

## Academic Anxiety among adolescents

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### Abstract

Adolescence being the developmental phase with enormous challenges of life situations coupled with pressure for fulfillment of parental expectations, is marked by definite noticeable anxieties. The broad objectives of the study were to understand better academic anxiety among adolescents in Greater Guwahati Area. Specifically, the study compares academic anxiety across gender and medium of instruction. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the sample. A total sample of 240 adolescents, 120 boys and 120 girls, from the government affiliated colleges of Greater Guwahati was selected. Personal Data Sheet and Self Constructed Adolescent Problem Inventory was applied as a tool for data collection. The results revealed that considerable amount of academic anxiety prevailed amongst the sample.

**KEYWORDS:** Adolescence, Academic Anxiety, gender differences and medium of instruction.

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### INTRODUCTION:

The term adolescence is derived from the Latin word ‘Adolescere’ meaning ‘to grow’, to mature’. Adolescence has been defined by World Health Organization as “Critical period of transition to adulthood and progression from appearance of secondary sexual characters to sexual and reproductive maturity and development of adult mental process.”

Adolescence is the most important period of human life and an important era in the total life span. Interest and significance of adolescence had been recognized right from the ancient times but the scientific study of adolescence is very recent. At present considerable importance has been accorded to the adolescence phase of life which is described as a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, transition from a state of total dependence to full independence. In this transitional phase considerable changes take place in person’s physical built, physiology, intellectual ability and verbal and social skills, emotional and sexual development and expectations from family and society.

Anxiety is arguably an emotion that predates the evolution of man. Its ubiquity in human and its presence in a range of anxiety disorders make an important clinical focus. The word anxiety is derived from the Latin word ‘Anxietas’( to choke, throttle, trouble, upset) and encompasses behavioural, affective and cognitive responses to perception of danger. Anxiety is normal human emotion. In moderation, anxiety stimulates an anticipatory and adaptive response to challenging or stressful event. In excess, anxiety destabilizes And dysfunctional state results. Anxiety is considered excessive or pathological when it arises in absence of challenge or stress, when it is out of proportion to challenge or stress in duration or severity, when it results in significant distress and when it results in psychological, social, occupational, biological and other impairment.

Gender differences are observed amongst adolescents as far as academic anxiety is concerned. Boys are said to have more academic anxiety as compared to girls. Traditionally, it is the males who are supposed to be primary breadearners and so boys are more concerned about doing well in academics to ensure better jobs. Also masculine self-esteem is dependent on their ability to earn and provide for. Adolescent boys, who are establishing their identity and have reason to be worried about academics which is almost a ticket to their job aspiration. With reference to Indian culture Pramod (1996) concluded that boys manifest more future orientations than girls, therefore boys have more academic anxiety. Even a study conducted by Ojha(2005) revealed that 25% boys have extreme high anxiety whereas only 6.7% girls have high academic anxiety.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

Anxiety among adolescent boys and girls is very common and natural. Be it about self, career, academics or any other issue, the youths undergo feelings of anxiety at some phase of their lives. Anxiety is associated with substantial negative effect on children's social, emotional and academic success. Its specific effect includes poor social and coping skills often leading to avoidance of social interaction, loneliness, low self-esteem, perception of social rejection, difficulty in forming friendship and lower academic achievement( Hudson and Rapee ; 2006). In India main documented cause of anxiety among adolescents and school children is parent's high educational expectation and pressure for academic achievement (Deb, 2001). It is relevant to mention here that in one year alone, 2520 children or more than six children per day, committed suicide because of failure in examination (National Crime Record Survey –GOI-2000). This shocking figure underlines the seriousness of this problem and its resounding social costs to communities. Since a very limited number of studies have addressed anxiety among school-aged children and adolescents in India, because of the seriousness of its adverse consequences, it was considered important to explore this issue further. Hence, the need of the study.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Whether there is academic anxiety among the adolescent students of 16-18years studying in Class XI and XII standard in the government affiliated colleges of greater Guwahati area.
2. To study the academic anxiety of the boys and girls studying in Class XI and XII standard in the government affiliated colleges of greater Guwahati area.
3. To study the academic anxiety of the adolescent students with English and Assamese medium background irrespective of gender.

