

Social Anxiety and Self Efficacy Beliefs among Adolescents

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Abstract : *With quality education at the disposition of privileged few, and majority percentage excluded from the educational stream, the prospects of youth getting employment are affected. The job and economic insecurity with unfulfilled career ambitions among the disadvantaged group leads to aimlessness and unrest, fear and frustrations among the youth in general and adolescents in particular. Thus, rising anxiety and widespread insecurity are the visible manifestations of economic liberalisation. Historically, social anxiety seems to have been viewed somewhat inaccurately as one of the more mild anxiety disorders and something that “most people deal with to some extent”. Now, in the face of anxiety or any situation of unease, there is demands from an individual a certain amount of competence for dealing with the situation.. This research paper aims to study the relationship between self efficacy beliefs and social anxiety among the adolescents. The sample for the study consisted of 150 adolescents (age group 15-18 yrs), selected from Chandigarh city. Social Phobia Inventory developed by Connor, Davidson, Churchill, Sherwood, Foa, and Weisler, R.H. (2000); and Self-Efficacy Subscale of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) developed by Pintrich et al. (1991) were employed to study social anxiety and self-efficacy beliefs among the adolescents. The findings of the study revealed mixed results pertaining to social anxiety and self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents.*

Keywords: *Social Anxiety, Self efficacy Beliefs, Adolescents.*

Introduction

Self-efficacy beliefs are central to mental health. Because adolescents' neighbourhoods shape opportunities for experiences of control, predictability, and safety, neighbourhood conditions are associated with adolescents' self-efficacy and, in turn, their internalizing problems i.e., depression/anxiety symptoms (Dupere, Leventhal, and Vitaro, 2012). The strength of one's firm belief in their own effectiveness is likely to affect whether a person will even try to cope with given situation. At this initial level, perceived self-efficacy influences choices of behavioural actions.

Social Anxiety

Anxiety is associated with substantial negative effects on children's social, emotional and academic success (Essau, Conradt, and Petermann, 2000). Specific effects include poor social and coping skills, often leading to avoidance of social interactions (Albano, Chorpita, & Barlow, 2003; Weeks, Coplan, and Kingsbury, 2009), loneliness, low self-esteem, perceptions of social rejection, and difficulty forming friendships (Bokhorst, Goossens, and De Ruyter, 2001; Weeks et al., 2009). Social anxiety,

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as defined in the Penguin dictionary of Psychology, (1983) refers to feelings of unease and discomfort in the social settings typically accompanied by shyness and social awkwardness. .” Likewise, in popular culture, social phobia or social anxiety is often viewed as mere “shyness” versus something clinically pervasive and pathological (Walker, 2001).

Analysis of social anxiety might fruitfully begin, not with the reasons why particular individuals are shy or anxious, but with the investigation of the influences on the patterns of social interaction, intra-group behaviour and inter-group behaviour. What is the nature of society that produces widespread social unease among its members? This is the question that Zimardo, Pilkonis and Norwood (1975) raised and argued that “problem of shyness is not essentially a personal problem. It is really a social problem. Certain kinds of social and cultural values lead people to imprison themselves within the ego-centric predicament of shyness.

All societies have means for indicating social status, for example, through the forms of appearance and dress or rules governing how one approaches and addresses an individual of high status. Social interactions are constrained by unwritten but widely acknowledged rules and convention, such as “etiquette”, “manners”, and taste. Failure to recognise and comply with these forms and rules can lead to punishment or to internalised forms of punishment, notably guilt or shame. (International Handbook on Social Anxiety, 2000).

Those who are symptomatic of social phobia are known to be socially anxious (social anxiety). Both social phobia and social anxiety have been used interchangeably in many contexts, but social anxiety ‘includes a collation of symptoms which unlike shyness can vary in severity through one’s life: these symptoms are only elicited in certain social situations (Leary, 1983; Shepherd and Edelmann, 2005). Consequently, both social anxiety and social phobia can affect an individual’s relationships, occupational success, and educational potential (Heimberg, Hope, Dodge and Becker 1990). Stein, Torgrud and Walker (2001) on basis of adult twin studies conclude that approximately 50% of variance in social anxiety related concerns is heritable leaving other 50% attributable to environmental influence.

