

Analysis of Students' Perceived English Test Anxiety at Secondary Level

Dr. Muhammad Nadeem Iqbal¹, Saba Mahmood², Maham Khalid³,

Samra Naseer⁴

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan, nadeemiqbal@bzu.edu.pk⁺
2. M.Phil Scholar, Institute of Southern Punjab, Pakistan; Sabascholar9106@gmail.com;²
(Corresponding Author) *
3. M.Phil Scholar, Institute of Southern Punjab, Pakistan; khalidmaham609@gmail.com;³
4. M.Phil Scholar, The Women University Multan; samranaseer45@gmail.com;⁴

Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the analysis of students' perceived English test anxiety at the Secondary Level, with a specific focus on examining the gender-based differences. This quantitative research utilized a survey as the primary data collection method and focused on the population of all government schools in the Multan district. From this extensive population, a sample of 513 male students and 392 female students was selected, totaling 905 participants, to gather pertinent data. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument, a pre-existing questionnaire was employed for data collection. Statistical analysis, including descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA, were employed to ascertain differences and relationships between various variables within the study. The research findings unveiled a significant disparity in the opinions of male and female students regarding the perception of English test anxiety. These findings have practical implications for improving English education and ensuring that all Secondary-level students can thrive in their learning experiences.

Key words: Anxiety, English, Perception, Test

1.1 Introduction

Despite learning, particularly in test circumstances (Howard, 2020). According to recent the fact that the subject of anxiety in the classroom has been extensively discussed and explored, it appears that it keeps coming up. As many academics contend that this problem affects students' academic performance as well as their psychological well-being, research on test anxiety appears to have followed a tradition Cherry, 2020). One of the most pervasive theories in anxiety-related literature for decades has been that anxiety is a problem in education because it arises when students are theoretical advancements; educational institutions have sought to implement measures that would help reduce the ongoing cases of anxiety during test scenarios (Wiseman & Hunt, 2013). There is now literature that discusses the perspectives of all parties involved, particularly with regard to the role of anxiety in evaluating educational outcome (Buck & Woods, 2019). The majority of them agree that anxiety has an impact on learning and may result in detrimental learning (Gneezy et al., 2019). Ofqual (2019) underscore the persistence of anxiety as a pressing concern, emphasizing that it often reemerges despite ongoing research efforts. This enduring interest reflects the profound impact that anxiety can have on students' educational experiences (Sommer & Arendasy 2015).

Test anxiety, in particular, has been a focal point for many years in the anxiety-related literature. It is widely recognized that anxiety tends to escalate during tests, potentially hindering students' ability to demonstrate their true knowledge and abilities (Nugent, 2013). In response to this challenge, educational institutions have made concerted efforts to implement strategies aimed at reducing test-related anxiety (Liu et al., 2021). These initiatives encompass a range of approaches, from creating more supportive testing environments to providing students with stress-reduction techniques and resources (Remmi & Hashim, 2021). Such interventions signify a growing recognition of the need to

address anxiety not merely as an individual issue but also as a systemic concern within the education system.

The explanation of test anxiety and how it affects academic results is a major theme in both older and more modern study (Von der Embse et al., 2018). When students are exposed to examinations at several level, they habitually experience test anxiety, categorized by way of emotional state of jumpiness (Álvarez et al., 2012). Numerous research studies have publicized that test anxiety theatres a substantial role in students' poor academic presentation and underachievement all over their educational passages. Additionally, it has been pragmatic that test anxiety obstructs students' aptitude to commendably learn since edicts (Silaj et al., 2021).

1.2 Literature Review

English test anxiety can significantly impact individuals in various ways. Test anxiety can hinder performance in English tests, affecting scores and grades negatively (Erözkan et al., 2017). Anxiety may lead to difficulty concentrating, remembering information, and applying language skills effectively during exams. The fear of English tests can cause significant emotional distress, including feelings of fear, nervousness, and even panic. This can affect overall well-being and mental health. Anxiety may impair language fluency and communication skills during the test (Ghahderijani et al., 2021). Students might struggle with expressing themselves clearly or comprehending questions and prompts effective. Constant anxiety about English tests can erode self-confidence in language abilities (Iliescu, 2017). This lack of confidence may persist beyond exams, affecting future language learning and use. Persistent test anxiety can deter individuals from pursuing opportunities that require English proficiency, impacting career prospects and personal growth (Mahshanian et al. 2019). Managing English test anxiety involves strategies such as relaxation techniques, effective study habits, and realistic goal-setting and seeking support from educators or counselors. Acknowledging and addressing test anxiety is crucial for improving performance and well-being in English language assessments.