### **HYPOTHESIS:**

H1. There exist academic anxiety among the adolescent students of 16-18years studying in Class XI and XII standard in the government affiliated colleges of greater Guwahati area.

H<sub>0</sub>2 There exist no significant difference in the academic anxiety of the boys and girls studying in Class XI and XII standard in the government affiliated colleges of greater Guwahati area.

H<sub>0</sub>3 There exist no significant difference in the academic anxiety of the adolescent students with English and Assamese medium background irrespective of gender.

#### **DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY:**

1. Adolescent students studying in Class XI and Class XII standard of government colleges of Greater Guwahati area.
2. The study was limited only to the government affiliated colleges of Greater Guwahati area.
3. Academic anxiety in comparison with gender and medium of instruction was taken into consideration in this study. The study cannot be generalized to other factors.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The present study fall under the *Descriptive Survey method*.

#### **Description of the area:**

The capital of many kings in the past, the modern city of Guwahati was in Ancient days known as “Pragiyotishpura” the light of the East. Because of its commanding position on the river Brahmaputra and direct link with the rest of the country, Guwahati may be considered to be the gateway of North-East india. Guwahati is also known as the ‘Panchatirtha’ or the seat of five Pilgrimages Kamakhya, Umananda, Navagraha, Ugratara, and Ashwaktanta and also SukreshwarJanardan.

Guwahati is situated on the South bank of the river Brahmaputra at an altitude of 55metres from the sea level, the latitude and longitude being 26° 10'45(N) and 91°45(E) respectively.

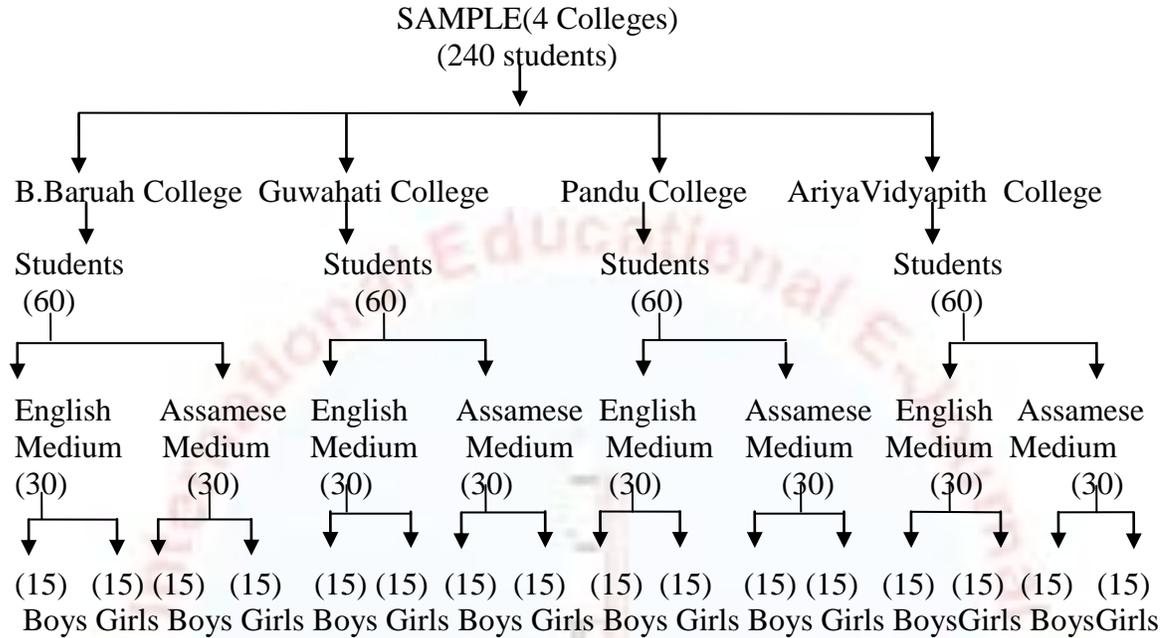
The term Guwahati is modified from its original term ‘Gauhati’. It is an anglicized form of the Assamese word Gua-hat meaning the village of arecanut.

