

A Comparative Study of Social Anxiety Disorder among Adolescents

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to find out social anxiety among adolescents. Sample of the study consists of 200 adolescents studying in government and private schools of urban and rural areas of Ludhiana district. Social Anxiety Disorder Scale by Dr. Ekta Nagpal and Dr. Gurmit Singh (2020) was used to collect data. The results of the study showed significant difference in social anxiety among adolescents studying in government and private schools. No significant difference was found in social anxiety of adolescent boys and girls but significant difference was found in social anxiety of adolescents belonging to rural and urban areas.

Keywords: Social Anxiety Disorder, Adolescents, Boys & girls, Urban & Rural

Introduction

Adolescence is the most significant period in an individual's life. As they grow and develop, young people are influenced by outside factors such as parents, peers, community, culture, religion, school, world events and the media. (Spano, 2004). While adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and potential, it is also a time when adolescents are under a lot of pressure to perform academically, to act responsibly and to fit in socially. The self-doubts, confusion, and pressures to succeed or conform can come at a high price for troubled adolescents. Adolescence is a high-risk period for anxiety disorders, with social anxiety disorder being one of the most prevalent. The fear of negative evaluation intensifies during this stage, often impairing academic and social functioning (Rajasekar, 2024)

Social anxiety disorder (SAD), also known as social phobia, is characterized by extreme and consistent fear of meeting new people or embarrassing oneself in social situations. Everyday interactions cause significant anxiety, fear, self-consciousness and embarrassment because you fear being scrutinized or judged by others (Mayo Clinic, 2021).

Coleman (2007) defined social anxiety disorder as an anxiety disorder characterized by a phobia of scrutiny by others or of being the focus of attention in social situations involving strangers. Exposure to such social situation either generates anxiety about behaving in an embarrassing or humiliating way, or triggers a panic attack, but the reaction is recognized by the afflicted person (an adolescent or adult) as excessive or irrational, and the avoidance behaviour or anxious anticipation interferes significantly with everyday life, occupational or academic performance, or social relationship.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition Text Revision (DSM-5, 2016), SAD is a marked fear or anxiety about one or more social situations in which the individual is exposed to possible scrutiny by others. Examples include social interactions (e.g., having a conversation,

meeting unfamiliar people), being observed (e.g., eating or drinking), and performing in front of others (e.g., giving a speech). According to Kashdan (2019) social anxiety occurs when we are overly concerned about being humiliated, embarrassed, evaluated, or rejected by others in social situations.

It can be concluded that SAD is a persistent fear of social situations and is characterized by feeling of uneasiness, dread, or apprehension about social interaction which significantly interferes with individual's quality of life. A person with social anxiety disorder may have a mild, moderate or extreme form of it (Cleveland Clinic, 2022):

The fear that people with social anxiety disorder have in social situations is so intense that they feel it is beyond their control. For some people, this fear may get in the way of going to work, attending school, or doing everyday things. Other people may be able to accomplish these activities but experience a great deal of fear or anxiety when they do. Sometimes, they end up avoiding places or events that cause distress or generate feelings of embarrassment (NHIM, 2022). Although behavioural avoidance of social or performance situations is common among socially anxious adolescents and adults, socially anxious children rarely are able to avoid these situations because parents, teachers and other adults “expect” them to carry on in such situations. As a result, they may show disinterest in age-appropriate social, academic, and athletic activities and may be mistakenly diagnosed as oppositional or noncompliant since they frequently refuse to engage in such activities. In severe cases, social anxiety can result in school refusal behaviour and social isolation (Ollendick and Benoit, 2012).

Thus, Social anxiety disorder heavily disrupts an adolescent's personal life, academic performance, and broader societal development. The burden of untreated SAD can have long term effects on developing countries like India. Since, there is a paucity of data on social anxiety disorders among adolescents in the Indian population so, the study aimed to determine the prevalence of social anxiety disorder among adolescent boys and girls studying in government and private schools of rural and urban areas of Ludhiana district.

Objectives

1. To study and compare social anxiety disorder among adolescents studying in government and private schools.
2. To study and compare social anxiety disorder in adolescent boys and girls.
3. To study and compare social anxiety disorder among adolescents belonging to rural and urban areas.

Hypotheses

1. There exists no significant difference in social anxiety among adolescents studying in government and private schools.
2. There exists no significant difference in social anxiety of adolescent boys and girls.
3. There exists no significant difference in social anxiety among adolescents belonging to rural and urban areas.

Sample

For the present study a sample of 200 adolescents (100 boys+100 girls) was selected from government and private schools of rural and urban areas of Ludhiana district.

Tool Used

Social Anxiety Disorder Scale by Dr. Ekta Nagpal and Dr. Gurmit Singh, 2020.

Statistical Analysis

The descriptive statistical data techniques such as mean, median, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis were used to check normality of the data. To find out significant difference between mean, t-ratios were calculated.

