

Fear of Failure and Substance Abuse among Competitive Exam Aspirants: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the current study was to investigate the association between substance abuse and fear of failure in young adults in India preparing for competitive exams. A sample of 207 respondents from diverse regions of India was selected using a non-probability purposive selection technique. Fear of failure was measured using the performance appraisal failure inventory (Conroy, D. E. 2001). And the TAPS Tool (McNeely J et al., 2016) to measures the use of drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, prescription medications, and others. It was predicted that there would not be a relationship between substance misuse and fear of failure. The data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation. According to the findings, substance abuse and fear of failure are not significantly correlated with one another. This study also demonstrated how sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender affect substance abuse and the fear of failure using an independent sample t-test. There was discussion about ramifications and restrictions.

Keywords: *fear of failure, substance abuse, young adults, competitive entrance examinations*

"Fear of failure is a motive to avoid failing in contexts where performance is evaluated based on anticipated embarrassment upon failure" (Atkinson, 1957).

The fear of failure stems from the conviction that you are not or will not be "good enough," and that you will let yourself or other people down in your life. It is a much more pervasive reaction to the idea that you won't measure up than simply being terrified to perform poorly on a task. Extreme concern, pessimistic thoughts, and a reluctance or unwillingness to put forth effort toward a task or goal are all symptoms of fear of failure.

According to the definitions given in the research by Elliot and Sheldon, the intrinsic energy of Fear of failure might serve as the impetus for avoiding a bad scenario. FoF was described as failure-avoidance motivation in early theories of accomplishment motivation in order to avoid the feelings of shame and humiliation brought on by failure (Elliot, Sheldon.1997). So, in the concept of an anticipating capacity regarding the detrimental influence in evaluative or achievement settings, FoF was regarded as a one-dimensional personality feature. Two accomplishment orientations were proposed: encouraging the person to avoid failure and

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encouraging them to seek success. By doing this, FoF and the urge for achievement were conceptualized as two separate motivators. (Langens, T.A, 2002). The origins of the symptoms of failure fear are covered in this article. It also looks at possible remedies and ways to avoid letting your fear hold you back.

According to the World Health Organization, “when they are able to function well, reach their full potential, and manage the rigors of everyday life.” Only a few students in India can display this ability. Every day, six to seven kids commit themselves as a result of receiving inadequate grades. Due to the pressure to do well on competitive tests like the CA exams, Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), National Eligibility Cumulative Entrance Test (NEET), and other significant entrance exams, students are suffering from depression (Sindwani, 2019). Due to competitive exams that assess students' relative performance, pressure for many pupils increases. Due to the high competition for jobs in engineering, medicine, the civil service, chartered accounting, etc. among Indians, they are extremely terrified of being rejected. Additionally, improper benchmarking and effort mismatch contribute to stress among medicine, civil service and JEE aspirants.

The tendency of substance usage behaviours to alter over time is well known. Both licit and illicit drug usage have substantial negative effects on public health, and our nation now has ample proof of this. Numerous substances of abuse have national-level prevalence estimates, although regional variances are quite noticeable. Young adults and adolescents using drugs are becoming a bigger matter of concern. The goal of early neurobiological research has been to identify those who are most susceptible to alcoholism (NL Schramm-Sapyta, 2009). Clinical studies in the field have mostly concentrated on comorbidity caused by alcohol and other drugs. The amount of research on pharmaceutical and psychosocial therapies is unfortunately small. Studies on the course and outcomes highlight this group's need for improved follow-up. A lot still needs to be done on the ground to prevent and address the spectrum of problems brought on by substance use, despite the constant criticism of the lack of a comprehensive policy and the many ideas given. (S Jhanjee, 2014).

Need and Significance

Fear, whether of success or failure, is the cause of failure. Unfortunately, even if it seems unjust, this is the situation. Many students let their fear keep them from taking the required steps that will help them succeed academically. (NSHSS, 2020)

Some students give up on their studies and quit trying out of fear of failing, which causes them to stop trying. They believe they won't have to worry about making a mistake if they don't try. This kind of anxiety may be experienced by students who are overachievers or who lack academic confidence. Teachers can assist students in overcoming their fear of failing by letting them know that they can learn from failure when it occurs. The peak years for substance use, including alcohol, cocaine, and marijuana, are often between the ages of 18 and late 20s. During this point in their lives, people typically leave their parents behind to enter college, join the military, start a career, or establish their own family. Although everyone takes their own route, it is undeniable that adolescence is a time of change and occasionally stress.

