

# ANXIETY MANIFESTATION IN ADOLESCENCE

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**Abstract:** Anxiety is part of human existence and is characterized by a sense of imminent danger. It can be defined as increased emotional unrest in anticipation of danger (Rieman, 2005). It differs from fear, which is an emotional response to an objective threatening.

Fear and anxiety are an intrinsic feature of the human condition with adaptive function and are parts of the normal development. The distinction between fear and anxiety, is given by the quality of the anticipatory experience anxiety versus fear, which focuses on a specific object. The pathological nature of these feelings is due to the increasing frequency of manifestations, their severity and their abnormal persistence.

The author presents the research done on two groups of subjects (students in twelfth grade and students in grade nine) to determine the differences between their share of anxiety, and highlight the weight of one or the other forms of anxiety (veiled or overt) and the personality factors that cause anxiety.

**Keywords:** anxiety, adolescence, manifestations of anxiety, fear

## *Theoretical framework*

Anxiety as pain has a protective function, a coping mechanism. It protects children and adolescents and improves their chances of survival. Different levels of expression of fear and anxiety are under genetic control.

There are many theories that attempt to explain the mechanisms of activation of anxiety. Graham in 1999 (cited Tudose Tudose, Dobranici, 2011) include:

*Psychoanalytic theory* - considers the anxiety as an ego reaction to imminent danger. These internalized fears are rooted in prohibited desires. As the threat is recognized, the Ego reacts by activating defense

mechanisms. Psychoanalytic theories are helpful when we want to understand the mechanisms of internalization typical for child, he managing to avoid the anxiogenic objects or situations.

Anna Freud (apud Enăchescu, 2007) considered that the anxiety in children has several steps:

- The biological mother union status, which may cause separation anxiety;
- The state of object relations, which can generate fear of losing the object of desire;
- The Oedipus complex state that can generate the appearance of character anxiety;
- The level of Over-ego training that can generate guilt.

The followers of *learning theory* regard anxiety as a result of compliance. The experience taught the child to make connection between some stimuli and the anxiety experience, he managing to avoid anxiogenic objects and experiences. By conditioning, fear can be created or reduced, say the advocates of this theory; conditioning paradigms are useful for understanding phobic behavior, but do not explain all the instances of fears purchase (Bărtănescu, Lazarescu, 2011).

The authors of *cognitive theories* – regard the anxiety as a result of knowledge by the child of stressful events. When he faces situations that he can not anticipate or that are unfamiliar the anxiety appears. Not understanding or misunderstanding of natural events cause fear in children, which is why the followers of this theory believe that cognitive restructuring, would solve the fear (Benga, 2009).

In the literature of recent years has increased the number of studies on mechanisms of developing anxiety disorders in children and adolescents.

We mention older and newer theories that try to explain the etiopathogenic process of the anxiety and phobias in children and adolescents (Andrews et al., 2008):

*Psychoanalytic theory* are based on the assertions of Sigmund Freud who believed that "there is an anguish corresponding to a state of biological distress, phenomenon automatically based on mechanisms of excitation on the one hand and, on the other hand, there is a sign of anxiety that is a device operated by the Ego in the face of danger, triggering defense. Anxiety is the result of repressed libidinal impulses; if the libidinal goal has not been achieved and is repressed, then in its place appears the anguish "(apud Eckersleyed, 2006).

*The behavioral theorists* have postulated that persistent difficulties in the separation process belong to the abnormal interaction between mother and baby. The mother limites and stifles the initial stress

of separation of the child and strengthens its abnormal response. Psychodynamic theorists believe that separation anxiety occurs when the child fails to pass through the stage of separation from the mother.

Regarding the phobic or generalized anxiety behavior in recent years were studied the predictors; it was studied in particular the "inhibited temperament construction" (Galbard, 2007).

Studies confirm that the traits of temperament and the reticence type character, shyness, inhibition, characterize the child who may subsequently develop anxiety disorders of the type of separation anxiety or phobia (Perry, 2011).

*Neurobiological hypotheses.* Numerous evidences appear in recent years, thanks to advances in neurosciences. The relationship between attachment, neurobiology of trauma and the development of the central nervous system was the theme of a symposium of the American Psychiatric Association for Child and Adolescent, October 1999.

