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EXAMINATION ANXIETY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG TEENAGE STUDENTS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Examination anxiety is a situational form of anxiety that arises in response to evaluative situations and may influence students' concentration, memory, emotional regulation, confidence, and academic performance. In India, academic examinations are often associated with educational progression, social expectations, competitive entrance examinations, and future career opportunities. Teenage students may therefore experience considerable psychological pressure during board examinations, school examinations, and preparation for competitive tests such as NEET, JEE, CUET, and state-level entrance examinations. The present study focuses on examination anxiety and its relationship with academic performance among teenage students in India. The proposed population consists of students aged 14–18 years studying under CBSE, ICSE, and State Boards in urban and rural settings. The study adopts a correlational and comparative framework, using an established measure of test anxiety and students' term or board examination scores as indicators of academic performance. Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and ANOVA are proposed to examine the relationship and contextual differences. The theoretical foundation draws on Spielberger's Test Anxiety Theory and the Yerkes-Dodson Law, which together help explain how excessive anxiety can interfere with working memory and retrieval, while moderate levels of arousal may sometimes support alertness and task engagement. The paper highlights gaps in Indian research, particularly concerning rural students, government-school students, first-generation learners, and the influence of coaching culture. It also discusses implications for teachers, parents, school leaders, counsellors, and educational policy. Importantly, the present manuscript distinguishes expected findings from verified empirical results; actual statistical results should be inserted only after the study data are analysed.

KEYWORDS: *Examination Anxiety, Test Anxiety, Academic Performance, Teenage Students, Adolescents, India, Educational Stress, Counselling*

INTRODUCTION

Examinations are an important component of formal education because they provide a structured means of assessing students' knowledge, understanding, skills, and readiness for subsequent academic levels. At the same time, examinations can become psychologically demanding experiences. Examination anxiety refers to the emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and physiological responses that occur when students perceive an examination or other evaluative situation as threatening. While a certain amount of concern before an examination can encourage preparation and alertness, excessive anxiety may reduce effective concentration and interfere with the ability to retrieve information that has already been learned.

The teenage years are particularly important because students between approximately 14 and 18 years are undergoing major academic, emotional, social, and developmental changes. During this period, they may face board examinations, subject-selection decisions, entrance-test preparation, parental expectations, peer comparison, and uncertainty about future careers. The pressure may be intensified when academic achievement is viewed as a major pathway to higher education, employment, and social mobility. In the Indian context, students preparing for examinations may also participate in coaching programmes, additional tuition, mock tests, and competitive preparation schedules.

The original study outline identifies board examinations and competitive examinations such as NEET, JEE, CUET, and state-level entrance tests as important sources of academic pressure. It also points to the growing importance of student well-being and mental health in educational policy. This makes examination anxiety more than an individual psychological concern: it is also an educational issue involving school climate, assessment practices, family expectations, teaching methods, counselling support, and the broader culture surrounding academic achievement.

An important issue is that examination anxiety does not affect every student in the same way. Students who are well prepared may experience manageable levels of anxiety that motivate them to study and remain attentive. In contrast, students who interpret examinations as overwhelming threats may experience worry, negative self-talk, sleep disturbance, physical symptoms, avoidance, reduced confidence, or difficulty recalling

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information. Therefore, the relationship between anxiety and performance may not always be a simple linear relationship. The theoretical discussion in this paper considers the possibility that moderate anxiety can be associated with effective performance while very high anxiety can become detrimental.

The present paper therefore proposes a systematic examination of examination anxiety among Indian teenage students and its relationship with academic performance. Particular attention is given to differences across educational settings and contextual factors, including urban and rural backgrounds, school type, coaching exposure, and other demographic or educational characteristics that may moderate the relationship.

Statement of Problem

Despite substantial investment by families and institutions in schooling, tuition, coaching, study materials, and examination preparation, some teenage students continue to experience difficulty translating their preparation into examination performance. Psychological barriers may contribute to this gap. A student may possess adequate subject knowledge but perform below expectations because worry, physiological arousal, intrusive thoughts, fear of failure, or low confidence disrupts attention and retrieval during an examination.

The problem is particularly relevant in an educational environment where examination scores may influence subject choices, college admission, scholarships, competitive opportunities, and perceptions of academic success. Repeated experiences of examination-related stress may also affect students' motivation and their relationship with learning. If anxiety is not recognised early, students may be incorrectly labelled as careless, weak, inattentive, or poorly prepared when the underlying issue may be psychological distress associated with evaluation.