#### **Variables:**

- The age of the students(16-18years)
- The educational status of the adolescent students (Class XI- Class XII standard)
- Sex of the adolescent students(Boys and Girls)

#### **Sample of the study:**

All the adolescent students of 16 -18years of age studying in the government affiliated colleges of Greater Guwahati area comprises the population of the study. The sample was selected from this group. A sample of 240 adolescent students was selected from four colleges of Greater Guwahati area studying in Class XI and Class XII standard. Participants were selected using purposive sampling.



**DATA COLLECTION:**

A prior appointment was made with the principal of the government affiliated colleges of Greater Guwahati area to appraise them of the objectives of the study and to obtain their permission for data collection. Data were collected with the voluntary consent of the adolescent participants. Voluntary consent was obtained after sharing the objectives of the study and reassuring the participant about their anonymity and the confidentiality of information they were providing.

**TOOLS:**

- a) Personal Data Sheet(PDS): PDS to collect the general information such as participant’s gender, age, education, family structure, parent’s education, income and occupation.
- b) Self Constructed Adolescent Problem Inventory(API): the checklist consists of the emotional problems of the adolescents. The inventory was divided into three(3) section namely Depression, Look Consciousness and Academic Anxiety. The score of Section ‘C’ i.e Academic anxiety were used for present analysis.

**STATISTICAL SUPPORT:**

The statistical techniques used in the study were:

- a. Simple frequency percentage
- b. T-test

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:**

Objective 1: Whether there is academic anxiety among the adolescent students of 16-18years studying in Class XI and XII standard in the government affiliated colleges of greater Guwahati area.

H1. There exist academic anxiety among the adolescent students of 16-18years studying in Class XI and XII standard in the government affiliated colleges of greater Guwahati area.

Table No. 1

Percentage of Academic Anxiety of total sample(N=240)

Problem Academic Anxiety	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Low	91	37.9
Border line	99	41.3
High	50	20.8
Total =	240	100

Table No.1 depicts that adolescent students of 16-18years studying in government affiliated colleges of Greater Guwahati had some amount of Academic Anxiety , 37.9% had low level of Academic Anxiety, 41.3% had border level of Academic Anxiety and 20.8% had high Academic anxiety. Therefore, hypothesis 1 that there exist academic anxiety among the adolescent students of 16-18years studying in Class XI and XII standard in the government affiliated colleges of Greater Guwahati area is accepted.

Objective No.2: To study the academic anxiety of the boys and girls studying in Class XI and XII standard in the government affiliated colleges of greater Guwahati area.

H<sub>0</sub>2 There exist no significant difference in the academic anxiety of the boys and girls studying in Class XI and XII standard in the government affiliated colleges of greater Guwahati area.

**Table No.2**

Mean, SD, t-value of Academic Anxiety faced by Adolescent Boys and Girls

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	remarks
Boys	120	34.5	13.16	238	-0.75	Not significant
Girls	120	33.2	13.59			

Table 2 provides mean, SD and 't' scores of adolescents on Academic anxiety. There is no significant difference in academic anxiety of boys and girls studying in Class XI and XII standard in the government affiliated colleges of greater Guwahati area. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. On the other hand if we observe mean anxiety score in the case of adolescent boys (34.5) was slightly higher than that of adolescent girls (33.2).

Objective No. 3: To study the academic anxiety of the adolescent students with English and Assamese medium background irrespective of gender.

