

Correlation of Test Anxiety and Well-Being in an Employment Interview among Job Applicants

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ABSTRACT

Every individual strives for an employment which not only provides meaning and purpose to life but also gives a chance to live life to its fullest. For employment, most of the time one has to face an interview where one's affective states and ability to function both get affected. Both job applicant's well-being and test anxiety experienced before an employment interview are related. The present study aims to find out the correlation of test anxiety and well-being in an employment interview among job applicants. A sample of 101 male job applicants from Bhopal, India was pooled through purposive sampling, who undertook Test Anxiety Inventory consisting of two subscales viz. Worry and Emotionality, developed and Friedman Well-Being scale developed by consisting of 20 bi-polar adjectives divided over five subscales: Emotional Stability, Jovial, self-esteem, sociability and Happiness prior to facing the job interview. Results revealed negative correlation between test anxiety and well-being ($r=-0.50^{**}$; 0.01 sig). Regression analysis explained that 25% variation in the test anxiety was explained by the overall well-being significantly ($F=33.01$; $p<0.01$). It was also revealed that 22.2% variation in the emotionality dimension of test anxiety was explained by the components of well-being significantly ($F=5.43$; $p<0.01$).

Keywords: Test anxiety, Well-being, Employment interview, Job applicant

THEORY OF DUAL COMPARISON

In a test dominated world, it is impossible to escape testing situations [1]. Tests are employed in a variety of situations, selection and recruitment being one of them for job applicants. Higher level of test anxiety and lower level of well-being state both influence the performance adversely on the test [2]. Performance also depends on the nature and purpose of test underwent, i.e. academic, ability, group, individual, personality, ground task or an interview test for job attainment or score achievement. When the job applicant faces a testing situation, his/her states of well-being and test anxiety are the key factors in determining his/her performance on the test. The overall performance depends on lot of covert and overt factors playing on an individual. Feelings of anxiety are a pervasive problem in today's stressful and fast-paced environment [3]. This is particularly true for prospective employees, as the evaluative and competitive nature of job application process often evokes feelings of anxiety, frustration and distress [4]. A key source of this anxiety is the employment interview, which is the most common selection device used by organizations [5]. It is not surprising that test anxiety is an inherent part of the

interview process, as the employment interview is a highly evaluative situation [6]. In addition, the interviewer is typically a stranger and talking to strangers has been found to be anxiety provoking [7]. Finally, employment interviews are typically not under the applicants' control and this lack of control may lead to heightened feelings of anxiety [8].

Anxiety refers to vague and apprehensive feeling of fear that is often accompanied by physiological symptoms. Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure.

People with anxiety disorders usually have recurring

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intrusive thoughts or concerns. They may avoid certain situations out of worry and also have physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, dizziness or a rapid heartbeat. It is a basic human emotion consisting of fear and uncertainty that typically appears when an individual perceives an event as being a threat to the ego or self-esteem [9].

Anxiety can be divided into two domains: Trait and State [10]. Trait anxiety is more permanent and deeply rooted in individual's personality while state anxiety is characterized as a temporary change in a person's emotional state due to an outside factor, and it is experienced in relation to some particular event or act [11].

Irrespective of variations in purpose of test, every testing condition induces anxiety [12]. Suggested that test anxiety has two major components, Worry and Emotionality. Worry (W) can be conceptualized as cognitive concern over performance and Emotionality (E) is the autonomic arousal aspect of anxiety. In this regard, the cognitive dimension involves worry and negative thoughts, self-criticism or concern about the negative consequences of failure that occurs during test situations [13], while also making students 'freeze up' mentally, and fail to recall the information needed [14]. Additionally, the emotional component describes the tension that students have during the test, which is manifested through muscle tension, accelerated heart rate, nervousness, or sweaty palms [15]. This can have an impact on their sense of psychological well-being. A study examined the role of test anxiety in selection context in group testing. The results of the study reveal that there was a significant difference between familiarity and performance; result and performance, however, no significant difference was found between test familiarity, result and performance in relation to dimensions of test anxiety in group testing [16]. One more study investigated relationship between test anxiety and performance over a battery of projective tests for personality assessment. Results revealed that significant difference was found between test familiarity & emotionality and performance and result. No significant difference was found with total test anxiety and worry dimension [17].

