RELATIONSHIP OF SELF ESTEEM AND SOCIAL ANXIETY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

Nasreen Bano*, Zaeema R. Ahmad* and Amena Z. Ali**
*Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi, Pakistan
**Department of Psychology, University of Karachi, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Objectives: The present study aims to find the relationship differences of social anxiety and self esteem among male and female adolescent students in Pakistan. It was hypothesized that there would be a difference in the relationship of self esteem and social anxiety in males and female adolescents.

Research Design: A Correlational Study

Place and Duration of study: Different Schools and Colleges of Karachi, 2011.

Sample and Method: A total of 210 adolescents including 86 males and 124 females served as the subjects of the study. To assess the social anxiety Interaction Anxiety Scale, Urdu version[1] and for the evaluation of self esteem Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale translated version[2] was employed.

Results: Descriptive Statistics was computed to analyze sample characteristics; and Pearson correlation coefficient was applied to determine the relationship of social anxiety and self esteem among male and female adolescents. Z correlation was also computed to find out if the gender difference in the relationship of social anxiety and self esteem is significant. The results indicate that there is gender difference between the associations of two variables but it is not significant.

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[2] Sardar, S. (1998*). Study of relationship among childhood paternal loss, sex role orientation, self esteem and locus of control in male and female students.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Karachi, Karachi- Pakistan.

Conclusion: *Findings of the research do not support the role of gender difference in the relationship of self esteem and social anxiety.*

Key Words*: Social Anxiety; self esteem; adolescents; gender*

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety disorders are one of the most common disorders affecting children and adolescents with social anxiety as the most prevalent problem. Social anxiety is a persistent, disabling condition that is distinguished by extreme fear of being humiliated or looking stupid in social situations that demand social interaction or performance activities, like public speaking. Recent studies reveal that social anxiety is common and position as the third most frequent mental health problem after major depression and alcohol abuse[3]. Adolescence is considered to be a fundamental period for the onset of social anxiety and usually influence 3 to 5% of youth population[4]. The onset of social phobia is mostly considered to occur between the ages of 12 to 1[5].

Furthermore, the onset of puberty is a stage of awareness about the physical self as well as individuals has the ability to consider own and other's perspective about themselves[6, 7]. Therefore, the self worth during these ages is

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[4] Wittchen, H., Stein, M., & Kessler, R. (1999). Social fears and social phobia in a community sample of adolescents and young adults: Prevalence, risk factors and co morbidity. *Psychological Medicine, 29*, 309–323.

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based on others' positive or negative evaluations[8]. The research evidences from studies [9;10,11,12] indicate that the capacity of an individual to analyze the sense of worth has significant implications for the performance in different domains of life.   Thus studies over the entire world have highlighted the role of self esteem in the positive growth of human and the role of low self esteem in the development of the emotional and psychological problems including depression, aggression, low academic achievements and the most prevalent problem of anxiety in social settings. It plays an important role in the development and maintaining relationships and social interactions. Eccles, Lord, & Midgely[13] considered preadolescent and adolescent years as an important period for the orientation and affiliation with the peer groups. According to Leary's[14] sociometer hypothesis, self esteem of adolescents depends on peer acceptance and instability in the acceptance impacts their self worth[15,16]. Thus self esteem is

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[13] Eccles, J. S., Lord, S., & Midgley C. (1991). What are we doing to early adolescents? The impact of educational contexts on early adolescents. *American Journal of* Education, *99*, 521-542.

[14] Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R.M. (1995). *Social Anxiety.* Guilford: New York.

[15] Bullock, J. R. (1992). Children without friends: Who are they and how can teachers help? *Childhood Education, 69*, 92-96.

an important factor for the developmental and situational changes of youths. The ratio of social anxiety for females is considered to be greater as compared to males for example the research findings indicated that the average ratio for social anxiety for female/male in community studies is 1.5:1, which is considerably lower than gender ratios for other mental health problems [17]. Women scored more highly on all of the sub-scales as is consistent with the clinical and research and literature on gender differences and mental health. For social anxiety the female average score was higher than males in all cases, although the difference was less pronounced for avoidance. It may be that males are particularly reluctant to seek help for social anxiety, perceiving as it a sign of weakness. There is also some, limited evidence that social anxiety may be overtly expressed differentially as anger in males[18].

Keeping in view the literature review it was hypothesized that there would be a difference in the relationship of self esteem and social anxiety in male and female adolescents.

METHOD

Sample

For the purpose of present study, a sample of 210 adolescents including 86 males and 124 females were selected from different colleges of Karachi. The age range of the participants was from 16 to 19 years with the mean age of 17.24 years. Only adolescents from registered schools /colleges of the Ministry of Education, Sindh were taken.

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[16] Dayan, J., Doyle, A., & Markiewicz, D. (2001). Social support networks and self-esteem of idiocentric and allocentric children and adolescents. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 18*, 767-784.

