



# Academic Achievement: Role of Need for Achievement and Anxiety

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### ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between academic achievement, need for achievement and anxiety among 101 above average female achievers. The participants of the study were between the age range of 16-18 years. Academic achievement was assessed by previously passed examination, 65% being the cut off score. The A M Sn-dm (n-ach) by Deo & Mohan was used to assess need for achievement and IPAT Anxiety Scale by Krug, Scheier and Cattell was used to assess anxiety amongst the students. The average achievement score was 79%. The mean need for achievement and anxiety scores were 132 and 39 respectively. A positive but insignificant correlation was found between academic achievement and need for achievement. A negative but insignificant correlation was found between school achievement and anxiety. A negative but significant correlation at .01 level of significance was found between need for achievement and anxiety. The present study has implications in child rearing and teaching practices.

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### Introduction

The concept of adolescence as a stage of storm and stress (Hall, 1904) is giving way, but the Indian middle-class adolescents like their other Asian counterparts face a highly competitive examination system. Schoolwork generated negative subjective states as reflected in low affect state, below-average activation levels, lower feeling of choice, and higher social anxiety. (Verma et al, 2002). The trade-off faced by Indian adolescents were evident in the findings that those who spent more time doing homework experienced lower average emotional states and more internalizing problems, while those who spent more time in leisure experienced more favorable states but also reported higher academic anxiety and lower scholastic achievement (Verma et al, 2002). Tutions and coaching have become a norm. A new phenomenon—over scheduled kids—has come upon us in the last two decades. The picture of a carefree childhood with time for play and day dreaming is no longer the reality for many children. For some, childhood has become a rat race of hyper-scheduling, over busyness, and loss of family time. (Doherty, 2004). Booming India's students are reeling under grueling competition, growing stress and parental pressure to excel academically. Some fail to cope and end up depressed, or even worse, commit suicide (Vij, 2009).

### Academic achievement

Academic performance is the outcome of education—the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. Academic achievement is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment. The term achievement refers to the degree or level of success attained in some specific tasks, especially school performance. Hence, scholastic achievement is described as “the attained ability to perform school tasks, which can be general or specific to a given subject matter”. The standard of excellence may be task related (ex.: degree of accuracy in the performed act) or in other words scholastic achievement is the

performance of the pupils accomplishment in a subject of study (Krishnamurthy, 2009).

Social psychologists and sociologists consider achievement in school as a consequence of the interplay of multifarious social factors (Bernstein, 1981, 1985, Vendl, 1991). Admittedly, academic or scholastic achievement is a complex phenomenon and requires different approaches to understanding and interpretation. It is the function of many cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of personality (Vendl, 1994). Choudhary (2011) defined scholastic achievement as knowledge acquired and skills developed in school subjects, generally indicated by marks obtained in tests in an annual examination (Mokashi, 2009)

However individual differences in academic performance have been linked to differences in intelligence and personality and higher grades or higher academic achievement are associated with high in need for achievement (Baron, 2008; Andrews, 1967; Raynor, 1970).

### Achievement motivation

Achievement motivation or need for achievement is the desire to accomplish difficult tasks and to excel. People in whom need for achievement is strong seek to become accomplished and improve their task performance (Morgan & King, 1993). Need for achievement is important because it is not only correlated to higher achievement scores but also with more rapid promotions, attainment of greater success, running their own business and a nation's economy (Baron, 2005). Need for achievement is the tendency to persist at challenging tasks—explains why less intelligent children do better than their more intelligent classmates and why children with equal ability often respond differently in achievement situations (Dewck & Elliott, 1993).

Persons high in achievement motivation or need for achievement differs from persons low in this motive in many respects. Firstly persons high on need for achievement tend to prefer tasks that are of moderate level of difficulty and challenging.

The reason why they avoid easy tasks is because they don't find it challenging. The reason why they don't prefer very/extremely difficult tasks is the chances of failing are too high.

