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Exploration of academic anxiety among male adolescents

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to examine academic anxiety among male successful, unsuccessful and non-athlete adolescents. Total three hundred (N=300) male adolescents which include one hundred (n=100) successful athletes, one hundred (n=100) unsuccessful athletes and one hundred (n=100) non-athlete adolescents were selected to act as subjects. The successful athletes were those who won medals in the inter- school tournaments whereas unsuccessful athletes were those who had just participated but failed to won medals in the inter- school tournaments and non-athletes were those who did not participate in any inter- school tournaments. Random sampling technique was applied to select the subjects studying at various Government schools of Nagpur. Academic anxiety was measured by applying the Academic Anxiety Scale for Children constructed by Singh, A.K. and Gupta, A. Sen (2009). The One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to find out the significance of differences among male successful, unsuccessful and non-athlete adolescents. The level of significance was set at 0.05. Results showed statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) differences among male successful, unsuccessful and non-athlete adolescents with regard to the variable academic anxiety. Since the obtained F-value 7.285 was found statistically significant, therefore, Post-hoc test i.e., Least Significant Difference (LSD) was applied to see the degree and direction of differences among male successful, unsuccessful and non-athlete adolescents. The non-athlete male adolescents had exhibited significantly higher academic anxiety followed by unsuccessful and successful athlete adolescents.

Keywords: academic anxiety, successful, unsuccessful, non-athlete, male, adolescents

Introduction

Anxiety is a psychological and physiological state characterized by somatic, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. It is the displeasing feeling of fear and concern. The root meaning of the word anxiety is 'to vex or trouble'; in either presence or absence of psychological stress, anxiety can create feelings of fear, worry, uneasiness, and dread. Anxiety is considered to be a normal reaction to a stressor. It may help an individual to deal with a demanding situation by prompting them to cope with it. When anxiety becomes excessive, it may fall under the classification of an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety is a common phenomenon of everyday life. It plays a crucial role in human life because all of us are victim of anxiety in different ways (Goodstein and Lanyon, 1975) [1]. Generally, anxiety can be either a trait anxiety or a state anxiety. A trait anxiety is stable characteristic or trait of the person. A state anxiety is one which is aroused by some temporary condition of the environment such as examination, accident, punishment, etc. Academic anxiety is a kind of state anxiety. Thus, the academic anxiety has emerged as one of the most salient constructs in modern-day psychology and by far the most widely studied specific form of anxiety in the literature. Academic anxiety is a psychological condition in which a person experiences distress before, during or after a test or other assessment to such an extent that this anxiety causes poor performance or interferes with normal learning. It deserves its notice due to its prevalence amongst the students' populations of the world (Mandler and Sarason, 1952) [7]. Described academic anxiety as an inability to think or remember a feeling of tension, and difficulty in reading and comprehending simple sentences or directions on an examination. Spielberger and Vagg (1995) [6] viewed academic anxiety as a 'situation specific form of trait anxiety', which is explained as a stable personality characteristic and 'state anxiety' is a transitory emotional state. Academic anxiety is believed to be the trait that predisposes

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individuals to react negatively to examinations and test (Keogh and French, 2001) [5]. Academic anxiety is a normal response to the pressures of school. It can motivate students to study for tests or complete assignments. Sometimes, however, the anxiety can reach levels that hinder academic performance instead of improving it. Some students delay, others cannot concentrate on studies.

Academic anxiety can adversely affect the performance on tests as well. Sarason (1959) [8] had examined the research literature on test anxiety among school children and concluded that the performance of high test anxious students may be both facilitated and impaired by experimental conditions. Personal evaluation or threat leads to decrements of the performance of high test anxious students whereas reassurance facilitates their performance. Achievement oriented instructions impair the performance of high test anxious subjects. Observing a successful model facilitates the performance of high test anxious subjects, while observing a fail model results in poorer performance. It shows that anxiety is considered to be an uneasiness of mind. The situation will get worse when it starts interrupting the quality of life. Therefore, the present study was designed to investigate academic anxiety among male successful, unsuccessful and nonathlete adolescents.

Effect of Anxiety

The physical effects of anxiety may include heart palpitations, muscle weakness and tension, fatigue, nausea, chest pain, shortness of breath, stomach aches, or headaches. As the body prepares to deal with a threat, blood pressure, heart rate, perspiration, blood flow to the major muscle groups are increased, while immune and digestive functions are inhibited (the fight or flight response). External signs of anxiety may include, sweating, trembling, and pupillary dilation. Someone who has anxiety might also experience it subjectively as a sense of dread or panic.

