

Development of an Instrument to Check Academic Anxiety Among Distance Learners

– Preeti Chandel

Research Scholar, Staff Training & Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE), IGNOU, New Delhi (India)

✉ chandelpreetihpu225@gmail.com  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2177-383X>

– Amiteshwar Ratra*

Professor, Staff Training & Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE), (IGNOU), New Delhi (India)

✉ amiteshwar@ignou.ac.in  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5114-8679>



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ABSTRACT

Purpose: By determining the validity and reliability of a self-made scale to evaluate the academic anxiety of postgraduate distance learners, the current study aims to develop an academic anxiety scale for distance learners to measure their anxiety.

Design/ Methodology/ Approach: The following procedures were used to develop the scale: (1) Developed the draft (2) Collect the data (3) checked the validity and reliability and, (4) factor analysis.

Findings: The study developed a tool to measure distance learners' level of Academic Anxiety. The tool, consists of 27 items and is statistically proven to have good reliability and validity.

Originality/Value: The study helps in developing a contextualized Academic Anxiety tool for measuring distance learners' Academic Anxiety.

Paper Type: Empirical Research Paper

KEYWORDS: Academic Anxiety | Distance learners | Students | ICDEOL

*Corresponding Author (Amiteshwar)

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Introduction

Anxiety is a reaction to any action in life events like speaking in front of an audience, taking exams, etc. Anxiety disorder is most common in adolescence (Ritzhaupt, Rehman, & Wilson, & Ruggles, 2022). This is the feeling of stress, shaky hands, distress, and agitation in some situations. In students' life, This is connected to academic tasks like exams, writing assignments particular subjects fear, etc. Sometimes these feelings affect negatively the students (Sharma & Shakir, 2018). Anxiety is many types and academic anxiety is one of them (Sharma & Shakir, 2019).

Academic anxiety is one of the main things that affect students' life positively or negatively. In this technological era, life has become more competitive, complicated, and complex, especially for students (Jain & Singhai, 2017). Studying through distance mode in education serves as a big challenge for mature people, employee persons, and family persons with other responsibilities. Studying through distance mode is not easy for all, several obstacles that affect students' studies like new technology, communication problems, study material, network issues, and availability of technology (Ritzhaupt, Rehman, Wilson, & Ruggles, 2022). These factors affect students' academic achievement and create anxiety. Ajmal, & Ahmad, S. (2019) said that Anxiety disrupts normal human reasoning, particularly in students, and this process makes the students uneasy or anxious. In the literature, it is found that there is a negative correlation between anxiety and the achievements of distance learners' students (Jegade, Alaiyemola, & Okebukola, 1990). The big source of anxiety in distance learners comes from their past experiences, assumptions, and acceptance. The fear of failure always runs through the distance learners and make them stressed, yet they have high expectations of themselves. Sometimes poor educational past experience or incomplete study in conventional mode, the students believe that distance education helps to complete their study and also help to provide empowering learning.

In the literature, many reasons have been found for poor results, and high dropout rates in distance education (Christensen, & Spackman, 2017). The reason found for poor result and high dropout is economic weakness, lack of feedback, low encouragement, isolation, low confidence, lack of socioemotional maturity, dissatisfaction with the course, advanced technology, and changes in career goal, etc (Bernard, Abrami, Lou, Borokhovski, Wade, Wozney, L& Huang, 2004). For students who are unfamiliar with technology in this day and age, it can also cause academic anxiety (Saade & Kira, 2009). Every academic task, including writing assignments, evaluating assignments, exams, and so on, causes academic anxiety in students. According to Huberty (2012), A higher level of anxiety related to academic tasks negatively impacts a student's academic performance. Sometimes Academic anxiety also helps to motivate students positively to concentrate on their

studies (Hooda & Saini 2017). According to Nepon et al., 2010 general anxiety is normal but severe anxiety leads to some issues like depression, risk for suicide, dropouts, and abuse of drugs or alcohol. (Moore & Kearsley, 2011) In the fifth generation of distance education online education with technology like audio/video conferences, and educational apps provide wide information making distance education more successful and easier for all. However, the use of this new technology makes students confused or have higher academic anxiety (Helms, 2014).