### Anxiety

Anxiety is one of the most studied phenomenon in psychology. It is a normal human response to stress. The concept of anxiety is differentiated from fear as it is defined as a response to an unidentifiable threat as anticipated danger. Furthermore anxiety responses are often more intense and frequent than is warranted by perceived threat; the fear response is proportionate to the objective danger.

The word 'anxiety' has been derived from the Latin word 'Anxietas' which commonly connotes on experience of varying blends of the uncertainty, agitation and dread. Anxiety has been defined as the socio-psycho-physiological phenomenon experience as a foreboding dread or threat to the human organism whether the threat is generated by internal, real or imagined dangers, the sources of which may be conscious or unconscious whether the threat is secondary to the actual environmental threats of a biosocial, biophysical or biochemical nature (Keable, 1999). According to Dollard and Miller (1950), anxiety is a sub type of fear and learned drive i.e. considered as a disruption in the organism's homeostasis, ultimately relating to the occurrence of painful stimulation. It may be regarded as a disorder when it occurs in the absence of an appreciable degree or a kind of threat or danger. Anxiety may be diffuse, free-floating but persistent feeling of unease i.e. generalized anxiety; or it be a fear attached only to specific object or situations i.e. phobia. It may also occur intermittently in extremely acute form i.e. panic attacks. Anxiety may take the form of a state which in temporary feeling of subjective and physical tension or it may be described as a trait in which it takes the form of relatively permanent personality characteristic.

Hence, anxiety has been conceptualized as an experience or a learned drive or a learned response with drive properties, or a state of physiological arousal or a particular pattern of cortical or endocrinological functioning or a consequence of a person's efforts to sustain his individuality or some combination of these (Mokashi, 2007).

Academic scores are becoming a source of anxiety to students because they perceive that their future depends on doing well on high stakes hence a. Research has also shown that scores lower students' self esteem and increase their fear of failure (Hardy, 2009). Singh and Asha (2009) in their study reported that more number of high achievers had high anxiety than the low achievers. When the correlation between high achievers and anxiety was calculated, it was found that high achievers had high anxiety. Verma (2000) conducted a study to find the effect of anxiety on academic achievement. The study revealed that high achievers had significantly greater academic motivation as compared to their low achiever counter parts where as students who are high achievers feel more stressed than those who are not because they feel that they have to retain their rank (Rothman, 1995).

Studies on effects of anxiety on teenagers and youth are becoming vulnerable to suicidal tendencies as they are unable to cope with the fast life of metropolitan cities and fail to meet the pressure of competition and education. Thus feelings of stress, confusion, self-doubt, and pressure to succeed can be overwhelming to teenagers. A news report in the Daily Pioneer, suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students.

It was also reported that 60-80 cases of suicides are normally reported in Doon Hospital in a month (Joshi 2011).

### Hypothesis

H1: It is hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between academic achievement and need for achievement motivation.

H2: It is hypothesized that there will be positive correlation between academic achievement and anxiety.

H3: It is hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between need for achievement and anxiety.

### Method

#### Sample

The sample comprised of 101 above average female achievers in Chandigarh, selected through accidental sampling. The participants of the study were between the age range of 16-18 years. Academic achievement was assessed by previously passed examination, 65% being the cut off score.

All the subjects were told that this study pertained to their attitude towards success. They were asked to write their academic scores as a part of general information. The purpose of anxiety scale was not revealed till after the performance, they were however explained about the purposed of the study before they submitted back the test material and consent was also obtained.

#### Tests and Tools

The following standardized tests were employed:

- The A M Sn-dm (n-ach) (Deo & Mohan, 1971)
- IPAT Anxiety Scale (Krug, Scheier and Cattell, 1976)
- The A M Sn-dm (n-ach) by Deo & Mohan was used to assess need for achievement and IPAT Anxiety Scale by Krug, Scheier and Cattell was used to assess anxiety amongst the students.

#### Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the means for the total sample. Table 2 shows the correlations of need for achievement and academic achievement, academic achievement and anxiety, achievement and anxiety among total sample. The mean need for achievement score of the sample was very low i.e. 132, with a corresponding percentile rank of 20. Low need for achievement motivation in the present sample is a matter of grave concern during the present time of financial crunch that the nation is facing presently because achievement motivation is correlated not only to higher achievement scores but also with more rapid promotions, attainment of greater success, and running their own business (Baron, 2008). Past researches reveal that achievement motivation has implication in a societies economic and business growth (McClelland, 1961; 1971). In the list of factors contributing the boom in any economy psychologists would add (among other factors) national differences in level of achievement motivation (Baron, 2008).

**Table1. Mean of Total Sample**

Sr. No.	Variable	Mean
1	Academic Achievement	79
2	Need for Achievement	132
3	Anxiety	39

**Table2. Showing Correlations Among Academic Achievement & Need For Achievement, Academic Achievement & Anxiety, Need For Achievement & Anxiety**

S. No.	Variables	Correlation
1	Academic Achievement & Need for Achievement	0.122
2	Academic Achievement & Anxiety	-0.064
3	Need for Achievement & Anxiety	-0.325

Value of correlation significant at

0.05=.195

0.01=.254

Despite much research reporting that Indian students are under stress and anxiety (Verma et al, 2009) scores a source of stress to students (Hardy, 2003). High achievers are more stressed to retain their rank (Rothman, 1995). The average anxiety score of the sample was found to be .07, corresponding to moderate anxiety. Asian students in comparison pass a highly competitive entrance exam to gain admission to college but do not report feeling more anxious about school than their American counterparts- in fact less so (Stevenson et al, 1993). The timing of the research and the sample which majorly composed of freshers at college, who are well post board exam anxiety and had already been chosen their academic streams, may explain the moderate anxiety score.

Previous studies correlate Achievement motivation to higher achievement scores (Baron, 2005; Andrews, 1967; Raynor, 1970). The study revealed that high achievers had significantly greater academic motivation as compared to their low achiever counter parts (Verma, 2008).

As predicted academic achievement and achievement motivation were found to be positively correlated but the correlation was not significant. High academic scores among low need for achievement motivation may be so because while competition improves the performance of people low in need for achievement but it actually impairs performance for those in whom achievement motivation is strong. The most successful people identified in a research scored high on achievement motivation but low in competition motivation (Spence & Helmreich, 1983).

Contrary to our hypothesis that high academic scores will be positively related to anxiety (Singh and Asha, (1984), Rothman (1995), the correlation between academic achievement and anxiety was found to be negative but insignificant. Academic performance is negatively influenced by test anxiety, while general anxiety appears to be less predictive of such a goal attainment (Sharma & Rao, 1984). High achievers and low achievers did not show any significant differences on test anxiety (Verma, 1990).

Sudhir (1989) found that student with high test anxiety were found to have higher mean score on achievement motivation. Contrary to our hypothesis need for achievement motivation was significantly and negatively related to anxiety. People high on need for achievement don't set up too difficult goals Rather they are realistic in tasks, jobs and vocations that they select. They are likely to make a good match between their abilities and what will be demanded of them. When high need achievement people are successful, they tend to raise their level of aspiration in a realistic way so, that they will move on to a slightly more challenging and difficult tasks (Morgan, 1993). They are not gamblers neither are they burdened by unrealistic goals hence are spared of needless anxiety.

There is a pressing need to increase achievement motivation among the youth of today which in turn is a largely learnt, through childhood experiences. More specifically children learn achievement motivation by copying the behavior of their parents and other people who serve as models [Eccles (pearson),1983]. The expectations that parents have of their children are also said to be important in the development of achievement motivation [Eccles (pearson),1983]. Parents who expect their children to work hard and to strive for success will encourage them to do so and

praise them for achievement directed behavior. A set of parental expectations related to achievement motivation concerns ideas about when children should become independent, in skill such as "standing up for one's rights," "knowing one's way around," playing with minimum supervision, and in general, doing things for one's self (Morgan et al,1993). Because achievement motivation inspires us to acquire more knowledge and skills and increase competence, it is a highly valued trait in all human societies (Fyans et al, 1983).

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