The emotional effects of anxiety may include "feelings of apprehension or dread, trouble concentrating, feeling tense or jumpy, anticipating the worst, irritability, restlessness, watching (and waiting) for signs (and occurrences) of danger, and, feeling like mind's gone blank" as well as "nightmares/bad dreams, obsessions about sensations.

The cognitive effects of anxiety may include thoughts about suspected dangers, such as fear of dying. "One may fear that the chest pains are a deadly heart attack. The behavioral effects of anxiety may include withdrawal from situations which have provoked anxiety in the past. Anxiety can also be experienced in ways which include changes in sleeping patterns, nervous habits, and increased motor tension like foot tapping.

Anxiety can be defined as an unpleasant state of mental uneasiness or concern that causes physical and psychological discomfort. Extreme anxiety disrupts and unsettles behaviour by lowering the individual's concentration and affecting their muscular control. Any sporting game or contest can give rise to anxiety when one's perceived ability does not measure up to the demands of the task.

Trait Anxiety

Trait anxiety refers to a general level of stress that is characteristic of an individual, that is, a trait related to personality. Trait anxiety varies according to how individuals have conditioned themselves to respond to and manage the stress. What may cause anxiety and stress in one person may not generate any emotion in another. People with high levels

of trait anxiety are often quite easily stressed and anxious.

State Anxiety

State anxiety is characterized by a state of heightened emotions that develop in response to a fear or danger of a particular situation. State anxiety can contribute to a degree of physical and mental paralysis, preventing performance of a task or where performance is severely affected, such as forgetting movements during a dance or gymnastic routine, to breaking in sprint or swim starts or missing relatively easy shots at goal i.e. pressure situations.

For some athletes sports anxiety can be a valuable motivator, e.g., contact sports such as rugby, whereas other sports require a very low level of anxiety for successful performances, e.g. archery, pistol shooting.

Athletes can learn to manage anxiety using techniques such as relaxation, hypnotherapy, cognitive behaviour therapy and positive thinking. For state anxiety, therapies focus on the specific situations causing stress to the athlete whereas Trait anxiety requires a broader approach.

Sports and performance anxiety often go hand-in-hand. Have you ever "choked" during an important sporting event or felt your nerves get in the way of your athletic performance? While many athletes become "pumped up" during competition, when the rush of adrenaline is interpreted as anxiety, and negative thoughts begin to swirl, it can have devastating effects on your ability to perform. Before you learn how to manage the symptoms of anxiety during competitions, it is important to understand the relationship between anxiety and athletic performance.

Methodology

Sample

For the present study, total three hundred (N=300) male adolescents which include hundred (n=100) successful athletes, hundred (n=100) unsuccessful athletes and hundred (n=100) non-athlete adolescents were selected to act as subjects. The successful athletes were those who win medals in the inter- school tournaments whereas unsuccessful athletes were those who had just participated but failed to win medals in the inter-school tournaments and non-athletes were those who did not participate in any inter- school tournaments. Random sampling technique was applied to select the subjects studying at various Government schools of Nagpur.

Tool

For measuring Academic Anxiety among male successful, unsuccessful and non-athlete adolescents, the Academic Anxiety Scale for Children constructed by Singh, A. K. and Gupta, A. Sen (2009) [2] was administrated.

Statistical Design

The one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to find out the significant differences among male successful athletes, unsuccessful athletes and non-athletes adolescents. Post-hoc test i.e., Least Significant Difference (LSD) was applied to find out the direction and degree of differences where 'F' value was found significant. To test the hypothesis, the level of significance was set at 0.05.

Results and Discussion

The results with regard to variable academic anxiety among male successful, unsuccessful and nonathlete adolescents have been presented below:

Table 1: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results with regard to the variable academic anxiety among male successful, unsuccessful and non-athlete adolescents

Variable	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Value	Sig.
	Between group	79.487	2	39.743	7.285*	.001
Academic	Within group	1620.300	297	5.456		
Anxiety	Total	1699.787	299			

*Significant at 0.05 $F_{0.05}(2,297)$

It is evident from Table 1 that results of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with regard to variable academic anxiety among male successful, unsuccessful and non-athlete adolescents were found statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Since the obtained F-value 7.285 was found statistically significant,

therefore, Post-hoc test i.e., Least Significant Difference (LSD) was applied to find out the degree and direction of differences between paired means among male successful, unsuccessful and nonathlete adolescents. The results of Post-hoc test have been presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Significance of difference between paired means among male successful, unsuccessful and non-athlete Adolescents with regard to the variable Academic Anxiety