Research on Academic Anxiety

Anxiety affects the academic performance of distance learning students (Alam, 2017). According to a study by Allama Iqbal Open University, anxiety among distance learning students can be exacerbated by issues with the admissions process, book delivery, assignments, tutorials, and student support services. The study also highlighted that anxiety significantly affects the academic performance of distance learners. anxiety and academic performance are negatively correlated. (Ajmal & Ahmad, 2019). Academic difficulties might result from anxiety due to distraction, irrelevant ideas, and decreased focus and attention span. (Alam, 2017). In the other study on Orphans, it was found that orphans ranked high in negative anxiety because of lack of parental love and affection (Maqbool & Ganai, 2019). Alomyan, 2021 in his study on the impact of distance learning on the psychology and learning of university students during the COVID-19 pandemic result showed that first-year and second-year undergraduate students feel anxious, bored, and nervous about distance learning. They also find that the students in distance mode during this pandemic time feel lethargic and lazy, with poor focus on studying during online lectures. According to Roy, (2019), the findings of the study indicate a strong inverse relationship between academic achievement and academic anxiety. In this research thought and feeling of scoring high marks also affect academic anxiety, which means with increase in anxiety decreases academic achievement. In a study author found that high level of stress in school students during school closure during the Pandemic (Radwan, al...2021). in the review revealed that in distance education students have high anxiety during the examination time and factors like content of the study material, financial condition, time, employment and acceptance of high score differ significantly (Jegde, 1990).

Need of the Study

In this technological era life is full of competition and struggle (Moore, Dickson, Galyen, & Chen, 2010). Youth is affected by, this fast-paced life. Anxiety also affects students' mental and physical health. Due to anxiety, students affect their academic performance. Therefore, it's critical to understand the level of academic anxiety experienced by remote learners. A review of the literature and test researcher found that in India most adaptation of foreign test or measure some particular

anxiety in conventional mode students. The first test in India on anxiety was constructed by Sinha in 1968. After a long time, there isn't serious effort taken for distance learners, particularly for responsible postgraduate students who want to advance their careers. In order to determine the degree of academic anxiety, of distance learners, they need to construct an academic anxiety test for them.

Statement: "Development of an Instrument to Check Academic Anxiety among Distance Learners".

Objectives:

- To develop an Academic Anxiety Scale for distance learners.
- To find out the reliability and validity of the academic anxiety scale for distance learners.
- To find out the factors of academic anxiety scale for distance learners.

Operational Definition

Academic Anxiety: Academic anxiety related to academics like exams, assignments, results, etc.

Scale: A questionnaire with constructing items under different dimensions to measure the Academic Anxiety of students.

Students: a student is a person who is engaged with any learning process and enrolled in any school, college, or university.

Research Methodology

The population of the current study consisted of postgraduate distance learners, and it was a descriptive survey in nature. The Himachal Pradesh International Centre for Distance Education and Open Learning sample of 254 postgraduate remote learners. The data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 21.

Procedure

A list of one hundred questions is created by the researcher. The parameters were determined by the researcher, and items with related topics were grouped. A five-point Likert scale was made using the 100 items that were chosen. The 45 items from the questionnaire were eliminated in this step after it was displayed to the various specialists. resulting scale of 55 items. The sample of 100 distant learners was given the 56-item scale. 24 items were eliminated based on expert consensus, student feedback, and agreement. The scale included thirty-one items. for the examination of the 31-item scale that was ultimately built. It was given to a sample of 254 distance students.

Checking the Reliability

In the SPSS software, V26 was used to check the reliability. The results demonstrated an excellent Cronbach coefficient reliability of students' opinions towards the blended learning questionnaire ($\alpha = .807$).

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
.911	.904	31

Correlational Analysis

An analysis of correlation has been carried out to investigate the inter-item correlation to analyze whether the items establish the validity or not. In other words, by correlational analysis, the researcher aimed to examine the validity of research tools.