Psychological well-being can be conceptualized as a combination of positive affective states and the ability to function at an optimal effectiveness in one's individual and social life [18]. Psychological well-being consists of positive relationships with others, personal mastery, autonomy, a feeling of purpose and meaning in life, and personal growth and development [19]. It is attained by achieving a state of balance affected by both challenging and rewarding life events [20]. Testing situations are both challenging and rewarding and hence can directly alter one's state of well-being. High test anxiety was found to be correlated with low self-esteem, inadequate studying and accomplishment, failing grades, troublesome classroom actions and adverse behavior towards school as a result of an intense fear of

failure [21]. According to research [2], psychological well-being has five components viz. Sociability, Self-Esteem/Self-Confidence, Emotional Stability, Jovial, and Happiness.

High levels of test anxiety may result in low job interview score, in spite of the fact that the candidate may demonstrate superior on-the-job performance, if hired. Since employment is based on skills acquired through academics and practical experience overtime, it becomes important to assess how testing of these skills is related to psychological well-being. For job applicants who are not contended with their present jobs, many challenges in the work environment, characterized by heightened competition, increased work targets, threats of job loss, organizational change, lack of time, lack of space, continuous technological development, conflicting demand from organizational stakeholders [22], increased use of participatory management and computerization [23], greater uncertainty and often result in higher work stress. These stressors may produce a negative impact on health and well-being if employees lack resources to cope with demands. In a study by [24], low test anxious individuals were found to focus on task-relevant variables in the testing situation. However, high test anxious individuals were found to focus internally on self-evaluative, self-depreciatory thinking, coupled with negative perception of autonomic responses.

A number of factors other than well-being are considered to influence test anxiety. Students' perception regarding the knowledge they have and their inability to enhance their learning has been evaluated within the group of factors affecting student performance and their level of stress [25]. This factor is manifested through students' complaints of lacking sufficient time to prepare for the exams or learn the course materials, or not being satisfied with the achieved academic results in the previous evaluations [26]. Test anxiety during interview may also influence the pursuit of acceptance of job offers by affecting the perceived organizational attractiveness. Researches indicate that applicants who view the interview process more favorably are also more satisfied with the organization [27]. If applicants experience high levels of anxiety and/or discomfort during the interview process, then they may regard the organization less attractive. This could result in the loss of qualified individuals and may also have implications for reputation of the organization, as impressions made in recruitment may be communicated to others. Hence, employee well-being is of considerable importance in determining the level of anxiety experienced.

Also, many researches indicated that test anxiety is associated with fear of negative assessment, inadequate study skills, inadequate test achievement and perfectionism. All these factors can be directly linked to high or low levels of well-being. It is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, behavioral and physiological

components [28]. Thinking about failing is thought to exhaust cognition which subsequently affects attention and working memory, thereby reducing full concentration of student. All of these results of thinking about failure will lead to decreased performance on difficult tasks and easy tasks will not be affected [9]. Furthermore, families also spend a lot of their resources in educating their wards and exert pressure on them to perform, gain employment and contribute towards the livelihood of their families. There is also pressure on students to perform and attain tertiary education in order to secure one of the limited employment opportunities [29-31]. Hence, the present study aims to explore the relationship between test anxiety and well-being of job applicants appearing in an employment interview irrespective of level of performance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find the relationship between test anxiety and well-being in an employment interview among job applicants.
2. To find the relationship between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness dimensions of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
3. To find the relationship between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness dimensions of well-being and worry dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
4. To find the significance of difference between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness dimensions of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
5. To find the significance of difference between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness dimensions of well-being and worry dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
6. To find out the strength of prediction of test anxiety by well-being of the job applicants in an employment interview.
6. There will be no significant difference between happiness dimension of well-being and worry dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
7. There will be no significant difference between sociability dimension of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
8. There will be no significant difference between self-esteem dimension of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
9. There will be no significant difference between jovial dimension of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
10. There will be no significant difference between emotional stability dimension of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
11. There will be no significant difference between happiness dimension of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
12. There will be no significant relationship between sociability, self-esteem, emotional stability, Jovial and happiness dimensions of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety.
13. There will be no significant relationship between sociability, self-esteem, emotional stability, jovial and happiness dimensions of well-being and worry dimension of test anxiety.
14. There will be no significant prediction of test anxiety by the well-being of the job applicants.

