

## Test anxiety among school students

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### Abstract

The present study is an attempt to investigate the difference in test anxiety between male and female as related to socio-economic status. A total of 200 respondents constituted the sample of the study studying in class X from different high schools of Jamshedpur. They were equally divided into male and female and high and low socio-economic status. Sarason's Test Anxiety Scale for Children (TASC) developed by Kumar was used to measure test anxiety. Mean, standard deviation and t ratios were calculated to analyze data. Result revealed that male and female differ significantly on the level of test anxiety. Female students compared to male are more anxious. Low socio-economic group showed more test anxiety than high socio-economic group.

**Keywords:** test anxiety, socio-economic status

### 1. Introduction

Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which people experience extreme distress and anxiety in testing situations. While many people experience some degree of stress and anxiety before and during exams, test anxiety can actually impair learning and hurt test performance. A little bit of nervousness can actually be helpful making you feel mentally alert and ready to tackle the challenges presented in an exam. Test anxiety in general expected to have negative effect on performance. The term "test anxiety" refers to the emotional reactions that some students have to exams. The fear of exams is not an irrational fear — after all, how you perform on college exams can shape the course of an academic career. Test anxiety is actually a type of performance anxiety — a feeling someone might have in a situation where performance really counts or when the pressures on to do well. High anxiety is experienced before the examination in all the students specially when they are pressured to make high scores in the examination, their anxiety is found to increase. Research investigating the causes of test anxiety has led to two models, the interferences model and the skill deficit modal. The interference model states that anxious students are plagued by worry that interference with their ability to retrieve information during a test. The skill deficit model states that high anxious students' problems occur before the test in the form of inadequate learning that results in poor performances. Thus test anxiety is simply an emotion that results from an awareness of being unprepared for the test. Sarason (1980) believed that test anxiety is a personality characteristic which forms in interaction with parents.

In very simple terms, 'test anxiety' can be defined as the state of tension or mental conflict related to the quality of performance in test situations. The test anxiety is central because of the fact that either in one time or in another every individual of the society has to experience the test situation. Conflict among students, could by competition for grades, can hamper the psychological climate of educational institutions and test can be an important element in raising tensions among students. Given the central role that education plays in industrialized society, research in to test anxiety offers the

ultimate promise of helping many people to benefit from their schooling more fully. While people have the skills and knowledge to do very well in these situations, their excessive anxiety impairs their performance. Test anxiety is the set of phenomenological, physiological and behavioral responses that accompany concern about possible failures in any testing or evaluative situation. Test anxiety is "a special, intense kind of nervousness that arises from the total test situation." Some excitement for tests is normal and even beneficial. But quite a bit of test anxiety is probably the result of pressure to maintain, or get, good grades. The worry component consists of internal expectations of failure based upon past performance. This aspect of test anxiety can interfere with cognitive activity at the time of evaluation, such as memory recall, distractibility, and deficits in general concentration Spielberger and Sarason (1989) [20] as a situation-specific trait that refers to the anxiety states and worry conditions that are experienced during an examination.

### 2. Review of Literature

Literature is full of studies which report gender differences in anxiety, girls being more anxious than boys. For example, Palermo (1959) [13], Durrett (1965) [7], Pringle and Cox (1963) [14], Castendaa and others (1956) [4] and Sarason *et al.* (1960) [15] has all reported similar trends in their researches. Gender as a demographic factor has been implicated as having significant influence on students' test anxiety level. e.g. Sharma and Sud (1990) [18], drawing samples from four Asian cultures found that female students experience higher levels of test anxiety than do males irrespective of cultural background. Female students experience higher levels of test anxiety than do males irrespective of cultural background. Studies have consistently found that female students have significantly higher test anxiety than male students (Ferrando Varea & Lorenzo, 1999; Hembree, 1988; Sharma & Gandhi, 1971; Abu-Rabia, 2004; Chapell *et al.* 2005; Guida & Ludlow 1989; Locker & Cropley, 2004; Sena *et al.* 2007; Costello *et al.* 2003; Bandalos *et al.* 1995; Volkme & Feather, 1991; Zeidner, 1990) [8, 10, 1, 5, 9, 11, 16, 6, 2, 22, 23, 17]. Research has consistently found gender difference in test anxiety (Chapell *et al.*, 2005 & Sharma &

Gandhi, 1971) [5, 17] with female participants scoring higher than male participants on self report measures of test anxiety (Sena *et al.* 2007; Costello *et al.*, 2003 & Soffer, 2008) [16, 6, 19]. Cassady and Johnson (2002) [3] found that females were more prone to experience high level of test anxiety than their male counterparts and are more likely learn to surrender passively to test anxiety than the males.