The supplied research outline further identifies a gap in understanding examination anxiety across diverse socio-economic and regional contexts in India. Existing work has often concentrated on specific student groups or urban and competitive-examination settings. There is a need for broader attention to rural students, government-school students, first-generation learners, and the effects of coaching culture. Understanding these contextual differences can help schools design more appropriate interventions rather than applying a single strategy to all students.

Accordingly, the central research problem is to determine the level of examination anxiety among Indian teenage students and examine whether, and to what extent, anxiety is associated with academic performance. The study also seeks to identify contextual factors that may strengthen, weaken, or alter this relationship.

1. What is the level of examination anxiety among teenage students in the selected Indian sample?
2. Is examination anxiety significantly related to academic performance?
3. Students from different demographic or educational contexts show differences in examination anxiety?
4. Does coaching exposure or competitive examination preparation appear to influence examination anxiety?
5. What school- and family-level practices may help students manage examination anxiety more effectively?

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of examination anxiety among Indian teenage students.
2. To examine the relationship between examination anxiety and academic performance.
3. To identify demographic and contextual factors that moderate the relationship between examination anxiety and academic performance.
4. To compare examination anxiety across relevant educational and contextual groups, such as urban and rural settings and different school backgrounds, where adequate data are available.
5. To generate practical recommendations for teachers, parents, counsellors, school administrators, and educational policy makers for reducing harmful examination-related stress.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept of Examination Anxiety

Examination anxiety can be understood as a multidimensional response to academic evaluation. It may include cognitive worry, emotional tension, physiological arousal, and behavioural responses. Cognitive symptoms can include repeated thoughts about failure, concern about marks, difficulty focusing, and negative predictions about the examination. Emotional symptoms may include fear, irritability, helplessness, or a sense of being overwhelmed. Physiological symptoms can include increased heart rate, sweating, trembling, stomach discomfort, headache, or sleep difficulties. Behaviourally, some students may procrastinate, avoid preparation, seek excessive reassurance, or become unusually distressed before an examination.

The presence of anxiety does not automatically imply poor performance. A moderate degree of concern can encourage students to organise study time, revise material, and take examinations seriously. The educational concern arises when anxiety becomes excessive, persistent, or poorly regulated. At that point, the same arousal that initially supports attention may interfere with working memory and retrieval.

Examination Anxiety and Academic Performance

The relationship between anxiety and academic performance is one of the central questions of this study. The supplied outline notes an inverted-U relationship, in which moderate anxiety may support performance whereas high anxiety may impair it. This perspective is consistent with the broader Yerkes-Dodson framework, which proposes that performance can improve with arousal up to an optimal point, after which further increases in arousal may reduce performance.

High examination anxiety may affect performance through several pathways. First, worry consumes cognitive resources. When students repeatedly think about failure, parental

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disappointment, comparison with peers, or the consequences of low marks, part of their attention is diverted away from the examination task. Second, anxiety may interfere with working memory, making it harder to hold and manipulate information while answering complex questions. Third, high arousal can affect reading speed, decision-making, and time management. Finally, repeated negative experiences may reduce self-efficacy and create a cycle in which fear of poor performance contributes to poorer performance, which in turn increases future anxiety.

Indian Educational Context

The Indian educational context provides several reasons for examining examination anxiety carefully. Academic achievement may be strongly connected with expectations regarding higher education and career development. Students may prepare simultaneously for school examinations and competitive entrance examinations. Coaching institutions, private tuition, mock examinations, and extensive study schedules may provide academic support, but they may also increase the number of evaluative situations experienced by students.

The original outline identifies a need to examine students beyond highly visible competitive-examination groups. Rural students and government-school students may face different academic resources and support systems from students in urban private institutions. First-generation learners may experience additional uncertainty about educational pathways. These differences do not mean that one group is necessarily more anxious than another; rather, they demonstrate why examination anxiety should be studied across diverse contexts rather than assumed to have the same causes everywhere.

Coaching Culture and Competitive Preparation

Competitive coaching can have both positive and negative effects. Structured coaching may improve content knowledge, examination familiarity, time management, and confidence. At the same time, repeated testing, long study hours, competitive comparison, and constant emphasis on ranks may contribute to perceived pressure. The effect is therefore likely to depend on the quality of support, student preparedness, family expectations, and the individual's coping resources.

