

Academic Anxiety and General Wellbeing: A Comparative Study among High School Students of Rohtak, India

John Njue* and Madhu Anand

Department of Psychology, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, India

Abstract

The aim of this study was to study the relationship between academic anxiety and general wellbeing and compare the results of boys with girls. To do this Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC) and PGI General Wellbeing Measure (PGIGWM) were administered to a sample of 204 high school students. Before that, it had been hypothesized that the correlation between academic anxiety and general wellbeing would be negative in both boys and girls and that there would be no significant difference between academic anxiety in boys as compared to girls and finally there would be no significant difference between general wellbeing of boys with that of girls. After the administration of the scales the data was analyzed by computing Pearson correlation, mean and t-values. The results showed that the correlation between academic anxiety and general wellbeing was negative in both boys and girls proving the first two hypotheses true. In addition, the results also showed that there was no significant difference between academic anxiety in boys as compared to girls and there was no significant difference between general wellbeing of boys with that of girls also proving the third and fourth hypotheses and null hypothesis true. All the findings have been shown and given meanings accordingly and some suggestions have been recommended for future research.

Keywords: Academic anxiety; General wellbeing; Adolescence

Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood.

Adolescence is usually associated with the teenage years, but its physical, psychological or cultural expressions may begin earlier and end later. It is a stage of life which is filled with a lot of complications of life including identity crisis. According to Dorn and Biro the stage may begin earlier during preadolescence ends later in early twenties.

The stage experiences a lot of problems. Because most injuries sustained by adolescents are related to risky behavior (car crashes, alcohol, unprotected sex), a great deal of research has been done on the cognitive and emotional processes underlying adolescent risk-taking. They feel that they have grown enough and that the whole world is under their control. They can experiment anything in life. Academic anxiety is a general term for nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worrying which takes place associated with school environment. According to Seligman, the father of positive psychology, it is an emotion characterized by an unpleasant state of inner turmoil, often accompanied by nervous behavior, such as pacing back and forth, somatic complaints and rumination.

Well-being, welfare or wellness is a general term for the condition of an individual or group, for example their social, economic, psychological, spiritual or medical state; a high level of well-being means in some sense the individual or group's experience is positive, while low well-being is associated with negative happenings. The study of well-being is divided into subjective well-being and objective well-being.

The book on culture and subjective wellbeing says that, subjective well-being is based on the idea that how each person thinks and feels about his or her life is important. This idea is developed specifically in a person's culture.

Wellbeing is affected by many factors. Vipassana meditation has been seen effective on psychological wellbeing of employees.

Sangwan and Anand [1] conducted a study on home environment, academic anxiety, and happiness among adolescents. In their research which involved a sample of 160 adolescents, they found that there was a significant difference in the academic anxiety of urban and rural areas, but no gender difference was observed. [2] conducted a research to investigate to what extent general wellbeing and test anxiety influence each other over time. In their study, they found that the worry component of test anxiety negatively predicted changes in the cognitive component of general wellbeing worry also negatively predicted changes in the affective component of general wellbeing.

Jerrell and Ronald [3] conducted another study relationship between academic anxiety and academic achievement. The Higher levels of cognitive academic anxiety were associated with significantly lower test scores on each of the three course examinations. High levels of cognitive academic anxiety also were associated with significantly lower Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. Kumar and Sinnadurai [4] conducted a study on the relationship between study anxiety and academic performance among engineering students. The study which was carried over the 204 students showed that there was a significant correlation of high level anxiety and low academic performance among engineering students, with significant correlation ($p=0.000$) and the correlation coefficient was small with $r=-0.264$.

In another study on academic anxiety and academic achievement

***Corresponding author:** Dr. John Njue, Department of Psychology, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, India, Tel: 8816933915; E-mail: sharegodslove.withhischildren@gmail.com

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of Secondary Level School Students which was conducted by Ujjwal and Halder [5] on a sample of 237 (128 boys and 109 girls) found that girls students have more academic anxiety than boys. It was also found that there is a negative and significant correlation ($r=-0.10$) between academic anxiety and academic achievement. In some researches girls are seen with higher level academic anxiety and boys are seen with lower level of academic anxiety as supported by this research. Rohil and Shuresh [6] conducted a similar research on academic anxiety among higher education students of India, causes and preventive measures which was an exploratory study. The results showed that personal, familial, institutional, social and political factors were identified as potential threat to provoke severe academic anxiety among students. Various preventive measures were available both non-clinically and clinically for students who suffer from severe academic anxiety. The need of the hour is to create awareness among students, so they could take help of professional at the right time. Academic anxiety is a major problem in many schools nowadays. School counselors might be more needed than any other time.

Yoshitake and Takebayashi [7] conducted another research on well-being and generalized anxiety in Japanese undergraduates which was a prospective cohort study. The results showed that enhanced purpose in life and autonomy dimension of Psychological well-being may be useful in preventing GAD, while the enhanced positive relationship with others dimension of Psychological well-being may facilitate generalized anxiety, as a function of fear of anxiety. In a primary prevention setting, it may be useful to consider the dimensions of Psychological well-being.

