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## The Role of Academic Anxiety in shaping Performance of students: A Tertiary level scholarly outcomes.

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### Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the role of academic anxiety in determining student performance. The population of this study included all male and female students from Punjab. The study's sample from Bahawalpur, Pakistan, was selected using a basic random selection procedure. The study was developed quantitatively. Data were acquired using a Likert scale questionnaire. The data was analysed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied. The frequency, percentage, t-test, correlation, and regression tests were used to produce more dependable and accurate results.

The findings indicate that academic anxiety influences students' motivation and engagement

levels, the greatest inauspicious effect of academic anxiety is obtaining low scores, and a highly significant and positive relation was found between academic anxiety and academic performance. Educators and institutions need to support students in managing their anxiety and providing resources to promote optimal learning environments.

## **Introduction**

A mental health condition characterized by worries, fear, and apprehension, often accompanied by physical symptoms is termed as anxiety. It is even reported to affect the lifestyle of those who suffer from anxiety (Taj et al., 2024). Anxiety in the course of study has become a common psychological challenge for university students. It is reported to affect their academic success and overall well-being (Kashif, Tabassum, et al., 2024). It is rooted in the pressure to excel academically, fear of failure, and the demanding nature of the coursework. Kashif et al (2024) reported that academic anxiety may have both positive and negative impacts on academic performance. Recognizing and addressing academic anxiety can improve student performance and well-being, enhancing overall academic performance. Academic anxiety, particularly test anxiety, negatively impacts university students' performance, cognitive functioning, and overall well-being. Research consistently shows a negative correlation between test anxiety and academic achievement with higher levels associated with poorer performance (Dilshad et al., 2016). Anxiety can also interfere with working memory capacity, attentional control, and information processing, leading to decreased performance on complex tasks. High levels of anxiety can lead to decreased motivation and engagement, negatively impacting academic performance (Pot-Kolder et al., 2018).

Anxiety affects sleep quality and sleep hygiene, which in turn impacts academic engagement and performance. Poor sleep quality mediated by anxiety leads to lower academic engagement

and performance (Tabassum, Fatima Kashif, et al., 2024).

### **Problem Statement**

Since academic anxiety has a major impact on students' success and well-being, the topic "Role of Academic Anxiety in Shaping Performance of University Students" was chosen. Comprehending the correlation between academic anxiety and students' cognitive ability, motivation, and overall academic achievements is crucial, given the prevalence of this issue. By examining this subject, it will be possible to highlight the significance of addressing mental health issues in educational settings and to throw light on the mechanisms through which anxiety affects performance. This study can aid in creating practical plans that will enable pupils to overcome their fears and reach their greatest academic potential.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed to;

1. Determine the prevalence of academic anxiety on university students' Motivation and engagement.
2. Assess the effect of academic anxiety on the academic grade points of students.
3. Investigate the correlation between academic anxiety and academic achievement among university students.

### **Research Questions**

1. How common is academic anxiety among university students' motivation and engagement?
2. How can academic anxiety affect students' academic performance?
3. Is there a correlation between academic anxiety and student performance?

## **Significance of the Study**

The study covers the following significant features.

- For students, the study provides insights into how anxiety can hinder their academic success. The study findings may provide them with an evidence-based insight into the situation. Understanding that situation, they may adopt coping mechanisms, and stress management techniques to alleviate their academic performance.
- This knowledge may also help educators and educational administrators, in implementing strategies to adopt strategies that may minimize their academic stress and boost their performance rate.
- The study contributes to filling the research gap in understanding the effects of academic anxiety on university students' performance. It adds to the existing body of knowledge by providing specific insights into the relationship between anxiety and academic outcomes.

## **Literature Review**

Literature indicated a deep focus on both study variables in different aspects. Anxiety is a psychological distress experienced by students in response to any life-related tasks. If it is related to exams, assignments, or presentations, it is called academic anxiety (Kumari, Santha, Chamundeswari, 2015). Academic anxiety impairs cognitive processes, leading to difficulties in comprehension, problem-solving, and critical thinking. It also influences test-taking behaviors, resulting in rushed responses, avoidance of challenging tasks, and excessive checking. This can negatively impact motivation, engagement, and persistence in academic tasks (Tabassum, Fida, et al., 2024). Additionally, academic anxiety can affect students' perceived control over their academic outcomes, leading to a sense of helplessness and reduced belief in their ability to control or

influence academic performance. Understanding the relationship between academic anxiety, motivation, and engagement is crucial for implementing interventions and strategies that foster positive motivation, enhance engagement, and support students in managing their anxiety to achieve optimal academic outcomes (Magelinskaitė et al., 2014).

The levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among students lead to the externalization or internalization of harmful behavior, which lowers motivation, erodes coping strategies and self-worth, and ultimately affects performance and well-being (Rehman et al., 2024). There are several ways in which academic anxiety substantially affects students' motivation. Research has indicated that students' motivation may suffer as a result of academic anxiety, whether it is brought on by writing assignments, taking tests, or worrying due to the outbreak (Qayyum et al., 2024) . Academic anxiety can also undermine students' motivation and engagement in academic tasks, leading to decreased intrinsic motivation and engagement. Beyond academic outcomes, academic anxiety can extend to students' mental health and overall well-being, with chronic academic stress and anxiety associated with increased levels of depression, burnout, and decreased life satisfaction (Fakunmoju et al., 2016). A decrease in accomplishment motivation has been associated with high levels of stress and anxiety, specifically influencing their incentive to perform well academically (Tabassum, Saad, et al., 2024).

Furthermore, research has demonstrated the detrimental correlation between test anxiety and extrinsic as well as intrinsic motivation, underscoring the need for anxiety management in maintaining students' levels of academic motivation (Tabassum et al., 2023). In general, treating academic anxiety plays a critical role in preserving and boosting students' drive to excel in their studies (Kashif, Nayyar, et al., 2023).

Academic anxiety has a major negative impact on students' grades. Tabassum and Aziz (2022) discovered that anxiety levels were higher in girls than in boys, which had an impact on their academic performance.

Hamid et al. (2024) also emphasized the adverse impacts on pupil achievement that are associated with parental support and academic stress. The study conducted by Tabassum, Saleem, et al. (2024) highlighted the detrimental relationship that exists between stress, anxiety, and academic performance, particularly in high-stress learning contexts. These studies therefore clearly show that academic anxiety is a significant factor impacting students' grades and general academic success.

Most of the research indicated a negative association between academic anxiety and the academic performance of university students. Tabassum, Yaseen, et al. (2024) asserted that academic anxiety hinders the learning process resulting in cognitive impairments, comprehension difficulties, and lack of problem-solving and critical thinking abilities of the tertiary level learners. Further research also indicated that academic anxiety adversely affects information processing, and the learning process, leading to maladaptive behaviors such as procrastination and avoidance attitudes (Jabeen et al., 2023). Academic anxiety is a significant factor in the academic performance of university students. Studies show that higher levels of anxiety lead to lower grades and overall GPAs, as it hinders concentration, information processing, and performance. Additionally, academic anxiety can lead to decreased academic engagement, which can negatively impact students' understanding of the subject matter and academic performance (Tabassum, Haneef, et al., 2024).

Chronic academic stress and anxiety can also lead to increased depression, burnout, and decreased life satisfaction among students (Kashif, Ashraf, et al., 2023). To address such issues,

interventions such as cognitive-behavioral techniques, relaxation exercises, mindfulness-based interventions, and supportive learning environments have been proposed (Iqbal et al., 2021). Self-monitoring and self-reflection techniques help students develop greater self-awareness and identify patterns of negative thinking and behaviors associated with academic anxiety (Tabassum, Khalid, et al., 2024). These techniques have been proven effective in reducing academic anxiety and enhancing self-regulation skills. Understanding the effects of academic anxiety is crucial for promoting students' mental health and overall quality of life. Therefore, addressing academic anxiety is crucial for promoting academic success and reducing the negative impact of anxiety on students.

### **Research Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of academic anxiety in shaping the performance of university students. The current study was descriptive, and a survey approach was used to successfully finish the research. To collect information like raw numbers and frequency distributions of attitudes and opinions, surveys are frequently used. A survey questionnaire was designed to collect data through this study strategy.

### ***Population & Sample of the Study***

The population of this study was all the male and female students from Punjab. The sample of the study comprised 150 university students from Bahawalpur, Pakistan, using a simple random sampling technique. The sample (n = 150) was found to be demographically diverse in gender, location, and departments based on the demographic profile of the sample.

### **Development of Research Tool**

Self-developed Likert-Scale questionnaire was used as a research tool. It included two parts

1. Demographic questions regarding gender, locality, and study department.
2. Part 2 consisted of 30 statements on a five-point Likert scale from (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree).

### ***Validation of Research Tool***

The research tool was validated by pilot study and expert opinion i.e., the study tool was validated by 20 experts in the field, and necessary changes were made according to their directions. 30 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to students studying science, arts, and humanities at three different universities in District Bahawal Pur for the pilot project. Cronbach's alpha indicated that the obtained tool data had a reliability of .89.

### ***Data Collection***

The data were collected by using a simple random technique. One hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were distributed among students and one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were returned, respondents were requested to answer the most suitable answer according to their opinion and the return rate was 100%.

The sample (n = 150) was found to be demographically diverse in gender, location, and departments based on the demographic profile of the sample.