Results

Table 1 Significance of difference in social anxiety among adolescents studying in government and private schools.

Category	N	Mean	S.D	S.E _d	t-ratio
Government	100	126.03	18.44	3.057	4.40*
Private	100	112.57	24.39		

*Significant at 0.01 level

Table 1 shows that the mean score of social anxiety of government and private schools as 126.03 and 112.57 respectively. The t-ratio was found to be 4.40 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. This shows that there is significant difference in social anxiety among adolescents studying in government and private school. Therefore, the hypothesis “There exists no significant difference in social anxiety among adolescents studying in government and private schools” is rejected.

Discussion: The results show that mean scores of adolescents studying in government schools is more than that of adolescents studying in private schools, which means adolescents studying in government schools have more social anxiety than adolescents studying in private schools. Similar findings were reported by Farooq et.al., (2017) who found a preponderance of social anxiety in public school students as compared to their private-school counterparts. The results are in contradiction with the findings of Gupta, Semwal, Sharma, Srivastava, and Vyas, (2022) who found moderate to severe grade of social phobia higher among the private school adolescents as compared to government school adolescents.

Fig. 1 Bar graph showing significance of the difference between mean scores of social anxiety of adolescents studying in government and private schools

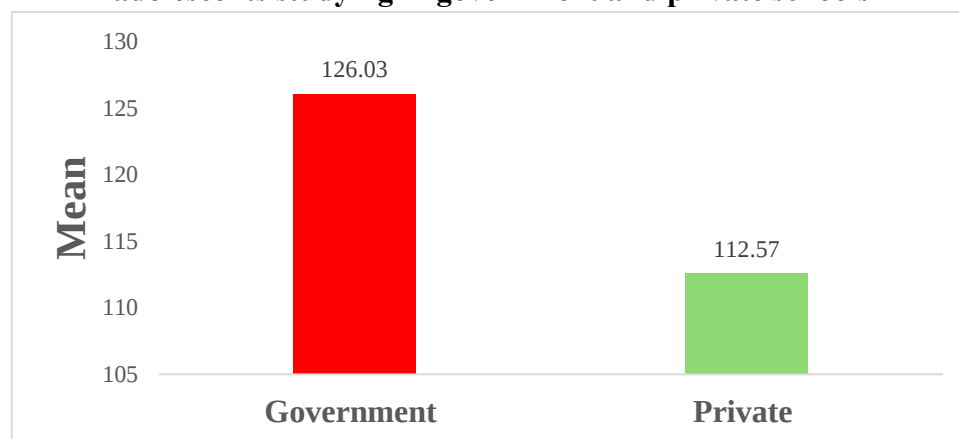


Table 2 Significance of difference in social anxiety among adolescent boys and girls.

Category	N	Mean	S.D.	S.E.d	t-ratio
Boys	100	120.56	24.15	3.198	0.788*
Girls	100	118.04	20.97		

*Not Significant

Table 2 shows that the mean score of social anxiety of adolescent's boys and girls as 120.56 and 118.04 respectively. The t-ratio was found to be 0.788, which is not significant at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no significant difference in social anxiety between adolescent boys and girls. Therefore, the hypothesis "There exists no significant difference in social anxiety between adolescent boys and girls" is accepted.

Discussion: No significant difference was found in social anxiety between adolescent boys and girls. The results are corroborated by the study conducted by Sridhar and Surya Rekha (2017), who also found no significant relationship between social anxiety and gender among young adult urban college students. Varghese, Sneha Rajeevan, and Saranya, (2024) also found no significant differences in social anxiety levels between males and females.

Fig. 2 Bar graph showing significance of the difference between mean scores of social anxiety of adolescent boys and girls

