RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC ANXIETY AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present study tries to explain the relationship between Academic Anxiety and Mental Health among adolescents. Descriptive survey method of research was adopted for the study. A sample of 100 adolescents with equal number of boys and girls of 13 to 16 years of age was taken through purposive sampling technique. The tools for data collection were Academic Anxiety' Scale for Children (AASC) and Mental Health Battery (MHB) developed by Dr. Arun Kumar Singh and Dr. Alpana Sengupta. The data were analyzed using t-test and Product Moment method of correlation. Findings revealed that, Academic Anxiety is significantly but negatively correlated with Mental Health, for both male and female adolescents. Gender difference on Academic Anxiety among adolescents was found significant. Gender difference on Mental Health among adolescents was not found significant. The present study has implications in education as well as in social settings, because it provides an understanding into the manifestation of academic anxiety as related to mental health.

KEYWORDS: Academic Anxiety, Mental Health, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence represents a period of intensive growth and change in nearly all aspects of child's physical, mental, social and emotional life. It is very crucial period of one's life. The growth achieved, the experiences gained, responsibilities felt and the relationships developed at this stage destine the complete future of an individual. Adolescent's combat different life stresses ranging from awful life events, constant strain and everyday troubles. Academic issues are the most important sources of persistent stress for young people at global level. Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation are also significantly associated with academic matters.

Anxiety and stress is believed to be caused by the various problems that exist such as problems at school, financial problems, family problems and problems in surroundings. Today students are confronting new challenges in education imposing greater efforts from them. In addition, the society has also made endless, incompatible and impracticable demands causing intense stress and anxiety on mainly high school students. Partly for this reason and partly for both physical health and psychological well being, anxiety has become an important topic of research in psychology.

Academic Anxiety

Academic anxiety arises with respect to the academic affairs of students and is the major factor impending the learning process and predominant in the teen years of the learner. Academic anxiety is a prevailing expression which refers to a social phobia or social anxiety in which the students hesitate and cannot meet situations appraising themselves,

such as examinations. It is a self-obsession which is characterized by inferiority complex about their capabilities and competencies. It may tends towards lack of concentration, low intellective assessment,, undesirable physiological reactions, such as increase of heart rate, cold fingers, drop in blood pressure and poor academic performance. Academic anxiety is related to student's competition with their classmates and deterioration in their educational tasks including assignments, examinations and ability to study. Such students are highly rigid and constantly worry about their future.

Mental Health

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (WHO, 2014).

Mental Health connotates those behaviors, perceptions and feelings, that determine a person's overall level of personal effectiveness, success, happiness and excellence of functioning as a person (Kornhauser, 1985).

Rationale

In today's world where children start competing with their peers even for admission in kindergarten classes, academic anxiety is natural. However, when anxiety level starts rising, students' academic performance also tends to get affected. There is a growing concern with respect to academic pressure and its correlation with mental health problems among school children and adolescents in India. Academic anxiety may be a contributing factor in depression and a hidden depression is a major cause behind suicide among adolescents.

Although previous studies have explored the relationship between anxiety and depression, aptitude or poor academic performance among children, inconsiderable has been done regarding the association of academic anxiety and mental health exclusively with adolescents. By carrying out this research, the investigator wanted to cognize the root causes behind the academic anxiety and its relationship with mental health of adolescents. Also, to suggest some possible solutions to lessen academic anxiety in order to have good mental health.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the relationship between academic anxiety and mental health among adolescents.

- To study the relationship between academic anxiety and six dimensions of mental health among adolescents

- To study the gender difference on academic anxiety among adolescents.

- To study the gender difference on mental health among adolescents.

Hypotheses

- There is no significant relationship between academic anxiety and mental health among adolescents.

- There is no significant relationship between academic anxiety and six dimensions of mental health among adolescents

- There is no significant gender difference on academic anxiety among adolescents.

- There is no significant gender difference on mental health among adolescents.

RESEARCH DESIGN

In this research the descriptive method of research has been used by the investigator.

Sampling Procedure

Purposive Sampling technique of Non- Random sampling method was followed by the investigator to take sample. In the present study the sample consisted of 100 Senior Secondary school students (13-16 years) of Government and Public Schools located in South- West Delhi.

Tools

The standardized psychological tests have been used for data collection for the variables under study as mentioned below:

- Academic Anxiety' Scale for Children (AASC) by Dr. Arun Kumar Singh and Dr. Alpana Sengupta

- Mental Health Battery (MHB) by Dr. Arun Kumar Singh and Dr. Alpana Sengupta

STATISTICAL TREATMENT

The collected data was subjected to the Karl Pearson's product moment correlation and t- test.

Findings

The study has arrived at very meaningful findings which are reported as under

Objective 1

To study the relationship between academic anxiety and mental health among adolescents

The null hypothesis to test the objective 1 was formulated as follows

H01: There is no significant relationship between academic anxiety and mental health among adolescents.

