

ASSESSMENT OF ANXIETY AMONG SCHOOL-GOING ADOLESCENTS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

Nursing

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Anxiety is one of the common psychological problems affecting adolescents and may influence their academic performance, social relationships, and emotional wellbeing. **Methods:** A descriptive study was conducted among 80 adolescents to assess anxiety levels and their association with selected demographic variables. Data were collected using a structured anxiety assessment scale and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. **Results:** The findings revealed that the majority of adolescents 71 (88.75%) had moderate anxiety, while 9 (11.25%) had severe anxiety. Most participants were males, belonged to rural areas. A statistically significant association was found between anxiety level and religion as well as monthly family income at $p < 0.05$. No significant association was observed with age, gender, residence, or sleeping pattern. **Discussion:** The study concluded that anxiety is highly prevalent among adolescents and is influenced by socioeconomic and psychosocial factors. Early identification and supportive interventions are essential for promoting adolescent mental health. **Conclusion:** The study findings highlight the importance of adolescents early mental health assessment, counseling services, and supportive family and school environments to improve adolescents' psychological wellbeing and emotional health.

KEYWORDS

Adolescents, Stress, anxiety, mental health, school health, counselling

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, fear, or nervousness about something that may happen in the future. Anxiety is a major mental health concern that affects people across all age groups, with adolescents being particularly vulnerable to anxiety during adolescence, which can significantly influence emotional well-being and psychological health.¹

Anxiety disorders refer to a group of mental health conditions marked by excessive and persistent fear or worry that can interfere with an individual's daily life, including social interactions, work, and personal functioning. These disorders may lead to both physical and psychological symptoms, such as restlessness, irritability, fatigue, poor concentration, rapid heartbeat, chest discomfort, and several other manifestations that can differ from person to person.²

Among all disorders of mental health, anxiety is the most frequent in children and adolescents, affecting almost 7.5% of them worldwide. In epidemiological studies from India, 15% adolescents were found to be suffering from anxiety disorders. So, blurring other previews and focusing on adolescents' mental health³. In addition, anxiety disorders affect around 8% of children and adolescents worldwide. Anxiety and depression often share common manifestations, including sudden and frequent mood changes, and both conditions can adversely influence adolescents' overall well-being, personal development, and quality of life.⁴

Although adolescence is often considered a period of strength, adaptation, and personal growth, many mental health problems begin during this stage of life. Mental disorders among adolescents contribute substantially to the global burden of disease. According to global estimates, nearly one in seven adolescents experienced a mental health disorder, representing approximately 166 million adolescents worldwide. Among school-aged children and adolescents, anxiety disorders are recognized as one of the most common mental health conditions globally.⁵

India is home to nearly 243 million adolescents, making their mental health an important public health concern. Recent reports show that nearly one in six adolescents in India experiences mental health problems, including anxiety disorders.⁶ Despite this growing burden, mental health facilities and support services for adolescents are still limited. Factors such as academic pressure, intense competition, family expectations, and comparison with peers are increasing anxiety levels among school-going adolescents. In a system where academic success is often given more importance than emotional well-being, many adolescents silently struggle with anxiety without receiving proper support or timely help.⁷

Need of the study

Anxiety is a common emotional experience that every individual

encounters at different stages of life, particularly during stressful situations such as examinations, medical procedures, or interviews. According to the World Health Organization, anxiety is characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes such as increased blood pressure. Although mild anxiety is considered a normal response, excessive or persistent anxiety can negatively affect an individual's mental, emotional, and social well-being.⁸

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage marked by rapid physical, psychological, emotional, and social changes. During this period, adolescents often become more sensitive about body image, peer acceptance, independence, and self-identity. In the present era of globalization and increasing academic competition, adolescents face multiple pressures related to academic achievement, parental expectations, peer comparison, and future career goals. The desire to perform well academically, combined with confusion regarding self-identity and social roles, may lead to stress, frustration, anxiety, depression, and, in difficult situations, self-harm or suicidal tendencies.⁹ Therefore, understanding anxiety among adolescents in relation to their school performance has become highly important.¹⁰

The findings of the present study may help parents, teachers, school administrators, and educators better understand adolescents' emotional needs. The study can also contribute to the development of effective school-based programs to reduce academic stress, improve coping skills, strengthen parental support, encourage healthy participation in school activities, and enhance student's academic achievement and overall well-being.¹¹

What literature speaks: Lets discuss

Anxiety among adolescents has become a significant issue in both public health and education due to its adverse effects on emotional health, academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, and overall growth and development. Numerous studies carried out across various populations and settings have investigated the extent and intensity of anxiety experienced by adolescents and students.

