

## A comparative study of fears among adolescent girls in different ecological settings

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**Abstract:** The present study was conducted with the aim of studying the level and nature of fears among 180 adolescent girls in the age group of 12-18 years from three ecological settings i.e. urban, rural and tribal areas of Kathua district. Stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection of sample. Tools used for data collection were Fear Check List (FCL) and interview schedule. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant difference in the level of fears among adolescent girls of different ecological settings. The results further showed that maximum respondents in urban areas were in the category of fearful and in rural areas, majority of the adolescents girls were in the category of highly fearful where as the level of fear among tribal girls ranges from average to highly fearful. None of the respondents from tribal group fall under the category of least to less fearful. It was also found that out of the three ecological settings, adolescents girls in tribal area were fearful of medical surgical items followed by rural and urban girls.

**Key words:** Adolescence; Fear Check List (FCL); surgical items.

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### 1. Introduction

The term adolescence comes from the latin verb, 'adolescere', which means "to grow up" or "to grow to maturity". In psychology, adolescence is the bridge between childhood and adulthood. It is the stage in which the individual is required to adapt and adjust childhood behaviors to the adult forms that are considered acceptable in his or her culture. Some psychologists view the transition from childhood to adulthood as a time of "stress and storm". Hence, as we shall use the term, adolescence refers not only to biological growth but also to social growth with in a cultural framework. Puberty is the term used to denote the point in time when an individual reaches sexual maturity and becomes capable of bearing offspring and reproducing the species. Puberty then is a much more specific term than adolescence.

Fears are a normal part of growing up and every one has in them to some degree or extent. Fear exists so generally in contemporary life that our time has been called "Age of Anxiety". Even among women folk, one comes across ample examples that testify to their heroic deeds, such as Joan of Arc, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Razia Sultana, Jodha Bai and many other such heroic women. But no such heroic women ever existed in history who was free from all fears and no such woman exists today, certainly not among children and adolescents.

Adolescents have under gone a long series of development that influence the ebb and flow of their fears. There is a world of fear mitigates against social security and sustained happiness. Adolescents become more concerned with the affect they exercise on others, with what others think of them, and of being disliked or rejected by others. Besides those fears that are carried over from childhood to adolescence, many novel fears have arisen by virtue of threats and allurements that go with adolescent development, itself. All adolescents are more or less frightened at time. Some experience fear only on occasions when they happen to run into danger. Some have recurring fears that are touched off again and again by happenings in their daily lives or by dreams or by their own trends of thought. The behaviour of adolescents can be partly understood by studying and understanding their emotions and feelings. Fear of failure can result in the adolescents striving for achievement. Excessive fear may result in paralysis and prevent action. Some struggle with fears that arise out of problems of life. Adolescents who have been victims of physical or sexual abuse characteristically have difficulty in trusting others and establishing stable emotional relationships. Despite a very strong need for love, When they do form a social and sexual relationships, they are likely to lapse into distrust at the slightest disappointment. Some girls during adolescence stage are anxious and worried about talking to members of the opposite sex. Spencer et al (1998) reported that decrease in fearfulness with increasing age, with girls reporting higher fears scores than boys on both occasions.

Fear is a complex motivation with a simple goal to avoid or escape the source of the fear. If people are not afraid of certain things, they would probably not

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be around very long. People are brought up to afraid of some things because they are dangerous and can inflict harm on the persons. More often than not, individuals learn fear by associations with pain. There is a marked change in the quality and quantity of fears as one progresses from childhood and adolescence. Helping child learn to cope with fear is what's important. As children learn how to master fears, they become more competent in dealing with other life challenges and new situation. If fears become disabling and intrude on a child's life and development, it is time to seek help. The nature of fears and the ways in which children cope with them change with age. To the younger child a minor danger can be seen as an enormous threat. Young fearful children rely on adults to soothe them, but with increasing age, children's increased ability to understand to use logical reasoning helps them learn to cope with fears. Mastering fears can help a child deal with dangers rather than retreat from them. Human beings can't avoid being anxious or fearful or worried at various times in their lives. Children however are not to sure. Some children are more caution's and like to look things over first. Fear may be divided into four categories:

1. Fear of material things and natural phenomena like bugs, snakes, dogs, storms, fire, water and heights.
2. Fear relating to the self such as failure in school, death of parents, being hurt and personal inadequacy.
3. Fear involving school relationship such as parents loneliness, dates, gatherings and adult groups or situations.
4. Fear of the unknown like supernatural phenomenon, world events, ghosts, unpredictable future and tragedies.

