



## A STUDY OF ANXIETY AMONG STUDENTS APPEARING AND NOT APPEARING FOR BOARD EXAMINATIONS

*Afia Iftekhar Anwar Ansari & Mamta Ranjeetkumar Gupta*

*B.Ed. Student,*

*Aishabai College of Education*

### **Abstract:**

*Anxiety is one of the most common psychological disorders that has been observed in both school-aged children and adolescents worldwide. Many students face anxiety issues when they think they are unable to achieve their academic or non-academic purposes; however, sometimes anxiety helps in encouraging students to critically think about how to achieve the set goals. Students cope with anxiety in various ways, but most of them struggle to deal with anxiety effectively which probably causes many symptoms that affect their physical and mental health. Therefore, it is one of the many responsibilities of teachers to help students deal and manage their emotions and keep them mentally healthy. In India, the main cause of anxiety among school children and adolescents is the unrealistically high educational expectations from parents as well as teachers for students to outdo their classmates and their personal best, every time. The present study analyzes the anxiety level of secondary and junior college students. The study reflected that student who are not appearing for board examinations, that is those from 9th and 11th standard, had a higher level of anxiety as compared to those who are appearing that is 10th and 12th.*

**Keywords:** *Anxiety, Board Examination, Junior College Students, Secondary School Students.*

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### **Introduction**

Globalization has made life complex and challenging, which has increased the feeling of competitiveness in the world of profession, business and academics. Excessive workload and pressure to always do best, social media influence, and increasing demand for quality and innovation in every work results in physical and emotional exhaustion and mental breakdown. Breakdowns lead to stress, anxiety and negativity in life. Anxiety is a natural coping mechanism to stress which makes an individual temporarily alert to deal with stressful situations with more focus and energy. Anxiety can be felt for many reasons like before an interview, public speaking, a big test and important life changing decisions. (National Institute of Mental Health, July 2018) Anxiety causes feelings of helplessness and uncertainty, feelings of lack of strength to deal with the situation at hand or even overconfidence in one's ability (Rasquinha, 2012). Anxiety may also cause feelings of fear, nervousness and dread. Some of the physical symptoms of anxiety are sweating, rapid heart-beat and muscle tension. Anxiety is a temporary feeling



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but when these feelings last way past the important event has passed or ended, then it is called an anxiety disorder. (National Institute of Mental Health, July 2018)

When it comes to anxiety, mostly all the attention is reserved for adults, be it advertisements, media focus or generally asking your loved one about their feelings. Students and Children are casually left out of the conversation, especially on topics revolving around mental and emotional health. We are well aware that students do face a lot of pressure to do their best academically but any stress and anxiety they may be facing is remedied by saying do your homework on time, sleep on time and play less. Very few adults take student anxiety seriously and we almost never consider the fact that they may be suffering from anxiety disorders because of the constant pressure put on them to do their best academically and in other areas of life.

The serious problem that has arisen among adolescence is that of Anxiety. Anxiety is one of the most common psychological disorders seen not only in school-aged children but also among adolescents globally (Costello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler and Angold, 2003). It has been observed that anxiety causes many physical and mental health problems among students that not only affect their present but also affects their career. Various circumstances may be responsible for the same. For example, the death of a close friend or family member or relatives, rejection from friends, chronic illness, mental or sexual abuse, and a physical disorder, etc. These factors may lead to a higher risk of developing anxiety. The most common factors that have been seen in day-to-day life which may be the reasons for stress among adolescents are changes in their body due to hormones, academic stress which arises because of competition, exam fear, classwork preparation, type of syllabus and overload of assignments, problems with peers, unsafe living environment/neighbourhood (Rasquinha, 2012).

If the adolescent receives proper support from his surroundings it helps them deal with life effectively but if they don't find this support it can lead to different emotional and mental problems. Anxiety is mostly a good thing as it helps the students to be competitive and find solutions to their problems. But students who fail to use their anxiety productively, struggle emotionally, which not only affects their academic performance but also their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Increased and unmanageable anxiety in students may lead to loss of ambitions and drop outs from colleges. (Hocaoglu, Hocaoglu, and Mohamed, 2020)

The major objective of this study is to understand how many adolescents and teenage students from South Mumbai, specifically students of 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th suffer from anxiety. Also, the present study aims at understanding the difference in anxiety levels among students who are appearing for board exams and those who are not appearing. The numbers will allow the teachers to take the matter seriously and identify the symptoms in their students to come up with solutions or find a support system for the students suffering from anxiety and anxiety disorders.

