



**A COMPARATIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE LEVEL OF SOCIAL PHOBIA AMONG ADOLESCENT BOYS AND GIRLS IN A SELECTED HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL AT KERALA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Children and adolescents with social phobia or social anxiety disorder (SAD) may live with symptoms into adulthood without ever being diagnosed. Many parents and teachers are not familiar with the signs and symptoms in children and teenagers. Here the researcher identified that most adolescents have moderate to severe social phobia. The level of social phobia in adolescent girls was significantly higher than that of adolescent boys. A comparative descriptive design was used. The participant was about 100 (50 girls and 50 boys). Modified Liebowitz social anxiety scale was used to assess the anxiety of adolescents. The paediatric nurses have to play a vital role in enabling effective identification and management of behavioural changes in children's and adolescents. This can be facilitated by motivating the nurses to learn about the identification and management of social phobia

**KEYWORDS :** Social Phobia, adolescents, children's, social anxiety

**INTRODUCTION**

During this pandemic, everything came online, especially in the educational system with schools forced to shut down during the lockdown period, and the transition of students and teachers to online teaching-learning. In India, around 250 million students were affected due to school closures at the onset of lockdown induced by COVID-19. The end result was shocking now the students are not interested to go school and all are in the internet world, no talk, no activities, nothing, all become introverted and addicted to the internet, which will be one of the most common reasons for behavioral problems such as ADHD, social phobia, anxiety, etc in children and adolescents.

Today's generation of young people is the largest in history. Nearly half of the world's population (almost 3 billion people) is under the age of 25. About 85 percent of the world's youth live in developing countries. 25% of the population in India is between the ages of 10 and 19 years<sup>1</sup>.

Adolescence, the transitional stage of development between childhood and adulthood, represents the period during which a person experiences a variety of changes and encounters several emotional issues. The ages which are considered to be part of adolescence vary by culture and range from preteens to nineteen years. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adolescence covers the period of life between 10 and 20 years of age<sup>2</sup>.

Babies first understand sensory information and coordination of movements, and then the brain develops to make children understand spatial orientation, language and communication and, so on. The brain of the 20 years old is different from that of a 16-year-old is different from an 11-year old<sup>3</sup>. Brain disorders are broadly categorized by experts into different groups. In that social phobias and panic disorders are seen in the 13- 20 years group. Social phobia, is one of the serious problem and the third most common condition after depression and alcoholism. Adolescents may have a persistent fear of being embarrassed in a situation during a performance, or if they have to speak in class in public, and get to a conversation with others, or eat, drink, or write in public<sup>4</sup>.

Social phobia is defined by a strong and persistent fear of social situations in which the person might feel embarrassment or humiliation. It is also known as a social anxiety disorder (SAD). Since the early 1960's, there have been efforts at conducting epidemiological studies in community clinics and school settings<sup>5</sup>.

Currently, however, it remains unclear how potential deficits in

emotional understanding may affect socially phobic children's detection and report of their own thoughts. So investigator from the literature and from personnel experience in pediatric clinical felt the need and relevance of conducting a study on social phobia among adolescent boys and girls<sup>6</sup>.

**DESIGN AND METHODS**

A comparative descriptive survey approach was used to assess the level of social phobia among adolescent girls and boys in the age group of 16 - 19 years. The study was undertaken after the approval of the selected school. A convenient sampling technique was used. The sample for the study comprised 100 adolescents (50 boys and 50 girls) in the age group of 16-19 years studying at a selected higher secondary school in Kerala.

The social phobia scale based on Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale for Children and Adolescents was used. The data is analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics and is presented in the form of tables, graphs, and figures.

