students make dire predictions like "I will fail no matter how hard I work".

Higher Education system and Examination System in India

Economic and social progress depends on education. It is essential for developing human potential and creating chances. Development cannot be broadly based or maintained without education. After gaining independence, the Indian government gave education the attention it deserved and established goals for ensuring access and fairness at every educational level, realizing the essential role that education plays in development.

However, the elementary stage of education received top importance in the government's plans and programs owing to the constitutional requirement of universalizing basic education and the international community's focus on "Education For All".

The advancement of higher education is the second priority. While primary education lays the groundwork for further learning, secondary education is crucial because it serves as a bridge between primary school and higher education. In contrast, higher education systems create wealth producers and leaders in all spheres of endeavor, including business, professions, politics, administration, and artistic endeavors.

India has advanced significantly in the realm of higher education during the last 70 years. The majority of our grads are of shockingly poor quality. The kids are doing their best; they are diligent and disciplined, they study for exams and admission exams, and they graduate. On the other hand, many university graduates lack even the most basic knowledge, conceptual comprehension, or problem-solving abilities in their respective fields.

Our higher education has been weakened by rote learning, a lack of knowledge application, and a subpar testing system. Most grads are incapable of handling problems and lack even



basic communication skills. Because most graduates are unable to boost economic development and are consequently unemployed, educated unemployment is on the increase. Another reality about college students is the intense pressure they experience as a consequence of fierce struggle for the survival of the fittest.

Everyone aspires to succeed in today's tough professional environment, which requires great grades. This tendency has affected not just pupils but also parents' and teachers' expectations of their kids. They put pressure on their kids to achieve better and want better marks from them. Instead of information or skill acquisition, an examination score determines a student's success. Although it's widely accepted that some test stress is necessary for academic achievement, too much of it may occasionally cause students to experience psychological issues including anxiety, sadness, and examination phobia.

The outdated and disgusting assessment system for higher education is equally to blame for the high amount of stress experienced during exams, which is not only a product of student aspirations or family expectations. The emphasis is often on rote learning and memory tests for students.

A thorough memorization of the solutions to the problems asked in the three years before (apart from the most recent year) will ensure excellent scores! Rarely are analytical abilities, knowledge applications, problem-solving prowess, or innovative thinking put to the test. Continuous evaluation is not emphasized, and the student's performance is solely assessed on one final test.

What is taught in class and what is tested are completely at odds with one another. It seems sense that the instructor of the course would be the best person to assess a student's performance. But under the existing system, the student's test is graded by a totally disinterested assessor who is located elsewhere! This kind of universal assessment method leaves no space for either ongoing evaluation during the course or for evaluating the student's creativity, knowledge application, and problem-solving abilities. In the present system of higher education, elite High scores may be expected if you carefully memorize the answers to questions from the last three years.

In the majority of western institutions, the professor who is teaching the course scores the test papers, gives tests or exams, and evaluates the students throughout the semester. The student's final mark for the course is often released within a week following the final exams, and there is typically a clear procedure for resolving any concerns the student may have about how their work is assessed or scored. Tragically, intelligent, aspirational, and hardworking Indian students are just doing what the system requires of them.

This need is being met by the whole school system, including the many coaching institutions. If only the demand's nature were to change, infrastructure and students would adjust to the new circumstances and increase supply. There are several test methods available for properly assessing pupils and stimulating desire for improved education by redefining success.

Reforming examination system to reduce examination stress at higher education level

Academicians firmly believed that the higher education test system needed to be changed. They pushed for the implementation of the widely used credit-based choice (CBC) system. Students may pick their own courses under this method, and they can even ask the examiner to hold the exams when they are ready.

"The credit-based choice (CBC) system does not impose subjects or test dates on students. Although the credit-based choice (CBC) system has been implemented in a number of nations for quite some time, relatively few colleges in India have done so to yet. Out of the 569 institutions in the nation, only 30 have used the method. Currently, the annual and semester systems of exams are used in the majority of Indian institutions and colleges.

We anticipate an increase in the gross enrolment in higher education and an improvement in student understanding if we implement the CBC system by redesigning the conventional technique of assessment systems. Even Nevertheless, there have been several studies on the connection between teenage anxiety and test stress. However, they largely concern high school pupils.

There are few researches on the connection between test stress and anxiety among university students, which is why this study chose to concentrate on college students.

This essay's main objective is to investigate the effects of academic stress on college students. It should be of interest to Indian education policy makers to deepen their comprehension of the exam stress and anxiety experienced by Indian students as well as to generate ideas for how to best use and manage the educational system to support students' emotional growth and the best possible academic performance.

The establishment of a conceptual framework that takes into account the relationships between test stress and anxiety in Indian universities is another objective of this article. This ought to be helpful in directing future academics who want to investigate academic stress and anxiety in India. Therefore, the following goals were used in the research to determine the test stress and anxiety of college students:

- 1) To ascertain the level of test stress and anxiety among college students.
- 2) To compare college students at the graduation and post-graduation levels' levels of test stress and anxiety.
- 3) To compare the degree of test stress and anxiety experienced by students in the arts, sciences, and business streams.

