

**Level of Atychiphobia (Fear of Failure) among Undergraduate Students in Mirpur and its Impact on their Academic Achievements**

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<b>Received:</b> 09-03-2025	<b>Revised:</b> 10-04-2025	<b>Accepted:</b> 04-05-2025	<b>Published:</b> 20-05-2025
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**ABSTRACT**

*The present study investigated the level of atychiphobia (fear of failure) and its impact on the academic achievements of undergraduate students in Mirpur, AJK using ex-post-facto research design. A 26-items dichotomous scaled questionnaire was administered to 380 randomly selected students of Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST) and one of its affiliated college (N=15,174). It was found that 81.6% of students experienced a high level of atychiphobia. However, the regression analysis showed that there is a significant positive impact ( $B = 3.134$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) of atychiphobia on the academic achievements of undergraduate students in Mirpur, AJK. These results, while challenging the common beliefs about harmful effects of fear of failure, suggest that atychiphobia may serve as motivational factor for undergraduate students in the region. The study highlighted the need for supportive strategies that help students manage their fears productively.*

**Keywords:** *Atychiphobia, Fear of Failure, Academic Achievement, Undergraduate Students, Ex-Post-Facto Design*

**INTRODUCTION**

Atychiphobia is an excessive fear of failure that drives individuals to avoid situations where failure can happen, like exams, job interviews, or personal relationships. This concern may lead to many emotional and psychological problems, including despair, anxiety, and diminished self-esteem (Merk, 2022).

Carter (1959) defines academic achievement as the attainment of knowledge and skills, assessed by examination scores or teacher assessments. Bhatnager (1969) asserts that academic accomplishment arises from the interplay between the student and the educational environment, including both school and peer situations.

The relationship between atychiphobia and academic performance is evident, since the fear of failure can lead pupils to disengage from their studies. Zoolth (2023) suggests that little setbacks can be profoundly discouraging, prompting students to forsake their academic endeavors and explore alternate strategies to cope with the emotional consequences of failure.

Recent studies, such as those conducted by Merk (2022), demonstrate that atychiphobia is associated with significant emotional and psychological challenges that may impede performance. Carter (1959),

Bhatnager (1969), and recent discoveries by Zoolth (2023) demonstrate that academic achievement is fundamentally connected to individual psychological states and environmental factors. Nevertheless, these research have inadequately explored the distinct dynamics of the Mirpur region, revealing a notable gap in the literature about the influence of atychiphobia (fear of failure) on academic performance in that locale.

This study gap indicates that the distinct socio-cultural and educational dynamics of the Mirpur region are insufficiently examined, possibly resulting in an inadequate comprehension of the impact of fear of failure on student involvement and academic achievement. In the absence of localized research, educators and policymakers may be deprived of essential insights required to formulate effective, context-specific interventions that tackle the underlying reasons of academic underachievement associated with atychiphobia. This study aims to address the gap by investigating the prevalence of atychiphobia and its influence on the academic performance of undergraduate students in Mirpur institutions. The results are anticipated to inform the creation of targeted policies and support systems aimed at alleviating the detrimental effects of fear of failure on students' academic performance.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the level of atychiphobia (fear of failure) among students studying at undergraduate education level in Mirpur, AJK.
2. To identify the academic achievements of students studying at undergraduate education level in Mirpur, AJK.
3. To examine the effects of atychiphobia (fear of failure) on students' academic achievements at undergraduate education level in Mirpur, AJK.

### **Significance of Study**

This study significantly benefits both teachers and students by offering a structured framework to address atychiphobia. For teachers, the research enhances understanding of how fear manifests in classroom settings, enabling them to implement evidence-based interventions such as adaptive teaching methods and counseling strategies, while continuously monitoring progress through targeted assessment tools. For students, it provides practical self-regulatory techniques and stress management strategies, empowering them to overcome their fears and improve academic outcomes.

### **Hypothesis**

- H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant effect of Atychiphobia (fear of failure) on students' academic achievements of students at undergraduate level Mirpur, AJK.
- H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant effect of Atychiphobia (fear of failure) on students' academic achievements of students at undergraduate level in Mirpur, AJK.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Burns (2023), perfectionism is frequently accompanied with fear, which can impede productivity and personal development. Zoolth (2023) asserts that anxieties can significantly hinder personal development.

Zoolth (2023) identifies several manifestations of fear, including fear of failure, fear of success, lack of preparation, and lack of drive, illustrating how these fears impede students' full engagement in their academic responsibilities. Atychiphobia, characterized as an intense and irrational fear of failure, is emphasized by Birch (2023) and Villines (2023) as a condition that can paralyze individuals, trapping

them in a cycle of helplessness and self-sabotage prior to any significant endeavor, thus hindering both personal and academic growth.

