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Exploring Prevalence and Psycho-Social factors of Library Anxiety among the Student Category of Users based on University affiliations

Rajesh Chutia
Assam University, raj4u411@gmail.com

Sudeshna Nath
Gauhati University, sudeshnavortex@gmail.com

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Rajesh Chutia
Ph.D. Scholar
Department of Library and Information Science
Assam University
raj4u411@gmail.com

&

Sudeshna Nath
Ph.D. Scholar,
Department of Education,
Gauhati University
sudeshnavortex@gmail.com

Abstract

An outright fear of using library facilities has been observed among students which can hinder academic productivity among students. Library anxiety poses as a psychological barrier in effective use of library resources. Research suggests us to delve deeper in the library perspectives in order to unearth possible causes of anxiety associated with it. The present study is a descriptive cross-sectional design intended to examine library anxiety among the students' category of library users in Assam's state universities; along with investigation of probable psycho-social reasons for such an anxiety. For the study, a sample size of 160 (Gauhati University = 80 and Dibrugarh University = 80) was selected using the Purposive sampling technique. The Bostick's Library anxiety scale and a self-constructed questionnaire were administered and simple frequencies, summarized figures and chi-square was applied to achieve the objectives. Results revealed that no significant difference exists in the prevalence of library anxiety among the students on the basis of university affiliations. It was also found that existence of pre-conceived social and exam anxiety, along with difficulties in academic planning and learning were detected as major psycho-social causes for higher levels of anxiety.

Keywords: Library Anxiety, Users, Students' Category, State Universities, Libraries, Gauhati University, Dibrugarh University

1. INTRODUCTION

Library anxiety has emerged as a problematic issue for many students, compelled to use the library resources for academic assistance and learning. Psychologically, library anxiety is a fear which creates a sort of mental blockage as soon as the student encounters a really wide spaced library. Basically it develops confusion among the users manifesting in uneasiness and apprehension in approaching a library staff for help. Most of the times, the fear can be paralleled to that of imminent death and paralysis. Research suggests that library anxiety needs to be taken seriously and find out what type of possibilities can be prescribed for giving the students a sort of relief within the library environment.

A review of related studies in this context focuses on the primary role of the librarian in understanding and conceptualizing anxiety in a library set up. It should be rightfully considered as a psychological barrier in effective library use. Reference services like providing help and support to students in accessing the resources and infrastructure of the library needs to be more user friendly. Identification and measurement of library anxiety among the users, tracing of demographic factors and synthesis of the results to reduce the impact of such an anxiety forms an important subject matter of library research. (Carlile, 2007).

2. OBJECTIVES

Following are the objectives:

- To study the prevalence of library anxiety among the student category of users of the state universities of Assam.
- To find out whether any significant differences exist in the prevalence of library anxiety among the student category of users of the state universities of Assam on the basis of university affiliation.
- To investigate the psycho-social reasons causing high library anxiety among the student category of users of the state universities of Assam on the basis of university affiliation.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jiao & Onwuegbuzie (1999) studied the prevalence of library anxiety among college students in order to prove that library anxiety is a real phenomenon. They examined the relationship between library anxiety and trait anxiety among graduate students in the

United States. The results indicated that library anxiety stands as a unique construct which cannot be related to any anxiety traits.

McPherson (2015) determined the indicators of library anxiety among the undergraduates as well as some of the factors contributing to it. Results pointed out certain personal and institutional factors, which contributed to higher levels of library anxiety among the students. It was recommended that both categories of factors need to be checked in order to reduce prevalence of library anxiety.

Jan, Anwar & Warraich (2016) tried to examine the status of library anxiety among Pakistani fourth year undergraduate students, and its relationship with library use, academic performance, gender and academic discipline A majority of the students showed mild prevalence with user education and user knowledge affecting library anxiety predominantly. Gender and academic discipline also contributed to significant differences in library anxiety among the students.

Abdullah, Hashmatullah & Hazrat Usman (2017) investigated library anxiety among UiTM students in correlation with some socio-demographic constructs. The research respondents comprised of both undergraduate and post-graduate students. The results indicated a moderately low prevalence of library anxiety. Moreover the students' demographic background did not have any significant effect on their levels of library anxiety.