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Measures

Interaction Anxiousness Scale

      Interaction Anxiousness Scale [19] is a self-report measure of dispositional social   anxiety. The scale defines social anxiety as experiential state of anxiety resulted from being evaluated in a social situation. This scale consists of 15 items. The responses range from extremely characteristic of me (5) to not at all characteristic of me (1). Four items are reversed score. High scores indicate anxiety in social situations. The IAS demonstrates high test-retest and internal reliability. Correlations with measures relevant to social and general anxiety document its convergent and discriminant validity, and it correlates well with measures of anxiety and interpersonal concern in actual interactions (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). For the purpose of current study Urdu version of IAS[1] was used. Internal consistency of the Urdu version is .752 and has a test retest reliability of .835 with an interval of one week.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

      This scale measures the global self-esteem. The scale consists of 10 items answered on a five-point Likert scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Negative items are reverse coded so that a high score continues to indicate high self-esteem. The possible range of scores for this scale is 10 to 50. This measure is widely accepted as having good psychometric properties[20,21]. In the current study the translated version of Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale was used. The cronbach for the translated version of RSES in this study is .738.

Procedure

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Sample of the research was randomly recruited from different educational organizations of Karachi, Pakistan. After getting permission from authorities participants were approached through their class teachers. Initially personal information was obtained from the participants. The examiner filled the questionnaire of personal information individually.

Then Interaction Anxiousness scale and Rosenberg self-esteem scale were administered to measure the level of social anxiety and self esteem in participants respectively with 5 minutes break. In the end participation of the study were acknowledged and highly appreciated.

Statistical analysis

In order to interpret the data in statistical terminology following statistics were used: Descriptive statistics (mean, frequencies, and percentages) was used for getting a better statistical view of characteristics of sample of the data in a summarized way. Pearson correlation coefficient was applied to know the relationship of social anxiety and self esteem among the male and female adolescents. Z correlation was also computed to find out if the gender difference in the relationship of social anxiety and self esteem is significant.

RESULTS

Table 1
Correlation between social anxiety and self esteem

Scales	Pearson r	Significance level
IA	-.418(**)	0.01
SE		

There is a negative correlation between social anxiety and self esteem.

Table 2 (a)
Correlation between Social Anxiety and Self Esteem in males

Scales	Pearson r	Significance
IA	-.376**	0.01

SE

Males show a negative correlation between social anxiety and self esteem

Table 2 (b)
Correlation between Social Anxiety and Self Esteem in females

Scales	*Pearson r*	*Significance*
IA	-.448**	0.01
SE		

Females show a comparatively strong negative correlation between social anxiety and self esteem

Table 2 (c)
Table of Correlation Difference

Groups	*Variables*	*N*	*r*	*z*	*Confidence interval*
Males	Social Anxiety	86	-.376	.609	.271
Females	Self Esteem	124	-.448		

The gender difference for the correlation between social anxiety and self esteem is not significant

DISCUSSION

The objective of present study was to investigate the difference of relationship in the variables of social anxiety and self esteem among adolescent males and females. The possible reasons of association of these two variables Pakistani adolescents are discussed in their cultural perspective.

The results obtained, (r= -.418, p<0.001) in Table 1 for the data clearly show a very strong and statistically significant negative correlation between social anxiety and self esteem; these findings are consistent with the previous studies. A study by Kocovski and Endler [22], on undergraduates found a negative correlation between social anxiety and self esteem (r=-.40). Studies further

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[22] Kocovski, N. L., & Endler, N. S. (2000). Self-regulation: Social anxiety and depression. *Journal of Applied Biobehavioral Research, 5*, 80–91.

support the negative association between social anxiety and self-esteem. Ginsberg and colleagues[23] found that socially anxious children reported low social acceptance, low self esteem, and generally negative peer interactions. Individuals with positive self esteem enjoy the social interaction while individual with the negative self esteem have low confidence and do not feel comfortable in social interactions[24].

Results obtained in Table 2 (a & b) show the difference of gender in the relation of the social anxiety and self esteem. Results indicate a higher negative correlation for the variables of social anxiety and self esteem in females than males however this difference is not significant as shown in the Table 2(c). Some of the previous studies have found more worries and fears of negative social evaluation than male adolescents[25]. One of the reasons behind such findings can be that females are more susceptible to fear of evaluation in social setting that causes anxiety among them. Some of the previous studies supported that females seemed to be characterized by a social skill deficit[26]. One explanation for these findings can be that female's role is more relationship oriented and in this case one's own public appearance is more important. Adolescent girls are more occupied with the self than boys and perceive themselves less physically attractive and express more worries about their public appearance[27],[28]. Although

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the results are not significant however, gender differences do exist in our culture. One of the main reasons can be that data of the present study included separated/ segregated educational setups, in such systems females have difficulties especially to interact with males. It has been observed that adolescent females were hesitant to interact with the males especially those who were studying in separate systems. Due to cultural, traditional and religious values most of the females in Pakistan are prohibited to interact with the males that cause shyness and anxiety among them along with low confidence[29]. According to Auroj [30] due to moralistic values and the cultural constrains in Pakistani society females have difficulty in socialization that leads to adult psychological problems.

However according to current study results (Table 2c) gender difference among adolescents for the relationship of social anxiety and self esteem is not significant indicating that males and females experience same anxiety in social interaction and have no significant difference of self esteem. According to Puklek and Vidmar[25] research findings females are more socially anxious however adolescent males also experience difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Social tension and inhibition decreases with age among however in male adolescent's social tension and inhibition increases with age.

Conclusion

In conclusion*,* in cultural context change in the role of females and increase in their acceptance level have led to no differences of gender in the relationship between Self esteem and Social Anxiety in adolescents.

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[30] Arouj. K. (2005). *Early segregated education and vulnerability to emotional problems in adulthood*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan.