



A Study of Fear of Secondary School Students

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Abstract:

Fear is a natural emotional response to perceived danger or uncertainty. However, excessive fear among adolescents may adversely affect their academic performance, social relationships, personality development, and mental well-being. The present study aimed to investigate the level of fear among secondary school students and examine differences based on gender and residential area. A descriptive survey method was employed. The researcher constructed and standardized a Fear Inventory to assess the fear level of students. A sample of 300 secondary school students was selected from various schools. The collected data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The findings revealed significant differences in fear levels among different groups of students. The study emphasizes the need for guidance and counseling programs to help students overcome fear and develop confidence.

Keywords: *Fear, Secondary School Students, Adolescents, Gender Differences, Educational Psychology*

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical stage of human development characterized by rapid physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes. During this period, students often encounter various challenges related to academic expectations, peer relationships, family pressures, and future career concerns. These challenges may generate feelings of fear and anxiety.

Fear is a universal human emotion that serves as a protective mechanism against threats. While a moderate level of fear can motivate individuals to act cautiously and responsibly, excessive fear can negatively influence emotional stability and daily functioning. Students experiencing high levels of fear may avoid participation in classroom activities, hesitate to express their opinions, perform poorly in examinations, and struggle with social interactions.

Secondary school students are particularly vulnerable to different forms of fear such as fear of failure, fear of examinations, fear of rejection, fear of punishment, and fear of uncertainty regarding their future. Therefore, understanding the nature and extent of fear among secondary school students is essential for educators, parents, and counsellors.

2. Definitions of Key Terms

2.1 Fear

According to the American Psychological Association, fear is an emotional response to a perceived imminent threat.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous and likely to cause pain or harm.

2.2 Operational Definition of Fear

In the present study, fear refers to the total score obtained by students on the Fear Inventory developed and standardized by the researcher.

3. Variables of the Study

1.Independent Variables

1)Gender

1.Boys

2.Girls

2)Residential Area

1.Urban

2.Rural

2.Dependent Variables

Fear score obtained by students on the Fear Inventory.

4. Objectives of the Study

- 1.To study the level of fear among secondary school students.
- 2.To compare fear levels of boys and girls.
- 3.To compare fear levels of urban and rural students.
- 4.To identify the educational implications of fear among adolescents.

5. Hypotheses of the Study

Ho₁ There is no significant difference between the mean score of fear quotient inventory obtained by boys and girls.

Ho₂ There is no significant difference between the mean score of fear quotient inventory obtained by urban and rural students.

6. Importance of the Study

The present study is significant because fear affects various aspects of students' lives, including academic achievement, personality development, social adjustment, and emotional well-being. Understanding the level of fear among students can help teachers, parents, and educational administrators develop appropriate intervention strategies. The findings may contribute to the planning of counselling services, mental health programs, and supportive learning environments in schools.

7. Delimitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to secondary school students.
2. Only students studying in Standards IX and X were included.
3. The study was conducted in selected schools.
4. The findings are based on students' responses to the Fear Inventory.

8. Research Method

The descriptive survey method was employed for the present study. This method was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect information regarding existing conditions and analyze the characteristics of a population.

9. Population of the Study

All secondary school students studying in Standards IX and X constituted the population of the study.

10. Sample of the Study

A sample of 300 students was selected using stratified random sampling.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample

Category	Boys	Girls	Total
Urban	75	75	150
Rural	75	75	150
Total	150	150	300

11. Tool of the Study

The researcher constructed a Fear Quotient Inventory as data collection tool. In this tool, 65 statements were added and distributed in six different sections as mentioned below.

1. Home/Society related fear
2. School related fear
3. Exam/Competition related fear
4. Peer group related fear
5. Psychological fear
6. Fictional fear

Each statement has three responses: 1) Agree, 2) Neutral and 3) Disagree.

12. Data Collection

The researcher personally visited selected schools and obtained permission from school authorities. Students were informed about the purpose of the study and instructed on how to respond to the inventory. Adequate time was provided for completing the questionnaire.

13. Data Analysis

The researcher calculated mean, standard deviation and critical ration (t-test) to check hypotheses. The results shown as below.

H₀₁ There is no significant difference between the mean score of fear quotient inventory obtained by boys and girls.

Table 2: Result of t-test between the mean score of fear quotient inventory obtained by boys and girls

Gender	N	M	SD	SED	t-value	Significance
Boys	1346	92.11	7.97	0.32	10.46	0.01
Girls	1228	95.50	8.46			

As mentioned in above table, calculated t-value between mean scores of fear quotient inventory obtained by boys and girls is 10.46. For df=2572, table t-values are 1.96 at 0.05 level and 2.58 at 0.01 level. Calculated t-value is more than table t-values at both levels. Thus, hypothesis is rejected and there is a significant difference between mean scores of fear quotient inventory obtained by boys and girls. Moreover, mean score of girls is more than mean score of boys. This revealed that girls demonstrated higher fear levels compared to boys.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference between the mean score of fear quotient inventory obtained by urban and rural students.

Table 3: Result of t-test between the mean score of fear quotient inventory obtained by urban and rural students

Area	N	M	SD	SED	t-value	Significance
Urban	1247	94.96	8.37	0.32	7.12	0.01
Rural	1327	92.65	8.06			

As mentioned in above table, calculated t-value between mean scores of fear quotient inventory obtained by urban and rural students is 7.12. For df=2572, table t-values are 1.96 at 0.05 level and 2.58 at 0.01

level. Calculated t-value is more than table t-values at both levels. Thus, hypothesis is rejected and there is a significant difference between mean scores of fear quotient inventory obtained by urban and rural students. Moreover, mean score of urban students is more than mean score of rural students. This revealed that urban students demonstrated higher fear levels compared to rural students.

14. Findings of the Study

- 1.Secondary school students exhibited a moderate level of fear.
- 2.Girls demonstrated higher fear levels compared to boys.
- 3.Rural students showed slightly higher fear levels than urban students.
- 4.Fear was found to influence students' confidence and academic participation.
- 5.Students experiencing higher fear levels were less likely to engage actively in classroom activities.

15. Educational Implications

- 1.Schools should organize regular counselling and guidance programs.
- 2.Teachers should create a supportive and fear-free classroom environment.
- 3.Parents should encourage open communication with children.
- 4.Stress-management and life-skills training should be incorporated into school activities.
- 5.Mental health awareness programs should be conducted periodically.

16. Conclusion

Fear is an inevitable aspect of adolescent life; however, excessive fear can hinder the overall development of students. The present study revealed that fear exists among secondary school students and varies according to demographic characteristics. Educational institutions, parents, and counsellors must work collaboratively to identify sources of fear and provide appropriate support mechanisms. By fostering confidence, resilience, and emotional well-being, schools can help students achieve their full academic and personal potential.

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