Gardijan (2021) made an effort to analyze and summarize research studies on library anxiety with a special emphasis on academic libraries. The main intention was to find out to what extent library anxiety can impair normal library functioning and academic learning. Moreover alleviating measures were also suggested keeping in view the research summary.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Library anxiety has been explained as the feeling of inadequacy in research skills and in an attempt to hide it, it can manifest as an outright fear of libraries and anything associated with it. There are certain negative feelings associated with library aspects like the size of the library, locating directions and equipment, lack of user knowledge etc. These negative feelings impaired their functioning within the library with an overwhelming sense of inferiority and inadequacy; and made them hesitant to ask library staff for help. (Constance Mellon, 1986).

There may be multitude of reasons behind an expression of anxious behavior when a student is face to face with a library professional. Bostick's scale traces down possible anxiety attached with the library resources and staff. At the same time, there may be certain personal factors which might affect the conduct of the students in the library, which will be investigated by another questionnaire. Research helps us to understand and overcome library anxiety as it is quite an emotional disposition experienced in a library setting that has an impact on our cognitive, affective and psycho-motor dimensions. As such the central focus of the research study will be to study the personal causes associated with library anxiety. This will help us to understand the sources of such kind of anxiety and accordingly take steps to minimise its effects.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. Research method

Descriptive Survey method of research with a cross-sectional design has been adopted to conduct the research study. The sample has been investigated in their current status without any external control of the situation under study.

5.2. Research Population

The research population is the students' category of Assam's state universities, i.e., Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University. The students' category includes respondents studying in both undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the mentioned universities.

5.3. Sample and sampling technique

A sample size of 160 students was decided to conduct the study in both the state universities of Assam. A purposive sampling technique has been adopted to determine the sample size of 160; 80 students have been included from Gauhati University and the rest 80 from Dibrugarh University. The sample distribution is as follows:

Table 1: Area of the study and sample size

Sl. No	State Universities	Sample Size
1.	Gauhati University	80
2.	Dibrugarh University	80
Total		160

5.5. Research Tool

The following research tools have been administered for collection of relevant data:

- In order to gather data on Library anxiety, Bostick's scale was applied by converting the statements into questions. It comprised of 43 statements.

Library anxiety score is calculated by using the following method:

$$\text{Anxiety Score} = \frac{\text{Score}}{\text{Total Score}} \times 5$$

Anwar, Al-Kandari, and Al-Qallaf (2004) proposed library scores measured after calculating the library anxiety. Following are the Library anxiety scores:

Table 2: Proposed categories for Library Anxiety Scores

Proposed Categories for LAS Scores	
No Anxiety	0.0 – 2.2
Low Anxiety	2.3 – 2.6
Mild Anxiety	2.7 – 3.5
Moderate Anxiety	3.6 – 3.9
Severe Anxiety	4.0 – 5.0

- A self-constructed questionnaire was used comprising of 10 statements to investigate the possible psycho-social causes of library anxiety among the students. It allowed the respondents to rate their responses in five levels – strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree and strongly agree.

5.6 Data Collection Procedure

After getting an informed consent of the respondents, the Bostick scale was distributed among the students to determine their library anxiety prevalence levels and then the differences between the two universities were proved statistically. It was followed by administration of the self-constructed questionnaire to explore the personal factors for causing such anxiety.

5.7. Statistical Methods adopted

The data were statistically treated by using the SPSS 2.1 version. The data were described using frequencies and summarised figures, while chi-square was applied to draw inferences about the significant differences between the two universities.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

Following are the data analysis of the responses received from the students' category of library users of State Universities of Assam:

6.1. Response Rate

Table 3: Response Rate

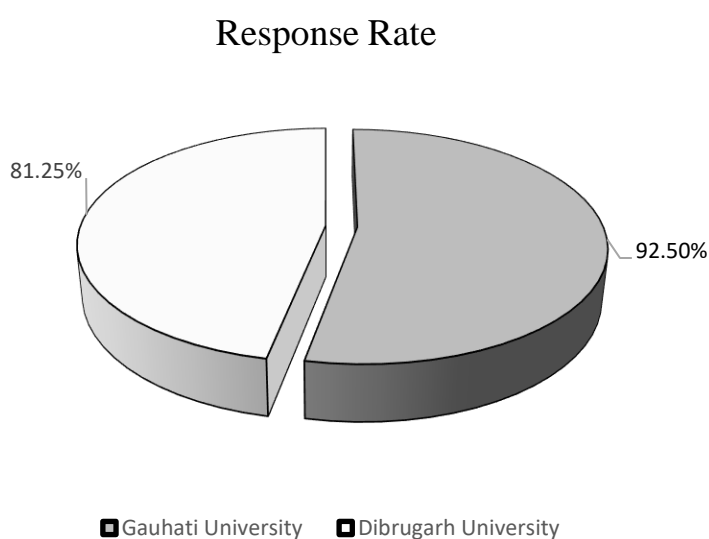| Sl. No	Universities	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Received	Questionnaire Received (%)
1.	Gauhati University	80	74	92.5 %
2.	Dibrugarh University	80	65	81.25 %

Response Rate

Figure 1: Response Rate

6.2. Prevalence of Library anxiety among the student category of users in the state universities

Table 4: Prevalence of Library anxiety among the student category of users

Levels of library anxiety (%)	No anxiety	Low anxiety	Mild anxiety	Moderate anxiety	Severe anxiety
Gauhati University	9.42%	19.05%	43.56%	14.20%	13.77%
Dibrugarh University	12.4%	15.4%	52.7%	8.6%	10.8%

The table data indicated that in Gauhati University, prevalence of mild anxiety persisted in most of the students, followed by low anxiety, moderate anxiety and severe anxiety levels. So the presence of library anxiety among the students cannot be ruled out. While in Dibrugarh University, majority of the students similarly displayed mild presence of library anxiety, followed by low anxiety, no anxiety and severe anxiety levels. So library anxiety is off course present, but the prevalence is lower than Gauhati University.

6.3. University affiliation differences in the prevalence levels of library anxiety among the student category of users

Table 5: University affiliation differences in the prevalence levels of library anxiety

Levels of library anxiety	Gauhati University	Dibrugarh University	χ^2 Value	P value	Significant at 5% level
No anxiety	7	8	2.31	.678	Not significant
Low anxiety	14	10			
Mild anxiety	32	34			
Moderate anxiety	11	6			
Severe anxiety	10	7			

The table presented the university affiliation differences in the prevalence levels of library anxiety among the student category of users. The table indicated that there was no significant difference in their prevalence levels with a χ^2 Value of 2.31 and p value of 0.678 (p<0.05), on the basis of university.

6.4. Gradation of psycho-social factors causing high library anxiety among the student category of users in Gauhati University

Table 6: Gradation of psycho-social factors (Gauhati University)

Sl No	Statements	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
1	My reading ability affects my span of reading in the	6.7	8.1	51.3	16.2	17.5

	classroom and library (Reading ability)					
2	I often deal with procrastination of academic tasks and duties (Academic Procrastination)	66.2	4	20.2	4	4
3	I often face difficulties in computer and internet operations in the library (Computer skills)	33.7	18.9	32.4	12.2	2.7
4	I find language as a barrier in using academic and library facilities as English is my second language (Language barrier)	64.8	20.2	9.4	2.7	2.7
5	My gestures and words seem inappropriate while communicating with my classmates, teachers and library staff (Communication skill)	25.6	33.7	13.5	22.9	4
6	I have pre-conceived social anxiety which affects my social interactions with other people (pre-conceived social anxiety)	20.2	39.2	20.2	13.5	6.7
7	I fear covering the entire syllabus on time as the course is very comprehensive and the library environment does no help either (Comprehensive curriculum)	66.2	4	18.9	5.4	5.4
8	I get very anxious before my	78.3	2.7	13.5	2.7	2.7