A cross-sectional study conducted among school-going adolescents in urban Bhopal reported a considerable burden of anxiety among participants. The findings revealed that female students and adolescents facing academic pressure, poor sleep, and limited social support had higher anxiety levels. The study emphasized that anxiety negatively affects emotional well-being, academic performance, and social functioning among adolescents. Researchers recommended early mental health screening, counselling services, and school-based psychological support programs to reduce anxiety and promote adolescent mental health.⁷

Similarly, a cross-sectional study among school-going adolescents in Delhi reported depression in 13.7% and anxiety in 15.5% of participants. Higher prevalence was observed among female students

and adolescents experiencing academic and family-related stress. The study highlighted the urgent need for school-based mental health screening, counselling, and early psychological interventions to improve adolescent well-being.¹² Supporting these findings, a multicentre observational study in India found that nearly 18% of school-going children and adolescents experienced significant test anxiety. Higher anxiety levels were associated with female gender, parental expectations, and academic pressure. Students with severe test anxiety reported poorer quality of life, including emotional and social difficulties. The study recommended supportive school environments and stress-management interventions for adolescents.¹³ In developing nations such as India, mental health services are still limited and often receive less attention compared to other health priorities. Strengthening adolescent mental health can provide long-term benefits not only for young people at present but also for their future adult lives and the well-being of upcoming generations. Improving mental health awareness, encouraging healthy sleep and dietary habits, and identifying emotional, social, and behavioural problems at an early stage can help lower illness burden and reduce premature deaths in adulthood.¹⁴

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Globally, depression is one of the most common mental health problems among adolescents, affecting nearly 4.4% of this population. It is recognized as a major contributor to illness and disability, ranking among the leading health concerns in both early and late adolescence. Anxiety disorders also affect a significant proportion of children and adolescents worldwide, with an estimated prevalence of around 8%. Despite the growing burden of adolescent mental health problems, lack of awareness and limited attention toward mental health issues have resulted in insufficient data in many regions. This shortage of reliable evidence creates challenges in developing effective health policies and programs aimed at improving the mental well-being of present and future generations.¹²

India accounts for nearly 21% of the global adolescent population, making adolescent mental health an important public health concern. Evidence suggests that almost one in six children experiences some form of mental health disorder. Earlier community-based studies conducted in India reported that the prevalence of psychiatric disorders among children and adolescents ranged from 2.6% to 35.6%, indicating a substantial and varying burden of psychological problems in this age group.¹⁶

A cross-sectional study to determine the prevalence of anxiety among school students in the Teliamura Municipality area of Tripura. A total of 400 students from classes IX to XII were selected using random sampling. The Beck Anxiety Inventory was used to assess anxiety levels. The results demonstrated that 7.3% of students had severe anxiety, 43.3% had moderate anxiety, and 49.4% had low anxiety. These findings indicated that anxiety among school students is common and requires attention to prevent its impact on mental health and academic achievement.¹⁷

During the COVID-19 lockdown period, Kadam Priyanka et al conducted a descriptive study to evaluate examination-related anxiety among students in selected schools of Pune. Sixty participants were recruited using convenience sampling, and anxiety was measured through the Hamilton Anxiety Scale. The results revealed that half of the students experienced very severe anxiety, while others reported severe, moderate, mild, or no anxiety. The study highlighted the psychological burden created by examination stress during unusual circumstances such as lockdown conditions.¹⁸

Expanding the understanding of anxiety in rural settings, Madasu Swapna, Malhotra Sumit, and colleagues (2019) conducted a cross-sectional study among adolescents in rural Haryana, Northern India. The study involved 729 students aged 10-19 years selected through random sampling. The researchers concluded that anxiety disorders

are prevalent among adolescents in rural communities and emphasized the need for targeted mental health interventions.¹⁹

