Gender Differences in Anxiety and Aggression among College Students

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Abstract
The purpose of the present study was to investigate the anxiety and aggression level of college students. The sample consisted of 200 students (100 males & 100 females) of age range 22 to 23 years from Ranchi. All of these belong to middle socio-economic status. Respondents were given Sinha Anxiety Scale (1976) and Aggression Scale by Mathur and Bhatnagar (2004). Data was analyzed by using percentage, means, standard deviations “t” and r test. Result revealed that male and female differ significantly on the level of anxiety and aggression. Result indicates that the level of anxiety is higher in females than males. Females were more aggressive than males. There was positive co-relation found between anxiety and aggression.

Keywords: Anxiety, Aggression & Middle Socio-Economic Status

Introduction
Anxiety is a normal and acceptable facet of human emotion, however, it is when this level of anxiety becomes excessive, when it disrupts normal living, that it becomes a cause for concern. Anxiety is an automatic biological product of undercharged tension. It is a feeling of mingled dread and apprehension about the future without a specific cause for such fear. Anxiety is an unpleasant emotional (and physiological) state that occurs when a person anticipates a potentially threatening event, or even when there is no threatening event but the temperament of the person is worry-prone (due to heredity or early life experiences). Anxiety is actually quite useful when it is not pathological. Anxiety is one of the most common psychological disorders in school-aged children and adolescents worldwide (Costello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler & Angold, 2003). Anxiety is associated with substantial negative effects on children’s social, emotional and academic success (Essau, Conradt & Petermann, 2000). In India, the main documented cause of anxiety among school children and adolescents is parents’ high educational expectations and pressure for academic achievement (Deb, 2001). Anxiety is a basic human emotion consisting of fear and uncertainty that typically appears when an individual perceives an event as being a threat to the ego or self-esteem. Anxiety relates to feelings of being threatened or frightened by something. Very often our past experiences, as well as our beliefs and attitudes, affect how we react in particular circumstances. Anxiety is the central explanatory concept in almost all the contemporary theories of personality. When one feels anxious there is a sense of physical and psychological discomfort, a feeling of that something. Anxiety is a generalized mood that can occur without an identifiable triggering “stimulus. As such it is distinguished from fear, which occurs in the presence of an external threat. Although some anxiety is a normal response to a stressful situation, when the anxiety level is too high a person may not come up with an effective way of managing the stressful or threatening situation. Anxiety is considered to be a universal phenomenon existing across cultures, although its contexts and manifestations are influenced by cultural beliefs and practices (Good & Kleinman, 1985; Guarnaccia, 1997). Anxiety is common in childhood, but its nature changes as the child grows older; infants pass through a stage of fear of strangers; during pre – school years separation anxiety and fears of animals, imaginary creatures and the dark are common, in early adolescents these fears are replaced by anxiety. Anxiety is common in childhood, but its nature changes as the child grows older; infants pass through a stage of fear of strangers; during pre – school years separation anxiety and fears of animals, imaginary creatures and the dark are common, in early adolescents these fears are replaced by anxiety. The lifetime rate of diagnosis of anxiety disorders is higher in women, with 33 percent experiencing an
anxiety disorder in their lifetime, as compared with 22 percent of men. Experts believe this difference arises from a combination of hormonal fluctuations, brain chemistry and upbringing: women more often feel responsible for the happiness of others, such as their children or their spouse. Anxiety disorders also occur earlier in women than in men. Anxiety disorders also occur earlier in women than in men.

In psychology and other social and behavioral sciences, aggression refers to behavior that is intended to cause harm or pain. The term aggression often has been applied to negative emotions such as anger, to motives such as the desire to harm or injure others, and even to negative attitudes such as racial or ethnic prejudice.