|		Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
	exams and library atmosphere heightens that fear (Exam anxiety)					
9	I am weighed down by the socially prescribed perfectionism in the library and university, which is very different from the interior place I come from (Perceived social acceptance)	41.8	20.2	27	10.8	0
10	I have difficulty in academic planning and cannot chalk out effective learning styles for academic success, for which I am unable to use library facilities at the fullest (Learning styles and academic planning)	61	33.7	0	2.7	2.7
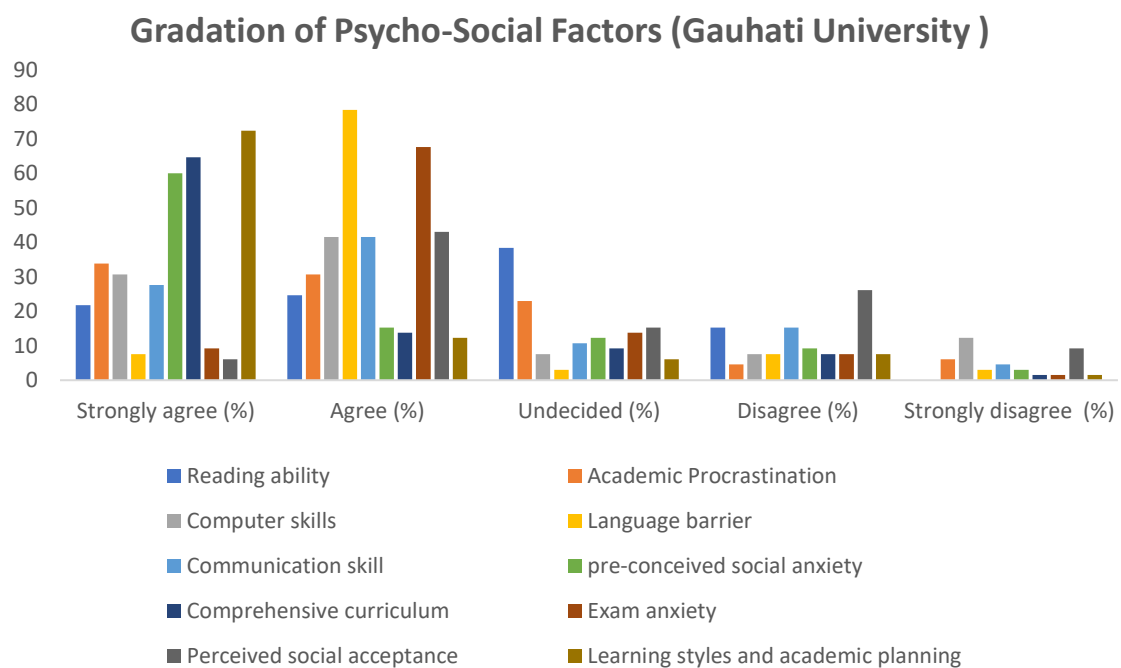
Figure 2: Gradation of psycho-social factors (Gauhati University)

The above table and figure represented the response range of the student users of Gauhati University in the different psycho-social factors presenting a gradation of their effect on library anxiety. Exam anxiety, comprehensive curriculum and academic procrastination were rated as the major personal sources. Students also agreed favourably in support of language barrier, academic planning styles, perceived social acceptance and computer skills. Pre-conceived social anxiety and communication skills were moderately rated. Reading ability was found to be less agreeable as a psycho-social factor among the respondents.

6.5. Gradation of psycho-social factors causing high library anxiety among the student category of users in Dibrugarh University

Table 7: Gradation of psycho-social factors (Dibrugarh University)

Sl No	Statements	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
1	My reading ability affects my span of reading in the classroom and library (Reading ability)	21.8	24.6	38.4	15.3	0
2	I often deal with procrastination of academic tasks and duties (Academic procrastination)	33.8	30.7	23	4.6	6.1
3	I often face difficulties in computer and internet operations in the library (Computer skill)	30.7	41.5	7.6	7.6	12.3
4	I find language as a barrier in using academic and library facilities as English is my second language (Language barrier)	7.6	78.4	3	7.6	3
5	My gestures and words seem	27.6	41.5	10.7	15.3	4.6

	inappropriate while communicating with my classmates, teachers and library staff (Communication skill)					
6	I have pre-conceived social anxiety which affects my social interactions with other people (Pre-conceived social anxiety)	60	15.3	12.3	9.2	3
7	I fear covering the entire syllabus on time as the course is very comprehensive and the library environment does no help either (Comprehensive curriculum)	64.6	13.8	9.2	7.6	1.5
8	I get very anxious before my exams and library atmosphere heightens that fear (Exam anxiety)	9.2	67.6	13.8	7.6	1.5
9	I am weighed down by the socially prescribed perfectionism in the library and university, which is very different from the interior place I come from (Perceived social acceptance)	6.1	43	15.3	26.1	9.2
10	I have difficulty in academic planning and cannot chalk out effective learning styles for academic success, for which I am unable to use library facilities at the fullest	72.3	12.3	6.1	7.6	1.5

