

Interview Anxiety of Job Applicants in Relation to Age, Gender, and Academic Performance

Research Article

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ABSTRACT

Interview anxiety is a prevalent issue among job applicants. It poses a significant threat to applicants' interview performance. Past studies suggest a substantial gap in the comprehension of the various factors that can influence the anxiety experienced by job applicants during interviews. The goal of this research was to explore the interview anxiety of male and female job applicants in relation to their age and academic performance. A personal information form along with the adapted Bangla version of the Measurement of Anxiety in Selection Interview (MASI) scale was applied to 260 job applicants selected purposively from different public universities in Dhaka city. In the present study, a cross-sectional survey design was employed and data were analyzed by using independent sample *t*-tests, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, and stepwise multiple regression analysis. The results of the study indicated that females experience more anxiety in the selection interview than males. For both males and females, there was a positive correlation between age and interview anxiety, and academic performance was negatively correlated with interview anxiety. The results further revealed that, for both males and females, age and academic performance could predict interview anxiety where academic performance was the strongest predictor of interview anxiety. These findings may be useful to employers and human resource professionals concerned with these issues and to raise awareness regarding the interview anxiety of job applicants.

Keywords: *Academic performance, Age, Interview anxiety, Job applicants*

1. Introduction

The selection interview is a frequently employed approach for evaluating potential job applicants (McCarthy & Cheng, 2014), and getting a job is

almost completely reliant upon how an individual does in an interview. Selection interviews are evaluative, crucial for the applicant's career, and frequently represent the initial meeting between job

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candidates and interviewers (Langer et al., 2016). Given these considerations, it's understandable that the selection interview frequently triggers substantial anxiety among job applicants (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004). Understanding the significance of investigating interview anxiety becomes evident through the research that found a negative correlation between interview anxiety and interview performance (Feiler & Powell, 2016a). As the job market continually evolves, understanding the socio-demographic factors that underpin job applicants' interview experiences becomes increasingly crucial. While interview anxiety is a prevalent concern, recent research suggests that its prevalence and impact may differ based on factors such as gender, age, and prior academic performance (Brumariu et al., 2022; McCarthy & Goffin, 2004).

Interview anxiety refers to the "feelings of nervousness that are relatively stable within job applicants across selection interview situations", which includes five distinct dimensions of interview anxiety, each addressing specific concerns related to the interview process (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004). These dimensions include communication anxiety (pertaining to worries about one's verbal and nonverbal communication abilities), appearance anxiety (relating to apprehensions about physical attributes like height or hairstyle), social anxiety (involving concerns about behaving appropriately in social settings and experiencing anxiety or apprehension regarding one's social conduct during job interviews), performance anxiety (involving concerns about one's performance and the ultimate interview outcome), and behavioral anxiety (involving physical manifestations of anxiety, such as sweaty palms). While the five dimensions of interview anxiety are conceptually different, the majority of research has concentrated on total interview anxiety (Feiler & Powell, 2013; Gong et al., 2016). These dimensions of interview anxiety, as conceptualized by McCarthy and Goffin (2004), emphasize the interpersonal, social, and evaluative nature that is characteristic of interviews. These dimensions highlight the interpersonal, social, and

evaluative aspects that characterize the interviews.

Previous studies have highlighted the existence of gender-based biases in hiring processes (Madera et al., 2019), indicating that females might experience heightened anxiety due to stereotype threats and societal expectations. Several studies have pointed out that females are more concerned about physical appearance and body image than males, and males exhibit this distinction that initiates during the early stages of adolescence (Grabe et al., 2008). Hallers-Haalboom et al. (2020) found that girls and women are more frequently affected by anxiety disorders, and women tend to experience more severe and enduring symptoms compared to men. Essau et al. (2018) found that gender played a role in the initial occurrence of anxiety disorders but did not have a significant impact on their recurrence. Inderbitzen-Nolan and Walters (2000) found that girls exhibited notably elevated levels of social anxiety when compared to boys.

Dordinejad et al. (2011) found that age and test anxiety were positively correlated but had no significant correlation between test anxiety and the academic semester at the university. In contrast, Dawood et al. (2016) discovered no significant relationship between test anxiety and undergraduate nursing students' age.

Research has demonstrated a negative relationship between test anxiety and academic performance (Chapell et al., 2005; Syokwaa et al., 2014; Barrows et al., 2013; Rana & Mahmood, 2010). Test anxiety is found to hamper students' test-taking ability and their capacity to demonstrate their understanding of course material, ultimately resulting in a poor academic performance (Markman et al., 2010). In research conducted by Yasin et al. (2011), it was discovered that low-achieving students have higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress than high-achieving students. Afolayan et al. (2013) discovered that anxiety adversely impacts the students' performance in the examinations manifesting in physiological, psychological, and behavioral expressions. In Nigeria, Adewuyi et al. (2012) found that students in secondary education who experienced higher levels of anxiety tended to

perform more poorly academically than those with lower anxiety levels.

