

A Study of Anxiety Level Among Male and Female NEET Aspirants

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Abstract: Anxiety is a pressing issue among candidates appearing for NEET, with increasing reports of suicides and psychological breakdowns. In the present study 37 male and 75 female were taken as the sample of the study. Sample was selected through chain referral sampling method. Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) tool was used for collecting data. Data analysis was done using Chi-square. Findings revealed no significant difference in anxiety levels between male and female aspirants overall, but a significant difference was found between male and female aspirants appearing for first time and second-time in the NEET exams.

Keywords: Anxiety, NEET aspirants

I. INTRODUCTION

NEET introduced in the year 2013 by the Government of India with the aim of standardizing the medical entrance process, at the national level for ensuring a uniform merit-based selection process. While this centralization promises fairness and transparency, it also escalates the pressure on students to perform exceptionally well.

Fierce competition for limited seats in medical colleges can create a sense of pressure and urgency among aspirants, leading to anxiety. This is further heightened by the uncertainty of admission to medical programs leading to anticipatory anxiety. Fear of failure or not performing well in the exam and the potential consequences, such as not securing admission to a preferred college or any college, also contributes to anxiety. Extensive preparation time in the form of prolonged and rigorous study sessions to cover the vast syllabus adds to stress and mental exhaustion.

External expectations like social and peer comparisons among the aspirants' community may create a competitive environment that intensifies stress and anxiety among individuals. Family expectations regarding success in National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) can add an additional layer of pressure and it may contribute to anxiety levels among participants. Isolation and study pressure may also impact the mental well-being of aspirants. Anxiety may also manifest physically, affecting the overall health and well-being of the individuals.

Fear of failure, the high expectations from family and society and the rigorous preparation regimen contribute significantly to the anxiety levels among aspirants.

Rationale of the study-

The prevalence of anxiety among NEET aspirants is a critical concern, as it can significantly affect their mental health, academic performance, and overall quality of life. **Mental health implications** of anxiety, if left unaddressed, can lead to severe mental health issues such as depression, burnout, and other stress-related disorders. By studying the anxiety levels among NEET aspirants, this research aims to highlight the mental health challenges faced by these students and advocate for better mental health support systems within the educational framework. The impact of high anxiety levels **on academic performance** may reduce concentration and memory, resulting in poor academic performance.

The findings are expected to inform educators, policymakers and mental health professionals, coaching centers paving the way for targeted support systems that can lessen the burden of anxiety and promote the holistic wellbeing of future medical practitioners.



Objectives:

1. To find out the difference between the anxiety of male and female aspirants' appearing for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test.
2. To find out the difference between the anxiety of first attempt and second attempt aspirants' appearing for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test.

Hypothesis:

Ho1. There will be no significant difference between the anxiety of male and female aspirants' appearing for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test.

Ho2. There will be no significant difference between the anxiety of first and second attempt aspirants of National Eligibility cum Entrance Test.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Manal Khursheed and Sufia Naseem (2021) studied 220 medical aspirants and students in Aligarh, North India, focusing on depression, anxiety, stress, and life quality. They found that extremely severe anxiety (37.7%) and depression (20%) were more prevalent than stress (10.9%). Higher levels of depression, stress, and anxiety were particularly noted among 11th, 12th, and 12th-pass students preparing for medical entrance exams, as well as final-year students and interns. The study also revealed a strong negative correlation between the physical domain of life quality and levels of depression, stress, and anxiety.

Sarkar Sohel Rana (2022) examined depression among medical and engineering aspirants across three Indian states: West Bengal, Tripura, and Jharkhand. Using a self-administered 13-item questionnaire, data were collected from 1,184 students selected randomly from two reputed institutions. The study identified two dimensions of depression: Intrinsic Instability and Extrinsic Instability, through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The validity and reliability of these dimensions were confirmed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with AMOS. The sample was split into two equal subsamples (n=592 each) for analysis, ensuring robustness in the findings.

Sanika Gautam (2019) studied depression among 232 IIT and NEET aspirants in Kota, analyzing the impact of motivation type and perceived ability. The study used a 2x2x2 factorial design, considering gender, motivation type (self vs. parent), and perceived ability (low vs. high). Results revealed that higher perceived ability correlates with lower depression. Self-motivated students experienced moderate depression, while parent-motivated girls had the highest levels of depression.

Kushal V. and Tiwari S. (2021) studied exam-related anxiety in 100 students from classes 10th, 11th, and 12th using the Westside Test Anxiety Scale. The findings revealed that 30% of students experienced moderately high-test anxiety, while 12% had high anxiety, and 6% suffered from extremely high-test anxiety.

