

Comparative Study

A Comparative Study of High and Low Anxious Adolescents with Regard to Their Self-Handicapping Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Jones and Berglas in 1978 used the term “self-handicapping” to describe the situation when people feel uncertain about their performance, they tend to reduce their effort, so that blame for not performing well would go to not putting enough efforts instead of their ability. In this way they externalize their failure to protect their self. In the present study an effort was made to compare the high and low anxious peoples with regard to their level of self- handicapping behaviour. It was hypothesized that both the groups will differ significantly in terms of their level of self- handicapping. The sample of present study consisted of 300 students of class XI studying in different C.B.S.E Schools located in Meerut city, India. A State-Trait Anxiety Inventory constructed and standardized by Dr. Roma Pal and Govind Tiwari was used to measure the level of anxiety among students and to measure self-handicapping, a scale was prepared by the researcher, based on Rhodwalt’s self-handicapping scale. On the basis of scores on State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, students were divided into two groups i.e., high anxiety and low anxiety group with the help of calculated median value. Result showed that both the groups significantly differ with regard to their level of self-handicapping behaviour. It was observed that high state and trait anxiety groups have scored significantly higher on self-handicapping ($p < .01$) in comparison to low state and trait anxiety groups. To conclude, it can be said that the result of the present study indicates a significant effect of anxiety on self-handicapping behavior whether related to a specific situation or experienced in a generalized manner as high anxious students reported high self- handicapping in comparison to low anxious students.

Keywords: *Anxiety, self- handicapping, Adolescents, State anxiety.*

Self-handicapping is a strategy used to avoid hurting self- esteem, when people anticipate not performing well on a given task or situation by actually reducing their effort (Kolditz and Arkin, 1982). It was first theorized by Edward E. Jones and Steven Berglas (1978) according to whom , self-handicaps are obstacles which an individual creates, or claim, fearing failing any performance (Feick, & Rhodewalt, 1997).

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In situations where a threat is seen for self – esteem, an individual whether a student or an athlete may indulge in self- handicapping behaviours to protect their self-image.

There are many different ways of self-handicapping for example, people can make a task harder for themselves, so that if they fail, they can blame the obstacles not themselves. This type of self-handicapping is known as behavioral handicapping, in which the individual actually creates obstacles to performance (Leary, and Shepperd, 1986). Few examples of behavioral handicaps are, consumption of alcohol (Tucker et.al. 1981), selecting goals in such a way that they are not attainable (Greenberg, 1985), and not practicing a given task or technique (Harris, and Snyder, 1986).

Another way of self-handicapping is making use of justifications and excuses as the reason for their failure. In claimed self-handicapping a person declares about experiencing anxiousness, nervousness, various physical and psychological symptoms of not feeling well before the performance (Smith, Snyder, and Perkins, 1983).

Thompson, (2004) found in a study the adverse effects of non-contingent success for high self-handicappers, as following non-contingent success, high self-handicappers reported greater anxiety, more unproductive attributions and claimed more handicaps than low self-handicappers. ÜmitSahranc, (2011) observed that self-handicapping is related to negative emotional mood states in a sample of university students. Students high in self-handicapping are more likely to be vulnerable related to factors of depression, anxiety, and stress. **On the other hand, some** theorists have suggested that self-handicapping can decrease performance anxiety by reducing pressure to perform well (Leary and Shepperd, 1986; Snyder, 1990).

Objective

- To compare adolescents with high and low state anxiety with regard to their level of self- handicapping.
- To compare adolescents with high and low trait anxiety with regard to their level of self- handicapping.

Hypotheses

- Adolescents with high and low state anxiety will differ significantly with regard to their level of self- handicapping.
- Adolescents with high and low trait anxiety will differ significantly with regard to their level of self- handicapping.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample of study consisted of 300 adolescents (150 males and 150 females) within the age group of 13-17 years studying in different C.B.S.E. Schools located in Meerut city, India.

Measures

A scale of self-handicapping was prepared on the basis of Rhodwalt's self-handicapping scale by the researcher and administrated to find out the level of self-handicapping in students. Reliability of the scale was 0.75 and Factorial validity was established for the scale which was also found high.