NULL HYPOTHESES

1. There will be no significant relationship between overall well-being and total test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
2. There will be no significant difference between sociability dimension of well-being and worry dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
3. There will be no significant difference between self-esteem dimension of well-being and worry dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
4. There will be no significant difference between jovial dimension of well-being and worry dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.
5. There will be no significant difference between emotional stability dimension of well-being and worry dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

101 male job applicants from Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India were selected as the sample for the study through purposive sampling. The sample consisted of subjects of age group ranging from 16 year and 6 months to 25 years, and Education standards ranging from higher secondary to graduation.

Tools used

For the present study, Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) developed by scientists [1] consisting of twenty items divided into two subscales viz. Emotionality (E) and Worry (W) in which Subjects responded on a four-point scale with response alternatives; 'almost never', 'sometimes', 'often' and 'almost always' was used. All the twenty items were used to determine the total anxiety score after which the raw scores were converted into percentile ranks for all the three dimensions. The mean, standard deviation and alpha

reliability coefficient of the TAI scale and Worry and Emotionality sub-scales are as **Table 1** for college freshmen.

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation and alpha reliability coefficient of the TAI scale.

Dimensions	TAI Total			Worry			Emotionality		
	Mean	SD	Alpha	Mean	SD	Alpha	Mean	SD	Alpha
College freshmen (male)	39.28	10.99	0.92	14.26	4.39	0.83	16.58	4.78	0.85

In addition to the above, Friedman Well-Being scale developed by scientists [2] was also administered. The test consists of a series of 20 bi-polar adjectives and the respondent is asked to rate himself/herself on each of the 20 adjectives. The adjectives are divided over five subscales: Emotional Stability (10 items; calm, relaxed, at ease, content, secure, steady, stable, unemotional, guilt-free, non-

envious), Jovial (3 items; jovial, humorous, enthusiastic) self-esteem/elf confidence (3 items; self-confidence, assertive, self-assured), sociability (3 items; social, neighborly, outgoing) and Happiness (1 item). A total score (FWBS) can also be obtained by adding up the 20 bi-polar adjectives (range 0-200) and dividing by 2 (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Dimension-wise descriptive statistics.

Dimensions	N	Mean	S. D.	SE _M
Sociability	101	58.59	7.09	0.70
Self-esteem	101	56.26	7.28	0.72
Jovial	101	57.37	8.23	0.81
Emotional stability	101	56.98	7.81	0.78
Happiness	101	61.58	5.82	0.58
Total Well-Being	101	59.40	6.54	0.65
Worry	101	11.76	3.03	0.30
Emotionality	101	11.90	3.54	0.35
Total test anxiety	101	29.72	7.37	0.73

The test-retest, coefficient alpha and split half reliabilities of the scale were found to be .81, .92 and .91 respectively with good overall validity.

PROCEDURE

In the present research, Test Anxiety Inventory and Friedman Well-Being Scale were administered on 101 male Job applicants in Bhopal for recruitment in various posts. The method of recruitment was to be employment interview. Prior to the administration of test anxiety and well-being scales, subjects were briefed about the purpose of present study and henceforth, informed consent was sought. They were also informed that their scores on the mentioned tests were independent of their selection criteria. Participants were assured of confidentiality of responses and they were fully debriefed about the study after the employment interview and before the result. The study aimed to assess the correlations between test anxiety and well-being of those who will undergo in an employment interview. It also aimed to investigate the significance of difference between dimensions of test anxiety with respect to components of well-being.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 reveals that on average, there was significant difference between overall well-being (M=59.40) and total test anxiety (M=29.72) among job applicants (p<.01). Hence, the null hypotheses stating that there will be no significant difference between total well-being and total test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants was rejected.

Table 4 reveals that the coefficient of correlation between overall well-being and total test anxiety is significantly negative (r = -0.5<.01). Hence, the null hypotheses stating that there will be no significant relationship between total well-being and total test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants was rejected.

Table 5 reveals that on average, there was significant difference between all the dimensions of well-being and worry dimension of test anxiety among job applicants (p<0.01). Hence, all the null hypotheses stating \ that there will be no significant difference between dimensions of well-being and worry dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants were rejected.

Table 3. Showing comparison of overall well-being and total test anxiety scores.

Variables	Mean	N	SD	t	df	Significance	Null hypothesis
Overall Well-being	59.40	101	6.54550	24.743	100	Significant at 0.01 level	Rejected
Total test anxiety	29.72	101	7.36766				

Table 4. Showing comparison of Total Well-being and Total test anxiety scores.