K. Satish Kumar and Brogen Singh Akoijam (2014) conducted a cross-sectional study on depression, anxiety, and stress among 830 higher secondary students in Imphal, Manipur. Using the DASS scale, they found that 19.5% of students experienced depression, 24.4% had anxiety, and 21.1% suffered from stress. Notably, 81.6% had at least one of these conditions, and 34.7% experienced all three. Females showed significantly higher levels of anxiety ($P = 0.00$) and stress ($P = 0.04$). Depression and stress were also significantly more prevalent among 12th-grade students, with P -values of 0.00 and 0.02, respectively.

Shawaz Iqbal, Sandhya Gupta, and E. Venkatarao (2012) conducted a study on stress, anxiety, and depression among 353 medical undergraduates at the Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhubaneswar. Using the DASS scale, they found that 17.5% of students experienced severe or extremely severe depression, 33.4% had anxiety, and 13.1% suffered from stress. The study highlighted the significant mental health challenges faced by medical students, emphasizing the need for urgent psychological support.

Hamza M. Abdulghani (2007) conducted a cross-sectional study on stress among medical students at the College of Medicine, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. Using the K10 questionnaire, data were collected from 892 students during the 2007-2008 academic year. The study revealed that stress was more prevalent among female students (75.7%)



compared to males (57%). First-year students experienced the highest stress levels (78.7%), with stress decreasing in subsequent years.

Indoo Singh and Ajeya Jha conducted a study on anxiety, optimism, and academic achievement among 346 students from private medical and engineering colleges in Uttar Pradesh, India. The study used Sinha's comprehensive Anxiety Test (SCAT) and the Learned Optimism Scale (LOS) to measure anxiety and optimism, with academic achievement based on the latest two semesters' results. Findings showed a significant negative relationship between anxiety and both optimism and academic achievement, while optimism positively correlated with academic achievement. Although significant differences were observed between medical and engineering students, gender differences were not significant. The study offers valuable insights for improving student performance through institutional strategies.

Sumaya Basudan, Najla Binanzan, and Aseel Alhassan conducted a study on depression, anxiety, and stress among dental students, with a sample of 247 participants. Using the DASS-21 scale, they found that 55.9% of students experienced abnormal levels of depression, 66.8% anxiety, and 54.7% stress. The study underscores the need for support programs and preventive measures to address these high levels of psychological distress in dental students, particularly for those at greater risk.

III. METHODOLOGY

Survey method was used in the present study. Data was collected from Surat region. Chain referral sampling method was used for the selection of sample. Sample comprised of 37 male and 75 female. Data was collected using the Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS), which includes 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale has a validity coefficient of 0.44 and a Cronbach alpha of 0.84, indicating good reliability. Scores were categorized as low (<1.9), normal (2.0-2.5), high (2.5-2.9), moderately high (3.0-3.4), high (3.5-3.9), or extremely high (4.0-5.0) anxiety. The WTAS was administered via a Google Form with a request letter, one month before the exam. The data was analyzed using chisquare.

Result And Interpretation of The Result

This study aimed to compare the results of the male and female NEET aspirants to find out whether there was a significant difference in the levels of anxiety between the males and females.

Ho1. There will be no significant difference between the anxiety of male and female aspirants' appearing for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test.

Table-1: Showing Anxiety of male and female Aspirants' Appearing for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test.

NEET Aspirants	Comfortably low test anxiety	Normal or average test anxiety	High normal test anxiety	Moderately high	High test anxiety	Extremely high anxiety	Chi Square
Anxiety Level	1.0—1.9	2.0—2.5	2.5—2.9	3.0—3.4	3.5—3.9	4.0—5.0	
Boys	6	1	4	9	8	9	5.11
Girls	10	9	13	16	17	10	