Very few studies were conducted on socio-economic status causing anxiety in individuals. Putwain (2007) reported that age, gender, ethnic, and socio-economic background was significant predictors of test anxiety scores. Sharma (1971) [17], Srivastava and Sinha (1974), Singh and Kaur (1976) observed lower class adults to have higher levels of anxiety.

**3. Hypotheses**

- There will be significant gender difference on test anxiety.
- There will be significant difference between high and low socio-economic groups on test anxiety.

**4. Method**

**4.1 Sample**

The sample consisted of 200 students (100 male and 100 female) studying in class X different schools of Jamshedpur city. Their age ranged between 15 to 16 years. The subjects were classified into 2 groups in terms of economic status i.e. 100 high and 100 low economic groups. Subjects whose parent’s income was from Rs.2000 – 10,000 per month and Rs. 40,000 and above was placed into the category of low and high SES group respectively. The sample stratification was based on gender – 2 (male and female) and socio economic status - 2 (high and low).

**4.2 Variables of the study**

- Independent Variable
- Gender (Male and Female)
- Socio-economic status (High and Low)
- Dependent Variable
- Scores on test anxiety scale

**5. Instrument**

**Test Anxiety Scale for Children**

Hindi adaptation by Kumar (1985) of Sarason’s Test Anxiety Scale for Children (TASC) Sarason (1960) [15] was used to measure the test anxiety of the students. The test consist of 30 items of yes/no type. The total number of ‘yes’ answers denote the raw scores of test anxiety.

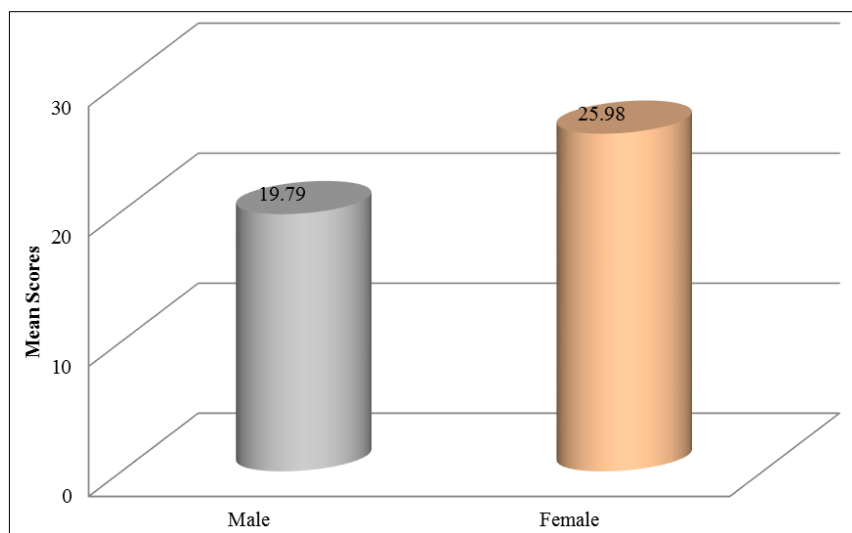
**6. Procedure**

The Sarason’s test anxiety scale for children was administered to both groups with instructions to complete all questions honestly and not to discuss the questions with fellow students. Scoring was done according to the respective scoring key In order to fulfill the hypotheses of the study the score obtained were analysed with Means, SD’s and t values.