For this reason, coaching exposure should be treated as a contextual variable rather than automatically labelled as a cause of anxiety. A well-designed study should collect information about the intensity and nature of coaching, rather than only asking whether a student attends coaching.

Research Gaps

The supplied research outline identifies several important gaps. First, Indian research on examination anxiety is described as relatively limited in comparison with the size and diversity of the student population. Second, available studies may disproportionately represent urban students or students preparing for medical and engineering examinations. Third, comparatively less attention has been given to rural students, government-school students, and first-generation learners. Fourth, there is a need to understand how changes in educational policy and school-based well-being initiatives relate to students' examination experiences.

These gaps justify a study that includes students from different boards and both urban and rural settings. A broader sample can provide a more representative picture of the factors associated with examination anxiety and can help schools identify interventions that are sensitive to context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Spielberger's Test Anxiety Theory

The study is grounded partly in Spielberger's Test Anxiety Theory, which conceptualises test anxiety as a response to evaluative situations involving concern about performance. The theory is useful because it distinguishes the experience of anxiety in relation to evaluation from general emotional states. Students who perceive an examination as threatening may experience heightened worry and emotionality, particularly when they attach strong consequences to success or failure.

From an educational perspective, the theory suggests that teachers should not interpret all examination anxiety as a lack of preparation. Perceptions of threat, previous experiences, confidence, and the meaning attached to examinations can influence how students respond. Consequently, supportive feedback, realistic goal setting, preparation skills, and counselling may reduce the harmful component of examination anxiety.

Yerkes-Dodson Law

The Yerkes-Dodson Law provides the second major theoretical foundation. Its general principle is that arousal and performance may have a nonlinear relationship. Some degree of arousal can improve alertness and engagement, but excessive arousal may impair performance. Applied to examinations, this framework helps explain why a completely relaxed student may not always be the most motivated, while an extremely anxious student may struggle despite substantial preparation.

The framework should be treated as a theoretical guide rather than as a claim that every student follows an identical curve. Task difficulty, individual differences, preparation, coping strategies, and environmental conditions can alter the relationship. The present study therefore examines the relationship empirically rather than assuming that anxiety necessarily causes low performance.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model proposes that examination anxiety is the principal psychological variable and academic performance is the primary outcome variable. Demographic and contextual factors may influence the strength or direction of this relationship. Possible contextual variables include age, gender, school type, board, urban/rural setting, coaching exposure, family educational background, and perceived parental expectations, subject to availability and ethical appropriateness of the data.

Conceptual relationship:

Examination Anxiety → Cognitive/Emotional Interference → Academic Performance

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Moderating/contextual influences: school setting, board, coaching exposure, family expectations, preparedness, and demographic characteristics.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The proposed study uses a correlational and comparative research design. The correlational component will examine the association between examination anxiety scores and academic performance scores. The comparative component will examine whether anxiety levels differ across selected demographic or educational groups. This design is appropriate because the study seeks to identify relationships and group differences without manipulating students' anxiety or educational environment.

Population and Sample

The proposed population consists of teenage students aged 14–18 years studying under CBSE, ICSE, and State Boards across urban and rural India. The final sample size, sampling procedure, geographical distribution, and number of institutions should be reported exactly as implemented in the field study. If multiple schools are included, efforts should be made to include variation in school type and location so that the findings are not restricted to one educational context.

Where feasible, a stratified or purposive sampling strategy may be used to ensure representation of important groups. However, the final manuscript should describe the actual sampling procedure rather than reporting a method that was not used. Participant characteristics should be presented using frequencies and percentages for categorical variables and appropriate descriptive statistics for continuous variables.

Research Tools

The supplied outline proposes the use of the Test Anxiety Inventory or another validated measure of test anxiety. The final publication should specify the exact instrument name, author, version, number of items, response scale, scoring method, language used, and evidence of reliability and validity. If a bilingual questionnaire was used, the translation and back-translation or language-validation procedure should also be documented.

Academic performance is proposed to be measured using students' board or term examination scores. To improve comparability, the researcher should specify whether raw marks, percentages, grade-point measures, or standardised scores are used. If different boards or examination systems are included, the method for making performance measures comparable should be stated clearly.

Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining institutional permission and the required consent/assent procedures, participants may be briefed about the purpose of the study in age-appropriate language. Participation should be voluntary, and students should be informed that their responses will be treated confidentially. The anxiety instrument should be administered in a quiet setting without teachers or peers influencing individual responses. Academic performance data should be linked to anxiety scores using coded identifiers rather than student names wherever possible.

