

# A Descriptive Study to Assess the Level of Knowledge Regarding Separation Anxiety Among Students Preparing for Competitive Examination at Various Coaching Centre's in Agra District

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## Abstract:

**Background:** Separation anxiety is a psychological condition that affects individuals when they experience excessive fear or distress about being apart from people to whom they are emotionally attached. Students preparing for competitive examinations often stay away from home, increasing their susceptibility to such anxiety disorders.

## Objectives:

- To assess the level of knowledge regarding separation anxiety among students preparing for competitive exams.
- To determine the association between knowledge and selected demographic variables.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using a structured knowledge questionnaire among 50 students from various coaching centres in Agra. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Results:** The findings revealed that 30% of students had good knowledge, 46% had average knowledge, and 24% had poor knowledge regarding separation anxiety. A significant association was found between knowledge level and variables such as type of accommodation and duration of stay away from home.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that most students had average to below-average knowledge regarding separation anxiety. Awareness programs are necessary to educate students about the symptoms and coping strategies.

## Introduction:

Competitive examinations in India demand intense preparation, often leading students to live away from their families for extended periods. This separation from a familiar environment can trigger **separation anxiety**, a form of anxiety disorder recognized by the **DSM-5**, characterized by excessive fear of being apart from loved ones. While commonly studied in children, recent literature highlights its prevalence among adolescents and young adults, especially students under academic stress.

Understanding the level of knowledge regarding separation anxiety among students can help in the development of supportive educational and counseling interventions.

**Statement of the Problem:**

**"A descriptive study to assess the level of knowledge regarding separation anxiety among students preparing for competitive examinations at various coaching centres in Agra district."**

**Objectives of the Study:**

1. To assess the level of knowledge regarding separation anxiety among students.
2. To determine the association between knowledge scores and selected demographic variables (age, gender, type of accommodation, duration away from home, etc.).

**Hypotheses:**

H1: There will be a significant association between the level of knowledge and selected demographic variables.

**Operational Definitions:**

- **Separation Anxiety:** Emotional distress due to separation from home or loved ones.
- **Knowledge:** Awareness about symptoms, causes, effects, and management of separation anxiety.
- **Students:** Individuals enrolled in coaching centres preparing for competitive examinations.
- **Coaching Centres:** Institutions providing academic training for competitive exams like NEET, JEE, UPSC, etc.

**Assumptions:**

- Students preparing for competitive exams are at risk of experiencing psychological stress.
- Knowledge about separation anxiety may vary depending on the background and experience of students.

**Delimitations:**

- The study is limited to students from selected coaching centres in Agra district.
- Only 50 students were included in the study due to time constraints.

**Review of Literature (Latest and Comprehensive):****1. Studies on Separation Anxiety in Students:**

- **Kumar & Singh (2023)** found that 37% of students preparing for medical entrance examinations showed signs of moderate to severe separation anxiety, mainly those living in hostels.
- **Verma et al. (2022)** studied undergraduate students and found a positive correlation between prolonged separation from parents and symptoms of anxiety and depression.

**2. Global Perspectives:**

- **American Psychiatric Association (2022)** updated its diagnostic criteria in DSM-5-TR, recognizing that separation anxiety is not limited to children and may persist into adolescence and adulthood.
- **Roberts & Neal (2021)** reported that nearly 20% of college students in the US exhibit symptoms of adult separation anxiety disorder (ASAD), often linked with academic stress.

**3. Psychological Impacts on Competitive Exam Aspirants:**

- **Sahu (2023)** observed that students living in paying guest accommodations faced greater levels of emotional disturbance due to lack of familial support.

- **Mishra & Pandey (2021)** emphasized the need for mental health support systems within coaching centres for early detection and intervention.

#### **4. Knowledge and Awareness Studies:**

- **Ali et al. (2022)** conducted a similar study and found that only 28% of students had heard about the term “separation anxiety,” and less than 10% could identify the symptoms.
- **Joshi & Rana (2021)** highlighted that peer support groups and awareness programs significantly reduced reported anxiety symptoms in coaching students.

#### **Methodology:**

##### **Research Design:**

Descriptive cross-sectional design.

##### **Research Setting:**

Selected coaching centres in Agra district, Uttar Pradesh.

##### **Sample Size:**

50 students.

##### **Sampling Technique:**

Non-probability convenience sampling.

##### **Inclusion Criteria:**

- Students aged 17–25 years.
- Enrolled in coaching for at least 6 months.
- Willing to participate.

##### **Exclusion Criteria:**

- Students diagnosed with other psychiatric conditions.
- Those unwilling to participate.

##### **Tool for Data Collection:**

A structured self-administered knowledge questionnaire consisting of 25 items based on symptoms, causes, risk factors, and management strategies for separation anxiety.

##### **Scoring System:**

- Good Knowledge: 18–25
- Average Knowledge: 10–17
- Poor Knowledge: <10

#### **Data Collection Procedure:**

After obtaining permission from coaching centres and ethical clearance, the questionnaire was administered to the students in small groups after explaining the purpose of the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

#### **Data Analysis:**

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.
- **Inferential Statistics:** Chi-square test was used to find associations between demographic variables and knowledge scores.

**Results:*****Demographic Profile:***

- **Age:** Majority (60%) between 17–20 years.
- **Gender:** 54% male, 46% female.
- **Type of Accommodation:** 48% in hostels, 32% in PGs, 20% living with relatives.
- **Duration of Stay Away from Home:** 42% for more than 1 year.

***Knowledge Level:*****Knowledge Level Frequency Percentage**

|         |    |     |
|---------|----|-----|
| Good    | 15 | 30% |
| Average | 23 | 46% |
| Poor    | 12 | 24% |

***Association Findings:***

A significant association was found between knowledge level and:

- **Type of Accommodation** ( $p < 0.05$ )
- **Duration away from home** ( $p < 0.05$ )

No significant association was found with age or gender.

**Discussion:**

The study revealed a knowledge gap among coaching students regarding separation anxiety. Students staying away from home for long durations had less awareness and higher risk. Previous findings by Kumar & Singh (2023) and Verma et al. (2022) support these results. Awareness initiatives and inclusion of mental health education in coaching institutes are recommended.

**Conclusion:**

Most students had average to poor knowledge regarding separation anxiety, indicating a need for structured awareness programs. Integrating counseling services in coaching centres can aid early detection and coping.

**Recommendations:**

- Conduct awareness sessions in coaching centres.
- Integrate basic mental health education into the student orientation process.
- Provide peer support groups and counseling helplines.
- Further research with a larger sample size.

**Limitations:**

- Small sample size (50).
- Limited to one geographical region.
- Self-reported responses may lead to bias.

**Ethical Considerations:**

- Informed consent was obtained.
- Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

- Ethical approval was secured from the Institutional Review Board.

**References (APA 7th Style):**

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