



## CLINICAL SYMPTOMS AND THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES IN PATIENTS WITH GENERAL ANXIETY DISORDER

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### Abstract :

*Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a psychological condition characterised by widespread, uncontrollable, and persistent anxiety in multiple domains, including work, health, and social contexts. Common symptoms include muscle tension, sleep disturbances, fatigue, impaired concentration, and excessive anxiety relative to circumstances. This condition can interfere with daily functioning and reduce an individual's quality of life. This study used a qualitative methodology using in-depth interviews with five psychiatric physicians to determine the main symptoms, etiological factors, and therapeutic strategies for Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). This study revealed that all informants showed consistent patterns of physical and psychological symptoms. These factors include genetics, neurochemical imbalances, high-stress environments, and predisposed personality traits. Regarding treatment, physicians recommend implementing cognitive behavioural therapy, pharmaceutical interventions, relaxation and mindfulness practices, and adopting a healthy lifestyle in a coordinated manner. Generalised Anxiety Disorder is a multifaceted condition that requires a holistic approach. Appropriate and ongoing treatment can help individuals manage anxiety well and improve their quality of life. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference in clinical practice and the development of mental health interventions.*

**Keywords:** Generalised Anxiety Disorder, clinical manifestations, interventions, holistic approaches

### INTRODUCTION

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is one of the most common mental illnesses in contemporary society. Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is defined as persistent, uncontrollable, and excessive worry about various aspects of life, including work, health, family, and minor issues that pose minimal threat. Unlike generalised anxiety, which occurs as a reaction to specific circumstances, anxiety in Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) often occurs without an identifiable trigger (Krisnawardhani & Noviekayati, 2021).

The epidemiological prevalence of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) has increased significantly and has shown an increasing trend in recent decades, particularly among the working-age population (Alatawi et al., 2020). Many international studies show that Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is often underdiagnosed because its symptoms are similar to other conditions, including



depression and physical illness. Societal ignorance and stigma regarding mental health exacerbate this problem, preventing individuals from promptly seeking professional help (Wijaya et al., 2025).

The main symptoms of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) include muscle tension, difficulty sleeping, excessive fatigue, impaired concentration, and disproportionate worry. These symptoms negatively impact an individual's psychological, physical, and social well-being. Many individuals experiencing stress report decreased productivity, impaired interpersonal relationships, and a significantly reduced quality of life (Agusta et al., 2024).

The factors influencing the development of Generalised Anxiety Disorder are complex and interrelated. An imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain, including serotonin and norepinephrine, is thought to contribute to the development of anxiety symptoms (Manassis, 2012). From a psychological perspective, traumatic childhood experiences, stressful situations, and certain personality traits can increase a person's susceptibility to Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). Furthermore, genetic variables have been shown to influence a person's predisposition to developing this condition (Mather, 2016).

Various methodologies have been developed to treat Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) in the treatment realm. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is the dominant approach because it is effective in helping clients change harmful thought patterns and actions that exacerbate anxiety (LaFreniere & Newman, 2023). Furthermore, the administration of medications such as benzodiazepines or antidepressants is recommended in some instances. Relaxation techniques, mindfulness, and promoting a healthy lifestyle are integral components of a holistic approach to the treatment of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (Simon, 2021).

The efficacy of therapy depends heavily on a thorough understanding of the GAD condition. Many examples show that delayed or inadequate treatment leads to relapse or the onset of other mental illnesses in patients (Peper et al., 2022). Therefore, early recognition of GAD symptoms is an essential first step in the healing and recovery process.

Previous research conducted by Hashemi (2023) examined the lived experiences of children with generalised anxiety disorder. Furthermore, research conducted by Widakdo et al. (2025) examined the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural therapy in reducing anxiety in patients with generalised anxiety disorder. Moreover, another study conducted by Kim & Kim (2024) examined factors associated with generalised anxiety disorder in culturally diverse adolescents. In general, most of these studies focused on quantitative methodologies to assess symptom severity or therapy efficacy.

This study aims to comprehensively investigate the symptoms of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), associated risk factors, and coping strategies used by mental health professionals. The study aims to offer essential insights into clinical practice and mental health service policy by examining the perspectives and experiences of five psychiatrists. The qualitative methodology used in this study has significant potential to thoroughly explore the subjective experiences of individuals with GAD and the perspectives of healthcare

practitioners on their treatment. This method facilitates contextual, comprehensive, and empathetic understanding of the complexities inherent in anxiety disorders.

This research is not only necessary in an academic setting but also has broad practical applications. The results of the comprehensive interviews are expected to inform the development of more effective, humane interventions tailored to the actual needs of patients. Furthermore, the findings of this study can serve as a valuable reference for educators, policymakers, and the broader community to enhance their understanding of the importance of mental health.