**RESULT**

**Section I: Demographic Data**

**Table 1: Frequency And Distribution Of Subjects Concerning Demographic Variables**

Demographic variables	Boys		Girls	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Age of adolescent				
a. 15-16yrs	29	58	34	68
b. 16-17yr	21	42	16	32
Religion				
a. Christian	18	36	33	66
b. Hindu	23	46	9	18
c. Muslim	9	18	8	16
A number of siblings				
a. None	7	14	7	14
b. One	31	62	29	58
c. Two	7	14	12	24
d. Three	3	6	2	4
e. Four and above	2	4	0	0
Birth order				
a. First	25	50	28	56
b. Second	20	40	17	34
c. Third	4	8	4	8
d. Fourth and above	1	2	1	2
Type of family				
a. Nuclear family	32	64	38	70
b. Joint family	15	30	10	25
c. Broken family	0	0	2	2
d. Single parent family	3	6	0	3

Demographic variables	Boys		Girls	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Monthly income of the family				
a. Rs. 6001- Rs.9000	4	8	0	0
b. Rs. 9001-Rs. 12000	14	28	1	2
c. Rs.12001-Rs.15000	17	34	15	30
d. >Rs. 15000	15	30	34	68
The educational level of the father				
a. Secondary school	8	16	0	0
b. Higher secondary school	18	36	22	44
c. Graduate and above	24	48	28	56
The educational level of the mother				
a. Primary school	1	2	0	0
b. Middle school	4	8	8	16
c. Secondary school	9	18	10	20
d. Higher secondary school	18	36	10	20
e. Graduate and above	18	36	22	44
Location of residence				
a. Rural	18	36	5	10
b. Urban	32	64	45	90

Table 1 shows the baseline characteristics and percentage of the subjects under the study

**Section II: Assessment Of Level Of Social Phobia In Adolescent Boys And Girls**

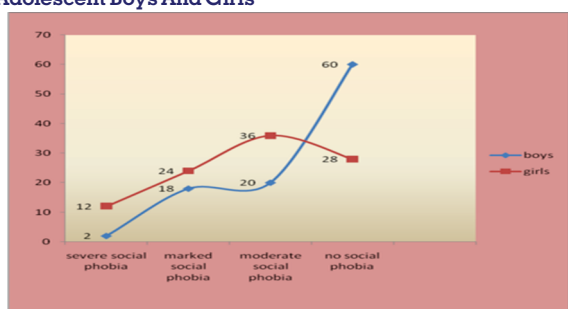


Figure 1: Line graph showing the distribution of adolescent boys and girls based on level of social phobia.

Based on figure 12, 2% of adolescent boys had severe social phobia, 18% of the adolescent boys had marked social phobia, 20% had moderate social phobia and the majority (60%) had no social phobia.

Among adolescent girls 12% had a severe phobia, 24% had marked social phobia, 36% had moderate social phobia, and 28% had no social phobia.

**Section III- Area Wise Assessment Of Social Phobia In Adolescent Boys And Girls**

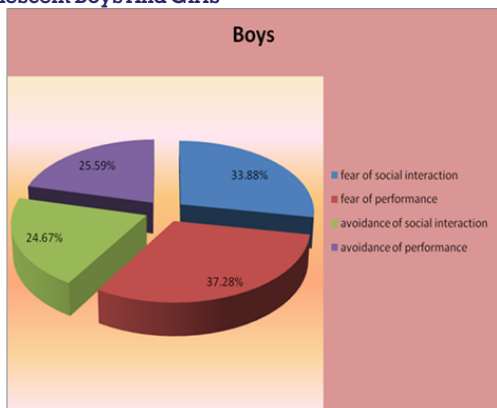


Figure 2: Pie diagram showing the area-wise distribution of social phobia in adolescent boys.

Table figure 2 depicts that the mean percentage of social phobia in adolescent boys was 30.47% with a mean and SD of 43.88±23.165. Area-wise mean percentage of social shows that the highest mean percentage of 37.28% was in the area of fear of performance with a mean and SD of 14.54 6.215, the mean percentage in the area of fear of social interaction was 33.88% with a mean and SD 11.184.818. The mean percentage in avoidance of social interaction was 25.59% with a mean and SD of 9.988.108 while avoidance of performance was having a mean percentage of 24.67% with a mean and SD of 8.14±6.276.

