

## STUDYING THE ANXIETY LEVEL OF TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS

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**Abstract:** The teaching profession is an important social role, which is also highly susceptible to stress. Increased responsibility, high mental workload, irregular working hours, and poor health can represent some factors in the development of anxiety disorders, which negatively affect the overall quality of a person's life and the quality of professional activity. This requires finding ways to increase the psychophysical resistance of teachers to everyday stress in and outside the workplace. The given article discusses anxiety disorders as a common phenomenon among school teachers. There are presented the results of the conducted research on the degree of anxiety among teachers.

**Introduction:** Anxiety or anxiety disorders is a group of disorders at the mental level, which from year to year become more and more common. As the most widespread group of mental disorders, anxiety is found in about 30% of adults, women being more subject to this phenomenon compared to men [1, 2]. Sometimes, occasional anxiety is a natural part of our lives. However, people suffering from anxiety disorders often feel worry, excessive fear, dysfunctional thoughts in everyday situations. Anxiety disorders can also manifest through different physical symptoms, such as sweating, breathing difficulties, tachycardia, nausea, dizziness, fainting and also sleep disturbances. This condition has a harmful effect on human health, causing various disorders and diseases of the psychological and physical sphere, which worsen the quality of a person's life [2, 9]. Anxiety disorders, like other mental disorders, are the result of a complex interaction of social, psychological and biological factors, so the causes of their occurrence are equally complex. The factors that can cause the development of anxiety are: Experiencing a traumatic event in the past; Genetic factors; Illness or physical trauma; Chronic stress; Excess of caffeine; Sleep disorders; Consumption of alcohol or narcotic substances; Neurotic or mental disorders: depression, neurasthenia, etc.; Traits of character or temperament. The occurrence of anxiety disorders is closely related to a person's physical health. Diseases and traumas, which have especially affected the brain, can increase the risk of their development. States of hyperactivity, physical

agitation, nervousness or lack of sleep favor the development of anxiety. It seems that life experiences such as traumatic events or stress can trigger anxiety disorders in people who already have a predisposition to anxiety. Hereditary factors may also play a role. In some cases, anxious signs and symptoms can be the first signs of a physical illness. Anxiety disorders can reduce overall energy and interest in daily activities, create sleep problems, tension, tremors, dizziness, stomach problems; can worsen symptoms of depression, lead to a negative self-image, and decrease the overall sense of satisfaction and joy in life. Being ignored, anxiety can seriously affect health both physically and mentally. Among the other factors it can be also the way of life of the person: diet, lack or excess of physical activity, rest and work regime. Since most of the time of the day the person is included in the professional activities, these ones can to a greater extent favor the appearance of anxiety disorders. In the interest of the study is the nature of anxiety in the context of pedagogical activity, because this professional environment is most frequently subject to anxiety due to the specific nature of the profession [3, 5, 10]. The modern teacher must not only respond to rapid socio-economic and technological challenges, but also have a high level of activity that allows him to participate in innovative educational processes, creatively overcome the difficulties specific to the profession in conditions of permanent personal energy consumption. Pedagogical activity is the activity of a teacher, who solves the current tasks of teaching and developing students through various methods. The complexity of the pedagogical activity is due to the fact that it is, above all, multifunctional. Among the most important functions of the teacher, in addition to teaching, education and development of students, it is necessary to highlight research and methodological work. Many teachers combine their teaching activities with organizational and public work. The daily mental work of a teacher is associated with a great load on the psyche, because he is often put in situations where new and sometimes difficult situations suddenly appear, without time for thinking and decision. The teacher is the person responsible for the intellectual, physical and emotional training and education of the pupils. However, a teacher is not only a profession and a social role. The task of the teacher is to prepare the young generation for entering life and the modern world, through education and providing knowledge and skills not only for the effective performance of school activities, but also those that would be applicable in everyday life. The role entrusted to teachers requires that they demonstrate a high level of both personal and professional development. Along with the extracurricular activities, overtime hours, high level of responsibility and personal activities, teachers are prone to disturbances in psychological stability, which can manifest as anxiety disorders [6, 8]. In order to support and increase the psychological resistance of teachers, it is important to study the theme of anxiety, its causes and ways of prevention and support.