METHOD

Aim:

To understand the relationship between fear of failure and substance abuse among young adults preparing for competitive examinations.

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Objectives:

- To assess the significant relationship between fear of failure and substance abuse.
- To assess the significant gender differences in the score of Fear of Failure among young adults preparing for competitive entrance examination.
- To assess the significant gender differences in the score of substance abuse among young adults preparing for competitive entrance examination.

Hypothesis

H01: There will be no significant correlation between fear of failure and substance abuse

H02: There will be no significant gender difference in the score of Fear of Failure

H03: There will be no significant gender difference on their score of Substance abuse.

Variables

- Independent variable: Fear of failure
- Dependent variable: Substance abuse

Demographic variable

- Gender
- Socioeconomic Status
- Age
- Marital Status
- Occupational Status

Sampling technique

A non- probability method was employed to collect the desired sample size using purposive sampling technique. The sample of the study was of young adults between the age of 18 to 26 who are currently preparing for competitive entrance examinations and residing in India.

Geographical area

The sample collected include participants aged 18 to 26 from all over India.

Procedure

The main source for primary data was to use the questionnaire method. Standard scales were used for the same:

- The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Pfai)
- The Tobacco, Alcohol, Prescription Medications, and other Substance (TAPS) Tool
- Google Forms for collecting sociodemographic details

Sample distribution

The sample size for this study was 207 in total. That includes young adults between 18-26 years old preparing for competitive examinations.

University of the study

Young adults under the age 18 to 26, who are currently preparing for competitive entrance examinations and are currently residing in India.

Tools For Study

- **The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PfaI):** The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) is a multidimensional measure of cognitive-motivational-relational appraisals associated with fear of failure (FF). the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the entire scale of PFAI was alpha= 0.798 (N= 300) with 25 items in the scale. coefficient of reliability (0.798) and Index of reliability (0.893) values were obtained. Calibration sample analyses reduced the PFAI to 25 items measuring five appraisals in a higher-order factor structure that demonstrated tight cross-validity in the second half of the sample. The five aversive consequences of failure assessed by the PFAI included (a) experiencing shame and embarrassment, (b) devaluing one’s self-estimate, (c) having an uncertain future, (d) important others losing interest, and € upsetting important others. A five-item short form also demonstrated tight cross-validity.
- **The Tobacco, Alcohol, Prescription medications, and other Substance (TAPS) Tool:** The Tobacco, Alcohol, Prescription medications, and other Substance [TAPS] Tool consists of a 4-item screening for tobacco use, alcohol use, prescription medication misuse, and illicit substance use in the past year and brief assessment (modified version of the ASSIST-Lite (Ali et al., 2013). TAPS Tool had a sensitivity of 0.93 (95% CI 0.90–0.95) and specificity 0.87 (95% CI 0.85–0.89) for tobacco, and a sensitivity of 0.74 (95% CI 0.70–0.78), specificity 0.79 (95% CI 0.76–0.81) for alcohol. The TAPS Tool was developed and validated so that health systems will have the option of using either a screen or a combined screen and brief assessment tool, as directed by the needs of their patient populations and clinical settings (McNeely et al., 2016). The instrument is available for use in the public domain; research was supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Design

This study was a quantitative correlational study exploring the correlation between Fear of failure and substance abuse among young adults who are aspiring to take competitive exams. At the same time, this study explores the difference caused by gender in both variables. The descriptive statistics were computed using the SPSS software

RESULTS

Table 1 Table showing the descriptives statistics of fear of failure and substance abuse

	Fear of Failure	Substance abuse
Mean	1.98	4.59
Std. Deviation	2.636	7.122
Minimum	-3.91	0
Maximum	10	32

The central limit theorem (CLT) of probability theory states that, under the assumption that all samples are of equal size and regardless of the population's actual distribution shape, the distribution of a sample variable approaches a normal distribution (i.e., a "bell curve") as the sample size increases. (ganti, 2023)

Therefore, as the sample size is n = 207 which is greater the 30, 207>30 based on the above-mentioned central limit theorem, parametric tests will be performed for analysis of the data.