The values of items 1, 6, and 8 are lower than the critical value ($< .1946$). Therefore, these items will be removed from the questionnaire since the items are not measuring the scale. The item's reliability is tested once again after removal. The outcomes are displayed below.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
.922	.921	28

After removing three items (1, 6, 8), the Cronbach coefficient increased slightly ($\alpha = .922$). The inter-item association has also been examined using an item analysis.

Inter-item Correlation Matrix

According to the inter-item correlation matrix, there shouldn't be a correlation between any two items that is greater than or equal to 80 or less than 20. That being said, there's a good chance that the correlation for some items is less than 20. As a result, the overall statistics of each item have been examined to determine which ones ought to be eliminated.

In the analysis item corrected column, no, negative items are detected. It indicates that the remaining items are appropriate to be used for measuring the scale. Moreover, the last column, it suggests which item should be removed to increase the total Cronbach coefficient. After an investigation last column, no items were found to be deleted.



Exploratory Factor Analysis

To identify underlying variables or lower the number of elements, the EFA would be used.

Adequate sample size

The adequate sample size is the most important presumption of the EFA. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) suggest at least 300 or a minimum of 150 participants. Moreover, for each item 5 participants are required as a sample size. There were 28 items and 254 participants in the current study that proved the first assumption was true.

Factorability of Data: Determinant Value

The determinant's value should be greater than 0.00001. It shows that components do not exhibit multicollinearity. Bartlett's test of sphericity from the KMO should have a statistically significant value of p.05. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value should be more than .50. The KMO has a range of 0 to 1, with values nearer 1 being preferable. (Kaiser, 1970).

Table 3: Threshold

0.50 to 0.70 moderate
0.70 to 0.80 good
0.80 to 0.90 excellent
0.90 to 1.00 perfect

Findings of the EFA

The number of factors has been determined by doing an initial analysis. The results revealed a determinant value larger than .00001, indicating that the first assumption is true. Additionally, the BTS value was statistically significant (<.001) and the KMO value was greater than .50 (KMO=.916).

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
.916		2762.076	378	<.001

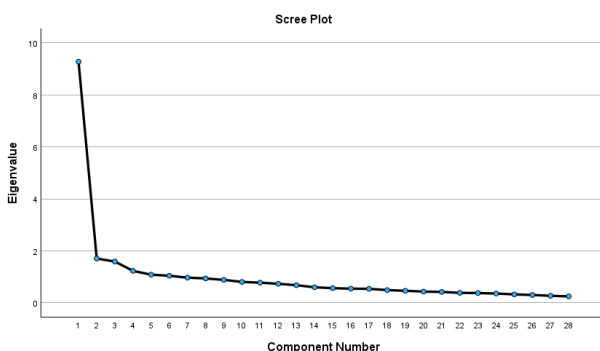


Figure 1: Scree Plot

Six elements are chosen as the starting factors in the analysis when an Eigenvalue greater than 1 is taken into account. Thus, in order to ascertain whether the number of components acquired by SPSS is accurate and whether more investigation is required, the Monte Carlo PCA for Parallel Analysis has been employed.

Interpretation of the MCPCA

If the random Eigenvalue from MCPCA is greater than the generated Eigenvalue from EFA, then the factor is not considered to be a spate factor. The factor number 4 value is greater than the SPSS-generated factor (SPSS=1.228, MCPCA=1.4312). Therefore, the final factors should be 3 factors. After forcing the SPSS to generate 3 factors, the new findings are presented in the below table.

Determinant Value

The barrier is exceeded by the new determinant value (>.00001). Additionally, the table below shows the KMO and BTS.

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	Df	Sig
.916		2762.076	378	<.001

Excellent value (KMO=.916) is displayed by the KMO, which is far higher than the required threshold (>.50). Furthermore, the BTS is substantially less than 05 (BTS<.001).

After compelling the SPSS to generate three factors, three factors were produced. 44.906 is the total cumulative variance. In addition, a scree plot illustrating the quantity of loaded components is provided below.

