

A Review Article on Home Environment, Examination Anxiety, And Academic Achievement of Higher Secondary Students

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ABSTRACT

Academic achievement holds significant importance not only for the student but also for those around them. It is widely recognized that academic success is influenced by two broad categories of factors: subjective (individual) factors and objective (environmental) factors. Subjective factors relate to the personal attributes of the individual, while objective factors are associated with the individual's environment. Emotional maturity is one of the key individual, non-cognitive factors that may impact a student's academic achievement. In a study investigating the effects of home environment and academic achievement on mental health, a sample of 300 secondary school students was examined, comprising 150 female and 150 male participants. The results revealed that the mean mental health score for girls was 74.7, while for boys it was 70. These findings indicate that, on average, girls demonstrated better mental health compared to boys.

1. INTRODUCTION

Science, technological advancement, and education levels are key indicators distinguishing developed countries from developing ones. The economic and social growth of any nation primarily depends on its human resources, rather than just its physical resources like minerals. Human resources refer to individuals' knowledge, cognitive abilities, and creative potential — all of which are reflected in students' academic performance. Academic achievement is most commonly assessed through examinations, which remain the primary method of evaluating a student's learning and performance. Today, academic achievement is a major focus in the field of education, with increasing responsibility placed on teachers to

prepare students for future success. A teacher's ultimate goal is to develop students' abilities and guide them towards maturity. Research has shown that a low to moderate level of test anxiety can enhance academic achievement by keeping students motivated and focused. In contrast, high academic achievement itself serves as a powerful motivator, encouraging students to strive harder for excellence. Anxiety, however, is generally described as an unpleasant emotional state characterized by nervous behaviors such as restlessness, physical symptoms, and constant worrying. Examination anxiety is widespread among students across the world. While a certain degree of anxiety is normal and can even help maintain alertness, excessive examination anxiety has been consistently linked to poorer test performance. Test anxiety is one of the most commonly recognized cognitive issues impacting students' academic scores. It can also affect students' self-esteem, peer relationships, and social behaviors (Costello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler, & Angold, 2003). Studies suggest that approximately 25 to 40 percent of students experience examination anxiety, with children having special educational needs showing even higher rates. Examination anxiety can occur before, during, or after exams and, when intense, can lead to significant stress and a decline in academic achievement. Academic achievement refers to the scores students obtain across different subject areas, serving as tangible proof of their learning success. It reflects the extent to which educational goals have been achieved by students, teachers, or institutions. Typically, academic achievement is measured through examinations or continuous assessments. The present study aims to investigate the impact of examination anxiety on the academic achievement of higher secondary school students

HOME ENVIRONMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The home environment plays a critical role in shaping students' academic success. It includes factors such as parental support, family income, access to educational materials, parental involvement in schooling, and the emotional atmosphere at home. Research consistently shows that students from nurturing, resourceful households tend to perform better academically.

- **Parental Involvement:** When parents actively participate in their children's education — by attending school meetings, assisting with homework, and offering encouragement — students often show greater motivation and achieve higher academic results.
- **Socio-economic Status (SES):** Families with higher socio-economic status usually provide better learning resources, healthier nutrition, and broader life experiences, all of which contribute to stronger academic performance.
- **Emotional Support:** A home that offers emotional warmth, encouragement, and structure helps to lower students' stress levels and promotes a more positive and confident approach to learning.

EXAMINATION ANXIETY AND ITS IMPACT

Examination anxiety refers to the intense stress or nervousness students feel before, during, or even after examinations, which can significantly disrupt their academic performance. While a mild level of anxiety can sometimes enhance alertness and motivation, excessive anxiety tends to have negative effects.

- **Cognitive Effects:** High anxiety can interfere with memory recall, reduce concentration, impair decision-making, and hinder problem-solving abilities, making it difficult for students to demonstrate what they have learned.
- **Behavioral Effects:** Students suffering from severe examination anxiety may develop avoidance behaviors, such as procrastination, absenteeism, or, in some cases, resort to dishonest practices like cheating in an attempt to manage their fear of failure.
- **Physiological Symptoms:** Anxiety often triggers physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, insomnia, rapid heartbeat, and nausea, all of which can further undermine a student's ability to focus and perform effectively.

Research indicates that while moderate anxiety can act as a motivating force to prepare thoroughly for exams, excessive anxiety is overwhelming and leads to underperformance. Academically well-prepared students may struggle during exams because self-doubt, mental blocks, and panic prevent them from accessing and applying their knowledge effectively. Therefore, managing examination anxiety is crucial for maximizing student success and maintaining their mental and physical well-being.