Afolayan and Bitrus [8] tried to find out the relationship between anxiety and academic performance of nursing students and the results showed that generally students expressed anxiety during examination which was seen as physiological, psychological and behavioral changes and abnormality. Academic anxiety is showed many times before any exams and it has connection with some physiological as well as psychological changes. Some researchers have been done to find out the association between general wellbeing with other variables. The majority of empirical studies indicate that there is an association between gratitude and a sense of overall wellbeing. However, there are several studies that indicate potential nuances in the relationship between gratitude and wellbeing as well as studies with negative findings.

Jennifer et al. [9] conducted a research to examine other factors that affect the wellbeing apart from stress, depression and anxiety. In their study, they found that, factors like family adversity especially in childhood would affect the wellbeing of the child in his/her future. This means that poor wellbeing is not only affected by academic anxiety in school, but other factors do. Kapsodorfer and Daniela [10] also found similar results in their study conducted among school children.

The wellbeing is found to be contrasted with anxiety and stress. The researchers conducted earlier and recently find that students in school can improve their wellbeing through many psychological factors like exercise. In fact, exercise was found to be very effective in wellbeing and positively correlated with wellbeing according to a study done by European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Stubbs and Schuch [11] also conducted a similar study and reported similar results.

The wellbeing among many school children has not been an explored area of study. Most of the researchers have worked on finding the relationship between many variables like academic anxiety with other variables or general wellbeing with a different variable and leaving the relationship between academic anxiety and general wellbeing behind.

Taking this into consideration, the relationship between academic anxiety and general wellbeing as a comparative study was taken to be the topic of the current study.

Aims and Objectives

To measure academic anxiety and general wellbeing in school.

To explore the correlation between academic anxiety and General Wellbeing.

To explore the difference of academic anxiety in boys and in girls.

To find out the difference between General Wellbeing of boys with that of girls.

Hypotheses

1. There would be negative relationship between academic anxiety and General Wellbeing in boys.
2. There would be negative relationship between academic anxiety and General Wellbeing in girls.
3. There would be no significant difference between academic anxiety in boys as compared to girls.
4. There would be no significant difference between General Wellbeing of boys with that of girls.

Methods

Sample

A sample of 204 (102 boys and 102 girls) adolescent students from High School of Rohtak District in Haryana, India was taken to carry out the research study on the basis of their availability and informed consent.

Tools

Academic anxiety scale for children (AASC): The Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC) was developed by Professor A.K Singh, the Head of the Department of Psychology in Patna University and Dr. A. Sen. Gupta PG. Centre of Psychology College of Commerce in MU Patna in 1939. It has 20 items. The test is meant to measure academic anxiety of children of age 13 to 16 of class 8th to 10th. There are two types of items in the test: Positive and Negative. The Negative items are; 4, 9, 16, and 18. The rest are positive items. 1 score is given to the yes answer on Positive items and 1 score on No answer on Negative items. The vice versa of the responses are scored 0. The test validity is very high and its reliability also very high in measuring academic anxiety.

PGI general wellbeing scale: PGI General Wellbeing Measure (PGIGWM) was developed by Dr. Santosh K. Verma an Ex-Professor of Clinical Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry, PGI Chandigarh and Ms. Amita Verma in Pujab University in 2005. It has 20 items in which one should tick the one applicable on him/her. The test also checks one's level of general wellbeing. The test validity is so high compared to other tests on general wellbeing. The reliability of the test is also very high which is 0.98 ($p<0.01$) while the test retest reliability is 0.91 ($p<0.01$). The inter-rater reliability is 0.86 ($p<0.01$) and inter-scoring reliability is 1.0 ($p<0.01$). Items showed satisfactory internal consistency. The scale scores have been found to be independent of socio-economic status (-0.39) and education (0.12) when correlated with these variables but it showed significant correlation with age (0.52, $p<0.01$).

Procedure

First of all, it was a good thing to look for the sample for conducting the research. Requesting a school to grant permission was the first thing to do. Then a good rapport with students was established. 204 secondary school students (102 boys and 102 girls) were then administered Academic anxiety and general wellbeing scales. The scales were attached together. After the administration of the scales, the correlation test was done to analyze the data and find out the correlation between academic anxiety and General Wellbeing in both boys and girls and finally t-test was calculated to compare and find out the difference in the academic anxiety of boys with that of girls and General Wellbeing of boys with that of girls.

Results and Discussion

The results obtained have been discussed here in order to view how many hypotheses formulated earlier have been confirmed or not confirmed by the obtained results. The research was conducted to study the relationship between academic anxiety and General wellbeing as a comparative study between boys and girls in High School. Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC) and PGI General Wellbeing Measure (PGIGWM) were applied on a sample of 204 students (102 boys and 102 girls) and hypotheses were formulated which predicted that:

There would be negative relationship between academic anxiety and general wellbeing in boys.