Another study by Dawangliani M.S. et al explored academic anxiety among secondary school students in Aizawl district. Ninety students from classes IX and X participated in the study. The Academic Anxiety Scale, developed by Siddiqui and Rehman, was used. Nearly half of the students showed above-average anxiety levels, while others reported average and below-average anxiety. The study concluded that academic anxiety can directly influence students' academic achievement and educational progress.²⁰

The systematic review and meta-analysis conducted in India found that anxiety disorders are highly prevalent among adolescents. After analyzing 13 studies, the researchers reported a substantial burden of anxiety among Indian adolescents, with pooled prevalence estimates ranging from 29% to 41%. The study highlighted that physiological, psychological, and social factors contribute significantly to adolescent anxiety. The authors emphasized the urgent need for early identification and effective mental health interventions to reduce this growing burden.²¹

The narrative review reported that anxiety among adolescents has increased considerably in recent years and is more prevalent in Generation Z individuals born between 1997 and 2012 than in the previous three generations. Although the review did not provide a specific pooled prevalence percentage, it highlighted a substantial rise in adolescent anxiety linked to academic pressure, social media exposure, family dynamics, and societal stressors. The study emphasized the need for timely clinical, educational, and community-based interventions to address this growing mental health concern.²²

The study on academic anxiety among adolescents in Himachal Pradesh examined 400 senior secondary students, including both boys and girls. Using the Academic Anxiety Scale for Children, the researchers found that academic anxiety was prevalent among students, with girls showing higher anxiety levels than boys. The distribution of anxiety scores was similar across the total sample. The study highlighted academic pressure and educational stress as important factors influencing adolescents' emotional well-being and academic performance.²³

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a descriptive research design to assess anxiety among adolescents. A total enumerative sampling technique was employed to select 80 adolescents studying at Government Senior Secondary School, Haripur, District Chamba, Himachal Pradesh. The reliability of the tool was established using the Split-Half method, while content validity was confirmed by experts from the nursing field.

Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire consisting of two sections. Section A included demographic variables such as age, gender, residence, religion, family type, monthly income, and sleeping pattern. Section B comprised 14 statements measured on a five-point Likert scale. The total score ranged from 14 to 70, and anxiety levels were categorized as mild, moderate, and severe. The questionnaire was prepared in both Hindi and English for better understanding. The study included adolescents aged 12-19 years from classes 9th to 12th who understood Hindi or English and were willing to participate. Students from classes 7th and 8th, and those unwilling to participate, were excluded. Ethical approval and administrative permissions were obtained before data collection, and confidentiality of participants' information was maintained. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used for data analysis, and findings were presented using tables and graphical representations.

RESULTS:

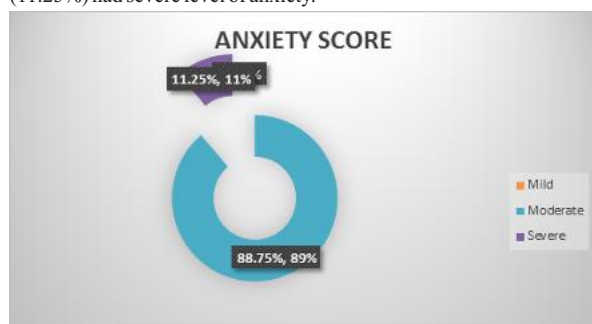
With regard to Age (in year), majority of adolescents i.e. 37 (46.25%) were in the age group 13-14 years. In consideration to Gender, majority of adolescents i.e. 48 (60%) were males. According to Place of residence, majority of adolescents i.e. 62 (77.5%) were from rural area, majority of adolescents i.e. 60 (75%) were Hindu, 36 (45%) were from Joint family, according to monthly income, majority of adolescents i.e. 43 (53.75%) were from 5001-10000.