Group (A)	Group (B)	Mean Difference (A-B)	Sig.
Successful	Unsuccessful		
(Mean- 10.69)		.59000	.075
	Non-athlete	1.26000	.000
Unsuccessful (mean-11.28)	Successful	.59000	.075
	Non-athlete	.67000	.043
Non-athlete (mean-11.95)	Successful	1.26000	.000
	Unsuccessful	.67000	.043

Table 2 showed insignificant difference between successful athletes and unsuccessful athletes. However, significant difference was noticed between successful athletes and non-athlete adolescents. It is further observed that the non-athlete adolescents had exhibited significantly higher academic anxiety than their counterpart successful athletes. Similarly,

significant difference was also noticed between unsuccessful athletes and non-athlete adolescents. The non-athlete adolescents had demonstrated significantly higher academic anxiety than their counterpart unsuccessful athletes. The graphical representation of mean scores is exhibited in Figure 1.

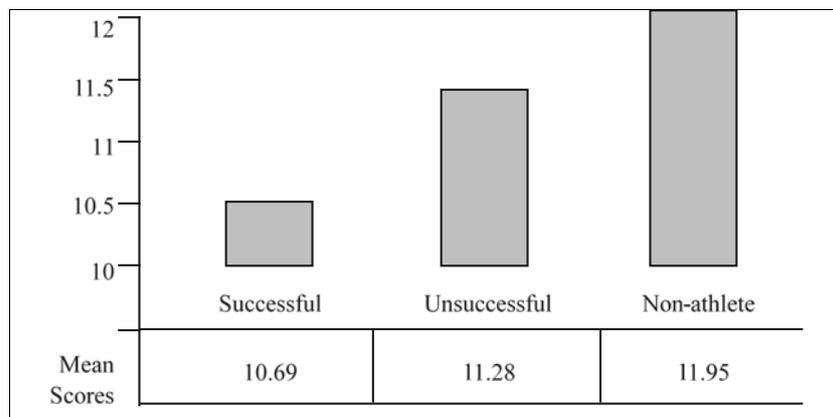


Fig 1: Graphical Representation of Mean Scores with regard to the Variable Academic Anxiety among Male Successful, Unsuccessful and Non-athlete Adolescents

Discussion

It is noticed from the results presented in Tables (1-2) that there is significant difference found among male successful, unsuccessful and non-athlete adolescents with regard to the variable Academic Anxiety as the obtained F-value 7.285 was found statistically significant. However, while comparing the mean scores of all the groups, it was observed that male successful athletes had exhibited controlled academic anxiety than their counterpart unsuccessful and non-athlete male adolescents.

The outcome of the result might be due to the fact that male successful athletes were less occupied by mental tension and also able to manage/control their negative thoughts and emotions. Because it is believed sports participation provides ample opportunities for emotional outlet to its participants and enables them to regulate negative emotions associated with the environment as well as make them to do better on the task

at hand. Sheikhi *et al.* (2012) [10] revealed statistically significant differences with regard to anxiety between male athlete students and non-athletes. The mean scores showed that male athletes exhibited lower anxiety as compared to non-athletes. Similarly, De Moor *et al.* (2006) [3] corroborated that male and female who were involved in various physical activities had average anxiety as compared their non-participant counterparts. They substantiated that regular exercise is cross-sectionally associated with lower neuroticism, anxiety and depression and higher extraversion and sensation. Schurr *et al.* (1977) [9] had clearly reported that athletes were independent, more objective and less anxious than non-athletes. Thomas *et al.* (1994) [13] expressed that there is a positive association between physical activities and cognitive abilities. They concluded that participation in physical activities leads to positive psychological outcomes as it improves learning ability, memory, lowering anxiety and

enable an individual to perform his/her work efficiently with confidence and less self-doubt.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the findings that significant differences were observed among male successful, unsuccessful and non-athlete adolescents with regard to the variable academic anxiety. It is further summarized that male non-athlete adolescents had exhibited significantly higher academic anxiety than male unsuccessful athletes. Similarly, the male unsuccessful athletes demonstrated higher academic anxiety than male successful athletes. Finally, the male successful athlete adolescents showed controlled academic anxiety.

Recommendations

Similar study can be conducted by using longitudinal design for comparing male and female subjects on all variables used in present study. Cross-cultural research can be conducted on all the variables used in the present study. Factors like daily routine, home environment, family background, and socio-economic status which could not be controlled in the present study may be controlled. Similar study may be undertaken with other variable namely, psychological, anthropometric, physiological etc., in addition to the variables chosen in the present study. To arrive at more comprehensive results, the study may be repeated on a larger sample.

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