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EXAMINATION ANXIETY AMONG THE HIGHER SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS OF JAÏAW, SHILLONG

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<i>Keywords</i>	<i>Abstract</i>
<p><i>Examination Anxiety, Streams, Mental Health, Educational Anxiety, Academic Achievement.</i></p>	<p>Examination anxiety has long been a persistent issue affecting many students and therefore resulting in high academic pressure and low performance among the students' community. This study aims to unfold the levels of examination anxiety of the higher secondary school students of Jaïaw and to compare the difference in the examination anxiety of the students on the basis of sex, locale and streams. A total of 721 students (311boys and 401 girls) participated in the study. The study has employed a quantitative approach and descriptive cum survey research designed was utilised to realise the objectives of the present investigation. The data collected were subjected to normality testing and appropriate statistical treatments were used to ascertained the significant of the differences in the examination anxiety of the students. The results indicated that the overall level of Examination anxiety among higher secondary school students were above average and the existence of a statistically significant difference in the examination anxiety of the students.</p>

Introduction

Anxiety can be defined as the condition of uneasiness or disturbance caused by both internal and external factors such as psychological factors, which occur due to fear or worry, or it can be of



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physiological factors often in response to a perceived threat or stressor. Matthews & Deary (1998) describe anxiety as feelings of nervousness or distress about future events, and unlike fear, which is a response to an immediate threat. It is manifested physically in the form of muscle tension, rapid heartbeat, and shallow breathing, which results in uneasiness (Zeidner,1998, and Cassady, 2004).

Examination anxiety has become an increasingly prevalent issue, especially among students in the 21st century. With the rising demands of academic success, students often face significant pressure to maintain high marks, meet expectations, and fear of failure. This anxiety can arise from different factors such as the fear of not living up to societal or personal standards, the pressure of academic workloads, and the constant striving for perfection. As a result, many students experience overwhelming stress, which can affect their mental health and overall health and well-being.

Examination anxiety, as the name suggests, is closely associated with the feelings of tension, worry, and nervousness arising due to examination situations or the perception of examination as the defining factor for future success (Spielberger, 1983). In the words of Hembree (1988), it stems from students' concern over academic performance and their fear of the consequences of failure. Examination anxiety has serious repercussions on the lives of students that can lead to a feeling of hopelessness, dropping out, or abandoning their educational pursuits altogether. The growing prevalence of examination anxiety in the context of a highly competitive world calls for special attention. There is a need to support students and to offer help to overcome or to cope with today's competitive academic environment.

Positioning the seriousness of examination anxiety and its adverse impact on the lives of the students, it becomes pertinent to undertake a study in this field as it will help the different stakeholders to get a clear picture of its influence on the mindsets of the students, teachers, and parents. The study will go a long way to offer suggestions and corrective measures to counter its ill effects on the lives of the students.

Literature Review

Previous studies (Bhatt et al, 2002; Ghost 2012; & Kumari and Jain, 2014) indicated that examination anxiety is prevalent among the student community, wherein a majority of them experience from a moderate to a very high level of examination stress, which significantly undermines, particularly their academic performance and their efficiency in their everyday life. The effect is more pronounced among the female students than the male students (Eman et al. 2012; Das and Kumar 2022; Kumari and Singh 2022; Manikandan et al. 2023; Khalid 2024; Bit 2021). However, examination anxiety is a multifaceted issue influenced by a wide range of interconnected factors. For instance, academic streams play a notable role where arts students reported the highest levels of anxiety during examinations, followed by Commerce students, while science students reported the least (Kumari and Jain 2014; Beena and Aggarwal 2019). Additionally, academic



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performance has been identified as another key factor, as seen in studies by Mohan and Lone 2021, Patel 2024), Ansar and Sagar 2021), and Ghosh 2012), which reported a significant correlation between examination anxiety and academic performance among higher secondary students. Nonetheless, Dutta and Gogoi 2015) reported no significant difference in the impact of educational anxiety on academic achievement between male and female students, suggesting that effective academic management skills, guidance, and counselling services may help reduce such disparities.

The above review sheds light on the issues and problems reported by numerous studies that are related to the examination anxiety of many students in different parts of the world. Some of the common factors, such as gender, streams, locale, learning process, perception related to examination, learning pattern and over expectation of learning outcome were able to identify.

