

Relationship between Shyness and Academic Achievement among Adolescents in Karachi

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The aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between shyness and academic achievement among adolescents. It was assumed that there would be a significant relationship between shyness and academic achievement in adolescents. In order to empirically test the variables, the 13-Item revised version of Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (RCBS; Cheek & Melchior, 1990) was employed for measuring shyness and for academic achievement of students, their percentage from the previous year was used. The sample of $N = 200$ (Male $n = 100$ & Female $n = 100$) was taken from Grade VI-X from private schools of Karachi, Pakistan. The participants belonged to 12 to 16 years old age group. The results indicated that there is a significant negative relationship between shyness and academic achievement ($r = -0.38, p = 0.01$). The implication of the current study highlights the needs for nurturing shy students to increase academic achievement.

Keywords: Shyness, academic achievement, adolescents, Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale

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Shyness is a factor that at some time or another has had an influence on almost every person. Half of the world's population considers themselves as being shy and between seventy-five and ninety-five percent of people have been affected by shyness at some point in their lives. Shyness is the tendency to feel awkward, worried or tense during social encounters, especially with unfamiliar people. People who are severely shy may have symptoms like withdrawing from social interactions; feeling worried about how people think about them and show physical symptoms like blushing, sweating and a pounding heart or upset stomach (Carducci, 1999).

Shyness can also be understood in terms of its characteristic symptoms and how they impact one's performance. Cheek and Melchior (1990) analyzed the nature of shyness as being complicated; that includes cognitive, somatic and behavioral components.

In the cognitive component of shyness, shy individuals show a high rate of negative self-referent thoughts as compared to positive thoughts during social interactions (Bruch, Gorsky, Collins, & Berger, 1989; Garcia, Stinson, Ickes, Bissonette & Briggs, 1991). The habit of using negative cognitions is considered to be related to concern about getting dissatisfaction from others (Halford & Foddy, 1982; Leary, Kowalski & Campbell, 1988).

In the somatic component of shyness cognitions are specifically associated with physiological processes. Hofmann, Moscovitch & Kim (2006) stated that when a person feels shy, his sympathetic and parasympathetic nerves of the autonomic nervous system are stimulated which results in the emergence of a complex pattern of reactions. Hence, they may sense symptoms such as heart racing, dry mouth, sweating, trembling, muscle tension and blushing that is one of the most common physiological indicators of shyness.

The behavioral component of shyness is explained as behavioral inhibition that refers to a pattern of behavior including withdrawal, avoidance, and fear of unfamiliar situations during social interactions. Hence, as compared to less shy individuals, shy people are generally identified as talking less, making less eye contact and sitting further away from others (Cheek & Buss, 1981; Leary, 1983). Shyness can occur at any stage of life with variances in the levels and intensity in different people (Rubin & Coplan, 2010).

The role of one's family life acts as the most important component in the upbringing of the child. This plays a significant role in the development of shyness. In early childhood if there is stress or tension in the family then there is a likelihood of experiencing shyness in later life. On the other hand if this family stress occurs during middle childhood years then there is no probability of shyness in later life (Findlay & Coplan, 2009).

The link between stress and tension in the family with shyness has been observed and found to be greater in Pakistan because of the non-peaceful and haphazard life conditions. Families living in these conditions have weak physiological and psychosocial health that has a strong probability of increasing the likelihood of shyness in children (Parvez, 2013).

Shyness does not develop only because of family but gender also plays an important role in the development of shyness. Carducci and Zimbardo (1995b) pointed out that, girls are more likely to be shy from childhood up to adolescence, perhaps because parents tend to be more protective of them than boys. However, in adolescence it is observed that shyness is more distressing for boys than girls. This distress is connected with gender-role expectations that boys have to be brave and sociable. This gender role disparity suggests that it is more appropriate for females to be socially accepted for being shy than males.

Carducci and Zimbardo (1995a) demonstrated that adolescence is the period in which a person is going through many changes. The development is not only related to physical bodily changes but there are changes in the social fabric as well as emotional aspects of their life that could possibly increase shyness.

Shyness is universal, even though it is not characterized similarly in different cultures. Payne (2006) pointed out that cultural practice is important in order to understand individuals who describe themselves as being shy. Every culture is not the same therefore they have their own definition of being normal. Different cultures have different approaches and it is essential to take this in account in collaborating with individuals who are from a different cultural group. In correspondence with this view, an individual's culture and traditions may determine how a particular person identifies with his or her degree of shyness.

