Academic Anxiety of the Students During COVID-19, Assam, India- A Situational Analysis.

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the conventional way of teaching and learning methods of educational institutions. The COVID-19 situation and online method have increased the pressure of academic activity that contributed towards the development of academic anxiety of the students.**Objective**:The goal of this study is to determine the level of Academic Anxiety among secondary school students in both private and government schoolsand also to compare the academic anxiety of the boys' and girls' students.**Method:**A total of 200 secondary school students participated in this investigation. The data was gathered using an online survey.**Results:**According to the results of the study, 2.5 percent of students had extremely high anxiety, 20% had high anxiety, 46.5 percent had above-average anxiety, 21.5 percent had average/moderate anxiety, 7% had below average anxiety, and 2.5 percent had low anxiety. The study also discovered that there is existsno significant difference in the mean academic anxiety score between males and girls in secondary school.**Conclusion:**The outbreak of Covid-19, unfortunately, brought undesirable consequences to people around the world, especially young students. It has negatively affected the students. The parents and teachers need to develop the potential intervention and appropriate strategy to help the students.

Keyword: Covid-19, Secondary school students, Academic Anxiety, Online Teaching

Introduction:

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic paralyzed the world as it brought nationwide closure and lockdown to stop the spread of Coronavirus. The COVID-19 protocol influenced people emotionally, mentally, and physically. The closure of educational institutions and switching traditional classrooms to online classroomsaffected the students adversely. It has drastically affected the students learning and increased anxiety, stress, and depression. According to UNESCO, school and university closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted more than 1.5 billion students and youth around the world. (UNESCO, UNESCO, 2021).Nearly half of the world's pupils are still affected by partial or complete school closures a year after the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, and over 100 million more children will fall below the reading proficiency level as a result of the health catastrophe(UNESCO, 2021). The uncertain lockdown, fear of Coronavirus, and online classes without face-to-face interaction with teacher and peer group increases students' stress, anxiety, and depression. The study was done by Chew et. al 2020 evident that the most common psychological impact found in the students were fears, anxieties, and depression.

The Government of India declared the lockdownand closure of all educational institutions after the second wave of Coronavirus, thus, all the educational institutionswere forced to adopt the online method to continue the teaching-learning process and to completion of courses. That hasaffected the academic activities of the students. The sudden changes in academic activities have an impact on the students psychologically. Z.Ma et.al Identified acute stress (34.9%), anxiety (21.1%), and depressive symptoms (11.0%) among students during the pandemic in a recent study(Z. Ma,

2020)According to the findings of Chao et alstudy, 0.9 percent of participants had severe anxiety, 2.7 percent had moderate anxiety, and 21.3 percent had mild anxiety and Covid-19 was also found to be a risk factor for anxiety(Wenjun Cao, 2020). Mirna Fawaz and Ali Samaha discovered that 48.65% of students were unsatisfied with their online learning and experience in their education. Depression and anxiety problems have become more common among undergraduate university students as a result of online learning(Samaha, 2020). Similarly, Rakhmanov & Dane (2020) discovered that during the lockdown, 24 percent of African pupils in Nigeria had severe anxiety, 22 percent had high anxiety, and 30 percent had mild anxiety(Dane, 2020).In Saudi Arabia, Saudi college students experience a 20% level of anxiety.

The unplanned and unexpected new learning environment affected the students mentally, physically, and emotionally. Apart from teaching and learning, the teacher, parents, and administrator need to give importance to the student's psychological and physical well-being. Based on the evidence of the previous research that students facing different psychological impactsi.e., stress, anxiety, anger, and depression, the present research purpose is to study the academic anxiety of the students during the Covid-19 pandemic
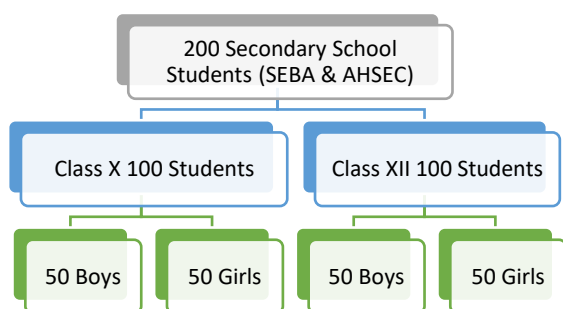
Objectives:

1. To find out the Levels of Academic Anxiety of Secondary School Students.
2. To compare the Levels Academic Anxiety of Boys and Girls secondary school students.