Objectives

The objectives of the present investigation are stated as under:

1. To find out the level of examination anxiety of higher secondary school students in Jaïaw
2. To assess the difference in the examination anxiety of male and female Higher Secondary School students.
3. To test the difference in the examination anxiety of the Higher Secondary School students based on the streams that they study (arts, commerce, science).
4. To determine the difference in the examination anxiety of students from rural and urban areas studying in Jaïaw, Shillong

Null Hypotheses

The followings are the hypotheses of the study:

H₀ 1 There is no significant difference in the mean scores of examination anxiety between males and females among higher secondary school students in Jaïaw.

H₀ 2 There is no significant difference in the examination anxiety of Higher secondary school students studying on the basis of the streams they are studying.

H₀ 3 There is no significant difference in the examination anxiety of students from rural and urban areas studying in Jaïaw, Shillong.

Delimitations

This present investigation has been delimited to the class XII students of the schools of Jaïaw and those studied under Meghalaya Board of School Education (MBOSE).



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Methodology

This study aims to examine the level of examination anxiety among higher secondary school students in the East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. In this present study, the investigator has employed the quantitative method and a descriptive a design was used to attain the objectives and answer the research questions. By utilizing a standardized tool. This approach helps the researcher to analyze the patterns and trends within the sampled population.

Population: The population of the present study comprises all secondary schools located in Jaïaw, namely Jaïaw Mihngi, Jaïaw St Joseph, Jaiaw Lumbatemon, and Jaïaw Pdeng. In total, there are 9 secondary schools consisting of both government-aided and private institutions. The study includes 721 higher secondary school students (311 boys and 401 girls) from these schools within the Jaïaw Block, East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya.

Sample: The researcher adopted basic random sampling procedures to select the sample for the current study. For this study, private, government, and government – aided higher secondary schools were selected as a sample. A random technique was used to identify the 322 samples for the study.

Tool Used: To achieve the stated objectives of the study, the investigator has used the Students' Examination Anxiety Test (SEAT-AK), which was standardized by Dr. Madhu Agarwal and Varsha Kaushal in the year 2017, and a self-made questionnaire was constructed to identify factors associated with the examination anxiety of the students.

Statistical technique Used: The data was analysed using a quantitative approach. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, were used to understand the distribution of scores and provide a general overview of examination anxiety levels among students. In addition, non-parametric statistics were applied to determine significant differences in examination anxiety. Specifically, the Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used to examine significant differences among higher secondary school students in Jaïaw, with respect to variables such as gender, type of school, class level, and type of family. Data was collected from the respondents to obtain the necessary information required for the study. The objective of understanding their views was to provide the researcher with relevant insights from which conclusions could be drawn regarding the level of examination anxiety among representative groups of higher secondary school students.

Findings

Level of examination anxiety of higher secondary school students in Jaïaw (overall)

The study found that a notable number of higher secondary students fall within the above-average level of anxiety when the two levels are taken as one (37.35%), which is followed by (31.5%) falling within the average level of examination anxiety, which is followed by smaller percentages falling in



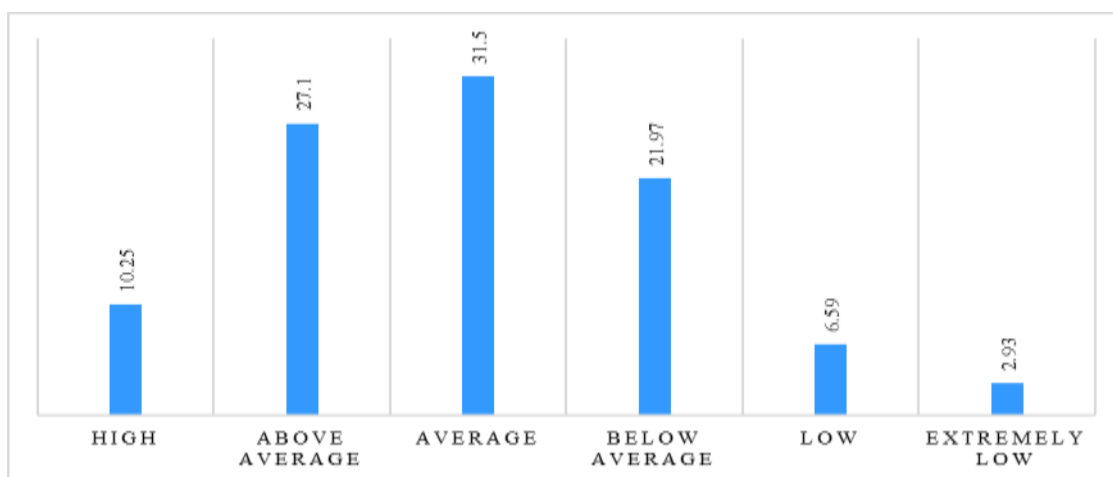
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the below, low, and extremely low levels. A similar trend is also noticed on the bases of gender where a sizeable percentage were found to be average however females recorded a higher examination anxiety compared to males, on the other hand while considering examination anxiety on the bases of streams it shows that commerce students were the sole group at the highest level of anxiety, Science students though had varying anxiety levels from high to low, and Arts students were centred around an average to slightly low anxiety level. Showing different patterns of examination stress across academic streams. Lastly, based on the locale of the students, a sizeable number of them fall within the above and high levels of examination anxiety. These findings suggest that moderate examination anxiety is widespread among students and may serve as both a motivator and a potential source of stress if not properly managed.