Charles Zeanah (apud, Riemann, 2005) confirmed the existence of four main areas of interest in which research is conducted on the attachment of Child and Adolescent from the psychopathology development perspective, namely:

- The behavioral plasticity of the attachment;
- Attachment specific relationship - psychopathology;
- The relationship attachment - affiliation and the development of social relationships;
- The finding of the most important stage in the formation of attachment.

*Genetic Hypothesis.* There are many studies that claim that anxiety disorders have a familial character. Twin studies report a high rate of concordance for anxiety disorders, with significant higher in monozygotic twins compared to dizygotic (Galbard, 2007).

Studies on large population groups such as "Virginie-Twin" study support the influence and association of genetic factors as risk factors for anxiety disorders and psychopathological disorders in general. These studies provide the basis for the expression of anxiety but did not report for specific anxieties.

#### *Types of anxiety manifestations in children and adolescents*

Labellarte et al (apud Tudose Tudose, Dobranici, 2011) states that anxiety is the most frequent and common expressions encountered in child and adolescent psychiatry and that excessive anxiety, severe as intensity and frequency may fall into one of the DSM IV categories; unfortunately, continues the author, the diagnostic system is controversial given that: the high frequency of inconsistencies, comorbidity with other

disorders and lack of biological markers that would provide consistent support to the etiology established yet empirically.

#### *Separation anxiety*

The essential clinical features is the quality of the child's emotional reaction to separation from the primary attachment figure (mother or other caregiver that the child perceives as secure).

#### *Generalized anxiety disorder in children and adolescents*

Children and adolescents with this disorder seem to be always anxious about, their worries are countless and without reason. All the events are accompanied, for different periods, by: irritability and anger crisis. Observing this behavior is made by parents about the age of 6-8 years.

To consider this constant anxiety as pathological, mobilizing, it must persist more than a few weeks and to disrupt the socio-familial child interaction (Zager, Rubinstein, 2011).

#### *Phobias in children and adolescents*

Compared to the fears that are so common in the child's life, phobias are "pathological fear". "The pathological fear often manifests a tend to rise and to diversification and generalization; they become more vivid and varied, while disturbing the general state of the child "(Perry, 2011).

In children, these "irrational fears caused by clearly defined circumstances and whose presence is at least imminent" (Galbard, 2007) most often expressed as: fear of darkness (aclyophobia); fear of being alone (selfphobia); fear of heights (acrophobia); fear of injections, pain (algophobia); fear of enclosed spaces (claustrophobia); fear of crowds of people (antropophobia); fear of school (school phobia); fear of death (tanatophobia).

#### *Panic attacks in children and adolescents*

Panic attack is defined as an intense experience of fear that is associated with palpitations, sweating, anxiety, choking, chest pain, vomiting, nausea, imminent death (Bărtănescu, Lazarescu, 2011).

Onset is 12 years, with a peak incidence between 15 and 19 years old (Ionescu, 2006). Masi et al in 1999 (cited by Rieman, 2005), report even the onset at 10 years based on the allegations of adult patients with panic attacks.

Pilowsky (cited by Robinson, 2010), in a longitudinal study on 1,580 adolescents, observed their progression towards depressive disorder with suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.

### Hypothesis and objectives

We assumed that anxiety twelfth grade students who are in high school before an important exam (baccalaureate) is higher than ninth grade students in the school who have just passed such an examination.

The formulation of working hypothesis led us to set ourselves the following research objectives:

- Choosing groups of subjects;
- The choice of psychological tests to measure anxiety;
- Applying psychological tests to the selected groups of subjects enrolled in research;
- Choosing the statistical methods for processing the results;
- Interpretation of results from research in the theory presented in the first part.

### Studied samples

Checking the assumption made previously imposed the choice of two groups of subjects: adolescents in class IX and adolescents in class XII. The two groups of subjects were selected from High School Vasile Goldis Arad. On the day of the survey were present 20 students in each class.

The distribution of classes and gender is shown in Table 1 and Graph 1.