Table 2 Table showing the correlation between fear of failure and substance abuse

Variables		Substance abuse
Fear of failure	Pearson Correlation	.057

In this research, we analyzed to understand the relationship between fear of failure and substance abuse. Table 3 includes a correlation matrix presenting the correlations of fear of failure and substance abuse. Fear of failure was not significant and positively associated the substance abuse ($r = .057, p > .05$).

Therefore, it can be said that there is not a significant relationship between fear of failure and substance abuse. It shows that the score of the fear of failure test does not have any significant relation with scores of substance abuse.

Thus, the hypothesis stating there will be significant relationship between fear of failure and substance abuse is not supported. The possible causes for this could be boredom, face-to-face interaction, fatigue, tiredness etc.

Table 3 Gender differences in fear of failure and substance abuse

Variables	Males		Females		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Fear of failure	2.26	2.55	1.62	2.70	1.76	0.80
Substance abuse	4.53	6.68	4.67	7.67	-.144	.886

In the table above, fear of failure and substance abuse have p values of 0.80 and .886 respectively, which are > 0.05 and hence are non-significant, rejecting the hypothesis which states that there is a significant gender difference between males and females in fear of failure and substance abuse.

SUMMARY

The study hypothesized to compare the difference in the mean of the sample for the score of fear of failure and substance abuse Score using the, correlation to check the relationship between fear of failure and substance abuse. The findings of the correlation.

Data was collected from all over India. 207 responses in total were collected. Google Forms was utilized to collect the data, as well as standardized scales like performance failure appraisal inventory (PFAI) and The Tobacco, Alcohol, Prescription medications, and other Substance (TAPS) Tool were used. the purposive sampling technique was used to get the sample. Before a participant could fill out the socio-demographic information and the rest of the questionnaire, informed consent had to be obtained. The software SPSS was used to analyze the data. The means and standard deviations were determined using descriptive statistics. To comprehend the correlation and link between the variables Pearson's correlation were utilized. Here are some studies which offer some insights to infer the findings.

Substance abuse is a habit that has been associated with numerous health risks, including heart disease, cancer, respiratory illnesses, and premature death. In addition to its physical effects, tobacco use can also have a significant impact on an individual's mental health and emotional well-being. One such impact is the fear of failure that may be associated with tobacco use.

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(National institute of alcohol abuse and Alcoholism, 2007). Research has shown that individuals who use substances like drugs and alcohol are more likely to experience feelings of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. These feelings can be intensified by the fear of failure, which may manifest as a fear of not being able to quit smoking or a fear of the negative health consequences of tobacco use. This fear can lead to a cycle of negative thoughts and behaviors, making it difficult for individuals to break free from their tobacco addiction. (R.sinha, 2008) . Research on the relationship between tobacco and alcohol use and fear of failure has yielded mixed results. Some studies have suggested a positive association between these variables, while others have found no significant relationship.

CONCLUSION

The quantitative correlational design study followed a non-random purposive sampling method to collect sample N=207. The tools used measure the fear of failure and substance abuse score. The correlation tests showed that there was no significant relationship between the two scores ($r = .057 = .415$, $p < .05$). two tailed independent sample t test was done to find out gender differences in fear of failure and substance abuse have p values of 0.80 and .886 respectively, which are > 0.05 and hence is no significant difference between male and female in fear of failure and substance abuse.

Implication

The study obtained above has various theoretical and practical implications. Competitive examinations are the most focused yet the most disregarded topic in India. The expectations of parents, teachers, extended family, and society from students are growing day by day. And with expectations come fear of failure. And to cope with those fear of disappointment, fear of shame and fear of embarrassment, students start with negative coping mechanism such as alcohol, smoking, drugs etc. The data can be used to generate ideas for how to provide students safe space not just physically but also mentally. This study can be conducted in specific geographical areas like Kota, Delhi and Pune.

Limitations

- Non-random sampling for the study eliminates the random variability of the sample and reduces the power of the sampling
- Absence of any control variable in the study makes it difficult to rule out the influence of these variables on the fear of failure and substance abuse.

Suggestions

- Geographical area needs to be more specific.
- Specific competitive examination needs to be selected.
- More control variables should be used to assess the moderation effects on substance abuse.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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