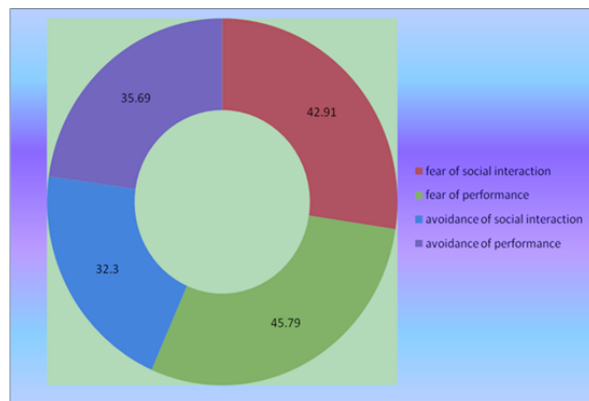


Figure 3: Doughnut diagram showing the areawise distribution of social phobia in adolescent girls

Figure 3 depicts that the mean percentage of social phobia in adolescent girls was 39.32% with a mean and standard deviation of 56.62±26.459. Area-wise mean percentage of social phobia in adolescent girls shows that the highest mean percentage was 45.79% in the area of fear of performance with mean and SD as 32.04±12.870. The mean percentage in the areas of fear of social interaction was 42.91% with the mean and SD as 14.16±6.319. The mean percentage in the area of avoidance of performance was 35.69% with a mean and SD of 13.92±8.146 and the mean percentage in the area of social interaction was 32.30% with a mean and SD of 10.66±6.847.

**Section Iv: Comparison Of Level Of Social Phobia In Adolescent Boys And Girls**

This section deals with the comparison of the level of social phobia among adolescent boys and girls. A comparison of the level of social phobia among adolescent boys and girls was analyzed by computing the mean, standard deviation, and independent test and is presented in table 2

**Table 2: Mean, mean difference, standard error difference, and 't' value of social phobia in adolescent boys and girls**

	Mean		Mean difference	Standard error difference	't' value
	Boys	Girls			
Adolescents	43.88	56.62	12.740	4.973	2.562*

't' = 1.980, p < 0.05 \* = significant (P < 0.05)

Data in table 2 shows that adolescent girls' mean social score (X<sub>2</sub> = 56.62) was higher than the mean social phobia score (X<sub>1</sub> = 43.88) of adolescent boys. The calculated 't' value (t = 2.562 p < 0.05) is greater than the table value (t<sub>28</sub> = 1.98 p < 0.05). The computed 't' value shows that there is a significant difference in the level of social phobia in adolescent boys and girls. Based on this research hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean social phobia score of adolescent boys and girls.

Data in figure 4 reveals that the mean social phobia score in all areas of adolescent girls was higher than the mean social

phobia score of adolescent boys. The calculated 't' value in all areas was greater than the table value in (1.980) at a 0.05 level of significance. Hence the research hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was accepted and the null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) was rejected. These findings again highlight that there is a significant difference between the social phobia score of adolescent boys and girls.

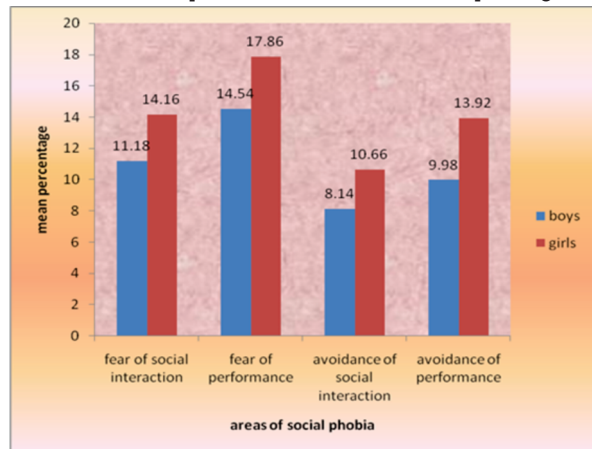


Figure 4: Bar diagram showing area-wise comparison level of social phobia in adolescent boys and girls.