**Table 1.**  
**The distribution by sex of the two groups**

	Boys	Girls
Class XII	10	10
Class a IX-a	9	11

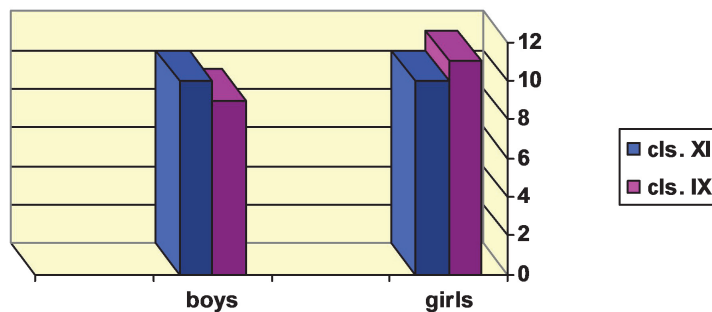


Figure 1. The gender distribution of the groups under study

### Research Methodology

To check the assumption made, we chose Cattell Anxiety Questionnaire, which was applied to the subjects in both groups.

1. *Cattell Questionnaire to determine the level of Anxiety*

Also called 'self-analysis sheet'. It is a test which, although it has been validated in cases of neuroses and psychoses, can be used in the selection and counseling and guidance to detect the subjects with abnormal levels of anxiety.

2. *Working procedure*

The test was applied collectively in the morning between 9:10 o'clock in two consecutive days - one day in class XII and one day in ninth grade.

Data from subjects were processed with SPSS 17.0. There were followed the general statistics index: maximum value, minimum value, average, and aspects of comparison between averages.

The verification of the hypothesis, involved gathering data from subjects and comparison subjects between ninth grade and the grade XII.

**Results and discussions**

*Comparative analysis of IX and XII class*

We will present in Table 2. and Figure 2. the comparative situation. Total anxiety in two classes with minimum and maximum values recorded by the students' responses to questionnaires.

**Table 2.**  
**Comparison between the total anxiety averages and minimum and maximum values for class IX and XII**

	<b>IX Class</b>	<b>XII Class</b>
<b>Minimum Value</b>	26	27
<b>Maximum value</b>	54	58
<b>Total anxiety Average</b>	<b>44,35</b>	<b>50,7</b>

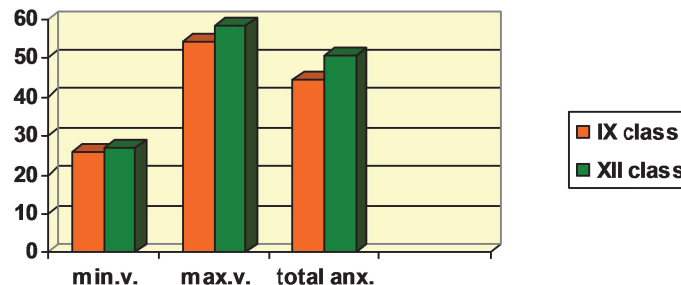


Figure 3.12. Comparison between the totals anxiety averages and minimum and maximum values for class IX and class XII

It is easy to see from the graph that the total anxiety average on the two groups is different, being higher in class XII students. In fact they recorded and greater dispersion of responses within the minimum and maximum amount of values.

As we mentioned the Class XII shows a higher rate of anxiety because of the situation obstacle that stands before them and which they must confront. Let us not forget that of the overcoming this obstacle will depend their professional future: entry to college, obtain subsidized places for large average of baccalaureate, or the reverse of this: studies paid or the need to engage somewhere until next year when they will again be able to give the baccalaureate. These are serious enough reasons for those in terminal class to present an increased anxiety.

Students in the ninth class barely exceeded an obstacle like a decisive examination. No matter how the results were for them (they managed to enter or not to the high school preferred) now the situation is somewhat stabilized and have to cope as best they can with the situation. For them, anxiety does not arise from an imminent difficult exam but from the unknown facing (new school, new colleagues, new teachers, other requirements and other laths) and from the desire to affirm themselves in the collectivity newly established, which is grade IX.

Personality factors that determine the overall anxiety, compared for the two classes are illustrated in Table 3 and Figure 3.

**Table 3**  
**Personality factors that determine the overall anxiety**  
**compared to the two classes**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>IX Class</b>	<b>XII Class</b>
<b>Q3</b>	4,47	4,92
<b>C</b>	3,20	3,92
<b>L</b>	2,27	2,60
<b>O</b>	6,85	7,67
<b>Q4</b>	5,50	6,22

Although values seem at first glance somewhat similar, though there are differences of 0.5 or even a point between the determinants of anxiety.

