

Research Article

Assessment of Shyness among Young Adults and Its Relationship with Psychological Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

The present study reports the extent of relationship between shyness and psychological well-being among young adults in and around Mysore city. A total of 180 young adults studying in various colleges of Mysore city were selected for the present study. They were administered Shyness Assessment Test (D'Souza, 2006) and psychological well-being scale (Ryff, 1989) in one setting. Shyness of young adult was measured in 3 domains-cognitive/affective, physiological and action oriented domains of shyness including total shyness. The psychological wellbeing of an young adult was measured in six areas- autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, and purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The data analysis was done through chi-square tests and Pearson's product moment correlation. Results revealed that Majority of the young adults were in medium levels of shyness in all the domains of shyness of Cognitive/affective, Physiological, Action oriented and in total shyness. Comparatively more of young adults expressed higher levels of shyness than in Cognitive/affective and Physiological domains. Higher the psychological wellbeing in Positive relations with others, self-acceptance and total psychological wellbeing, lower was the shyness among young adults. Strategies for decreasing shyness and increasing psychological wellbeing have been delineated.

Keywords: *Shyness, Psychological wellbeing, Young adults*

Shyness is an uncomfortable or frightened reaction to other people, especially in unfamiliar or social settings. It's an uncomfortable feeling of self-consciousness, a worry about what one thinks other people are thinking. According to Carducci (1999), "Shyness may be defined experientially as a discomfort and/or an inhibition in interpersonal situations that interferes with pursuing one's interpersonal and professional goals. A person's ability to do or say what they want may be restricted by this fear. Additionally, it may hinder the development of wholesome relationships. Shyness and low self-esteem are frequently related. It might also contribute to social anxiety. Shyness can refer to social anxiety, communication apprehension, social skills defects, lack of poise, modest reserve, introversion, self-consciousness, non-assertiveness & audience sensitivity. Shyness is the fear

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Assessment of Shyness among Young Adults and Its Relationship between Shyness and Psychological Well-Being

to meet people and the discomfort in others presence (Pilkonis, 1977). It is a type of excessive self-focus, a preoccupation with one's thoughts, feelings in addition to physical reactions. It may be different from mild social awkwardness to totally inhibiting social phobia". "Shyness is a tendency to avoid social interaction and to fail to participate appropriately in social situations" (Pilkonis, 1977; Scholmerich *et al.*, 2000). Shyness is a temperamental trait characterized by wariness and anxiety in the face of social novelty and perceived evaluation (Rubin *et al.*, 2009).

"Wellbeing is a dynamic condition characterized by a reasonable amount of harmony between an individual's abilities, needs, expectations, environmental demands as well as opportunities" (Singh & Shyam, 2007). Pollard and Lee (2003), describe well-being as "a complex, multi-faceted construct that has continued to elude researchers' attempts to define and measure it". It transcends the limitations of body, space, time and circumstances and reflects the fact that one is at peace with one's self and others" (Johnson, 1986). Psychological Well-being refers to the simple notion of a person's welfare, happiness, advantages, interests, utility, and quality of life (Burris *et al.*, 2009). Psychological well-being refers to positive mental health (Edwards, 2005). Research has shown that psychological well-being is a diverse multidimensional concept which develops through a combination of emotional regulation, personality characteristics, identity and life experience (Helson & Srivastava, 2001). Psychological well-being is one component of health, which like psychological skills falls under the wide category of psychology (Edwards, 2007). "An individual high in psychological well-being not only carries higher level of life satisfaction, self-esteem, positive feelings, and attitudes, but also manages tensions, negative thoughts ideas along with feelings more efficiently" (Singh & Shyam, 2007). There are six distinct components of psychological well-being having a positive attitude towards oneself and one's past life (self-acceptance); having goals and objectives that give life meaning (purpose in life); being able to manage complex demands of daily life (environment mastery); having a sense of continued development and self-realization (personal growth); possessing caring and trusting ties with others (positive relations with others); and being able to follow one's own convictions (autonomy) (Khan, 2007). Wissing and Van Eeden (2002), explain "psychological well-being as being multi-dimensional with regard to facets of self that are involved (including affect, cognition and behaviour), as well as with regard to the domains of life in which these facets manifest themselves (e.g. intra- and interpersonal, social and contextual, in love and work). A sense of coherence, satisfaction with life and affect-balance are strong indicators of general psychological well-being". Among all the stages, the age of adolescence plays a major role in shaping an individual's overall personality. Because the adolescence phase determines a critical role in the entire life of a person. Adolescence age is a crucial stage in one's life. The success or failure of a person is determined by how well he/she has spent his/her adolescence.

Psychological wellbeing of adolescents means being content with life and understanding an abundance of positive emotions, when joined with the absence of psychopathology, is associated with greatest academic function, social skills and support and physical health, being a stage that lays strong foundation for future personality, and a critical period during human development in which life goals, values, direction and purpose in life are created (Jessica, 2011; Berman *et al.*, 2006).

Studies have shown that shyness does influence personality and academic achievement (D'Souza, Urs & James, 2000; D'Souza, Singh & Basvarajappa, 1999; D'Souza & Urs, 2001) and shy individuals are in need of guidance needs especially in emotional and

Assessment of Shyness among Young Adults and Its Relationship between Shyness and Psychological Well-Being

social domains (D'Souza, Urs, & Jayaraju, 2008). The present study was chosen to explore the levels of shyness among young adults and their relationship with psychological well-being.

METHOD

Sample

A total of 180 young adults were randomly selected for the study. Of the 180 students included in the study, 90 were male and 90 were female young adults. They were studying in the various colleges situated in the urban and rural areas of Mysore district in Karnataka.

Tools

1. Demographic data sheet

The first part designed to collect preliminary information regarding details of schools and student's gender, class, area etc.

2. Shyness Assessment test

Shyness Assessment Test (SAT) developed by D'Souza (2006). It consists of 54 yes/no items. If the answer is 'yes', further, the participant has to indicate one of the three levels-low, medium or high. The items in the test pertain to three domains of shyness-Cognitive/Affective (32 items), Physiological (11 items) and Action oriented (11 items). Item analysis of the scale using SPSS program resulted in Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7119.

3. Carol Ryff's Psychological well-being scale (1989)

The Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being is a theoretically grounded instrument that specifically focuses on measuring multiple facets of psychological well-being. These facets include the following:

- self-acceptance
- the establishment of quality ties to other
- a sense of autonomy in thought and action
- the ability to manage complex environments to suit personal needs and values
- the pursuit of meaningful goals and a sense of purpose in life
- continued growth and development as a person

The Ryff inventory consists of either 84 questions (long form) or 54 questions (medium form). There is also a short form, but it is statistically unreliable and therefore should not be used for assessment. Both the long and medium forms consist of a series of statements reflecting the six areas of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, and purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Respondents rate statements on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 indicating strong agreement.

Responses are totalled for each of the six categories (about half of the responses are reverse scored, which is indicated on the master copy of the test). For each category, a high score indicates that the respondent has a mastery of that area in his or her life. Conversely, a low score shows that the respondent struggles to feel comfortable with that particular concept.

Assessment of Shyness among Young Adults and Its Relationship between Shyness and Psychological Well-Being

Procedure:

The researcher personally went to selected colleges in and around the Mysuru city, after obtaining the permission letters for the administration of test and took the permission from the respective heads of the institution and administers the tool to 180 young adults. Before administrating the questionnaire, the young adults were assured that their responses utilized only for research purpose and maintained confidentiality. They were asked to answer all questions. The instructions were read out and each items in the questionnaire explained in order to get good response. Once the data were collected, they were scored and fed to the computer. Chi-square tests and Pearson's product moment correlation was employed to find out the mutual relationship between domains of shyness and psychological wellbeing.

RESULTS

Table 1

Distribution of the selected sample of young adults on various domains of shyness and results of chi-square tests

| Domains of shyness | Levels | Frequency | Percent | Chi-square & P value |
|---------------------|--------|-----------|---------|--------------------------|
| Cognitive/affective | Low | 32 | 17.77 | $X^2=90.133$; P=.001 |
| | Medium | 120 | 66.67 | |
| | High | 28 | 15.56 | |
| Physiological | Low | 11 | 6.11 | $X^2=198.70$; P=.001 |
| | Medium | 149 | 82.78 | |
| | High | 20 | 11.11 | |
| Action oriented | Low | 38 | 21.11 | $X^2=40.133$; P=.001 |
| | Medium | 100 | 55.56 | |
| | High | 42 | 23.33 | |
| Total shyness | Low | 35 | 19.44 | $X^2=97.30$; P=.001 |
| | Medium | 122 | 67.78 | |
| | High | 23 | 12.78 | |

