

## **GENDER BASED ANALYSIS OF TEST ANXIETY AND SELF -ESTEEM AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Self-esteem and test anxiety have been studied closely on the premises of academic settings, since researchers has shown that they have a close interaction with each other. The major drive of the present study was to explore the level of test anxiety and self-esteem of the students of university regarding their gender difference and to determine the relation between test anxiety and self-esteem. Random sample of 73 students (30 male and 43 female) of two leading public sector universities were selected. Data for the present study were collected from the departments of social sciences only with the help of two types of inventories which were: Self Esteem by Todd. F. Heatherton and Spielberger's State Anxiety Inventory. After collection of data, it was statistically treated and scores of male and female students were compared. T-test, correlation and mean analyses were run for statistical significance of data. Results of the study revealed that a significant negative relationship exists between test anxiety and self-esteem of students. It was also found that female students have significantly higher level of test anxiety as compared to male students. Further a significant difference was found between male and female students on self-esteem, which indicates that male students have high score on self-esteem as compared to female students. By keeping in view, the findings of present research it is concluded that test anxiety is one of the factors which are responsible for students' self-esteem.

**Keywords:** Test anxiety, Self-esteem, University students

## INTRODUCTION

Although anxiety affects the performance and efficiency of human life in different situations, the average anxiety level helps people maintain diligence and sense of responsibility, and also helps people lead a more sustainable and prosperous useful life (Kahan, 2008). In the learning and teaching environment, the concept of test anxiety is negative. It is the subjective emotional state experienced before or during any particular assessment process, and any behavior related to the negative consequences of completing the assessment itself. There are several main aspects of test anxiety, including students' test views, self-awareness, and perceptions of the test situation. Although students believe that test-related attributes are mainly anxiety-causing, self-perception seems to have a stronger empirical correlation with the level of test anxiety they experience (Bonnaccio & Reeve, 2010).

Anxiety is one of the furthestmost commonly experienced emotion, explained as the painful feeling of restlessness, worry, tension, fear, worry or worry. According to Marry (1950), anxiety is a vague worry or restlessness and a high degree of emotionality. It is classified according to the sense of uncertainty and helplessness. The standard of normal or abnormal anxiety can be resolute by its reason and strength. In fact, moderate level of anxiety can encourage people to cope with their problems and achieve triumph in their lives. Numerous explanations have been projected to clarify the relationship between the exam anxiety and academic achievements. Some authors show that test anxiety may consume cognitive resources, prevent students from focus on exam 9Lenka & Kant 2012). Recent explanations referring to anxiety may affect students' motivation and destruction of their learning strategies for example, anxiety may decrease learning or impede the driving force of using effective learning strategies (Karatas, Alci & Aydin, 2013).

A study by Yilmaz and Ocakci (2001) found that 77.2% of students had slight anxiety and 19.6% had moderate anxiety. Anxiety is a key forecaster of student academic performance (McCraty, 2007). Highly anxious students will have minor academic performance (Heather & April 2008), and greater anxiety is associated with poor academic performance (Luigi, 2007). Educational testing is the main tool for measuring academic performance. Although different evaluation methods are castoff in educational setup, testing will still be the most frequently used evaluation method (Keogh & French, 2001). Test anxiety is one of the most disabling factors in schools and other educational environments where tests are conducted (Birenbaum & Nasser, 1994). Test anxiety affects 10%-30% of all students. Therefore, it has been found that high exam anxiety is related to low self-esteem, failing grades, and feelings of tension and anxiety derived from intense psychological distress (Peleg, 2009).

Test anxiety is some of the utmost notorious psychological concepts associated to evaluation. The term “test anxiety” refers to a state of being overly worried under test conditions. The concept of test anxiety originated from a psychological phenomenon of Luria, Brown, and Neumann (Burn, 2004) in the 1930s, and was far ahead proposed by Mandler and Sarason (1952). Ndirangu, Muola, Kithuka, and Nassiuma (2009) describe test anxiety as a form of excessive arousal that leads to emotional, physical, and scholarly changes, thereby delaying the effective use of early information learned during the test. They believe that test anxiety has further two subcomponents: cognition and emotion. The emotional subcomponent represents physical stimuli related to the performance (Bembenutty, 2009), while the cognitive component represents concerns that hinder attention, and effective processing of the information (Mathews, Zeinder & Roberts, 2006).

The structure of self-esteem is considered to be the main factor affecting learning outcomes. Blascovich Tomaka (1991) typically says that self-esteem is

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the degree to which a person rewards, buys, recognizes or likes oneself. The overall evaluation of a person's value regardless of high or low (Bailey, 2003). Different researchers recognize several relationships of self-esteem, more or less of which are conditional, while others are decisive. Therefore, self-esteem is associated to academic achievement, academic success, depression, social anxiety, self-strength, self-attribute, optimism, strength and resilience, and adaptation (Bernard, 1996).