It maybe seen, however, higher values of all factors for Class XII sign that overall anxiety of students in this class, involves several personality factors in its determination. Quotas obtained by the terminal grade students far exceed the average values of those factors, evidence of

elevated total anxiety of these adolescents. The most significant differences arise between the factors C (0.72 difference), O (0.82 difference), and Q4 (0.72 difference). This means that the students of class XII, have an increased excitability and less ability to control and express immediate tensions in a realistic and appropriate way (factor C interpretation). The anxious tension cause some regression and impede normal growth of ego strength.

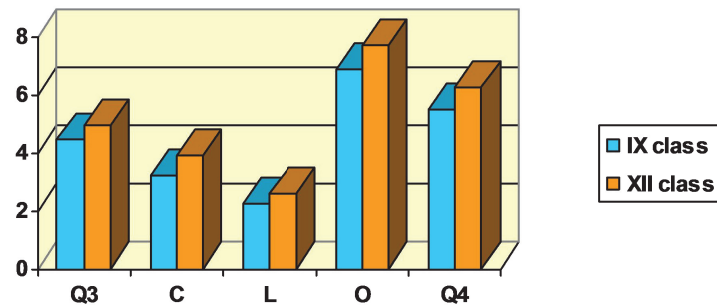


Figure 3 Personality factors that determine overall anxiety compared to the two classes.

Regarding the other two factors O and Q4 these refer to the culpability toward insecurity and respectively to the ergic tension. It seems that in the last class of high school students feel more guilt for the situation in which they are that the ones in class IX. We saw that in the ninth grade students the guilt was felt more towards people from outside, who had not managed the same performance as them. In class XII guilt is turned to himself, considering that they had not learned in time, that they were not prepared enough, or that in the present they do not allocate enough time for the following exam preparation.

The desire for appreciation and recognition (factor Q4) has, too, a different character for the two classes. Ninth graders are afraid that there will be higher expectations from the new school, that they will not be ranked among the best students or that they will fail to keep pace with new school teachers. Many of them come from general schools and there is fear, unspoken, that they will not face the level of the high school, especially when that high school has a good reputation.

The others, however, already hold a position in the class hierarchy of values, an appreciation in the eyes of parents, teachers and the colleagues. For them, the anxiety stems from the fear of disappointing the people who already had a good impression of them.



Comparative share of the manifest and veiled anxiety to the two classes can be seen in Table 4 and Figure 4.

**Table 4.**  
**The determining anxiety type for the total anxiety for the two classes**

<b>anxiety type</b>	<b>Class IX</b>	<b>Class XII</b>
<b>manifest anxiety (mark A)</b>	<b>19,5</b>	<b>25,35</b>
<b>Veiled anxiety (mark B)</b>	<b>22,3</b>	<b>25,35</b>

If in the ninth grade, total anxiety is mainly driven by the veiled anxiety to class XII the contribution of the two types of anxiety (veiled and manifest) is equal in determining the total anxiety.

Manifested anxiety is much higher to the terminal grade students compared with the students in grade IX. The impending baccalaureate which will take place over eight-nine month is the determining factor contributing to an evident increase of manifest anxiety to these students. Let us not forget that on this examination will depend the future professional path of current students, either through obtaining a place in an institution of higher education, either by inclusion in the workforce if they fail the first version. As because of the generalized economic crisis, the number of unemployed increased and the number of jobs available decreased significantly for those with secondary education, result another reason for concern and anxiety related to the future, who brings his share of contribution in the increased rate of manifest anxiety.

