

Anxiety Issues among Secondary-Level Students in Narsingdi District: Causes, Effects, and Teacher Roles

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Abstract: *Anxiety is a prevalent mental health issue affecting students worldwide, especially in high-pressure academic environments. This study explores anxiety among secondary-level students in the Narsingdi District, Bangladesh, where academic pressure, family expectations, and social factors intensify mental health challenges. Using a qualitative methodology, data were gathered through interviews with teachers and students to understand the root causes, effects, and potential strategies to address these issues. Findings indicate that anxiety significantly impacts academic performance and emotional well-being, exacerbated by a lack of adequate support systems in schools. The role of teachers and the importance of mental health programs in schools are highlighted. Recommendations include teacher training, parental awareness initiatives, and improved school mental health services.*

Keywords: *Anxiety, Secondary Students, Mental Health, Academic Pressure, Teacher Role, Coping Mechanisms.*

1.1 Introduction

Anxiety is recognized as one of the most prevalent mental health challenges faced by students globally. It affects various aspects of life, including academic performance, emotional well-being, and social interaction. In Bangladesh, particularly in the Narsingdi District, anxiety among students has gained attention due to the competitive academic environment and the pressures placed on students by their families and society. These pressures, combined with the lack of mental health support in schools, have resulted in a significant number of students suffering from anxiety, with many unable to access the necessary support systems. This study aims to investigate the prevalence and causes of anxiety among secondary-level students in the Narsingdi District, focusing on the role of teachers, schools, and families in managing anxiety. By examining the root causes and effects of anxiety, this research seeks to provide recommendations for improving mental health support systems in schools and promoting a more supportive learning environment.

Anxiety has become a growing concern across educational systems worldwide, with secondary-level students being one of the most vulnerable groups. The transition from childhood to adolescence is characterized by significant emotional, physical, and psychological changes. For students, these changes are often accompanied by increased academic responsibilities and social pressures. In the context of secondary-level education, where students face high expectations from families, schools, and society, the

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stakes are even higher. This creates an environment where anxiety can thrive, leading to detrimental effects on students' academic performance, self-esteem, and overall mental health.

Globally, anxiety disorders are the most common mental health issues, affecting millions of adolescents. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), approximately 10-20% of adolescents worldwide experience mental health conditions, and anxiety disorders represent a significant proportion of these conditions. The prevalence of anxiety among adolescents is not just a problem in high-income countries but is also a growing concern in low- and middle-income countries like Bangladesh. In these contexts, students often face added stress from societal expectations, economic instability, and limited access to mental health services, which exacerbates anxiety-related issues.

In Bangladesh, Socioeconomic disparities also play a critical role in shaping students' experiences with anxiety. In the Narsingdi District, many students come from low-income families, where financial instability adds another layer of stress. Parents, who often view education as the primary means for upward social mobility, place immense pressure on their children to perform well academically. This pressure, combined with the limited mental health resources in schools, creates a perfect storm for anxiety disorders to develop and flourish.

Additionally, societal expectations in Bangladesh place a heavy burden on students, particularly on boys to be academically successful and on girls to conform to societal norms related to family and marriage. These gendered expectations further compound the anxiety experienced by students. For boys, the pressure to succeed academically and secure a stable career is immense. For girls, the expectations to excel in school while simultaneously preparing for traditional gender roles create conflicting pressures that can lead to feelings of anxiety and inadequacy.

The lack of mental health resources in schools further compounds the problem. Most schools in the Narsingdi District do not have access to counselors or mental health professionals who can provide support to students. Even when mental health services are available, students are often unaware of them or reluctant to use them due to the stigma associated with seeking help. This creates a situation where students are left to manage their anxiety on their own, often resorting to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as avoidance, isolation, or overworking themselves.

The role of teachers in managing student anxiety cannot be overstated. Teachers are often the first point of contact for students who are struggling with anxiety, yet they are not always equipped to provide the necessary support. In many cases, teachers may recognize that a student is struggling but feel unsure about how to help. This is particularly true in Bangladesh, where mental health education is not part of teacher training programs. Without the proper training, teachers may inadvertently contribute to students' anxiety by placing additional pressure on them or failing to recognize the signs of anxiety.

This study aims to address these gaps by exploring the prevalence and causes of anxiety among secondary-level students in Narsingdi District, with a particular focus on the role

of teachers and schools in managing student anxiety. By investigating the specific challenges faced by students in this region, this research seeks to provide actionable recommendations for improving mental health support in schools and promoting a more supportive learning environment.

Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on adolescent mental health by focusing on a region that has been underrepresented in previous studies. By providing a detailed analysis of the causes of anxiety in the Narsingdi District and offering practical recommendations for addressing these issues, this research aims to improve the mental health outcomes of secondary-level students and create a more supportive educational environment for all students. Anxiety among secondary-level students in the Narsingdi District is a critical issue that affects both their academic performance and overall well-being. Students in this region face significant academic pressure due to the competitive nature of the education system, which places a high value on examination performance. Family expectations add to this pressure, creating an environment where students are constantly under stress to meet both academic and personal expectations.

Despite the increasing recognition of mental health issues in Bangladesh, schools in the Narsingdi District lack structured mental health programs, and teachers are often untrained in recognizing and addressing anxiety in students. The stigma associated with mental health further discourages students from seeking help, leaving many to suffer in silence.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring the specific causes of anxiety in this context, identifying the roles teachers and families play, and providing recommendations for improving mental health awareness and support in schools.

1.2 Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety has long been studied as a psychological condition that affects emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses. According to Freud (1926), anxiety arises from conflicts between unconscious desires and societal expectations, often leading to feelings of distress, helplessness, and fear. Over time, various theories have emerged to explain anxiety. Cognitive-behavioral theories, for example, suggest that anxiety is maintained by negative thought patterns and cognitive distortions (Beck, 1976). Anxiety disorders are often linked to a combination of genetic, environmental, and psychological factors (LeDoux, 1998).

In academic settings, anxiety manifests in specific forms such as test anxiety, performance anxiety, and social anxiety. These types of anxiety are especially prevalent among adolescents due to the developmental changes and social pressures they experience during this time (Kessler et al., 2005). The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies anxiety disorders as one of the leading causes of disability worldwide, with adolescents being particularly vulnerable to its effects.

1.3 Anxiety among School Students

The literature on anxiety among students highlights the significant impact it has on academic performance and emotional well-being. Research by McLean et al. (2011) shows that anxiety disorders are more common in adolescents than previously thought, and the prevalence is particularly high among students who face intense academic pressure. In South Asian countries like Bangladesh, the emphasis on academic success exacerbates these issues, as students are often judged by their performance in high-stakes examinations.

In Bangladesh, studies have shown that anxiety among secondary school students is linked to the competitive nature of the education system, where success in exams is highly valued (Rahman et al., 2019). The cultural stigma surrounding mental health further complicates the situation, as students are often reluctant to seek help for their anxiety. The lack of mental health resources in schools, coupled with the social expectations placed on students, creates a challenging environment for managing anxiety.

1.4 The Role of Teachers and Schools in Managing Student Anxiety

Teachers play a critical role in managing student anxiety, as they are often the first to notice changes in behavior or performance that may indicate mental health issues. However, studies have shown that many teachers lack the necessary training to address these issues effectively (Beck et al., 2009). In Bangladesh, the absence of formal mental health education in teacher training programs means that many teachers are ill-equipped to support students who are struggling with anxiety.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) suggests that students' mental health is influenced by various environmental factors, including their relationships with teachers and peers. Schools are a key part of this environment, and when teachers are trained to recognize and manage anxiety, they can provide crucial support to students. Programs such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and mindfulness training have been shown to reduce anxiety levels in students when implemented in schools (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015). Teachers play a critical role in identifying and managing anxiety among students. Research by Jennings and Greenberg (2009) shows that teachers who create supportive classroom environments can significantly reduce student anxiety. However, many teachers lack the training necessary to recognize the signs of anxiety and provide appropriate support.

In Bangladesh, mental health education is not a part of teacher training programs, meaning that most teachers are ill-equipped to handle the mental health challenges their students face. This lack of training, combined with the cultural stigma surrounding mental health, means that many teachers are unable to provide the support their students need.

1.5 Theoretical Frameworks on Anxiety

Anxiety, as a psychological construct, has been explored through various theoretical lenses. One of the most prominent frameworks is the cognitive-behavioral model, which

posits that anxiety is maintained by dysfunctional thought patterns and maladaptive behaviors (Beck, 1976). Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a widely used intervention for anxiety disorders and focuses on changing negative thought patterns to reduce anxiety symptoms. In the context of education, CBT can be particularly useful in helping students reframe their thoughts about academic performance and reduce the anxiety associated with exams and academic pressures.

