

## **A Study of the Relationship among Test Anxiety, Psychological Well-being and Resilience among Senior Secondary Students**

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### **Abstract**

Exam situations are seen as one of the most distressing events when students feel worried all the time, overwhelmed, irritated and out of control. The distress eventually leads to a reduction in effectiveness so much so that students become exam phobic and develop exam anxiety. The present research was conducted to study the relationship between Test Anxiety, Psychological Well-being and Resilience among the senior secondary students. To conduct the study, data was collected using standardized scales and interview schedules. Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation method was employed to study the relationship between Test Anxiety, Psychological Well-being and Resilience. It was found out that Test Anxiety and psychological wellbeing shares a significant negative correlation and similarly, Test Anxiety and Resilience are negatively correlated. Results obtained from the analysis of interviews conducted with the school counsellor suggested counselling is effective in managing Test Anxiety.

**Keywords:** Test Anxiety, Psychological Well-being, Resilience.

### **Introduction**

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development. It 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 competitiveness and comparison with others. Test Anxiety is one of the many issues that higher secondary school students in India are experiencing. School written exams are the most important aspect of evaluation in the Indian Education system. Every year, the government conducts two board exams, at the end of the 10th (secondary education) and at the end of 12th (higher secondary education). The scores obtained in the 10th board exams are necessary not only to get admission in good higher secondary schools but also to choose the preferred mainstream of higher secondary education. Since the number of seats in high quality schools is limited compared to the number of students passing out of the 10th grade, competition to get higher secondary admission is always fierce. The high pressure and competition lead to stress and anxiety in students. Exam situations are seen as the most distressing. When the distress and

nervousness increase so much that it interferes with the performance, the students might be facing Test Anxiety.

Test Anxiety is a psychological state where individuals face extreme distress and anxiety in testing situations. While many individuals face some degree of stress and anxiety before and during exams, Test Anxiety can actually impair learning and reduce the test performance. It is a physiological condition in which people experience extreme stress, anxiety, and discomfort during and/or before taking a test (Andrews, B., & Wilding, J. M., 2004). As academics is an integral part of a student's life, if perceived positively can lead to Students experiencing Test Anxiety can have negative feelings about themselves and school, negative mental and emotional states or overall development. Increased levels of Test Anxiety negatively affect Psychological Well-being of students.

Psychological Well-being refers to the extent to which people feel that they have meaningful control over their life and their activities. It includes positive relationships with others, personal mastery, autonomy, a feeling of purpose and meaning in life, and personal growth and development.

Resilience is a key variable in determining successful adaptation to adverse circumstances and it may influence successful educational outcomes. Thus, Resilience can be understood as a capacity to press oneself beyond challenging risk factors. To become resilient means becoming academically successful even after facing various constraints and barriers. The present study examines the relationship between Test Anxiety, Psychological Well-being and Resilience among senior secondary students.

## **Review of Related Literature**

Steinmayr, et al. (2016) conducted a study which focused on investigating the extent to which subjective well-being, academic achievement, and Test Anxiety influence each other over a period of time. It was found out through the study that the worry component of Test Anxiety negatively affects and GPA positively predicted changes in the cognitive component of subjective well-being (life satisfaction). Worry component also predicted negative changes in the subjective well-being of students. Moreover, worry also, negatively affects student's GPA or their grades. Udhaya kumar, and Illango (2018) conducted a study to measure the psychological wellbeing of the undergraduate students. Findings of the study revealed that the majority of the students were observed experiencing 'high level' regarding positive wellbeing and 'high' regarding anxiety and depressed mood. Correlations were significantly positive for the positive wellbeing and anxiety scores as well as general health and self-control scores. Moreover, it was observed that general health scores significantly predicted the manifestation of anxiety, depression, and self-control among the students.

Deb, Strodi, and Sun (2015) investigated the academic stress and mental health of Indian high school students and the relation between various psychosocial factors which means relationship

issues, negative past experiences, depression and academic related stresses. It was found that nearly two-thirds (63.5%) of the students reported stress because of academic pressure – with no significant differences across gender, age, grade, and several other personal factors. About one-thirds (32.6%) of the students were showing negative symptoms and 81.6% reported examination-related anxiety. Academic stress was positively correlated with parental pressure and other psychiatric problems, while examination-related anxiety also was positively related to psychiatric problems. Putwin et.al (2013) investigated how Test Anxiety may mediate the association between resiliency and task performance and it was found that Resilient children perform better in tests and high-test anxious students perform worse in tests and moreover Test Anxiety mediates the relationship between Resilience levels and the test scores.