There would be negative relationship between academic anxiety and general wellbeing in girls.

There would be no significant difference between academic anxiety in boys as compared to girls.

There would be no significant difference between general wellbeing of boys with that of girls.

After the hypotheses formulation, the research was conducted, and the results were gathered and analyzed. For this purpose, correlation of all variables, means and t-test, and were calculated using statistical software. The values have been shown in tables.

From Table 1 we can find that the correlation of academic anxiety and general wellbeing in boys was $r=-0.041$ which was a negative correlation which was weak and significant meaning that the decrease in academic anxiety leads to increase in general wellbeing and increase in academic anxiety leads to decrease in general wellbeing level in boys. But though it's a negative correlation, it's weak which means that it's almost zero or almost no relationship. This proves the first hypothesis true that there would be negative relationship between academic anxiety and General Wellbeing in boys.

On the other hand, the correlation of academic anxiety and general wellbeing in girls was $r=-0.1681$ which was a negative correlation and significant meaning that the decrease in academic anxiety leads to increase in general wellbeing level and increase in academic anxiety leads to decrease in general wellbeing level in girls. But though it's a negative correlation, it's weak which means that it's almost zero or almost no relationship. This proves the second hypothesis true that there would be negative relationship between academic anxiety and general wellbeing in girls.

A clear result showing the mean values of boys and girls on academic anxiety and general wellbeing variables is shown on Table 2 above. From the table we can see that the mean of the academic anxiety in boys was 11.07 and in girls was 10.76 with the mean difference of 0.31

which shows that boys are a little bit more anxious as compared to girls. This could be as a result that boys might be more worried in school due to more punishments administered to them. Boys are easily punished in school than girls triggering academic anxiety in boys than girls.

However, even if the mean of academic anxiety in boys is higher, the mean difference is just 0.31 which when t-value was computed was 0.606 with p-value 0.4483 which was non-significant at 0.01. This implies that though there is a slight difference in academic anxiety in boys as compared to girls, the difference is not significant, and we can conclude that no significant difference in academic anxiety that exists between boys and girls in schools. This proves the third hypothesis true that there would be no significant difference between academic anxiety in boys as compared to girls making the null hypothesis correct.

From the same Table 2 we can see that the mean of the General wellbeing in boys was 15.1 and in girls was 15.5 with the mean difference of 0.4 which shows that girls are a little bit more wellbeing as compared to boys. This could be as a result that boys might be more worried in school due to more punishments administered to them leading to low wellbeing in school. Boys are easily punished in school than girls triggering academic anxiety in boys and this could lead to lower level of general wellbeing in boys.

However, even if the mean of General wellbeing in girls is higher, the mean difference is just 0.4 which when t-value was computed was -0.79276 with p-value 0.428847 which was non-significant at 0.01. This implies that though there is a slight difference in General wellbeing in girls as compared to boys, the difference is non-significant, and we can conclude that no significant difference in General wellbeing that exists between boys and girls in schools. Their general wellbeing is almost the same. This proves the fourth hypothesis true that there would be no significant difference between general wellbeing of boys with that of girls making the null hypothesis in general wellbeing correct.

My current research is in accordance with the retrospective cross-sectional study which was conducted by Sangwan and Anand [1] in Rohtak on home environment, academic anxiety, and happiness among adolescents. In their research which involved a sample of 160 adolescents, they found that there was a significant difference in the academic anxiety of urban and rural areas but no gender difference was observed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that wherever academic anxiety increases, general wellbeing decreases. And wherever general wellbeing increases,

Gender	Correlation Between academic anxiety and general wellbeing	Interpretation
Boys	-0.041	Negative, weak correlation
Girls	-0.1681	Negative, weak correlation

Table 1: Showing correlation of academic anxiety and general wellbeing in boys and girls.

Variables	Mean	Mean Difference	t-value	P-value	Interpretation
Academic anxiety	Boys	11.07	0.31	0.7606	0.447783
	Girls	10.76			
General wellbeing	Boys	15.1	0.4	-0.79276	0.428847
	Girls	15.5			

Table 2: Showing mean, mean differences and t-values of academic anxiety in boys and girls.

academic anxiety decreases. The two are in opposite direction from each other. When one increases the other one decreases and vice versa. Academic anxiety is very high in many schools now a day and this is leading to lower General wellbeing of students in schools. To improve the general wellbeing of students, students must be taught how to control the academic anxiety first.

Further Research Recommendation

There is much more to be done in future. The current research was conducted on a sample of 204 students from one school. To get a better result, it would be a good thing to gather a bigger sample and which might comprise of students from different schools. A sample from a different environment would be a more recommendable. This is because if academic anxiety is too high in this school, it is possible it is low in another school and if the results are mixed up it would give a better result. A comparison with many other schools can give a better result. Secondly, the current study was conducted from one state in India. The same study should be conducted from another country to find out the cultural differences. Finally, the current study was conducted from one age group. The future research should be conducted among many age groups to find out if there might be any difference in academic anxiety and wellbeing in different age groups.

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