Cherry (2023) asserts that the traits of atychiphobia encompass not only anxiety but also emotional symptoms—such as avoidance and a sense of loss of control—and physical manifestations including tachycardia, trembling, and vertigo, all of which hinder an individual's willingness to undertake essential risks. The etiology of atychiphobia is complex, with Praveen (2020) identifying traumatic experiences and excessively critical upbringing as primary factors, while Birch (2023) and Cherry (2023) attribute it to learned behaviors and perfectionistic inclinations; these elements together foster an environment where failure is perceived not as a catalyst for growth but as a definitive judgment of one's abilities.

Atychiphobia significantly impacts students, as demonstrated by research from Yildirim (2015), Trifoni and Shahini (2011), Spielberger and Vegg (1995), Mihailescu et al. (2016), Orth et al. (2008), Franklin (2002), and Deanna (2021), which indicates that the fear of failure can result in procrastination, diminished self-esteem, decreased motivation, and overall academic underachievement. Strategies to mitigate atychiphobia including identifying and accepting the fear (Marcin, 2018), adopting a growth mindset that reframes failure as a learning opportunity (Tanya, 2023), establishing realistic objectives (Jones, 2024), and utilizing positive thinking (Merck, 2022; Cherry, 2023).

## METHODS

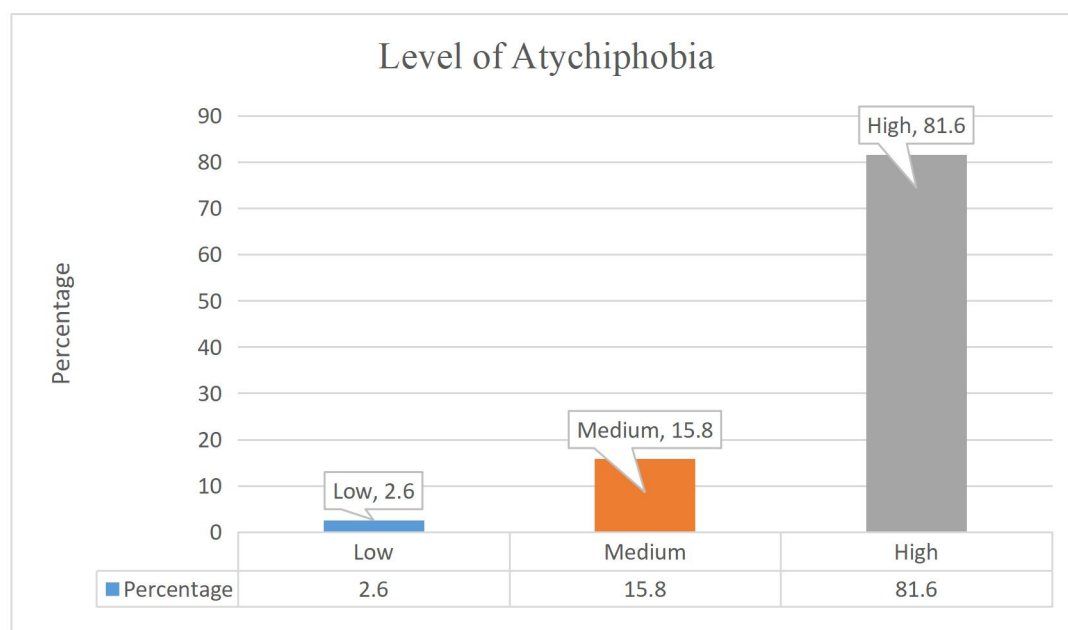
An ex-post-facto (Abdel-wahab, 2009) research design was employed to examine the causal and effect association between fear of failure and academic success. The study encompassed 15,174 students from Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST) and its affiliated institutes (P&D AJK, 2023), utilizing a sample of 380, derived using Yamane's (1965) formula and selected by random sampling (Creswell, 2013). A pre-designed Atychiphobia Questionnaire (Karim, Rasheed, & Khurram, 2022), including 26 dichotomous (Yes/No) items, was employed to evaluate the fear of failure in students. Subsequently, validity and reliability were ascertained by piloting the instrument, with validity evaluated using expert evaluations (Yeshaswi, 2024) and reliability determined via Cronbach's alpha (0.836) on a pilot sample of 27. Data were collected using an online Google Form distributed via WhatsApp and other social media platforms, and the resulting dataset underwent regression analysis to examine the relationship between atychiphobia and academic success (Donna, 2022). The data collected was done with informed consent from all participants and ensured complete confidentiality (Bhandari, 2024).

## RESULTS

**Table 01**

*Level of Atychiphobia (fear of failure)*

Atychiphobia level	Frequency	Percentage
32-38	10	2.6
38-44	60	15.8
44-52	310	81.6
<b>Total</b>	380	100



*Fig.1: Level of Atychiphobia*

Table and Figure 1 illustrate the distribution of atychiphobia scores among respondents. Only 2.6% of the participants registered scores within the low range, indicating minimal fear of failure in this segment of the sample. Additionally, 15.8% of the respondents fell within a moderate range, suggesting a more balanced or emerging level of atychiphobia. However, a substantial majority of the sample—81.6%—exhibited high levels of atychiphobia. This marked skew towards higher scores indicates that most respondents experience a significant fear of failure, which could have considerable implications for their academic performance and overall psychological well-being.

**Table 02**  
**Effect of Atychiphobia (Regression Analysis)**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
Academic Achievements * Atychiphobia	3.134	.209	14.971	.000

The regression analysis examining the relationship between atychiphobia and academic achievement yielded a significant unstandardized coefficient for atychiphobia of 3.134 (SE = 0.209,  $t = 14.971$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that the null hypothesis of the study is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted that there lies a significant impact of atychiphobia on the academic achievements of undergraduate students in Mirpur, AJK. The result also indicates that for each one-unit increase in the atychiphobia score, academic achievement increases by 3.134 units.

## DISCUSSIONS

The present study reveals a significant prevalence of atychiphobia among undergraduate students, with 81.6% of respondents exhibiting high-range scores. This aligns with existing literature highlighting the

widespread occurrence of fear of failure in academic contexts (Burns, 2023; Zoolth, 2023). This level of fear aligns with observations made by Birch (2023) and Villines (2023), indicating that fear of failure can be debilitating, leading to inaction. Consequently, this may result in negative outcomes such as self-sabotage and the avoidance of growth opportunities.

The regression analysis indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between atychiphobia and academic achievement ( $B = 3.134$ ,  $SE = 0.209$ ,  $t = 14.971$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), complementing the descriptive findings. This result suggests that each unit increase in atychiphobia score is associated with an increase in academic performance, which contradicts the prevailing consensus in the literature that fear of failure generally undermines academic success (Cherry, 2023; Orth et al., 2008). This unexpected outcome necessitates a thorough examination of potential mediating factors and contextual elements that may elucidate the observed results.

Considering the positive observed association, one potential explanation is that in specific contexts, a moderate level of fear may serve as a motivational factor, prompting students to exert greater effort to avoid complacency. This aligns with the principles of the Yerkes-Dodson Law, which posits that an optimal level of arousal can enhance performance. Cultural or situational factors unique to the Mirpur region may interact with atychiphobia in ways that diverge from established patterns observed in Western contexts (Deanna, 2021; Franklin, 2002).

Furthermore, it is important to consider that the measurement scale and specific characteristics of the study sample may influence the observed results. The instrument utilized to evaluate atychiphobia (Karim, Rasheed, & Khurram, 2022) may identify elements of fear that, in this context, are associated with enhanced diligence or increased vigilance in academic endeavors. Research suggests that anxiety can be converted into proactive behavior under certain conditions, particularly when students employ adaptive coping strategies and maintain a growth mindset (Marcin, 2018; Tanya, 2023), thereby reinforcing this interpretation.

The present study confirms the prevalence of atychiphobia among undergraduate students and challenges conventional beliefs by demonstrating a positive impact of fear of failure on academic achievements. This divergence from expected outcomes emphasizes the complexity of psychological factors in educational performance and underscores the necessity for further research to investigate potential mediators and moderators—such as cultural influences, coping mechanisms, and individual differences—in the relationship between atychiphobia and academic success (Jones, 2024; Merck, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

The present quantitative study was carried out to explore the level of atychiphobia and its impact on the academic achievement among undergraduate students in Mirpur, AJK. The results of the study indicated that a vast majority (81.6%) of students experience high levels of atychiphobia, which indicates that there is a widespread prevalence of fear of failure in the academic environment at Mirpur, AJK. Despite of the traditional assumptions that fear of failure is detrimental to performance, the data analysis revealed that there is a statistically significant and positive effect of atychiphobia on academic achievement ( $B = 3.134$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thereby leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. The finding disproves the prevailing opinion in the available literature. According to the Yerkes-Dodson Law, fear may enhance an individual's performance. This outcome may possibly be attributable to Mirpur's culture, location, and the instruments utilized, which might have instilled fear in students. Research on this subject highlights the complexity of psychology in education and elucidates its significance. The results suggest that addressing anxiety constructively may enhance students'

accomplishments. The subsequent step of research should aim to uncover variables, including coping mechanisms, factors influencing learning, and distinctive personality traits, to examine this phenomena across diverse educational and cultural contexts.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that:

1. Institutions should offer workshops and counseling to help students manage fear of failure through practical stress management and goal-setting techniques.
2. Teachers need training to identify signs of fear in students and respond with encouragement and constructive feedback.
3. Academic tasks should be designed to challenge students in a way that promotes effort and resilience rather than pressure and avoidance.
4. Peer support through group work or mentoring can help students share their concerns and reduce feelings of isolation linked to fear.
5. Regular monitoring of students' emotional well-being can help ensure that fear of failure remains a motivating factor and does not become overwhelming.

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