Freud (1926) viewed anxiety through the lens of psychoanalysis, where it is seen as a conflict between unconscious desires and conscious social expectations. Freud's theory is less commonly applied in educational contexts today, but it remains relevant in understanding the deep-rooted fears and conflicts that may contribute to anxiety in adolescents. More recent research, however, has shifted towards understanding anxiety in terms of cognitive processes, environmental stressors, and biological predispositions.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) offers another useful framework for understanding student anxiety. According to Bronfenbrenner, human development is shaped by various environmental systems, ranging from the immediate microsystem (e.g., family, school) to the broader macrosystem (e.g., culture, society). In the context of student anxiety, the microsystem would include relationships with teachers, parents, and peers, while the macrosystem would encompass societal expectations regarding academic achievement and mental health stigma. Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasizes the importance of understanding how these different systems interact to influence a student's mental health and well-being.

1.6 Anxiety in Educational Settings

Anxiety in educational settings is often linked to academic pressures, particularly in systems that place a high emphasis on standardized testing and examination performance. In countries like Bangladesh, where success in high-stakes exams is seen as the key to future success, students face immense pressure to perform well. This pressure often leads to anxiety, particularly in students who feel that their self-worth is tied to their academic performance (Rahman et al., 2019).

1.7 Cultural Context of Anxiety in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the cultural context plays a significant role in shaping students' experiences with anxiety. Education is highly valued in Bangladeshi society, and academic success is often seen as the key to social mobility and future prosperity. As a result, students face immense pressure to excel in school, particularly in high-stakes exams such as the SSC and HSC exams (Rahman et al., 2019). This pressure is compounded by the societal expectations placed on students by their families, who often view academic success as a reflection of their parenting and social status.

Gender expectations also play a role in shaping anxiety experiences among students in Bangladesh. Boys are often expected to excel academically and secure well-paying jobs, while girls are expected to balance academic success with traditional gender roles, such as preparing for marriage and family life. These conflicting expectations can create

significant stress for students, particularly for girls who may feel torn between their academic aspirations and societal expectations.

The stigma surrounding mental health in Bangladesh further exacerbates the problem. Mental health issues are often viewed as a sign of weakness or failure, and students who experience anxiety are reluctant to seek help for fear of being judged or ostracized. This cultural stigma makes it difficult for students to openly discuss their mental health struggles and seek the support they need.

1.8 School-Based Interventions for Anxiety

School-based interventions have been shown to be effective in reducing anxiety levels among students. Programs such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and mindfulness training have been successfully implemented in schools to help students manage their anxiety. Research by Bandelow and Michaelis (2015) shows that CBT is particularly effective in helping students reframe their negative thoughts and develop healthier coping strategies.

In addition to CBT, peer support programs have also been shown to reduce anxiety among students. These programs provide students with a safe space to discuss their mental health struggles and receive support from their peers. Research by Seligman et al. (2009) shows that peer support programs can significantly reduce feelings of isolation and improve mental health outcomes for students.

While there is extensive research on anxiety in students globally, there is a lack of localized studies that focus on specific contexts such as the Narsingdi District in Bangladesh. Existing studies have not fully explored the role of teachers in managing anxiety in this region, nor have they examined the unique cultural and societal factors that contribute to student anxiety. This study seeks to fill this gap by focusing on the specific challenges faced by students in Narsingdi District and providing actionable recommendations for schools and teachers.

1.9 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

- a. To find out the Prevalence of Anxiety Among Secondary Level Students in Narsingdi District.
- b. To identify the Factors Contributing to Anxiety Among Secondary Level Students.
- c. To identify possible management systems to reduce the anxiety issues of secondary level students.

2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach to explore the anxiety issues faced by secondary-level students in Narsingdi District. Qualitative methods are appropriate for this study as they allow for an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of

students and teachers. The research employs thematic analysis to identify key themes related to anxiety, academic pressure, and the role of teachers in managing student mental health. The sample for this study includes 03 secondary schools in Narsingdi District. Within each school, 5 students and 3 teachers were selected, resulting in a total sample of 15 students and 09 teachers. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the sample represented a diverse range of socioeconomic backgrounds and school types.

Table 1: Total Respondents

Schools	Male Students	Female Students	Male Teachers	Female Teachers
School-01 (Boys School)	03	00	05	00
School-02 (Girls School)	00	03	02	03
School-03 (Combined)	01	02	01	04

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with students and teachers. The interviews focused on understanding the causes of anxiety, the strategies used by students to cope with their anxiety, and the role of teachers in supporting students. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was recorded with the consent of the participants.