*Table 1: Demographic Profile*

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	64	42
	Female	86	58
<b>Locality</b>	Rural	47	32
	Urban	103	68
<b>Departments</b>	Science	97	64
	Arts/Humanities	53	36

***Ethical Considerations***

The data-gathering plan was approved by the research ethics committee. A letter of approval was given to the university administration before any data were collected. Also, essential information regarding privacy issues was provided to the students.

**Data analysis.**

This survey was designed to determine the role of academic anxiety on students' academic performance. Students were given a questionnaire to accomplish this goal. Following questionnaire verification, the data from 150 respondents was deemed accurate and was chosen for data analysis.

**Study Findings**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25) was used to analyze the data using descriptive and inferential statistics, such as frequency, percentage, t-test, correlation, and regression.

***Prevalence of academic anxiety on Motivation and Engagement***

**Table 2: Academic anxiety on Student’s Motivation and Engagement levels**

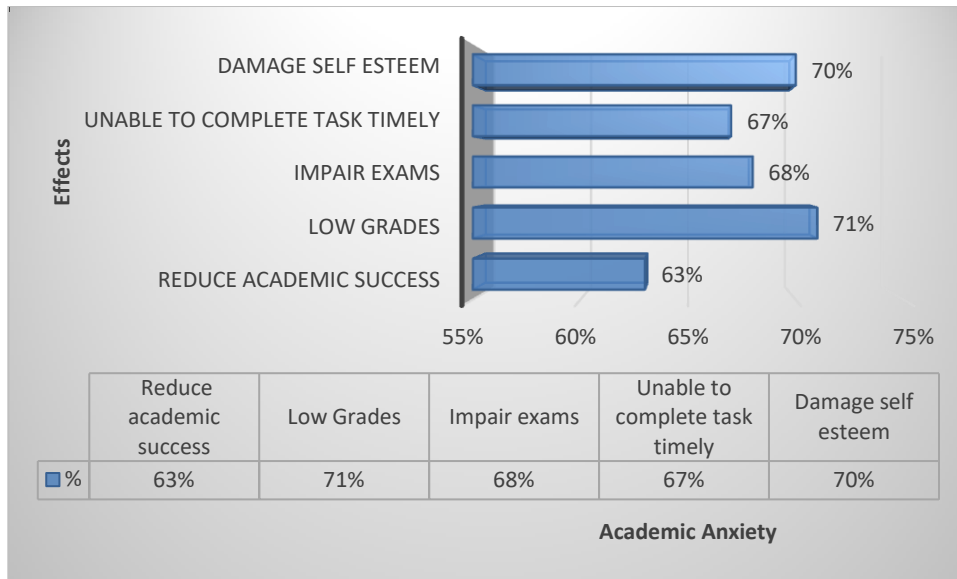
Academic anxiety;	Mean	SD
Decreases my motivation to perform well academically.	68.2	3.70 1.095
Reduces my enthusiasm for learning and pursuing academic goals.	71.5	3.73 1.045
This leads me to avoid challenging academic tasks or opportunities.	62.9	3.48 1.136
Makes it difficult for me to actively participate in class discussions or activities.	72.2	3.77 .891
Often results in procrastination or delayed academic work.	66.8	3.66 1.611

The results show students indicated that academic anxiety makes it difficult for them to actively participate in class discussions or activities with the highest percentage value (72.2%), mean

score of 3.77, and a standard deviation of .891. It demonstrates a favorable attitude to this element and investigates how harder academic anxiety affects the motivation and engagement levels of the students.

***The Effects of Academic Anxiety and Students’ Grades Points***

Figure 1: Academic anxiety on students’ grades.



A large percentage of students (71. %) contend that their academic anxiety has resulted in lower grades or educational accomplishments. This bar chart makes it very evident that the greatest inauspicious effect of academic anxiety is obtaining low scores that negatively impact academic achievement.

Table 3: The Correlation in Academic Anxiety and Students’ Academic Performance

B	Std. Error	t	Sig	F	R	R Square
.212	.077	2.765	.006*	7.647	.175	.031

Note. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance Significant at 0.01 level

The value of correlation (.175) shows that there is a positive correlation between academic anxiety on students' academic performance at the university level. The goodness of fit indices value (.031) showed that only 3% total variance in the academic performance of students (dependent variable) is explained by academic anxiety (independent variable). The F- value (F= 7.64, p = .006) is significant at a .01 level of significance so the model fit is significant. It suggests a linear relationship between academic anxiety on students' academic performance at the university level. The value of a n independent variable that is academic anxiety ( $\beta = .212$ ) in coefficient table represents the extent to which the independent variable contributes to the value of the dependent variable which is academic performance. The t-value (t = 2.76, p = .006) is also significant, which indicates academic anxiety had positive effects on students' academic performance. It means that the independent variable has positive effects on the dependent variable.

