

Social Anxiety Disorder among Adolescents in relation to Family Environment and School Environment

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Adolescence is a period of development and adjustment. It is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development from puberty to adulthood. Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health problems experienced by children and young people (Costello, Egger and Angold, 2005). Social anxiety is the second most common anxiety disorder in adults (Kessler et al., 2005). Social anxiety disorder is explained by extreme and consistent fear of meeting new people or embarrassing oneself in social situation. Family is the most important environmental cluster of variables which influence the development of a child. Family environment is the first social setting in which an infant takes birth and start learning, responding and acting. Literature revealed that both heredity and environment contribute to the development of adolescents. The present study was undertaken to investigate social anxiety disorder among adolescents in relation to family and school environment. Descriptive survey method was conducted on 500 adolescents studying in government and self-financed schools in the state of Punjab. The sample was drawn from ten randomly selected districts of Punjab. Multistage randomization was followed at the district, school and adolescent level. Data collection instruments are Social anxiety disorder scale (2018) by Nagpal, Family Environment Scale (2012) by Bhatia and Chadha and school Environment scale by Mishra (2012). In conclusion, the current study revealed that social anxiety disorder has significant and negative correlation with family environment. The adolescents, who have unhealthy family environment, are having more social anxiety disorder. Further, a significant and negative correlation was also found between social anxiety disorder and school environment, meaning thereby that, students' who feel rejection at school level are at a higher risk of developing social anxiety problems. It is quite apparent from the regression model summary that home environment and school environment would contribute towards the prediction of social anxiety disorder among adolescents both independently and as well as conjointly. Hence, it is obvious from the results stated earlier that the family environment and school environment are the most significant and influential contributor in predicting social anxiety disorder among adolescents..

Keywords: Social anxiety disorder, family environment. school environment

Adolescence is a transitional phase in human development during which individuals undergo pervasive biological, psychological and emotional changes (Steinberg, 2005; Yourgelun - Todd, 2007). The time of adolescence is characterized by high self-awareness and self-criticism and thus, can result in high vulnerability especially with regard to social anxiety and social problems (Blumenthal, Leen-feldner, Babson, Gahr, Trainor and Fralo, 2011; Deardoff, Hayward, Wilson, Bryson and Hammer, 2007). Adolescence is the most typical age of onset

and the course is often chronic (Beidel, Morris and Turner, 2004; Wittchen and Fehm, 2003). Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health problems experienced by children and young people (Costello, Egger and Angold, 2005). Social anxiety is the second most common anxiety disorder in adults (Kessler et al., 2005).

The defining feature of social anxiety disorder is an excessive fear in response to social situation in which the person believes they may be judged and negatively evaluated

by others (American Psychiatric Association, 2014). Bruce and Saeed (1999) has ranked it as the third most common psychiatric disorder. It is a common disorder with a prevalence of 12.1% among the people (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin and Walters, 2005). It is “uncomfortable and unwanted” psychological problem (Ahmed, 2009). Research found that social phobia develops in people of all ages, groups, both genders, among the people of all ethnic groups and geographical areas, one of the most common phobia among the children and adolescents (Al-Naggar, 2012). Social anxiety disorder is a frequent psychiatric disorder and social anxiety in parents were statistically associated with higher odds of social anxiety disorder in their children (Mohammad et al., 2019). Heredity and environmental factors contribute to the development of social anxiety disorder (Chandler, 2012; Cuncic, 2012). Self determination theory (SDT) suggests that environments such as family, school, peer interactions can play a crucial role in a child’s psychological wellbeing (Ryan, 1985; Vansteenkiste, 2005). Family is a primary socialization context and is therefore, considered to be a very important factor influencing child development (Ozcinar, 2006). Family Environment continues to be of crucial importance during adolescence and young adulthood (Vanwel, 2000). Many studies have shown that youngsters growing up in families with a happy harmonious parental marriage experience, fewer problems and a higher wellbeing than those from divorced or maritally distressed families (Spruijt and De Goede, 1997). Shek (1997) conducted a study on Chinese adolescents and found that family factors play an important role in influencing the psychological adjustment particularly the positive mental health. Studies have shown that adolescents who have limited family support system have low level of well being and are at risk of experimenting substance abuse (Unger, Ritt-olson, Teron, Huang, Hoffman and palmer, 2002). Positive parenting is a strategy that involves warmth, sensitivity, acceptance and responsiveness toward the child (Kawabata et. al., 2012). Zhang and Li (2011) and Verhoeven et. al., (2012) studied that poor parenting style would increase the incidence rate of children’s psychological problems and the negative parenting styles, such as overprotection and excessive interference were more likely to increase children’s social anxiety.