Self-Efficacy Beliefs among Adolescents

Self-efficacy is defined as people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances (Bandura, 1986). Generally, adolescents with low level of self-efficacy typically view difficult task with a feeling of fear. Low self-efficacy leads to lack of faith in ability which further leads lack of action and these further causes self doubt. Once the adolescents become doubtful of their own capabilities, they tend to be more easily stressed and more frequently depressed than people with high level of self-efficacy. A study conducted by Sanna (1977) found people with high in self efficacy reported high capability of coming-up with solutions and experience in performing the task successfully as compared to low level of self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy beliefs affect which action a person will choose, the amount of effort expended, endurance in the face of obstacles, thought patterns, stress level, and level of accomplishment achieved (Baldwin, Baldwin and Ewald, 2006; Bandura, 1997). Pajares (2005) remarks that “self-efficacy beliefs should not be confused with people’s judgments of the consequences that their behavior will produce. Typically, self-efficacy beliefs help foster precisely the outcome one expects, which is the very heart of the self-fulfilling prophecy. Confident students anticipate successful outcomes. Students confident in their social skills anticipate successful social encounters. Those confident in their academic skills expect high marks on exams and expect the quality of their work to reap academic benefits. The opposite is true of those who lack confidence”.

There is emerging evidence of an association between a child's self-efficacy and increased abilities with regards to peer sociability, self-reliance, scholastic achievement, behavioral conduct, and less anxiety (Hoeltje, 1996). Self-efficacy contributes to well-being and adjustment in the face of life adversity (Hoeltje, 1996). Level and degree of self-efficacy beliefs differ according to task-performing situations and personal perceptions (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). The study by Singh and Udainiya (2009) investigated the effects of type of family and gender on self-efficacy and well-being of adolescents. One hundred adolescents (50 boys and 50 girls) from joint and nuclear families were administered the measures of self-efficacy and well-being. Data were analyzed by ANOVA. Results revealed a significant effect of type of family and gender on self-efficacy. The interaction between type of family and gender was also found to be significant.

Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Social Anxiety: the term social anxiety will be used to describe social fears.

Self Efficacy Beliefs: refer to a person's perception about his/her capabilities in achieving the desirable outcomes.

Need of the Study

Adolescence is the most vulnerable age for development, when the child once entering in this stage requires readjustments on the part of adolescents in school, social and family life. Social interaction presents new challenges and assumes new importance as individuals progress into middle early adolescence. They increasingly view their status in social relationships to be a defining feature of the self, more important than physical or psychological characteristics (Harter, 2003). Parents and teachers may well be interested in the research findings regarding the self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents and more importantly, useful implications, sensible strategies to help maintain their students' adaptive self-efficacy, and insights on ways to best alter these beliefs when they are inaccurate. The socio-cultural environment in India does differentiate among boys and girls aspects related to growth and development process. This factor invariably should have its own role in shaping of the self-efficacy beliefs among boys and girls. Also, it needs to be seen that whether the type of family influences the self-efficacy beliefs and social anxiety among the adolescents and hence the need for the present study emerged.

Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of the present study:

- i. To study the social anxiety of the adolescents in relation to their gender, family type (joint or nuclear) and stream of study (science, vocational and humanities).
- ii. To study self-efficacy beliefs of the adolescents in relation to their gender, family type (joint or nuclear) and stream of study (science, vocational and humanities).
- iii. To study the social anxiety among adolescents in relation to their self-efficacy beliefs.

Hypotheses

- H₀₁ There is no significant difference in social anxiety of the male and female adolescents.
- H₀₂ There is no significant difference in the self-efficacy beliefs of the male and female adolescents.
- H₀₃ There is no significant difference in social anxiety among the adolescents in relation to family type (joint or nuclear).