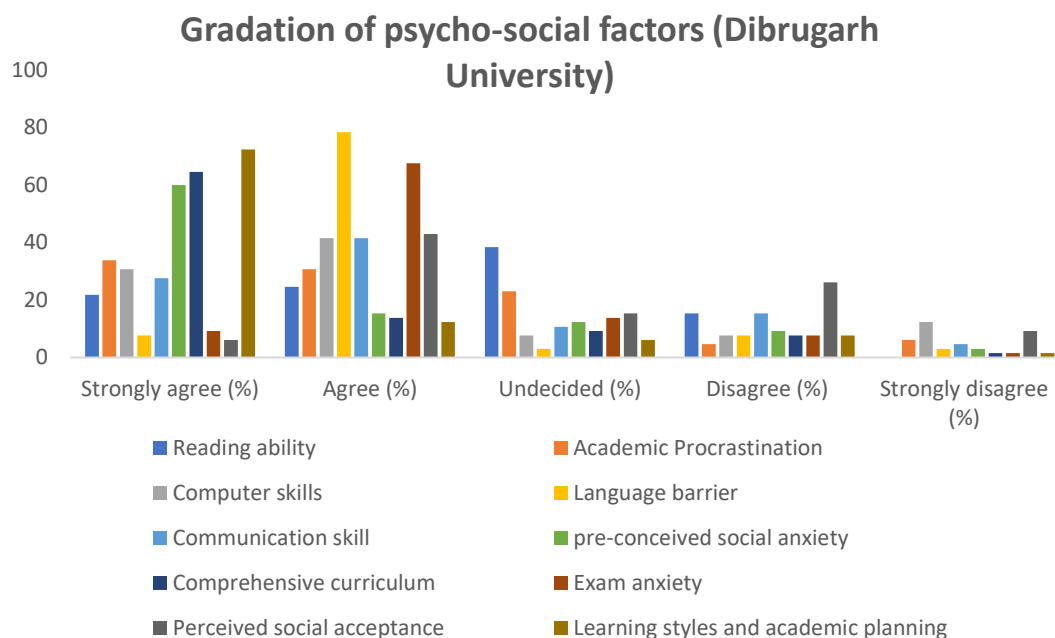|	
(Learning styles and academic planning)	

Figure 3: Gradation of psycho-social factors (Dibrugarh University)

The above table and figure represented the response range of the student users of Dibrugarh University in the different psycho-social factors presenting a gradation of their effect on library anxiety. Learning styles, comprehensive curriculum and pre-conceived social anxiety were rated as the major personal sources. Students also agreed favourably in support of language barrier, exam anxiety, perceived social acceptance, communication and computer skills. Academic procrastination was moderately rated. Reading ability was found to be less agreeable as a psycho-social factor among the respondents.

7.   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research study is designed to study library anxiety among the students' category of library users in the state universities of Assam viz. Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University. The data analysis has been explained in four tables i.e. tables 4, 5, 6 and 7. The first two tables reveal the prevalence of library anxiety in both the state universities, along with significant difference among the universities in such prevalence. The next two tables signify the frequencies of different psycho-social factors related to library anxiety among the student users in both the universities.

Findings based on objective 1:

A detailed analysis of data indicates that there is a mild prevalence of anxiety among majority of the respondents in both the state universities. However the students of Dibrugarh University have lesser students in the category of moderate and severe anxiety when compared to Gauhati University. Even a slight difference has been observed in the categories of low anxiety level, where Gauhati University have lesser respondents in comparison to Gauhati University.

Findings based on objective 2:

Although the prevalence is found to differ among the student category of users between the universities, statistically such a difference was not found to be significant. A major difference do not exists but Gauhati University students have been found to suffer more due to library anxiety.

