

International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development

Volume 7; Issue 7; July 2024; Page No. 272-277

Received: 02-05-2024
Accepted: 08-06-2024

Indexed Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal

Academic anxiety among selected rural and urban adolescents of Telangana state

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26180723.2024.v7.i7d.805>

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Abstract

Academic anxiety is a mental sensitivity of uneasiness or distress in response to school or college circumstances that is perceived negatively. Academic Anxiety is a state of distress induced by a student's appraisal of excessive academic demands. The current study was undertaken to study the levels of academic anxiety among rural and urban adolescents of Telangana state. The sample consisted of 240 adolescents where 120 were from rural area and 120 were from urban area. Academic anxiety scale developed by Siddiqui and Rehman (2019) was used to study the levels of academic anxiety. The results inferred that adolescents experienced average to higher levels of anxiety irrespective of gender and residence. A significant difference was found between mean scores of urban and rural adolescents at 0.01 level. Urban adolescents experienced more academic anxiety than rural adolescents. The study concludes that both internal and external factors influence the degree to which the adolescents experience the academic anxiety and need for counselling and psychological support systems at institution level.

Keywords: Academic anxiety, adolescents, rural, urban, anxiety symptoms

Introduction

Adolescence is one of the most critical periods of life. Adolescents deal with a variety of difficulties in their daily lives and experiencing several anxieties. Anxiety is the state of uneasiness and distress accompanied by nervous behavior, often caused by academic pressure, social expectations and future uncertainty. Anxiety disorders are common and prevalent during adolescence when compared to other age groups. The prevalence of anxiety disorders among Indian adolescents ranged from 8.2% to 20.8%. Globally, it is estimated that 1 in 7 of 10–19 year-olds (14%) had mental health problems (WHO, 2021), yet these remain largely unrecognized and untreated. Adolescent girls reported depressive symptoms two times more than boys. Academic anxiety is a type of fear, a nervousness or apprehension about any form of academic activity which is one of the contributing factors for anxiety disorders. Research studies revealed that adolescents with academic anxiety tend to have poor self-esteem, low motivation to pursue education, disinterest towards future career prospects and develop a negative attitude towards learning and ended up with low level of satisfaction with their life. Academic anxiety is also closely linked to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety disorders and even suicidal ideation. Every day 623 Indian students commit suicide due to academic stress and failure in examination (Deb *et al.* 2015)^[6]. Nearly two-thirds (63.5%) of the students reported stress and anxieties due to academic pressure with no significant differences across gender, age, grade and several other personal factors. The urban adolescents had a higher prevalence of academic anxieties compared to their rural

counterparts and female adolescents experienced more academic anxieties when compared to male adolescents. Studies also revealed that self-efficacy beliefs play a crucial role in academic achievements and anxieties.

Not many studies were taken up on this important construct especially in Telangana state. Unless the levels of academic anxieties among rural and urban adolescents along with their associative factors are explored, suitable intervention programmes cannot be made to enhance mental health status and psychological wellbeing among adolescents. Hence to fill up the existing research gap the present study was taken up with the objective of studying the levels of academic anxiety among selected rural and urban adolescents of Telangana state.

Materials and Methods

An exploratory and comparative study designs were adopted. The sample consisted of 120 rural and 120 urban adolescents thus, a total sample of 240 adolescents was taken for the investigation. The rural sample were selected from Alampur and Manopadu mandals of Jogulamba Gadwal district and urban sample was selected from various zones of Hyderabad city (GHMC). Random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Adolescents in the age group of 13-18 years were selected. Interview schedule was developed to collect information on general profile of adolescents and Academic anxiety scale developed by Siddiqui and Rehman (2019)^[18] was used to study the levels of academic anxiety. The data was analyzed by using frequency and percentage and t- test.

Results and Discussion

Academic anxiety is a mental sensitivity of uneasiness or distress in response to school or college circumstances that is perceived negatively. Academic Anxiety is a state of distress induced by a student’s appraisal of excessive academic demands.

The dimensions of Academic anxiety were - Anxiety symptoms, Anxiety from poor study habits, Anxiety from subjects, Anxiety from school environment, Anxiety from teachers, Anxiety from examination. The details of the results related to components of Academic anxiety are presented under the following tables.

Levels of academic anxiety symptoms among rural and urban adolescents

Academic anxiety symptoms are the abnormal behaviour of a student shown at the beginning of any new academic task like procrastination in academic activities, worrying most of the time, perform poorly in school work, fail classes and withdraw from socializing with peers or pursuing activities that interest him/her.

The data on levels of Academic anxiety symptoms among adolescents obtained is discussed below.