The interview items are situated according to awareness about anxiety, teachers role to cope up the stress & Anxiety issues also the self-coping mechanism and mental health development.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. This method allows for the identification of recurring themes and patterns in the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to student anxiety. The analysis was conducted in several stages, including familiarization with the data, coding, and theme development.

3. Findings

3.1 Academic Pressure

The study found that academic pressure was the most significant factor contributing to anxiety among secondary-level students in Narsingdi District. Students reported feeling overwhelmed by the high expectations placed on them by their families and schools. Many students expressed concerns about failing to meet these expectations, which led to feelings of inadequacy and fear of disappointing their families.

Several students also mentioned that the pressure to perform well in exams was intensified by the competitive nature of the education system. Students felt that their entire future depended on their exam results, and this created a constant state of stress and anxiety.

One student noted, "If I don't do well in the exams, my family will be very disappointed, and I feel like I will have no future."

One student noted "I always try to do my best. I am academically good also I have some extracurricular activities like I can play cricket very well. I had played under 16,17 in my district. But my parents this is totally time waste. Removing this talent from my life I am not supposed to be a good student because cricket gives me that energy. I can't take and make their expectations."

3.2 Lack of Coping Mechanisms

The study also revealed that many students lacked effective coping mechanisms to deal with their anxiety. While some students attempted to manage their stress by studying harder, others resorted to unhealthy coping strategies, such as avoiding school or withdrawing from social interactions. Students reported feeling isolated and unsupported in their efforts to manage their anxiety. Teachers also noted that students often struggled to communicate their feelings of anxiety, which made it difficult for them to provide the necessary support.

One teacher commented, "Many students are afraid to talk about their anxiety because they don't want to be seen as weak or incapable."

3.3 Role of Teachers

The role of teachers in managing student anxiety was a key theme in the findings. While teachers were often aware of the anxiety their students were experiencing, many felt unprepared to provide adequate support. Teachers expressed a need for more training in mental health management, as well as access to resources that could help them support their students more effectively.

One teacher stated, "I see that my students are struggling, but I don't always know how to help them. I think we need more training on how to handle mental health issues in the classroom."

3.4 Parental Involvement

The study found that parental involvement played a significant role in either exacerbating or alleviating student anxiety. Students from families that placed high expectations on academic success reported higher levels of anxiety. Conversely, students whose parents were more supportive and understanding of their struggles experienced less anxiety.

Teachers also noted that parents often lacked awareness of the impact that their expectations had on their children's mental health.

One teacher remarked, "Parents sometimes don't realize how much pressure they are putting on their children, and this can have a negative impact on their mental health."

4. Discussion

The findings of this study align with previous research on student anxiety, particularly in high-pressure academic environments. Academic pressure, family expectations, and the

lack of mental health support systems are key factors contributing to student anxiety in Narsingdi District. The findings also highlight the need for schools to play a more active role in managing student anxiety, particularly through teacher training and the implementation of mental health programs.

The role of teachers is critical in addressing student anxiety, yet many teachers lack the necessary training to provide adequate support. This finding is consistent with global research, which suggests that teachers are often the first point of contact for students experiencing anxiety but are not always equipped to manage these issues effectively (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015).

The lack of parental awareness is another significant issue. Parents often place high expectations on their children without understanding the toll it takes on their mental health. This finding suggests that there is a need for greater communication between schools and parents regarding the importance of mental health and the impact of academic pressure on students.

The findings of this study align with global research on student anxiety, particularly in high-pressure academic environments. The data collected from secondary-level students in Narsingdi District highlights the critical role that academic pressure and family expectations play in contributing to anxiety. These findings are consistent with previous research by Rahman et al. (2019), which shows that students in Bangladesh face immense pressure to succeed academically, often to the detriment of their mental health.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the role that academic pressure plays in exacerbating student anxiety. Students reported feeling overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them by their families and schools, with many expressing fear of failure and disappointment. This is consistent with research by Zeidner (1998), who found that test anxiety is one of the most common forms of anxiety experienced by students and can significantly impair their academic performance.