1. Concept of Anxiety

Anxiety is a multifaceted emotional response characterized by feelings of worry, fear, and unease, often manifesting in physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, sweating, and restlessness. It serves as a natural reaction to stress, alerting individuals to potential dangers or challenges. However, when anxiety becomes chronic or overwhelming, it can interfere with daily life and well-being, leading to disorders such as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and social anxiety. The complexity of anxiety is influenced by various factors, including genetics, environmental stressors, and personal experiences, making it a deeply personal and often misunderstood phenomenon. Understanding and addressing anxiety is essential for fostering resilience and improving mental health, allowing individuals to navigate life's uncertainties with greater confidence and clarity.

2. History of Test Anxiety

Test anxiety has been a recognized phenomenon throughout the history of education, with documented instances dating back several decades. The concept gained prominence in the mid-20th century as researchers and educators began to delve into the psychological aspects of learning and assessment. The origins of test anxiety can be traced to the increased emphasis on standardized testing during the early stages of educational reform. As high-stakes exams became more prevalent, students experienced heightened stress levels associated with the fear of academic evaluation and its potential consequences.

3. Components of Test Anxiety

As research on test-related anxiety has advanced, the initial comprehensive concept has been deconstructed into various distinct sub-divisions. In 1960, Alpert and Haber proposed a model of test anxiety comprising two facets.

4. Effects of Test Anxiety on Memory and Cognition

Govorova, 2020 research provides affirmation for the overall impact of fretfulness on remembrance and cerebral functioning. Through conducted experiments, He demonstrated that anxiety negatively influences not only short-term memory functions that rely on internal repetition (as seen in tasks like digit span) but also more intricate cognitive processes like comprehension (Govorova, et al. 2020).

1.3 Gap in the Study

The purpose of conducting research on this topic is due to the reason that previously on this topic less researches have been conducted and there is not much data available in this context. The primary aim of this ongoing research is to explore how English test anxiety impacts Secondary school students and to determine if these anxiety levels have any measurable impact on students' academic performance in both classroom and exam situations. This study specifically concentrate on government schools in Multan and takes into account factors like gender and the language of instruction. This study aims to analyze perception of students towards English test anxiety at Secondary Level. This study is helpful to analyze the English test anxiety on the perception of students. Furthermore, given the limited availability of local research on these specific variables, it was deemed crucial to examine these factors to contribute more extensively to the body of research literature concerning the well-documented impact of test anxiety on students' perceptions.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine Secondary school students' perceptions of test anxiety in the English. The analysis of test anxiety on how students perceive emotional discomfort would also be beneficial from this study. It anticipates that the findings of this study further our understanding of primary education. The majority of current research on test anxiety focuses on undergraduate college students. Anxiety stands as one of the extensively explored subjects within the realm of psychology. It signifies the innate human reaction to stress, representing a typical response. This notion of anxiety diverges from fear, as it emerges as a customary human reaction to stressors. In today's world, anxiety has become a prevalent occurrence in everyday experiences.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The study successfully accomplished the following objectives:

1. To analyze the perceived English test anxiety of students at Secondary Level.
2. To analyze the effect of English test anxiety on the performance of students at Secondary Level on the bases of demographics i.e. gender, and locality.

1.6 Research Questions

The research study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the students' perception of English test anxiety of at Secondary Level?
2. Is there any gender based difference in students' perception of test anxiety at Secondary Level?

1.7 Research Design

The study was quantitative in nature. Mixed method research design was used.

1.8 Sample and sampling technique

Systematic random sampling technique was used to select the required sample of the study with the following steps; Out of total strength of students 22% sample for data collection was selected. Out of total sample i.e. 905 strength of male and female in each tehsil was calculated proportionally to their total strength 3936.

1.9 Tool Development

A questionnaire was developed on Four-point Likert scale as a tool of research. For the validation of tool, researchers used some steps of validity; Experts opinions, Pilot testing, Content Validity Index (CVI) and Reliability of tool.

Table 1.1 Reliability of the Instrument

Chronbach's Alpha	No of item
.667	55

Table 1.1 indicates that the reliability value is 0.667 which is acceptable as reliable tool.

1.10 Statistical Treatments

The data were analyzed by applying various statistical treatments including mean, SD, t-test, percentage and ANOVA.