Null Hypothesis:

H_{01}: There exists no significant difference between Boys' and Girls Academic Anxiety.

Figure-1: Shows the sample of the present study

Methods:

The researcher used the Descriptive Survey Method in this study because of the nature and objective of the study. The online survey approach was used in light of the current scenario.

Tools Used:

The Educational Anxiety Inventory, created and standardized by Dr. Vishal Sood and Dr. Arti Anand, was used in this investigation. Test-Retest Reliability for the questionnaire is 0.738. There are two components to the questionnaire: 1) Test Anxiety and 2) Academic Anxiety. In two dimensions, the internal consistency is 0.784 and 0.693, respectively.Based on the present situation the investigator also constructed the closed-ended questionnaire.

Data Collection and Statistical Method Used:

The data for this study was obtained from secondary and higher secondary school students in January, February, and March using a Google form Questionnaire from students in classes X and XII.

To find out the result and correlation the SPSS software was used to run Percentage, Z value, and t-test.

Sample:

The Total sample of the present study was 200 SEBA and AHSEC board secondary school studentsof Assam, India. Total 100 were selected from the class X students in which 50 were boys and 50 were girls' students and a totalof 100 were selected from the class XII students in which 50 were boys and 50 were girls' students. To collect the sample the snow-ball techniqueand convenience technique was used.

Procedure:

A questionnaire was distributed to each of the 200 participants to collect data. The entire sample was gathered using a Google Form Questionnaire. Students' responses were transformed into Z-values and percentages and compared to a pre-determined Z-value and Percentage of Educational Anxiety Inventory Scale to determine their level of academic anxiety. In which a range of Z-scores was established to indicate the pupils' various levels of academic anxiety.The independent sample t-test was used in SPSS to determine the difference in mean Academic anxiety

scores between boys and girls. The students' replies to the closed-ended questionnaire were again recorded and transformed into a percentage to determine the percentage of students who experienced anxiety.
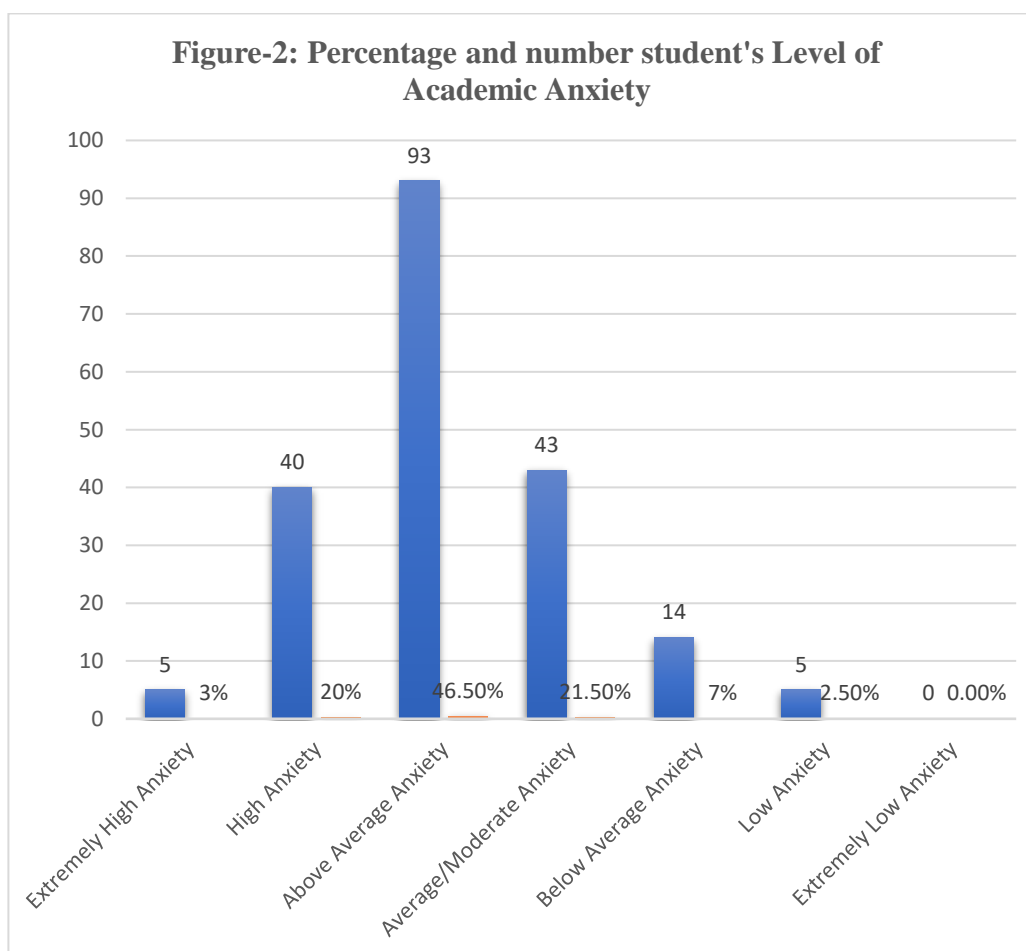
Results:

The analysis of the students'responses shows that 2.5% of the students were extremely high anxiety, 20% of the students were high anxiety, 46.5% above average anxiety, 21.5 % students were average/ moderate anxiety, 7% below average anxiety, and 2.5% students were low anxiety. (See table no-1 and Chat no-1)

Table no-1: Shows the level of Academic Anxiety of the students

Score Range	Levels of Educational Anxiety	No. of Students	Percentage
Above 180	Extremely High Anxiety	5	2.5%
159-179	High Anxiety	40	20%
139-158	Above Average Anxiety	93	46.5%
111-138	Average/Moderate Anxiety	43	21.5%
90-110	Below Average Anxiety	14	7%
69-89	Low Anxiety	5	2.5%
Below 68	Extremely Low Anxiety	0	0.0%
	Total	200	100%

Figure-2: Percentage and number student's Level of Academic Anxiety

Table-2: Independent sample t-test results.

		Mean	SD	Levene's Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means							
				F	Sig	T	Df	Sig (2-tail)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
											Lower	Upper
A	boys	141.95	22.882	1.578	.211	-1.297	198	.196	-4.000	3.085	-10.083	2.083
A	girls	145.95	20.689									

An independent sample t-test was used to compare Boys and Girls' Academic Anxiety (AA) to test the null hypothesis. There were no significant differences (t (198) =-1.297, p=>.05) in the scores with the mean score for Boys (M=141.9, SD=22.882) was lower than for the Girls (M=145.59, SD=20.689). The magnitude of the differences in the means (Mean Differences= -4.000, 95% of CI: -10.083 to 2.083. Hence, the H_0: It was accepted that there exists no significant difference in academic anxiety between boys and girls. (See table no-2)

The responses of the students in closed-ended questions were converted into percentagesto find outthe percentage of students facing the problems that contributed to the academic anxiety of the students. Analysis of the students' responses shows that 69% of the students were worried due to the online classes, 78.5 % of students were not mentally prepared for the online classes, 10 % of the students did not have smartphones,54% students worried because of poor internet connectivity, 37.5% of students were facing negative experience of online teaching method, 51.5 % students were getting worried due to the lack of interaction with the peer group, 68.5 students were worried about the online examination and 56.5% students were worried due to the uncertainty of academic goals because of coronavirus. (See the Table No-3)

Table-3: Shows the number of students' responses toclosed-ended questions.

