



The effects of Socio-Economic status on the mental health of Adolescence

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Abstract

The relationship between low socio economic status and high prevalence of mental health problems has been established by volumes of research studies. Low socio economic status (SES) and poverty create severe stresses which ultimately lead to psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression and many other psychopathologies. Anxiety in the face of stress situations in comparison to the normal one lead to panic or severe fear, excessive sweating, rapid heartbeat, dryness of mouth and frequent urination. It is found that adolescents as a group are more vulnerable to anxiety as they pass through lots of changes both physically and mentally. In the present study hundred participants both from high and low SES group were selected randomly. They were matched on the basis of socio economic status, age and years of education. Their anxiety scores and academic achievement scores were compared by using various statistical tools. It was found from the study that adolescents belong to low SES status suffers from more anxiety and it ultimately affected their academic performance. On the contrary adolescent students from the high SES status group experienced less anxiety and their academic performances were better than their low SES counterparts. Results were compared both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Adolescence is a stage of crises and turbulence which include revolutionary changes in human life. According to psychologists it starts from 12 years to 13 years and continue up to 21 years. It is the time when young boys and girls shoulder new responsibilities and become able to establish their own personalities. The college students usually belong to this category. Their behaviour is full of extremes. Either they will be extremely self centred or extremely liberal. They show both the vices and virtues like smartness, lethargy, happiness or unhappiness, confidence or lack of confidence in a very high degree.

The adolescents particularly the college students feel very vulnerable in this distinct stage of life. They explore their identities, lead unstable lives, focus on their psychological needs and believe that they have limitless possibilities ahead. They focus on their performances, achievements and their assessments. They love to spend more times with their peers, explore different lifestyles and values enjoy greater independence from parental monitoring and may face more challenges intellectually by academic works. (Dielman, Shantrock, Shop & Butchart, 1990). They may sometimes experience incompatibility in their thoughts and behaviours or with the social environments and thus suffer from mental problems arising out of inadequate adaptations. Such mental problems may include anxiety (Barber, Ecoles & Stone, 2001).

College students have a number of reasons to develop anxieties. In the present study attempts have been made to find out the anxiety of college students which can interrupt their performance. Anxiety affects both physical and psychological aspects of a person which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension. Anxious students experience cognitive deficits like misapprehension of information or blocking of memory and recall. In the present study focus is given on the role of socio-economic status in creating anxiety in college students which affect their academic performance. From previous studies it is found that poor socio-economic status creates the internalizing disorders which involve emotional distress that is turned

inward and generate anxiety and stress. (Achenback and Edelbrock, 1983). Research findings also explain that lower socio-economic status is significantly associated with impaired emotional attainments.

Method

In the present study hundred subjects from various colleges were randomly selected. The age groups of the students were 18 to 22 years. All the subjects had completed their 12th standard board examinations and entered into the college. They were administered socio-economic status scale of Kuppuswamy (2017) to find out high and low socio-economic status. All the students belong to the urban domicile. On the basis of the scores students were divided into two categories such as high socio-economic status group and low socio-economic status group. In each group there were fifty subjects. Then the subjects were administered 'Hamilton Anxiety Scale' and their academic performance scores were collected. Finally the mean anxiety scores of the two groups were compared and the correlation between the anxiety scores, and socio-economic status scale scores were correlated with their academic performance scores to find their significance.

Result

Table: 1 Mean and SD of Anxiety Scores of the Subjects

	Low SES (50 Subjects)	High SES (50 Subjects)
Mean	26.72	21.92
SD	4.16	3.60

The mean anxiety score of the low SES is 26.72 and the SD is 4.16 and the mean anxiety score of high SEW is 21.92 and SD is 3.60. the *t* test of the scores shows a significant difference between the mean anxiety score $t=6.23$, $p > 0.01$.

Table: 2 Correlations of Anxiety Scores and Socio-Economic Status with Academic Achievement

	Academic Achievement Scores
Anxiety Scores	0.720
SES Scores	0.701

Table 2 shows that the Achievement Scores are significantly related to Anxiety Scores and SES Scores.

Table: 3 Correlation of Anxiety Scores and Academic Performance in Case of High SES group.

	Academic Achievement Scores
Anxiety Scores	0.535
SES Scores	0.547

Table-3 shows that the academic achievement scores are moderately significantly related to Anxiety Scores and SES Scores.

It was found from the study that low SES students experienced more anxiety than the high SES students which affect their academic performance whereas high SES students experienced anxiety which affected their performance moderately.

It is found that the low SES students expressed lack of adjustment capacities in the classroom and with the friends which predispose them to various anxiety provoking behaviours.

It is also found that in low SES families young boys and girls share a poor relationship with their parents which affect their mental health and ultimately their academic performance.

While considering various occupational categories of parents, it was found that students belong to the parents doing semiprofessional jobs experience more anxieties.

Further, it was found that some adolescent boys and girls manifest anxious personalities which are characterized by repressed hostility, aggression and anguish etc. These students are usually compliant, restrained and timid. In case of low SES group poverty was considered as the single most important social problems faced by the young generations. It leads to inadequate housing dangerous neighborhood, burdensome responsibilities and economic uncertainty which are the main cases of anxiety. (Eron & Peterson, 1982).

In case of high SES group, it was found that rapid changes in the life style, nuclear family system, more competitions in the academic achievements and careers lead to anxiety and it ultimately affect the academic performance. (Lynch, 1977).

It is also found that in case of high SES groups, students get pressures from families and societies to secure good percentage for getting admissions in the future course and to prove themselves better than others in this competitive era (Sahukar, 2011). It creates greater academic anxiety and affect their performance (Deb, 2001)

Major Implications and Conclusions

- There should be counseling centre in each college which would take up the issues of identifying the students with psychological problems.
- There should be regular workshop for students on stress management, time management, and assertive tracking and communication skills.
- Relaxation training, positive self talk play a major role in combating anxiety among students.
- Alternative educational arrangements for at risk students may be a new perspective to handle the young students (Rayle, 1998). It provides educational programmes with low expectations, low tolerance and highly individualized environment.
- Faculties must be trained to give emphasis on the student's strength than on the weakness.
- In order to reduce the classroom anxieties specific techniques must be used to ease the students. Those techniques include provision of hand notes, guidelines to provide grades, working with classmates on class assignments, support of peers during class, working with a group of research project, choosing the research project on real life situations because while doing a research project, it gives information about one's own behaviour.

Therefore, from the present study it is found that positive mental health is very much essential for happiness, goodness and for a purposeful life. It can be achieved through self discipline, positive thought and appropriate communication. Students must be trained to follow all those values so that we can spread the essence of life through them to the future generation.

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