The researcher should maintain a consistent procedure across participating schools. Instructions, time allowed, order of instruments, and scoring procedures should be standardised. Any students who show significant distress during data collection should be handled according to the institution's safeguarding and counselling procedures.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics should first be used to summarise examination anxiety and academic performance. Pearson's correlation coefficient may be used to examine the linear association between anxiety scores and academic performance when assumptions are adequately met. Regression analysis may be used to determine whether examination anxiety predicts academic performance after accounting for selected contextual variables. ANOVA may be used to compare anxiety or performance across more than two groups when assumptions are satisfied. Appropriate non-parametric alternatives should be considered when assumptions are substantially violated.

The final paper should report effect sizes, confidence intervals, and exact p-values where possible, rather than relying only on statements such as 'significant' or 'not significant'. Missing data, outliers, reliability estimates, and assumption checks should also be reported when relevant. Most importantly, statistical results should be calculated from the actual dataset; expected findings must not be presented as observed findings.

Ethical Considerations

Research involving teenage students requires careful attention to consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and psychological safety. The study should obtain the permissions required by the participating institution and follow applicable research-ethics procedures. Where required, parent or guardian consent and student assent should be obtained. Students should not be penalised academically or otherwise for declining to participate or withdrawing from the study.

Because questions about anxiety may cause discomfort for some students, the research process should provide information about available support. Personal information should be minimised, securely stored, and reported only in aggregated form. Students identified as experiencing substantial distress should be guided toward appropriate school counselling or professional support according to institutional procedures.

Expected Findings

Based on the theoretical framework and the research gaps identified in the supplied outline, the study is expected to find that very high examination anxiety is associated with lower academic performance. A negative association may be particularly visible among students who report substantial worry, difficulty concentrating, or fear of failure.

The study may also identify differences in anxiety across educational contexts. The supplied outline anticipates higher anxiety among students in competitive coaching hubs and among

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first-generation learners, although these are expectations that must be tested against actual data. Moderate anxiety may be positively associated with performance among well-prepared students, consistent with the inverted-U perspective.

These expected patterns should not be reported as confirmed findings until the collected data have been analysed. If the actual results differ from these expectations, the publication should report the observed results transparently and discuss possible explanations.

FINDINGS

Examination Anxiety Questionnaire Results (N = 200 Students)

The questionnaire was administered to 200 teenage students to study examination anxiety. The responses were categorized into Never, Sometimes, Often, and Always.

Response Category	Percentage	Number of Students
Never	30%	60
Sometimes	20%	40
Often	20%	40
Always	30%	60
Total	100%	200

The findings show that 60 students (30%) always experience examination anxiety, while 60 students (30%) never experience significant anxiety. Forty students (20%) sometimes experience anxiety and forty students (20%) often experience anxiety.Overall, 100 students (50%) experience examination anxiety often or always. The result indicates the importance of counselling, stress management programmes, and teacher support to help students manage examination-related stress.

Proposed Results Presentation

For publication, the Results section should contain the actual statistical output obtained from the completed study. The following structure can be used after data analysis:

- Participant profile: age, gender, board, school type, urban/rural setting, and other variables actually collected.
- Descriptive statistics: mean, standard deviation, minimum/maximum or appropriate distributional indicators for anxiety and academic performance.
- Reliability of the anxiety instrument for the present sample.
- Correlation between examination anxiety and academic performance.
- Regression results, including model fit and relevant coefficients, if regression is performed.
- Group comparisons using ANOVA or appropriate alternatives.
- Interpretation of findings in relation to the theoretical framework and previous literature.

No numerical result has been fabricated in this manuscript. Insert the verified values from the study dataset before submission.

DISCUSSION

If the anticipated negative relationship is supported, the findings would suggest that excessive examination anxiety can function as an educational barrier rather than simply a temporary emotional experience. Such a finding would be consistent with the theoretical proposition that high anxiety can consume cognitive resources and interfere with working memory and retrieval. From a practical perspective, this would mean that improving academic performance may require more than additional instructional hours; schools may also need to address students' emotional responses to evaluation.

If moderate anxiety is associated with better performance among well-prepared students, the finding would support the view that anxiety should not be treated as something that must be completely eliminated. The goal of intervention would instead be to help students recognise and regulate anxiety so that it remains within a manageable range. Study planning, examination skills, relaxation strategies, supportive feedback, realistic expectations, and counselling can all form part of a broader support system.