Hypothesis:-

1. Teenagers' reported test stress and anxiety have no connection to one another.
2. Students in the arts, sciences, and business do not much vary in how stressed and anxious they feel before exams.
3. There is no discernible difference between undergraduate and graduate students in terms of how stressed and anxious they feel before exams.

Research Design

This research is descriptive in nature. The main sources were used to get the information.

Population: College students made up the study's population.

Sample and Sampling Technique: - Using the stratified random selection approach, a sample of 90 college students as a whole was chosen. Out of the 90 students, 45 were in the graduating class and 45 were in the post-graduation class. These 45 graduates included 15 students from the Arts stream, 15 from the Science stream and 15 from the Commerce stream. For postgraduate students, the same student allocation was carried out.

Tool: Data collecting using a self-made tool. There were 120 total items in the survey. Out of the 120 questions, 60 were intended to elicit information on test stress, while the remaining 60 were connected to exam anxiety level.

Data Analysis

With the aid of SPSS version 20, the scores acquired from the administration of the questionnaire were submitted to statistical analysis such as Mean, SD, and Coefficient of Correlation.

Result & Discussion

Table No: 1.1 Correlation between examination stress and anxiety among college students

	MEAN	SD	R
Examination Stress	31.41	5.04	0.79
Anxiety	27.46	5.69	

The table 1.1 demonstrates the strong association between test stress and anxiety. Therefore, the hypothesis (H0 1) that there is no connection between test stress and anxiety among college students is rejected. College students experience tension and anxiety before to exams. Exam stress and anxiety are caused by high goals, bad study habits, increased study issues, a change in the medium of instruction, low socioeconomic situations, test anxiety, fear of failure, competition for grades, an excessive amount of homework, and difficulties with attention and memory (G Manjula and Vijaylaxmi A.H.M. 2012; Edmund 1984; Joost, 2007). Studies have shown that a little bit of stress may sometimes stimulate pupils and improve their performance (Moore, Burrows & Dalziel, 1992). However, excessive use among college students has detrimental effects. According to Kohlon's (1983) research, stress-inducing variables included a lack of parental support, a friendly examination system, living up to parental expectations, instructor attitudes, and test anxiety.

Table No: 1.2 Mean and SD of examination stress and anxiety among college students of Arts, Science and Commerce background

	Examination Stress			Anxiety		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Science	30	31.05	5.72	30	26.6	5.04
Arts	30	33.45	3.69	30	29.7	6.24
Commerce	30	29.75	5.1	30	26.1	5.32

Table 1.2 above shows that students in the Arts stream have higher levels of test stress than students in the Science and Commerce streams (mean: 31.05 and 29.75, respectively). Similar trends may be seen in the mean value for anxiety in table no. 1.2 above. Science (Mean=26.6)

and Commerce (Mean=26.1) students feel less worried than Arts stream students (Mean=29.7). This might be as a result of the topics' nature.

Table No: 4.3 Mean, SD and t-value of examination stress and anxiety among under graduated and post graduate students of Science, Arts and Commerce stream.

			Mean	SD	T
SCIENCE	Examination stress	UG	30.5	6.75	0.25
		PG	31.6	4.81	
	Anxiety	UG	25.3	5.49	1.02
		PG	27.9	4.43	
ARTS	Examination stress	UG	32.9	2.23	0.44
		PG	34	4.8	
	Anxiety	UG	30.4	4.57	0.22
		PG	29	7.76	
COMMERCE	Examination stress	UG	31.8	4.28	2.12
		PG	27.7	5.03	
	Anxiety	UG	28.2	5.28	1.14
		PG	24	4.69	

The aforementioned table illustrates how little there is in terms of felt test stress between students in the Science and Arts streams at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The t value for students' anxiety levels at the UG and PG levels was not shown to be significant. This suggests that students' test tension and anxiety are not much affected by their educational level. However, compared to postgraduate students, undergraduate students in the commerce stream report feeling more stressed and anxious.

Conclusion:

When studying for or taking an exam, stress is characterized by excessively high performance expectations, high levels of concern, self-criticism, and attentiveness (Altmaier, 1983, p. 52). An excessive amount of stress might affect a student's ability to focus, prepare, and perform. The research discovered a strong correlation between college students' test stress and anxiety levels.

Students from the Arts, Science, and Commerce streams have the most test stress and anxiety, followed by those from the Commerce stream. Students in the scientific stream reported feeling the least tension and anxiety leading up to their exams. Comparing undergraduate and graduate students' levels of stress and anxiety before and after exams, it



was discovered that graduate and post graduate students experience about identical levels of stress and anxiety.

Some college students lack the knowledge necessary to adequately prepare for exams, which causes them to perform badly and get nervous. Understanding how exams affect pupils, identifying those who are susceptible, and determining whether the existing assessment procedure is acceptable all need more attention (Fisher, 1994).

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