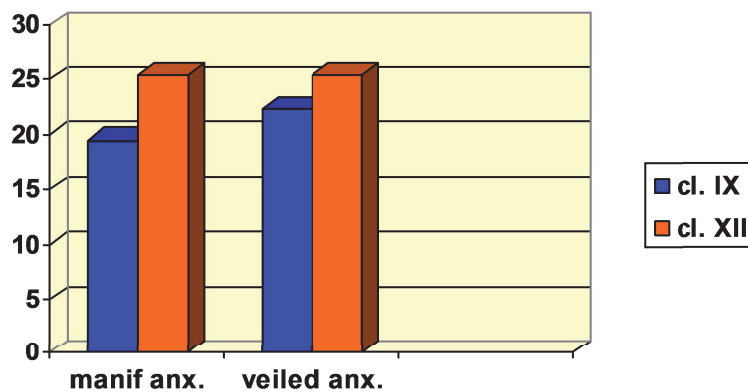


Figure 4. The determining anxiety type for the total anxiety for the two classes

For Class IX anxiety is caused mainly by the veiled anxiety. Students of this class have before them any major event with which to confront and to overcome. They have just passed such an event and their relaxation occurring after overcoming the obstacle is reflected in lower manifest anxiety in these students.

The other sources of anxiety, do not present a so great insight because they can be settled within three years, a time long enough not to feel stressed by the situation. A moderate anxiety as they have be a mobilizing factor of mental and intellectual energies to face the challenges ahead. A much more anxiety leads to difficulties in determining the maturation of the ego and in its regression.

Equal shares of manifested and veiled anxiety recorded in the last grade of high school pupils are a sign of a higher total anxiety to this lot compared to the other and of an equal contributions of the two types of anxiety in determining total anxiety.

Share of personality factors that determine manifested anxiety in the two groups can be tracked in Table 5. and Figure 5.

**Table 5.**  
**Personality factors that determine the manifest anxiety,**  
**compared to the two classes**

Factors	Class IX	Class XII
Q3	4,70	4,85
C	3,60	3,95
L	2,60	2,65
O	6,15	7,85
Q4	5,25	6,05

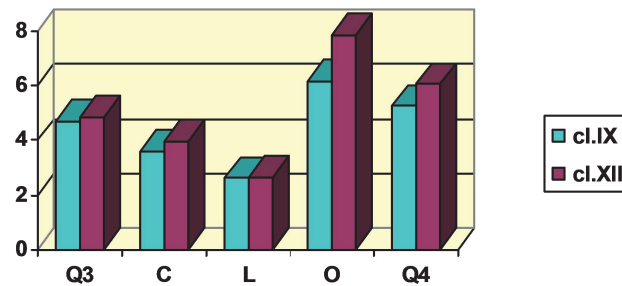


Figure 5. Personality factors that determine the manifest anxiety, compared to the two classes

The biggest difference between personality factors that determine anxiety are recorded to factor O (tendency to guilt, self-accusation and combined anxiety) recorded difference of 1.70 points. Apparently the feeling of self- culpability linked to the inability of the individual to employ correctly the time for the acquisition of knowledge (students of class XII) is much stronger than the feeling of guilt against former colleagues who failed to choose the high school wanted (ninth graders).

Indeed, for the terminal grade students their own self-accusation is stronger because the stakes is greater. On the other hand, the culpability for absences in others disciplines or the lack of attention in class, is out of time, because things have already happened and nothing can be changed. The only thing that remains is to mobilize all their physical and intellectual resources to recover most of the lost knowledge. This, however, involves physical effort and volunteer effort outside intellectual effort. Students may fear, rightly, that they will not withstand a sustained pace of learning, or they will not succeed in rhythm and in the time proposed to recover fully the knowledge required by a baccalaureate good reviews.

Next in order of size is the difference that occurs in Q4 factor between the two classes. Q4 factor refers to the yield stress or psycho ergic tension: unsatisfied desires and needs which are sources of anxiety. We took into account the need to be appreciated and valued. For those in ninth grade valuing and assessing in the new school will begin to manifest just from now on. They have in front of them all the time and the resources to imposed themselves in the eyes of teachers and fellow students and be regarded by them as students with good and very good school performance.

For those in the terminal year, appreciation and valuing have already be done. To them anxiety stems more from the feeling that they will not meet these appraisals and valuations. Students are afraid to disappoint the entourage, not to spoil their image in the eyes of the others. If we think that self-image is a reflection of what others think about the person we realize why it is so important this feeling of not to disappoint the entourage. A decrease or diminution of image value in the eyes of others, will cause automatically a decrease of the self-image, that means of the image that the subject has in his own eyes.

Changing the self-image entails other negative consequences such as the emergence of inferiority complexes, feelings of worthlessness, minimizing their intellectual capacities and their own possibilities to face new obstacles.