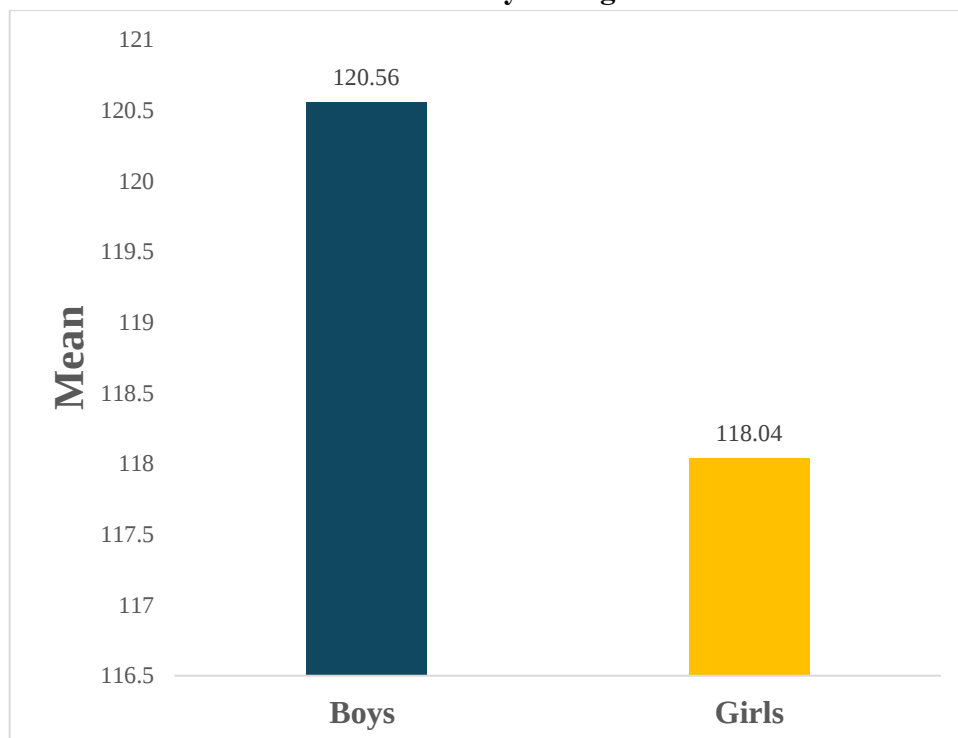


Table 3 Significance of difference in social anxiety among adolescents belonging to rural and urban areas.

Category	N	Mean	S.D.	S.E.d	t-ratio
Rural	100	128.7	23.91	3.020	5.65*

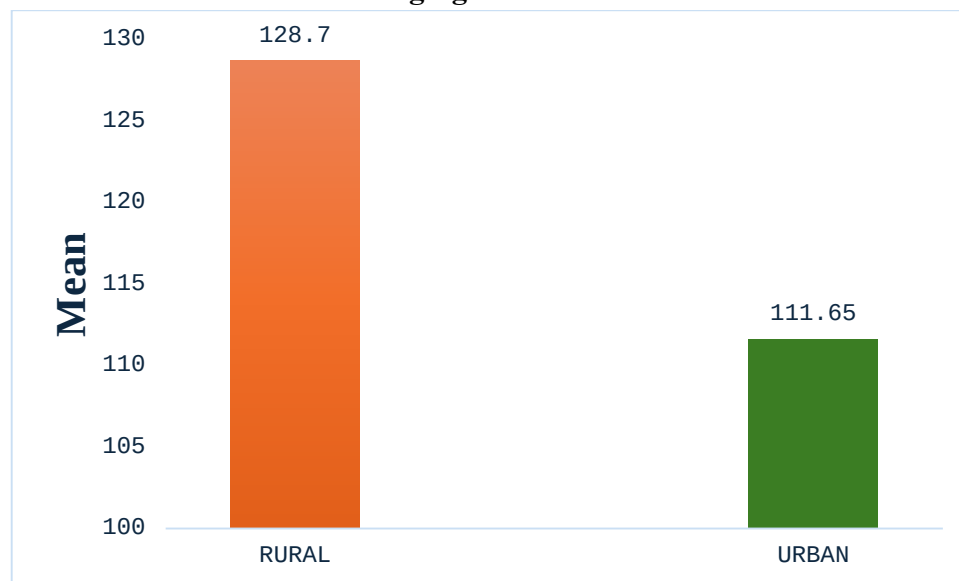
Urban	100	111.65	18.47		
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*Significant at 0.01 level

Table 3 shows that the mean score of social anxiety of adolescents belonging to rural and urban areas as 111.65 and 128.70 respectively. The t-ratio was found to be 5.65 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. This shows that there is significant difference in social anxiety among adolescents belonging to urban and rural areas. Therefore, the hypothesis “There exists no significant difference in social anxiety among adolescents belonging to rural and urban areas” is rejected.

Discussion: The results show that mean scores of adolescents belonging to rural area is more than that of adolescents belonging to urban area, which means adolescents belonging to rural area experience more social anxiety than adolescents belonging to urban area. The results are in line with the findings of Rajasekar, (2024) who also found significant rural-urban disparities, with rural adolescents exhibiting higher prevalence and severity of social anxiety.

Fig. 3 Bar graph showing significance of the difference between mean scores of social anxiety of adolescents belonging to rural and urban areas



Conclusion

The present study investigated social anxiety disorder among adolescents of Ludhiana district of Punjab and found that adolescents studying in government schools had significantly higher social anxiety as compared to adolescents studying in private school. Also, adolescents belonging to rural areas were found to have higher social anxiety than adolescents belonging to urban areas. This study warrants urgent need for increased awareness of social anxiety disorders among adolescents, their families, teachers, and healthcare professionals which will in turn help in reducing stigma, promote early detection and intervention. It is necessary that affordable mental health services should be made accessible to adolescents, especially in the rural areas. Since at present, there is limited availability of mental health services in rural areas so school teachers should be trained to provide basic psychological support to the students and can identify problems among adolescents and improve their mental health. It is imperative

that social anxiety issues should be addressed during the critical developmental period of adolescence so that its long-term consequences can be mitigated and promote better mental health.

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