When fear is combined with vigilance, it helps in keeping lower animals alive. In augmenting energies in times of danger, it is an asset and its also provide an impetus to caution and prudence But is an individual of today fear frequently out stays its usefulness. Instead of aiding, it often curtails an individual's efforts to cope to the stresses of life. Instead of mobilizing the resources, it acts as an inhibitory agent. Not all the fears show this trend but among adolescent girls, fear of snakes, fire, parents, social relations, and fears pertaining to the physical aspects of the body.

#### *Justification*

As experience of fear is not a genetic matter, environment tremendously influences the development of fears as well as its expression in relation to different object and situation of life. India being a vast country with sharp geographical social and cultural diversities from region to region, specific fears of children and their manifestations are bound to differ substantially in different ecological setting. An

attempt has been made in the present research study to know the various types of fears among adolescent girls of three different ecological setting (urban , rural & tribal ) in Kathua District. The objectives of the present study were:

1. To study the level and nature of various types of fears among adolescent girls
2. To compare fear among adolescent girls in three ecological setting

#### *Hypothesis*

1. There will be high level of fears among urban adolescent girl.
2. There will be a significant difference in the level of fears among adolescent girls of different ecological setting.

## **2. Material and methods**

The sample of the study comprised of 180 adolescent girls between the age group of 12-18 years who were selected from three different ecological settings i.e. urban, rural and tribal, 60 adolescent girls from each setting was selected. To gather the indepth information from the sample selected various tools were used. These tools were:

**Interview Schedule:** It included background information related to adolescent girls and their families.

**Fear Check List (FCL):** This was used to study the level and nature of fears of adolescent girls.

## **3. Results and discussion**

The overall analysis of the data revealed that majority of the respondent and rural areas were in the age group of 14-16 years. In tribal areas 34 % were falling in 16-18 years. Regarding the educational qualification majority of the respondents were studying in standard 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> in urban areas. In rural areas 48% of the respondents were studying in the standard 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> and in tribal areas 41 % were studying in standard 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>. Results also revealed that majority of the adolescent girls (45 %) were in the category of fearful and 23 % were in average category. Very few respondents (2 %) and 3% were in least and less fearful category. The results of the study are consistent with the study of Hurlock (1999), where the girls are more susceptible to fears than boys. As compared to adolescent in rural areas, results reveals that majority of the adolescent girls (50 %) were in the category of highly fearful and 36 % were fearful. In average category only 12 % were included and 2% were in less fearful category.

Regarding the level of fear among tribal ranges from average to highly fearful. Not a single respondent from tribal group fall under the category of least to less fearful. Majority of the respondents

52% were in the fearful category followed by (45 %) in the highly fearful category. Very few (3 %) were having average score on FCL. Analysis regarding the nature of fears among adolescent girls in three ecological setting revealed, that out of three settings, adolescent girls of tribal areas 72 % were fearful of medical surgical items like operation and operation theatre, injection; doctors, hospital etc. followed by rural 62 % and urban 50 %. Half of the adolescent girls 50% in rural areas were having fears related to illness like person suffering from infectious diseases, naked wounds, getting injected, medicine, possibility of falling illness. Followed by tribal (48 %) and urban (37 %), Bernstein et al. (1988) 42 % of the tribal adolescent girls were having fear of supernatural phenomena followed by rural and urban adolescent girls. It was observed that tribal and rural people believed in superstitions and magical treatment and as such their belief in supernatural things increases. They are of the view that they do not believe in supernatural phenomena something bad will happen to them and their families. Therefore, they take all the precautions to be safe from this supernatural phenomenon.

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