Bandhana and Sharma (2012) stated an ideal family environment is one where there is proper reward to strengthen the desired

behavior, a keen interest in and love for the child provision of opportunities to express its views and ideas freely, where parents not preventing the child from acting independently, put less restriction to discipline the child and not compel the child to act according to parental expectations and desires. Lakhotia and Dubey (2020) explained the child’s family environment covers cognitive stimulation, quality of parenting and the quality of the physical family environment. The central characteristic is the quality of the relationship between the parents whereas another characteristic of the family environment is the mental health of parents. Uzonwanne and Akpunne (2015) studied the influence of family and relationship status on social phobia among young adults in Nigerian universities. A sample of 400 students from five universities of Nigeria was taken. The 28 findings of the research showed that adolescents from divorced homes experience significantly higher social phobia than both adolescents from monogamous and polygamous homes. Tahirovic and Demir (2018) in their study found influence of parental divorce on anxiety level of adolescents and found that adolescents from divorced families shows higher level of social anxiety than adolescents from intact families and furthermore adolescents divorced families and intact families do not vary in their anxiety level in relation to gender. The sample for the study consists of 162 adolescents from five different high schools from Istanbul, Turkey and for assessment of anxiety level of participants Beck Anxiety Inventory was used. Gomez-Ortiz, Romera, Jimenez-Castillejo, Ortega-Ruiz, Garcia-Lopez (2019) conducted a study on parenting practices and adolescent social anxiety: a direct or indirect relationship? The representative sample consisted of 2060 Andalusian students (47.7% girls. Mage = 14.37) assessed by various self reports and found a direct relationship between maternal and paternal educational practices and social anxiety and indirect relationship between parental practices and social anxiety, mediated by negative self-esteem and emotional suppression.

Vineeta (2004) described school environment as the organizational personality of a school and is the result of interaction between the group and the leader and within the group itself. It may be defined as a set of properties of the work environment, which are specific to a particular organization that may be assessed by the way the organization deals with its employees and its societal and task environments.

School can play an important role in

addressing the unmet mental needs of youth by potentially increasing access to come in a cost-effective manner (Weist, 1997; Adelman and Taylor, 1999). School represent a universal and influential context of youth development. Based on ecological model, researchers have long argued that schools can exert a strong influence not only on the intellectual growth, but also on the social and emotional wellbeing of students (Roeser, Eccles, Sameroff, 1998). Positive aspects of school socio-educational environments, such as good student-student and student – teacher relationships, teacher support, student connectedness and classroom management practices reported to reduce the risk of depression in adolescents (Kidger, Araya, Donovan, Gunnell, 2012). The school environment is likely to facilitate the acquisition of competencies in Indian children as it is viewed as a place of learning (Rambaldo et al. 2001). The experience of school related stress such as poor performance, negative feedback from parents and teachers about school work; daily hassles in the school environment, stressful life events and negative affect states during school work were all leads to increase in depression a major cause of social anxiety (Stanley et al., 2010; Liu Y, Lu Z, 2012). Depression, anxiety and stress is highly prevalent in adolescents that leads to suicidal ideation, homicidal ideation, tobacco use and other substance use (Sandal et al. 2017). Research (Jayashree et al. 2018) evidence reveals that the levels of depression are high in adolescents and it is associated with female gender and presence of anxiety.

Turner, Reynolds, Lee, Subasic and Bromhead (2014) studied a longitudinal research on bullying perpetration and peer victimization on a sample of 492 Australian school students (mean age 15 years) in Grades 7 to 10 who completed measures over 3 years. Their focus was on factors of school climate (academic support, group support) and school identification (connectedness or belonging). Analysis of change on these factors as well as individual well-being across time contributed to understanding bullying behaviour. Latent growth modelling was employed to examine the predictors of anxiety, depression, two school climate factors and school identification in understanding change in physical and verbal bullying behaviour. Academic support and group support were the strongest predictors of change in bullying and victimization. Positive change in school identification also predicted a decrease in bullying behaviour over time. An increase in anxiety across time predicted an increase

in rates of both bullying and victimization over time. Nagpal (2018) conducted a study on social anxiety disorder among adolescents in relation to self-efficacy, family and school environment and found a negative relationship between social anxiety disorder and the five dimensions (Creative Stimulation, Cognitive Encouragement, Acceptance, Permissiveness and Control) of school environment among urban adolescents. Whereas, social anxiety disorder has significant positive relationship with rejection (dimension) of school environment. Gonzalez et al. (2019) researched on identifying risk profiles of school refusal behavior: differences in social anxiety and family functioning among Spanish students. Data was collected by using The School Refusal Assessment scale- revised, the Social Anxiety Scale for adolescents and the Family APGAR scale from 1842 Spanish adolescents. And results of this study shows that students who reject the school are at increased level of social anxiety problems and manifesting family conflicts whereas non-school refusal behavior revealed higher scores in the perception of good family functioning.

Operational definitions of the terms used

Social Anxiety Disorder

Social anxiety disorder is explained by extreme and consistent fear of meeting new people or embarrassing oneself in social situation. DSM-V defines social phobia as marked or intense fear or anxiety of social situations in which the individual may be scrutinized by others and this situation interferes significantly with routines, occupational (academic) functioning, social activities, and relationships.

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 relationships.

According to Goldberg (2014) social anxiety disorder, also called social phobia is an anxiety disorder in which a person has an excessive and unreasonable fear of social situations. Anxiety (intense nervousness) and self-consciousness arise from a fear of being closely watched, judged, and criticized by others.

Peer relationships, school functioning and family functioning may all suffer as a result of child's social anxiety disorder.

Family Environment

Family is the most important environmental cluster of variables which influence the development of a child. Family environment is the first social setting in which an infant takes birth and start learning, responding and acting.

Pfeiffer and Aylward (1990) were of the view that family climate affects the child's cognitive and social development, which in turn influences his/her self-confidence, self reliance, assertiveness, personality characteristics coping skills, academic motivation and success.

Ranhotra (1996) defined family environment as the complex of social and cultural conditions, the combinations of external or extrinsic physical conditions that affect and influence the growth and development of the member of family, the most intrinsic fundamental social group which includes parents and their children.

School environment

School environment include six dimensions namely creative stimulation, cognitive encouragement, permissiveness, acceptance, rejection and control. These dimensions are included in school environment inventory by Mishra (2012).

Objectives of the study

1. To find out the relationship between social anxiety disorder and family environment among adolescents
2. To investigate the relationship between social anxiety disorder and school environment among adolescents
3. To study the conjoint effect of family environment and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents

Emergence of the study

Little is known about the prevalence of school phobia among adolescents in spite of the enormity of its adverse consequences. Despite the high prevalence of social anxiety, adolescents with social anxiety often do not seek treatment which in turn leads to impairment in daily activities. There is a need of early detection of adequate factors leading to social anxiety disorder to reduce overall burden and disability associated with psychiatric disorder in adolescent population. The present study is an attempt in this direction by exploring two main factors family environment and school

environment affecting social anxiety disorder among adolescents as they spend most of their adolescence time either with family or in school.

Hypotheses of the study

1. There exists a significant relationship between social anxiety disorder and family environment among adolescents.
2. There exists a significant between social anxiety disorder and school environment among adolescents.
3. Family environment and school environment contributes towards the prediction of Social anxiety disorder of adolescents both independently and conjointly.

Methods

Research Design

Research design may be defined as a plan or blue print describing the conditions and procedures for collecting and analyzing data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The present study is a descriptive survey method.

Participants

The participants of the study were 500 adolescents studying in government and self-financed schools in the state of Punjab.

Sampling technique

The sample was drawn from ten randomly selected districts of Punjab. Multistage randomization was followed at the district, school and adolescent level.

Data collection instruments are Social anxiety disorder scale (2018) by Nagpal, Family Environment Scale (2012) by Bhatia and Chadha and school Environment Scale by Mishra (2012).

Description of the tools

Social anxiety disorder scale for adolescents in its final form comprised of 42 items. Social anxiety disorder score of the subject is the sum total of all item scores. The theoretical range of scores is from 42 to 210, high scores reflecting relatively higher level of social anxiety disorder of adolescents and vice-versa. The tryout group used for the scale was 100 adolescents of age between 15-18 years.

Family environment scale used consists 69 items out of which 41 items are positive and 28 items are negative in all the dimensions of family environment.

School Environment scale contains 70 items related to the six dimensions of school environment.