Cultural diversification in the occurrence of shyness may reveal the impact of socialization practices. In Asian countries particularly Israel, children are likely to be admired for being self-confident and often are included in adult conversations. These are the two elements that may account for the low level of shyness reported by Israelis. Alternatively in Japan shyness is found to be high because eastern cultures value the prevalence of shyness. There are strong values related to dutifulness and harmony that tend to encourage dependency and softer tones of voice with senior people. Here there is a stronger possibility that talkative or self-confident people will be considered as immature or insincere. All of these values may promote shyness. In contrast, American cultures value competition, achievement and success that create an environment which makes it considerably difficult for a shy person to feel secure. In Asia particularly in China, teachers tend to see shyness as a favorable trait in children, and among Chinese children shyness is not associated with loneliness, unlike in the United States (Rubin & Chung, 2006).

Hence, shyness plays a vital role in several aspects of children's lives particularly social which further influences their academic life as well. There are certain elements that affect students' behavior and achievement in the classroom for instance, age, size, grouping and schools social organization and interactions. These elements are primarily important because they are influencing the learning and psychosocial development of the adolescent (Rutter, 2008). Hence, it can be deduced from above mentioned literature, these factor are significant contributors of shyness as well.

Academic achievement can be understood in terms of information obtained or understanding that developed through test marks given by teacher in the school (Trow, 2004). Academic achievement not only includes class performance through which the learning of a child takes place, but extracurricular activities also indicate the learning of a child (Metha, 2007).

Adolescence characteristically is a time of preparation for the responsibilities of adulthood and significant interest has been paid to the development and expression of achievement during these years. Broadly defined, achievement concerns the development of motives, capabilities, interests, and behavior that have to do with the performance in evaluative situations. More specifically, the study of achievement during adolescence has focused on young people and their careers (Lancaster, 2006).

Someone who has a strong need of achievement can show this need in different situations specifically in academic and social situations. Adolescents who believe that they are capable are more likely to carry on their hard work to do well in school but adolescents who are extrinsically motivated and have doubts about their abilities and achievement are inclined to feel anxious and hesitate in front of the challenge. Students who think that they cannot achieve anything and their efforts do not make a difference are those who are being told by others that they are stupid or that the task is too difficult for them. This eventually leads to learned helplessness (Dweck & Licht, 1980). As a result of learned helplessness, some students try less hard than their peers, and they do not do as well as they might have done if encouraged enough.

Eventually, in elementary school, children are often not accepted by their classmates in result they begins to develop issues related to trust and start thinking that no one will accept them, that is crucial time for the development of shyness. The person's environment plays an enormous part in the development of shyness as it may not only influence the way one talks with others but also affects the performance of a child in school and in the work place later in life. There is a link between internalizing behaviors and academic achievement. Hence, academic performance of a student may also be affected by shyness (Paulsen, Murberg & Terjea, 2006). In the classroom shy students face difficulties with their peers' perception that these students have lesser cognitive abilities than other active students. Shy students are sometimes labeled by their peers as having poor intelligence than others (Paulhus & Morgan, 1997). Bosacki, Coplan, Krasnor, & Hughes, (2011) suggested that teachers usually have negative views about shy students and they have less interaction with them which creates more issues for shy students in school than less shy students.

A study conducted by (D'Souza, Urs & James, 2000) in India, found that extremely shy students are prone to neurotic tendencies and it leads to negative effects for instance low academic achievement. Classroom participation is usually less by the shy children as they feel anxious when they are trying to participate. Moreover, shy students' speech is also limited when they do take a part in the classroom; they might give irrelevant and inappropriate answers due to anxiety (Crozier & Alden, 2001).

Hughes and Coplan (2010) researched that teachers have lowered expectations from shy students because they do not take part in classroom activities; this does not mean that they have no awareness and skills but it is due to anxiety and fear they have faced during interactions in the classroom. Evans and Evans (1987) investigated that academic engagement is positively related with academic achievement so it is concluded that shy students who do not engage in the classroom get lower grades. Wood (2006) also researched that shy and nervous students scored less than other students.

Furthermore, Hughes and Coplan (2010) also investigated the relationship between shyness, academic engagement and academic achievement in childhood and the results showed that academic engagement had a significant negative relationship with shyness and was positively related to all measures of achievement. Finally, it showed that academic engagement intercedes the relationship between shyness and teacher ratings of achievement. These findings propose that poor teacher-rated academic performance in shy children may be partially accounted for by a lack of academic engagement in the classroom.

Rudasill and Kaufman (2009) studied the impact of shyness in students in developing relationships with the teacher. The results indicated that shy children face difficulties in developing positive relationships with their teachers as well as with their classmates.