Aggression can be either physical or verbal, and behavior is classified as aggression even if it does not actually succeed in causing harm or pain. Aggression is not the same thing as assertiveness. Aggression has various meanings; we will define human aggression as behavior whose intent is the physical or psychological injury or another person. Aggression is a type of behavior arising from hostile motives it takes such forms as argumentativeness, scorn, and sarcasm, physical and mental cruelty and fighting. Two forms of aggression are often cited in the literature: Hostile and Instrumental. Hostile aggression springs from anger. Its goal is to injure. Instrumental aggression aims to hurt only as a means to some other end. Hostile aggression is hot, instrumental aggression is cool.

Review of Literature

Gender and anxiety research have been explored in a variety of areas, one being distance learning (Yukselturk, and Bulut, 2009). Martin (2010) recommends that to gain better representation on gender and discipline, study one specific dis- cipline and explore gender within it. Bekker and Van Mens-Verhulst (2007) define gender as con-sisting of “the socio-cultural aspects of defining people’s identity in relation to sex”. These characteristics can be very different between same sex members, but can also be similar between those individuals of opposite sexes (Bekker & Van Mens-Verhulst, 2007). Judge and Livingston (2008) state that gender is fundamental and has been explored within a plethora of disciplinary perspectives. In fact, gender is often one of the first variables considered when conducting a meta-analysis of a topic. As for gender prevalence, Bekker and Van Mens-Verhuls (2007) report that anxiety is substantially higher in women than in men. Mundia (2010) indicates that there is an increase in the prevalence of anxiety in college students. In addition, anxiety was more prevalent in female students than male students.

Gloff and Schmukle (2004) demonstrated that women reported greater anxiety than men. Traditional gender roles are believed to contribute to women’s greater vulnerability for anxiety and phobias (Fodor, 1974). Fodor argued that this predisposition was due to gender socialization teaching women to be dependent, fearful, passive, and submissive, whereas men are taught to be courageous, active, and goal and achievement oriented. Anderson and Hope (2009) examined response patterns of socially anxious and non-anxious adolescents during a social situation and found that, regardless of social anxiety, girls had higher heart rate reactivity than boys during the speech. The literature surrounding the topic of anxiety suggests that while females appear to have a higher prevalence rate than males in all anxiety disorders except social phobia (Oakley Browne, 1995).

According to Eagly and her Colleagues (1987, 1991) men are more aggressive because society accepts them to be more assertive and aggressive. On the other hand women are expected to be more nurturing, more emotional and more concerned for the well being of others than males. There is some research evidence to show that biological factors also play an important role in causing gender differences in aggression. One important biological difference in aggression is the level of testosterone. It has been found that among males, the higher the levels of testosterone the higher the level of aggression. (Olwens 1986)

Average aggressiveness ratings are higher for boys at all ages (Lahey, Waldman & McBurnett, 1999). Crick (1996) and Crick and Grotipeter (1995) it is argued that much aggression in girls has been overlooked because it is in a different form from that of boys. Lancot and LeBlanc (2003) conducted the Gender and Aggression Project in Canadian Institutes for Health Research and reported that gender difference in aggression have several forms. In general, much research has suggested that boys are
more aggressive than girls (Coie and Dodge 1997). Female tend to view their aggression as experience while men tend to view their aggression as instrumental (Archer 2004). According to Tapper and Boulton (2004) female adolescent students obtained a significantly higher score on the expressive scale of aggression than male adolescent students. Iqbal et al., (1993) found girls to be more intra-aggressive. Physical and verbal aggression by males has been investigated the most during the past 50 years, but studies on non-physical forms of aggression by both males and females has been growing (Underwood, Galen, & Paquette, 2001). Indirect aggression is more often exhibited by girls, who target both boys and girls (Coyne et al., 2006; Coyne & Whitehead, 2008).

Hypotheses

- Male and female differ significantly on their anxiety level.
- Male and female differ significantly on their aggression level.

Sample

The sample of the proposed study will be selected from the different colleges of Ranchi. There were 100 male and 100 female respondents ranging age – group 20 to 23 years. All of these belong to middle socio-economic status.

Instrument

Sinha Anxiety Scale: - The scale has been developed and standardized by Professor Durganand Sinha of Allahabad University (1976). It has 100 items. The reliability by split half method was 0.88. Applying Spearman Brown formula, the index was found to be 0.94 indicating good reliability. As for validity, scores were correlated against Taylor’s MAS. The coefficient of correlation was 0.73 which was quite significant.

Aggression Scale: - Aggression scale developed by Mathur and Bhatnagar (2004) was used to study the level of aggression of the subjects. This scale consists of 55 statements. It is a Likert type 5 point scale. The total number of answers constitutes the final score. Maximum score is 275 and minimum is 55. Higher scores show higher aggression level and lower scores show lower aggression level. Test-retest reliability of the checklist was found to be .88 in males and .81 in females. Validity is .80 in males and .78 in females.

Procedure

The anxiety scale and aggression scale were administered to both groups with instructions to complete all questions honestly and not to discuss the questions with fellow students. Scoring was done according to the respective scoring keys. On the basis of their scores of anxiety, they were categorized as the high, average and low anxious group. Students whose total score was one standard deviation or more above the mean, formed the high anxiety group students whose anxiety scores were one standard deviation or more below the mean formed the low anxiety group and students with score between the high and low groups formed the average group. In order to fulfill the objective of the study the score obtained were analysed with percentage, means, SD’s and t values.

Result and Discussion

Table – 1

Percentage of anxiety among male and female students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Test Anxiety</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 showed the percentage of the sample on three levels of anxiety. It was found that 45 percent of the respondents had shown high anxiety, whereas 30 percent of the respondents had average anxiety and only 25 percent of the respondents had low anxiety. Male students have shown greater extent of low level of anxiety (40%), whereas female students exhibit more high level of anxiety (60%). Male and female had similar level of average anxiety.

Figure 1, 2 and 3
Showing percentage of male, female and total respondents on different level of anxiety

Table 2
Percentage of aggression among male and female students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of high level of aggression in females was much higher (63%) than that of males (27%). On the other hand in males the percentage of low and average aggression was higher (18% and 55% respectively) than their female counterpart (12% and 51% respectively).

Figure 4, 5 and 6
Showing percentage of male, female and total respondents on different level of aggression

Table 3
Means, SDs and t value of male and female students on anxiety scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>SDs</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>49.41</td>
<td>15.27</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>63.48</td>
<td>15.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result given in Table –2 indicate significant gender difference in the anxiety level of students (t =6.39; P = <0.01). The female students reported higher level of anxiety as compared to the male student. The results are agreement with earlier findings of Weiss and Last (2001).

There are many causes of anxiety and various explanations have been put forward to explain the gender discrepancy. One such explanation is that the social position that women occupy precipitates anxiety.

Table –4
Means, SDs and t value of male and female students on aggression scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>SDs</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>198.38</td>
<td>26.84</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>213.47</td>
<td>31.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table - 4 shows that male and female college students differ significantly in the level of aggression. Female students have higher mean aggression score (213.47) than their male counterparts (198.38). Hence, the hypothesis was accepted. It is believed that boys expressed their antagonism directly, through physical and verbal attaches, in contrast girls used indirect forms of aggression aim at damaging another’s peer relationships. When both types of aggression are considered, girls are just as aggressive as boys. The results are agreement with earlier findings of Tapper and Boulton (2004).

Table –5
Interrelationship between anxiety and aggression.
(N=200)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Aggression</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.241025</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 revealed the relationship between anxiety and aggression. It shows that anxiety and aggression was positively correlated to each other and the correlation (0.24) is significant at 0.01 level. It means higher the anxiety higher the aggression and lower the anxiety lower the aggression. Results were consistent with the previous one (Kusy, 2011).

Conclusions

- Female students have higher percentage in high level of anxiety than male students.
- Female students have higher percentage in high level of aggression than male students.
- Female students were found more anxious than their male counterparts.
- Females were more aggressive than their males counterpart.
- Anxiety was positively and significantly co-related with aggression.

References


