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The Social Correlates of Anxiety among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Anxiety is a feeling of uneasiness experienced by an individual regarding his/her future oriented tasks, where an individual feels apprehension regarding the worse happening which may not actually happen. The correlates of anxiety refer to the factors which lead towards the feelings of worry, whereby the social correlates of anxiety are the social factors which may lead towards anxiety. The current study was designed to investigate the social correlates of anxiety among university students. A total of 758 students from the University of Peshawar Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were taken as a sample of the study including 442 male and 316 female students from all the disciplines of the stated university from its final year all masters programs. A proportionate sample of 30% from both male and female students was taken and the data were collected through the use of self-report four point liker scale inventory. The social correlates of anxiety among university students were divided into three broad categories including family (parents), friends and teachers. Data were collected, tabulated and analyzed for the stated correlates of anxiety among university students which revealed that all of the three social correlates of anxiety prevailed among male students. Finally, suggestions were made and recommendations were presented for minimizing the severity of anxiety correlates among university students.

KEYWORDS: Anxiety Prevalence, academic Anxiety, Social correlates of Anxiety,

1. INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is defined as a feeling of discomfort or nervousness for something unknown to happen in future. According to Freud (1920), anxiety is a feeling of worry, characterized by some physical symptoms of increased heartbeat, stress and sweating. Anxiety is also defined as a feeling of overwhelming in which an individual expects of

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Article info

Received Feb 13, 2017
Accepted April 03, 2018
Published April 30, 2018

thinking something bad to get happen (Shaikh et al., 2004).

Normally, anxiety serves as a source of motivation to cope the threatening situation effectively and to achieve the desired objectives (Seligman, Walker, & Rosenhan, 2007), however, an increased anxiety may lead towards the medical condition of anxiety disorder. Stress provided by parents may be supportive in students' academic performance, however, students having a lowered level of self-efficacy and lowered regulation of learning styles may be affected badly (Bouras & Holt, 2007). Studies carried out over the various correlates of anxiety prevalence via a sample of 328 patients whereby data was collected through the use of a self-report inventory. It resulted that the anxiety prevalence was related to the age of patients where people with low age were having more anxiety, due to the effect of substance abuse. Anxiety is a future oriented fear, being experienced by an individual, where there is a threat to one's ego or self-esteem (Sarason, 1988).

Anxiety is also considered as a feeling of readiness towards performing future tasks effectively (Barlow, 2000), which is differentiated from fear in the sense that fear is an escaped feeling of the present while escape from anxiety is not possible and it is future oriented. The students' anxiety, being related to the academic achievements is also proportional to the self-esteem. The students with an increased self-esteem are having low anxiety levels, which in turn influences their academic performance. Students having a low self-esteem are subject to increased anxiety and lowered academic performances. The results are true in reverse order too, where students with low academic grades are having low self-esteem and higher anxiety prevalence (Sylvers, Lilienfeld, & Laprairie, 2011).

Sadock and Sadock (2008) Proposed that anxiety refers to a diffuse, vague and unpleasant sense of sadness accompanied by autonomic symptoms such as palpitation, headache, sweating and gastric discomfort leading to overall unrest. They also argue that anxiety is a feeling experienced by all human beings, however, its symptoms and effects may differ from person to person. There may also be a variety of causes of anxiety for every individual and it may also be situational for a single human being, i.e. the sources, conditions, feelings, and effect of anxiety vary from person to person.

The exact stimuli for anxiety are not identified and it has been established that the anxiety level of an individual depends upon his/her personal thoughts, coping mechanism, environmental setup and emotional maturity (Ohman, 2000).

The personal life of an individual in coping with the situation has a great role in anxiety optimization. People with negative thought are always having difficulty in public dealings. Similarly, the environmental constraints also influence the social life of an individual. Conducting a study over normal and social anxious sample of both clinical and nonclinical nature, it was found that both individual thoughts and physiological reactivity influence the social anxiety.

Theoretical Framework

The sources or causes of anxiety are termed as correlates of anxiety, which range from individuals' pre-birth history to the academic, social, financial, cognitive, physical and a number of environmental variables. Student's anxiety is normally more affected by the academic environment, examinations, parental care, teacher's involvement, and future tasks. A number of researches have been conducted on the vital issue of anxiety among students, where stress have been given on the test anxiety and it has been established that there is a negative correlation between anxiety and academic performance of students (Firth-Cozens, 2001). Students' GPA, Academic excellence and intelligence are inversely related to their anxiety. Students with strong academics are having good coping behavior with their anxiety prevalence and vice versa. Moreover, an increased anxiety may also be a hindering factor towards academic performances among students.