Lancy D'Souza (2003) studied the influence of shyness on anxiety and academic achievement among high school students of class VIII, IX and X grades, in India. Results revealed that high levels of anxiety and contradictorily shyness did not influence the academic achievement of students. Some degree of shyness in new or ambiguous social settings is normal but it emerged out to be a problem if it becomes not merely situational but dispositional and that makes a child labeled as shy.

In the light of the above literature review, it can be concluded that academic achievement and shyness both are crucial for adolescents and need to be studied together as they are found to be interrelated yet limited literature has been found in the indigenous perspective. In the light of this conclusion, the aim of this study is to examine the relationship of shyness and academic achievement. Therefore, by reviewing many qualitative and quantitative researches on shyness and its impact on human behavior, it is identified that many studies have been conducted in western countries and in some developed countries of Asia i.e.

India, China and Japan. However, few researches have been carried out in Pakistan on the relationship of shyness and academic achievement of adolescents. So, it is necessary to expand the horizon in this particular area by which it will enable others to understand the issues regarding shyness and how it becomes a barrier in reaching academic goals of an individual. Hence, the findings of the current research are significant as they will help in developing new therapeutic techniques to overcome shyness by training teachers and by conducting workshops.

Thus, it is hypothesized that there would be a significant relationship between shyness and the academic achievement in adolescents.

Method

Research Design

The current research is based on quantitative correlational survey design.

Participants

The participants of the current study comprised of adolescent school students belonging to the age range of 12 to 16 years. The students belonged to VI, VII, VIII, IX, and X grades from different private schools of Karachi. A total sample of $N = 200$ participants were approached, from which $n = 100$ were male adolescents and $n = 100$ female adolescents.

Measures

The following measures were used in the current study:

Demographic and Consent Form. The demographic form was used to gather information regarding name, fathers name, age, gender, family structure, siblings, birth order, residential area, school name, class and last exams percentage.

An informed consent form was used to obtain the participant's permission to take part in the research. The form provided assurance for confidentiality, information about any foreseeable risks or discomfort, the purpose of the research as well as the participant's right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty

The Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale (RCBS).

The 13- item revised version of Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale was used. Cheek and Buss (1981) developed the Cheek and Buss Shyness Scale which originally contained 9 items but revision of the scale was done to improve the psychometric properties of the original scale. The RCBS was found to be internally consistent. The alpha coefficient for the scale is .90, and the 45 day test- retest reliability is $r = .88$). Moreover, the correlation with the original 9-item version was .96 (Cheek, 1983). It is a 5-point Likert scale where 1= Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. Scores on the RCBS range from 13 to 65. They are obtained by summing up all the responses according to the response choice. There are four items 3, 6, 9 and 12 that are reversely scored. Cheek proposed that participants scoring over 49 should be considered very shy, and those scoring between 48 through 39 considered as shy and 34 and 39 considered as somewhat shy. If the scores are below 34 then the individual is not a particularly shy person but they feel shy in one or two situations. Most shy people score over 39 and few reach the possible high score of 65. Hence, the cutoff score of 39 is used in this study to differentiate between shy and non-shy students.

Academic Achievement. To check academic achievement the percentages of the academic scores of the previous year of the students were obtained from relevant teachers and office records. The academic criteria were set for the academic achievers and non-achievers. Individuals' percentages ranging from 90% or above to 80% as high, 79% to 70% as average, 69% to 50% as low achievers and 49% or below were considered as non-achievers.

Procedure

Formal permission was taken from the principals of the various schools from where the research participants were approached for the administration of 13-item shyness questionnaire. Participants were informed about the study and assured that their participation was voluntary. However, they were not informed about the hypothesis of the research.

The participants were selected from different schools through purposive convenient sampling method. They were first provided with the informed consent form after that they were asked to fill in the demographic form followed by instructions for completing the questionnaire. It was made clear to them that all responses provided would be kept confidential and anonymous. Moreover, further questions were also answered to avoid any confusion. Each participant took almost 5- 10 minutes to complete all the forms.

Results

The hypothesis was tested using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Pearson correlation was used to determine the correlation between shyness and academic achievement, whereas descriptive analyses were used to determine the mean scores and standard deviations of the variables by using SPSS version 20.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for shyness and academic achievement in adolescents

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Academic Achievement	200	73.49	11.90
Shyness	200	38.75	06.36

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation of academic achievement and shyness where $N=200$ participants were included in the sampling frame.