#### **Review of Related Literature**

Ali, Mufti and Mufti (2020) conducted an anonymous online survey to assess and study anxiety among Indian students during Covid-19 Lockdown. The study was specifically conducted and limited to mentally sound students who have finished grade 12<sup>th</sup> and are between the age group 18-25 only. The survey results indicate that 55.96% students showed symptoms of anxiety with 5.9% showing signs of severe anxiety. 36.01% and 13.99% responses indicate signs of mild and moderate anxiety respectively. The study concludes that Covid-19 pandemic has affected


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everyone in different ways including students in higher classes.

Karande et al. (2018) Conducted a study to check the presence of anxiety symptoms in school going students of age 8-15 from Mumbai. They also studied how anxiety levels differed based on variables of age, gender, siblings and school curriculum. The research was conducted using Spence Children's Anxiety Scale and child self report questionnaire. The results of the study indicated that 10.8% students showed symptoms of overall anxiety of which older students of 12-15 had the greatest odds of having the symptoms. Similarly, 29.6% students showed symptoms of obsessions and compulsions, especially older students, specifically boys. 27.2% students showed symptoms of fears of physical injury, 12% showed symptoms of separation anxiety and 7.7% showed symptoms of social anxiety. Deb and Walsh (2010) Conducted research to study the presence of anxiety among students of high school in Kolkata city, India. Students of age 13-17 participated in the study where data was collected using self-report semi-structured questionnaires and standardized psychological tests. The study results indicated that there exists a significant difference in presence of anxiety symptoms among students in relation to medium of instruction in school, gender and socio-economic status. Moreover, a significant amount of students perceive that they do not receive quality time from either one of their parents.

Seçer, Gülbahçe and Ulaş (2019) Conducted a study on 670 secondary and higher secondary students between ages 13-18 to investigate the impact of anxiety sensitivity on childhood depression and anxiety disorders. The data was collected using 'Anxiety and depression index for children' and 'Anxiety sensitivity index for children'. The results of the study indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between anxiety disorder and physical, psychological and social sensitivity. This means that anxiety sensitivity of children and adolescents does act as a source in experience of anxiety disorders in adolescents and children. Koshaim, Al-Sukayt and Chinna (2020) attempted to study the anxiety in university students of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia during the time of Covid-19 pandemic. According to the results, more than 35% of students suffered from moderate to high levels of anxiety. Gender and age variables were significant in the study as females and students of 4<sup>th</sup> year showed higher levels of anxiety compared to males and the students of fifth / final year. Aydin (2018) Did research on 414 school students, of 4<sup>th</sup> grade, to study Gender differences in test anxiety. Their thoughts, off-task behaviors, and autonomic reactions were also studied. From these, significant gender differences in favor of females was observed. Kaushal and Tewari (2021) carried out a quantitative research study where their sample consisted of co-ed school students of 10th, 11th, 12th grades in Dehradun, Uttarakhand in order to find out the prevalence of examination anxiety among them. 50 males and 20 female students were selected for their study. Results indicated that boys and girls both showed exam anxiety and there was a significant difference among them. It was also proved from their study that Boys experience a higher exam anxiety than girls. Stress free school environment is required for a student's mental and physical health.

Effects of gender for anxiety disorders and symptoms have been found in multiple studies of children and adolescents in English-speaking countries. Generally, it has been reflected through studies that more girls than boys develop anxiety symptoms and disorders. Adolescent girls report a greater number of worries and more separation anxiety, and higher levels of generalized anxiety as well ( Poulton et al, 2001; Weiss, 2001) However, an earlier Indian study reported that high anxiety was prevalent in 20.1% of boys and 17.9% of girls and this

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difference was statistically significant (Deb et al, 2010)

In India, the main highlighted cause of anxiety among school going and college going children and adolescents is high educational expectations from parents and pressure for academic achievement during their educational periods (Deb, 2001). In India, this is amplified in secondary schools and colleges specially junior colleges where all above 16-year old children attempt the Class X and XII Board Examination. Results of the Secondary Examination and Higher Secondary Examination are important for individuals as this is important in determining criteria for future admission and selecting appropriate career options like medical, engineering, management, etc. There is fierce competition in the field of education among students since the number of places in higher educational institutions is fewer than the number of students who have appeared for the examination. It is relevant to mention here that in one year alone in India, 2320 children, or more than six children per day, committed suicide because of failure in examinations (National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2000). This shocking figure highlights the seriousness of this problem and its resounding social costs to communities. But, due to various novel teaching methodologies, easier availability of content, approachable counselors and teachers, the canvas of education is changing with students lowering their anxiety especially while dealing with examination pressure. Since a very limited number of studies have been addressed on anxiety among school-aged and college going students children in India, and because of the seriousness of its adverse consequences, it was considered important to explore this issue further and hence this study was undertaken.