Women tend to look forward and are more emotional than men. Gender differences are an important area of research. For example, self-esteem, including gender, may also include previous research on gender differences in self-esteem related to self-awareness emotions or gender. Strong, self-esteem female students of male students (McMullin & Cairney, 2004), but in some of the studies, the gender related results are different (Kling, Hyde, Showers & Buswell, 1999). In the development of self-esteem, demonstration, and performance influence, gender is often asserted. Significant studies have proved that there are different genders in self-esteem, which has the strongest unique influence on students' self-esteem (Habibollah, 2009).

The relationship among self-esteem and anxiety has not often been studied. Respect for oneself can be used as a protective factor, regulator, mediator or merely the outcome of emotional health or difficulty. Low self-esteem is related to anxiety symptoms and physical discomfort, while high self-esteem is well-thought-out as a significant safeguard in contradiction of anxiety (Millings, 2012). Cross-sectional studies report a correlation between high statistical ability among self-esteem and anxiety (Lee & Hankin, 2009).

Friedman and Bendas-Jacob (1997) reported that one of the elements leading to the increase of test anxiety is self-esteem. According to them, worrying about pain will reduce self-image, especially in the eyes of peers, leading to higher test anxiety. Compared with students with low self-esteem, unhappy, and not so

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friendly, those who are optimistic about themselves have fewer sleepless nights, they are friendly, and perform better academically, they are more likely to suffer from depression, and low academic performance (Fathi-Ashtiani, 2007). There are different elements that show test anxiety and depression, and the element between self-esteem levels is related to one of the elements that has been widely discussed (Sowislo & Orth, 2012). Generally speaking, the relationship between test anxiety and self-esteem is obvious. Students with high self-esteem tend to have better ability to cope with stress than students with low self-esteem (Moksnes, Moljord, Espnes & Byrne, 2010). This study aims to explore the gender differences in test anxiety and self-esteem among college students, and to decide the relationship between test anxiety and self-esteem.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Test anxiety is considered to be a characteristic of the person who responds to the exam and testing (Keogh & French, 2001). It is a specific feature refers to an anxiety and worry conditions that students experienced during the exam. In general, testing anxiety is the uneasiness, worry or nervousness that students feel during the exam or test. Some people are so afraid of exams or other forms of exams so that their performance is damaged. Test anxiety levels can vary over time to deal with internal and external stimulation. Among the people testing anxiety, some observable behaviors, such as sweat, unnecessary movement and questioning, sweat palm and muscle tension are common during testing.

Some research on test anxiety focused on gender differences, it repeatedly found that girls have experienced higher level testing, rather than men. However, less known is that these differences between male and women reported that the degree of anxiety reported may affect their academic achievements. The high-level test anxiety of female reports is usually not accompanied by lower performance scores. However, since then, few research has been conducted, especially for higher education students (Hembree, 1988). A related study is conducted by

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Ahmed (2009), which investigated the academic performance of Pakistani secondary school students in terms of the relationship between gender, social anxiety, and self-esteem. The results of that study explained that academic performance was positively correlated with self-esteem, and negatively correlated with social anxiety. It has been found that there is a negative correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety. In addition, the survey results show that compared with female students, male students have higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of social anxiety.

Akinleke (2012) led a research study to discover how test anxiety and self-esteem affect academic performance. 250 randomly selected students participated in the study. The study found that, overall, the grade point average (GPA) of low-anxiety students was higher than that of high-anxiety students, and self-esteem was positively correlated with academic performance. The significance of the research results is that the stakeholders in education should be developed to help students cope with anxiety by formulating policies. This will help learners manage anxiety and initiate programs that help learning and coping with challenges, because this will lead to higher Academic achievements. A study by Wong, Cheung, Chan, Ma & Tang (2006) on a sample of college students from ten universities revealed that 41% of students experienced moderate anxiety. Anxiety level may interfere with students' daily functions such as study, family, daily activities, sports, and social life.

Through the exam, learners' education results and achievements are assessment and scores (Chinta, 2005). In fact, testing is common in daily life; testing from school's specific tests to work during work. This has increased significant pressure on test results and levels. Therefore, in most cases, this has caused many people to become anxious when they are subject to the exam. The strain of the exam and examination is considered to make some people maintain

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academic potential. It is pointed out that students believe that the exam is an improved anxiety and unfair / uncertainty, allowing them to show their true potential (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995). The most anxious child is discovered to be more likely to accept the poor level, repeat their grades, and execute under the task scheme that requires new learning. Similarly, Nikolson conducted a study to understand the effects of test anxiety on 11 students' achievements, revealing anxiety and achievements (Nicholson, 2009). The most research work has completed the impact of testing anxiety to students' academic performance, indicating negative relationships between performance and examination anxiety (Huberty, 2010).

Some researchers have explored the gender variances in test anxiety and found that the overall level of test anxiety of women is upper than that of men. Cassaday & Johnson, (2002) explained that the gender-based difference in student test anxiety is that men and women are worried about the same level of test, while women have a higher emotional level. Zeidner (1990) concluded that the difference in test anxiety between men and women is caused by academic gender differences. In addition, studies have shown that older students are more stressed than younger students, and female students are more stressed and anxious than male students. (Gint, 1982). Sarason (1978) believes that test anxiety is a kind of self-concern, exhibited as low self-esteem, leading to negative cognitive evaluation, inattention, unpleasant physiological reactions and students' academic performance.

