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State- Trait Anxiety among Orphan and Non-Orphan Adolescents

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Abstract:

Anxiety is a state of being nervous. Worry, agitation, sweating, an increased heart rate, rapid breathing accompany anxiety. State anxiety describes the experience of unpleasant feelings when confronted with specific situations, demands or a particular object or event. Trait anxiety arises in response to a perceived threat, but it differs in its intensity, duration and the range of situations in which it occurs. The aim of this article is to explore whether presence of parents have any role in trait anxiety and state anxiety of adolescents. For this purpose a sample of 171 adolescents- 60 orphans and 111 non-orphans were selected through simple random sampling. The sample of orphans was collected from two orphanage homes and the sample of non-orphans was collected from one school in Thrissur. State-Trait-Anxiety test developed by Sanjay Vohra (1992) was used to know the level of anxiety. To study the difference in anxiety t-test was used. The results indicated the vital role of parents and joint family system in state-trait anxiety of the adolescents. The implications of the study are also discussed.

Keywords: Anxiety, orphan adolescents, parents

1. Background

Anxiety is one of the most common psychological problems in school-aged children and adolescents worldwide (Costello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler & Angold, 2003). Anxiety is a state of being nervous. Worry, agitation, sweating, an increased heart rate, rapid breathing accompany anxiety. State anxiety describes the experience of unpleasant feelings when confronted with specific situations, demands or a particular object or event. State anxiety arises when the person makes a mental assessment of some type of threat. When the object or situation that is perceived as threatening goes away, the person no longer experiences anxiety. Thus, state anxiety refers to a temporary condition in response to some perceived threat.

Like state anxiety, trait anxiety arises in response to a perceived threat, but it differs in its intensity, duration and the range of situations in which it occurs. Trait anxiety refers to the differences between people in terms of their tendency to experience state anxiety in response to the anticipation of a threat. People with a high level of trait anxiety experience more intense degrees of state anxiety to specific situations than most people do and experience anxiety toward a broader range of situations or objects than most people. Thus, trait anxiety describes a personality characteristic rather than a temporary feeling.

State and trait anxiety are concepts that also apply to the anxiety that occurs in psychiatric disorders, especially anxiety disorders. A phobia represents an intense feeling of anxiety or fear that is associated with a specific event or object, such as a snake, spider or high place. Phobias represent types of state anxiety. Once the feared event or object is not present or forgotten, the person no longer experiences anxiety. Generalized anxiety disorder, or GAD, is a disorder in which the person experiences anxiety over many different situations for at least 2 years. Such people are considered chronic worriers who fret over both trivial and important matters. GAD represents a clinical manifestation of trait anxiety.

Parents or caretakers play a crucial role in reducing anxiety among adolescents. The comfort and care from parents, trustful relationship with parents, realistic expectations from parents and having realistic goals can help adolescents to handle anxiety. A guided exposure to feared situations can also desensitize and reduce the fear and anxiety. It has been reported that adolescent girls have separation anxiety and higher levels of generalized anxiety and worry more than adolescent boys (Costello, Egger & Angold, 2003; Poulton, Milne, Craske & Menzies, 2001; Weiss & Last, 2001). Rapee (2012) reported that modelling parents' fear and avoidant strategies tend to increase child's risk for emotional problems. Also insecure parent-child relationship is an important factor for the development of anxiety disorder (Warren, Huston, Egeland, Sroufe, 1997). Edwards et al., (2010) found that parenting styles especially overprotective parenting during early days can cause anxiety disorders in later part of life.

2.1. Aim

The main aim of the present study is to know the difference in anxiety between orphan and non-orphan adolescents.

2.2. Objectives of the Study

- To study the difference in state-trait-anxiety between orphan and non-orphan adolescents.

- To explore gender differences in State- Trait- Anxiety among adolescents
- To identify whether there is difference in State-Trait-Anxiety of adolescents based on their socio-economic status.
- To find out whether there is difference in State-Trait-Anxiety of adolescents based on their type of family.

2.3. Hypothesis

1. There is a significant difference between orphan and non-orphan adolescents in state-trait anxiety.
2. There will be a significant gender difference in state-trait anxiety of adolescents.
3. There is a significant difference in state-trait anxiety of adolescents based on their socio economic status.
4. There is a significant difference in state-trait anxiety of adolescents (with parents) with regard to their type of family.