**Section V: Association Between Social Phobia And Selected Demographic Variables**

Table 3: Association Between The Mean Social Phobia Score In Adolescent Boys And Selected Demographic Variables

Sl no	Demographic variables	Chi-square value	df	p' value
1.	Age	1.213	1	0.271*
2.	Religion	0.643	1	0.423*
3.	Number of siblings	1.231	1	0.267*
4.	Birth order	0.321	1	0.571*
5.	Type of family	0.643	1	0.423*
6.	Monthly income of the family	0.244	1	0.621*
7.	The educational level of the father	0.087	1	0.768*
8.	The educational level of the mother	0.935	1	0.333*
9.	Location of residence	0.045	1	0.832*

p<0.05

\* not significant

The finding in table 3 shows that there is no association between the social phobia score of adolescent boys and selected demographic variables such as age, religion, number of siblings, birth order, type of family, monthly income of the family, education level of father, educational level of mother and location of residence was not statistically significant at 0.05 level.

Table 4: Association between the level of social phobia in adolescent girls and selected demographic variables

Sl. no	Demographic variables	Chi-sq value	df	p'- value
1.	Age	1.039	1	0.308*
2.	religion	2.880	1	0.090*
3.	Number of siblings	0.000	1	1.000*
4.	Birth order	0.063	1	0.802*
5.	Type of family	2.244	1	0.134*
6.	Monthly income of the family	2.645	1	0.104*
7.	The educational level of the father	2.131	1	0.144*
8.	The educational level of the mother	0.102	1	0.749*
9.	Location of residence	0.009	1	0.925*

p<0.05

\* not significant at 0.05 level

The finding in the table 4 shows that in order to find out the

association between level of social phobia in adolescent girls with their selected demographic variables

**DISCUSSION**

**Section I: Description of demographic characteristics**

1. The majority (63%) of adolescents were in the age group of 16-17 years. 58% of the boys and 68% of the girls were in this age group.
2. For gender, the number of participants was equal in size to 50% males and 50% females.
3. The distribution of subjects regarding religion revealed that most of the adolescents (51%) were of the Christian religion. 36% of girls and 66% of boys were of the Christian religion. 32% of adolescents were from to Hindu religion and 17% were from the Muslim religion.
4. About the number of siblings majority (60%) of adolescents had only one sibling. 60% of adolescent boys and 58% of adolescent girls had only one sibling.
5. The distributions of subjects based on the birth order revealed that the majority (53%) of adolescents were in the first birth order. 50% of the boys and 56% of the girls were in the first birth order. 37% of adolescents were in the second birth order.
6. In the study majority of the adolescents (70%) were from a nuclear family. 64% of adolescent boys and 76% of adolescent girls were from a nuclear families. 25% of adolescents were from joint families.
7. Concerning the monthly income of the family 49% of adolescents were under the family monthly income > Rs.15000. 30% of boys and 68% of girls belonged to this category.
8. Regarding the educational level of the subject's fathers majority, (52%) were graduates and above. 48% of adolescent boy's fathers and 56% of adolescent girl's fathers were graduates and above
9. Data about the educational level of mothers revealed that 40% of them were graduates and above. 18% of mothers of adolescent boys and 22% of mothers of adolescent girls were graduates and above.
10. Based on the location of residence majority of the adolescent boys and girls belong to urban areas.

**Section II: To assess the level of social phobia among adolescent boys.**

Assessment of the social phobia among adolescent boys in a selected higher secondary school revealed that 60% of the subjects had no social phobia, 20% of the subjects had moderate social phobia, and 18% of the subjects had marked social phobia and 1% of subjects had severe social phobia. The majority of adolescent boys feared and avoided performances in the public. 37.28% and 24.67% had fear of performance and avoidance of performance respectively.