Results and Discussion

It can be seen from Table 1 that value of coefficient of correlation between the scores of adolescents on the variables of Social anxiety disorder and family environment is -0.40 ($p < .01$) which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. The value of correlation is significant and negative meaning thereby that, there is negative and significant relationship between social anxiety disorder and family environment. The adolescents, who have unhealthy family environment, are having more social anxiety disorder. Hence, the above stated hypothesis i.e. there exists a significant relationship between Social anxiety disorder and family environment among adolescents is accepted. The negative rearing behaviors such as overprotection, punishment, less emotional warmth and rejection are related to anxiety in children. Research evidences also indicate that the parents who have low socio-economic status and have not enough time to meet the needs of children's attachment, resulting in emotional neglect (McLoyd, 2008). Studies have shown that parental factors associated with higher levels of child social anxiety included parental anxiety, such as having generalized anxiety disorder or social phobia, parental rejection, such as parents being very critical of their children, and children's perception of parental overprotection. Similar results were also found in a study where researcher shows that parents of children with high anxiety are likely to be more protective and less accepting than those of low anxious children (Bögel et al.; Fiesta and Ginsberg, 2011). Parental anxiety and parental behaviors, such as parental over-control (over-protection) and possibly parental rejection, are associated directly with levels of anxiety in their children. Research also has shown that peer factors, such as social support, social acceptance, and quality of friendships, are associated with childhood social anxiety (Festa & Ginsburg, 2011). Social anxiety does not exist in isolation. Parental factors (e.g., parental anxiety, parental rejection) and peer factors (e.g. social support, validation) are associated significantly with anxiety of children. Understanding the connections among parental and peer factors and childhood social anxiety can help families

to seek appropriate multi-faceted treatments and to seek ways to help protect their children from the risks associated with social anxiety (Festa & Ginsburg, 2011).

However few previous studies show that overprotection, rejection and lack of emotional warmth from parents are also associated with social phobia of children (Knappe et al. 2009) and supporting another research that maternal overprotection is strongly related to children's anxiety. Overprotected children often face difficulty in building good social skills with outside world due to which their social anxiety level increases (Verhoeven et al., 2012). Further Al- Nabahni and Hasan (2015) research also shows a significant difference in social anxiety due to mother's authority and student's gender that is supported by research by Xu, Ni, Ran and Zhang (2017) which evidences that mother's overprotection is associated with adolescent's social anxiety in migrant families. Furthermore, studies also shows social anxiety is high in adolescents that belongs to divorced families than adolescents from intact families (Tahirvoic and demir, 2018). Ortiz et al. (2019) also reveal that parental education practices seem to act as a family asset which either hinders or promotes the development of self-esteem, basic attitudes and by doing this, either prevents or encourages the emergence of problems such as social anxiety disorder.

To test what was stated in objective 2, it was hypothesized as 'There exists a significant between Social anxiety disorder and school environment among adolescents'. In order to verify aforesaid hypothesis, coefficient of correlation was calculated with product moment method between the scores of social anxiety disorder and school environment. The coefficient of correlation between social anxiety disorder and school environment as depicted in Table No. 1 is -0.35 ($p < .01$) which is significant at 0.01 level of significance indicating that, the relationship between social anxiety disorder and school environment and it is found to be significant and negative. Adolescents who feel connected to their school shows better peer relationships, motivation, good communication skills and less emotional problems including

Table 1 showing coefficient of correlation between social anxiety disorder, family environment and school environment

Variables	Category	r	Inference
Social anxiety disorder and family environment	Adolescents	-0.40**	Significant
Social anxiety disorder and school environment	Adolescents	-0.35**	Significant

'Family environment and school environment contributes towards the prediction of Social anxiety disorder of adolescents both independently and conjointly'

Variable	R	R ²	% Variance	F	Inference	Step-up Regression Equation
YX ₁	0.395	0.156	15.6	95.89	Sig at 0.01 level	Y = 203.09-0.28X ₁
YX ₂	0.349	0.122	12.2	71.94	Sig at 0.01 level	Y=189.74-0.32X ₂
YX ₁ X ₂	0.489	0.239	23.9	81.12	Sig at 0.01 level	Y = 235.03-0.24X ₁ -0.26X ₂

Y - Social anxiety disorder, X₁ - family environment, X₂ - school environment

depression and social anxiety that was in accordance with the previous study by (Briere, Pascal, Dupere and Janosz, 2012) who found that school level socio-educational environment is predictive of depressive symptoms in children and this association is slightly stronger in girls than boys. School connectedness was a factor in adolescent depressive symptoms (Shochet, Dadds, Ham and Montague, 2006). School connectedness was described as school bonding, engagement and attachment as students begin to rely on family and more on extra familial relationships found in friends (Goodenow, 1993). School environment accounted for 13% to 18% of the emotional distress in various age groups (Resnick et al. 1997). Previous research studies also support the fact that poor level of education in the schools and lack of attention and care on the part of the teachers, the child continues to face the disorder; this in turn predisposes the child into social phobia (Chhabra et al., 2009). School type also effects anxiety level of adolescents as adolescents belonging to Benagli medium schools were found to be more anxious than adolescents from English medium school (deb, Chatterjee and Walsh, 2010) supported this fact by their research study. More studies also shows that there is a prevalence of social phobia among school going adolescents whereas many factors contribute to this such as school type, school functioning, parental education and it has a negative effect on quality of life of school going adolescents (Harikrishan U, Arif and Sobhana H, 2016; Sandal et al., 2017; Farooq et al. 2017; Jayashree et al., 2018). Research study conducted by Gonzalez et al. (2019) also suggests that students' school attendance problems negatively affect students' development. Student who feel rejection at school level are at a higher risk of developing social anxiety problems.