Table 4: The relationship between academic anxiety and academic performance of university students

Variables	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	R-value	p-value
Academic Anxiety	3.18	1.286	.563**	.000
Academic Performance	3.20	1.113	.583**	.000

Note. \*p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001.

Table displays the correlation matrix of different academic anxiety and academic performance. A highly significant and positive relation was found between academic anxiety and academic performance (r=.583\*\*, p<.05).

## Discussion

The study aims to explore the impact of academic anxiety on university students' performance. The study's first objective was related to assessing the impact of academic anxiety on

student's motivation and engagement levels. The study revealed that students feel it challenging to engage fully in class discussions and activities due to academic anxiety. It explores how students' motivation and engagement levels are affected by higher degrees of academic anxiety and reveals an upbeat mindset toward that aspect. Tabassum et al. (2020) found that high levels of anxiety were associated with decreased motivation, lower self-regulated learning strategies, and ultimately poorer academic performance. Students with high levels of neuroticism and perfectionism experience more academic anxiety, which can negatively impact their performance (Kashif, Zabrin, et al., 2024). Anxiety can impair students' ability to concentrate, recall information, and perform well in exams, affecting their overall academic achievements. A study by Tabassum and Akhter (2020) also highlights the role of anxiety in hindering cognitive processes which can apply to university students experiencing academic anxiety.

The second objective of the study explores that academic anxiety has a detrimental influence on students' performance in general, resulting in lower marks, impaired exam performance, ineffective completion of projects or tasks, and lowered one's self-esteem. Another study shows a significant but small inverse relationship between test anxiety and grade point average (GPA) was found in both undergraduate and graduate student. (Mofatteh, 2021). whereas Eidlin-Levy et al. (2023) discovered that academic-specific anxiety is an important negative predictor of academic performance. Anxiety and depression negatively predict college students' college GPA, but higher levels of perceived peer support can buffer these effects (Sharma et al., 2021). Narmandakh et al. (2021) also found that an optimal level of anxiety leads to peak performance, but excessive anxiety can hinder performance.

The third objective was to investigate the link between academic anxiety and academic

performance in university students. According to this study, academic anxiety and students' university-level academic performance are correlated linearly. Academic performance and academic anxiety were revealed to be positively correlated in a highly significant way. Salari et al. (2020) suggested that academic anxiety not only correlates with but also predicts academic performance. Students with lower anxiety levels tend to perform better academically, and anxiety can significantly predict academic outcomes. Yang and Yang (2022) found a weak and negative relationship between anxiety and achievement scores of undergraduate university students under his study. Tabassum, Fatima Kashif, et al. (2024) examined the associations between educational goals, learning-related skills, and socioemotional competencies. They found that anxiety negatively predicted academic performance, highlighting the importance of addressing anxiety-related issues early on to foster positive learning outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the study, students with academic anxiety found it difficult to participate completely in class discussions and activities. It looks at how increased levels of academic anxiety affect students' motivation and involvement and presents a positive outlook on that front. High levels of academic anxiety can negatively affect students' motivation and engagement, leading to decreased academic performance.

Receiving poor grades in students' disciplines was, however, the most important factor. Students claim that their grades or scores have suffered as a result of their academic worries. It is quite clear that getting low marks, which have a detrimental influence on their academic progress, is the biggest adverse effect of academic anxiety.

A direct correlation between students' academic anxiety and their university-level academic achievement was found in this study. Between academic anxiety and academic achievement, a strong and favorable relationship was discovered.

However, when anxiety becomes too high, it can hinder performance. This concept can be applied to academic anxiety, where moderate levels may enhance performance, but excessive anxiety can have negative effects. Overall, this study and others in the field suggest that academic anxiety can have a significant impact on the academic performance of university students. Excessive anxiety can hinder cognitive functioning, motivation, and self-regulated learning, leading to decreased performance. Furthermore, higher levels of anxiety can lead to lower academic success, resulting in poorer academic performance.

The study concludes that academic anxiety can negatively affect students' motivation, engagement, and academic grades, suggesting the need for supportive environments to alleviate anxiety. Educators and institutions need to support students in managing their anxiety and providing resources to promote optimal learning environments. Therefore, educators and institutions must support students in managing anxiety and providing resources for optimal learning environments.

## **Recommendations**

The study findings led to the following recommendations.

- Students should be given proper training or guidance regarding time management in their lives and study schedules especially. Moreover, the inoculation of various other study techniques such as active reading, note-taking, and effective revision methods. By equipping them with

efficient study skills, students can feel more confident in their abilities, leading to reduced anxiety.

- For future researchers, it is recommended that exploring different other angles of data collection and increasing the breadth of the sample may help to explore more research facets as well.

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