In some conditions, reverse findings have also been reported, where anxiety in its mild state has improved the academic achievements of students (Shaikh et al., 2004). The age and gender of an individual can be a significant variable acting as a strong correlate of anxiety among people. Females are more likely to be at risk for anxiety than males. They reported a prevalence of anxiety among male and female samples with percentages of 17.1 and 21.5 respectively. An inverses relation was found between anxiety and educational level, urbanization, health status, and socioeconomic status. They found an inverse relationship between anxiety and education, urban dwelling, physical health, and socioeconomic status. It was further recommended that people with anxiety prevalence at

risk may be treated therapeutically at early stages of life. Similarly, the physical symptoms of anxiety include muscular pain, difficulty breathing, headache, palpitation, and dry mouth, cooling of hands, nausea and wobbliness in legs (Zeidner, 1998).

When an individual tries to present a good image towards the audience and receives an unexpected or lower reward, the condition may lead to an anxious situation of worry, which is termed as social anxiety. In simple words, social anxiety is a feeling of overwhelming due to an unexpected perceived response from the audience which an individual considers important (Cassady, 2010). Observing parents with disabled children for social anxiety, Putwain (2009), investigated that there is a significant effect of children disability over the anxiety level of parents. They found that the normal routine life of parents was badly affected in terms of family life, social gatherings, and public dealings.

According to Zoller and Ben-Chaim (1990), Exclusion of an individual from his/her social group due to any reason, like immoral behaviour, lack of capacities, lack of emotional regulation or receiving responses from the group with increased guilt and ownership can lead to a severe form of social anxiety, technically called social phobia. Nicholson (2009) found that students' academic and social dealings are proportional to the involvement of parents. Parents with a more motivating role for child academic uplift and social maturity succeed in maintain good academic achievements and healthy social dealings. However, extra demanding parents may badly influence the academic performance of their children as in such conditions, the students become more consequence cantered, and there may be observed academic unfair means. Similarly, the individual differences are also influencing the anxiety of students related to a particular subject. Moreover, the gender factor and age are also associated with the anxiety of subjects among students.

A study carried out over college students on the subject of statistics revealed that age is a significant factor for the anxiety of statistics among college students, where students with, more age are prevailing than those with young age Hammer, Grigsby, and Woods (1998) found that Social anxiety among adults may be due to its persistence from childhood and adolescence. Similarly, lack of motivation at school and home

environment may induce social anxiety among students as revealed by the study of (Trockel, Barnes, & Egget, 2000). Social support provided by teachers, parents, peers, and friends is a strong factor to overcome social anxiety. An individual with a lack of involvement from social dealers may develop an increased social phobia, which may influence his/her normal life badly.

Statement of the Problem

There have been conducted a number of studies over the vital issue of anxiety among students, however, little is known about the social correlates of anxiety among university students. The study in hand aimed to investigate the social correlates of anxiety among university students.

Research Questions

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

- What are the social correlates of anxiety among university students?
- How severely the social factors are influencing the anxiety level of university students?
- How effectively the anxiety level of university students can be optimized?

Objectives

- The study in hand was based on the following objectives.
- To investigate the social factors of anxiety among university students.
- To analyze the intensity of the social correlates of anxiety among university students.
- To present suggestions to optimize the social anxiety among university students.
- Significance

The study is significant for university students in terms of providing valuable information about the social correlates of their anxiety. It is also significant for university teachers, peers and parents of students to provide their gentle support to optimize the severe levels of anxiety among university students.

Limitations

The study was kept limited to the investigation of the social correlates of anxiety among university students. Other factors like financial, moral, academic and professional aspect have not been considered in the given study.

Delimitations

Keeping in view the objective of the study and the resources available, the study was further delimited to the students of the University of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa only.

Sampling

The study was conducted over a sample of 758 students of the University of Peshawar. There were a total of 2507 students enrolled at master's level final year (16th Grade) at the university in all departments including 1426 male and 1081 female students. A proportionate sample of 30% was taken from all the male and female students of all the departments which included 316 girls and 442 boys.