Regression for predictive efficiency

The effect of family environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents was found significant at .01 level (F(1, 498)=95.89). The computed value of R² of family environment and

Social anxiety disorder among adolescents (YX₁) is 0.156 which indicates that the contribution of family environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents is 15.6%. The Social anxiety disorder among adolescents can be predicted with the equation

Social anxiety disorder = 203.09-0.28 x Family Environment i.e. for every unit of increase in family environment, Social anxiety disorder among adolescents decrease .28

The effect of school environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents was found significant at .01 level (F (1, 498)=71.94). The computed value of R² of school environment and Social anxiety disorder among adolescents (YX₁) is 0.122 which indicates that the contribution of school environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents is 12.2%. The Social anxiety disorder among adolescents can be predicted with the equation

Social anxiety disorder = 189.74-0.32 x school environment i.e. for every unit of increase in school environment, Social anxiety disorder among adolescents decrease .33

The conjoint effect of both family environment and school environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents was found significant at 0.01 level of significance (F(2,497)=81.12). The computed value of R² of Social anxiety disorder with family environment and school environment (Y₁X₁X₂) is 0.239 which indicates the contribution of family environment and school environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents is 23.9%.

As %age variance(=23.9) of variables of family environment and school environment conjointly on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents shows increase in its value from family environment (%age variance=20.1) and school environment (%age variance=21), it indicates that the conjoint effect of family environment and school environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than that of family environment and school environment separately.

The Social anxiety disorder among adolescents can be predicted with the equation

$$\text{Social anxiety disorder} = 235.03 - 0.24 \times \text{Family Environment} - 0.26 \times \text{School Environment}$$

Hence, hypothesis 3 stating, "Family environment and school environment would contribute towards the prediction of Social anxiety disorder of adolescents both independently as well as conjointly" stands accepted.

Conclusions of the study

In conclusion, the current study revealed that social anxiety disorder has significant and negative correlation with family environment. The adolescents, who have unhealthy family environment, are having more social anxiety disorder. Further, a significant and negative correlation was also found between social anxiety disorder and school environment, meaning thereby that, students' who feel rejection at school level are at a higher risk of developing social anxiety problems.

It is quite apparent from the regression model summary that home environment and school environment would contribute towards the prediction of social anxiety disorder among adolescents both independently and as well as conjointly. Hence, it is obvious from the results stated earlier that the family environment and school environment are the most significant and influential contributor in predicting social anxiety disorder among adolescents.

Implications of the study

Based on literature review, following implications are devised: Social interaction becomes a way of life for adolescents and they spend major of their active time in interacting with parents, teachers and their peer. The call for justified explanation of their every act at home and school front especially in schools where they have to answer the questions asked by the teachers, giving oral presentations, conducting team activities etc. leads to social anxiety among adolescents which aggravates with the passage of time if not reprimanded well in time. The results of the study suggest that both family and social environment are negatively correlated with social anxiety disorder and are significant predictors of it. This provides a clean understanding of the role of family and school environment in stimulating or reducing social anxiety disorder among adolescents. It implies a much felt need of families been working with their clinicians to help children build social skills and confidence among them (Motoca, Williams, & Silverman, 2012). The need for the parents

and teachers should be educated about social anxiety prevalent among adolescents and it's far reaching negative consequences in the life of adolescents and to be encouraged to collaborate in curtailing the spread of anxiety and mental illness in children (Farooq et al., 2017). Krandeet, al. (2017). It supports the felt need to start early diagnosis of anxiety symptoms so that it would be helpful to optimize management of students and may lead to favorable long-term academic and social outcomes. The effective and timely interventions of both family and school independently and collaboratively are necessitated through the present study so that adolescents can be saved from being trapped in the vicious cycle of social anxiety.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

It is certify that authors of the present paper have no affiliations with any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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