Barterian, Segool, Embse (2012) reviewed Test Anxiety interventions for children and adolescents and the study indicated that the students with high Test Anxiety levels perform poor as compared to students with low Test Anxiety. Their study also stated techniques like behavior therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy that have demonstrated effective results to reduce Test Anxiety levels among the students. Kumaran and Kadhiravan (2015) investigated the relationship between Test Anxiety and personality of school students and it was found that the negative emotionality dimension of personality is significantly correlated with all the dimensions of Test Anxiety. It was also found out that the students differ in their Test Anxiety on the basis of their gender and type of family they belong to. Moshe (2007) examined that Test Anxiety levels affects student's cognitive performance and the study found out that Test Anxiety has an impact on their scholastic achievements, ill health and moreover causes psychological distress which means students experience a state of emotional suffering which is associated with the stressors and demands that are difficult to cope with in daily life.

## **Rationale of the study**

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between Test Anxiety, Psychological Well-being, and Resilience among senior secondary students. Previous research has shown that there is a strong relationship between Test Anxiety and Psychological Well-being. Similarly, research has also shown that Test Anxiety does share a relationship with Resilience. However, there is hardly any research that talks about the relationship between the above-mentioned variables together among students of class 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. So, this study will help the students as well as teachers to understand how students' Psychological Well-being and Resilience tendency varies with the level of Test Anxiety they undergo. This study will also try to find out the measures taken by counsellor in reducing Test Anxiety of students' and improve their Psychological Well-being and Resilience tendency. The research will have implications for all the students, school teachers, school counsellors, parents and even the school authorities to understand about the Test Anxiety in students and how to intervene effectively with solutions and strategies, so that students do not face such issues.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between Test Anxiety and Psychological Well-being of senior secondary students.
2. To examine the relationship between Test Anxiety and Resilience of senior secondary students.
3. To explore different types of issues faced by students due to Test Anxiety.
4. To examine the steps taken by the school counsellors to reduce Anxiety among students.

## Methodology of the Study

The present study is a descriptive research design. The sample of 100 students was chosen randomly studying at the senior secondary level and 10 school counsellors were also taken as a sample for conducting the research. Data was collected using standardized tests and interview schedules. Test Anxiety Scale (TAS) developed by V.P. Sharma was used in the present study. The scale consists of 25 items, each having 5 response opinions ranging from minimum to maximum Test Anxiety. Psychological Well-being scale, (PWBS-SDCP) developed by Devender Singh Sisodia and Pooja Choudhary was another tool used to collect the data for the present study. It is a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The Resilience Scale developed by Wagnild and Young which consists of 14 items was also used. It measures the individual's level of Resilience i.e. ability to bounce back from difficult situations. It is a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

## Analysis and Interpretation

**Objective 1-** To examine the relationship between Test Anxiety and Psychological Well-being of senior secondary students.

	Test Anxiety	
	r	Sig. (p value)
<b>Psychological Well-being</b>	-0.313	0.002

The table shows that Test Anxiety and Psychological Well-being are significantly correlated which means that there is a relationship between Test Anxiety and Psychological Well-being. The Test Anxiety shares a significant negative correlation with total score of Psychological Well-being ( $r = -0.313$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ).

From the above analysis it can be interpreted that when the student has high levels of Test Anxiety, they will have low or extremely low-level of Psychological Well-being. Low level of

psychological wellbeing indicates that the student does not have a sense of personal growth, they lack environmental mastery also there is lack of self-acceptance, lack of sociability and an unstable mental health. The student feels a sense of personal stagnation and poor self-concept. On the other hand, when students have low or extremely low level of Test Anxiety, they will have high or extremely high levels of Psychological Well-being. Students with high level of Psychological Well-being experience a sense of autonomy, easily adapts in a given environment, they can function effectively in day-to-day life, they can easily form positive relations with other people and most importantly they have a greater feeling of contentment and self-acceptance. Thus, this suggest that Test Anxiety and Psychological Well-being share an inverse relationship which means students with high Test Anxiety will have low or average on Psychological Well-being and students who have low Test Anxiety will have high levels of Psychological Well-being.

**Objective 2:** To examine the relationship between Test Anxiety and Resilience of senior secondary students.

	Test Anxiety	
	r	Sig. (p value)
<b>Resilience</b>	-0.211	0.022

The table shows that Test Anxiety and Resilience are significantly correlated which means that there is a relationship between Test Anxiety and Resilience. The Test Anxiety shares a significant negative correlation with Resilience ( $r = -0.211$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ).

From the above analysis, it can be interpreted that high or extremely high levels of Test Anxiety negatively affects the Resilience levels of students. It means that when students have high levels of Test Anxiety, they will have low level of Resilience level. Low levels of Resilience indicate that the students will not be able to effectively adapt to their changing environment. They find it difficult to bounce back in the times of difficulty and crisis. When these students are put in challenging situations, they are unable to deal with it or strive back. On the other hand, when students have low or extremely low level of Test Anxiety, they will have high or extremely high levels of Resilience. High levels of Resilience indicate that these students can easily adapt themselves to the challenging situations, they have the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties and they have the ability to recover mentally and emotionally in the times of crisis. Thus, this suggests that Test Anxiety and Resilience share an inverse relationship which means students with high Test Anxiety will have low or average on Resilience and students who have low Test Anxiety will have high levels of Resilience.