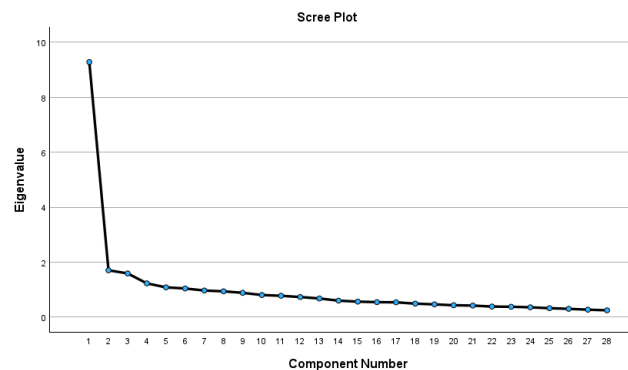


Figure 2: Scree Plot

Loaded Factors

The factors were extracted using the PCA. Oblimin, the rotation approach, makes the assumption that the elements have no link to one another. 15 items loaded under factor 1, 7 items loaded under factor 2, and 5 items loaded under factor 3. However, item 22 is not loaded under any factors. Therefore, this item will be removed.

Table 6: Component Correlation Matrix

Component	1	2	3
1	1.000	.460	-.194
2	.460	1.000	-.123
3	-.194	-.123	1.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

To reject the null hypothesis, the correlation between the components must be less than .50. The table above illustrates that there is less than a .50 connection between the components. After then, the rotation method would be noted as orthogonal.

Construct validity

Composite Reliability & Convergent validity

Through composite reliability, the items' internal consistency is investigated. The composite reliability should be greater than .70 (Hair et al, 2009). The relationship between the items is indicated by the convergent validity. For convergent validity to be established, the average variance extracted (AVE) needs to be higher than .50. In the analysis, all factors established composite reliability. Furthermore, the AVEs of the factors were lower than .50.

Discriminant validity

The square root of the AVEs must be higher than the correlation between the components in order to demonstrate discerning validity.

Table 7: AVE Correlations

		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.615**	.668**
	Sig.2-tailed)		<.001	<.001
	N	254	254	254
		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 2	Pearson Correlation	.615**	1	.589**
	Sig.2-tailed)	<.001		<.001
	N	254	254	254
		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 3	Pearson Correlation	.668**	.589**	1
	Sig.2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	
	N	254	254	254

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

With the exception of factor 3, all factors have square roots larger than correlations.

Checking the reliability of the items

Using Cronbach alpha, the 27 items' reliability was examined. The table below displays the findings. Table 8 reliability statistics

Table 8: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
.925	.924	27

Final Questionnaire

After conducting, item analysis, correlational analysis, and exploratory factor analysis, the remaining items were finalized to be used for data collection.

Factor 1 Unease, Stress, Nervousness	
1	I feel stressed while writing assignments.
2	Mostly I feel uncomfortable interacting with tutor or fellow classmates during online classes/ face to face classes.
3	I feel ashamed for not understanding English word while searching for information through internet.
4	Mostly I feel sweaty palm and shaky hand before online test.
5	I feel nervous to attend group lecture.
6	I think my efficiency reduced due to poor grades in online exams.
7	Poor knowledge of internet creates stress in my studies.
8	Thoughts of failure run through my mind during examination.
9	I am always afraid of making mistakes in keywords.
10	less knowledge of laptop and computer makes me nervous.
11	The medium of language in online classes create problem in understanding the topic.
12	I feel anxious about performing or giving a speech/presentation in front of audience.
13	I always delay and avoid assignments.
14	Mostly I feel like crying.
15	The medium of tutor's instructions confused me in learning.
Factor 2 Worries towards Academics	
16	The thought of getting high grades worries me.
17	Reviewing study material makes me confused about the concepts.
18	While reading the books for studies, lots of thought run in my mind.
19	Due to stress, I feel lack of concentration in studies.
20	The fear of particular subject worries me.
21	Mostly I feel sleepy during studying through distance education mode.
22	I feel lack of concentration in studying through distance education mode.
Factor 3 Exam Anxiety	
23	During examination I forget material that I knew before examination.
24	Sometimes I fail to attend classes and that make me more stressful.
25	I feel stressed during the examination.
26	I get nervous the night before exam.
27	I get anxious to manage study time with job/other responsibilities.



