

A Psychological Study on Shyness Among High School Students

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to study the gender difference in the level of shyness among high school students. The sample consisted of 119 participants comprising of 54 boys and 65 girls belonging to the age group of 13-15 years. The study adopted comparative research design and purposive sampling design. The tool used in the present study was, Revised Cheek and Buss Scale (RCBS13) (Cheek, 1983). The result was analysed using independent sample t test. The result indicated, significantly higher level of shyness among high school girls compared to high school boys.

Keywords: Shyness, Gender, High School Students.

1. Introduction

Shyness is a feeling of fear or discomfort caused by other people, especially in new situations or among strangers. It's an unpleasant feeling of self-consciousness; a fear of what some people believe others are thinking. This fear can inhibit a person's ability to do or say what they want. It can also prevent the formation of healthy relationships. Shyness is often linked to low self-esteem. It may also be one of the causes of social anxiety. About 15 percent of infants are born with a tendency toward shyness. Research has shown biological differences in the brains of shy people. However, the propensity for shyness also is influenced by social experiences. It's believed that most shy children develop shyness because of interactions with parents. Parents who are authoritarian or overprotective can cause their children to be shy. Children who aren't allowed to experience things may have trouble developing social skills. A warm, caring approach to rearing children usually results in them being more comfortable around others. Schools, neighborhoods, communities, and culture all shape a child. Connections a child makes within these networks contribute to their development. Children with shy parents may emulate that behavior. In adults, highly critical work environments and public humiliation can lead to shyness (Legg, 2019) [1]. Buss (1980) [2] defined shyness as discomfort, inhibition, awkwardness in social situations, particularly in situations with unfamiliar people.

1.1 Shyness as a Personality Trait

Shyness is a personality trait encompassing a type of inhibition or discomfort shown by individuals in interpersonal situations that will significantly affect their participation in activities (Henderson, et al., 2001) [3]. As a personality trait, shyness is a key factor affecting individual behavioral characteristics. Studies have found that individuals with shy tendencies account for 48% of the total sample (Heiser et al., 2003) [4]. Lei and Zhang (2002) [5] found that shyness was a significant variable in predicting

bullying. Shy individuals commonly demonstrate greater social avoidance, which may make it more difficult for other people to accept them and so they instead become bullies (Ren et al., 2018) [6]. At the same time, shy individuals may also show more aggression due to a hostile attribution tendency (Gao et al., 2016) [7].

1.2 Shyness among School Children

Most of the secondary school students are adolescents. According to Umeh (2013) [8] shyness has been found to be more among adolescents and it ranges from mild, moderate to severe levels with the impact debilitating to self-development. Thus, students who are shy may find it difficult to approach their classmates for discussion either in the classroom or outside the classroom. They may also find it difficult to mingle with other students during break. Shy students may reject their fellow students with the fear that such students will as well reject them.

Most of the children who first become shy in later childhood and early adolescence do not have the temperamental predisposition for shyness. Instead, late-developing shyness is usually caused by adjustment problems in adolescent social development. The bodily changes of puberty, the newly acquired cognitive ability to think abstractly about the self and the environment, and the new demands and opportunities resulting from changing social roles combine to make adolescents feel intensely self-conscious and socially awkward. Adolescent self-consciousness gradually declines after age 14, and less than 50% of individuals who first became shy during later childhood and early adolescence still consider themselves to be shy by age 21 (Cheek, 2007) [9].

1.3 Need and Significance of the Study

Shyness has the capacity to inhibit an individual's full social participation, can cause loneliness and may lead to social awkwardness and anxiety, a shy student may be unwilling to ask questions in the class. A shy student may suffer peer rejection as he may be bullied and teased by fellow students. Moreover, it is imperative, such deficits should be readdressed, at a young age. There has been conflicting evidence as to the influence of gender on shyness among school going children. Hence it is relevant and findings of this might provide a better understanding about the nature of influence of gender among high school children.

2. Review of Literature

Singh and Singh (2017) [10]. The study examined the effect of type of schooling on sociability and shyness among students and to study the gender differences between sociability and shyness among students. The sample comprised 210 students from both private and government schools situated in Delhi. The results obtained from ANOVA revealed that government school students were observed to be more sociable as compared to private school students. On the other hand, private school students were found to be shyer as compared to government school students. Females were observed to be shyer as compared to males.