H<sub>0</sub>3 There exist no significant difference in the academic anxiety of the adolescent students with English and Assamese medium background irrespective of gender.

Table No. 3

Mean, SD and 't' value of Academic anxiety faced by English and Assamese medium adolescents

Medium of instruction	N	Mean	SD	df	t	remarks
English	120	33	14	238	0.98	Not significant
Assamese	120	34.83	14.68			

Comparison of Academic anxiety between adolescents whose medium of instruction is English and Assamese revealed that the mean value for the adolescents whose medium of instruction is Assamese(34.83) was slightly higher than the mean value for the adolescent whose medium of instruction is English. The 't' value of adolescents whose medium of instruction is English and Assamese is 0.98 which is not significant at 0.01 level and also at 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there exist no significant differences between the English and Assamese medium adolescent is accepted.

### DISCUSSION:

Academics are the major source of tension amongst the youth nowadays. In today's competitive world, it is not uncommon to find academic achievement playing the most important role in a child's growing up. Being academically successful and making a place for oneself in the society is their priority. It is also true that the youth of today, often lacks academic motivation as their attention is diverted and divided among many things like peer group, heterogeneous relations, fashion and incessant entertainment. It appears that desiring and requiring academic achievement on one hand, and getting diverted from through academic efforts, creates a situation of continuous stress and anxiety for the adolescent.

During adolescence gender also comes up as an important factor in the intensity and of emotional problems faced. The present study revealed that the Academic anxiety prevails among the adolescent students studying in ClassXI and ClassXII standards in the government affiliated colleges of Greater Guwahati area.

The mean academic anxiety score for adolescent boys (34.5) was found slightly higher than that for adolescent girls(33.2). The girls are also found to be suffering from high anxiety. These finding conflicts with previous research regarding adolescents anxiety in developed countries wherein girls are more likely to develop anxiety symptoms and disorders (Cambell and Rapee; 1994, Costello, Egger and Angold, 2003; Poulton, Milne, Craske and Menzies, 2001; Weiss and Last, 2001). These differences may be attributed to cultural practices in Indian society. Despite the context of domestic change brought about by globalization, underlying patriarchal structures persist (Da Costa; 2008, Kingdon, 2007). Wherein boys continue to face more pressure regarding their proper choice of vocation and future career (Deb, 2001). However, at the same time, it is relevant to highlight that though the mean score of boys was slightly higher than the mean score of the girls, but there was no significant difference regarding academic anxiety between adolescent boys and girls. The girls also have high academic anxiety.

The mean score of adolescents whose medium of instruction is Assamese(34.83) was slightly higher than the adolescent whose medium of instruction is English. This may be due to the growing demand for English as the most widely used second language. According to Anamalai (2004) the policy of retaining English as the medium of instruction in universities coupled with its rising use the sphere of international business has influenced the demand for English instruction in Indian Primary and secondary schools. However, it is relevant to highlight that though the mean score of adolescent whose medium of instruction is Assamese was slightly higher than the adolescents whose medium of instruction is English, but there was no significant difference between the English medium and Assamese medium adolescents. The adolescents of both the medium have high academic anxiety.

### **CONCLUSION:**

In a nutshell, result of this study of 240 adolescents of age 16-18 years studying in the government affiliated colleges of Greater Guwahati, shows that academic anxiety was prevalent among the adolescents. Boys and girls have academic anxiety. Boys in general have better self-esteem and tension areas for them are restricted to academics and future, as till date, boys are expected to be the primary bread earners. The sources of tension for girls are more than boys. Girls are more prone to depression, be it their looks, marriage, the self-esteem. But today's girls are getting involved in the frenzy of competitions and carrier worries too. As a result even for girls, the emerging source of depression is the increasing dreams and aspirations regarding their independence and career along with the usual concerns regarding looks, mate selection and marriage. All these make them more vulnerable to emotional pressures and problems one of which is found to be high academic anxiety.

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