



Shyness Among Adolescents

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Introduction

The transition from childhood to adolescence involves many dramatic changes. Adolescents must contend with three major sources of changes: the bodily changes of puberty, the new cognitive abilities of formal operations, and new demands and opportunities caused by changing social roles and relationships (Damon, 1983). As Buss (1980) has noted, the most prominent cause of shyness is novelty, thus, it is not surprising that early adolescence is the time of greatest shyness in the course of personality and social development (Zimbardo, 1977). Shyness culminates in inadequate participation in social activities and is a major constraint in human relationship especially among secondary school students. Various terms have been used to describe the experience of apprehension and anxiety in social settings. The behavior has been conceptualized as social anxiety, shyness, speech anxiety, social phobia, social inhibition, reticence, communication apprehension, stage fright and audience anxiety (Crozier, 2000). Buss (1980) defined shyness as an inhibition of expected social behavior together with feelings of tension and awkwardness. A key aspect of shyness is that it leads to inadequate participation in social activities. Shyness has been defined as a tendency to avoid social interaction and to fail to participate appropriately in social situations (Durmus, 2007; Scholmerich, Broberg and Lamb, 2000). Buss (1980) defined shyness as discomfort, inhibition, awkwardness in social situations, particularly in situations with unfamiliar people. According to Bas (2010), shyness may vary from mild, social awkwardness to totally inhibiting social phobia.

Shyness may occur due to fear of what other people will think and say about a person's behavior. Thus, the fear of negative reactions, criticism and outright rejection may cause the shy person to avoid social situations. Consequently, shyness is a term often used to describe the discomfort people feel in social situations.

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).

This includes child abuse, particularly emotional abuse such as ridicule. Shyness can originate after a person has experienced a physical anxiety reaction; at other times, shyness seems to develop first and then later causes physical symptoms of anxiety. Shyness differs from social anxiety, which is a broader, often depression related psychological condition including the experience of fear, apprehension or worrying about being evaluated by others in social situations to the extent of inducing panic. Shyness may come from genetic traits, the environment in which a person is raised and personal experiences. Shyness may be a personality trait or can occur at certain stages of development in children.

Shyness is often seen as a hindrance to people and their development. The cause of shyness is often disputed but it is found that fear is positively related to shyness, suggesting

that fearful children are much more likely to develop being shy as opposed to children less fearful. Shyness can also be seen on a biological level as a result of an excess of cortisol. When cortisol is present in greater quantities it is known to suppress an individual's immune system, making them more susceptible to illness and disease. The genetics of shyness is a relatively small area of research that has been receiving an even smaller amount of attention, although papers on the biological bases of shyness date back to 1988.

Introversion, Shyness and Social Anxiety

There are very distinct characteristics to each and they should not be confused. Introversion, shyness, and being socially anxious each have their own underlying reasons for why a person would rather stay in than go hang out with their friends.

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 and Zimbardo, 2001; Lo Coco et al., 2018). 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). Lei and Zhang (2002) 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). At the same time, shy individuals may also show more aggression due to a hostile attribution tendency (Gao et al., 2016).

Social anxiety disorder can have a devastating impact on an individual's education, career success, financial

independence and personal relationship. Often it will lead to an isolated lifestyle and subsequent depression or substance abuse. Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is often dismissed as just extreme shyness. The reason many people don't seek help for SAD is that they don't realize that they have a recognized psychiatric condition. Statistics show that

although symptoms usually start in childhood, only about 50% of adults with the disorder receive treatment, and those who do seek treatment wait a long time to do so, 15 to years after symptoms begin.

People with social anxiety disorder don't just feel nervous before giving a speech. They may worry about the speech for weeks or months beforehand, lose sleep due to anxiety, and have intense symptoms of anxiety during the feared situation such as a racing heart, shortness of breath, sweating, or shaking. The symptoms usually do not go away but get worse as the situation progresses. The person with social anxiety disorder usually realizes that their fears are unfounded but is still unable to control them.

Introvert describes people who attend to their internal thoughts and feelings. Everyone is born with an innate temperament; the way a person interacts and behaves with other people and their environment. Introversion prefers minimally stimulating environments. Introverts can process everything in their surroundings and will pay attention to all sensory details, not just the people around them. They often have active dialogues with themselves and feel energized when reading a book, thinking deeply, or journaling. Introversion is a spectrum and anyone can experience characteristics of both introversion or extroversion. Most people are not purely one or the other, but some characteristics may be stronger. Shy people are not necessarily introverts (Cheek, 1989). Introverts prefer to be alone; they enjoy the peace and quiet of solitude. Shy people, on the other hand, want to have contact with others, to be socially involved, and have friends and be part of the group. But shy persons' self-doubt and self-consciousness prompts them to pass up opportunities to socialize (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2001). They handicap themselves; by not entering groups, not speaking to unfamiliar people, not approaching others, they deny themselves the opportunities to learn and practice the very social skills they need to overcome their shyness.

Heredity plays a larger role in shyness than in other personality traits in infancy (Plomin & Rowe, 1979), early childhood (Plomin & Rowe, 1977), middle childhood (O'Connor, Foch, Sherry, & Plomin, 1980), adolescence (Cheek & Zonderman, 1983), and adulthood (Horn, Plomin, & Rosenman, 1976).