Scoring Method

The Questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale as its foundation. Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The total highest score is 135, the average score is 67.5, and the lowest score is 27.

Low Academic Anxiety	Average Academic Anxiety	High Academic Anxiety
27	67.5	135

Table 9: Scoring Methods for Factors

No. of Items	Dimensions	Low	Average	High
15	Factor 1	15	37.5	75
7	Factor 2	7	17.5	35
5	Factor 3	5	12.5	25

Summary

The research has produced an Academic Anxiety tool to measure the Academic anxiety of distance learners. The tool’s strong construct validity, factor analysis, and reliability have been statistically demonstrated based on data from 254 distant learners of the PG course. The tool has three dimensions and twenty-seven components. The instrument was created as a scale that yields accurate results from student assessments conducted in both rural and urban locations.

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Annexure 15.4.2

Submission Date	Submission Id	Word Count	Character Count
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2

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4	uir.unisa.ac.za	1	Publication

5	repository.up.ac.za	<1	Publication
6	thescipub.com	1	Publication
7	qdoc.tips	1	Internet Data
9	moam.info	1	Internet Data
10	onlinecourses.swayam2.ac.in	1	Internet Data
11	www.eajournals.org	1	Publication
12	citeseerx.ist.psu.edu	<1	Internet Data

Reviewers Memorandum



Reviewer's Comment 1: In the present paper Author developed Scale for measuring an instrument to measure Academic anxiety among distance learners. The topic is quite relevant in today's time. Since after covid-19 distance education is very common phenomenon and as a result academic anxiety is increasing among students which affect student life both positively and negatively.

Reviewer's Comment 2: The empirical paper, “Development of an Instrument to Check Academic Anxiety Among Distance Learners,” is a commendable contribution to the field of distance education and student well-being. The authors successfully address a significant gap in the literature by creating a novel instrument to measure academic anxiety specifically tailored for distance learners. The methodology employed in the paper is robust, with a clear and systematic approach to instrument development.

Reviewer's Comment 3: The authors provide a detailed account of the steps taken, from the initial conceptualization of the instrument to its validation. The use of a diverse sample of 254 PG distance learners enhances the generalizability of the findings, and the statistical analyses employed demonstrate the instrument's reliability and validity.



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Conflict of Interest: Author of a Paper had no conflict neither financially nor academically.



Editorial Excerpt



The article has 02% of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the authors (Preeti and Amiteshwar), and accordingly, all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are noticeably related to the theme "**Development of an Instrument to Check Academic Anxiety Among Distance Learners**" both subject-wise and research-wise. The paper is well-structured and all the sections are clearly defined. The methodology section is a standout feature of the paper, demonstrating a meticulous process in the development and validation of the instrument. The transparency in reporting the various stages of instrument development contributes to the paper's methodological rigor. Furthermore, the inclusion of a diverse sample of distance learners adds depth to the study's applicability. However, it would be beneficial if the authors addressed certain limitations more explicitly. For instance, the generalizability of the instrument to different cultural contexts could be discussed, and potential biases associated with self-reporting measures should be acknowledged. Overall, the paper promises to provide a strong base for the further studies in the area. After comprehensive reviews and editorial board's remarks the manuscript has been categorized and decided to publish under "**Empirical Research Paper**" category.

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The acknowledgment section is an essential part of all academic research papers. It provides appropriate recognition to all contributors for their hard work and effort taken while writing a paper. The data presented and analyzed in this paper by authors (Preeti & Amiteshwar) were collected first handily and wherever it has been taken the proper acknowledgment and endorsement depicts. The authors are highly indebted to others who facilitated accomplishing the research. Last but not least, endorse all reviewers and editors of GJEIS in publishing in the present issue.

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