The rationale for studying male and female job applicants' interview anxiety in relation to their age and academic performance is rooted in the need to address a significant gap in the existing research literature. Although sufficient research suggests that females have more anxiety disorders than males (Feeney et al., 2015) and experience more interview anxiety in selection interviews (McLean & Anderson, 2009) understanding the extent of this issue in Bangladesh is essential to address this research gap. Age plays a significant role in job interviews (Feeney & Hembree, 2019; Djidonou et al., 2016), but there is a significant lack of understanding of how interview anxiety varies across different age groups and its impact on interview performance. In several nations, research has indicated a connection between students' academic performance and mental conditions such as social anxiety (Djidonou et al., 2016), panic disorder (Norton et al., 1992), and anxiety disorders (Vitasari et al., 2010). However, there is limited research exploring how academic performance relates to interview anxiety. Investigating this relationship can help determine whether individuals with strong academic backgrounds are more or less prone to interview anxiety and if this impacts their job interview outcomes.

The motivation behind conducting this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how interview anxiety varies among male and female job applicants concerning their age and academic performance. This research aims to uncover potential disparities in interview anxiety and its impact on the job-seeking process. By examining these factors, the study seeks to identify whether there are gender, age, or academic performance-related biases in the job interview process that may affect candidates' chances of securing employment. The results could help inform HR practices, promote fairness in hiring, and contribute to a more equitable job market. Besides, the factor (e.g., age, gender, and academic performance) that affects the interview anxiety of job applicants are also unknown in the Bangladeshi context. Thus, the

current research was designed to examine the interview anxiety of male and female job applicants in relation to their age and academic performance.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study was to examine the interview anxiety of male and female job applicants in relation to their age and academic performance.

The specific objectives were as follows:

- i. To examine whether there is any significant difference in interview anxiety between male and female job applicants;
- ii. To investigate whether there is any relationship between age and interview anxiety of male and female job applicants;
- iii. To investigate whether there is any relationship between academic performance and interview anxiety of male and female job applicants;
- iv. To examine whether age and academic performance predict interview anxiety of male and female job applicants.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 260 job applicants (male, female) whose ages ranged from 25 to 30 years ($M = 26.55$, $SD = 1.27$) were selected as participants from different universities of Dhaka city in Bangladesh. Among the participants 50% were boys and 50% were girls. Here, all participants and institutions were selected purposively based on inclusion (i.e., having given a selection interview in a year, having a selection interview in a few days/weeks) and exclusion criteria (i.e., unwillingness or inability to participate).

2.2 Research Design

Our current research employed a cross-sectional survey design, which involves gathering essential information from various age groups of students at a specific moment in time.

2.3 Measuring Instruments

Personal Information Form (PIF). The Personal Information Form represents information about the respondent's personal information. The form elicited participants' age, gender, and CGPA. There were also two questions for screening the participants. These were:

- Do you have a pending interview?
- Have you completed an interview in the previous year?

Measurement of Anxiety in the Selection Interview (MASI). McCarthy and Goffin (2004) designed a multidimensional measure of interview anxiety, known as the Measurement of Anxiety in Selection Interviews (MASI). The MASI was employed to determine an individual's level of anxiety within the context of the selection interview. The MASI evaluates interview anxiety across five different dimensions: communication, appearance, social interactions, performance, and behavior. The MASI measures its constructs using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from "1 = *Strongly disagree*", "2 = *Disagree*", "3 = *Neutral*", "4 = *Agree*", and "5 = *Strongly agree*". The researchers in the current study utilized their adaptation of the Bangla version of the scale. The cut-off score is 90. It suggests that scores equal to or above 90 indicate a significant level of interview anxiety, while scores below 90 suggest a non-significant level of interview anxiety. In this research, the average inter-item correlation (AIC) for the MASI was found 0.27 (-0.38 to 0.78) and the coefficient alpha was 0.91. The MASI had a high level of convergent validity.

Academic Performance. In our ongoing research, we assessed the academic performance of participants by utilizing their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) scores. CGPA scores in this study spanned up to 4.00, with a higher score indicating stronger academic performance and a lower score signifying weaker performance.