In all the domains, majority of the young adults were in medium levels of shyness, i.e., 66.67%, 82.78%, 55.56% and 67.78% in Cognitive/affective, Physiological, Action oriented and in total shyness scores respectively. 15.56%, 11.11%, 23.33% and 12.78% of the young adults had high levels of shyness in Cognitive/affective, Physiological, Action oriented and in total shyness scores respectively. Chi-square tests revealed significant frequency differences between low, medium and high levels of shyness in Cognitive/affective ($X^2=90.133$; P=.001), Physiological ($X^2=198.70$; P=.001), Action oriented ($X^2=40.133$; P=.001) and in total shyness scores ($X^2=97.30$; P=.001) respectively.

Table 2 Relationship between domains of Shyness and Psychological Well-being:

| Areas of psychological wellbeing | Total shyness scores | Correlation coefficient | P value |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Autonomy | Total shyness scores | -.032 | .669 |
| Environmental mastery | Total shyness scores | .016 | .831 |
| Personal growth | Total shyness scores | .002 | .978 |
| Positive relations with others | Total shyness scores | -.366 | .001 |
| Purpose in life | Total shyness scores | .010 | .894 |
| Self-acceptance | Total shyness scores | -.282 | .001 |
| Total Psychological wellbeing | Total shyness scores | -.266 | .001 |

Assessment of Shyness among Young Adults and Its Relationship between Shyness and Psychological Well-Being

Only two areas of psychological wellbeing and total psychological wellbeing were significantly and positively related to total shyness scores. The obtained correlation coefficient between Positive relations with others and shyness scores was $-.366$ with the significance level of $.001$, between self-acceptance and shyness scores was $-.282$ with the significance level of $.001$ and between total psychological wellbeing scores and Total shyness scores was $-.266$ with the significance level of $.001$. Higher the scores in Positive relations with others, Self-acceptance and total psychological wellbeing scores, lower the scores in shyness and vice-versa. Rest of the areas of psychological wellbeing- Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Personal growth and Purpose in life did not correlate significantly with total shyness scores.

DISCUSSION

Major findings of the study

- Majority of the young adults were in medium levels of shyness in all the domains of shyness of Cognitive/affective, Physiological, Action oriented and in total shyness.
- Comparatively more of young adults expressed higher levels of shyness than in Cognitive/affective and Physiological domains.
- Higher the psychological wellbeing in Positive relations with others, self-acceptance and total psychological wellbeing, lower was the shyness among young adults

Shyness is the “tendency to feel awkward, worried or tense during social encounters, especially with unfamiliar people” (APA, 2012). The results of the present study clearly demonstrated that majority of the sample selected had medium levels of shyness. Further, it was found that Young adults with high scores in Positive relations with others, self-acceptance and total psychological wellbeing, showed lower shyness scores. Nasrin and D’Souza (2013), reported that adolescents with different levels of shyness had similar scores on psychological well-being scores both in total scores and individual areas of wellbeing- Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Personal growth, Positive relations with others, Purpose in life, and Self-acceptance. Alavikolaie and D’Souza (2011), in their study investigated sub types of shyness and psychological well-being among adolescents and adults who were studying various schools, colleges and post graduate department of Mysore university ($n=1368$). In this study result revealed that shyness had significant influence on positive relationship with others. Respondents in both low shyness groups had high scores in positive relationship with others. Result also revealed that Shyness had significant influence on self-acceptance; respondents with higher self-acceptance scores had lower shyness and vice-versa. A study by Rowsell and Coplan (2013) revealed that shyness was negatively associated with relationship quality and well-being. In a recent study on relationship between shyness and psychological wellbeing, Mahadevaswamy, D’Souza, and Manish (2022) found limited relationships between shyness and psychological wellbeing.

The most severe physical handicaps, shyness can also be a mental impairment (Zimbardo, 1977). It makes it difficult to make new acquaintances, interact socially, or take advantage of positive opportunities. People are unable to defend their rights or express their thoughts and values because of it. They rarely allow others to see their true selves, which limits how positively others can evaluate their talents. It encourages self-consciousness and an overly focused attention on their responses. Clear thinking and efficient communication are both hampered by shyness. All of these could have an impact on a person's health. For a young adult to thrive, shyness must be reduced and wellbeing must be improved.

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Assessment of Shyness among Young Adults and Its Relationship between Shyness and Psychological Well-Being

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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