Table 1: Relationship between Academic Anxiety and Mental Health among Adolescents

Variables	N	'r'	Remarks
Academic Anxiety	100	-0.731**	Significant
Mental Health	100		

Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 reveals that there is significant negative relationship between Academic Anxiety and Mental Health among adolescents at 0.01 level of significance This shows that Academic Anxiety affects Mental Health of adolescents. As Academic Anxiety increases Mental Health decreases and vice versa.

DISCUSSIONS

To sum up the findings of H01, it may be conclude that the findings of the study carried out by Reddy (1989) "the adjustment and problem areas of adolescents in the school" also favour the present finding as it says that, most of the problems concentrated on academic anxiety, followed by anxiety regarding their future. Academics are the major source of tension amongst the youth nowadays which affects the mental health. Ma (2003) also is in conformity of present result

which found that for gifted and honour students, early acceleration did not necessarily confer negative emotional effects, but for average or below average students it had negative effects. When a person is suffering from academic anxiety, he/she may lose concentration on the task at hand and may end up undertaking some unproductive behaviour that, further reduces the efficiency of the person. Moreover, a large portion of human anxiety is produced by anticipation of future events.

The null hypothesis 1 there is no significant relationship between academic anxiety and mental health, among adolescents was rejected.

OBJECTIVE 2

To study the relationship between academic anxiety and six dimensions of mental health among adolescents

The null hypothesis to test the objective 2 was formulated as follows:

H02: There is no significant relationship between academic anxiety and six dimensions of mental health among adolescents.

Table 2: Relationship between Academic Anxiety and Six Dimensions of Mental Health among Adolescents (N-100, df - 98)

S. No.	Variables	'r'	Remarks
1.	Academic Anxiety & Emotional stability	-0.726**	Significant
2.	Academic Anxiety & Over all adjustment	-0.521**	Significant
3.	Academic Anxiety & Autonomy	-0.232*	Significant
4.	Academic Anxiety & Security-Insecurity	-0.632**	Significant
5.	Academic Anxiety & Self concept	-0.206*	Significant
6.	Academic Anxiety & Intelligence	-0.388**	Significant

Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 reveals that there is significant negative relationship between Academic Anxiety and six dimensions of Mental Health among adolescents. As Academic Anxiety increases six dimensions of Mental Health decreases and vice versa.

Emotional stability, Over all adjustment, Security-Insecurity and Intelligence are significantly correlated at 0.01 level of significance whereas Autonomy and Self concept are significantly correlated at 0.05 level of significance This shows that Academic Anxiety affects all six dimensions of Mental Health of adolescents.

DISCUSSIONS

To sum up the above findings it may be conclude that the findings of the research carried out by Phillips (1978) to unravel the effects of anxiety, has indicated that highly anxious adolescents engage in more problem behavior, are more disliked by peers, have poorer self-concepts, and have lower school achievement and aptitude as compared with less anxious adolescents. Between 10% and 30% of school children have been found to experience anxiety severe enough to impair performance (Johnson, 1979). While low levels of anxiety enhance awareness and performance, high levels contribute to a variety of psychosocial problems among adolescents.

The null hypothesis 2 there is no significant relationship between academic anxiety and six dimensions of mental health among adolescents was rejected.

OBJECTIVE 3

To study the gender difference on academic anxiety among adolescents.

The null hypothesis to test the objective 3 was formulated as follows:

H03: There is no significant gender difference on academic anxiety among adolescents.

Table 3: Gender difference on Academic Anxiety among Adolescents

Group	N	't'	Remarks
Adolescent Boys	50	2.524*	Significant
Adolescent Girls	50		

Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 3 reveals that there exists significant gender difference on Academic Anxiety among adolescents. The 't' statistics for the academic anxiety among adolescents (2.524) for the said degree of freedom 98 is greater than the critical value of 't' (1.99) at 0.05 level of significance.

DISCUSSIONS

To sum up the findings of H03 it may be concluded that the results of a study carried out by Ojha (2005) revealed that, 25% boys have extremely high anxiety whereas only 6.7% girls have high academic anxiety. Results of a research done by Deb, et. al. (2010), also supports the present findings which show that anxiety was prevalent in the sample under study. 20.1% of boys and 17.9% of girls found to be suffering from high anxiety. More boys were anxious than girls ($p < 0.01$). Traditionally, boys being the primary bread winners, are more anxious to excel in academics to clinch good jobs.

The null hypothesis 3 'There is no significant gender difference on academic anxiety among adolescents' was rejected.

OBJECTIVE 4

To study the gender difference on mental health among adolescents.

The null hypothesis to test the objective 4 was formulated as follows:

H04: There is no significant gender difference on mental health among adolescents.