2.4 Procedure

Initially, the first author obtained the required information from the participants by obtaining

permission from the relevant authorities and building a rapport with them. Subsequently, the first author provided a clear explanation of the study's objectives and informed the participants about potential risks, benefits, and confidentiality concerns. Following this, participants were asked to complete a personal information form. Once the personal information form was completed, participants were provided with the Bangla version of the MASI scale. Finally, participants were thanked for their cooperative involvement in the study.

2.5 Data Processing and Analysis

In the present study, descriptive and inferential statistics were employed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to measure socio-demographic characteristics. Inferential statistics encompassed independent sample *t*-test, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, and stepwise multiple regression analysis.

2.6 Ethical Consideration

In the research, necessary steps were taken to safeguard the participant from potential harm, encompassing physical, psychological, social, and legal risks. Additionally, the privacy of participants' data was guaranteed. Before collecting data, selected participants were given an informed consent document that outlined the study's goals and purpose, possible risks and advantages, as well as their right to decline participation or withdraw, and it was accompanied by appropriate post-study explanations.

3. Results and Discussion

The collected data were analyzed using various statistical methods through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26) following the objectives of the study. Before applying inferential statistics, the normality of the collected data on interview anxiety scores was checked. Regarding skewness and kurtosis, the suggested range of the data is found between (-1 to + 1), and in the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, *p* values are above .05 indicating the variable is normally distributed (Goodman, 1954; Leech et al., 2005). Results are shown in the following tables

and figures consecutively.

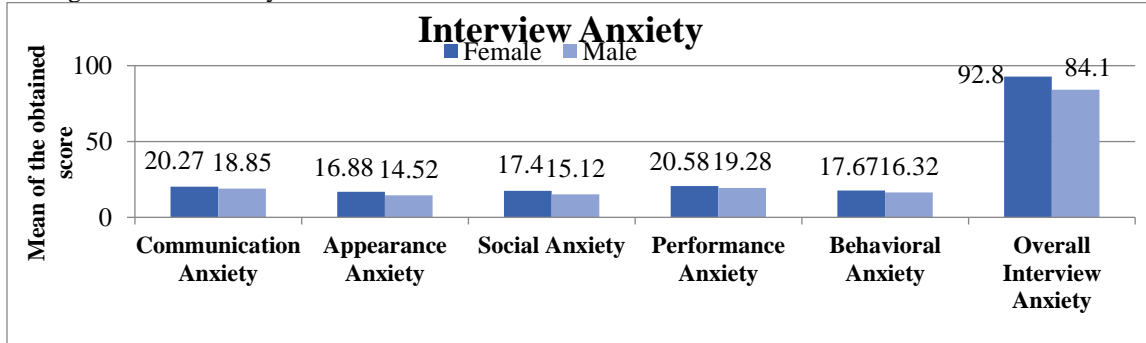


Figure 1. Independent sample *t*-test of interview anxiety between male and female job applicants

The results reported in Figure 1 show that there was a statistically significant difference in the overall interview anxiety of the job applicants in terms of gender. The figure also shows that for every interview anxiety dimension (communication, appearance, social, performance, and behavioral), females scored higher than males, with statistically significant differences, indicating that females experience more interview anxiety than males.

These findings were consistent with previous studies that have shown gender-related differences in different anxiety levels (Monro & Huon, 2005; McCarthy & Goffin, 2004; Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004). Mathews et al. (2018) also found that women experience higher levels of social and communication anxiety, which can impact their performance in evaluative situations like job interviews.

Table 1. Correlations matrix of age, academic performance, dimensions of interview anxiety, and overall interview anxiety for female job applicants.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	–							
2. Academic Performance	.401**	–						
3. Communication Anxiety	.404**	-.411**	–					
4. Appearance Anxiety	.506**	-.576**	.730**	–				
5. Social Anxiety	.505**	-.616**	.767**	.872**	–			
6. Performance Anxiety	.358**	-.493**	.695**	.711**	.788**	–		
7. Behavioral Anxiety	.297**	-.456**	.780**	.790**	.876**	.787**	–	
8. Overall Interview Anxiety	.447**	-.558**	.872**	.902**	.949**	.869**	.943**	–

Note. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01.

Results in Table 1 revealed that age was negatively correlated with academic performance ($r = -0.40$; $p < .01$) and positively correlated with overall interview anxiety ($r = .44$; $p < .01$). Results also

revealed that academic performance negatively correlated with overall interview anxiety ($r = -.55$; $p < .01$). This finding aligns with prior research that suggests interview anxiety increase with age of the

female due to accumulated experience and awareness of the significance of job interviews (Feeney & Hembree, 2019). This finding contrasts with the study (Ebrahimi & Khoshsim, 2014) which indicates that age does not play a significant

role in the relationship between learners' test anxiety. Cheng and Furnham (2003) found that applicants with strong academic backgrounds may possess greater confidence in their abilities, leading to reduced anxiety during interviews.