Manzoor (2016) [11]. Studied the relationship between levels of shyness among the adolescents (13-18 years) of public and private schools. 120 students studying in different grades from public and private schools in Islamabad (Pakistan) were selected by random sampling technique. Data was analyzed by applying t-test for independent samples and hypothesis was not supported because there was no significant

difference found between levels of shyness among the public and private schools adolescents. The study presents evidence that there was no impact of schooling system on shyness levels of adolescents but shy adolescents were less likely to participate in communication and classroom activities or ask questions when they needed help with schoolwork. They greatly suffered from social anxiety.

Bober et al., (2022) [12]. The study was conducted to study the impact of shyness on self-esteem. The study was carried out among 198 adults. Results indicated a significant positive correlation coefficient between the following variables (1) self-esteem/self-promotion; (2) shyness/self-deprecation. All other variables correlated negatively: (1) shyness/self-esteem; (2) shyness/self-promotion; (3) self-esteem/self-deprecation; (4) self-promotion/self-deprecation. Moreover, both self-promotion and self-deprecation acted as mediators between life satisfaction and self-esteem.

Thomas and Akhila (2020) [13]. The research aimed to study shyness and psychological well-being among young adults. This study was done on 110 young adults aged 18 to 26, out of which 55 were males and 55 were females through purposive sampling method. The data were analyzed by using mean, standard deviation, independent sample t-test and Pearson's product moment correlation. Results indicated that there was no significant difference between shyness among young adult across gender. There was no significant difference between psychological well-being among young adults across gender. Statistically, there was no significant correlation between shyness and psychological well-being among young adults.

Wang et al., (2020) [14]. The study investigated the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between shyness and problem network behavior, and the mediating effect of loneliness on the moderating effect. The results indicated that the level of shyness among girls was significantly higher than that among boys, whereas the prevalence of cyberbullying, pathological Internet use, and Internet gaming disorder was significantly lower for girls than for boys.

3. Methodology

3.1 Objectives

To study the level and gender difference of shyness among high school students

3.2 Hypothesis

There is no significant gender difference in the level of shyness among boys and girls of high school students.

3.3 Variables

Independent variable

Gender

High School Students

Dependent variable

Shyness

3.4 Sample

The study was conducted on high school students. A purposive Sample of 54 boys & 65 girls were

selected for the study.

Boys	Girls	Total
54	65	119

3.5 Research Design

The comparative research design was employed for the research.

3.6 Measure

The 13 item Revised Cheek and Buss Scale (RCBS13) (Cheek, 1983) [15] was used to measure the level of shyness among school students. The RCBS13 consisted of 13 items. The measure uses a Likert type scale with five points of measurement 1,2,3,4 and 5. The maximum score for the scale is 65 and the minimum score is 13. Items 3, 6, 9 and 12 are reverse scored (5, 4, 3, 2 and 1). The scale has an internal consistency score of .90 (Cronbach's α). It has a test-retest reliability of .88 ($r = .88$).

3.7 Procedure

The students were approached after seeking appropriate permissions from school authorities. The school authorities and later during data collection students were also assured their identity will remain undisclosed and the data collected from them will remain confidential. Further, the data collected from them will be used only for research purposes. Further, individual information will not be disclosed. This was ensured by not collecting names from the students. The participation in the study was purely on voluntary basis and non- participation.

4. Result and Discussion

This study was intended to assess the shyness among high school students. The study comprised of 54 boys and 65 girls high school students (8th, 9th and 10th grade students). The data was explored to identify significant gender differences among high school students on shyness.

Table 01 Mean and Standard Deviation of Shyness among boys and girls of High School Students.