Table 1: Distribution of adolescents based on levels of Academic anxiety symptoms (n1=120, n2=120, n=240)

S. No.	Academic anxiety symptoms	Rural (n1)		Urban (n2)		Total (n)	
		f	%	F	%	f	%
1	Low	37	31	11	9	48	20
2	Moderate	59	49	43	36	102	42
3	High	24	20	66	55	90	38
Total		120	100	120	100	240	100

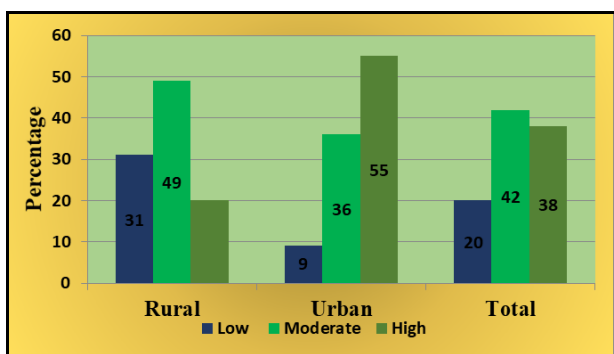


Fig 1: Academic anxiety symptoms of rural and urban adolescents

The above table reveals that nearly half (42%) of the respondents had moderate levels of academic anxiety symptoms followed by high levels (38%) and low levels (20%).

According to the table 1 nearly more than half of the urban respondents had high level of Academic anxiety symptoms followed by moderate levels and low levels were as above half of the rural adolescents were having moderate levels of Academic anxiety symptoms.

The above findings indicate that more than half of the respondents were getting easily irritated when asked about studies, they were having more subject related stress, they felt school as most boring place, they were finding difficulty in focusing the task, they were facing Intense fear in group

activities or presentations, they were Lacking in effective planning and organization, Inadequate or poor-quality sleep. This might be due to the prevalence of High expectations from parents and teachers, Competitive academic environments, disorganized study habits and poor time management, Using ineffective study methods, Previous academic failures or poor performance, Lack of support system and cognitive distortions.

The results were further supported by Mbanuzuru *et al.* (2022) [19] found that urban participants reported higher levels of academic anxiety symptoms

It clearly depicts that the majority of rural adolescents were able to handle academic challenges, concentrate on studies, they have the ability to plan and stick to a study schedule, and a healthy level of motivation to succeed academically without excessive pressure.

Levels of poor study habits among rural and urban adolescents

Anxiety from poor study habits is the Anxiety caused by learning strategies applied by students in their daily academic tasks. The Anxiety from poor study habits was studied in terms of Difficulty in remembering, getting tired easily, not interested in studies, difficulty in conceptual relation understanding, negative self-talk, and fear of failure, increased heartbeat, sweaty palms, difficulty concentrating due to anxiety, Worrying about not meeting academic expectations, Poor time management skills, Inadequate preparation, lack of confidence and increased anxiety about performance.

The data obtained on existing levels of Anxiety from poor study habits among rural and urban adolescents is discussed below.

Table 2: Distribution of adolescents based on levels of Anxiety from poor study habits (n1=120, n2=120, n=240)

S. No.	Anxiety from poor study habits	Rural (n1)		Urban (n2)		Total (n)	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	Low	33	27	11	9	44	18
2.	Moderate	72	60	47	39	119	50
3.	High	15	13	62	52	77	32
Total		120	100	120	100	240	100

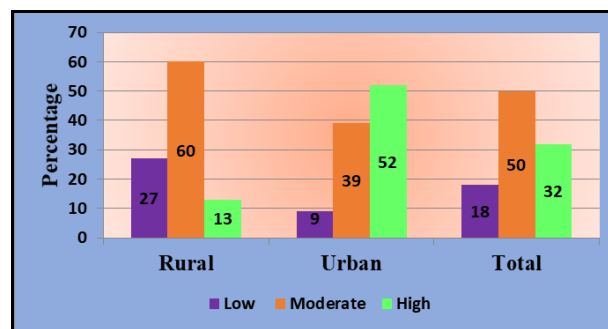


Fig 2: Anxiety from poor study habits levels of rural and urban adolescents

According to table 2 it was found that half of the respondents (50%) had Moderate level of anxiety from poor study habits followed by High (32%) and few (18%) of the respondents had a high level of anxiety from poor study

habits. It clearly depicts that slightly more than half of the urban and rural adolescents had proper study habits.

This might be due to majority of the rural and urban adolescents were not able to create a study schedule, break task into smaller steps, organize study materials, set study goals, not able to maintain a healthy lifestyle, take breaks, Inefficient study methods and lack of organization.