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- H₀₄ There is no significant difference in the self-efficacy beliefs of the adolescents in relation to their family type (joint or nuclear).
- H₀₅ There is no significant difference in social anxiety among the adolescents in relation to their course of study (science, vocational and humanities).
- H₀₆ There is no significant difference in the self-efficacy beliefs of the adolescents in relation to their course of study (science, vocational and humanities).
- H₀₇ There is no significant difference in the social anxiety of adolescents having high self-efficacy beliefs and adolescents having low self-efficacy beliefs.

Methodology

Tools Used

SPIN (Social Phobia Inventory) : The Social Phobia Inventory (abbreviated as SPIN) is a 17-item questionnaire and was developed by Connor, Davidson, Churchill, Sherwood, Foa, and Weisler, R.H., Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Department at Duke University in the year 2000. It is an effective instrument in screening for, and measuring the severity of social anxiety disorder.

Self-Efficacy Sub-scale : Self-efficacy was measured by using the Self-Efficacy subscale of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ; Pintrich et al., 1991). The Self-Efficacy subscale consists of 8 items and each item was rated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). In the reliability study, the internal consistency alpha coefficient was calculated to be 0.93.

Sample

The sample of 100 adolescents was selected from 2 senior secondary schools of Chandigarh namely GMSSS 10 and GMSSS 23. Out of 100 students 22 students were vocational stream, 34 were from science stream and 44 students were from humanities stream.

Statistical Techniques

Descriptive statistics will be used to study the social anxiety and self-efficacy beliefs among adolescents. 't'-ratio shall be used to compare the two variables in relation to gender, family type and course of study.

Delimitations

- i. The study is delimited to the schools of Chandigarh city only,
- ii. The sample consists of 100 students studying in senior secondary schools.

Results

Table 1: Social Anxiety and Self-efficacy Beliefs among Adolescents

Variable(s)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social Anxiety	30.63	6.01
Self-efficacy Beliefs	44.03	4.96

Table 1 shows that the mean score on social anxiety and self-efficacy among adolescents is 30.63 and 44.03 respectively which is indicative of moderate level of social anxiety among the adolescents and high level of self-efficacy (above average score of 32).

Table 2: Comparison of the Scores on Social Anxiety among Boys and Girls

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	't'-ratio
Girls (57)	30.94	5.39	0.45
Boys (43)	30.20	6.79	

Table 2 signifies that there is no significant difference in the social anxiety among boys and girls as the difference in the mean scores of social anxiety among boys and girls is insignificant. Thus, the null hypothesis Ho1: There is no significant difference in social anxiety of the male and female adolescents, is accepted.

Table 3: Comparison of Self-efficacy Beliefs among Boys and Girls

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	't'-ratio
Girls (57)	44.23	4.90	1.16
Boys (43)	43.76	5.07	

From table 3 it is clear that there is no significant difference in the self-efficacy beliefs among boys and girls. Thus, girls and boys both possess the same level of self-efficacy and hypothesis Ho2: There is no significant difference in the self-efficacy beliefs of the male and female adolescents is accepted.

Table 4: Social Anxiety among Adolescents in Relation to Family type (Joint/Nuclear)

Family Type	Mean	Standard Deviation	't'-ratio
Joint (34)	28.64	4.89	2.64*
Nuclear (66)	31.65	6.30	

* Significant at 0.01 level

Table 4 indicates towards difference in social anxiety level of adolescents living in joint families and those who are in nuclear family setup. The t-ratio is significant at .01 level and hence the null hypothesis Ho3: There is no significant difference in social anxiety among the adolescents in relation to family type (joint or nuclear) is rejected. The adolescents who live in joint families have mild social anxiety while the adolescents who live in nuclear families have moderate level of social anxiety.

Table 5: Self-efficacy Beliefs among Adolescents in Relation to Family type (Joint/Nuclear)

Family Type	Mean	Standard Deviation	't'-ratio
Joint (34)	45.70	4.38	2.61*
Nuclear (66)	43.16	5.04	

* Significant at 0.01 level

Table 5 reflects that adolescents having a joint family setup have higher level of self-efficacy beliefs than their counterparts in the nuclear families. Thus hypothesis Ho4: There is no significant difference in the self-efficacy beliefs of the adolescents in relation to their family type (joint or nuclear), is

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rejected; and there is a significant difference in the self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents in relation to family type.