**Scope and Delimitations of the Study**

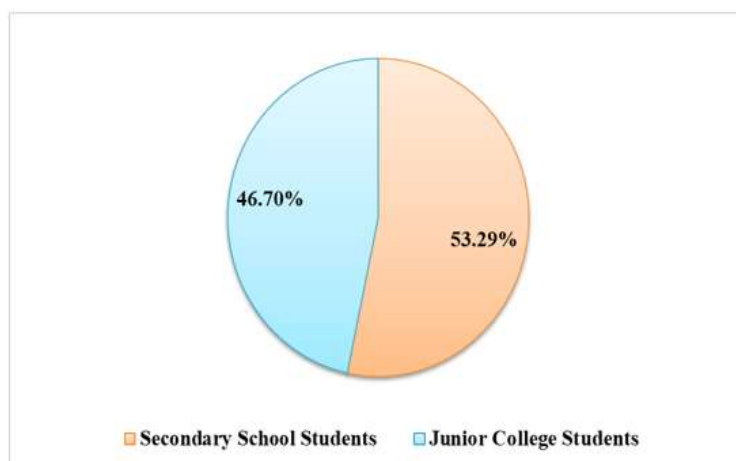
In the present study the data was collected from secondary school students and junior college students. This data does not include pre-primary, primary section and senior college students. The data was collected from SSC and HSC board institutions. Other boards like ICSE, CBSE, IGCSE, IB, etc were not taken into consideration. Data includes female and male students and for college students all the three fields were considered i.e. science, commerce and arts. This data does not include teachers, principals and parents' perspectives. This data was collected from South Mumbai only and other regions were not considered. The present study only focused on English medium students, those from vernacular medium were not selected. Factors affecting anxiety like phobia, stress, self-esteem, socio-economic status, present family background, qualification of parents, school and college climate, etc were not considered for the present study.

**Methodology and Sample of the Study**

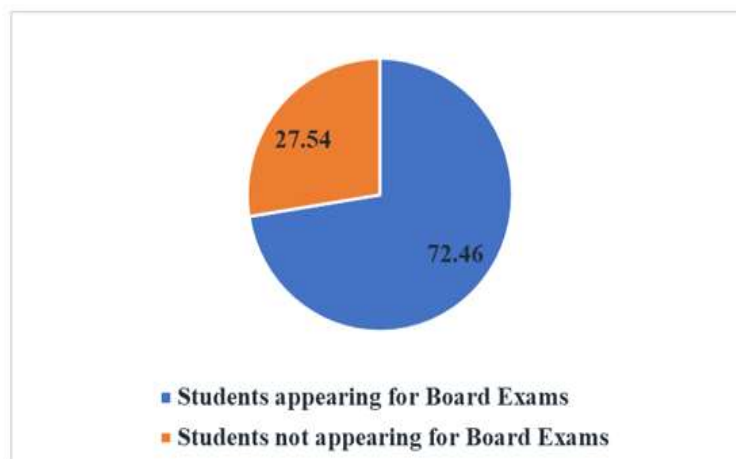
The present study was conducted using a descriptive survey method. The sample for the same was collected using convenience sampling. Self-rating Anxiety Scale (SAS) questionnaire designed by William W.K Zung (1971) was used to collect data in the form of Google online forms. The questionnaire consisted of 20 anxiety diagnostic criteria, which were answered by a total of 167 respondents. A total 167 students of secondary and higher secondary from South Mumbai were selected for the study. 121 students of the total sample from grade 10th and 12th were appearing for their board exams, whereas 46 students of the total sample, from grade 9th and 11th were not appearing for any board exams. Table 1.1 represents the sample for the study and Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 represents a pie-chart depicting the sample size based on the percentage of students selected for the study.

**Table 1.1: Sample Size for Present Study**

	N	Percentage
Total students	167	100%
Secondary School Students	89	53.29%
Junior College Students	78	46.70%
IX and XI standard Students	46	27.54%
X and XII standard Students	121	72.45%


**Figure 1.1: Pie Chart Depicting Secondary School Students and Junior College Students**

Out of the total sample size 53.29% were secondary school students and 46.70% were junior college students.


**Figure 1.2: Pie Chart Depicting Students appearing and not appearing for Board Examinations**



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Out of the total sample size 27.54% were Students who were not appearing for Board exams and 72.46% were appearing.

#### Hypothesis Testing and Interpretation of Data

1. There is no significant difference in the anxiety level among teenagers.
2. There is no significant difference in the anxiety level among Secondary School Students.
3. There is no significant difference in the anxiety level among Junior College Students.
4. There is no significant difference in the anxiety level among students not appearing for board examinations.
5. There is no significant difference in the anxiety level among students appearing for board examinations.
6. There is no significant difference in the anxiety level among secondary school students and junior college students.
7. There is no significant difference in the anxiety level among students appearing and not appearing for board examinations.

**Table 1.2: Relevant Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	S. D	Skewness	Kurtosis
Total students	167	41.41	40	38	8.66	1.025	2.72
Secondary School Students	89	41.01	40	36	9.07	1.36	4.22
Junior College Students	78	41.88	40	38	8.20	0.55	0.65
IX and XI Standard Students	46	43.5	42.5	42	9.29	0.29	0.77
X and XII Standard Students	121	40.62	39	38	8.31	1.38	4.48

#### Hypothesis 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were tested using descriptive analysis

**Hypothesis 1:** The mean, median, mode and standard deviation value for total number of sample (teenagers) 41.41, 40, 38, and 8.66. Skewness was positive and was found to be 1.02. Kurtosis was found to be 4.22, hence the data is leptokurtic by nature.

**Hypothesis 2:** The mean, median, mode and standard deviation value for secondary school students was 41.01, 40, 36, and 9.07 respectively. Skewness was positive and was found to be 1.36. Kurtosis was found to be 2.72, hence the data is leptokurtic by nature.

**Hypothesis 3:** The mean, median, mode and standard deviation value for junior college students was 41.88, 40, 38, and 8.20 respectively. Skewness was positive and was found to be 0.55. Kurtosis was found to be 0.65, hence the data is mesokurtic by nature.

**Hypothesis 4:** The mean, median, mode and standard deviation value for students not appearing for board exams is 43.6, 42.5, 42, and 9.29 respectively. Skewness was positive and was found to be 0.29. Kurtosis was found to be 0.77, hence the data is leptokurtic by nature.

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**Hypothesis 5:** The mean, median, mode and standard deviation value for students appearing for board exams is 40.62, 39, 38, 8.31. Skewness was positive and was found to be 1.38. Kurtosis was found to be 4.48, hence the data is leptokurtic by nature.

**Table 1.3: Relevant Inferential Statistics**

	No	Mean	t value	p value	LoS
Secondary School Students	89	41.01	0.65	0.51	NS
Junior College Students	78	41.88			
IX and XI Standard Students	46	43.5	1.93	0.05	S
X and XII Standard Students	121	40.62			

**Hypothesis 6 and 7 were tested using inferential analysis.**

**Hypothesis 6:** The t value for anxiety levels in students of secondary and junior college students is 0.65. The p value was found to be 0.51 which is greater than 0.01 and 0.05, thus it is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference in the anxiety level among secondary school students and junior college students.

**Hypothesis 7:** The t value for anxiety in students appearing for board exams (10th and 12th) and not appearing for board examinations (9th and 11th) was found to be 1.93. The p value was found to be 0.05 which is equal and greater to 0.05, thus it is significant. Hypothesis 7 is rejected and it is proved that there is a significant difference in anxiety levels among students appearing for their boards and students not appearing for board examinations. The mean value of students not appearing for their board examination (grade 9th and 11th) is 43.5 which is greater than the mean of board examination appearing students which is 40.62. Therefore, it is concluded that students who are not appearing for board examinations have higher anxiety levels than students who are appearing for their board examinations.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The academic and professional success of Indian students is mostly judged mostly from the grades scored by the students in their board exams (competitive exams). The high value assigned to these exams creates a lot of pressure and anxiety in students to give their best, since most students are given only one chance from their parents to clear these exams. Much research has been conducted on test anxiety in students of the western countries, but very little research has been done on test anxiety in Indian students. (Mary, Marslin, Franklin, and J, 2014) did a research on test anxiety of board exams students in Tamil Nadu and their research findings indicated that board exam appearing students showed high levels of anxiety especially boys and students appearing for their 12th standard board examination. Another similar research by (L and D, 2020) on test anxiety in board examination appearing students indicated that students have higher levels of anxiety when they are appearing for their board examination, especially students of government schools as compared to students of government aided schools.

On the contrary, The results of the current study where the variables were not limited to just board appearing



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students, indicates that anxiety levels are comparatively higher in students who are not appearing for their board exams (students of standard 9th and 11th) than students who are appearing for their board exams (students of 10th and 12th). The studies, where board examination appearing students show higher levels of anxiety were done before the Covid-19 Pandemic and lockdown. The present study was done after the pandemic lockdown was lifted. So it can be said that board examination students faced lesser anxiety because they were well prepared for their exams and had enough time in their hands to cope with the pressures related to board examination studies. The portion (amount of topics to be learnt for the exams) was also reduced by the board authorities, for the exams, in order to ensure that underprivileged students who might be affected by the pandemic don't feel a lot of burden and pressure for the exams. On the other hand, students who were not appearing for their board exams were facing greater anxiety because they would be entering their final year, where they will have to appear for the board exams, which culturally has been assigned very high values for deciding the career and future of the students. The anxiety in the students not appearing for their board exams (9th and 11th students) stems from the fear of the unknown and the fear of pending board examinations that will decide their future.

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