In terms of anxiety from poor study habits related problems majority of the respondents were facing Excessive Worry, Irritability and Mood Swings, Avoidance Behaviors, Negative Self-Talk and Sleep Disturbances.

In line with the above study Nwosu *et al.* (2016) [13] reported that study habits had a predictive effect on academic performance. Better study habits lead to higher academic performance. Completion of homework and assignments at proper time, proper time allocation, reading and note-taking and teacher consultation significantly influenced academic performance of university students. In contrast with the present findings (2016) Girls were found better than boys on study habits as well as academic achievement. Urban students had higher score on study habits as well as academic achievement than rural students.

Levels of anxiety from subject among rural and urban adolescents

Anxiety from subject is the ability toward Possessing negative attitude towards a particular subject or different subjects due to one or the other reasons. Anxiety caused by it is called anxiety from subjects of study. Anxiety from the subject was studied in terms of worrying about difficult subject, perceiving study as most difficult task, not interested in subjects he is studying, finding certain subjects harder than others, lack of interest or motivation in a particular subject, Becoming easily frustrated or irritated when dealing with the subject, hard to focus on studying the subject, Previous failures or struggles in the subject.

The data obtained on existing levels of anxiety from subject among rural and urban adolescents is discussed below.

Table 3: Distribution of adolescents based on levels of anxiety from subject (n1=120, n2=120, n=240)

S. No.	Anxiety from subject	Rural (n1)		Urban (n2)		Total (n)	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	Low	39	33	21	18	60	25
2.	Moderate	40	33	43	36	83	35
3.	High	41	34	56	46	97	40
Total		120	100	120	100	240	100

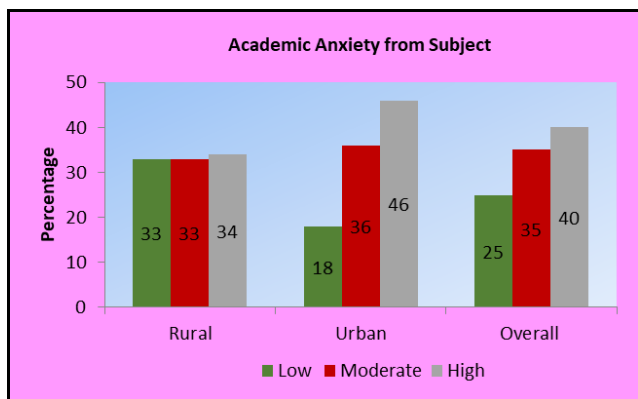


Fig 3: Anxiety from subject levels of rural and urban adolescents

It was observed that nearly half (40%) of the respondents had moderate to high levels of anxiety from subject and one fourth (25%) had a low level of anxiety from subject. It clearly depicts that the majority of rural and urban were having moderate to high levels of anxiety from subject. This might be due to the reason, in both rural and urban areas, students may lack access to adequate academic support, fear of failure, causing significant subject anxiety, particular subject anxiety

The current findings are in line with Sanal *et al.* (2017) [20] explored the Maths anxiety in primary and secondary school students. Results revealed that girls exhibited higher anxiety than boys at both educational levels. Ambion (2023) [2] inferred that girls obtained a higher GPA than boys although their level of anxiety was higher too.

Levels of anxiety from school environment among rural and urban adolescents

Anxiety from school environment is the Anxiety caused by prevailing school environment like stiff competition among students, role of school administrators (Authoritarian / Democratic) is called anxiety from school environment. The level of Anxiety from school environment was studied in terms of facing criticism from teachers, not interested in co-curricular activities, doesn't like to share school experiences with parents, perceive school as a boring place, self-imposed pressure to achieve good grades, Bullying, social exclusion, Fear of public speaking, Negative interactions with teachers, Inability to relax, Intense fear of being judged, criticized, or embarrassed, avoiding school-related activities, Frequently asking for validation.

The data obtained on existing levels of Anxiety from school environment among rural and urban adolescents is discussed below.