Table 2. Correlations matrix of age, academic performance, dimensions of interview anxiety, and overall interview anxiety for male job applicants.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	–							
2. Academic Performance	-.467**	–						
3. Communication Anxiety	.481**	-.642**	–					
4. Appearance Anxiety	.582**	-.708**	.863**	–				
5. Social Anxiety	.580**	-.672**	.893**	.939**	–			
6. Performance Anxiety	.508**	-.641**	.913**	.856**	.869**	–		
7. Behavioral Anxiety	.535**	-.651**	.914**	.918**	.949**	.893**	–	
8. Overall Interview Anxiety	.559**	-.689**	.954**	.952**	.970**	.943**	.978**	–

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Results in Table 2 revealed that age was negatively correlated with academic performance ($r = -0.46$; $p < .01$) and positively correlated with overall interview anxiety ($r = .55$; $p < .01$). Results also revealed that academic performance was negatively correlated with global interview anxiety ($r = -.68$; $p < .01$). Findings of the study were supported by the study of Dordinejad et al. (2011) where they

observed a positive correlation between age and test anxiety. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that there has been an association between elevated test anxiety and reduced academic performance (Onyeizugbo, 2010). But, Dawood et al. (2016) found no significant relationship between academic performance and test anxiety.

Table 3. Stepwise multiple regression of interview anxiety on age and academic performance of female job applicants

Model	Predictors	β	t	R	R^2	R^2 Change	F Change	ANOVA for Model Fit
1	(Constant)		13.07***					
	Academic Performance	-.558	-7.59***	.558	.311	.311	57.74***	57.74***
2	(Constant)		3.02**					
	Academic Performance	-.451	-5.86***					
	Age	.267	3.47***	.609	.371	.060	12.04***	37.38***

Note. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Results in Table 3 indicated that the strongest predictor of interview anxiety was academic performance which alone explained 31.1% of the variance in interview anxiety. Further, R^2 indicates that age and academic performance jointly explained 37.1% of the variance in interview anxiety. R^2 -change indicates that 31.1% and 6.0% variance of interview anxiety accounted for by

academic performance and age, respectively. Finally, the values of ANOVA indicated that both predictors are good and fit the models significantly. These findings align with previous research that has suggested a link between academic performance and interview anxiety (Johnson & Tait, 2020) as well as the impact of age on job interview outcomes (Higgins & Judge, 2020).

Table 4. Stepwise multiple regression of interview anxiety on age and academic performance of male job applicants.

Model	Predictors	β	t	R	R^2	R^2 Change	F Change	ANOVA for Model Fit
1	(Constant)		14.5***					
	Academic Performance	-.689	-10.7***	.689	.475	.475	115.7***	115.7***
2	(Constant)		2.13*					
	Academic Performance	-.547	-8.09***					
	Age	.303	4.48***	.739	.547	.072	20.14***	76.57***

Note. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$

Results reported in Table 4 indicated that the strongest predictor of interview anxiety was academic performance which alone explained 47.5% of variance in interview anxiety. Further, R^2 indicates that age and academic performance jointly explained 54.7% of the variance in interview anxiety. R^2 change indicates that 47.5% and 7.2% variance of interview anxiety accounted by academic performance and age, respectively. Finally, the values of ANOVA indicated that both predictors are good and fit the models significantly. The findings of the present study were also supported by a study conducted by Sideeg (2015). The results of the study indicated that text anxiety was negatively correlated with students' academic achievement and female students have significantly higher levels of test anxiety than male. This finding is also consistent with the previous study conducted by Rauvola et al. (2021) where they found that age has a positive correlation with interview anxiety.

The present study had some limitations. First, the study has been conducted with a small number of samples and data were collected only from Dhaka city. That's why it may not be generalized to all

Bangladeshi populations. Further, the research could have been more effective if the sample size would have increased. Second, the study was carried out with a limited time and there was also a lack of financial support.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined the relationship between interview anxiety, gender, age, and academic performance of job applicants. The findings revealed that gender-related differences exist in various dimensions of interview anxiety, with females generally experiencing higher anxiety levels. Both age and academic performance were associated with global interview anxiety. Academic performance emerged as a strong predictor of interview anxiety for both male and female job applicants. These results suggest that tailored interventions aimed at reducing interview anxiety could benefit applicants, particularly those with lower academic performance.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors of this research work declared no conflict of interest.

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