Therefore, this study aims to contribute to a collaborative initiative aimed at improving awareness, understanding, and quality of care related to Generalised Anxiety Disorder. This study highlights the importance of a qualitative approach in understanding and addressing the complex issues faced by individuals with Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), thus contributing to the field of clinical psychology and public health.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative methodology with a descriptive study design. Qualitative descriptive research is an approach used to gain knowledge about research subjects at a particular point in time (Rachmad et al., 2024). This methodology was employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the symptoms, risk factors, and treatment modalities of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) from the perspective of a medical practitioner. This study focused on examining the experiences and perspectives of psychiatric experts in treating patients with Generalised Anxiety Disorder, resulting in narrative and contextual data.

The data collection method involved semi-structured interviews with five psychiatrists experienced in treating anxiety disorders. The informants were purposively selected based on their professional background and clinical experience in the field of mental health. Each interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes, was recorded with the informants' consent, and then transcribed for further research.

Thematic analysis was employed for data analysis, where researchers identified, categorised, and analysed key themes emerging from the interview transcripts. Data validity was ensured through data triangulation, researcher discussions, and verification of findings with informants. These steps were designed to ensure that data interpretation was accurate, reliable, and scientifically valid.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a psychological condition that can significantly reduce the quality of life of those who suffer from it. It often causes persistent and excessive anxiety about various things, even in the absence of a real threat. This article will examine the symptoms of Generalised Anxiety

Disorder (GAD) in detail and evaluate effective treatment strategies for managing this condition.

The following presents excerpts from interviews with five physicians that describe their consensus on the symptoms of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), specifically regarding muscle tension, pervasive and uncontrollable worry, difficulty sleeping, fatigue, impaired concentration, and further physical manifestations.

"The majority of my patients experience persistent muscle tension, especially in the shoulders and neck." Further analysis revealed that it was caused by persistent anxiety. They often have difficulty sleeping because their minds are constantly active." (P1)

"Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is unique because its symptoms are often hidden. Patients sometimes fail to realise that their fatigue is a result of excessive anxiety. I've received reports of symptoms such as heart palpitations, muscle tension, and difficulty concentrating. This creates a crippling cycle." (P2)

"I often treat patients who report insomnia and fatigue. Upon evaluation, it's discovered they suffer from persistent anxiety. Even while sleeping, their bodies remain alert. This is why they wake up feeling restless and have difficulty staying focused throughout the day." (P3)

"Many people experience physical symptoms such as stomach aches, tremors, and fatigue. We only begin to assess for psychosomatic issues after conducting standard scientific testing. Almost all of them also experience persistent muscle tension and anxiety for no apparent reason." (P4)

"During treatment sessions, I frequently observe patients losing concentration while speaking. They express dissatisfaction with their inability to get enough sleep and report persistent fatigue throughout the day. Upon further questioning, they admit that their concerns are pervasive and persistent, accompanied by a feeling of physical tightness almost daily." (P5)

Interviews with five physician from diverse backgrounds revealed a consensus regarding the symptoms of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). All interviewees emphasised that individuals with GAD typically exhibit a combination of somatic and psychological symptoms that interplay. Symptoms include muscle tension, pervasive and uncontrollable anxiety, and sleep disturbances, which are routinely noted in their observations. The observed muscle tension is not caused by physical activity but rather a physiological reaction to chronic anxiety. This tension increases stress signals to the brain, resulting in a state of constant alertness throughout the body.

Furthermore, doctors observed that profound fatigue and impaired concentration were two significant complaints frequently reported by patients. Many patients fail to realise that the fatigue they experience daily stems from chronic anxiety, which drains mental and physical vitality. Similarly, reduced

concentration is not caused by a brain condition, but rather by the constant distraction of uncontrollable, nervous thoughts. This affects patients' productivity and overall quality of life, both at work and at home.

Ultimately, all five physicians agreed that other clinical manifestations, including heart palpitations, abdominal discomfort, and indigestion, often serve as the impetus for patients seeking medical care. Unfortunately, these symptoms are frequently mistaken for purely physical illnesses, even when the underlying cause is anxiety. Therefore, an accurate diagnosis and a multidisciplinary strategy are crucial for the treatment of GAD. This strategy should include psychological interventions, patient education, lifestyle changes, and, if necessary, medical or pharmacological therapy to help patients overcome the debilitating cycle of anxiety.

The following are excerpts from interviews with five physicians regarding the risk factors and aetiology of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), which include hereditary influences, environmental variables, neurochemical imbalances, personality traits, and strategies for stress management.