**Material-method:** The purpose of the research. Studying the level of anxiety among school teachers. Research methodology: study and analysis of specialized literature data; Spielberger's anxiety scale; the methods of statistical mathematics. The Spielberger Anxiety Scale (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, STAI) is an informative way of self-assessment of the level of anxiety in the present (reactive anxiety as a condition) and personal anxiety (as a consistent characteristic of the individual). The test measures anxiety based on a self-rating scale. Situational anxiety is more dependent on current problems and experiences. Personal anxiety is a constant category and is determined by the type of higher nervous activity, temperament, character, education and acquired strategies of response to external factors. Therefore, personal and situational anxiety are related: in people with high levels of personal anxiety, situational anxiety is more pronounced in similar situations. The test consists of 2 parts, each one has 20 questions. The results of the test are expressed in points, the sum of which at the end indicates a certain level of anxiety. The reference scale is: up to 30 points is considered a low level of anxiety, points between 31 and 45 – moderate level of anxiety, above 46 – high level of anxiety. The minimum score accepted for the answer is 20, maximum – 80.

**Results:** 31 teachers from different schools of the city of Chisinau, aged between 30-49, participated in the research. In view of the purpose, Spielberger's test was used, which is an effective and informative method for studying anxiety. Under optimal conditions, anxiety is perceived as a natural part of an active personality. Situational anxiety manifests itself as an emotional reaction to stressful situations and has varying levels of intensity and duration, characterized by subjective feelings of restlessness, tension and nervousness. Persistent anxiety involves the subject's persistent tendency to perceive a wide range of situations as potentially threatening, which implies a persistent anxious response to them.

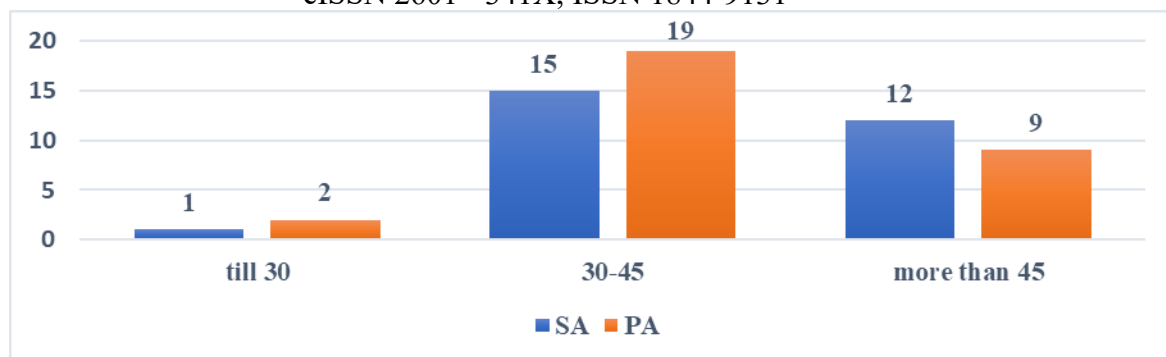
The results of the conducted research are presented below. The overall mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) for situational anxiety is 42.2, which corresponds to a moderate level of anxiety. The level of persistent anxiety is 42.3, which is also within moderate limits (Table 1).

**Table 1. Spielberger's test results (points)**

No	Situational anxiety (SA)	Persistent anxiety (PA)	No	Situational anxiety (SA)	Persistent anxiety (PA)
1.	43	45	18.	30	41
2.	50	52	19.	46	51
3.	21	26	20.	50	46
4.	33	43	21.	53	40
5.	48	54	22.	50	38
6.	56	45	23.	42	38
7.	53	43	24.	41	40

8.	53	41	25.	30	28
9.	40	38	26.	38	40
10.	41	50	27.	48	52
11.	31	29	28.	40	35
12.	40	38	29.	33	43
13.	46	50	30.	48	54
14.	35	40	31.	56	45
15.	46	50			
16.	40	42			
17.	31	36			
$\bar{X}$				<b>42,2</b>	<b>42,3</b>