Share of personality factors in determining veiled anxiety is shown in Table 6 and Figure 6.

**Table 6.**  
**Personality factors that determine the veiled anxiety**  
**compared to the two classes**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Class IX</b>	<b>Class XII</b>
<b>Q3</b>	<b>4,25</b>	<b>5,00</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>2,80</b>	<b>3,90</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>1,95</b>	<b>2,55</b>
<b>O</b>	<b>7,55</b>	<b>7,50</b>
<b>Q4</b>	<b>5,75</b>	<b>6,40</b>

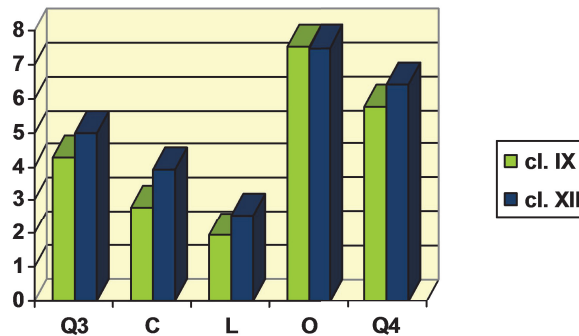


Figure 6. Personality factors that determine the veiled anxiety compared to the two classes

Only for a single factor, the factor O - insecurity towards culpability the shares of class IX are slightly higher than those of Class XII, to the veiled anxiety. It is a clue that in their inner forum the younger adolescents feel guilty not only for the failure of their friends and colleagues, but in a paradoxal way, also for their success. This is contrary to the spirit of altruism and adolescent's general tendency to come to the aid of all and make a better world. The intrapsychic tension created increase the anxiety. Even if this trend is not manifestly noted, however, their inner forum adolescents are permanently processing this and feel guilty over the whole world. This feeling causes higher rates to the factor O compared with adolescents in the terminal class.

All the other personality factors involved in determining anxiety shows higher rates in the last grade of high school adolescents compared to the values of class IX. The most significant differences are to the C factor of 1.10 points. Factor C is the ability to control immediately the tensions and to express them in an appropriate and realistic manner. Or just here the adolescents in this sample have great difficulties. On the one

hand they can not control immediately tensions as they rise as time passes. Time and his passing carries a particular tension from two points of view: on the one hand the passage of time means for the adolescents nearness exam and so the tension, the emotions and the anxiety grow. On the other hand, the passage of time means for the adolescents the shortening of the time in which they can recover some of the lost knowledge and in which they can prepare for the exam.

The most conscientious will panic, with the impression that time passes too quickly and that the left time is insufficient for the training they need. The less conscientious caution not because they have less time to learn, but because they do not know which solution to adopt to overcome the exam. They become aware that they have insufficient knowledge to cope correctly with the exam and begin to look for different alternatives, more or less correct, to keep their self-image intact and uncompromised.

Furthermore, tensions expression is not realistic. The teenager becomes more nervous and irritable as shorten the time to the exam. This can lead to frequent conflicts in the family, or even with colleagues at school. Sometimes tensions are discharged through crying or total waiver threats. The teenager do not trust their ability to cope with the first major examination of his life and emotions and tensions related to this, are growing day by day.

Even those who have a good knowledge base, and do not have cognitive gaps and have a very rigorous program to learn, not get rid of these emotions and tensions. Let us not forget that the emotional instability adds to the inherent physical and physiological changes of the age make them have a lower capacity to make decisions. And when there are temptations of all kinds (is invited to a movie, at the mall, at a party) the teenager easily gives into temptation and is going, even on the program's learning. Subsequently he feels guilty because it has not had the strength to meet their own schedule imposed and thus revolves in a vicious circle of desires and tensions that lead to anxiety, which in turn causes taking measures that will generate other anxieties .