Table 4: Distribution of adolescents based on levels of Anxiety from school environment (n1=120, n2=120, n=240)

S. No.	Anxiety from school environment	Rural (n1)		Urban (n2)		Total (n)	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	Low	50	42	22	18	72	30
2.	Moderate	42	35	57	48	99	41
3.	High	28	23	41	34	69	29
Total		120	100	120	100	240	100

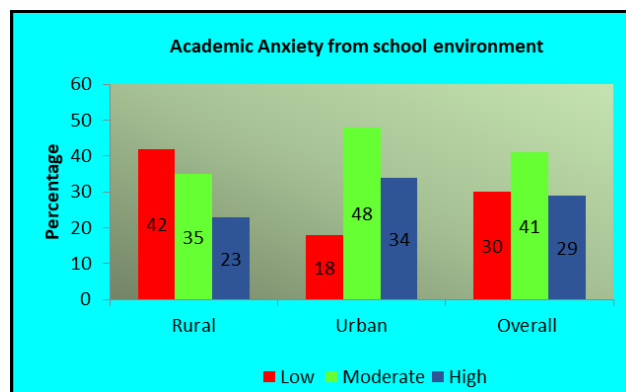


Fig 4: Anxiety from school environment levels of rural and urban adolescents

The results of table 4 showed that about half of the respondents (41%) had moderate level of Anxiety from school environment. And about only one-third (30%) of them had low levels and less than one-fourth of the respondents (29%) had low levels of anxiety from school environment. It was also found that both rural and urban adolescents were almost similar in their levels of Anxiety from school environment.

The above findings indicate that the majority of rural and urban adolescents are facing problems like High expectations for grades and performance, Constant comparisons with classmates, The pressure to succeed and fear of making mistakes, Strict, controlling, and punitive administrative styles, they may feel powerless and stressed due to rigid rules, Unrealistic demands and lack of adequate support. This might be due to the reason that majority of adolescents were suffering from Academic Pressure, Performance Anxiety, heavy workload, Negative interactions with teachers and lack of support. The findings are on par with the study by Kumar (2018) [10] who found a significant relationship between academic achievement and school environment of senior secondary school.

Levels of anxiety from teachers among rural and urban adolescents

Anxiety from teachers is the ability of teaching incompetency and partial attitude of teachers inside the classroom also provoke academic anxiety among students. Anxiety occurring due to this phenomenon is called anxiety caused by teachers.

Child gets worried when teacher enters the class, avoid sitting in first bench, do not like clarifying doubts, problems with teacher, lack of motivation from teacher. Feeling anxious, high expectations in terms of grades, participation, behavior, or overall academic achievement. feel overwhelmed or stressed, fear of negative feedback or criticism from teachers, feeling unsupported, misunderstood, or intimidated by their teachers, experiencing harsh criticism, strict, inflexible teaching style, constant negative feedback, harsh criticism, unfair treatment, unwilling to provide extra help.

The data obtained on existing levels of Anxiety from teachers among rural and urban adolescents is discussed below.

Table 5: Distribution of adolescents based on levels of Anxiety from teacher (n1=120, n2=120, n=240)

S. No.	Anxiety from teacher	Rural (n1)		Urban (n2)		Total (n)	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Low	48	40	11	9	59	24
2	Moderate	31	26	50	42	81	34
3	High	41	34	59	49	100	42
Total		120	100	120	100	240	100

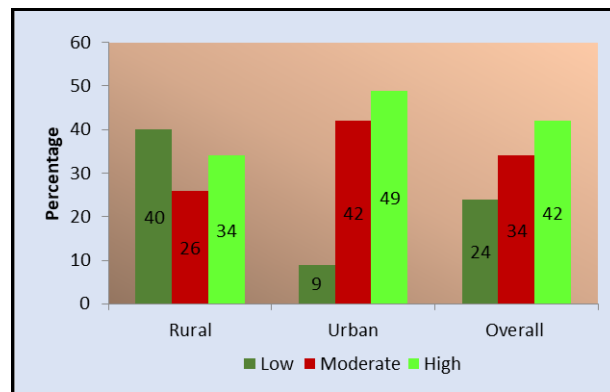


Fig 5: Anxiety from teacher levels of rural and urban adolescents

The results from table 5 show that more than half of respondents (42%) had high levels of Anxiety from teacher and about only one-third (34%) of them had moderate levels and very few (24%) had low levels of Anxiety from teacher. This clearly shows that the, majority of urban adolescents It was also observed that high levels of anxiety from teachers were slightly more among rural adolescents when compared to urban adolescents.

The above findings indicate that more than half of the respondents believed that, teachers were providing inconsistent or unclear feedback on assignments and performance, placing high academic pressure on students to achieve high grades or meet high standards without considering individual capabilities, creating an environment where mistakes are not tolerated and are met with severe consequences.

The results were further supported by A study conducted by Purwanti *et al.* (2020) [14] in Nigeria who found that anxiety levels were influenced by location, with urban students experiencing higher levels of anxiety. This was linked to more intense academic pressure and higher expectations from teachers in urban areas.

Levels of anxiety from examination among rural and urban adolescents

Anxiety from examination is the Introduction of schemes like Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) may lead students towards severe anxiety sometimes. Anxiety caused due examination type (Formative & Summative) is called anxiety from examination.

In the present study, Anxiety from examination was assessed in terms of feeling uneasy and upset before exam, thinking of consequences of failing, mind goes blank during the exam, gets unwanted thoughts while writing the exam, High expectations from oneself, Insufficient study time or ineffective study methods, feeling unprepared, Becoming easily frustrated or angry. Intense fear about taking the exam or receiving the results, Persistent thoughts about failing, meeting expectations and Trouble in focusing.

The data obtained on existing levels of Anxiety from examination among rural and urban adolescents are discussed below.

Table 6: Distribution of adolescents based on levels of Anxiety from examination (n1=120, n2=120, n=240)

S. No.	Anxiety from examination	Rural (n1)		Urban (n2)		Total (n)	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	Low	39	33	11	9	50	21
2.	Moderate	41	34	22	19	63	26
3.	High	40	33	87	72	127	53
Total		120	100	120	100	240	100

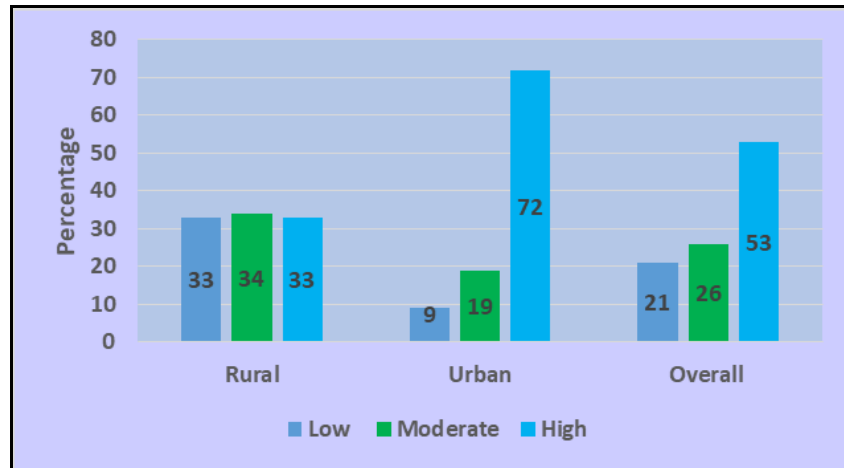


Fig 6: Anxiety from examination levels of rural and urban adolescents

The results show that about half of the respondents had (42%) high levels of anxiety from examination and about only (34%) had moderate levels and a very few (24%) were having low levels of anxiety from examination. Urban

adolescents were having more anxiety from teachers when compared to rural. Similar findings are supported by Mendez *et al.* (2023) ^[12].

Table 7: Mean differences in Academic anxiety levels of rural and urban adolescents based on Residence (n1=120, n2=120)

S. No.	Academic anxiety levels	Rural (n1)		Urban (n2)		t value	P
1.	Academic anxiety symptoms	15.46	2.25	17.25	2.86	2.64**	0.00
2.	Anxiety from poor study habits	13.52	3.15	16.45	2.82	3.46**	0.00
3.	Anxiety from subjects	11.78	2.32	12.88	2.62	2.87**	0.00
4.	Anxiety from school environment	13.56	2.53	10.22	3.24	2.97**	0.00
5.	Anxiety from teachers	18.44	3.12	19.57	2.58	2.14**	0.00
6.	Anxiety from examination	15.64	2.41	17.45	3.11	3.22**	0.00
7.	Overall Academic anxiety levels	62.46	8.14	78.92	7.45	7.86**	0.00

The mean difference between urban and rural adolescents shows a significant difference in all the dimensions of the academic anxiety. Comparatively urban students expressed higher mean scores in all the dimensions of academic anxiety than rural adolescents except for the anxiety from school environment. The higher levels of academic anxiety among urban adolescents may be attributed to the high parental and school expectations, lack of interest in the subjects and course chosen and repeated examinations.

Conclusion

Academic anxiety is a kind of anxiety which is closely related with stressed state of students due to one of the many factors or collective effect of many factors like type of school, environment of the institution, subjects taken, examination patterns etc. The study concludes that adolescence are experiencing average to high levels of academic anxiety irrespective of gender and residence. However, urban adolescents had more academic anxiety compared to rural adolescents. Academic anxiety can be

caused by various factors. These include internal factors such as excessive worry and unpreparedness to face academic challenges, as well as external factors like parental demands, environmental conditions, and unsupportive facilities.

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