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“EFFECT OF GENDER ON FEAR, AVOIDANCE AND DISTRESS AMONG ADOLESCENTS”

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ABSTRACT

Fear is an emotional arousal caused by anticipation of an actual physical stimulus or danger. Fear is the state of discomfort; an individual starts avoiding the stimulus that slows down and weakens physical and mental abilities. An adolescent prefers to remain isolated and then withdraws from daily activities which lead to depression. It interferes with educational social and daily activities. The most important thing to do is to develop a far consistent behavior among the adolescents. Parents should come forward for reducing this fear and avoidance. Present study is an attempt to study the relation between fear and avoidance and distress in reference to gender.



The study concluded that fear, avoidance and distress are independent of sex among the adolescents.

KEY WORDS: Adolescents, Gender, Fear, Avoidance, Distress.

1.INTRODUCTION

Fear is an emotional arousal that is caused by the anticipation of an actual physical stimulus or danger (King Hamilton and Dllendick, 1988). An individual experiences pain despite the absence of pathology. If an individual experiences active discomfort and delays the situation by using avoidant behavior, he/she feels anxious. Thus anxiety stems from the fear and the symptoms of anxiety will show harmful social and physical effects. As it involves a state of discomfort, an individual starts avoiding the situations and that slows down and weakens physical and mental abilities of an individual which further restricts the normal daily functions. The onset of some types of anxiety disorder tends to be in early adulthood, whereas others tend to emerge in childhood or adolescence. Prevalence of anxiety disorders, onset typically occurs in adolescence (Dozois and Dobson, 2004), as a person experiences many challenges in life and is highly exposed to peer influence, family and life pressure.

An adolescent prefers to remain isolated and then withdraws from daily activities, which leads him/her to depression. It interferes with their educational, social and daily activities and thus become the cause of emotional collapse. Each emotion is sensitive to a different aspect of affective experience. For example, Grief is typically a response to Loss, Frustration is typically a response to Blockage, Anger is typically a response to Violation, and Fear is typically a response to Danger (Carl Pickhardt). This fear and avoidance behavior has been giving negative effects on the students now days. In fear and avoidance studies gender is very important interest area. Both biological and environmental factors make boys and girls quite

different, which is reflected in differences in personality traits, activities and achievements (Berk, 2006). Individual differences in gender create variations in fear and anxiety level of adolescents. Ollendick, Yang; Dong, Xia, Lin (1995) revealed that girls generally are more fearful and anxious than boys. Burnham and Gullone, (1997); Muris and Rijkee,(2011) concluded that female adolescents have higher level of fears than males . Bem ,(1981) revealed that the fear and anxiety are generally acquired by girls resulted in negative emotions and avoidant behaviors. McGee R1, Feehan M, Williams S, Anderson J. (1992) has shown that up until age 11, girls and boys are equally likely to develop an anxiety disorder. By age 15, however, girls are six times more likely to have one than boys are.

The present study is an attempt to study the relation between Fear and avoidance and distress in reference to gender.

2. NEED OF THE STUDY:

As adolescent’s thought process move from concrete operations to propositional thinking; the system of mental operations reaches a high degree of equilibrium. Each adolescent develops his or her own view of the world. The patterns of emotions during adolescents are expecting the stimuli and form of expressions. Fear also embraces a wide variety of conditions and brings terror to mind; resulting in avoiding situations. This leads them to stress, anxiety or depression. So presently it is urgent that fear should not become this intense that it makes healthy functioning of adolescents at stake. So keeping this the researcher selected this topic for study.

3) OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- (1) To study the impact of gender on fear and avoidance.
- (2) To study the impact of gender on Distress Quotient.

4) HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:

- (1) There will be no significant difference between adolescent boys and girls with respect to fear and avoidance.
- (2) There will be no significant difference between adolescent boys and girls with respect to distress.

5) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

A sample of 800 adolescents from the 10 convent semi English, English, aided, unaided schools studying in 9th standard, in Washim city, have been selected for the study. The data used for analytical purpose is primary data. It includes the qualitative as well as the quantitative data. Qualitative data are converted in to quantitative by using appropriate scorings. The primary data was collected with the help of specially designed questionnaire. The questionnaire includes Generalized Social Anxiety and Avoidance Disorder scale given by Brooks and Stan Kutcher during the year 2003.

6) DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS:

After the data had been collected, it was processed and tabulated and analyzed using Chi square test, Z-Test and Karl Pearson’s correlation co-efficient.

Descriptive Statistics:

The distribution of total frequency according to the sex and the level of fear and avoidance are presented in the following table. The observed frequencies along with expected cell frequencies are given. The χ^2 value is given below the table. Expected cell frequencies are in bracket.

Table 1 Sex, fear and Avoidance:

Sex	low up to 30	Medium up to 50	High above 50	
Male	48 (56)	241 (232.36)	104 (104.64)	393

Female	66 (58)	232 (240.64)	109 (108.36)	407
	114	473	213	800

$\chi^2 = 2.89^{NS}$

It is observed that sex, fear and avoidance, the χ^2 value given below the attributes are independent. Concluding, the attributes are independent. Sex of the adolescents does not have any significant impact on fear and avoidance.

The frequency distribution according to the attributers, sex and distress score as female and male with distress score low, medium and high are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Sex and Distress score

Sex	low up to 10	Medium up to 15	High above 15	
Female	164 (149.06)	184 (197.40)	59 (60.54)	407
Male	129 (143.94)	204 (190.60)	60 (58.46)	393
	293	388	119	800

$\chi^2 = 6.98^*$

The observed and expected frequencies are given in the table. The value of χ^2 presented below the table was tested for its significance. It is observed that the χ^2 value is significant at 5 percent level of significance. Concluding, the distress score among the adolescents has effect on sex. Male's distress level is relatively higher and ranges with medium to high as compared to the females.

In the present study Z-test is applied to test the effect of gender on fear and avoidance, and distress.

The following table presents the mean values for the parameters fear and avoidance and distress for the male and female adolescents separately along with their S. Ds. The Z-values for each parameter are given along side.

Table 3: Mean, SD and Z- scores for the selected characters

S.No.	Gender	Male	Female	
	Characters	Mean S.D.	Mean S.D.	Z value
(1)	Fear and Avoidance	43.72 + 10.84	43.12 + 11.67	1.50 ^{NS}
(2)	Distress	11.82 + 3.90	11.58 + 3.56	1.82 ^{NS}

It is revealed from the table that the difference between the mean values over the males and females for the characters fear and avoidance, and distress were non-significant. Concluding, there was no significant difference amongst the adolescent male and female with reference to fear and avoidance and distress.

In the present study the co-relation analysis using the formula suggested by Karl Pearson was conducted from the data on gender and the co-relation matrix obtained has been given below.

Table 4: Karl Pearson Co-relation between fear, avoidance, distress and gender.

S.No.		Gender
(1)	Fear and avoidance	0.026191
(2)	Distress score	0.031444

Concluding fear and avoidance and also distress score are not related with gender.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING:**Hypothesis 1**

There will be no significant difference between adolescent boys and girls with respect to fear and avoidance.

The difference between mean values of fear and avoidance amongst the males and females was non – significant, also results of chi –square test concludes that the attributes gender and fear and avoidance are independent. The co-relation study exhibited non significant relationship between fear and avoidance and gender.

Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 2:-

There will be no significant difference between adolescent boys and girls with respect to distress.

The difference between mean values of distress amongst the males and females was non - significant. Also results of chi-square test concluded that the attributes gender and distress are independent. The correlation study exhibited non significant relationship between distress and gender.

Hence hypothesis is accepted.

7. CONCLUSION:

- (1) The result of the chi-square concluded that sex of the adolescents does not have any significant impact on the fear and avoidance.
- (2) The findings of Z-test concluded that the average level of fear and avoidance of the males & females is equal.
- (3) The mean distress score over the sex is non - significant.
- (4) Fear and avoidance also distress score is not related with gender.

Over all it is concluded that fear avoidance and distress are independent of sex of adolescents.

Now the most important thing to do is to develop a far consistent behavior among the adolescents. Parents and teachers should come forward together for reducing fear and avoidance. Public awareness toilet phobia, using communal showers, eating in public should be aroused and due recognition should be given to it by the medical and mental health communities. Opportunities should be aroused to have comfort level with the opposite sex. With ignoring the anxiety symptoms adolescents should seek the help of psychiatrists or counselor about the nature of their disorder and extreme measures should be taken to avoid the feared object or situation.

The feeling of curiosity and positive possibilities can overcome the fear and avoidance.

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