

Anxiety disorder in academic situations among the adolescent school students of a few prominent schools in three districts of Bangladesh

Muhammad Shamsul Alam,¹ Subrina Yeasmin Binni,² Muhammad Zillur Rahman Khan,³
Zoha Mohammad Meherwar Hossain,⁴ Nur Taj Jarin Tasmia,⁵ Farah Tuba⁶

¹Chief Medical Officer (Retired), Bangladesh Power Development Board, Dhaka, Bangladesh; ²Assistant Professor, Department of Transfusion Medicine, Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College, Bogura, Bangladesh; ³Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College, Dhaka, Bangladesh; ⁴Associate Professor (Retired), Department of Community Medicine, Jashore Medical College, Jashore, Bangladesh; ⁵Medical Officer, ANAS Medical Center, Dhaka, Bangladesh; ⁶Founder, LATIM, Organization of Child Education, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Article info

Received : 05 Mar 2019
Accepted : 15 May 2019
Number of tabs : 04
Number of figs : 00
Number of refs : 15

Correspondence

Muhammad Shamsul Alam
Mobile: +8801718822361
E-mail: shamsul.alampsy@gmail.com

Summary

Adolescence is a crucial period from academic perspective and anxiety in this period plays an important role in this respect. The objective of this study was to assess the level of anxiety among the adolescent school students in respect of gender, economic status of the families and some relevant factors. It was a cross-sectional study conducted in Dhaka, Chattogram and Rajshahi districts in some prominent schools. The respondents were 123 in number they were of class nine and ten and the range of age was from 14 to 17 years. The study period was from September 2016 to September 2017. The data were collected by using the questionnaire Achievement Anxiety Test developed by R. Alpert and R. Haber in 1960. The results showed that 71 respondents were boys and 52 were girls. It was found that 101 (82.12%) respondents were seriously anxious. There was no statistically significant difference of the occurrence of anxiety disorder among the boys and girls ($p > 0.05$). The lower middle class of the society showed the highest occurrence of serious level of anxiety (59.4%) followed by respondents of the upper middle class having 27.8% adolescents having the same problem. Comparing with the other classes (i.e. the poor and the rich), the difference was statistically highly significant at $p < 0.001$. The overall findings of this study indicated negative status of anxiety level among the respondents. Therefore, we should be aware in this respect and our families, educational institutions and concerned authorities including psychologists and psychiatrists should do the necessary actions.

Bang J Psychiatry 2019;33(2): 23-26

Introduction

Anxiety and stress are universal aspects of existence that are shared by individuals in all societies. They have always been and always will be an inescapable part of life.¹ Occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. A person might feel anxious when faced with a problem at work, before taking a test or making an important decision. But anxiety disorders involve more than temporary worry or fear. For a person with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not go away and can get worse over time. The feelings can interfere with daily activities such as job performance, school work and relationships.² Anxiety is one of the most common psychological disorders in school aged children and adolescents worldwide.³ Adolescence is a period of internal conflict, psychic

disequilibrium and erratic behavior. Lack in academic motivation and performance, the attention of adolescents are often divided among a lot of things especially at creating an identity for themselves.⁴ Anxiety in academic situation is related to the imminent danger from the environment of the educational institutions together with teacher, certain subjects, co-curricular activities etc. It is a mental sensitivity of uneasiness or distress in response to school or college circumstances that was perceived negatively. They feel anxious in academic field in the form of panic, helplessness and mental disorganization. Academic anxiety leads to academic difficulties through irrelevant thoughts, preoccupation and reduce attention and concentration.¹ But without any anxiety most of the people lack the motivation to do anything in life. Therefore, moderate level of academic anxiety is essential to motivate students to

study for examination and might incline them for better achievements.

It had been observed that a high level of anxiety interfered with concentration power and also affects memory. In this way high academic anxiety might be one of the obstacles to academic achievement. Academic anxiety can not be ignored at any cost, if we are concerned about students' performance. If it is not properly addressed it may have serious and long-lasting consequences such as causing a student to procrastinate, perform poorly in school work and withdraw from socializing with peers or from other situations.⁵ Education is vital for every country in the world, as a strong and effective education could help boost the development of the country. However, education can also become a burden to the country as low academic achievement was one of the major problems facing the families, society and government at large.⁶ So the objective of this study was to assess the level of anxiety among the adolescent school students in relation to gender and economic status of the families.

Materials and methods

It was a cross-sectional study conducted from September 2016 to September 2017 in few prominent schools of Dhaka, Chattogram and Rajshahi districts among the adolescents of age between 14 to 17 years and students of class nine and class ten. The sample size was 123 and sampling technique was convenient. The data were collected by using the questionnaire Achievement Anxiety Test developed by R. Alpert and R. Haber in 1960.⁷ The questionnaire was translated into Bangla along with questions regarding socio-demographic data and other relevant factors. The questionnaire, which was self-responding in type, was supplied to the respondents and later on collected from them with their response. Written informed consent was taken from each of the legal guardians of the respondents. The Achievement Anxiety Test (AAT) was devised to look at the presence or absence of anxiety as it affects academic achievement performance but also facilitates or debilitates test performance. It consists of two independent scales: a facilitating scale of nine items and a debilitating scale of nine items that are administered as one scale using a 5-point Likert scale. The authors provided scoring and psychometric properties. Data were collected by the researchers and reliable associates and were checked for consistencies as well as completeness. Data were analyzed and shown as tables in result-section duly. Ethical concerns were maintained throughout the study.

