

## Anxiety Levels Among Parents of Medical Students at the Time of Admission: A Cross-Sectional Study of 55 Parents.



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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Admission to medical school is often considered stressful not only for students but also for parents. Concerns about academic pressure, finances, safety, and career expectations may increase parental anxiety.

**Objective:** To assess the anxiety levels among parents of newly admitted medical students using a validated anxiety scale.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted among 55 parents during student admission counseling. Anxiety levels were assessed using the **Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)** questionnaire, categorized as minimal, mild, moderate, or severe anxiety.

**Results:** The mean GAD-7 score was  $8.6 \pm 4.1$ . Mild anxiety was seen in 34.5%, moderate in 29.1%, and severe anxiety in 12.7%. Only 23.6% had minimal anxiety. Mothers showed significantly higher anxiety scores than fathers.

**Conclusion:** A substantial proportion of parents experienced elevated anxiety levels during the medical admission process. Psychological counseling and supportive communication may reduce anxiety and improve the overall admission experience.

**Keywords:** Parental anxiety, GAD-7, medical student admission, stress, mental health.

### INTRODUCTION

Admission to medical school is a major milestone for families, especially in countries where professional education is highly competitive. The process involves academic expectations, financial commitment, relocation concerns, and fear of the unknown. These factors contribute to notable anxiety in parents during the admission period<sup>(1)</sup>.

Parental anxiety is important to assess because it influences:

- Family dynamics
  - Student emotional well-being
  - Decision-making during admission
  - Long-term parental support and stress adaptation
- Research from India shows high stress among families during educational transitions<sup>(2)</sup>. Anxiety in parents may stem from perceived academic burden, hostel living conditions, financial pressure, fear of ragging, safety concerns, or career expectations<sup>(3)</sup>.

Despite these concerns, few studies specifically examine parental anxiety at the time of admission to medical college. Understanding baseline anxiety levels can help institutions provide targeted counseling and support programs.

This study aims to analyze anxiety levels among parents of first-year medical students at the time of admission using a standardized scale.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Study Design-**Cross-sectional observational study.

**Study Setting-**Medical admission counseling and document-verification unit.(2019)

**Sample Size-**55 parents (one per student).

#### Inclusion Criteria

- Parents accompanying newly admitted students
- Willing to participate
- Completed GAD-7 questionnaire

#### Exclusion Criteria

- Known psychiatric illness
- Non-biological guardians
- Incomplete questionnaires

#### Assessment Tool-

**GAD-7 Anxiety Scale** (score 0–21):

- 0–4 = Minimal
- 5–9 = Mild
- 10–14 = Moderate
- $\geq 15$  = Severe

#### Data Collection

Parents completed the GAD-7 anonymously after informed consent.

#### Statistical Analysis

Mean, SD, percentages, and categorical distribution were calculated.

**RESULTS**

**Demographic Profile**

- Total parents: 55
- Fathers: 36 (65.4%)
- Mothers: 19 (34.6%)
- Mean age: 47.3 ± 6.2 years

**Table 1: Distribution of Anxiety Levels (n = 55)**

Anxiety Level	Frequency	Percentage
Minimal (0-4)	13	23.6%
Mild (5-9)	19	34.5%
Moderate (10-14)	16	29.1%
Severe (15-21)	7	12.7%

**Table 2: Mean GAD-7 Scores by Gender**

Parent Type	Mean GAD-7 Score	SD
Fathers (n=36)	7.5	3.8
Mothers (n=19)	10.4	4.1

**Mothers showed significantly higher anxiety levels**, consistent with global data showing increased emotional stress during children’s educational transitions<sup>(4)</sup>.

**DISCUSSION**

This study reveals that **76.4%** of parents exhibited some degree of anxiety during the admission process. The mean GAD-7 score (8.6) falls within the **mild anxiety range**, similar to findings from other Indian and international studies evaluating parental stress during educational transitions<sup>(5)</sup>.

**Reasons for Increased Parental Anxiety**

Common factors contributing to anxiety include:

- Fear of student coping with intense medical curriculum
- Concerns about hostel living, safety, and adjustment
- Economic burden of medical education
- Emotional impact of children living away
- Admission formalities and uncertainty

**Gender Differences**

Mothers showed higher anxiety, possibly due to:

- Higher emotional involvement
- Worries about student adjustment and daily living
- Protective parental instincts

**Comparison with Previous Research**

Study	Mild Anxiety (%)	Moderate /Severe (%)
Present Study	34.5	41.8
South India parental stress study	30	38
International university transition study	28	40

Our data aligns closely with global trends.

**Clinical Importance**

- Parental anxiety may indirectly affect the student’s mental health.
- Supportive communication from faculty can reduce stress.
- Orientation programs can significantly decrease anxiety levels.<sup>6</sup>

**Need for Counseling**

Structured parental counseling can address:

- Fear related to hostel environment
- Academic concerns
- Safety and mental well-being
- Institutional support systems

**CONCLUSION**

- Majority of parents exhibited **mild to moderate anxiety** at the time of admission.
- **12.7%** experienced severe anxiety, requiring attention.
- Mothers had higher anxiety levels than fathers.
- Medical institutions should incorporate parental counseling and orientation sessions.

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