Next on the size differences list is Q3 factor, with a difference of 0.75 between the two classes. We have already discussed in the paper the importance and significance of Q3 factor, signifying the degree of motivation in integrating the behavior in a clear concept of itself, and accepted consciously and by the social standards approved. The issue of social standards is very thorny for adolescents. Some of these standards make them to mobilize in order to reach and even surpass them and to integrate themselves into the adult world which is so complex and complicated. Some of the standards seem outdated and absurd and then

their violation is not regarded as serious. If to fit these standards they found less accurate alternative to pass the exam, it not seem to them a very big tragedy, especially because the final goal was good and also their intentions were good. But the moral conscience (which is well developed at that age) bother them constantly with guilt for the methods adopted and hence a state of increased inner tension, accompanied by anxiety. If it is known about their alternative methods, or if they are caught using them, then the self-image will collapse, and the image that others have of them will acquire negative connotations. In this way the teenager feels included in the battle of two contrary tendencies: on the one hand to win (to overcome exam) at any price, on the other hand tend to defend their own image in the eyes of others and his own eyes. The continuous oscillation between these two extremes lead to increased anxiety, sometimes accompanied by other symptoms, such as somatic ones (insomnia, nausea, headache etc.).

In this context too much anxiety leads to a regression of ego. The teenager is aware that after this examination, everyone (including the entire society) will consider him as an adult and will no longer be tolerated little subterfuge or alternatives for which until now there was some indulgence. As a defense against this tension, the ego regresses to childhood when there were no problems, when he had only to play and eat, when there were others (parents) who took care of him and were facing the daily problems and difficulties. The teenager will simulate disease states (flu, feeling unwell etc.) to avoid, at least for a short time, the continue confrontation with the problems to be overcome and resolved, and to feel again, safe and protected by adults.

For overall anxiety and its two forms, manifested the veiled anxiety we calculated using SPSS 17.0, the differences between averages and their meanings in order to have one last argument for the proposition that our working hypothesis is validated in practice.

**Table 7.**  
**The significance of difference between means**

	<b>t</b>	<b>significance</b>
<b>Overall anxiety</b>	<b>3,426</b>	<b>p &lt; 0,01</b>
<b>Manifested anxiety</b>	2,856	p < 0,01
<b>Veiled anxiety</b>	3,284	p < 0,01

All differences between averages are significant at a significance level  $p < 0.01$ . By calculating the difference between the averages, it passed the test of significance t, or Student t test for independent samples.

An extract from the meanings of T, is shown below in order to better observe where our values are located.

**Table 8.**

**Extract from Table significance of t.  
Number of degrees of freedom = N-1**

n	p	0,10	0,05	0,02	0,01
.....		.....	.....	.....	.....
19		1,73	2,09	2,53	2,84
.....		.....	.....	.....	.....

*Source:* Radu, Miclea, Nemeş, Albu, Moldovan, Szamoskozi (1993), *Metodologie psihologică și analiza datelor*, Editura Sincron, Cluj-Napoooca, p. 384.

The values obtained by us for t are higher than the last record in the table at  $p < 0.01$ . This means that we fail to less than 1% of cases when we say that there are differences in anxiety among the students of class IX and XII graders. These differences are not accidental, but are the products of concrete situations in teenagers real life at this age. The presentation of the meanings table for differences between averages, is the latest confirmation of our working hypothesis: that there are differences in the rate of anxiety in teenagers in ninth grade than those in class XII. Our hypothesis was validated in practice and our research has proved its utility by the explanations that tried to offer in understanding this age and the anxieties facing it.

**Conclusions**

Anxiety is a normal and common health problem which if not treated properly can persist into adulthood. Because anxiety among adults has numerous comorbid disorders (substance abuse, depression and suicide attempts) it is very important to identify risk factors that facilitate the development of this disorder and prevent chronic symptoms.

Anxiety is present naturally in the emotional child together with fear and sadness. Almost the entire spectrum of anxiety from symptoms to syndrome can be expressed in childhood and adolescence.

The approach of anxiety disorders in terms of growth and development is becoming more common in the literature of the last years, when the development and the psychopathology of development are focused by specialized author.

The most common manifestations of anxiety in children and adolescents are: separation anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, phobias

(specific to small child), panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

As a working hypothesis we assumed that anxiety of students of class XII in high school which are in front of an important examination (baccalaureate) is higher than that of the students in the ninth grade of high school who have just passed such an examination.

For overall anxiety and its two forms, manifested and veiled anxiety we calculated using SPSS 17.0, the differences between averages and their meanings in order to have one last argument for the assumption that our working hypothesis is validated in practice.

Our hypothesis was validated in practice and our research has proved its utility by the explanations it tried to offer in understanding this age and the anxieties facing it.

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