

## **ANXIETY AND FAMILY ENVIRONMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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**Key Words:** *High School Students, Anxiety, Family Environment.*

High school is a grade of education from Standards eight to ten. Standards nine and ten are also called Secondary School. Usually, students from ages fourteen to seventeen study in this section. These schools may be affiliated to national boards (like CBSE, ISC, and NIOS) or various state boards. Education is compulsory until age fourteen. When it comes to learning and performance at school, anxiety can be facilitative and disruptive. All students are anxious at times; some more than others; some pervasively and chronically. When anxiety is disruptive, it is associated with a host of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional problems. When the problems are pervasive and severe, they may be diagnosed as anxiety disorders. However, most students who have problems and appear or indicate that they are anxious are not disordered and should not be treated as having a psychopathological condition. (Liew & Michael 1981).

### **ANXIETY**

Anxiety is a basic emotion which results when a person's freedom of action and thought is threatened or thwarted. It is a natural and important emotion. On one side it helps in signaling a danger or a change in the environment or self that demand adjustment, and on the other side, it becomes an unhealthy exaggerated response. Kendall & Ingram (1989) defined anxiety as "closely associated with future-oriented 'questioning' cognitions".

Anxiety is an emotion that predates the evolution of man. Children, adolescents and adults experience anxiety in different form while this is visible in some, it can be inferred in others from their physiological and psychological responses. Anxiety also varies in frequency and intensity in different persons, even in response to the same stimuli (Trivedi & Gupta, 2010). It is a generalized state of apprehension or foreboding. There is much to be anxious about. Our health, social relationship, examinations, careers and conditions of the environment are but a few sources of possible concerns. It is normal, and even adaptive, to be somewhat anxious about these aspects of life. Anxiety serves us when it prompts us to seek regular medical checkups or

motivates us to study for tests. Anxiety is an appropriate response to threats, but it can be abnormal when its level is out of proportion to a threat. In extreme forms, anxiety can impair our daily functioning.

### **History and definition**

Nearly a century ago, Sigmund Freud (1895) coined the term anxiety neurosis which he believed resulted from dammed-up libido; a physiological increase in sexual tension leads to a corresponding increase in libido, the mental representation of physiological event. The normal outlet of such tension, in Freud's view, is sexual intercourse; but sexual practices such as abstinence and coitus interrupts prevent tension release and produce neuroses. The conditions of heightened anxiety related to libidinal blockage include neurasthenia, hypochondriasis, and anxiety neuroses, all of which were regarded by Freud as having a biological basis.

The word anxiety has as its root angst, German for fear. According to Hallam (1992) anxiety is a word used in every day conversation and refers to a complex relationship between a person and his situation. Anxiety is often a diffuse, unpleasant and uncomfortable feeling of apprehension, accompanied by one or more bodily sensations that characteristically recur in the same manner in the person. It is an alerting signal that warns an individual of imminent danger and enables him to take measures to deal with it. Anxiety and fear may exist simultaneously or follow each other. Anxiety of fear-arousing stimulus may be internal or external, immediate or future, definite or vague, and conflictual or non-conflictual in nature. One can, however, differentiate anxiety from fear, in fear no conflict is involved and the threat is known.

### **FAMILY ENVIRONMENT**

“The family is the fundamental unit of society which provides the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members, particularly the children. The influence of family process in the course of human development is widely recognized in psychological literature (Barn, & Matzagr, 2006, Collins 2004) Family environment plays a vital role in the psychological functioning of family members. Family environment has a major role in a person's emotional stability, life satisfaction, psychological well-being and happiness. Many studies indicate that a dysfunctional family environment result in conflict, aggression, cold and unsupportive relationships, and neglectfulness. Studies based on dysfunctional family environment have reported that individuals from dysfunctional family environments have some major psychotic problems like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and alcohol and drug abuse, and also have some physical illness. In recent decades, there has been as

accumulation of evidence suggesting the association between dysfunctional family relationships and adjustment problems (Chedid Romo, & Changard, 2009). The assessment of family environment is mainly based on the relationship dimension, such as cohesion, hierarchy, support, and conflict (Bjornbera & Nicholson, 2007 ; Teodoro et al., 2009). Cohesion is the emotional bond that connects family members, mentioning the level of affection, friendship and intimacy shared. Hierarchy refers to the structure of power and control between individuals, on the family. Support is the perception of material and emotional support received from family in the face of challenges and problems.

In order to understand the underlying pathology of anxiety better, there is a need to examine the influence of family environment. Home is a place to which one brings the everyday run of social experience, to sift, to evaluate, to appraise, to understand or to be twisted, to foster, to be magnified or ignored. It is hard to think of a factor that carries more weight in children's adjustment than their family life. Family is of central importance to human beings for their growth, development, and their very existence. Family influences are fundamental. They precede and determine other factors that support the development of an individual. The environment in which a child grows up has a great influence on his emotional and personality development and home constitutes a major part of the environment. (Bossard, 1948)

It has been noted that children raised in impoverished family environment due to separation, divorce, remarriage, violence, abuse or neglect tend to have an elevated risk of emotional and behavioral problems including early conducts problems and young offending. When we examine the association between family processes and childhood behaviors, it is possible that increased behavioural problems could be a response to the processes of change or it may be that these increase are due to the parental conflict and disharmony that frequently precedes family changes. There is mounting evidence that exposure to parental discord is the critical factor leading to behavior problems in children (Emery & O' Leary, 1982; Long & Forehand, 1987; Porter & O'Leary, 1980; Rutter & Giller, 1983). This evidence includes the finding that children from divorced homes display more behavior problems than children from homes in which a parental has died.