"A familial predisposition to anxiety or depression is frequently found in patients with Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). This genetic element does not imply direct inheritance; rather, it may reflect a biological vulnerability to stress or anxiety-related cognitive patterns that emerge during childhood." (P1)

"The childhood environment is crucial. Environmental influences, such as authoritarian parenting, academic pressure, and repeated traumatic experiences, can foster a perception that the world is unsafe. This is the foundation for anxiety disorders in adulthood." (P2)

"Biologically, patients with GAD exhibit an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain, specifically serotonin, norepinephrine, and GABA." This affects emotional regulation and the brain's response to stress. Consequently, pharmaceutical intervention is crucial in some instances." (P3)

"I once treated a patient who hadn't experienced significant trauma but was exhibiting excessive anxiety. He displayed a perfectionist streak and was overly self-critical. His method of coping with stress involved constantly blaming himself, which then became a trigger for his anxiety." (P4)

"Many patients lack effective coping mechanisms. They typically suppress feelings, avoid problems, or express tension in self-defeating ways. Failure to effectively manage stress makes individuals vulnerable to the development of chronic anxiety disorders." (P5)

Interviews with five professionals in mental health and medicine indicate that Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) arises from a complex interaction of multiple interrelated causes. Genetic factors are believed to influence a person's predisposition to anxiety. Individuals with a family predisposition to anxiety disorders or depression are at higher risk of developing Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). However, these genetic elements do not operate in isolation;

they interact with life circumstances and parenting styles experienced during childhood.

Environmental factors, including unsupportive parenting, traumatic experiences, social pressure, and school stress, significantly influence the development of negative opinions about the world and oneself. If not managed effectively, these events can reinforce the belief that life is inherently dangerous, causing the brain to remain in a constant state of alert. This is compounded by differences in brain chemistry, particularly in neurotransmitters crucial for regulating emotions and promoting calmness. This mismatch complicates an individual's ability to manage anxiety naturally.

Additionally, psychological traits such as perfectionism, excessive self-criticism, or low self-esteem serve as additional catalysts that make a person vulnerable to anxiety. The likelihood of developing Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) increases significantly when inappropriate coping mechanisms, such as avoidance, emotional repression, or unmanaged stress, are used. Consequently, GAD therapy must be holistic, encompassing psychological interventions, psychoeducation, stress management training, and pharmaceutical support when necessary, to help patients restore emotional balance and improve their quality of life.

This section contains interviews regarding the management of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), which includes pharmacological interventions, relaxation and mindfulness strategies, healthy lifestyle practices, and holistic approaches.

"The primary method I use is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Through cognitive behavioural therapy, patients gain skills to recognise and change harmful thought patterns that trigger anxiety. This approach is constructive because it helps patients identify the origins of their beliefs and develop more realistic and adaptive cognitive patterns." (P1)

"In extreme cases of Generalised Anxiety Disorder, the use of pharmacological agents such as antidepressants or anxiolytics is very effective in stabilising the patient's condition. Medications are not the only treatment; however, they can serve as temporary relief, making it easier for the patient to accept psychological therapy." (P2)

"I often recommend that patients regularly engage in relaxation and mindfulness exercises, including deep breathing, guided meditation, or yoga. These methods help calm the nervous system and reduce the body's stress response, which is often heightened in individuals with Generalised Anxiety Disorder." (P3)

"Many people don't realise that a healthy lifestyle is crucial for managing anxiety. Consistent sleep patterns, regular moderate exercise, and a nutritious diet can improve mood and regulate stress hormone levels." (P4)

"I emphasise that the treatment of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) must be carried out in an integrated manner. This requires a multifaceted approach that includes psychotherapy, pharmacotherapy, mindfulness

practices, and a healthy lifestyle. Collaboration between psychologists, psychiatrists, and patients is crucial for effective therapy." (P5).

The five doctors emphasised that treating Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) cannot be done individually or directly, but requires a holistic approach. Relaxation and mindfulness practices are considered effective in enabling patients to manage anxiety independently, especially when symptoms appear suddenly. Adopting a healthy lifestyle is equally important, as quality sleep, physical activity, and a balanced diet are crucial for maintaining emotional stability. All speakers emphasised the need for an integrated approach, including synergy between medical and psychological interventions and daily habits, to provide a more comprehensive and sustainable rehabilitation process for patients.

Table 1: Summary of Research Findings

No	Clinical Dimension	Main Components
1	<i>Symptoms of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)</i>	<i>Muscle Tension, Excessive and Uncontrolled Anxiety, Muscle Tension, Sleep Disturbances, Excessive Fatigue, Difficulty Concentrating, Other Physical Symptoms</i>
2	<i>Risk Factors and Causes of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD)</i>	<i>Genetic Factors, Environmental Factors, Brain Chemical Imbalance, Personality and How to Deal with Stress</i>
3	<i>Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) Treatment</i>	<i>Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Medication Treatment, Relaxation and Mindfulness Techniques, Healthy Lifestyle Practices, Integrated Approach</i>

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a common mental condition characterised by uncontrollable and excessive worry that lasts for at least six months (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This disorder causes psychological distress to individuals and reduces productivity and quality of life, making it a significant public health problem.

