

# Fears and Phobias – A Comparative Study

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**Abstract - The American Psychiatric Association identifies three different categories of phobia: Social Phobia, Agoraphobia, and Specific Phobia. When people talk about having a phobia of a specific object, they are referring to a specific phobia. A total of 2166 students was selected, out of which 671(N) from High schools, Intermediate (N=387) and Degree colleges (N=613) and University (N=495), distributed in and around Guntur. It is found that at all the levels Exam phobia is high compared to others. The study found that, except Exam and Acrophobia, all other fears are low in University students. As a whole exam, Acrophobia and Zoophobias are more in the students.**

**Keywords - Specific Phobia, therapy, High school, College, University**

## I. INTRODUCTION

A phobia is a type of anxiety disorder, defined by a persistent and excessive fear of an object or situation. Typically results in a rapid onset of fear and are present for more than six months (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Fears and phobias are common in students. They have a serious impact on student academic achievement and well being. Phobias are irrational, that leads to avoidance of the phobia situation or object which in turn increases the severity of the phobia. The sufferer realizes that the phobia is irrational; and the avoidance or distress due to the stimuli causes impairment in functioning (Javed and Khan, 2011). Existence of seven specific phobias, namely Exam, Acrophobia, Hemophobia, Achluophobia, Hodophobia, Zoophobia and Oneirophobia among the students community was presented.

Mohapatra et al., (2012) reported that the exam anxiety has risen from 27% in 2009 to almost 40% in 2010. Sufiana and Farhat (2015) found that the phobia of examination affects the academic performance of the students in the examination and they could not perform according to their knowledge due to a phobia of examination.

Acrophobia is an extreme and sometimes irrational fear of heights. One of a specific group of phobias classified by space and motion discomfort, this fear has many root causes and can be severe in its intensity. Acrophobic behavior typically involves the avoidance of a variety of situations, including stairs, terraces, apartments and offices located in high buildings, bridges, elevators and plane trips (Menzie, 1997).

Hemophobia is an abnormal and persistent fear of blood, also called a blood injury phobia. Sufferers of this very common phobia dread the sight of their own blood, the sight of the blood of another person or an animal, and sometimes printed or filmed images of blood or even thoughts of blood. Blood may remind them of their own vulnerability to injury and of the eventuality of death (<https://www.medicinenet.com>).

Achluophobia is the scientific term for fear of the dark (<https://www.allhealthsite.com>).

Hodophobia is an irrational fear, or phobia, of travel (Ronald, 2010). Some people are afraid only of specific methods of transportation, such as planes or trains, while others fear all types of trips (<https://www.verywellmind.com>).

Zoophobia or animal phobia is a class of specific phobias of a particular animal (Fodor and Gaynor, 2004) or an irrational fear or even simply dislike of any non-human animals.

Oneirophobia is the fear of nightmares.

Various studies were carried out on specific phobias (Ollendick et al., 2010; <https://www.verywellmind.com/>; Curtis et al., 1998; de Oliveira-Souza 2018; Naveed et al., 2015; Carleton 2016; Garcia 2017 Pull 2008 and Singh and Singh 2016).

The present study was made a comparison of specific phobias among High school, Intermediate, Degree and University students.

## II. METHODOLOGY

A total of 2166 students was selected, out of which 671 from High schools, Intermediate colleges (N=387), Degree (N=613) and University (N=495), distributed in and around Guntur (Table 1). Students were assembled in a classroom of the respective institutions and asked them to give their response to a question-“Do you have any specific fear/phobia?” The purpose of the study and the details regarding the phobia were explained in their mother tongue. The response was analyzed using statistical analysis. Percent variation was observed and presented under results and discussion. A comparison was made among the students of High school, Intermediate, Degree and University students.

Table 1: Level of Education and Students with Specific Phobias

Level of Education	Sample	No. of Students with Specific Phobias						
		Exam	Acro	Hemo	Achluo	Hodo	Zoo	Oneiro
High School	671	296	149	74	152	58	141	95

Intermediate	387	143	71	26	39	15	92	40
Degree	613	289	53	90	86	24	158	75
University	495	194	120	26	20	7	51	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>2166</b>	<b>922</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>238</b>

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A percent variation of various phobias, among different levels of education was shown in tables 2 figures 1 to 4.