Variables	Mean	N	r	Significance	Null Hypothesis
Total Well-being	59.40	101	-.50**	Significant at 0.01 level	Rejected
Total test anxiety	29.72	101			

Table 5. Showing comparison of dimensions of well-being and worry scores.

Dimensions of Well-Being	Dimension of test anxiety	Mean difference	SD	t	df	Significance	Null hypothesis
Sociability	Worry	46.83	8.32	56.53	100	Significant at .01 level	Rejected
Self-esteem	Worry	44.49	8.37	53.44	100	Significant at .01 level	Rejected
Jovial	Worry	45.60	9.41	48.66	100	Significant at .01 level	Rejected
Emotional stability	Worry	45.21	9.01	50.42	100	Significant at .01 level	Rejected
Happiness	Worry	49.82	6.92	72.29	100	Significant at .01 level	Rejected

Table 6 reveals that on average, there was significant difference between all the dimensions of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety among job applicants ($p < .01$). Hence, all the null hypotheses stating that there will

be no significant difference between dimensions of well-being and Emotionality dimension of test anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants were rejected.

Table 6. Showing comparison of dimensions of Well-being and Emotionality scores.

Dimensions of well-being	Dimension of test anxiety	Mean	SD	t	df	Null hypothesis
Sociability	Emotionality	46.69	9.12	51.42	100	Rejected
Self-esteem	Emotionality	44.35	8.97	49.65	100	Rejected
Jovial	Emotionality	45.46	9.95	45.89	100	Rejected
Emotional stability	Emotionality	45.07	9.80	46.20	100	Rejected
Happiness	Emotionality	49.68	7.73	64.59	100	Rejected

Table 7 reveals that for N=101, the correlation coefficients between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness dimensions of well-being with worry dimension of test-anxiety yield negative correlation; the significance level of all the coefficients were small ($p < 0.05$) except coefficient of self-esteem and happiness with worry which though negative, was not significant. Thus, all the null hypotheses stating that there will be no relationship between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, and emotional stability dimensions of well-being with worry dimension of test-anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants were rejected. However, the relationship between self-esteem and happiness with worry were not found to be significant.

Table 7 also reveals that for N=101, the correlation coefficients between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness dimensions of well-being with emotionality dimension of test-anxiety yield negative correlation; the significance level of all coefficients were large ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is negative relationship between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness dimensions of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety. Thus, all the null hypotheses stating that there will be no relationship between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness dimensions of well-being with emotionality dimension of test-anxiety in an employment interview among job applicants were rejected.

Table 7. Showing correlations between dimensions of well-being and dimensions of test anxiety.

Dimensions	Sociability	Self-Esteem	Jovial	Emotional Stability	Happiness	Worry	Null Hypothesis	Emotionality	Null Hypothesis
Sociability	1	0.47**	0.50**	0.57**	0.43**	-0.23*	Rejected	-0.40**	Rejected
Self-Esteem		1	0.72**	0.70**	0.35**	-0.18	Retained	-0.29**	Rejected
Jovial			1	0.60**	0.58**	-0.23*	Rejected	-0.32**	Rejected
Emotional Stability				1	0.45**	-0.23*	Rejected	-0.40**	Rejected
Happiness					1	-0.13	Retained	-0.32**	Rejected
Worry						1		0.06*	
Emotionality								1	

REGRESSION TABLES

Table 8 reveals that 25% variation in the test anxiety (dependent variable) was explained by the overall well-being

(independent variable). The $F=33.01$; $p < 0.01$, indicates that independent variables jointly explains variations in the dependent variable significantly.

Table 8. Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	0.5	0.25	0.24	6.41	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Overall Well-Being					
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1357.49	1	1357.49	33.01	0.00
Residual	4070.75	99	41.12		
Total	5428.23	100			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Overall Well-Being					
b. Dependent Variable: Test Anxiety					
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	63.16	5.86		10.79	0.00
Overall Well-Being	-0.56	0.09	-0.50	-5.74	0.00
a. Dependent Variable: Test Anxiety					

Table 9 reveals that 8% variation in the worry dimension of test anxiety (dependent variable) was explained by the components of well-being (independent variable). The

$F=1.67$; $p>0.05$, indicates that independent variables jointly explained variations in the dependent variable was not significant.

