



## A Study To Screen School Avoidance Disorder Among Higher Secondary School Students

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### ABSTRACT

*School phobia occurs in young children on first entering school. It can be the presentation of many psychiatric disorders predominantly anxiety. It may be considered as a variant of separation anxiety disorder Aim: To screen for school avoidance among higher secondary school students using SCARED scale child version and parent version. Method:*

*Descriptive study done in 400 higher secondary students from two schools. Results: Our study shows that 13.5% of the children have school avoidance disorder. Prevalence in females is 14.5% and in males is 12.5% respectively. Conclusion: The prevalence of anxiety among school children is higher in our study compared to the previous studies with prevalence being higher in females. Prevalence of school avoidance disorder is higher than in previous studies. Prevalence is equal in males and females which is in accordance with previous studies.*

**KEYWORDS :** School avoidance, student, anxiety, performance

### INTRODUCTION:

School Avoidance of the most common psychiatric problems prevailing among adolescence in this era is the anxiety disorders (1,2). Adolescence is a peculiar period between a dependent child and an independent adult. They comprise of 15% of the total population in developed countries and 22.8% in India. Though many are affected, it is solely under diagnosed. This is because both the parents and the practitioners themselves ignore the early signs and symptoms and hence no appropriate treatment (3). These traits can continue through adulthood and may become permanent and difficult to treat. Early onset symptoms (<13 years) have more chronic and persisting course (4,5). The symptoms may appear subtle, but they can lead on to serious and chronic illness. Though the spectrum of anxiety disorders in adolescence varies, the critical part is it causes significant emotional stress among family members and also academic under achievement in the individual.

### AIM AND OBJECTIVES

To screen for separation anxiety disorder among higher secondary school students using SCARED scale child version and parent version.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Descriptive study was done by Department of Paediatrics, Kilpauk Medical College Hospital, and Chennai in higher secondary students. Institutional Ethics committee approval, School Management permission to conduct the study in school premises and informed consent was obtained. 400 Higher secondary school students (11<sup>th</sup> standard) from 2 schools were recruited for the study. SCARED scale, Child version and Parent version questionnaire was used to access 3 months situation. One to one interview was taken with students; parents were interviewed in teacher parent meeting individually.

### RESULTS

400 higher secondary students from 2 schools were questioned, equal gender distribution in the ratio of 1:1. Analysis reveals that prevalence of School avoidance is 54 (13.5%) in child version. Distribution of school avoidance in gender, male 25 (12.5%), female 29 (14.5%). Parent version shown prevalence of panic disorder is 60 (15%) which is 1.5% higher than child version in both genders.

**Table 1 Distribution of study results in gender**

Version	School Avoidance	
	Male	Female
Child version	12.5%	14.5%
Parent Version	14%	16%

### DISCUSSION

Our study showed higher prevalence of anxiety in school children of about 22% in child version and 23.5% in parent version compared to others. The higher prevalence of anxiety in our study may be due to the fact that the students we studied are highly ambitious students with high competition.

**Table 2 Comparison of Study results**

Study	School avoidance disorder
Burke et al(1987) (8)	1.4-5%
Burke et al(1997) (8)	2.4%
Christofer j Kennedy (9)	1-5%
Saint Louis behavioral medicine institute	2-5%
Elliott JG et al (10)	1-2%
Mukesh prabhuswamy et al (10)	9.2%
Raakhee.A.S and Aparna.N et al (11)	13.5 (child version )
Our study	15 % (parent version )

Our study showed a higher prevalence of school phobia of 13.5% in child version and 15% in parent version. While Raakhee.A. and Aparna. N et al had 9.2% prevalence and other studies showed ranges from 1-5% (11). Most of the students had separation anxiety a co-morbid condition of school phobia. Higher prevalence of school phobia may be due to stress factors, school history and poor academic performances due to other disorders. As a result of this school avoidance they have poor academic performances necessitating the need of early identification and intervention at earlier stages.

**Table 3 Comparison of Study results**

Study	Male :female
Christofer J Kennedy (9)	No gender difference
Our study child version	No gender difference
Parent version	No gender difference

Our study showed no major gender difference in school phobia supported by Christofer j Kennedy et al. This may be due to the fact that girls and boys were equally ambitious these days and equal opportunities.

#### CONCLUSION:

Our study showed higher prevalence of panic disorder in the study population. This study implies more studies are to be conducted like this study and children with anxiety disorders are to be identified at earlier stage and properly counselled and treated if necessary. This is the need of the hour and to improve both the academic and general outcome of children.

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