Findings based on objective 3:

The investigator investigated the psycho-social factors associated with library anxiety with focus on the themes - Reading ability, academic procrastination, computer and internet skills, language barrier, communication skills, pre-conceived social anxiety, comprehensive curriculum, exam anxiety, interior residential areas and low level of perceived social acceptance, lack of academic planning and inappropriate learning styles to reach the desired goal.

In Gauhati University, the student category of users was found to be affected by almost all the factors listed with the exception of reading ability. The students have rated exam anxiety followed by comprehensive curriculum and academic procrastination as the major personal factors affecting their academic planning and conduct in the library. The wide expanse of the curriculum and the course materials confuse the students. It stirs an anxiousness towards examinations which creates a tendency towards procrastinating important academic tasks in the library. Procrastination creates an academic gap, resulting in fear which gets further intensified as soon as they enter the confines of a library. The variety of learning materials present in the library deters their decision to select suitable ones for themselves, for which they prefer avoiding the library. Some students have pointed that they avoid the library as they get confused and prefer buying the referred text books instead directly from the market.

In Dibrugarh University, the student category of users was found to be affected by almost all the factors listed with the exception of reading ability. The students have rated preferred learning styles and academic planning, vast curriculum and pre-conceived social anxiety as the major personal factors affecting their social behaviour and conduct in the library. When the curriculum is very vast, the students find it difficult to academically plan their tasks sequentially. It generates enormous confusion regarding task completion. If social anxiety is already present among the students, it will aggravate their personality even more. They will find it rather difficult to approach their classmates, teachers and most importantly library staff for help. Some respondents have also expressed that the wide expanse of the library scared them to death, and asking help from any library member was totally out of question.

Generally almost all the students have to deal with one or more than one psycho-social conditions which spike their anxiety in both library and university campus. They have to keep up with the socially prescribed perfectionism in the academic environment, and library is no exception. Library is intricately linked to the academic departments, so they have a tendency to carry over that fear to the library. It acts as an impediment in their interaction with the self, the library staff as well as teachers and classmates. Finally it manifests in low levels of aspirations to reach the desired academic goals.

8. SUGGESTION TO ELIMINATE LIBRARY ANXIETY

- **Amnesty days or fine forgiveness:** Fine forgiveness ensures that the learners come back to the academic library to return the books and materials borrowed from the library. It will prevent the learners from book hoarding and avoiding the library staff regarding enquiry about the borrowed stuff.

- **Interaction with librarian:** Research findings of several studies have confirmed the fact that small talks with the library staff and then frequenting lengthier interactions with them can reduce anxiety among the learners. Exchange of words can lead to development of rapport, self-confidence and esteem among the learners.

- **Feedback:** Feedback is an essential tool in the hands of the librarian to know about the status of the library resources at the learner's disposal, learner's satisfaction level regarding staff and library services. It is also instrumental in designing such a library system where the learners can feel free to connect with the library.

- **Clear communication:** The librarian can use his independent will to be more familiar and get connected with the students, without any official obligations. He can also motivate the other staff members to maintain a cordial atmosphere involving transparency of communication between both the parties.

- **Proper library instruction:** It is the responsibility of the library to teach the students about the right way in conducting material searches. Booklets or online guides can be created to show how subject appropriate materials are structured and organised within the library.

- **Libraries to integrate with the academic departments to remove inhibitions:** Libraries should not alienate itself from the academic departments. Students should understand how both the components are integrated to cater to the academic need of the learner.

- **Acknowledging library anxiety:** An effective way to reduce library anxiety is to identify anxiety among the students in a library. Acknowledging anxiety can promote self-care practices and avoid stressors among the learners. Academicians can also stay more vigilant to provide any kind of help needed.

- **Library tour:** Library orientation of the students must include a guided or online tour of the library space in order to familiarise them with the new academic zone. It reduces the fear and inhibitions of visiting a large expanse and counters confusing behaviour of the learners in a library.

9. CONCLUSION

Library is the onus of any academic set up, with a never failing duty to serve the academic need of the teachers and students. Library anxiety can cut off students from the mainstream library thus impairing their academic performance. In order to bring together the library and the students in a conducive environment the root causes, both institutional and personal need to be identified. The present research study was conducted to find out the personal factors associated with anxiety in the library.

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