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The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory constructed and standardized by Dr. Roma Pal and GovindTiwari (1984) was used to measure State Anxiety among adolescents. Test- retest reliability for the total test was 0.73. Concurrent validity was established with IPAT and TAMS and coefficient was found between 0.73 and 0.81.

Procedure

Students were oriented about the research and were willing to participate in the research. After getting their consent tests were administrated in two sessions. In first session self-handicapping scale was given and when students completed the test, state anxiety inventory was administered after a short break.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data subjected to appropriate statistical analysis. The t- test was employed to analyze the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the present study adolescents were compared on the bases of their state and trait anxiety, to find out whether there is a significant difference between high and low state anxiety groups and trait anxiety groups with regard to Self-handicapping. Respondents were classified as either high or low in state and trait anxiety separately through a median split procedure. The findings are presented in table no.1 and table no. 2 respectively.

Table No.1. Comparison of Adolescents with High and Low State Anxiety with Regard to Their Self- handicapping Behavior. (N=300)

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t- value
High State Anxiety	160	106.03	12.67	6.62**
Low State Anxiety	140	95.83	14.01	

*df = 298, **significant at 0.01 level*

The data as presented in table no.1 revealed that on state anxiety dimension, the respondents of high anxiety group have scored significantly higher (Mean = 106.03) in comparison to the respondents with low anxiety group (Mean = 95.83). The comparison between the two Means has yielded a t-value of 6.62, which was found significant at .01 level of confidence.

Table No.2. Comparison of Adolescents with High and Low Trait Anxiety with Regard to Their Self- handicapping Behavior. (N=300)

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t- value
High Trait Anxiety	160	106.68	10.93	7.69**
Low Trait Anxiety	140	95.09	15.07	

*df = 298, **significant at 0.01 level*

The data as presented in table no.2 revealed that on trait anxiety dimension, the respondents of high anxiety group have scored significantly higher (Mean = 106.68) in comparison to the respondents with low anxiety group (Mean = 95.09). The comparison between the two Means has yielded a t-value of 7.69, which was found significant at .01 level of confidence.

The statistical analysis indicates that adolescents with high state anxiety tend to use self-handicapping more than adolescents with low state anxiety. It Means, when adolescent feels heightened tension or anxiety before performing on any task in any particular situation,

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where evaluation is attached, he/she tends to self-handicap more. They exhibit self-handicapping behavior such as going out with friends rather than studying before an important exam. Similarly, adolescents with high trait anxiety, who have a tendency in general to perceive situations as threatening, tend to use self-handicapping more than low trait anxiety group. Both hypotheses made earlier in this regard were supported by the results.

Result of the present study is supported by some previous researches which suggested that trait competition anxiety is positively correlated with situational manifestations of claimed self-handicapping (Ferrand, Champely and Brunel, 2005), and that state competition anxiety is positively correlated with trait measures of self-handicapping (Prapavessis, et.al.2003).

Ryska, et. al. (1998) found that both high trait and situational self-handicappers demonstrate elevated state anxiety immediately prior to competition. Results are discussed in relation to the possible role of state anxiety as a salient self-handicapping strategy within competitive sport. In a study done by Jia et.al. (2021) a positive correlation of self-handicapping with academic anxiety and procrastination was emerged. Barutçu and Demir (2020) done a research on undergraduate university students and found test anxiety as a significant predictor of self-handicapping.

It can be concluded that adolescents with high state anxiety self-handicap more than adolescents with low state anxiety similarly, adolescents with high trait anxiety were high on self-handicapping behaviours in comparison to adolescents who are low in trait anxiety. Adolescents who are more anxious about their performance and self-image are more likely to attempt self-handicapping behavior to protect their self-esteem and it could be situation specific or a generalized view of situations and people around as threatening.

Findings of the present research are very encouraging and have great implication for students, sports persons and even to all of us, as at some point we have to perform on one or the other task. As anxiety is increasing self-handicapping behavior, it restricts us to reach our potential by actually curtailing required efforts. So, it is important to understand the nature of our anxiety and deal with it to reduce self-handicapping, which needs further exploration.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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