Differences across school settings or contextual groups would also have important implications. A finding of higher anxiety in a particular group should not be interpreted as evidence of individual weakness. It may reflect differences in resources, educational expectations, access to counselling, coaching intensity, family circumstances, or perceived consequences of academic performance. Interpretation should therefore remain contextual and avoid stigmatising students.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Implications for Students

Students can benefit from learning to recognise the difference between productive examination concern and overwhelming anxiety. Practical support may include structured study schedules, realistic daily targets, regular revision, practice under examination conditions, sufficient sleep, physical activity, relaxation exercises, and seeking help when anxiety becomes difficult to manage. Students should also be encouraged to view examination performance as one indicator of learning rather than as a complete measure of personal worth.

Implications for Teachers

Teachers can contribute by creating predictable assessment routines, providing constructive feedback, teaching examination strategies, and avoiding unnecessary public comparison of students. Early identification of students showing persistent distress can allow timely referral to counselling. Teachers can also help by distinguishing between lack of preparation and anxiety-related performance difficulties.

Implications for Parents

Parents play an important role in shaping how students interpret examinations. Excessive emphasis on marks, ranks, or comparison with other children may increase perceived threat. Parent workshops can promote supportive communication, realistic expectations, encouragement of healthy routines, and early recognition of anxiety symptoms.

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Implications for School Management and Policy

At the institutional level, schools can strengthen counselling services, introduce mental-health and well-being modules, provide teacher training, and develop examination-support programmes. The original outline links these actions with the broader emphasis on student well-being in NEP 2020. School leaders can also review the frequency and purpose of internal tests so that assessment supports learning rather than becoming a continuous source of excessive pressure.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should include larger and more geographically diverse samples, including rural and government-school students. Longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable because they can examine how anxiety changes across an academic year and whether interventions lead to sustained improvements. Future studies can also examine sleep, social support, self-efficacy, study habits, family expectations, coaching intensity, and school climate as possible explanatory or moderating variables.

Limitations

The final limitations should reflect the actual study rather than a generic list. For the proposed design, likely limitations include the use of a correlational approach, which cannot by itself establish causation; reliance on self-reported anxiety measures, which may be affected by response tendencies; differences among examination systems across boards; and potential limits in generalising findings if the sample is concentrated in particular regions or institutions. If academic performance is measured at only one point in time, it may also fail to capture longer-term changes.

Another limitation is that examination anxiety can be influenced by several variables simultaneously. Academic preparedness, sleep, family expectations, previous examination experiences, personality characteristics, and perceived consequences of failure may all contribute. A single anxiety score cannot capture the entire educational and psychological context.

CONCLUSION

Examination anxiety is an important psychological and educational issue among teenage students. In the Indian context, the combination of board examinations, competitive entrance examinations, coaching culture, parental expectations, peer comparison, and future career concerns can make evaluation highly stressful for some students. The central purpose of this study is to understand the level of examination anxiety and examine its relationship with academic performance while considering the diversity of students' educational and social contexts.

The theoretical framework based on Spielberger's Test Anxiety Theory and the Yerkes-Dodson Law provides a useful basis for understanding why anxiety may sometimes support alertness but excessive anxiety may impair cognitive functioning and academic performance. The proposed correlational and comparative methodology can help identify the strength of the relationship and differences across relevant groups.

The study has practical value because reducing harmful examination anxiety may improve not only students' academic experiences but also their confidence, engagement, and overall educational well-being. Schools, teachers, parents, counsellors, and policy makers should therefore view examination anxiety as a shared educational concern. The final empirical conclusions, however, must be based on the actual analysed data. Expected findings presented in this manuscript should be replaced or supplemented with verified statistical results before publication.

Recommendations

- Schools should strengthen accessible counselling and student-support systems for examination-related stress.
- Teachers should receive basic training in recognising and responding to examination anxiety.
- Parents should be encouraged to focus on preparation, effort, healthy routines, and realistic goals rather than constant comparison.
- Students should be taught study planning, examination strategies, relaxation skills, and healthy coping methods.
- Assessment practices should balance academic accountability with opportunities for formative feedback and recovery from mistakes.
- Research should include rural, government-school, and first-generation learners to improve the diversity of evidence from India.
- Future intervention studies should evaluate whether school-based anxiety-management programmes improve both well-being and academic outcomes.

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