INTERPLAY BETWEEN HOME ENVIRONMENT AND EXAMINATION ANXIETY

The home environment plays a crucial role in shaping how students cope with examination anxiety. A nurturing, supportive home setting can act as a buffer, helping to reduce the

negative effects of stress and anxiety. When parents offer emotional reassurance, encouragement, and academic support, children are more likely to feel confident and capable. This emotional backing provides a strong foundation for students to manage their stress more effectively, enabling them to perform better during exams. For example, parents who create a positive and open atmosphere where students can discuss their worries or challenges help them build resilience. Knowing they have a support system at home makes students less likely to feel overwhelmed when faced with academic pressures. Parental involvement, such as helping with homework, showing interest in schoolwork, and reassuring them before exams, strengthens students' coping mechanisms, which can lead to better performance. On the other hand, a hostile or indifferent home environment, where parents are emotionally distant or neglectful of their child's academic needs, can exacerbate anxiety. In such environments, students may feel unsupported or unloved, leading to feelings of insecurity, low self-esteem, and increased stress. Without positive reinforcement, students may struggle to handle the pressure of exams, leading to a vicious cycle where anxiety undermines their academic performance. The lack of emotional support can also cause students to internalize failure, making it more difficult to develop effective coping strategies, thus worsening their anxiety and contributing to poor academic outcomes. In summary, a supportive home environment provides students with the emotional stability and encouragement they need to face the challenges of examination anxiety, while a negative or indifferent environment can increase stress, lower self-esteem, and harm academic performance.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: A MULTIFACTORIAL OUTCOME

Academic success is not determined by a single factor; instead, it is shaped by a combination of both internal and external influences that work together.

- **Internal Factors are personal traits or abilities within the student that can affect their performance. These include:**
 - **Motivation:** The drive or desire to achieve academic goals, which pushes a student to study and improve.
 - **Self-concept:** How a student views their abilities and self-worth, which impacts their confidence and attitude toward learning.
 - **Time management:** The ability to organize and allocate time effectively for studying, which can help students stay on top of their academic responsibilities.
- **External Factors are influences that come from outside the student. These include:**
 - **Teacher support:** The encouragement and guidance provided by teachers can help students better understand subjects and feel supported in their learning journey.
 - **Peer relationships:** Interactions with classmates can offer social support and create a positive learning environment.
 - **Family dynamics:** The home environment, including parental support, emotional backing, and the availability of resources for studying, significantly influences a student's academic performance.

Understanding how these internal and external factors interact is crucial because it allows educators and parents to create more effective strategies and interventions to support students. By addressing both personal and environmental influences, they can help students achieve better academic results and maintain their well-being.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on research findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve students' academic performance and well-being:

1. **Parental Training Programs:** It's important to educate parents about their essential role in creating a positive academic environment at home. By training parents on how to provide emotional support, set expectations, and create a structured environment for learning, they can significantly enhance their child's academic success and reduce stress.
2. **Stress Management Workshops:** These workshops can be very beneficial in helping students manage the stress that comes with exams. Techniques such as mindfulness (staying focused in the present moment), time management (organizing tasks efficiently), and relaxation methods (deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation) can help students cope better with anxiety and improve their academic performance.
3. **School Counselling Services:** Providing regular mental health support in schools through counseling services is crucial. Having a counselor available can help students manage emotional challenges, such as anxiety, depression, or stress, that may interfere with their academic work. A school counselor can guide students in building coping skills and offer a safe space for them to talk about their concerns.
4. **Collaborative Approach:** Schools and families need to work together to support students more effectively. By fostering communication between parents and teachers, both parties can monitor a student's progress, identify any academic or emotional challenges early on, and implement strategies to address these issues. This holistic approach ensures that students receive support from both their home and school environments, increasing their chances for success.

2. CONCLUSION

The academic achievement of higher secondary students is not solely determined by their intellectual abilities or study habits; it is heavily influenced by their psychological and social contexts. A positive home environment, where emotional support and academic encouragement are present, plays a critical role in shaping a student's ability to succeed academically. Additionally, the development of effective coping strategies for managing examination anxiety is essential for overcoming the stress and pressure that often hinder students' performance. By learning techniques such as mindfulness, time management, and relaxation, students can better navigate the challenges they face during exams. Furthermore, creating supportive ecosystems in both the home and school environments is key to promoting academic success. When families and schools work collaboratively to provide guidance, resources, and emotional support, students are more likely to thrive academically while also maintaining a healthy emotional state. In conclusion, the combination of a nurturing home

environment and effective coping mechanisms for anxiety can significantly enhance a student's performance and overall well-being, demonstrating that academic achievement is deeply interconnected with both emotional and social support systems

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