

The Hidden Struggle: Assessing Anxiety Levels in Adolescent Populations

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescence is a crucial stage of development marked by profound physiological and psychological shifts. One of the most common mental health conditions affecting teenagers is anxiety disorders, which may have long-term effects on their growth and well-being.

Objective: This study aims to assess the level of anxiety among adolescents, identify associated factors, and provide insights into potential interventions.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted among adolescents aged 12-19 years from selected colleges at Sale. The sample comprised 100 participants, selected using a simplerandom sampling method. The Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM- A) was utilized to measure anxiety levels. Data on demographic variables, academic performance, family background, and social interactions were also collected through structured questionnaires.

Results: The present study showed that, 62% of the adolescents had mild level of anxiety, 8% moderate & 2% severe level of anxiety but 28% had no anxiety. Female adolescents reported higher anxiety levels compared to males. Key factors associated with increased anxiety included academic pressure, family conflict, and lack of social support.

Conclusion: The study highlights the prevalence of anxiety among adolescents and underscores the need for targeted interventions to address this mental health concern. Schools and families play a crucial role in providing support and creating environments that reduce stress and promote mental well-being. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to understand the long-term effects of anxiety and the efficacy of various intervention strategies.

Keywords: Adolescents, Assess, level of anxiety, college students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence period is often marked by heightened vulnerability to anxiety disorders, which can have long-term impacts on an individual's well-being.⁽¹⁾ Anxiety during adolescence has emerged as a significant public health concern, manifesting in various forms and affecting millions of young individuals globally. The prevalence of anxiety disorders among adolescents has been noted to be alarmingly high, with studies indicating rates ranging from 14% to 30% in different populations.⁽²⁾

The adolescents today are confronted with myriad challenges, including academic pressures, social dynamics, and a rapidly changing digital landscape. Research highlights that academic stress is a prominent precursor to anxiety, as students often feel overwhelmed by expectations from parents, teachers, and peers.⁽³⁾ This pressure can lead to a cycle of anxiety that affects performance and well-being. Moreover, the influence of social media cannot be understated; platforms that promote idealized images and lifestyles exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and social comparison, contributing to increased anxiety levels among adolescents.⁽⁴⁾ In addition to external pressures, individual factors such as genetic predisposition and personality traits also play a critical role in the manifestation of anxiety disorders. Studies have identified that adolescents with a history of anxiety in their families are at a higher risk for developing similar disorders, suggesting a significant genetic component.⁽⁵⁾

The transition from childhood to adulthood is often fraught with uncertainty, leading to increased vulnerability to anxiety symptoms. Furthermore, the influence of technology and social media cannot be overlooked; studies have indicated a

correlation between excessive screen time and heightened anxiety levels among adolescents. Several factors contribute to the heightened levels of anxiety among adolescents. Biological, psychological, and environmental influences play critical roles in shaping an individual's emotional health. For instance, genetic predispositions can amplify anxiety symptoms. Research suggests that adolescents with a family history of anxiety disorders are at a higher risk.⁽⁴⁾ Environmental factors, including family dynamics and socioeconomic status, further influence anxiety in adolescents. Research indicates that a nurturing family environment can serve as a protective factor, whereas dysfunctional family relationships may contribute to increased anxiety levels.⁽⁷⁾

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2021), approximately 31.9% of adolescents experience an anxiety disorder at some point in their developmental trajectory, marking it as the most common mental health issue in this age group. The hidden nature of anxiety symptoms often complicates diagnosis and treatment, underscoring the critical need for comprehensive assessments and early interventions.⁽⁸⁾ Despite the growing awareness of adolescent anxiety, stigma remains a formidable barrier to treatment uptake. Many adolescents hesitate to seek help due to fears of judgment or misunderstanding, thus prolonging their suffering. Consequently, public education initiatives aimed at de-stigmatizing mental health issues and promoting open discourse among peers and families are essential in fostering an environment conducive to help-seeking behaviour.⁽⁹⁾

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

A study to assess the level of Anxiety among adolescents at selected colleges.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To assess the level of anxiety among adolescents at selected colleges.
- 2) To associate the level of anxiety among adolescents with their selected demographic variables.

ASSUMPTION

Adolescents may have different level of anxiety

DELIMITATION

Adolescents who are in the age group of 12 to 19 years studying at selected colleges.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative non-experimental approach with a descriptive research design was used for the study. The study was conducted in selected colleges in Salem, and the population consisted of adolescents. The sample included adolescent boys and girls who were studying at these colleges, with a total sample size of 100 participants. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants.

The inclusion criteria for the sample were adolescents aged 12 to 19 years who could understand Tamil or English. The exclusion criteria included adolescents who were absent during the data collection process and those who were taking psychotropic medications.

The data collection tool consisted of two parts. Part 1 included 10 items relating to the participants' age, gender, order of birth, family type, caretaker, caretaker's education, monthly income, residence, nature of stay, and hobbies. Part 2 utilized the 14-item Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale, which assesses both somatic and psychic anxiety. Each item on the scale was scored from 0 (not present) to 4 (severe), with a total score ranging from 0 to 56. Scores below 18 indicated no anxiety, 18-24 indicated mild anxiety, 25-30 indicated moderate anxiety, and scores above 30 indicated severe anxiety.

Before the study was conducted, ethical permission was obtained from the Heads of the Colleges. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and assent was obtained for those under 18 years of age.

3. RESULTS

Table 1. Baseline characteristics of the participants (N=100)

S.No	Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender:		
	Male	18	18
	Female	82	82
2.	Age (in years):		

	17 Years 18 Years 19 Years	136324	136324
3.	Order of Birth: First child Second child Third child	50428	50428
4.	Types of family: Joint family Nuclear family	2476	2476
5.	Care taker: Parent Single parent Relative Guardian	92611	92611
6.	Care taker education: Primary Secondary Higher secondary Graduate Diploma	2226 24226	222624226
7.	Monthly Income: <10000 10000-20000 >20001	66268	66268
8.	Residence: Rural area Semi urban area Urban area Tribal area	726202	726202
9.	Nature of stay: Day-scholar Hosteller	3268	3268
10.	Hobbies: Reading books medias Others	Using Gardening 2419 53	4 2419453