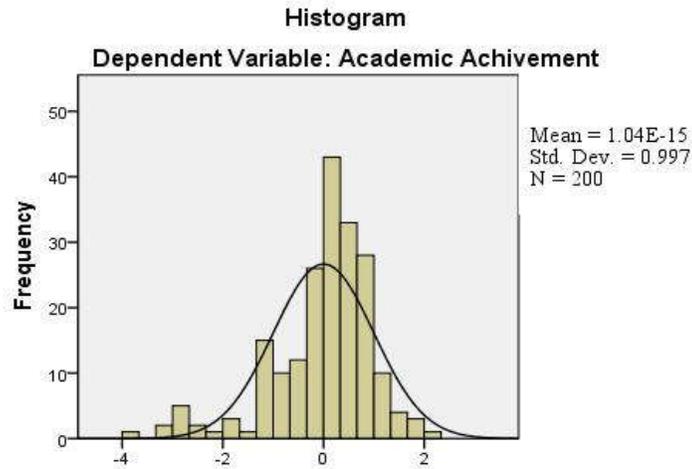


Figure 1. Normality of the overall data for Academic Achievement

Figure 1 provides that mean and standard deviation in histogram is approximately 0 and 1 respectively of the data. The shape of the histogram is close to the normal curve which indicates that the variation in data is close to low.

Table 2

Correlation between Shyness and Academic Achievement of Adolescents

	Academic Achievement
Shyness	-.383**

Note. ** $p < 0.01$

The table shows a weak significant negative correlation between shyness and academic achievement.

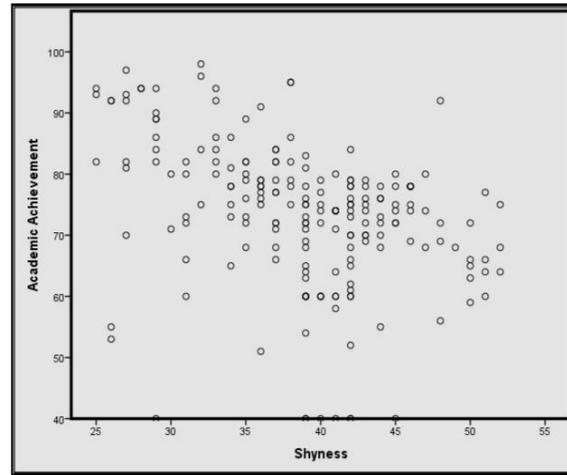


Figure 2: *Scatter Plot of correlation between Shyness and Academic Achievement of Adolescents*

Figure 2 shows a significant negative correlation between the variables that is, shyness and academic achievement.

Discussion

The purpose of the study is to explore the relationship between Shyness and Academic Achievement in adolescents. The results supported the hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between the two variables. Pearson correlation was applied to determine this relationship in which analysis indicates a significant relationship between Shyness and Academic Achievement in adolescents ($p < 0.01$). The results also suggest a negative correlation ($r = -0.383$) indicating that when shyness increases academic achievement decreases and when shyness decreases academic achievement increases. In a study conducted by Evans & Evans (1987) they investigated that academic engagement is positively related with academic achievement so it

is concluded that shy students who do not engage in the classroom get lower grades. Thus, it can be observed that the academic achievement is affected if the individual is shy. The results of another study also supported that shy and nervous students scored less than other students (Wood, 2006).

The results were supported by the research of Ishiyama, (1984), where the researcher studied that the students of 10th grade, in which through self-rating of shyness students were selected and divided into two categories of shy and not shy students. The results of the study signify more negative self-rating of shy students as compared to the not shy students on loneliness, interference of shyness with academic achievement and with making friends, shyness to the opposite gender, and certainty in the reactions of others.

As stated earlier, it has been found that sometimes shy children do desire to mingle with other people, but fear and nervousness cause inhibition in social situations. Shy students feel quite stressed in the classroom because of peers, teachers and especially with the demand of verbal participation (Hughes & Coplan, 2010). Jackson, Towson and Narduzzi (1997) illustrate that shy individuals are anxious and worried; hence, they choose to remain silent because of the fear of rejection by others. From this it can be concluded that shy adolescents' academic achievement is affected by their shyness.

Recommendations and Limitations

As the sample of the current study was taken from private schools of Karachi and children taken from VI - X grade (12-16 years), it is recommended to carry out the research on a broader scale by increasing the sample size and by including government sector schools; so, that there will be a clear view of what are the effects of shyness on academic achievement. The self-report measure of shyness was conducted on the individuals in the classroom setting, which provoked the element of the social desirability in terms of faking the ratings of questionnaire. For future researches, it is also recommended to execute the study on a standardized scale of academic achievement.

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