Table 6: Comparison of Mean Scores on Social anxiety Among Adolescents Pursuing Professional, Science and Humanities Courses

Course	N	Mean Score	S.D.	't'-ratio		
				Vocational	Science	Humanities
Vocational	22	26.45	4.62	0.00	3.97*	3.85*
Science	34	32.05	5.93	3.97*	0.00	0.33
Humanities	44	31.61	5.85	3.85*	0.33	0.00

** Significant at 0.01 level*

Table 6 indicates towards significant difference in the social anxiety among adolescents in relation to the type of course they are pursuing. There is a significant difference in social anxiety among adolescents pursuing vocational course and adolescents pursuing science course. Similarly, there is a significant difference in social anxiety among adolescents pursuing vocational course and adolescents pursuing humanities course. The adolescents pursuing vocational course are having mild social anxiety while both science and humanities group students are having moderate level of social anxiety. Thus, hypothesis Ho5: There is no significant difference in social anxiety among the adolescents in relation to their course of study (science, vocational and humanities), is rejected.

Table 7: Comparison of Mean Scores on Self-efficacy among Adolescents Pursuing Professional, Science and Humanities Courses

Course	N	Mean Score	S.D.	't'-ratio		
				Vocational	Science	Humanities
Vocational	22	46.13	4.79	0.00	2.43*	1.72
Science	34	42.5	6.09	2.43*	0.00	1.41
Humanities	44	44.15	3.56	1.72	1.41	0.00

** Significant at 0.01 level*

It is clear from table 7 that the students pursuing science course are having lower mean- score on self-efficacy beliefs as compared to students pursuing humanities and vocational course. There is a significant difference in the self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents pursuing science course and adolescents pursuing vocational course but, at the same time self-efficacy beliefs among adolescents pursuing science courses and humanities course are statistically at the same level. Thus, null hypothesis Ho6: There is no significant difference in the self-efficacy beliefs of the adolescents in relation to their course of study (science, vocational and humanities), is partially rejected.

Table 8: Social Anxiety among Adolescents in Relation to Their Self-efficacy Beliefs

Groups	Social Anxiety	t-ratio
Group scoring high on self-efficacy beliefs (upper 27%)	Mean 27.66	4.39*
	S.D. 4.53	
Group scoring low on self-efficacy beliefs (lower 27%)	Mean 34.40	
	S.D. 6.65	

* Significant at 0.05 level

To find whether the social anxiety among the adolescents varied in relation to the self-efficacy beliefs, the total sample was classified into two groups based on their scores obtained on self-efficacy beliefs questionnaire, higher 27% and lower 27%. For this purpose, t-value was calculated between the group that scored higher on self-efficacy beliefs (upper 27%) and the lower scoring group on self-efficacy beliefs (lower 27%) and this t-value came out to be '4.39. From table 8 it is evident that there is a significant difference (at 0.01 level) in the social anxiety among adolescents in relation to their self-efficacy beliefs. Adolescents having higher self-efficacy beliefs are having lower level of social anxiety. Hence, null hypothesis Ho7: There is no significant difference in the social anxiety of adolescents having high self-efficacy beliefs and adolescents having low self-efficacy beliefs, is rejected

Educational Implications

- i. Since the self-efficacy reflects the confidence on one's ability to tackle with the task in hand, adolescents should be provided with environment that enhances their self-efficacy.
- ii. Teachers should provide constructive feedback to the students regarding their work performance.
- iii. Adolescents should be encouraged to participate in group activities to foster social interaction among the peers.
- iv. The classroom environment should be interactive in nature so as the adolescents get a freedom to share their ideas and view and this in turn would lessen the anxiety level.
- v. Opportunities should be given to the students to communicate with the society member by encouraging their participation in socially useful productive work.

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