

## **Prevalence of Social Anxiety among Elementary Grade Children**

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### **Abstract**

The current research was conducted to find out the occurrence of social anxiety among elementary grade children. The objective of the study was to find out whether it is more common in boys or girls. For this purpose interviews were conducted among 120 boys and 120 girls from Central Model School and Government Girls High School, Samanabad, respectively. The findings of the study indicated that girls were more socially anxious than boys.

**Keywords:** Social Anxiety, Prevalence, Elementary Grade Children

**Running Head:** Prevalence of social anxiety among elementary grade children.

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## Introduction

Most people experience some form of anxiety when faced with a social situation. We are all familiar with that anxious feeling we have when we have to interact with strangers or speak at a public forum (Hub, 2002). In other words, social anxiety is the anxiety of social interaction, confronting social situation and being evaluated by other people. Social anxiety, unlike some other physical and psychological problems, is part of his personality and remains with him for his lifetime. If one has social anxiety one day, he will have it every day for the rest of his life, unless he receives the appropriate therapy (Richards, 2003). One of the most noteworthy things about social anxiety disorder is its prevalence. About 10-15% people in the world suffer with this condition at a significant level and it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest mental care problem in the world (DSM IV, 1994).

Social anxiety is common not only in adolescents but in children as well. According to Danette, (2010) children become overwhelmed. Rjoneslcsw, (2011) also explains social anxiety among children. Parker et al., 1995 also pointed out social anxiety among children (as cited in Cicchetti & Cohen, 2006). Adult retrospective report indicates that the average age onset of social anxiety is 10 years of age (as cited in Crozier, Alden, & Columbia, 2005). Greca & Lopes (1998) also elucidate the presence of social anxiety among children. Straus & Last (1993) reported average age for diagnosing social anxiety 8 years of age. Other studies cite social phobia approximately 1-2% of the general child population (**Kashani, Allan, Dahlmeier, Rezvani, & Reid** 1995; Mcgee, Feehan, Williams, Partridge, Silva, & Kelley, 1990). Birmahe & Axelson (2001) conducted a study in which they found that 20-25% children usually suffer from anxiety disorder. Rate of social phobia presented in medical clinics ranges from 15.9% to 61.9% (Brady, Erika, Kendall, Philip, 1992).

A large number of studies provide evidence to the presence of social anxiety in childhood particularly, in girls, which further pass through adolescence and then to adulthood (Costello, Compton, Keeler, & Angold, 2003; Mcgee, Feehan, Williams, & Anderson, 1992). In the study of Pine (1998) prevalence rates for girls range from 10.1% to 12.5% and for the boys the rate of anxiety prevalence is from 6.7% to 6.8% which declines over the years (as cited in Cicchetti & Cohen, 2006). According to Breton, Bergeron, Valla, Berthiaume, Gaudet, Lambert et al. (1999) in Quebec Child Mental Health Survey, the rate of anxiety disorder is more in boys than in girls between 6-14 years of age. A study by Fergusson, Horwood & Lynskey (1993) reported that the prevalence of social anxiety among girls is higher (approximately 33%) than that in boys (approximately 20%). Another study by **Essau, Conradt & Petermann (1999)** reported social anxiety in girls more than those in boys.

Researchers have selected this study to provide basic information about its prevalence. This study will serve as an aid to those who are interested in doing something for socially anxious children.

### **Objectives**

- To identify the group of socially anxious students in sixth grade of Government school.
- To check out whether social anxiety is more common in boys or in girls of elementary grade level.

### **Method**

#### **Participant**

To find out the prevalence of social anxiety among elementary grade children, researchers selected the sample of 120 boys and 120 girls from four schools for the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of interview. Random sampling was done by draw method in order to select the sample. Out of six, two sections from each school containing 60 students each were chosen.

#### **Instruments used**

For this purpose a specially designed checklist was prepared by the researchers keeping in mind the diagnostic criteria of social anxiety of DSM-IV and the age and understanding level of students. Checklist for the study was first developed in English and then was translated in Urdu for the convenience of students. Checklists were verified by a team of psychologists in order to avoid translation and substance mistakes.

#### **Pre-test**

Before actual data collection, pretesting was done on 10 boys and 10 girls of grade 6. By this pre-testing, the researchers identified the level of students and developed some necessary skills to work with them. The researchers also made necessary amendments in the interview schedule. Five point scales was reduced to three point scale on the basis of pretesting.

## Procedure

A request was made to the administrative staff of Central Model School and Govt. Model Girl's High School Samanabad for conducting this research endeavor. After obtaining permission visits were made to these institutes to develop interaction with students. After that, data collection was initialized with the help of scheduled interview. All questions were asked by the researchers themselves from each student individually, so that they did not influence each other. In every visit 20 to 30 students were interviewed. It was a 22 item checklist rated on 3 point scale (never, sometimes, and always) in which the maximum score of 44 could be obtained which represented profound social anxiety. Scores from 27 to 44 suggested that the student was suffering from the disorder at a significant level.

## Results

For statistical analysis Chi-square test was applied on the collected data. The results are presented in tables 1-8.

Table 1 presents prevalence of social anxiety among boys and girls. The value of  $p < .05$  shows there was no association between boys and girls regarding prevalence of social anxiety.