Shyness Among School Children

Most of the secondary school students are adolescents. According to Umeh (2013) 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).

Shyness and Culture

Shyness is affected by cultural orientations and shapes the perceptions and experiences of emotion. Many researchers have suggested that people in collectivistic cultures tend to be shy or inhibit their behavior to keep the group harmony (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Triandis,

1994). Shyness is positively evaluated in collectivistic cultures (Frijta & Masquita, 1994) and, as a result, being shy tends to be viewed as being more typical compared to individualistic cultures.

Rubin, Chen, and Sun (1992) found evidence for the fact that sociable cooperative children were popular in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, shy-sensitive children were especially well-liked in China, but not in Canada (Rubin et al., 1992). One plausible explanation for this finding is that Chinese children are encouraged to be cautious, restrain themselves, and inhibit their urges. As such, a quiet and shy child is considered well-behaved. Social shyness is evaluated more positively in a collectivistic society, but negatively evaluated in an individualistic society (Frijda & Mesquita, 1994)

From early childhood to adulthood, there is considerable empirical linking shyness with indexes of maladjustment in North American and other Western cultures (Rubin et al., 2009). results from research in Canada and the United States indicate that, compared with their more sociable counterparts, shy children display deficits in social and academic competence, lower self-esteem, and greater loneliness and depression, and tend to be rejected by peers (Coplan, Arbeau, & Armer, 2008; Ladd, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Eggum, Kochel,

& McConnell, 2011). Moreover, extreme shyness in early childhood places children at increased risk of the later development of clinical anxiety disorders (Hirshfeld-Becker et al., 2007).

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.

Method

Subsequent to an extensive literature review, this chapter enlists the methods followed to conduct the study and analyze the results. This chapter highlights the objective, hypothesis, research design, sampling method, measures and analyses conducted as a part of the study. Based on the extensive literature review the following objectives and hypothesis was formulated.

Objectives

- To study shyness among high school students
- To study gender differences on shyness among high school students

Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant difference male high school students and female high school students on shyness

Research Design

This study followed a comparative cross sectional research design

Sample

The sample of the study was purposively selected from 8th, 9th and 10th grade students aged between 13 and

15 years studying in a high school in Malappuram district of Kerala. This study followed a purposive sampling technique. The sample consisted of 119 students (N=119) (54 boys and 65 girls)

Measures

The 13 item Revised Cheek and Buss Scale (RCBS13) (Cheek, 1983) 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 ($r = .88$). (Cheek, 1983).

Additionally, demographics such as age, grade (class) and sex of the student were also collected.

Analyses

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 sexes were explored using the independent sample t test.

The Independent Samples t test compares the means of two independent groups in order to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the associated population means are significantly different. The Independent Samples t test can only compare the means for only two groups. It cannot make comparisons among more than two groups.

Method of Data Collection

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 did not ensue any setbacks for the students.

Results

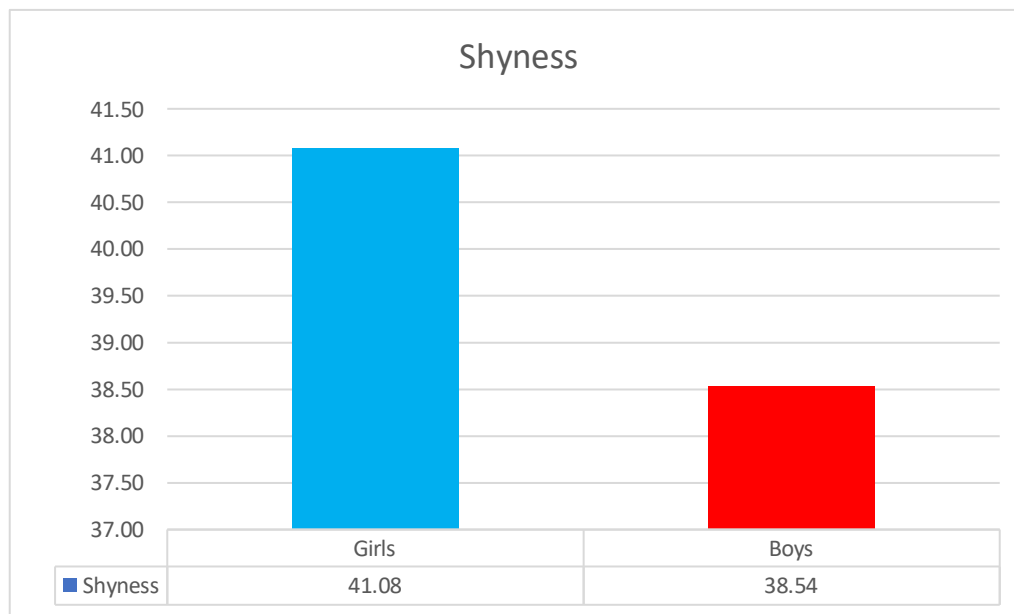
This study intended to identify the shyness among high school students. 54 male and 65 female high school students (8th, 9th and 10th grade students) comprised the sample. The data was explored to identify significant gender differences among high school students on shyness.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Mean and Standard Deviation on Shyness of Male and Female High School Students

| Gender | N | Mean | SD |
|---------------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| Female | 65 | 41.077 | 7.005 |
| Male | 54 | 38.537 | 6.544 |

Comparison of Male and Female High School Students on Shyness



The illustration in presented in Figure 1 clearly indicated that the female high school students had higher level of shyness in comparison to their male counterparts.