Men and women usually follow the same trajectory of self-esteem (Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005). However, some studies have found that the actual difference between the genders exists. Some studies showed a significant gender difference in self-esteem with mean scores indicating that females had higher level of self-esteem than males (Gohil, 2014) while other studies have shown an inverse relationship (Chabrol, Rousseau & Callahan, 2006).

## METHODOLOGY

All the students of social science departments comprised the population of the study. Random sample of 73 students (30 male and 43 female) of two leading public sector universities were selected. Data were collected by the researchers from the departments of social sciences. By keeping in view the nature, need and demand of the current study, two types of inventories were used: Self Esteem by Todd. F. Heatherton it comprises of 36 items that was planned in Likert's-point response format, which went from very often (1), Fairly often (2), Sometimes (3), Once in a great while (4), Particularly never (5). Second Inventory used were Spielberger's State Anxiety Inventory which was designed in Likert's-point response format ranged from Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1), it comprises of 20 items that ask how a person feels now and reflects situational factors that may influence anxiety levels. Scores range from 20 – 80 and the higher the score the greater the level of anxiety.

Present study being descriptive in nature utilized survey technique. In demand to fulfil the requirement of the study 73 students were selected from public sector universities. Respondents were approached for data collection according to the nature and research needs. There was a lot of unexpected obstacles in the collection of data, so for reducingg these difficulties permissionnletter was providedd to the authorities of universities before collection of data from the students. More or less all the participantss completed the questionnaires in the presenee of researchers. Collected data were analyzed according to objective of the study. After completing data collection data were transferred to SPSS 16.0 for statistical analysis by applying statistical tests including t-test, mean and correlation.

**RESULTS***Table 1.**Mean values of male and female students on Self-esteem N=73*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Tt	Df	Sig
Male	30	135	3.98	6.08	71	0.005
Female	43	104	2.21			

Table 1. above deals with the mean value of male and female students regarding their self-esteem, it indicates that there is a significant difference among self-esteem according to gender difference; male learners have significantly higher level of self-esteem as compared to the female students.

*Table 2.**Mean values of male and female students on Test anxiety N=73*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig
Male	30	60	4.71	5.76	71	0.005
Female	43	75	5.06			

Table 2. represents the mean values of male and female students regarding test anxiety, results indicate that female students had higher mean score (75) on test-anxiety than mean score (60) of male students. It also supports the results that there is a significant difference between female and male student's scores on test anxiety.

*Table 3.**Correlation between Test anxiety and Self-esteem N=73*

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Test anxiety	73	68	2.42	-.306*	.000
Self esteem	73	120	3.67		

Table 3. above indicates the correlation between test anxiety and self-esteem, it shows a significant negative correlation among test anxiety and self-esteem among university students.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Findings of the study regarding the level of self-esteem among male and female learners revealed that there is a noteworthy difference between self-esteem regarding their gender differences. Male students have significantly higher level of self-esteem as compared to female learners. Findings of the study are consistent with the findings of some earlier studies. It has been stated that a significant difference among self-esteem of male and female has been found (Sar Abdani Tafreshi, 2006).

Keeping in view the emphasis of present study to explore the level of test anxiety regarding gender variance the results of the independent samples t-test revealed that there is a significant difference on test anxiety according to gender variance. Female learners have significantly upper level of test anxiety. This finding is constant with the results of related previous studies directed by Chapell, Blanding, and MaCann (2005), which support the hypothesis that female pupils experience more severe level of test anxiety than male students. Farooqi, Ghani, and Spielberfer (2012) showed that gender is an important factor affecting the test anxiety level of medical students, among which the level of girls is higher than that of boys. The results of Ahmeds (2009) survey of Pakistani and Iranian students correspondingly show that the level of test anxiety reported by these female students is significantly higher than that of male students.

Results of the present study revealed noteworthy negative correlation among test anxiety and self-esteem. This explains that if higher the level of self-esteem is than the lower the level of test anxiety is. It shows that a good kinship has been established between these two psychological structures. Finding of this

study is consistent with the findings of Bhatta (2013) and Alam (2014) that there is a significant negative correlation among test anxiety and self-esteem amongst the Nepalese and Pakistani learners correspondingly.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Teachers, parents and education administrators can help students effectively deal with test anxiety by using different cognitive, emotional and behavioral strategies.
2. It is further recommended to teachers and parents to recognize and treat students with high test anxiety to enhance their self-esteem.
3. The university authorities can be advised to formulate guidelines and introduce plans to help students cope with test anxiety.
4. Feedback techniques can prove to be the most effective to assess learning and retention in the classroom. This will ultimately increase the confidence of text-anxious students and enable them to cope with test anxiety.
5. It is recommended that guidance counselor, psychologists, and further professionals working in an educational environment may form special programs for learners with test anxiety, including special program to improve self-efficacy.
6. Keeping in view the limitations of current research, it is suggested that large scale data may be collected and added in future research, and more variables can be studied.

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