Chi-square statistic (χ^2): 5.11

Degrees of freedom (df): 5

Level of confidence: .05

$p > 5.11$



GRAPH 1 Showing Anxiety level of Boys and Girls

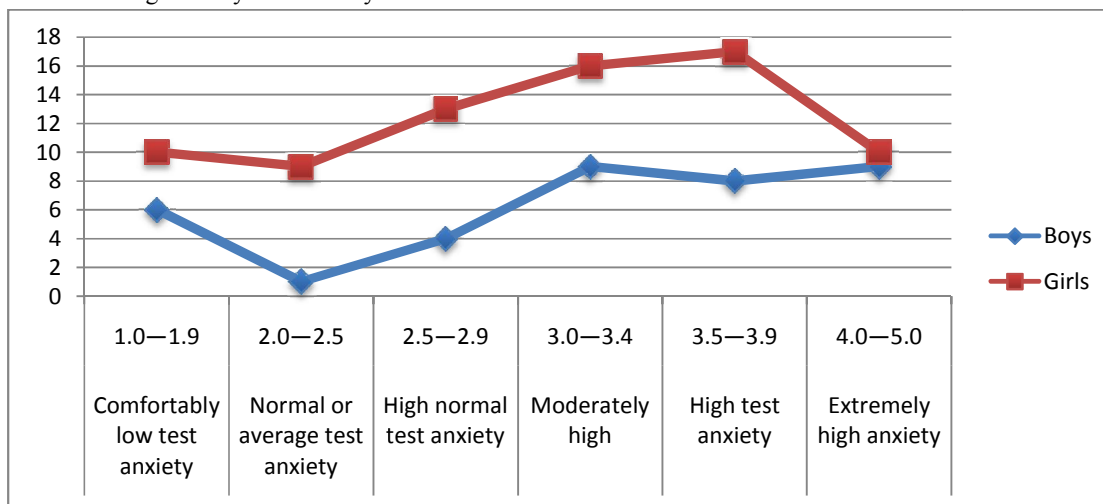


Table- 2 shows that there is no significant difference between male and female aspirants' appearing for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test. As the table value at the .05 level is 11.07 the obtained value is 5.11 that is less than the table value. Therefore Hypothesis "There will be no significant difference between the anxiety of male and female aspirants' appearing for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test" is retained.

Male and both experience similar types of anxiety related to the exam, and there isn't a significant or noticeable difference in the intensity or nature of the anxiety and both gender's maximum score lies at High Anxiety and moderately High Anxiety. This is because, regardless of gender, students are subjected to similar pressures, expectations, and stressors while preparing for and appearing in the NEET exam.

Therefore, the hypothesis is retained, as the data likely does not show a substantial difference in anxiety levels between male and female aspirants.

Ho2. There will be no significant difference between the anxiety of first and second-attempt aspirants of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test.

Table 2: Showing Anxiety of first and second attempt aspirants of National Eligibility cum Entrance Test.

NEET Aspirants	Comfortably low test anxiety	Normal average or test anxiety	High normal test anxiety	Moderately high	High test anxiety	Extremely high anxiety	Chi Square
Anxiety Level	1.0—1.9	2.0—2.4	2.5—2.9	3.0—3.4	3.5—3.9	4.0—5.0	
First Attempt	11	10	14	15	14	16	11.09
Second Attempt	5	0	3	10	11	3	

Chi-square statistic (χ^2): 11.09

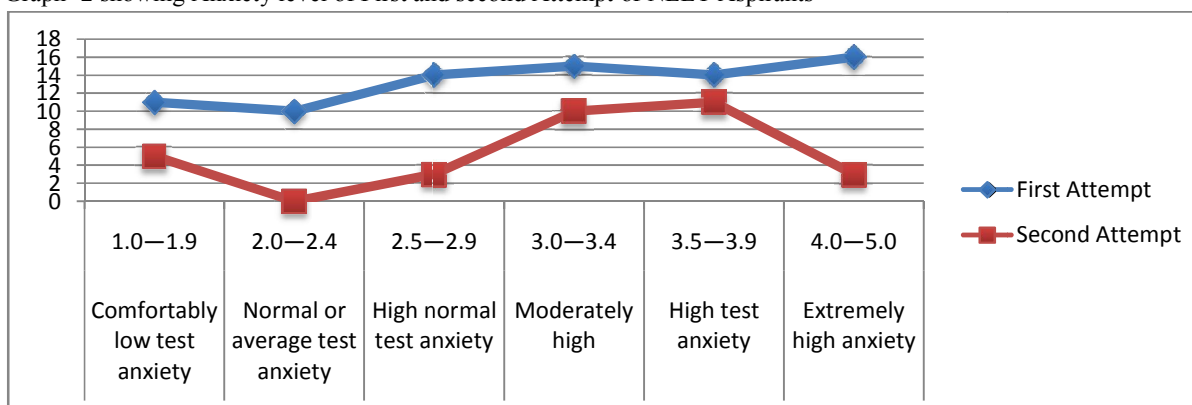
Degrees of freedom (df): 5

Level of confidence: .05

$p < 11.09$



Graph -2 showing Anxiety level of First and second Attempt of NEET Aspirants



The data in Table 2 indicates a significant difference in anxiety levels between first and second-attempt NEET aspirants. The Chi-square value of 11.09 slightly exceeds the critical value of 11.07 at the 0.05 significance level, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in anxiety levels between these two groups.

This suggests that first and second-attempt aspirants experience differing levels of anxiety, with first-time candidates likely experiencing higher anxiety. This difference could be attributed to factors such as the novelty of the experience for first-time aspirants, the pressure to succeed on the first attempt, and possibly the cumulative stress of repeated preparations for those on their second attempt. The statistical evidence indicates that, the anxiety levels between these two groups are not uniform, hence the hypothesis is rejected.

IV. CONCLUSION

There was found no significant difference between the anxiety of male and female aspirants' appearing for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test.

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Educational Implications

The study highlights the high anxiety levels among NEET aspirants, underscoring the need for educational reforms. Institutions should integrate mental health support into curricula, including stress management and counseling. Teacher training should be improved to help educators identify and address student anxiety. Additionally, parental involvement is crucial; awareness programs should educate parents about the pressures on their children. These steps aim to create a supportive and balanced academic environment that prioritizes mental well-being alongside academic success.

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