Table 2*Statistical Significance of Gender Differences Using t Test*

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | |
|-------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-----|------|-----------------|
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. | Mean Difference |
| Equal variances assumed | .561 | .455 | 2.029 | 117 | .045 | 2.53989 |

The results in table 2 indicated that both the groups had equal level of variance as indicated by Levene's test of equality of variance ($F = 0.561$, $p = .455$).

An independent sample t test showed significantly higher level of shyness among female ($M = 41.077$, $SD = 7.005$) high school students in comparison male ($M = 38.537$, $SD = 6.544$) high school students. The calculated 't' value was 2.029 and Mean difference was 2.53989, the value was .045, which indicated that the mean difference was significant ($t = 2.029$, $p = .045$). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

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) 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 supports Bronson's (1966) 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) Sex Role 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).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Various terms have been used to describe the experience of apprehension and anxiety in social settings. The behavior has been conceptualized as social anxiety, shyness, speech anxiety, social phobia, social inhibition, reticence, communication apprehension, stage fright and audience anxiety (Crozier, 2000). Buss (1980)

defined shyness as an inhibition of expected social behavior together with feelings of tension and awkwardness. A key aspect of shyness is that it leads to inadequate participation in social activities. Shyness has been defined as a tendency to avoid social interaction and to fail to participate appropriately in social situations (Durmus, 2007; Scholmerich, Broberg and Lamb, 2000). Buss (1980) defined shyness as discomfort, inhibition, awkwardness in social situations, particularly in situations with unfamiliar people. According to Bas (2010), shyness may vary from mild, social awkwardness to totally inhibiting social phobia. Shyness may occur due to fear of what other people will think and say about a person's behavior. Thus, the fear of negative reactions, criticism and outright rejection may cause the shy person to avoid social situations. Consequently, shyness is a term often used to describe the discomfort people feel in social situations.

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Singh and Singh (2017) 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 more shy as compared to government school students. Females were observed to be more shy as compared to males.

Thomas and Akhila (2020) studied 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) surveyed 5130 teenagers from Shandong province in China to investigate 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.

Li, Chen and Liu (2020) studied psychological security (potential affective factor) and gender differences as the two factors to explore the internal mechanism of self-disclosure among high-shy students. One thousand and twenty-five college students (290 males and 735 females) completed anonymous questionnaires regarding shyness, self-disclosure, and psychological security. Results indicated that 1) shyness was negatively related to self-disclosure; 2) psychological security mediated the association between shyness and self-disclosure; and 3) the mediating role of psychological security in the relationship between shyness and self-disclosure was not significant in the male sample but was significant in the female sample.

Wu et al., (2015) examined the moderating effects of gender and teacher-child relationship on the association between shyness and school adjustment. The sample consisted of 524 preschool students from 3 cities. Findings indicated that shyness was associated with lower teacher-child closeness, lower school liking, and higher school avoidance. Child gender moderated the relationship between shyness and teacher-child dependency. Moreover, teacher-child relationship and child gender moderated the shyness-adjustment relationships.

Methods and Objectives

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To study gender differences on shyness among high school students

Research Design

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Sample

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Additionally, demographics such as age, grade (class) and sex of the student were also collected.

Analyses

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 sexes were explored using the independent sample t test.

Method of Data Collection

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 only. 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 a voluntary basis and non-participation did not ensue any setbacks for the students.

Findings

An independent sample t test showed significantly higher level of shyness among female ($M = 41.077$, $SD = 7.005$) high school students in comparison male ($M = 38.537$, $SD = 6.544$) high school students. The calculated 't' value was 2.029 and Mean difference was 2.53989, the p value was .045, which indicated that the mean difference was significant ($t = 2.029$, $p = .045$). Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

Higher levels of shyness among girls might be due to menarche influencing the degree of shyness among girls, social stereotypes like shyness is more appropriate for girls and girls were more worried about physical attractiveness. Elkind and Bowen's (1979) cross-sectional study of students revealed that eighth-grade girls had the highest peak on their measure of self-conscious shyness (7.5 versus 6.3 for boys). Bronson (1966) has 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) Sex Role Inventory.

Conclusions

Both Female and Male Students had moderate levels of shyness, Female high school students had higher levels of shyness in comparison to male high school students

Implications of the Study

This study identified that both male and female high school students had moderate levels of shyness and female high school students had significantly higher levels of shyness in comparison to their male counterparts. 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 mediated so that students can be empowered to attain their full potential.

Limitations

This study followed and a cross-sectional comparative design. It would be more important whether maturational factors help students overcome shyness.

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

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.

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