Symptoms of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) vary significantly among individuals; however, a common characteristic is persistent anxiety about various aspects of life, such as work, health, and social interactions. This worry may be justified or excessive in relation to the actual threat faced (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015).

Prolonged stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system causes muscle tension, headaches, and various musculoskeletal problems. These physical manifestations are not merely side effects, but significant indications of

physiological hyperarousal that perpetuates the anxiety cycle (Strawnet et al., 2018).

Sleep disturbances, including both initial and maintenance insomnia, are common. Sleep deprivation increases the emotional reactivity of the amygdala and reduces cortical regulation of fear, making individuals more susceptible to anxiety the following day (Mendeze et al., 2024). Consequently, daytime fatigue often occurs despite seemingly adequate sleep.

From a cognitive perspective, individuals often experience challenges in concentration due to anxiety interfering with working memory. This difficulty concentrating directly impacts academic or work performance, increases discomfort, and creates a detrimental feedback loop between task failure and increased anxiety (Cuijpers et al., 2023).

The causes of Generalised Anxiety Disorder are multifaceted. Twin studies suggest that heredity accounts for approximately one-third of the risk variance, indicating a genetic predisposition that interacts with environmental factors (Hettema et al., 2001). Neurobiologically, functional MRI has demonstrated dysregulation of the neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine, along with hyperactivity in the amygdala-prefrontal circuit (Mendeze et al., 2024).

Childhood trauma, chronic stress, and authoritarian parenting increase the likelihood of developing Generalised Anxiety Disorder, especially in individuals with neurotic or perfectionist traits and maladaptive coping mechanisms (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015). These psychosocial circumstances support a cognitive paradigm of an unsafe world, which perpetuates anxiety (Basilee et al., 2024). Pharmacotherapy serves as an alternative when symptom severity precludes active engagement in cognitive behavioural therapy (Strawnet et al., 2018).

Mindfulness-based therapy and lifestyle modifications (aerobic exercise, regular sleep, caffeine restriction) improve emotional regulation and physical health (Fortes et al., 2025). NICE guidelines (2020) emphasise the importance of a cohesive, stepwise strategy that combines education, cognitive behavioural therapy, pharmacological treatments, and relaxation methods. Current barriers include stigma, inadequate therapist resources, and individual differences in response to treatment. Consequently, the management of GAD must be individualised, flexible, and include social support to achieve optimal long-term outcomes.

A recent randomised trial combining intensive cognitive behavioural therapy with videoconferencing demonstrated clinically significant symptom reductions sustained up to three months post-intervention, confirming that geographic barriers are no longer a significant barrier to accessing therapy (Trenoska-Basilee et al., 2024).

Interest in mindfulness-based therapies has increased in light of recent meta-analytic findings. Fortes et al. (2025) found that Mindfulness-Based Interventions improved quality of life and moderately reduced anxiety in anxiety-related disorders, including Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). The

primary benefit of Mindfulness-Based Interventions lies in their capacity to reduce rumination and support cognitive reappraisal. Furthermore, app-based mindfulness training reduces financial barriers, making it compatible with online cognitive behavioural therapy. The variability of procedures and the lack of uniformity among instructors warrant further research to determine the optimal dosage, frequency, and quality of training.

Physician should assess age, symptom severity, comorbidities, and patient preferences before formulating a multimodal management strategy. Further investigations should evaluate the continued effectiveness of combination treatment. Furthermore, ethical and regulatory frameworks are crucial to ensure data protection and prevent dependency. Personalised and coordinated therapy can substantially alleviate the burden of Generalised Anxiety Disorder on individuals and healthcare systems.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a multifaceted mental condition that significantly affects a person's personal, social, and professional life. Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is more than just ordinary anxiety; it is a chronic disorder characterised by prolonged psychological and physiological tension. Accompanying symptoms, such as muscle tension, difficulty sleeping, fatigue, and impaired concentration, are often overlooked as components of a mental condition, resulting in delayed diagnosis and treatment. Consequently, the general public and healthcare professionals must have a comprehensive awareness of the signs of Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) to facilitate successful early intervention.

Furthermore, treating GAD requires a comprehensive and personalised strategy, appropriate medication, relaxation techniques, and lifestyle changes. Practitioners in the field of Generalised Anxiety Disorder are advised to examine the various factors causing Generalised Anxiety Disorder so they can provide more appropriate consultation and services. This study is certainly still in the initial analysis stage to understand the factors causing and treating Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD). Therefore, researchers are advised to examine all the factors causing and treating Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) in more depth so that GAD can be treated appropriately.

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