**Objective 3:** To explore different types of issues faced by students due to Test Anxiety.

It was found out that 40 percent of the counsellors believe that feelings of stress and nervousness increase Test Anxiety of students due to exams. School examination system affects Test Anxiety

of students, the comparisons students make themselves with other fellow classmates, stress and nervousness, peer pressure and parental pressure. 50 percent of the counsellors stated that the most common problems seen in students are issues with time management, sleeping disorders, eating disorders. Thus, these stressors lead to high levels of Test Anxiety in students.

It was also evident from the responses of counsellors that primarily students are reported to school counsellors by their teachers as they show some symptoms of Test Anxiety. 80 percent of the school counsellors stated that the different types of behavioral and physical symptoms help them in identifying students who are facing anxiety issues. On the other hand 60 percent of the counsellors suggested that there are other factors that facilitate identification of test noxious students such as lack of confidence, reduced social communication, difficulty in concentrating etc. Moreover, it was found that high levels of Test Anxiety have debilitating effect on students Psychological Well-being as it leads to negative thoughts, poor self-concept, negative self-perception, self-doubt etc. which further lead to a decline in Psychological Well-being of students.

**Objective 4:** To examine the steps taken by the school counsellors to reduce anxiety among students

It was found out that 50 percent of the school counsellor used relaxation techniques which includes breathing exercises, meditation etc. and secondly the school counsellors ensure that they involve their parents and teachers so they have a supportive environment in dealing with Test Anxiety. Besides this, school counsellors help students improve their time management and organizational skills.

The analysis also revealed that 90 percent of the school counsellors used cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) which aims to stop negative cycles by breaking down things that make you feel bad, anxious or scared in treating students with Test Anxiety. The other therapy employed by the counsellor is rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) which is a type of psychotherapy that helps an individual to identify self-defeating thoughts and feelings and replace them with healthier and more productive beliefs.

Apart from therapy, counsellors were also found to help students in developing their coping skills. Some of the coping skills as mentioned by the school counsellor during the interview were positive self-talk, changing in the thinking patterns, regulation emotions, focusing on one's strengths, viewing challenges as opportunities, making realistic choices and goals, adapting to change and positivism and having patience and faith. 60 percent of the school counsellors also emphasized on teaching the students about time management skills and organization of work.

40 percent of the school counsellors suggested their students to practice their syllabus regularly to gain confidence over their studies and also identify and clarify their doubts from the teachers. The counsellors ask their students to prepare a study time table, organized study in short goals and finish the work in the given deadline. As a part of the lifestyle changes, the counsellors

mentioned certain approaches like making healthy food choices, practicing yoga and other mindful practices daily that help them replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts. In addition to this the counsellor involves the school teachers as well the parents of students having Test Anxiety so that they get a supportive environment both in the classroom and at home. Moreover, 80 percent of the counsellors reported that after the successful completion of the sessions they notice increased levels of confidence in the students and they are motivated to perform better in the exams. Some other good changes as reported by counsellors were enhanced motivation in students, positive emotional state, and better exam temperament in students.

## Findings and Conclusion

Test Anxiety and Psychological Well-being share an inverse relationship. They are negatively correlated which indicates that when the student has high Test Anxiety, they are likely to have low levels of Psychological Well-being. And similarly, Test Anxiety and Resilience are negatively correlated and share an inverse relation which means increase in Test Anxiety leads to low level of Resilience in students. School counsellors suggested that they have witnessed students battling with Test Anxiety, it is known to affect a students' Psychological Well-being and moreover, the ability to bounce back in difficult circumstances. Various techniques and therapies can help the students reduce Test Anxiety, also it is advised that the students practice healthy eating, sleeping and studying habits. Students Resilience can be built by developing coping skills, positive self-talk techniques, mindfulness practices and time management skills which can help the students deal effectively in adverse testing situations. Appropriate counselling sessions and interventions can help in reducing Test Anxiety among students and improve their Psychological Well-being. Furthermore, resilient children are likely to perform better in their test as academic Resilience is a key attribute in a students' life. Therefore, identification and early interventions can help students cope with Test Anxiety.

School counsellors should conduct workshops, counselling sessions, guide students regarding issues related to Test Anxiety, help them with test-taking strategies, time management skills, building Resilience and other lifestyle changes. Parents should identify if they notice any negative behavioral changes in their children before or during the examinations and provide them with the necessary support. Teachers should talk about Test Anxiety in the classrooms and should keep an alliance with the school counsellor and parents of identified students to deal with this issue. Students should reach out to their parents and school counsellors when they feel stressed due to the exams.

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