Table 1

Prevalence of Social Anxiety among Boys and Girls

	Boys		Girls		$\chi^2$	p-value
	F	%	f	%		
Mild (0-8)	12	10.0	15	12.5	4.246	0.374
Marginal (9-17)	41	34.2	28	23.3		
Moderate (18-26)	37	30.8	41	34.2		
Severe (27-35)	29	24.2	33	27.5		
Profound(36-44)	01	0.80	03	02.5		
Total	120	100	120	100		

Table 1 reflects that there is no association between gender and social anxiety levels. The value of  $\chi^2$  (N=240, df=4)=4.246,  $p=0.373$  is not significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ . It is concluded that distribution of boys at social anxiety levels is not different from distribution of girls.

**Details regarding prevalence of social anxiety among boys and girls are given as:**

Table 2

Body Trembling While Performing in Front of Others

	Boys		Girls		$\chi^2$	p-value
	f	%	f	%		
Never	40	33.3	30	25.0	20.195	0.000***
Sometimes	28	23.3	61	50.8		
Always	52	43.4	29	24.2		
Total	120	100	120	100		

Table-2 shows an association between gender and Body Trembling. The value of  $\chi^2$  (N=240, df=2)=20.195, p=0.000 is significant at  $\alpha=0.001$ . It is concluded that boys tremble more as compared to girls.

Table 3

Voice Trembling While Performing in Front of Others

	Boys		Girls		$\chi^2$	p-value
	f	%	f	%		
Never	39	32.5	38	31.7	0.074	0.964
Sometimes	40	33.3	42	35.0		
Always	41	34.2	40	33.3		
Total	120	100	120	100		

Table-3 shows that there is no association between gender and voice trembling in front of others. The value of  $\chi^2$  (N=240, df=2) =0.074, p=0.964 is not significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ . It is concluded that voice of both boys and girls tremble while performing in front of others.

Table 4

Dryness of throat while performing in front of others

	Boys		Girls		$\chi^2$	p-value
	f	%	f	%		
Never	65	54.2	32	26.7	18.96	0.000***
Sometimes	29	24.2	49	40.8		
Always	26	21.6	39	32.5		
Total	120	100	120	100.0		

Table-4 shows that there is an association between gender and dryness of throat while performing in front of others. The value of  $\chi^2(N=240, df=2)=18.96$ ,  $p=0.000$  is significant at  $\alpha=0.001$ . It is concluded that boys have more dryness of throat while performing in front of others as compared to girls.

Table 5

Blushing while performing in front of others

	Boys		Girls		$\chi^2$	p-value
	f	%	F	%		
Never	75	62.5	61	50.8	4.826	0.090
Sometimes	26	21.7	41	34.2		
Always	19	15.8	18	15.0		
Total	120	100.	120	100.		

Table-5 shows that there is no association between gender and blushing while performing in front of others. The value of  $\chi^2(N=240, df=2) = 4.826, p = 0.09$  is not significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ . It is concluded that majority of boys and girls do not blush while performing in front of others.

Table 6

Sweating while performing in front of others

	Boys		Girls		$\chi^2$	p-value
	f	%	F	%		
Never	52	43.3	38	31.7	9.021	0.011*
Sometimes	30	25.0	52	43.3		
Always	38	31.7	30	25.0		
Total	120	100.0	120	100		

Table-6 shows that there is an association between gender and sweating while performing in front of others. The value of  $\chi^2$  (N=240,df =2)=9.021, p=0.01 is significant at  $\alpha=0.01$ . It is concluded that girls sweat more than boys while performing in front of others.

Table 7

Sinking of heart while performing in front of others

	Boys		Girls		$\chi^2$	p-value
	F	%	F	%		
Never	63	52.5	37	30.8	11.735	0.003**
Sometimes	29	24.2	45	37.5		
Always	28	23.3	38	31.7		
Total	120	100.0	120	100.0		

Table-7 shows that there is association between gender and sinking of heart in front of others. The value of  $\chi^2$  (N=240, df=2) =11.735,p=0.003 is significant at  $\alpha=0.01$ . It is concluded that girls heart sink more than boys while performing in front of others.

Table 8

Heart palpitations while performing in front of others

	Boys		Girls		$\chi^2$	p-value
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Never	36	30.0	31	25.8	5.506	0.064
Sometimes	32	26.7	49	40.8		
Always	52	43.3	40	33.4		
Total	120	100.0	120	100.0		

Table-8 shows that there is a association between gender and heart palpitations in front of others. The value of  $\chi^2$  (N=240,df-2)=5.506, p=0.06 is not significant at  $\alpha=0.001$ . It is concluded that frequency heart palpitation is not different for boys and girls.

## Discussion

The findings of the study show that social anxiety exists in elementary school child which is supported by the previous studies of McGee et.al. (1990); Brady, Erika, Kendall, Philip (1992); Straus & Last (1993); Kashani & Orvaschle (1995); Greca & Lopes (1998); Birmaher & Axelson (2001); Alden & Columbia (2005); Cicchetti & Cohen (2006); Danette (2010); Rjoneslcsw (2011). The results of the present study are thus, in accordance with the previous studies carried out in other parts of the world. The physical symptoms of social anxiety in children were body trembling, voice trembling, dryness of throat, blushing, sweating, and heart sinking and heart palpitations. According to a study by Richards (2003), people with social anxiety show different symptoms. Blushing, sweating, freezing and heart sinking are some of the common symptoms present in socially anxious children, so present study strengthens the previous study.

Another finding of the present study is that girls are more anxious than boys. Previous studies by Feehan, William, & Anderson (1992); Fergusson, Horwood, & Lynskey (1993); **Essau, Conradt, & Petermann (1999)** & Costello et al. (2003) also show that prevalence of social anxiety among girls is higher than those in boys so the results of the present study are in accordance with previous findings.



## Limitations

As this study was conducted on only the students of grade 6 thus the findings of the study should not be generalized with students other than grade 6.

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