The lack of coping mechanisms among students is another key finding of this study. Many students reported feeling isolated and unsupported in their efforts to manage their anxiety. This is particularly concerning given the well-documented impact that social support has on mental health outcomes. Research by Seligman et al. (2009) shows that students who have access to peer support networks are less likely to experience feelings of isolation and anxiety. The fact that many students in Narsingdi District lack access to such support networks highlights the need for schools to implement peer support programs and other mental health interventions.

The role of teachers in managing student anxiety is another critical theme that emerged from the data. Teachers in this study expressed a willingness to help their students but also noted that they lacked the training and resources necessary to provide adequate support. This finding is consistent with research by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), who found that teachers who receive training in mental health management are more likely to create supportive classroom environments that reduce student anxiety.

In the context of Bangladesh, where mental health education is not a part of teacher training programs, this lack of preparedness is particularly problematic. Teachers are often the first point of contact for students who are struggling with anxiety, yet they are not always equipped to recognize the signs of anxiety or provide appropriate interventions. This underscores the need for teacher training programs that focus on mental health awareness and management.

Parental involvement also emerged as a significant factor in shaping student anxiety. Students from families that placed high expectations on academic success reported higher levels of anxiety, while those whose parents were more supportive experienced less anxiety. This finding is consistent with research by Sweeney and Andrews (2016), who found that parental expectations can significantly impact a student's mental health and well-being.

The lack of parental awareness regarding the impact of their expectations on their children's mental health is particularly concerning. Many parents in this study appeared unaware of the toll that academic pressure was taking on their children. This highlights the need for schools to work with parents to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and provide them with the tools to support their children more effectively.

The cultural stigma surrounding mental health in Bangladesh is another significant barrier to addressing student anxiety. Many students in this study reported feeling reluctant to discuss their anxiety with their teachers or parents due to fear of being judged or labeled as weak. This finding is consistent with research by Rahman et al. (2019), which found that mental health stigma is a significant barrier to seeking help for anxiety in Bangladesh.

Addressing this stigma will require a cultural shift in how mental health is viewed in Bangladesh. Schools can play a critical role in this process by promoting mental health awareness and creating environments where students feel safe discussing their mental health struggles. By normalizing conversations about mental health, schools can help reduce the stigma associated with anxiety and encourage students to seek help when they need it.

The findings of this study also highlight the need for schools to implement structured mental health programs. Schools in the Narsingdi District currently lack the resources necessary to provide students with the support they need to manage their anxiety. This is consistent with research by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), which found that there is a significant gap in mental health services in low- and middle-income countries like Bangladesh.

By implementing programs such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and mindfulness training, schools can provide students with the tools they need to manage their anxiety. Research by Bandelow and Michaelis (2015) shows that CBT is one of the most effective interventions for reducing anxiety in students. Additionally, peer support programs can provide students with a safe space to discuss their mental health struggles and receive support from their peers (Seligman et al., 2009).

Finally, the findings of this study underscore the importance of collaboration between schools, families, and mental health professionals. Addressing student anxiety will require a multi-faceted approach that involves all stakeholders. Schools need to provide students with access to counseling services, while also working with parents to raise awareness about the importance of mental health. Mental health professionals can provide teachers and parents with the tools they need to support students effectively.

By implementing these strategies, schools in Narsingdi District can create a more supportive environment for students, helping them manage their anxiety and achieve academic success without sacrificing their mental health.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant impact that anxiety has on secondary-level students in Narsingdi District. Academic pressure, family expectations, and a lack of mental health support systems in schools are the primary contributors to student anxiety. The study underscores the importance of teacher training in mental health management and the need for schools to implement structured mental health programs.

The following recommendations are made based on the findings- Schools should provide training for teachers on how to recognize and manage anxiety in students. This training should include strategies for creating a supportive classroom environment and promoting open communication with students about their mental health. Schools should implement mental health programs that provide students with access to counseling services and resources for managing anxiety. These programs should be integrated into the school curriculum and focus on promoting emotional well-being. Schools should work with parents to raise awareness of the impact that academic pressure can have on their children's mental health. Schools can host workshops and provide resources to help parents better understand how to support their children without placing undue pressure on them. Schools should collaborate with mental health professionals to provide students with access to counseling services. Mental health professionals can also work with teachers and parents to develop individualized support plans for students who are struggling with anxiety.

By implementing these recommendations, schools in Narsingdi District can create a more supportive environment for students, helping them to manage their anxiety and achieve academic success without sacrificing their mental health.

6. Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, ensuring that all participants provided informed consent and that their confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. The study was approved by the relevant institutional review board.

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