Table 1: Shows Frequency and Percentage distribution of demographical variable

Sr. No.	Demographic Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Age (Years)		
	13-14	37	46.25%
	15-16	28	35%
	17-18	15	18.75%
2	Gender		
	Male	48	60%
	Female	32	40%
3	Place of Residence		
	Rural	62	77.5%
	Semi-Urban	18	22.5%
4	Religion		
	Hindu	60	75%
	Muslim	15	18.75%
	Others	05	6.25%
5	Type of Family		
	Joint	36	45%
	Nuclear	39	48.75%
	Extended	05	6.25%
6	Monthly Income		
	Less than 5000	27	33.75%
	5001-10000	43	53.75%
	10001-15000	06	7.5%
	15001 & Above	04	5%
7	Sleeping Pattern		
	Regular	59	73.75%
	Irregular	21	26.25%

Fig1: Depicts doughnut diagram regarding percentage distribution of anxiety score among adolescent

With respect to Frequency and percentage distribution, majority of adolescents i.e. 71 (88.75%) had moderate level of anxiety and 9 (11.25%) had severe level of anxiety.



In context of association of anxiety score with selected demographic variables, anxiety score among adolescents was significantly associated with religion (122.69, df=4) at p value less than 0.05 and monthly income (275.79, df=6).

Table 2: Association of Anxiety Score with Selected Demographic Variables

S. No.	Demographic Variable	Mild	Moderate	Severe	χ^2	Degree of Freedom	Table Value
1	Age (Years)						
	13-14	00	35	02	6.57	4	9.49
	15-16	00	22	06			
	17-18	00	15	00			
2	Gender				0.098	2	5.99
	Male	00	47	01			
	Female	00	29	03			
3	Place of Residence				1	2	5.99
	Rural	00	53	09			
	Semi-Urban	00	17	11			
4	Religion				122.69	4	9.49*
	Hindu	00	52	08			
	Muslim	00	15	00			
	Others	00	04	01			
5	Monthly Income				275.79	6	12.59*
	Less than 5000	00	23	04			
	5001-10000	00	40	03			
	10001-15000	00	03	03			
	15001 & Above	00	04	00			

6	Sleeping Pattern						
	Regular	00	49	04	3.51	2	5.99
	Irregular	00	21	06			

* Significant association at selected level of significance.

DISCUSSION:

Adolescence is a crucial phase of life characterized by rapid physical growth, emotional instability, social adjustment, and psychological changes. During this period, adolescents are more vulnerable to stress and anxiety due to academic expectations, peer pressure, family responsibilities, and changing social environments. The present study attempted to assess anxiety levels among adolescents and determine their association with selected demographic variables.

The demographic findings of the study revealed that nearly half of the participants, 37 (46.25%), belonged to the age group of 13-14 years. This indicates that early adolescents formed the major part of the study population. Younger adolescents often experience difficulty adapting to emotional and social transitions, which may increase feelings of insecurity and anxiety. The proportion of participants gradually decreased in the higher age groups, with only 15 (18.75%) belonging to 17-18 years. This variation may be due to differences in school attendance or availability of adolescents during data collection.

A cross-sectional study conducted among adolescents in Tiruchirappalli reported a high prevalence of anxiety disorders among school students. The study found that anxiety was more common among girls, rural students, hostel residents, and adolescents from extended families. These findings support the present study by emphasizing that demographic, family, and environmental factors significantly influence anxiety levels among adolescents.²⁴ The study further showed that male adolescents 48 (60%) outnumbered females 32 (40%). Although both genders experience emotional stress during adolescence, the participation of more males in the present study may reflect the demographic composition of the selected area. Anxiety was observed among both male and female participants, suggesting that mental health concerns during adolescence are not limited to a particular gender.

Religion-wise distribution demonstrated that the majority of participants 60 (75%) were Hindus, followed by Muslims 15 (18.75%) and others 5 (6.25%). This pattern reflects the demographic characteristics of the study area. Religious beliefs and cultural values often influence emotional expression, family support, and coping behavior among adolescents. In many families, spiritual and cultural practices act as protective factors that help adolescents manage stressful situations more effectively.

