

# Phobias and Gender- A Case Study on Engineering Students

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## ABSTRACT

Fears and phobias are common in the student community. The present study was observed some of the specific phobias- Exam phobia, Acrophobia, Hemophobia, Achluophobia, Hodophobia, Zoophobia and Oneirophobia in engineering students with reference to gender. A total of 460 students studying in four Engineering colleges, located in Guntur and Prakasam districts was selected, out of which 294 are male and 166 are female. The study found that all the examined phobias were high in female students, particularly, Exam (50.60%) and Zoophobia (39.16%) are very high in female and compared to male (42.52% and 13.27%).

**Keywords:** Specific Phobias, Therapies, Engineering Students, Gender

## 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). Different specific phobias, namely Exam phobia, Acrophobia, Hemophobia, Achluophobia, Hodophobia, Zoophobia and Oneirophobia are present in students. 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. 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 irrational fear of heights. 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 (Menzies, 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 (<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).

## II. METHODOLOGY

A total of 460 students studying in four Engineering colleges, located in Guntur and Prakasam districts was selected, out of which 294 are male and 166 are female. 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 and correlation studies are presented under results and discussion between the male and female students.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Various phobias were studied with reference to gender and the results are incorporated in this section. Number of students with specific phobias was shown in table 1 and the percentages were given in table 2.

TABLE 1  
STUDENT'S WITH SPECIFIC PHOBIAS

Phobias	Male	Female	Total
Exam phobia	125	84	209
Acrophobia	44	28	72
Hemophobia	24	25	49
Achluophobia	25	26	51
Hodophobia	11	12	23
Zoophobia	39	65	104
Oneirophobia	41	28	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>577</b>

TABLE 2  
GENDER WISE PHOBIAS (%)

Phobias	Male	Female
Exam phobia	42.52	50.60
Acrophobia	14.97	16.87
Hemophobia	8.16	15.06
Achluophobia	8.50	15.66
Hodophobia	3.74	7.23
Zoophobia	13.27	39.16
Oneirophobia	13.95	16.87