2.4. Methodology

The aim of this research is to explore whether presence of parents have any role in trait anxiety and state anxiety of adolescents. For this purpose a sample of 171 adolescents- 60 orphans and 111 non-orphans were selected through simple random sampling. The sample of orphans was collected from two orphanage homes and the sample of non-orphans was collected from one school in Thrissur. State-Trait-Anxiety test developed by Sanjay Vohra (1992) was used to know the level of anxiety.

2.4.1. Description of Tool

State-trait-anxiety test consists of 40 items in which 20 item belongs to trait anxiety and items belongs to state anxiety. It has five dimensions namely, Guilt-proneness, Maturity, Self-control, Suspiciousness and Tension. The tool has three response categories viz. yes, no, sometimes.

3. Results and Discussion

| Variable | Status of Adolescents | Mean | SD | t-value |
|---------------|-----------------------|-------|--------|---------|
| Trait Anxiety | Non-orphan | 14.33 | 4.454 | 12.01* |
| | Orphan | 24.23 | 3.721 | |
| State Anxiety | Non-orphan | 20.69 | 8.151 | 7.92* |
| | Orphan | 23.85 | 4.222 | |
| Total Anxiety | Non-orphan | 34.94 | 10.595 | 20.98* |
| | Orphan | 47.92 | 7.124 | |

Table 1(a): shows the t-value of state-trait anxiety of adolescents

* Significant at 0.01 Level

From table 1, it can be clearly seen that there is a significant difference in the state- trait anxiety among adolescents. The orphan adolescents have high anxiety when compared to non-orphan adolescents. This clearly indicates that the care, support and comfort from parents help adolescents to handle anxiety they experience.

| Dimensions of State Trait anxiety | Status of Adolescents | Mean | SD | t-value |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| Guilt-Proneness (Gp) | Non-orphan | 8.12 | 3.508 | 8.310* |
| | Orphan | 14.60 | 3.185 | |
| Maturity (Ma) | Non-orphan | 4.32 | 2.046 | 7.673* |
| | Orphan | 7.82 | 1.864 | |
| Self-Control (SC) | Non-orphan | 4.14 | 2.535 | 9.186* |
| | Orphan | 9.22 | 2.344 | |
| Suspiciousness (Su) | Non-orphan | 3.99 | 1.687 | 1.277 |
| | Orphan | 4.67 | 1.980 | |
| Tension (Tn) | Non-orphan | 7.52 | 3.068 | 7.526* |
| | Orphan | 12.52 | 2.652 | |

Table 1(b): shows the t-value for dimensions of state-trait anxiety among adolescents

* Significant at 0.01 Level

From the above table we can see that there is a significant difference in dimensions of state-trait anxiety. Orphan adolescents have scored high in guilt-proneness, maturity, self-control and tension than non-orphan adolescents. This shows that the orphan adolescents tend to be less confident, full of worries, foreboding and brooding. They are easily affected by feelings and tend to have low frustration tolerance. They also tend to be suspicious and self-opinionated. Further they are not much worried about rules but follow their urges. Adolescents without parents may think that they are responsible for their present state and hence feel depressed, worried, easily emotional and annoyed. Since they don't have a proper model to learn how to handle the emotion, they may not know the right way of handling problems and therefore become anxious. Studies have revealed that the involvement of parents affect the outcome of

child's emotional competence and regulation (Volling., McElwain, Notaro & Herrera,2002). This shows the importance of quality time parents spend with their children. It plays a major role in helping children to learn to regulate their emotion and express it in an appropriate way. The early attachment relationship with parents is important for children's emotional development. The result of present study clearly shows that the adolescents without parents have high level of anxiety which may be because of lack of early attachment with parents. Siegler, DeLoache and Eisenberg (2011) proposed that the way the parents or caretakers respond to the emotion of the children is very significant. When the children's emotion is appraised negatively or not attended, it gives them a hint that their emotions are not valid. This can cause children more disposed to negative emotion and less able to survive the stress.