Table 2: Specific phobias among various levels of education (%)

Level of education	Specific Phobias in Students (%)						
	Exam	Acro	Hemo	Achluo	Hodo	Zoo	Oneiro
High School	44.11	22.21	11.03	22.65	8.64	21.01	14.16
Intermediate	36.95	18.35	6.72	10.08	3.88	23.77	10.34
Degree	47.15	8.65	14.68	14.03	3.92	25.77	12.23
University	39.19	24.24	5.25	4.04	1.41	10.30	5.66

#### High schools

Among the phobias, the highest percent of high school students expressed exam phobia (44.1), followed by Achluophobia (22.65), Acrophobia (22.21), Zoophobia (21.01). The lowest percent of students marked fear of the Hodophobia (Figure 1).

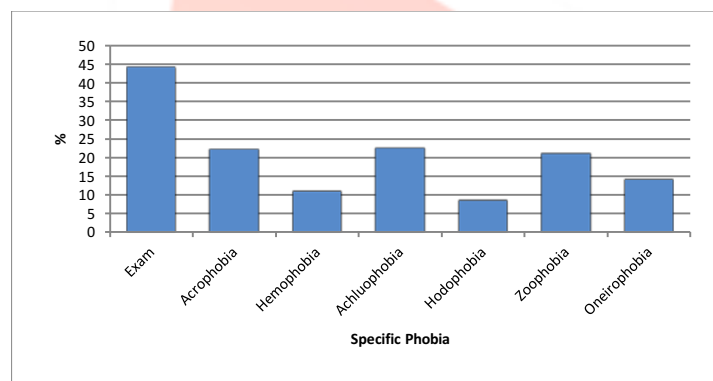


Figure 1 Specific Phobia in High school students

#### Intermediate

It is found that exam phobia was more among the Intermediate students (36.95%), followed by Zoophobia (23.77) and Acrophobia (18.35%). Only 3.88% students expressed Hodophobia fear, which is the lowest (Figure 2).

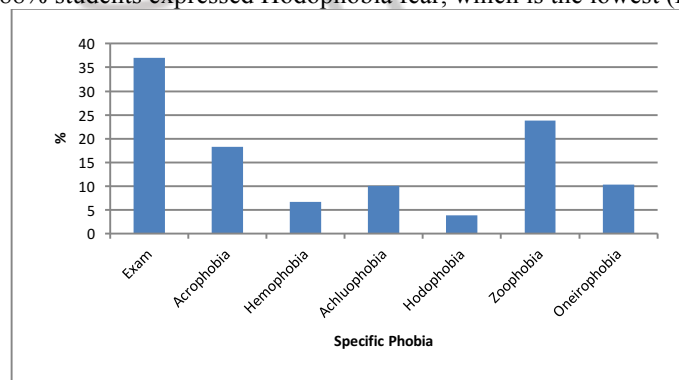
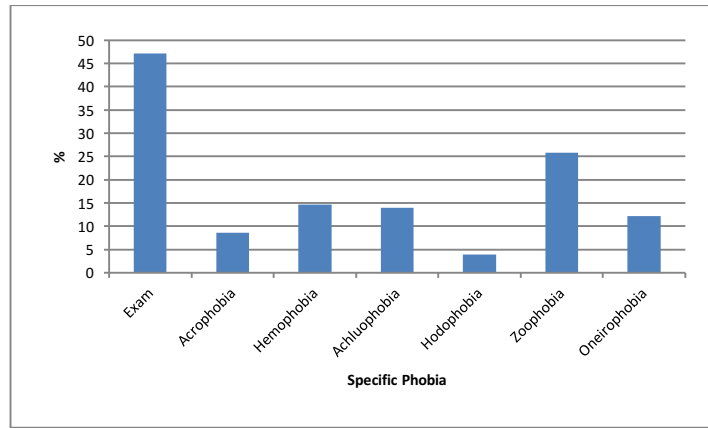


