

Hypercompetitive Attitude and Achievement Anxiety among Young Adults

Ms. Joan Mary John^{1*}, Dr. Molly Joy²

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to find the relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults. It also aims to measure the difference in hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults based on educational qualification. The study was conducted on 125 young adults within an age group of 18-25 from various educational institutions from different districts in the state of Kerala and from the city of Bangalore. The tools used for the study were the hypercompetitive attitude scale and achievement anxiety test. The statistical analysis used were Pearson correlation to find the relationship between the variables and Anova test to find the significant difference. The sampling technique used for the study was snowball sampling. The study concludes that there is a no significant relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults. The result also reveals that there is no significant difference hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults based on educational qualification.

Keywords: *Difference Hypercompetitive Attitude, Achievement Anxiety, Young Adults, Educational Qualification.*

Today's individualistic society has been conditioning and training humans to be highly competitive and go to any extends to reach their goals which could be a reason why hyper competitiveness is seemingly increasing in human kind especially among the younger generation. Hyper competitiveness is a sweeping desire to compete and win in order to believe one is worthy (Horney, 1937). It is a need to win at all costs to enhance one's self-worth (Ryckman et al., 1990). This need can lead to verbal or physical aggression which can negatively impact an individual's life. For example, hyper competitiveness was positively associated with loneliness, depressive symptoms, and interpersonal difficulties (Thornton et al., 2011). The concept of hyper competitiveness stems from Karen Horney's theories of neurosis which states that neurosis is resulted from basic anxiety and be caused by interpersonal conflicts. Parental bonds with mothers and fathers (i.e., care, rejection, autonomy, and overprotection) were indirectly linked to aggression via the mediating mechanisms of hyper competitiveness and feelings of anger (Peckham et al., 2020). Parental overprotection or control could be a reason for aggression in hypercompetitive individuals.

¹Post-graduate Student, Kristu Jayanti College, Bengaluru, India

²Professor & Head of the Department, Department of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College, Bengaluru, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: April 30, 2023; Revision Received: September 27, 2023; Accepted: September 30, 2023

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Hypercompetitive attitude was found to be higher in emerging adults of urban area than rural area (Mathews et al., 2022).

The well-being of youngsters especially students is determined by their environment. This can include many factors like their academic pressure, peer group relationships etc. Academic achievement anxiety is one such factor. Achievement anxiety or evaluation anxiety is defined as a worry and emotionality in an achievement situation where one's performance is under scrutiny and where the acting person is self-aware (Schwarzer, 1981). Past research has shown that anxiety is negatively correlated to achievement (Singh, S. & Thukral, P, 2009). *Achievement anxiety* always occurs in educational settings. Anxiety can seriously inhibit learning and performance - particularly on tests. The main source of anxiety in school is fear of *failure* and with it - the loss of self-esteem. It is also found that achievement anxiety has a negative effect on notetaking behaviours during a lecture and on subsequent test performance (Carrier et al., 1984). Academic achievement is not only correlated to anxiety but also other mental factors like depression and self-esteem (Al-Qaisy, 2011).

Need and significance of the study

In today's high achieving society, competition is becoming an inescapable part of life. Especially when it comes to academics, students are conditioned to be highly competitive to their peers, mostly unknowingly. This competitive attitude could help students in putting forward a better academic performance as well as enhance student's pressure and motivation in learning. But the shortcomings of this competitive attitude should also be taken into consideration. Achievement anxiety is one of such factors that could hinder the performance as well as mental and emotional well-being of students. Thus, it is pivotal to explore more on the effects of hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety on students. The present study aims to assess the relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety on young adults.

METHOD

Research question

Is there a significant relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults.

Variables and operational definition

- **Hypercompetitive attitude:** Hypercompetitive attitude can be defined as need to compete with others and win at any cost which can lead to unhealthy competition and aggression.
- **Achievement anxiety:** Achievement anxiety can be defined as extreme worry about ones achievements and academic performance which can lead to anxiety.

Research question

Is there a significant relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults.

Research design

A correlational research design is used to study the relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults. The questionnaire on hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety was circulated online through google forms considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

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Objectives

- To assess the relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults.
- To assess the difference in hypercompetitive attitude in young adults based on educational qualification.
- To assess the difference in achievement anxiety in young adults based on educational qualification.

Hypothesis

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference in hypercompetitive attitude in young adults based on educational qualification.
- H₀₃: There is no significant difference in achievement anxiety in young adults based on educational qualification.

Sample

The sample of the present study comprises 125 young adults within an age group of 18-25 years old from various educational institutions from various districts in the state of Kerala and from the city of Bangalore. From the sample, 47 young adults are pursuing under graduation, 45 are pursuing post-graduation and the other 33 are from different educational background like entrance coaching, diploma etc.

Inclusion criteria

Young adults pursuing education ranging between 18- 25 years from Kerala and Bangalore are included in the study.

Exclusion criteria

Young adults not coming under 18-25 age group and are not pursuing any educational degree, residing outside India is excluded from the study.

Assessment tools

Hypercompetitive attitude scale

The hypercompetitive attitude scale is developed by Richard M. Ryckman, Max Hammar, Linda M. Kaczor and Joel A Gold (1990). The HAS is a 26-item instrument designed to measure hyper competitiveness which is defined as a need to compete and win at any cost as a way of maintaining self-worth. It is scored on a 5 point scale with total score being a sum of all item scores. Items 3,5,6,10,13,15,16,18,19,20,24,25,26 are reverse scored. Higher scores indicate stronger hypercompetitive attitudes. The hypercompetitive attitude scale has an excellent internal consistency, with an alpha of 0.91. It also has a very good stability, with a six-week test retest correlation of 0.81.