Regarding family structure, the highest proportion of adolescents 39 (48.75%) belonged to nuclear families, closely followed by those from joint families 36 (45%). Family environment plays a central role in shaping adolescent behavior and emotional health. Adolescents living in supportive family settings generally feel more emotionally secure and confident in managing stress. On the other hand, lack of communication, family conflicts, or reduced parental attention may increase emotional distress and anxiety symptoms. Economic status is another important factor affecting adolescent mental health. In the present study, the majority of participants 43 (53.75%) belonged to families with a monthly income between ₹5001-10000, while 27 (33.75%) had a monthly income below ₹5000.

Sleep is closely linked with emotional wellbeing and mental functioning. The study findings showed that 59 (73.75%) adolescents had regular sleeping patterns, whereas 21 (26.25%) reported irregular sleep. Disturbed or inadequate sleep is commonly associated with irritability, poor concentration, emotional instability, and anxiety-related symptoms. Adolescents with irregular sleeping habits may find it difficult to cope with daily stressors effectively.

Assessment of anxiety levels revealed that the majority of adolescents 71 (88.75%) had moderate anxiety, while 9 (11.25%) had severe anxiety. None of the participants were found to have mild anxiety. These findings suggest that anxiety is highly prevalent among adolescents and should not be ignored as a minor emotional issue. Academic competition, fear of failure, social comparison, parental expectations, and uncertainty regarding the future may collectively contribute to elevated anxiety levels during adolescence. Moderate

anxiety among adolescents may initially remain unnoticed because many students hesitate to express emotional difficulties openly.

A study conducted among school-going adolescents in peri-urban areas of Karachi reported that a considerable proportion of adolescents experienced moderate to severe anxiety, particularly females. The study also identified factors such as strict parenting, sedentary lifestyle, excessive video gaming, and lack of physical activity as significant contributors to anxiety, supporting the present study findings that adolescent anxiety is influenced by multiple psychosocial and socioeconomic factors.²⁵ The present study also examined the relationship between anxiety scores and selected demographic variables. Cultural beliefs, spiritual practices, and family traditions associated with religion may influence emotional coping styles and stress management among adolescents. Different social environments and support systems within religious communities may also contribute to variations in anxiety levels.

A longitudinal study conducted among high school adolescents in Hungary found that anxiety levels were significantly higher at the end of the academic year and were more common among girls. The study also reported that parental expectations, school-related pressure, and psychosomatic symptoms were strongly associated with anxiety. These findings are consistent with the present study, which identified anxiety as a major psychological concern among adolescents influenced by multiple social and environmental factors.²⁶ No significant association was found between anxiety level and variables such as age, gender, place of residence, and sleeping. This finding suggests that anxiety among adolescents may not depend solely on demographic characteristics but may also be influenced by psychological, environmental, educational, and interpersonal factors that were beyond the scope of the present study.

Overall, the findings highlight that anxiety is a common psychological concern among adolescents and deserves immediate attention from parents, teachers, healthcare professionals, and policymakers. Early screening programs, school mental health services, counseling sessions, stress management activities, and supportive family environments can play a significant role in reducing anxiety and promoting healthy emotional development among adolescents. Awareness regarding adolescent mental health should be strengthened at the community and institutional levels so that emotional problems can be identified and managed at an early stage.

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that anxiety is highly prevalent among adolescents, with most participants experiencing moderate levels of anxiety. Demographic factors such as religion and monthly family income showed significant association with anxiety levels. The findings emphasize that psychological wellbeing of adolescents is influenced by social, economic, and environmental factors. Early identification, mental health awareness, counselling services, and supportive family and school environments are essential to reduce anxiety and promote healthy emotional development among adolescents during this critical stage of life.

Recommendation:

- Regular mental health screening programs should be conducted in schools to identify anxiety problems among adolescents at an early stage and provide timely support.
- Schools should organize counselling sessions, stress management activities, and awareness programs to help adolescents develop healthy coping strategies and emotional resilience.
- Parents should be educated regarding adolescent mental health so that they can provide a supportive, understanding, and non-pressurizing home environment.
- Adolescents should be encouraged to participate in physical activities, recreational programs, and healthy sleep practices to improve their psychological wellbeing and reduce anxiety levels.
- Further research with larger sample sizes and different settings should be conducted to explore additional factors influencing anxiety among adolescents and to develop effective intervention strategies.
- Conflict of Interest: None
- Acknowledgement: None
- Funding: None

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