Table 1 Level of examination anxiety of higher secondary school students in Jaïaw (N= 322)

Sl No	Z-Score Range	Grade	Level	Frequency	Percentage
1	+2.01 & above	A	Extremely High	-	-
2	+1.26 to +2.00	B	High	32	10.25%
3	+0.51 to +1.25	C	Above Average	77	27.10%
4	-0.50 to +0.50	D	Average	117	31.50%
5	-1.25 to -0.51	E	Below average	62	21.97%
6	-2.00 to -1.26	F	Low	26	6.59%
7	-2.01 & below	G	Extremely Low	8	2.93%
Total				N=322	100%

Figure 1 Level of examination anxiety of Higher secondary school students in Jaïaw



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Differences in the examination anxiety between male and female higher secondary school students in Jaïaw

Table 2 Differences in examination anxiety of male and female secondary school students (N= 322)

Category	N	Mean Rank	Sum of rank	Mann-Whitney U Test	p- value	Remark
Female	202	181.59	36681.00	8032.000	.00	Significant
Male	120	127.68	15322.00			

**Significant at 0.05 level*

The table showed a U- value of 8062.000, p-value .00 as displayed in the table. Since the p-value is less than the alpha value of 0.05. This indicates that the difference is statistically significant in the examination anxiety of male and female secondary school students. The mean rank of male students is 127.68, which is lower than the mean rank of female students, which is 181.59. This suggests that female students experienced significantly higher levels of examination anxiety compared to male students. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that “*there is no significant difference in the examination anxiety of male and female secondary school students*” is rejected.

Differences in examination anxiety of the higher secondary school students based on the streams that they study, namely arts, commerce, science

Table 3 Difference in the examination anxiety of the bases of streams, namely Arts, Science & Commerce (N=322)

Gender	N	Mean Rank	p-value	Remark
Arts	198	155	.286	Not Significant
Science	63	165.68		
Commerce	61	176.43		

**Not significant at 0.05*

From the above table it can be seen that the mean rank of arts, science and commerce students is 155.57, 165.68, and 176.43 respectively with p-value is .286. Since the p-value is greater than the conventional threshold of 0.05. This indicate that difference in the mean rank of arts, science and commerce secondary students is statistically not significant. Therefore, it indicates that higher secondary school students experience similar amount of examination anxiety irrespective of the



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streams they belong. Thus, the null hypothesis of ‘there is no significant difference in the examination anxiety of the higher secondary school students of Jaïaw irrespective of the academic streams they belong’ is not rejected.

Differences in the examination anxiety of students from rural and urban areas studying in Jaïaw, Shillong

The difference in the examination anxiety of the rural and urban secondary school students of Jaïaw is depicted in the following table

Table 4 Differences in the examination anxiety of students from rural and urban areas studying in Jaïaw, Shillong (N = 322)

Locale	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	p-value	Remark
Urban	274	158.82	43517.50	5842.500	.217	Not Significant
Rural	48	176.78	8485.50			

Note: Not significant at the .05 level

The above table shows the mean rank of urban and rural students which is 158.82 and 176.78 respectively. The Mann Whitney U value is 5842.500 with p-value is .217. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, this indicate that difference in the mean rank of the urban and rural higher secondary students is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis of ‘no significant difference in the examination anxiety of the male and female higher secondary school students of Jaïaw’ is retained.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that a considerable proportion of higher secondary students in Jaïaw, east Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya falls within the high and above average levels of anxiety with (37.35%) which is followed by (31.5%) falling within average level and only a smaller percentage of students fall into the low or extremely low categories. This finding aligns with **Bhatt et al. (2002)** and **Ghosh (2012)** who also found that a number of the students were categorized as those having high and very high level of examination anxiety with a small number of them falling under low anxiety groups. In the similar vein **Kumari and Jain (2014)** also observed that college students experience varying levels of examination stress and anxiety, with many showing moderate anxiety. These findings suggest that moderate examination anxiety is widespread among students and may serve as both a motivator and a potential source of stress if not properly managed.