On a more in-depth analysis, it can be observed that in 48.39% of teachers the level of situational anxiety is moderate (between 30 and 45 points), as is the level of persistent anxiety (61.29%) (Figure 1). Situational anxiety is the primary response to difficulties or threatening situations and can help mobilize the forces to overcome them. According to R. May, the criteria of normal anxiety are the following: the manifestation of anxiety is appropriate to the stimulus; does not trigger neurotic defence mechanisms; the person can deal with the anxiety constructively on a conscious level or the anxiety decreases when the situation changes [7]. It is possible to assume that these people have a high level of professional and personal training, which allows them to maintain the level of anxiety within normal limits. Teachers with less experience in this field are less affected by the professional environment, so the level of anxiety can be lower. At the same time, leading a rational way of life, with an adequate work, rest and nutrition regime, influences the reduced manifestations of anxiety. But at 38.17% the SA level is high (more than 45 points) and 29% of the teachers have high PA limits. Therefore, another part of those surveyed encounters the manifestation of anxiety to a greater extent due to the factors already listed: chronic professional stress, predisposition to these disorders from the side of physical or mental health, low capacities for self-regulation of the emotional state, overload at the place of work. It is possible that people with a high level of anxiety are not aware of this problem, considering this condition as something normal or inevitable, which does not require any intervention or treatment. A much smaller part of those surveyed (3.23% and 6.45%) have a low level (less than 30 points) of both indices. Due to a much smaller number it is more difficult to detect the causes of the low level of anxiety, but we can assume that, like those with normal limits of anxious manifestations, people with low anxiety have a calmer attitude towards the profession but also life, more prone lower incidence of this disease, better health, more developed psycho-emotional self-regulation capacities and a way of life that favors a state of common sense at all levels of human activity.



*Fig. 1. Breakdown of data by category (points)*

**Discussions:** In the last decade, the dynamics of the development of human morpho-functional structures have undergone significant transformations, influenced by the socio-economic context. Among the harmful factors of contemporary society are sedentary lifestyle [15]. „In the contemporary era of education, the integration of the acmeological concept in the process of continuous training of specialists in the field of hybrid education is an essential element for improving the quality of education and adapting to rapid changes in society” [11]. The purpose of the paper is an investigative analysis, making an important contribution to understanding how the acmeological concept can influence pedagogical practice in physical education and sports, with a particular focus on teaching the discipline of badminton [12]. The authors' [13] work aims to investigate and analyze the application of the acmeological concept in the professional development of physical education teachers, with the objective of optimizing the physical condition of students. Another study [14] conducted by the authors aims to identify the main problems related to normal weight and the mental state of the patients included in the study, by using various tests designed to highlight these aspects.

**Conclusions:** Anxiety disorders are a pressing problem of our time. Like many others, and sometimes to a greater degree, teachers become susceptible to the influence of anxiety. This negatively affects the general well-being of teachers as well as the activities they carry out. Taking into account the role of the teacher in society it is important to find the ways, which would support their psychological well-being. Among the modern and most widespread methods for reducing the level of anxiety are the following ones [4, 5]:

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy, which is the most effective psychotherapy for treating anxiety disorders. Usually used as a short-term treatment that focuses on teaching specific skills to relieve symptoms and gradually return to activities previously avoided due to anxiety.

- Drug treatment, which may include the use of antidepressants, sedatives or beta-blockers.

– Adequate physical activity regime: such types of training as pilates, yoga, dancing, aerobics, strength training and others, can help reduce the level of anxiety and regulate the general psychological background of the person.

– Adjustment of work and rest regime. Professional and personal overload along with lack of sleep lead to increased anxiety levels, so managing the rest and sleeping regime, with 6-7 hours of quality sleep and well-organized working hours, can reduce anxious manifestations.

As a result of the research carried out, we found that most of the teachers among those surveyed have a moderate level of anxiety, but the second part of them shows signs of increased anxiety, which confirms the studied problem and urges the continuation of research in this direction.

For the purpose of a more in-depth research, taking into account the information presented in relation to the essence of anxiety disorders, the factors that cause their development, ways of treating or at least reducing anxious manifestations, a practical experiment can be organized, which will involve: informing and educating experiment participants about the phenomenon of anxiety and how it can be detected individually; highlighting the risk factors that can lead to the appearance of anxiety and the methods to prevent or reduce it; correcting the way of life through the appropriate regime of daily physical activity, as well as the work/rest regime and the diet, by reducing or excluding the consumption of certain products and diversifying the diet with those products, which favor human well-being at the physical and psychological level. At the end, following a series of control tests, a conclusion will be made about the effectiveness of the proposed activities.

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