Gender	N	Mean	SD
Girls	65	41.077	7.005
Boys	54	38.537	6.544

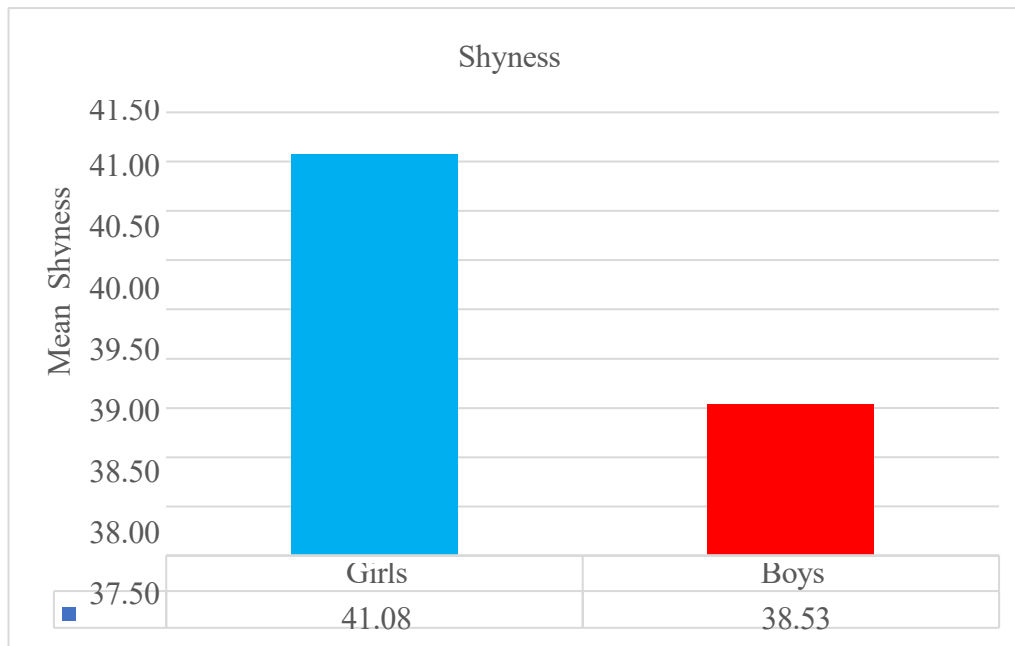


Figure 01 Mean core of Shyness among boys and girls of high school.

Table 02 Mean, Standard Deviation and p value of Shyness among boys and girls of High School students.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T Value	P value
Shyness	Girls	65	41.077	7.005	2.029	.045
	Boys	54	38.537	6.544	2.029	.045

The hypothesis stated that, there is no significant gender difference in the level of shyness among boys and girls of high school students was tested employing independent sample t- test. The calculated p value for shyness is 0.045 which is significant. Mean scores indicated that girls have higher level of shyness compared to boys. Hence, the null hypothesis which states there is no significant gender difference in the level of shyness among girls and boys of high school students is rejected.

Higher levels of shyness among girls might be due to menarche influencing the degree of shyness among girls, social stereotypes like shyness are more appropriate for girls and girls were more worried about physical attractiveness. This result in line with the results of Elkind and Bowen's (1979) [16] cross-sectional study of students which revealed that eighth-grade girls had the highest peak on their measure of self-conscious shyness (7.5 versus 6.3 for boys). Further, this study also supported by Bronson's (1966) [17] study which pointed out, in terms of social stereotypes it is more appropriate for girls to be seen as shy than for boys. Further, the self- descriptive adjective "shy" is scored on the Femininity Scale of the Bem (1981) [18] Sex Rol Inventory. Additionally, elementary school teachers nominate girls twice as frequently as boys for being among the five most shy youngsters in their class (Lazarus, 1982) [19].

5. Summary and Conclusion

The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. Further

graphs were used for visual comparison. Additionally significant differences between the sex were explored using the independent sample t test.

5.1 Major Finding

- The study has found significant higher level of shyness among girls compared to boys of high school students.

5.2 Implications of the Study

This study identified that both girls and boys of high school students had moderate levels of shyness and girls of high school students had significantly higher levels of shyness compared to boys. Shyness, if unaddressed, can lead to social avoidance, academic backwardness and loneliness. Hence it is important that shyness if present among students, be identified at an early age and mediate so that students can be empowered to attain their full potential.

5.3 Limitation of the Study

- The sample was a purposive sample, and the sample size was limited. Hence generalizations to the larger population should be done with caution.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

- A longitudinal design would show changes in shyness over a period of time.
- Qualitative study on shyness can throw more light on individual experiences of shyness.
- A larger random sample would further enable result generalization to the population.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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