Families characterized by high levels of conflict, aggression, and hostility are often lacking in acceptance, warming, and support. Research studies that assessed these characteristics of family life reported reliable associations between them and a broad array of mental health risks, including internalizing symptoms such as depression, suicidal behavior, and anxiety

disorders and externalizing symptoms such as aggressive, hostile oppositional, and delinquent behavior. (Chorpita & Barlow, 1998; Kaslo et al, 1994)

The family environment and the quality of the parent-child relationships are also likely to influence the types of coping strategies parents suggest to their children. These associations are more likely to be observed with coping strategies that involve parental participation, such as support seeking. We would expect that parents who have warm, accepting relations with their children to suggest support seeking more often than parents who are distant from and rejecting of their children. Similarly, parents in homes characterized by cohesion, openness of expression, and lack of conflict should suggest support seeking more often than parents residing in more conflicted household. A second way in parents may influence their children's coping choice is by modeling how they handle their own stressful situations that arise. (Barber,1996; Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994).

Not all children are affected equally by the stressors in the society and the family. Understanding their differential effects is an important research issue. The strategies that children use to cope are one source of children's differential vulnerability to the effects of stress. In general, coping researchers agree that the study of coping is fundamental to an understanding of how stress affects children, for better or worse. From the perspective of basic research, coping represents an important aspect of the general processes of self-regulation of emotion, cognition, behavior, physiology and the environment (e.g Eisenberg, Fabes & Guthrie, 1997; Skinner, 1995).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample**

The sample for the present study comprised of 120 students belonging to both gender, selected from Ernakulam district. Using convenient sampling. The age of the respondents is between 14 and 16 years.

### **Tools**

Only questionnaire were used in the present study. The two main measures used were STAT Anxiety Scale and Family Environment Scale (Bhatia & Chadha 2012). In addition to these, a personal data sheet was used to collect information on relevant sociodemographic variables such as age, sex, standard, socioeconomic status and type of family.

## Administration and Scoring

### S.T.A.T ANXEITY SCALE

S.T.A.T scale was developed by Psy.Com Services. The scale consist five dimensions, Tensions dimensions, Guilt proneness dimension, Maturity dimension, Suspiciousness dimension, and Self control dimension. The scale consists of 40 items. The items are scored using stencil, according to the manual.

### Family Environment Scale

The family environment scale was developed by Bhatia and Chadha (2012). The family environment scale is based on the family environment scale by Moos (1974). The scale consists of three dimensions, Relationship dimension, Persona growth dimension, and system maintenance dimension. The scale comprise of 69 items, with a five point response category of strongly agree-5; Agree-4; Neutral -3; Disagree-2; and Strongly Disagree-1. In case of negative items the scoring procedure was reversed, so that a high total score indicate better Family Environment.

## RESULT & DISCUSSION

This study has been conducted to verify whether there is any significant differences in Anxiety and Family Environment among high school students. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 16. Person correlation was done for find out the relationship between and Family Environment and 't' test were done for find out the difference between two groups.

**Table 1 : The Mean value, Standard Deviation and 't' value of anxiety and family environment among English and Malayalam Medium Students.**

Variables	English Medium		Malayalam Medium		't' value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Family Environment	256.93	33.410	227.83	24.996	5.40**
Anxiety	32.47	6.479	37.83	5.029	5.06**

\*\* Indicates Significance at 0.01 level.

From table 1, it is clear that there is significant difference in anxiety and family environment among children of English and Malayalam Medium. By analyzing the Mean Scores of anxiety and family environment in both medium of studies it can be seen that children of English medium have better family environment and less anxiety compared to children of

Malayalam medium. In English medium school students get more exposure than Malayalam medium. Hence students in English medium will have less anxiety.

**Table 2 : The Mean value, Standard Deviation and 't' value of anxiety and family environment among boys and girls.**

Variables	Boys		Girls		't' value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Family Environment	234.02	29.058	250.75	34.422	2.87**
Anxiety	36.47	5.936	33.83	6.569	2.30*

\*\* Indicates Significance at 0.01 level.

\* Indicates Significance at 0.05 level.

From table 2, it clear that there is a significant difference in anxiety and family environment among boys and girls. By analyzing the Mean scores of anxiety and family environment in both sexes it can be seen that girls have better family environment than boys and have less anxiety when compared to boys.

Boys have high anxiety when compared to girls. It may be because that boys have higher restrictions from family when compared to girls. Girls feel more secure than boys. Girls are always protected and under the pampering of each and every family members. Thus girls get a better family environment than boy. From this we may conclude that family environment plays a vital role in students anxiety.

**Table 3 : The correlation of Anxiety and Family Environment**

Variables		'r' Value
Family Environment	Anxiety	-.851**

\*\* Indicates Significance at 0.01 level.

From table 3 it is evident that there is a significant negative correlation between family environment and anxiety among high school students at 0.01 level. This indicates that when family environment is better than anxiety is seen lesser in students.

According to this study anxiety and family environment are negatively correlated to, when family environment is good then the children will have less anxiety. In a better family environment children could share their emotions and ill feelings with family members and could find out a proper solution for the same. Family plays a vital role in maintaining proper mental health of children.

## CONCLUSION

- There is significant differences in anxiety and Family Environment among English and Malayalam medium students.
- There is significant differences in Anxiety and Family Environment among boys and girls.
- Anxiety and Family Environment are negatively correlated.

## LIMITATIONS

- Sample size was small.
- This study includes only limited number of variables

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