Figure 2 Specific Phobia in Intermediate students

#### Degree

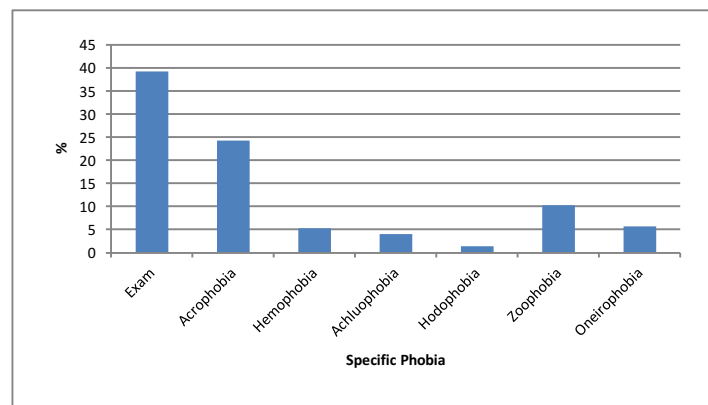
47.15% of respond students expressed exam phobia, which is the highest among all the phobias, followed by 25.77% about Zoophobia (Figure 3). The lowest percent was recorded in relation to Hodophobia.



**Figure 3 Specific Phobia in Degree students**

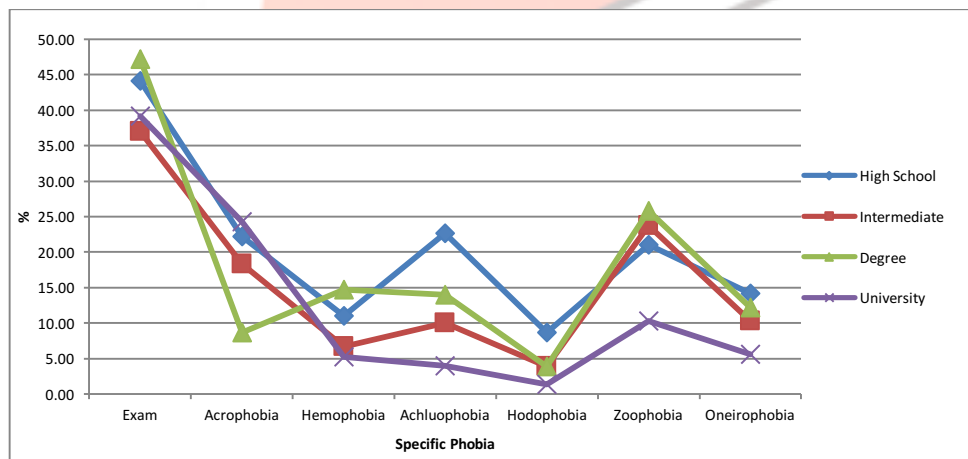
**University**

The highest percent of students marked exam phobia (39.19), followed by Acrophobia (24.24). Only 1.41% of the students pointed that they have Hodophobia (Figure 4).



**Figure 4 Specific Phobia in University students**

A comparison of various phobias among four levels of students is shown in figure 5. It is found that at all the levels Exam phobia is high compared to others.

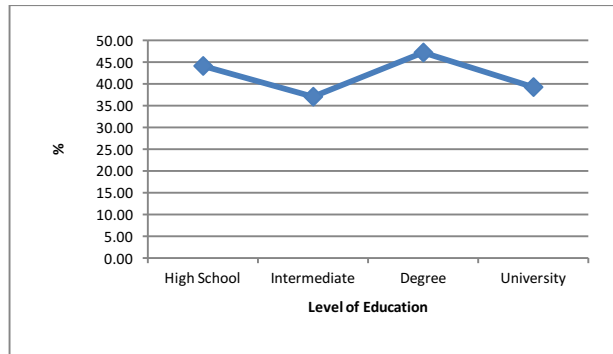


**Figure 5 Comparison of Phobias with level of students**

**Comparative study of Fears and phobias**

**Exam**

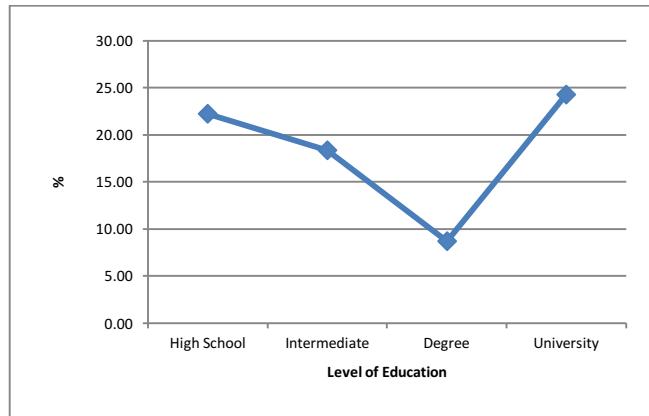
Among the four levels, more number of Degree students (47.15%) expressed the exam phobia, followed by high school students (44.11%). Compared to other phobias exam phobia was high at all levels (Figure 6).



**Figure 6 Exam phobia among various levels of students**

**Acrophobia**

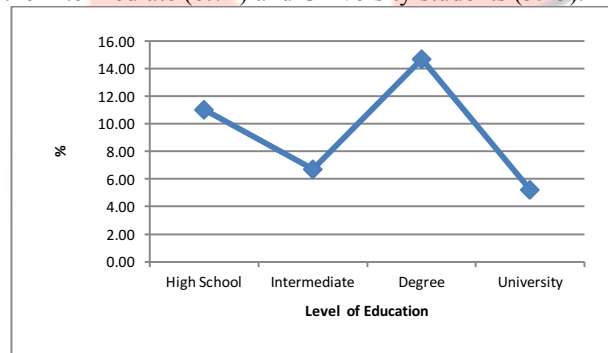
High percent of high school and University students pointed this phobia (24.24 and 22.21) (Figure 7). It is low in case of Degree students (8.65%).



**Figure 7 Acrophobia among various levels of students**

**Hemophobia**

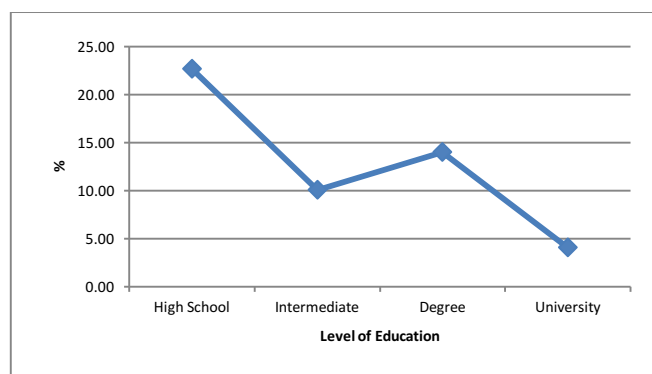
14.68% of Degree students, followed by 11.03% of High school students expressed the phobia (Figure 8). The percentage is more or less similar in the case of the Intermediate (6.72) and University students (5.25).



**Figure 8 Hemophobia among various levels of students**

**Achluophobia**

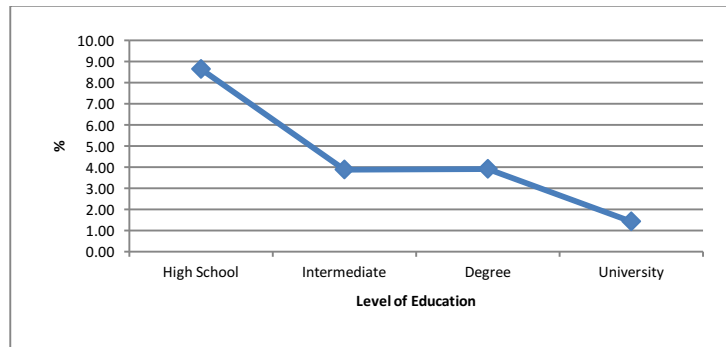
This phobia is high in High school students (22.65%), followed by a Degree (14.03%) and Intermediate (10.08%) (Figure 9). The phobia is less in University students (4.04).



**Figure 9 Achluophobia among various levels of students**

**Hodophobia**

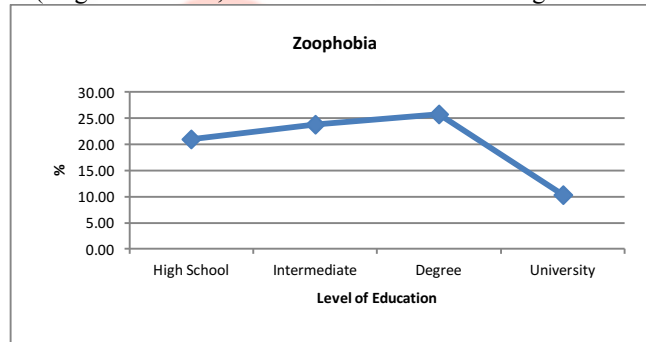
At all levels the phobia is low (Figure 10). The highest is 8.64% (High schools) and the lowest is 1.41%(University).