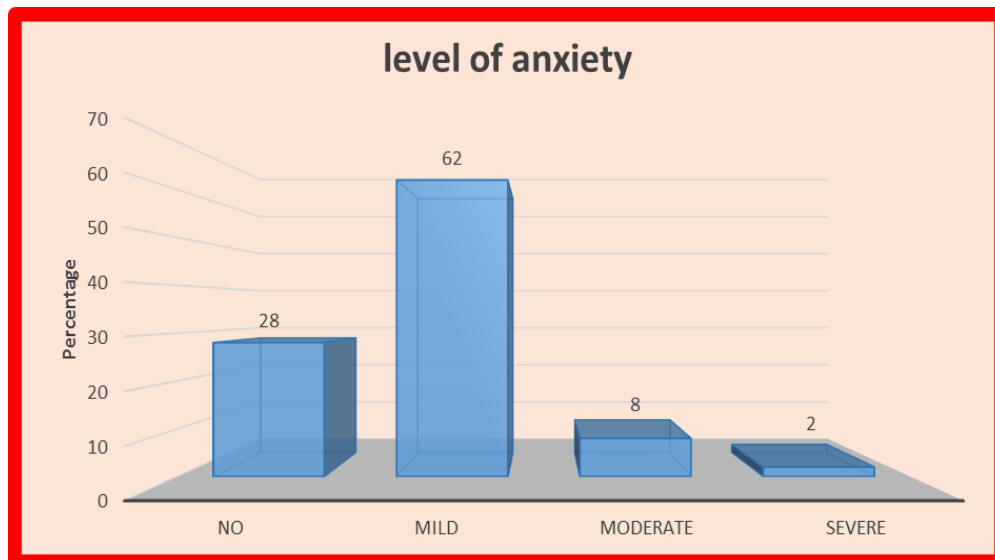


FIGURE 1: Frequency & Percentage of Anxiety among Adolescents

The present study shows that, 62% of the adolescents had mild level of anxiety, 8% moderate & 2% severe level of anxiety but 28% had no anxiety. This objective is supported by a study conducted by Laldinpuii B et al, "A study on prevalence of social anxiety among students" The study was conducted on 198 numbers of college students. Two questionnaires were used for data collection. The responses were coded and analysed. According to the research findings, social anxiety was common among students, with nearly a quarter (24.8%) exhibiting a high degree of social anxiety and 56.6% exhibiting a moderate level of social anxiety.⁽¹⁰⁾

Table 2: Association between Anxiety and selected Demographic variables. (N=100)

S.No	Demographic variables	No Anxiety		Mild Anxiety		Moderate Anxiety		Severe Anxiety		χ^2 -value	p-value
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1	Gender:										
	Male	2	2	13	13	3	3	0	0	5.11	0.163
	Female	26	26	49	49	5	5	2	2	(df=3)	NS
2	Age (in years):									2.93	
	17 Years	5	5	7	7	1	1	0	0	(df=6)	0.818
	18 Years	18	18	38	38	6	6	1	1		NS
	19 Years	5	5	17	17	1	1	1	1		
3	Order of Birth:										
	First child	15	15	30	30	4	4	1	1	1.613	0.952
	Second child	10	10	27	27	4	4	1	1	(df=6)	NS

	Third child	3	3	5	5	0	0	0	0		
4	Types of family:										
	Joint family	5	5	18	18	1	1	0	0	2.65	0.449
	Nuclear family	23	23	44	44	7	7	2	2	(df=3)	NS
5	Care taker:										
	Parent	24	24	59	59	8	8	1	1	12.9	0.167
	Single parent	2	2	3	3	0	0	1	1	(df=9)	NS
	Relative	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	Guardian	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0		
6	Care taker education:										
	Primary	3	3	17	17	2	2	0	0	15.65	0.208
	Secondary	11	11	10	10	3	3	2	2	(df=12)	NS
	Higher secondary	5	5	17	17	2	2	0	0		
	Graduate	8	8	13	13	1	1	0	0		
	Diploma	1	1	5	5	0	0	0	0		
7	Monthly Income:										
	<10000	15	15	44	44	5	5	2	2	4.85	0.562
	10000-20000	10	10	13	13	3	3	0	0	(df=6)	NS
	>20001	3	3	5	5	0	0	0	0		
8	Residence:										
	Rural area	17	17	46	46	8	8	1	1	11.68	P=0.232
	Semi urban area	1	1	5	5	0	0	0	0	(df=9)	NS
	Urban area	8	8	11	11	0	0	1	1		
	Tribal area	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0		
9	Nature of stay:										
	Day-scholar	12	12	17	17	2	2	1	1	2.59	0.459
	Hosteller	16	16	45	45	6	6	1	1	(df=3)	NS

10	Hobbies:										
	Reading books	7	7	12	12	3	3	2	2	12.74	0.175
	Using medias	3	3	15	15	1	1	0	0	(df=9)	NS
	Gardening	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0		
	others	18	18	31	31	4	4	0	0		

Their chosen demographic characteristics and the degree of anxiety are not significantly correlated. The study "Prevalence of depression and anxiety and correlations between depression, anxiety, family functioning, social support and coping styles among Chinese medical students" provided evidence in favour of this objective. The outcome demonstrated the lack of relationship.⁽¹¹⁾

4. CONCLUSION

This nursing research study highlights the prevalence and contributing factors of anxiety among adolescents, providing valuable insights for nursing practice. The findings reveal that anxiety is a significant issue in this population, with notable influences from academic stress, social relationships, and family environment. These insights are crucial for nurses, as they are often the front-line healthcare providers who identify and address mental health issues in adolescents.

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