| Dimensions of anxiety | Gender | N | Mean | SD | t-value |
|-----------------------|--------|----|-------|-------|---------|
| Trait Anxiety | Male | 57 | 12.51 | 3.924 | 4.861* |
| | Female | 54 | 16.26 | 4.190 | |
| State Anxiety | Male | 57 | 18.05 | 7.541 | 3.700* |
| | Female | 54 | 23.48 | 7.897 | |
| Total Anxiety | Male | 57 | 30.39 | 9.382 | 5.158* |
| | Female | 54 | 39.74 | 9.705 | |

Table 2: shows the gender difference in state-trait anxiety of adolescents
*Significant at 0.01 Level

Table 2 shows the analysis of data of non-orphan adolescents. From the table it is found that there is a significant gender difference in the state-trait anxiety of adolescents. The females have scored higher in state-trait anxiety. This result is supported by Ghosh's (2013) research which indicates that female university students have higher level of anxiety compared to male university students. This may be because of the way the girl children are brought-up in our society. Generally girls are encouraged to be emotionally sensitive and dependent. This makes them incapable to handle stressful situations better.

| Dimensions of anxiety | Socio-economic Status | N | Mean | SD | t-value |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----|-------|-------|---------|
| Trait Anxiety | Middle Class | 82 | 15.25 | 3.672 | 3.309* |
| | Upper Class | 29 | 11.69 | 5.399 | |
| State Anxiety | Middle Class | 82 | 23.23 | 7.854 | 9.227* |
| | Upper Class | 29 | 13.52 | 3.214 | |
| Total Anxiety | Middle Class | 82 | 38.38 | 9.701 | 8.520* |
| | Upper Class | 29 | 25.21 | 6.002 | |

Table 3: shows the difference in state-trait anxiety of adolescents based on socio-economic status
*Significant at 0.01 Level

Table 3 reports that there is a significant difference in the state-trait anxiety of adolescents based on their socio-economic status. The middle class has scored higher in state-trait anxiety than upper class. Today in most of the middle class family both parents go out to work and they may not find enough time to spend with their children and therefore may not help them in regulating their emotions. They may not satisfy their adolescent's needs and wishes which can lead to frustration and anxiety. Most of the adolescents coming from upper socio-economic status have their mothers at home. They are available any time for the children. They are constantly watching their children and know if they are upset and give them emotional support. This may be the reason for the difference.

| Dimensions of anxiety | Type of Family | N | Mean | SD | t-value |
|-----------------------|----------------|----|-------|-------|---------|
| Trait Anxiety | Nuclear Family | 60 | 16.53 | 3.553 | 6.60* |
| | Joint Family | 51 | 11.75 | 4.014 | |
| State Anxiety | Nuclear Family | 60 | 22.95 | 8.294 | 3.34* |
| | Joint Family | 51 | 18.04 | 7.189 | |
| Total Anxiety | Nuclear Family | 60 | 39.48 | 9.705 | 5.55* |
| | Joint Family | 51 | 29.59 | 9.047 | |

Table 4: shows the state-trait anxiety of adolescents based on type of family
*Significant at 0.01 Level

From table 5, it is seen that there is a significant difference in the state-trait anxiety of adolescents based on type of family. Adolescents from nuclear family have higher state-trait anxiety than those from joint family. This may be because the parents sometimes may be preoccupied with their works and thus can't spend adequate time for the child. In joint family, elders provide the mental support needed for the adolescent in the absence of their parents. The aged people in the family help adolescents handle their emotions. The emotional support elders provide boosts the adolescents' self-esteem and gives them the confidence to manage any situations.

4. Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the above discussion

1. Orphan adolescents have higher level of state-trait anxiety.
2. Adolescent girls have higher level of state-trait anxiety.
3. Adolescents from middle socioeconomic status have higher level of state-trait anxiety.

This article emphasizes the vital role of parents/ caregivers in building confident and mentally healthy children.

5. Implications

The present study shows that orphan adolescents have high level of state-trait anxiety. Among the non-orphan adolescents girls have high level of state-trait anxiety. Further it was found that adolescents from nuclear family have high level of state-trait anxiety. This result indicates the importance of the caregivers and the quality of care. In orphanage homes the caregivers should try to personally attend to the emotional needs of the inmates. The government can appoint visiting counsellor in orphanage homes.

Parents should not discriminate their sons and daughters in any matters. Girls should be encouraged to be confident and handle difficult situations. Parents should spend quality time with their children and encourage their children to share all issues with them. Government should encourage joint family system for the benefit of children and young parents.

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