Closed-Ended Questions	Responses	
	Yes	No
I get worried due to Shifting Offline to Online Classroom	69%	31%
I am unable to be completely mentally ready for online classes	78.5%	21.5%
I am unable to continue classes due tothe unavailability of SmartPhone	10%	90%
I get distressed due to the unavailability of Good Internet connectivity	54%	46%
I feel helpless due to the online Teaching Method	37.5%	52.5%

I get worried due to lack of Interaction with Peers Group	51.5%	48.5%
I get tensed by thinking about online Examination	68.5%	31.5%
I worried about uncertain academic goal bought by Covid-19	56.5%	43.5%

Discussion:

The changes in the education system brought by the COVID-19 pandemic created difficulties for the administrators, teachers as well as students. Especially the students have faced multiple challenges such as, online learning, online examination, social isolation, lack of interaction with a peer group, fear of getting infected by a coronavirus, etc. which has multiple psychological impacts. Students around the world suffer psychological problems such as anxiety, stress, and depression because of sudden changes in the educational institution working system, which increases the academic pressure and made academic goals uncertain.The study by Chao et al. discovered that economic effects, as well as effects on daily life and delays in academic activities, were all positively associated with anxiety symptoms, with 0.9 percent of respondents experiencing severe anxiety, 2.7 percent experiencing moderate anxiety, and 21.3 percent experiencing mild anxiety(Wenjun Cao, 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, students' mental health and psychological issues became quite widespread.According to the findings of Ma et al., 45 percent of the individuals had likely clinical acute stress, depression, or anxiety symptoms(Z. Ma, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic undoubtedly increases the academic anxiety of the students, the present study evidence that the highest numbers of students which 46.5% were above average academic anxiety level, and 20% of students were high academic anxiety and a very low percentage of the students 2.5% students were low academic anxiety level.Before the Covid-19, the prevalence rates of anxiety and depression were 7.04 and 9%, respectively. (Amit Nirmal Cuttilan, 2016). The wide literature review can be found to support the evidencethat the increasing cases of Covid-19 and uncertainty of lockdown increases the negative psychological impact on the students. The goal of this research was to see if there was a difference in academic anxiety between boys and girls. There is no substantial relationship between gender and academic anxiety, according to the results of this study. According to the findings, there is no statistically significant difference in academic anxiety between boys and girls.The study byNjue, J., & Anand, M. (2018) also, evident that there is no significant difference between boys' and girls' academic anxiety. However, some psychological theories claim that females are more likely than males to experience anxiety. Females scored higher than males on a common set of anxiety items, while females scored higher than males on self-report measures of anxiety in a previous study(Leili Hosseini, 2013).Again, in a Comparative study, it was discovered that girls experienced greater instances and degrees of academic anxiety than boys(Trivedi, 2008).Huang et al. (2020) contend in a recent study that Chinese women are more anxious than Chinese men. Similarly, a Previous study by Al Bahhawi et.al (2018) found thatfemale students have higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms than male students.

The closure of the face-to-faceteaching-learning method due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced to adopt the online teaching-learning method. The online teaching-learning method completely new method for the secondary school of Assam, India. Unfortunately, the online teaching-learning method became the reason forthe exclusion of students from different marginalized communities. In the present study, it was found that 10% of the students were unable to

continue the online classes because of the unavailability of smartphones and 54%of the students were worried about online classes because of the poor internet connectivity. Though the online teaching-learning method is not new it was not adopted until the closure of face-to-face teaching-learning, most of the teachers and students were not mentally ready for the online method of teaching and learning. In the present study, it was found that 78.5% of students were not completely ready for online classes. The lack of face-to-face interaction among the students in the online method worried the students by 51.5% in the present study. The uncertain lockdown and closure of educational institutions create chaos in the student's minds. The students get tense about the uncertain academic goals and more stressed about academic achievement and completion of the course. The result of the study found that 56.5% of students were worried about uncertain academic goals.

Conclusion:

The outbreak of COVID-19, unfortunately, brought undesirable consequences to people around the world, especially young students. The online teaching method increases the academic anxiety of the students. Presently, in the time of COVID-19 and the online teaching-learning method, the teachers and parents need to give more important students' academic anxiety than before.The study gives significant evidence and insight into secondary school students' academic anxiety in online teaching and learning. Thus,the study could help in the development and taking potential action and intervention to help the students. In this critical time, parents and teachers have to find ways and means to help the students. It is very important to find out the potential intervention and steps that could help the student to overcome the academic anxiety and cope up with the critical situation and also develop the academic resilience of the students.

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