Gender	Number of Students	Sample Taken
Male	1426	442
Female	1081	316
Total	2507	758

Data Collection Tool

The data were collected with the help of self-report four point inventory designed by the researcher including items related to the social correlates of anxiety. The inventory was validated through pilot testing over 40 students of Institute of Education and Research, University of Peshawar, which were not included in the actual sample. Moreover, the reliability of the tool was maintained through Cronbach Alpha statistics. The scale was organized in the form of a four point Likert scale where the responses of students were recorded in terms of the severity of the social correlates of anxiety including Minimal, Mild, Moderate and Severe levels.

Procedure

The students were approached in their respective departments and the inventory was administered by the researcher personally. The head/ in charge of each academic institute was informed for permission of data collection whereas the students were briefed before filling the inventory, about the significance of the study under investigation and importance of reliable responses. For this purpose, one subject teacher at each department was contacted and the request was made for briefing the students at their respective classrooms. Each item of the inventory was thoroughly discussed and the students responded on the spot according to their own will.

Data Analyses and Findings

The collected data were tabulated and arranged for the responses of social correlates of anxiety among university students. Separate columns for male and female students were made and the responses for social correlates of anxiety were categorized into three major groups including peer and friends support, teachers' involvement and parental interest.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are given in the following tables:

Table 1. Responses of Students for Lack of Cooperation from Friends				
Students' Responses (%)	Not at all	Mildly	Moderately	Severely
Male	43	24	22	11
Female	80	7	13	0

Shown in Table 1 the data about students responses for lack of cooperation from friends revealed that 11 percent of male students were having a severe lack of cooperation from friends and peers while 22 percent of them were having this experience with a moderate level. 24 percent of male students were having a mild lack of cooperation from their friends while 43 percent of male students were having no such observation.

Among female students, all were having no severe need of cooperation from their friends. 13 percent of female students were having a moderate need for peer cooperation while 7 percent were having a mild lack of cooperation. A total of 80 percent of female students were having no observation regarding the lack of cooperation from their friends.

Table 2. Responses of Students for Disliking the Teachers				
Students' Responses (%)	Not at all	Mildly	Moderately	Severely
Male	45	13	26	16
Female	76	11	09	04

The data reveals in Table 2 regarding the teacher dislike among university students, where 16 percent of male students were having a severe dislike for their teachers while 26 percent were at a moderate level. Similarly, 13 percent of male students were having a mild dislike for their teachers while 45 percent of university male students were having no such dislike. Among female students, 04 percent were having a severe dislike for their teachers and 09 percent were having a moderate level of dislike. 11 percent of female students were having a mild dislike for their teachers while 76 percent were having no such dislike.

Table 3. Responses of Students for Harsh/Inadequate Parenting				
Students' Responses (%)	Not at all	Mildly	Moderately	Severely
Male	75	10	07	08
Female	87	06	02	05

Referring to the responses of university students for harsh or inadequate parenting, as shown in Table 3, it was found that 08 percent of male and 05 percent of female students were observing a severe harsh parenting. 07 percent from male students and 02 percent from female students were having a moderate level of parental inadequacy while 10 percent among male and 06 percent among female students were observing a mild level of parental inadequacy. A total of 75 percent male students and 87 percent of female students were observing adequate or normal parenting.

3. CONCLUSION

Based on the analyses of data it was concluded that the severity of social correlates prevailed among male university students in a hierarchy of disliking the teachers, lack of support from friends and inadequate parenting, respectively. Majority of female students were found satisfied by their friends and peer support while few of them were found with parental inadequacy. Fewer of female students were found with feelings

of dislike for their teachers while most of them were having a satisfactory likelihood for their teachers, parents, and friends.

Future Recommendations

The following suggestions and recommendations were derived from the findings of the study at hand:

1. All the university students should be provided with a friendly environment, where mutual support from friends and peers may be encouraged, especially among male students.
2. Like female students, the male students of the university may also develop their affectionate attachment with teachers, so as to overcome the consequent severe levels of anxiety.
3. Parents should give attention to their children while extending their kind support to both male and female kids, so as to minimize their need for parental support.
4. The study may also be conducted for other correlates of anxiety among students at the college and school levels.
5. Action research and experimental studies may also be conducted for the correlates of anxiety among students at different levels

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