### Specific Phobias

#### Male Students

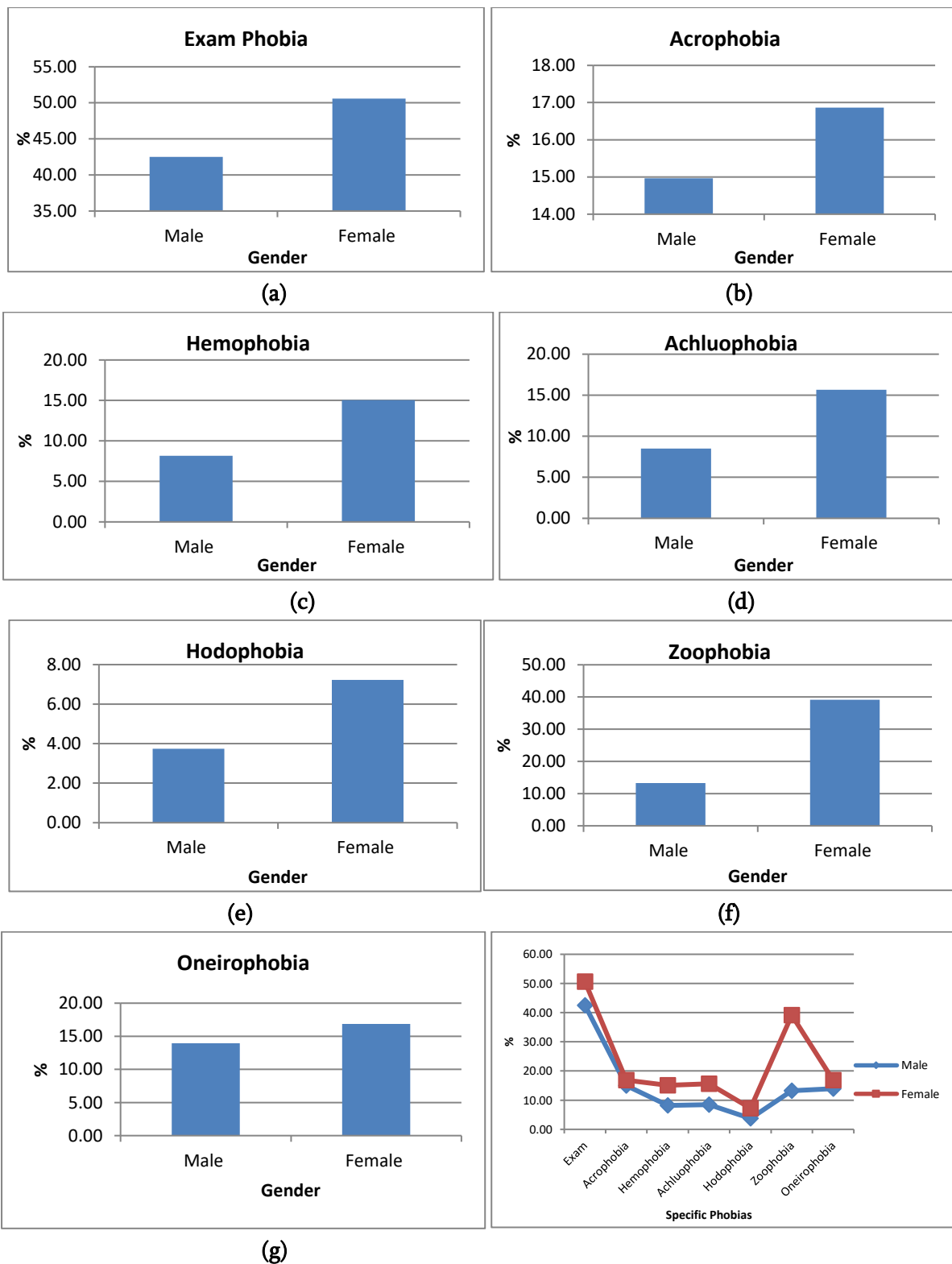
The highest percent of male students expressed exam phobia (42.52) (Table 2). It is followed by Acrophobia (14.97%), Oneirophobia (13.95) and Zoophobia (13.27). Comparatively, lower percentage was recorded with Achluophobia (8.50), followed by Hemophobia (8.16) and Hodophobia (3.74). These variations are depicted in figures 1a to 1g.

#### Female Students

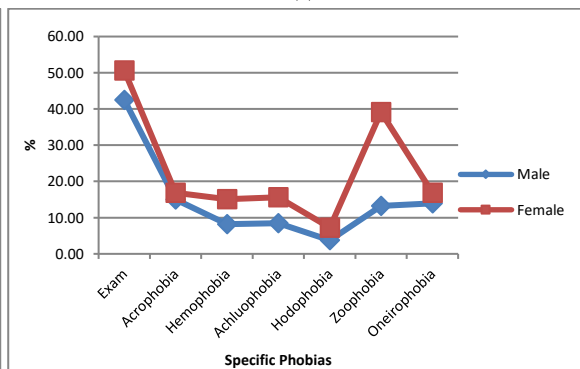
50.60% of female students marked that they have exam phobia, followed by 39.16% marked Zoophobia (Table 2). The lowest percent was recorded with Hodophobia (7.23). The percentages are more or less similar for Acrophobia, Hemophobia, Achluophobia and Oneirophobia. These variations are shown in figures 1a to 1g.

### Comparative Study

Compared to the males (42.52%), high percent of female students (50.60%) expressed exam phobia. Similarly, Zoophobia is high in female (39.16%) than male (13.27%). Though the difference in percentage is less compared to exam and zoophobia all other examined phobias are high female students (Figure 2).



**Figure 1** Phobias and Gender



**Figure 2.** Comparison of Phobias and Gender

**Treatment**

It is important to remember that the Phobias are common and you are not alone. 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). It appears that the amygdala is central to two phenomena that may support pathological innate fear: fear sensitization (Garcia, 2017).

The treatments vary with the type of phobia. 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. In case of Achluophobia and Zoophobia treatment exposures, reduce the fear.

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 influence health and academic achievement of the students. The study observed that exam phobia is high in both male (42.52%) and female (50.60%) students. It is concluded that the specific phobias are more in female compared to male.

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