Table 9. Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	0.28	0.081	0.03	2.98	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Components of Well-Being (Emotional Stability, Jovial, Self-Esteem / Self-Confidence, Sociability and Happiness)					
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	74.33	5	14.87	1.67	0.15
Residual	845.96	95	8.90		
Total	920.30	100			
a. Predictors: (Constant), , Components of Well-Being (Emotional Stability, Jovial, Self-Esteem / Self-Confidence, Sociability and Happiness)					
b. Dependent Variable: Worry					
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	17.84	3.62		4.92	0.00
Sociability	-0.05	0.05	-0.12	-0.99	0.32
Self-Esteem	0.04	0.07	0.10	0.60	0.55

Jovial	-0.070	0.06	-0.19	-1.17	0.25
Emotional Stability	-0.05	0.06	-0.13	-0.90	0.37
Happiness	0.03	0.07	0.06	0.46	0.65
Dependent Variable: Worry					

Table 10 reveals that 22.2% variation in the emotionality dimension of test anxiety (dependent variable) was explained by the components of well-being (independent variable). The $F=5.43$; $p<0.01$, indicates that independent variables jointly explains variations in the dependent variable significantly.

Table 10. Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.47	.22	.18	3.20	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Components of Well-Being (Emotional Stability, Jovial, self-esteem/self, confidence, sociability and Happiness)					
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	279.51	5	55.90	5.43	0.00
Residual	977.49	95	10.29		
Total	1257.01	100			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Components of Well-Being (Emotional Stability, Jovial, self-esteem/self, confidence, sociability and Happiness)					
b. Dependent Variable: Emotionality					
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	28.463	3.90		7.30	0.000
Sociability	-0.11	0.06	-0.23	-1.9	0.049
Self-Esteem	0.02	0.08	0.04	0.29	0.773
Jovial	-0.01	0.07	-0.02	-0.19	0.853
Emotional Stability	-0.10	0.06	-0.23	-1.70	0.093
Happiness	-0.07	0.07	-0.11	-0.95	0.344
a. Dependent Variable: Emotionality					

DISCUSSION

Not many researches are available pertaining to the relationship between test anxiety and well-being in an employment interview among the job applicants. High levels of test anxiety may result in low job interview score, in spite of the fact that the subject may demonstrate superior on-the-job performance, if hired. If the employee has low level of well-being, the performance may further deteriorate.

The results of the study reveal that there was a significant negative correlation between well-being and test anxiety scores ($r=-0.50$, $p<0.01$). This implies an inverse relationship between well-being and test anxiety, indicating that low well-being will result in high test anxiety and vice versa. The differences in scores of all dimensions of well-

being (sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness) with both the dimensions of test anxiety (worry and emotionality) were also found to be significant. This in turn indicates that among job applicants, scores on all the dimensions of well-being differed significantly with the scores on both the dimensions of test-anxiety. The research further investigated correlations between dimensions of well-being and dimensions of test Anxiety. The correlation coefficients between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness dimensions of well-being with Worry dimension of test-anxiety (-0.23, -0.18, -0.23, -0.23 & -0.13) were significantly negative ($p<0.05$) except coefficient of self-esteem and worry which though negative, was not significant. The correlation coefficients between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and

happiness dimensions of well-being with emotionality dimension of test-anxiety (-0.40, -0.29, -0.32, -0.40 & -0.32) were all significantly negative ($p < 0.01$). It could be concluded that there is negative relationship between sociability, self-esteem, jovial, emotional stability and happiness dimensions of well-being and emotionality dimension of test anxiety. Regression analysis explained that 25% variation in the test anxiety was explained by the overall well-being significantly ($F = 33.01$; $p < 0.01$). It also revealed that 22.2% variation in the emotionality dimension of test anxiety was explained by the components of well-being significantly ($F = 5.43$; $p < 0.01$), while 8% variation in the worry dimension of test anxiety was explained by the components of well-being was not significant ($F = 1.67$; $p > 0.05$).

The findings were in line with other research [5] that interview settings are a key source of test anxiety. According to scientists [20] testing situations are both challenging and rewarding and hence can directly alter one's state of balance. Interview situations can hence be related to lowered well-being and high-test anxiety, thus, validating the inverse relationship between the two supported by the present study. The research by Peleg [21] supports the negative relationship between self-esteem and dimensions of test anxiety. Hence there is negative relationship between well-being and test anxiety in interview settings among job applicants. This negative relationship is also extended to the dimensions of well-being and dimensions of test anxiety along with significant difference in these scores. Similar studies can be conducted for assessing gender differences in well-being and test-anxiety and with other methods of selection and recruitment.

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