Results

The results showed that, among 123 adolescents 71 (57.7%) were boys and 52 (42.3%) were girls. Of the respondents, 6.5% were poor, 56.9% were in the lower middle class, 26.8% in the upper middle class and the rest 9.8% were in the rich

class of the society (Table 1). It was found that there was no significant difference between boys and girls ($p=0.394$).

Table 1: Gender and socio-economic status of the respondents (n=123)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Boys	71	57.7
Girls	52	42.3
Economic status of the families of the respondents		
Poor	16	6.5
Lower middle class	70	56.9
Upper middle class	33	26.8
Rich	12	9.8

It was found that majority of the respondents (82.1%) were seriously anxious and the difference was statistically highly significant ($p<0.001$). Among the rest, 14.6% were anxious, 1.6% had average level of anxiety and the rest had less and very less levels of anxiety (0.8% for each level) (Table 2).

Table 2: Level of anxiety among the adolescent respondents (n=123)

Level of anxiety	Frequency	Percentage
Seriously anxious	101	82.1
Anxious	18	14.6
Average	02	1.7
Less anxious	01	0.8
Very less anxious	01	0.8
Total	123	100

Gender did not show any difference in the occurrence of anxiety between boys and girls. The result showed 78.9% of the boys have serious level of anxiety, whereas 86.5% of the girls had the same problem. The difference was not statistically significant ($p>0.05$) (Table 3).

The anxiety level was distinctly higher in the lower middle class of the society as it showed 59.4% respondents of this class having serious level of anxiety, followed by respondents of the upper middle class having 27.8% adolescents having the same problem. Comparing with the other classes (i.e., the poor and the rich), the difference was statistically highly significant at $p<0.001$. (Table 4).

Table 3: Level of anxiety according to gender of the respondents (n=123)

Level of anxiety	Boys frequency (%)	Girls frequency (%)	p value
Seriously anxious	56 (78.9%)	45 (86.5%)	p>0.05
Anxious	13 (18.3%)	05 (9.6%)	
Average, less and very less anxious	02 (2.8%)	02 (3.9%)	
Total	71 (100%)	52 (100%)	

Table 4: Level of anxiety according to socio-economic status of the families of the respondents (n=123)

Socio-economic status	Seriously anxious frequency (%)	Anxious frequency (%)	Average, less and very less anxious frequency (%)	Total frequency (%)	p value
Poor	04 (3.9%)	01(5.6%)	03(75.0%)	08(6.5%)	
Lower middle class	60 (59.4%)	09(50.0%)	01(25.0%)	70(56.9%)	<0.001
Upper middle class	28(27.8%)	05(27.8%)	0(0%)	33(26.9%)	
Rich	09(8.9%)	03(16.6%)	0(0%)	12 (9.7%)	
Total	101(100%)	18(100%)	04(100%)	123(100%)	

Discussion

In this study most of the respondents were seriously anxious (82.1%). In one Indian study anxiety was found among 65.3% of the adolescent school students and in majority of cases it was moderate (33.3%).⁸ In a Malaysian study among 350 adolescent school students, it was found 67.1% to have anxiety but it was not mentioned the level of severity.⁹ In one Saudi study it was found mild anxiety in 5.0%, moderate anxiety in 19.5% and severe anxiety in 9.8% among 1245 adolescent high school students.¹⁰ In comparison to these studies the finding of the current study was an alarming one. It reflected the overall socio-economic, cultural and other relevant aspects of our society.

It was found in this study that no significant difference between boys and girls ($p=0.394$). It was similar to some Indian studies where the anxiety level was not significantly differed between boys and girls.^{1,11} But in other Indian studies it was found significant differences between boys and girls.^{8,12-4} In the majority of studies girls were found more anxious than the boys with few exceptions. The variation of anxiety level among boys and girls might be due to family background, locality, socio-cultural and other relevant factors.

In this study anxiety level differed significantly in respect of the socio-economic status of the families of the respondents ($p<0.001$). Respondents of the middle-class families were more seriously anxious than those of poor and rich families. But this was not always consistent with many other international studies,^{11,15} where the anxiety level was not found different significantly in respect of socio-economic status. Probably the

inequality in socio-economic status also influenced the state of anxiety among the respondents in this study. The members of middle-class families survived in more conflict situations than the others in Bangladesh. Though they dreamed high but not had the ability to reach such and at the same time they were afraid to be lower in their position.

Conclusion

The study showed that most of the students were over anxious. It might affect negatively in their physical and mental health and in their achievement in life. It was also a national issue, as they were the future of the nation. So, all should be aware and educational institutions, teachers, parents and due authorities should proceed to do the essential steps.

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