Table 4: Gender difference on Mental Health among Adolescents

Group	N	't'	Remarks
Adolescent Boys	50	0.329	Insignificant
Adolescent Girls	50		

Table 4.4 reveals that there exists no significant gender difference on Mental Health among adolescents. The 't' statistics for the Mental Health among adolescents (0.329) for the said degree of freedom 98 is less than the critical value of 't' (1.99) at 0.05 level of significance.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of H04 may be concluded by observing the changing scenario of society for boys and girls where both are treated equally and getting equal educational and other opportunities especially in urban areas. Both are striving for a secured future to become successful and self reliant. Hence the investigator found no significant difference on Mental Health among adolescents.

The null hypothesis 4 'There is no significant gender difference on mental health among adolescents' was accepted**.**

IMPLICATIONS

In the light of the present study all the stakeholders who are engaged in the work of development of students at high school stage should take necessary steps for reducing the academic anxiety.

- It is a common perception that the Academic Anxiety is related to Academic Achievement of students in such a way that less Academic Anxiety leads to higher 'academic achievement' or vice versa. So knowledge about academic anxiety is of great importance and will play a vital role in teaching-learning process.

- Pre-service and in-service teachers should be taught skills to manage students suffering from severe academic anxiety. They should be exposed to measures which are helpful to deal with both non-clinical and clinical cases.

- Concentrated efforts are needed to devise anxiety free environment in schools by providing counseling to students for choosing appropriate stream (science/non-science) according to their abilities, interest & potential.

- Main determinant of academic anxiety is examination system, burden of homework and attitude of parents and teachers. A moderate amount of anxiety actually improves academic performance by creating motivation. Level of academic anxiety can be reduced by adopting student friendly evaluation system. Evaluating system should assess each aspect of students' development and motivate them to contribute according to their ability and interest, which in turn, lowers their level of anxiety, moreover promotion of all students.

- Anxiety free environment in classroom can be created by providing extra attention to underprivileged sections of society (SCs, STs, OBCs, lower SES) because they are prone to academic anxiety.

- Students migrating from rural background, poor socio economic to urban areas are at higher risk of maladjustment because of new environment. They should be guided from beginning about new challenges which they are going to face in college/university life. It will help them to face all issues and challenges boldly that will come in their way during the entire years of university/colleges.

- As compared to boys, girls are more prone to anxiety may be because of family commitments, gender bias etc. They must be given proper attention in the school so that they can get rid of academic anxiety.

- Parents and teachers should not expect academic performance which is beyond the abilities, interest and potentials of students. Though they must play an active role in minimizing their academic anxiety by motivating them.

- Students should accept uncertainty and do not expect results very early. They should be trained to practice relaxation techniques such as meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, and deep breathing to feel of relaxed and

improve emotional well-being. Students should be encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities to bust stress and anxiety.

- Poor study habits, poor school environment and high expectation of parents from their wards also lead to severe academic anxiety sometimes. Orientation programmes, must be organized for parents & teachers to make them aware about their ward limitations & how to develop good study habits among students. Counseling of parents is highly essential to make them aware about various characteristics of adolescents and the methods to deal with them.

- Guidance and counseling cell as advocated by Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) is the need of the hour at higher education institutions. Guidance and counseling helps the students in selecting their courses in the light of their abilities, attitude, aptitude and interests. It is obvious that selection of wrong choices leads to lessening of interest towards study which further reduces the academic achievement. Ultimately, the student remains underachiever throughout his/her life.

- Moral and spiritual development of students should be in harmony with intellectual development, which will ultimately lead students towards over all personality development. All round development of personality helps students to deal with most of the challenges in academics skillfully. Being skill full in academics bring interest in academic activities which ultimately will help students to get rid of from severe academic anxiety.

- Exposure therapy is the best technique to get relieve from severe academic anxiety related to a particular subject. It involves the exposure of students to the feared subjects like mathematics, physics etc. without any fear of pass/fail in order to overcome anxiety.

CONCLUSIONS

In India, academic anxiety is intensified in secondary schools where adolescents attempt their first Board examination, known as Secondary Examination. The results of the secondary examination are important for students since this is the crucial determining criterion for future preference to any academic stream. Hence, academic anxiety plays an important role at secondary level of education because this is the threshold of future education. The present study tries to explain the relationship between Academic Anxiety and Mental Health among adolescents. On the basis of results and findings, it is concluded that there is significant negative relationship between Academic Anxiety and six dimensions of Mental Health among adolescents. Result shows that there exists significant gender difference on academic anxiety but no significant gender difference on Mental Health among adolescents was found. Also, Academic Anxiety affects all six dimensions of Mental Health i.e. Emotional stability, Over all adjustment, Security-Insecurity, Intelligence, Autonomy and Self concept of adolescents; as Academic Anxiety increases Mental Health decreases and vice versa. Thus, academic anxiety greatly impacts the learning and memory capacity of the adolescents, thereby posing a great effect on their mental health.

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