Achievement anxiety test

The achievement anxiety test is developed by Richard Alpert and Ralph N. Haber. The AAT is a 19-item instrument designed to measure anxiety about academic achievement. The AAT consists of two separate scales, a facilitating scale, which assesses the degree to which anxiety is a motivator and a debilitating scale, which assesses degree to which anxiety interferes with performance. Items are on 5-point scales indicating the degree to which the statement applies to the respondent. Items 3,4,8,10,12,13,17,19 are reverse scored. The

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achievement anxiety test has an excellent stability with a ten-week test retest correlations of 0.87 for the facilitating scale and 0.87 for debilitating scale and eight month test retest correlations of 0.75 for facilitating scale and 0.76 for debilitating scale.

Data collection procedure

The process of data collection began by selecting the sampling technique, which is snowball sampling. Then the population sample was selected which includes 125 young adults from various districts of Kerala and the city of Bangalore among which there were 47 participants pursuing under graduation, 45 participants pursuing post-graduation and 33 participants from other educational background. The data were collected with the help of google forms. The confidentiality of participant's response was assured and consent to participate in the study was collected via google forms, in which the questionnaires were also attached. The instructions on how to fill the questionnaire was also provided in the questionnaire. The data were collected and analysis of the data was made using SPSS.

Statistical technique

Descriptive and correlational techniques were used in this study. The descriptive test used in the study is Pearson correlation coefficient technique. This test was used to assess the significant relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults by using mean and standard deviation. The inferential technique used in this study is Anova test which was used to assess the difference in hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety in young adults based on educational qualification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Pearson Correlation Table for Hypercompetitive Attitude and Achievement Anxiety with Mean, SD and p value

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2
Hypercompetitive attitude	125	67.61	10.923	-	
Achievement anxiety	125	53.70	5.391	-.023	-

Table 1 shows the Pearson correlation between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety. The variable hypercompetitive attitude has a mean value of 67.61 and a standard deviation of 10.923. The variable achievement anxiety has a mean value of 53.70 and a standard deviation of 5.39. The p value is found to be -0.23. The mean value shows that the population is averagely distributed around the bell curve.

Table 2 One Way Anova Table for Hypercompetitive attitude

Variable	Under graduation		Postgraduation		others		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Hypercompetitive attitude	68.85	10.925	66.93	11.618	66.69	10.037	.508

Table 2 shows the significant difference in hypercompetitive attitude among young adults based on educational qualification. The mean value and standard deviation obtained for hypercompetitive attitude in young adults pursuing under graduation is 68.85 and 10.925 respectively. Mean value and SD for young adults pursuing post-graduation is 66.93 and

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11.618 respectively. Mean value and SD for young adults pursuing other education is 66.69 and 10.037 respectively.

Table 3 One Way Anova Table for Achievement Anxiety

Variable	Under graduation		Postgraduation		others		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Achievement anxiety	54.60	6.263	53.02	4.770	53.31	4.734	1.115

Table 3 shows the significant difference in achievement anxiety among young adults based on educational qualification. The mean value and standard deviation obtained for achievement anxiety in young adults pursuing under graduation is 54.60 and 6.236 respectively. Mean value and SD for young adults pursuing post-graduation is 53.02 and 4.770 respectively. Mean value and SD for young adults pursuing other education is 53.31 and 4.734 respectively.

DISCUSSION

The study aims to analyse the relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults. Table 1 shows the p value for Pearson correlation is -0.23, the level of significance is found to be 0.803 which is greater than 0.005. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there is no significant relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. Table 2 shows that the F value for hypercompetitive attitude among young adults based on educational qualification is 0.508. The level of significance for the same was found to be 0.603 which is greater than 0.005. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there is no significant difference in hypercompetitive attitude in young adults based on educational qualification. Table 2 shows that the F value for achievement anxiety among young adults based on educational qualification is 1.115. The level of significance for the same was found to be 0.331 which is greater than 0.005. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there is no significant difference in achievement anxiety in young adults based on educational qualification. The study conducted by Mathews et al. (2022) which found that hypercompetitive attitude is high in young adults contradicts to the present study.

Barriers like lack of time and boredom in the participants could have hindered their performance and affected the obtained results. The self-report measures were used to collect the data, so there will be chances for the participants to engage in social desirability and to give biased answers.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study is to analyse the relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults. From the findings it can be inferred that there is no significant relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults. It was also found that there is no significant difference in hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety among young adults based on educational qualification.

Limitations

The study was conducted using self-report measures, so there will be chances for the participants to engage in social desirability and to give biased answers. The data were collected through google forms also, so the lack of rapport establishment and assurance of

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confidentiality may also influence the research. There were no previous studies conducted to assess the relationship between hypercompetitive attitude and achievement anxiety. The studies conducted on the variables separately contradicts to the present study.

Suggestions

Further research can be done with a sample of other age groups. The study can be extended by doing more comparisons on various sociodemographic details. The study can be conducted using other qualitative methods like interviews and meta-analysis. The data can be collected from young adults from different states and outside India. The study can also be conducted by measuring other psychological aspects among young adults.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: John, J.M. & Joy, M. (2023). Hypercompetitive Attitude and Achievement Anxiety among Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 4517-4522. DIP:18.01.420.20231103, DOI:10.25215/1103.420