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A significant difference was found based on gender, indicating the female students experienced are more prone to examination stress and anxiety. This finding goes in line with that of **Eman et al. (2012)**, **Ghosh (2012)** and **Das and Kumar (2022)** who reported that female students exhibited greater academic anxiety, which negatively impacted their performance. **Kumari and Singh (2022)** and **Kumari & Lakshmi (2023)**, **Manikandan et al. (2023)** confirmed this trend among senior secondary school students, observing significantly higher anxiety scores in female suggest that female students are more vulnerable to examination-related anxiety, highlighting the need for targeted support and interventions.

However, a statistically insignificant difference was observed among students from different streams. The study indicated that the academic streams do have significant influence on the examination anxiety among the higher secondary students of Jaïaw. The current finding contradicts the previous findings by **Kumari and Singh (2022)**, **Beena and Aggarwal (2019)**, which explicitly compared examination anxiety or academic stress levels among students of different streams and reported that science and commerce students experienced higher anxiety compared to arts students, often associated with more pressure, likely due to the increased academic demands in these fields.

Finally, the study suggested that the difference in the examination anxiety of the urban and rural higher secondary school students in Jaïaw was statistically insignificant. The finding supported the finding of **Dutta and Gogoi (2015)** who also found no significant difference in examination anxiety among the urban and rural students.

Conclusion

Through the findings we understand that Examination anxiety is highly prevalent among students with a considerable proportion experiencing high and average anxiety. The emotional and social dynamic particularly regarding gender and environmental influences, play a role in how students process academic pressure. The heightened anxiety observed in female students appears to be deeply rooted in a cycle of overanalyzing fueled by societal expectations and the fear of perceived shame when failing to meet external benchmarks. This necessitates a more empathetic approach from both parents and educators, shifting the focus from rigid, lofty ambitions to more realistic, achievable goals that prioritize the student's mental well-being. Regardless of whether a student hails from an urban or rural background, the detrimental effects of constant comparison and hyper-competitive aspirations remain a universal threat. To combat this, a collective effort must be made to de-emphasize outcomes in favor of valuing effort and individual progress. Through the implementation of robust counselling services and mentorship programs, educational system can create a supportive infrastructure that validates the student's experience, ultimately fostering a culture of mental health awareness that bridges the gap between different demographic backgrounds.



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Educational Implications

Based on the findings of the present investigation, some of the important implications may be drew that will help reduce the influence of examination anxiety among the students are listed as under:

1. The elevated levels of anxiety suggest that higher secondary school students experience significant anxiety. Therefore, schools should provide study skills and time management training to help students prepare more effectively and reduce last-minute stress. This will improve their confidence and lower anxiety before exams. Even though a small amount of anxiety is needed to get the work done and, in turn, lead to better academic performance, extreme anxiety can lower academic performance.
2. The significant difference based on gender that female students have more anxiety is likely because they overthink a lot, which stems from external pressure from parents and society, as well as a feeling of shame when they cannot meet their expectations. This emphasizes the need for emotional support and validation from parents and teachers, ensuring that they feel acknowledged, understood, and heard. Lofty expectations from parents and school management can do a disservice to the mental health and well-being of students. Hence, it is important that more realistic or achievable goals be set for and with the students, along with the parents. This will ensure that students are understood and cared for when expectations are placed before them by the elders.
3. The difference in the examination anxiety between rural and urban secondary school students may not be significant. Care should be taken by everyone to ensure that varying levels of aspirations, constant comparison, and high expectations and ambitions set by parents, teachers and society should be brought to a minimise level. Parents and teachers can start by setting realistic goals focusing on each student's abilities rather than comparing them with others. Encouraging effort, progress, and learning instead of only outcomes helps reduce pressure. Schools could also provide counselling or mentorship programs that can help students cope better with anxiety.
4. Collectively, these implications highlight the urgency of mental awareness among students, enhancing time management and counselling programs to ensure that students from different educational backgrounds can cope with examination anxiety.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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