**Figure 10 Hodophobia among various levels of students**

**Zoophobia**

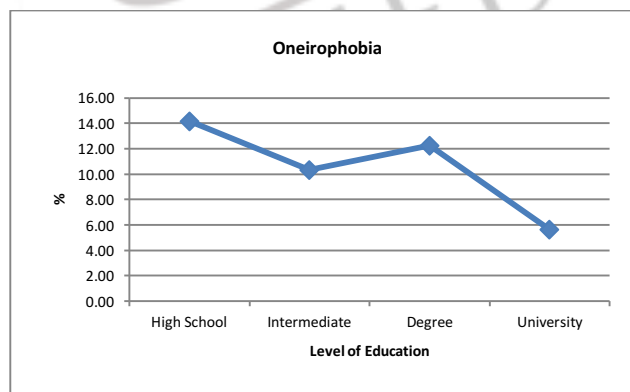
A Comparatively Zoophobia is high, next to exam phobia at all levels. Except University students (10.30%), another three level student expressed this phobia (Degree: 25.77%, Intermediate 23.77% and High school 21.01%) (Figure 11).



**Figure 11 Zoophobia among various levels of students**

**Onciophobia**

A Comparatively high percent of High school students pointed Oneirophobia, then intermediate (10.34) and Degree (12.23). It is only 5.66% in the case of University students (Figure 12).



**Figure 12 Oneirophobia among various levels of students**

The study found that, except Exam and Acrophobia, all other fears are low in University students. As a whole exam, Acrophobia and Zoophobias are more with the students. It may be due to the life experiences and the maturity.

**Treatment**

It is important to remember that you are not alone. Phobias are common, but also treatable. If you believe that you have the symptoms of some type of phobia, consult your doctor for further evaluation and treatment advice (<https://www.verywellmind.com>).

At the neurobiological level, significant advances have been made in identifying fear circuits and mechanisms; dysfunctions in these circuits/mechanisms can lead to chronic psychiatric disorders, Indeed, available treatments that aim to reduce

pathological fear are associated with decreased symptom severity, but up to 40% of patients show only partial long-term benefit, while most of them fail to achieve complete remission (Singewald et al. 2015).

Additionally, people who suffer from specific phobias work hard to avoid their phobia stimuli, even though they know there is no threat or danger, but they feel powerless to stop their irrational fear. Based on the research reviewed in this article, it appears that the amygdala is central to two phenomena that may support pathological innate fear: fear sensitization (Garcia, 2017).

All the phobias shall be treated using experts suggestions.

For example Exam phobia is better prevented than treated. A systematic, persistent, organized, planned and regular effort from the beginning of the academic session is the best method for any adolescent to prevent anxiety related to the examination.

Students may be given frequent tests and a healthy competitive environment among their students within the class may be promoted.

According to Hanies et al., (2007), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has been found to significantly decrease phobic symptoms by helping the phobia sufferer change his or her way of thinking. A variety of treatment options are available, including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Exposure Therapy, Anxiety Management, Relaxation Techniques, and Medications. Hoffman and Weghorst (1997) stated that one or a combination of these may be recommended according to the situation and intensity. No any single treatment is sufficient. If anyone may be suitable for one person, perhaps it may not be the best choice for someone else.

#### **Some of the useful methods**

Exposure-based therapy - (Singh and Singh, 2016)

Cognitive therapy (CT)- (Specific phobia. <http://www.med.upenn.edu>).

Progressive desensitization (Specific phobia. <http://www.med.upenn.edu>).

Relaxation- (Specific phobia. <http://www.med.upenn.edu>).

Hypnosis (hypnotherapy)- (Natural treatment for phobia and anxiety. <http://www.phobicssociety.org>)

Homeopathy- (<http://www.phobicssociety.org>).

Herbal remedies- (Natural treatment for phobia and anxiety. <http://www.phobicssociety.org>).

Pharmacotherapy-(Specific phobia. <http://www.med.upenn.edu>).

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Specific phobias are noticed in many students, School to the University level. It is suggested to take an appropriate treatment and to adapt exam preparation tips to reduce exam phobia. Hodophobia, its causes, symptoms and treatment methods are reported in literature. It is better to start the treatment at the earliest after the identification of the phobia. State Government shall find the suitable mechanism to assess the specific phobias among the students and to treat the phobias. It is found that at all the levels Exam phobia is high compared to others. The study found that, except Exam and Acrophobia, all other fears are low in University students. As a whole exam, Acrophobia and Zoophobias are more with the students.

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