A study was conducted in Baroda to assess social phobia in University students. A sample size of 380 students was selected using stratified random sampling majority of the participants were in the age group of 19-21 years and two-thirds of the participants were males. A cross-sectional self-report questionnaire was used to collect the data. The result showed that among subjects with a social phobia the majority had social phobia in moderate severity (almost 70%), followed by marked severity (24%), and severe social phobia was found only in 6% of them. The most commonly feared or avoided situations were performed in front of an audience. 31% feared or avoided performances'.

**Section III: To assess the level of social phobia among adolescent girls.**

Assessment of the social phobia among adolescent girls in a selected higher secondary school revealed that 28% of the subjects had no social phobia, 36% of the subjects had moderate social phobia, and 24% of the subjects had marked social phobia and 12% of subjects had severe social phobia. 45.79% had fear of performance and 35.69% avoided performances.

A similar study was conducted among Spanish adolescents to explore the relevance of gender and age differences in the assessment of social fears in adolescence. Out of 2,543 students 1,226 were girls. A Spanish version of the social phobia Inventory was used to assess social phobia. The study revealed gender differences in the occurrence of social phobia. 33% of the girls were reported to have mild to severe levels of social phobia. The girls in the study reported more avoidance of social situations than boys. Girls feared and avoided performing in the public<sup>8</sup>.

#### Section IV: Comparison of the level of social phobia among adolescent boys and girls

To compare the social phobia among adolescent boys and girls independent t-test was used. The mean social score ( $X_g = 56.62$ ) of adolescent girls was higher than the mean social phobia score ( $X_b = 43.88$ ) of adolescent boys. The calculated t value is greater than the table value  $t = 2.562$   $p < 0.05$ . The computed t value shows that there is a significant difference in the level of social phobia in adolescent boys and girls. Based on this the research hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean social phobia score of adolescent boys and girls.

The study finding is consistent with the study that assessed social phobia in Swedish adolescents. Students aged 12-14 from seventeen schools in five Swedish municipalities were screened through a self-report questionnaire, the social phobia screening questionnaire for children. Data from a sample of 2128 students were analyzed and showed a point prevalence rate of 4.4% and a significant gender difference of 6.6% girls Vs 1.8% boys,  $p < 0.001$ <sup>9</sup>.

#### Section V: Association between social phobia among adolescent boys and girls

About adolescent boys, there is no association between the social phobia score of adolescent boys and selected demographic variables such as age, religion, number of siblings, birth order, type of family, monthly income of the family, education level of father, educational level of mother and location of residence was not statistically significant at 0.05 level. Hence H02 was accepted and H2 was rejected.

About adolescent girls there is no association between the social phobia score of adolescent girls and selected demographic variables such as age, religion, number of siblings, birth order, type of family, monthly income of the family, education level of father, educational level of mother and location of residence was not statistically significant at 0.05 level.

A similar study finding is supported by a study conducted in Baroda to assess social phobia and its impact on Indian university students. A stratified sample of 380 undergraduate university students was assessed to identify the extent of social phobia. A cross-sectional self-reported questionnaire was used. The result showed that there is no significant association between social phobia and selected demographic variables such as family income, type of residence, etc<sup>7</sup>.

#### CONCLUSION

The findings of the study proved that most of the adolescents have moderate to severe social phobia. The level of social phobia in adolescent girls was significantly higher than that of adolescent boys.

On the whole, carrying out the present study was really an enriching experience to the investigator. It also helped a great deal to explore and improve the knowledge of the researcher and the respondents. The constant encouragement and

guidance by the guide, co operation and the interest of the respondents in the study contributed to the successful completion of the study.

“The greatest gifts we can give our children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence.”

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