**7. Result and Discussion**

**Table 1:** Mean Scores, SDs and t value of male and female students on Test Anxiety.

Groups	N	Means	SDs	t	P Value
Male	100	19.79	2.61	18.75	0.01
Female	100	25.98	2.35		



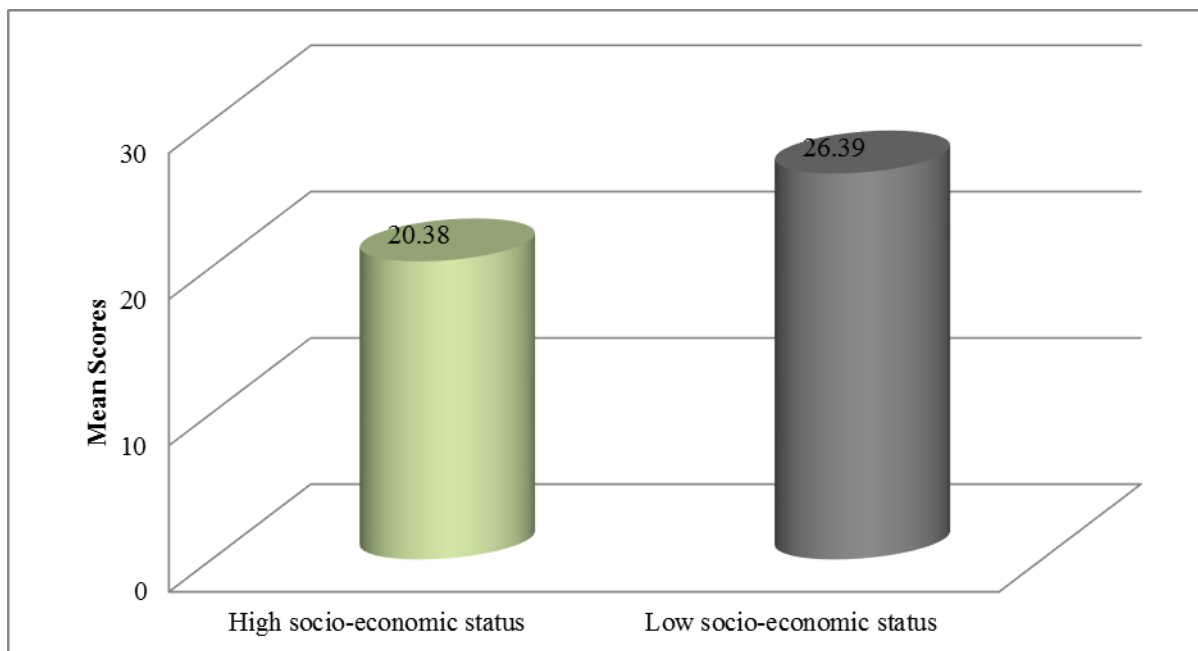
**Fig 1:** Mean scores of male and female students on Test Anxiety

The result given in table –1 indicate significant gender difference in the test anxiety. Male and female differ significantly on the level of test anxiety. The female students reported higher level of test anxiety as compared to the male student. The t ratio is highly significant (t = 18.75; P = <0.01).

The results are agreement with earlier findings of Mc Donald (2001) and Chapell *et al.* (2005) [5]. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted. We can say that female are more test anxious than the male.

**Table 2:** Mean Scores, SDs and t value of High and Low socio-economic status group on Test Anxiety.

Groups	N	Means	SDs	t	P value
High socio-economic status	100	20.38	1.39	13.06	0.01
Low socio-economic status	100	26.39	3.59		



**Fig 2:** Mean scores of High and Low socio-economic status group on Test Anxiety.

It was evident from the Table – 2 that low socio-economic group as compared to high socio-economic group tend to be more anxious. The mean anxiety scores of low and high socio-economic group is 26.39 and 20.38. The obtained t ratio is 13.06 which is highly statistically significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

#### 8. Conclusion of the Study

- Female students experienced more anxious as compared to male students.
- Low socio-economic group showed more test anxiety than high socio-economic group of students.

#### 9. Limitations of the Study

- The sample size for the present study is limited.
- The present study included subjects only from the school.
- Variables like religion, area, age, types of family etc. are not included in the study.

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