1.11 Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In order to achieve the objectives formulated for the study, the data were analyzed statistically by applying different methods.

Table 1.2 T test based on gender Group statistics

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	T value	Sig
Male	255	175.81	25.14	1.08	.28	0.28
Female	135	178.66	23.95			
G Total	390					

The table 1.2 presents statistical information regarding gender differences in a certain parameter. The dataset includes a total of 390 individuals, with 255 being male and 135 being female. The mean value of the parameter for males is 175.81, with a standard deviation of 25.14. For females, the mean value is slightly higher at 178.66, with a standard deviation of 23.93. The analysis includes a t-test, which yields a value of 1.08 with 388 degrees of freedom. The p-value (not explicitly provided) for the t-test is likely 0.28.

Table 1.3 One way ANOVA based on tehsil

Student Tehsil	Sum of Squares	df	Means Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	15008.658	3	5002.886		
Within Groups	364506.591	860	423.845	11.804	.000
Total	379515.249	863			

The results of table No 1.3, one-way ANOVA analysis indicates that there are statistically significant differences in student performance across the different tehsils. The extremely low p-value (.000) provides strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis, implying that at least one tehsil has a statistically different mean academic achievement compared to the others.

1.12 Discussion

English test anxiety is a prevalent concern among students, and its impact on academic performance and well-being is well-documented. Numerous studies have highlighted the detrimental effects of test anxiety on cognitive processes, memory retention, and overall test performance (McCaldin et al., 2019). This anxiety often stems from fear of failure, high stakes associated with English exams, and the perceived difficulty of scientific concepts (Smith, 2018). It can manifest in various ways, including physical symptoms like sweating and racing heart, as well as cognitive disruptions such as intrusive worrying and decreased concentration (Lotz & Sparfeldt, 2017). Furthermore, English test anxiety can lead to a vicious cycle where heightened anxiety impairs performance, which, in turn, reinforces anxiety for future tests.

To combat English test anxiety, it is essential to implement evidence-based strategies (Mackey and Gass 2015). These include adopting effective study techniques, such as spaced repetition and practice testing. Additionally, addressing the underlying causes of anxiety, such as perfectionism or negative self-talk, through cognitive-behavioral strategies can be highly beneficial (Amiryousefi & Tavakoli (2011)). Educators can also play a pivotal role by creating a supportive learning environment that emphasizes mastery over grades, offering feedback, and providing ample opportunities for students to practice and build confidence (Kader, 2016). By acknowledging and addressing English test anxiety, both students and educators can work together to mitigate its adverse effects and promote a more positive and effective learning experience.

1.13 Conclusions

In conclusion, English test anxiety is a prevalent issue that affects students' academic performance, attitudes towards English, and overall well-being. It is fueled by factors such as the high stakes of exams, the complexity of scientific concepts, and negative self-perceptions. However, addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses effective study strategies, psychological support, a growth mindset, and a reevaluation of high-stakes testing. By recognizing and addressing English test anxiety, we can create a more supportive and conducive learning environment that allows students to thrive academically and develop a positive relationship with English. Students experiencing English test anxiety may become demotivated, as the fear of poor performance can diminish their enthusiasm for learning. This lack of motivation can lead to a disinterest in English subjects. Persistent test anxiety can erode a student's belief in their own capabilities, reducing their self-efficacy. This diminished self-confidence can extend beyond test-taking situations, affecting their overall academic performance and problem solving skills.

1.14 Recommendations

To effectively address English test anxiety, a multifaceted approach is essential. Firstly, educators should implement strategies aimed at reducing anxiety during assessments, such as providing clear instructions, offering practice tests, and allowing for adequate time to

complete exams. Additionally, promoting a growth mindset and emphasizing the value of learning from mistakes can help students develop a more positive attitude towards challenges in English. Schools and institutions should prioritize mental health and provide access to counseling services for students struggling with severe anxiety. Parents and caregivers can play a supportive role by maintaining open communication with their children, understanding their concerns, and encouraging a healthy balance between academic expectations and overall well-being. Moreover, reducing the pressure associated with high-stakes testing and placing greater emphasis on comprehensive learning rather than test scores can contribute to a less anxiety inducing educational environment. Ultimately, addressing English test anxiety requires collaboration between educators, institutions, parents, and students to create a supportive and holistic approach to English education that fosters confidence, resilience, and a love for learning.

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