Development and Validation of the Adolescent Anxiety Scale (AAS): A New Measure for Assessing Anxiety in Today's Youth

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Abstract: Anxiety in the youth today has reached to an alarming situation where feelings of fear, worry and uneasiness have converted into excessive and persistent restlessness, confusion and loss of clear identity to emerge as an confident individual. This has triggered their physical, emotional, academic and behavioural patterns into identifiable disorders i.e Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Phobias, Panic Disorder and Social Anxiety Disorder. Loss of interest in studies, unbalanced aggression, suicide are some unwelcome outcomes of these disorders. Indian and Foreign scales are available for identifying symptoms. Yet, while working with adolescents from Indian schools and colleges, there emerged a need to have scale for career, academic, behavioural and personal anxiety can be measured as to formulate a comprehensive anxiety score in order to design interventions accordingly. AAS (Adolescent Anxiety Scale) was conceptualized and designed as an answer for the required need. It is a questionnaire having 25 items which were obtained after going through the various stages of making a standardized scale. On sample size of 150 students, AAS scores were correlated with TMAS (Tailors Manifest Anxiety Scale). AAS and TMAS were found significantly correlated (r=0.690, p < 0.001), suggesting the Adolescent Anxiety Scale has convergent validity with TMAS.

Keywords: Anxiety, Assessment Scales, CEBP (Career, Educational, Behavioural, Personal Concerns) AAS (Adolescent Anxiety Scale), TMAS (Tailors Manifest Anxiety Scale) , High Convergent Validity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a mood state which is experienced naturally and normally by any human being with slight increase in heart rate, worry over conflicted issues and feeling of unease resulting from relationships. It becomes unhealthy when it is occurring repeatedly with no control of the individual to overcome and manage the situational crisis. Anxiety in the youth today has reached to an alarming situation where feelings of fear, worry and uneasiness have converted into excessive and persistent restlessness, confusion and loss of clear identity to emerge as an confident individual. This has triggered anxiety manifestations in them in following ways:

➤ *Anxiety Manifestations: Excessive Worry*

Worrying is important to grow. Career, Educational, Social, Emotional and Personal worries are at heights in this phase of life. Worrying, if leading to positive outcome, is always welcome. Yet, excessive worry is hazardous. The symptoms of excessive worry are:

- Sleeplessness
- Decreased academic grades

- Low self esteem
- Social Isolation
- Depression

➤ *Anxiety Manifestations: Fear and Panic*

Sometimes when the worries tend to go out of proportion, fear and panic accompanies which further deteriorate our life's conditions. the fear and panic symptoms can be:

- Avoiding things, people, situations
- Shortness of breadth and dizziness
- Negative self-concept

➤ *Anxiety Manifestations: Irritability*

Anxiety produces irritability. It makes people react to normal situations in abnormal way and creating and developing negative environment around them. The symptoms are:

- Easily annoyed
- Always complaining

- Frustrations
- Impatience

➢ Anxiety Manifestations: Lack of Concentration

Anxiety does not let people concentrate, neither on academies nor on personal and social behaviour. The symptoms are:

- Unable to complete homework/ task
- Unable to devote time on relations to understand
- Unable to follow social discipline

➢ Anxiety Manifestations: Confusions and Lack of Decision Making

Anxiety leads to confusions or confusions gives anxiety. In both the conditions decision making gets affected The people find it challenging to think clearly and precisely and get overwhelmed even for a minor task. The symptoms are:

- Overthinking
- Impaired Memory
- Over and Under estimations
- Impaired Cognition

➢ Anxiety Manifestations: External Locus of Control

Anxiety is majorly due to external locus of control which is belief that one's life is controlled by outside forces rather than by one's own action and choices. The symptoms are:

- Finding a scapegoat
- Learned Helplessness
- Belief on Luck, fate, Chance
- Influence of powerful others

➢ Anxiety Manifestations: Compulsive behaviour

Compulsive behaviour is resultant of excessive anxiety where the compulsions are repetitive actions or rituals performed to reduce anxiety caused by obsessive thoughts and fears. The symptoms are:

- Excessive handwashing
- Checking and rechecking
- Ritualistic Behaviour
- Mental rituals

The triggers has influenced their physical, emotional, academic and behavioural patterns into an identifiable disorders i.e:

➢ Generalized Anxiety Disorder:

A student who is restless that he /she isn't looking good, the clothes they are wearing doesn't suit the occasion though have changed no. of times before wearing it. The hairstyle they are wearing is not in vogue. Their friends talk ill about them when they are not with them.

➢ Phobias:

Phobia makes people avoid the things they fear. Students suffering from social phobia does not like to make friends, being with group of people scares them, they fear speaking at public places.

➢ Panic Attacks:

This occurs for no apparent reason. The child can have sudden and intense feeling of numbness, dizziness, headaches, stomach problems, shortness of breathing.

➢ Obsessive Compulsive Disorder:

Anxiety takes the form of obsessions (excessively preoccupying thoughts) and compulsions (repetitive actions to try to relieve anxiety).

Student going for hand wash again and again, student who cannot sit at a place and frequently changes seats, student who changes the paper and rewrites if a mistake is done and eraser marks are visible are some of the symptoms of OCD.

➢ PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder):

The student who suffered a severe loss like death of loved ones, divorce of parents, child abuse etc tend to have flashback syndrome and nightmares which affect their behaviour. They fear similar situations which can brought the memory of such incidents.

➢ Social Anxiety Disorder:

The student feels embarrassed, introverted, always being watched and criticized which makes them avoid people, public gatherings. They become loners.

➢ Academic Anxiety:

With loss of interest in studies, unbalanced aggression, suicide are some unwelcome outcome. To measure the symptoms of them lot of Indian and Foreign scales are available. Yet, while working with Indian school and college adolescents there emerged a need to have scale where the career, academic, behavioural and personal anxiety can be measured as comprehensive anxiety score so that interventions can be designed accordingly.

➢ Rationale for developing new scale:

While existing scales bring anxiety scores on adolescents yet the unique stressors and expectations faced by Indian students needed to be scored. Immediate societal pressures and cultural nuances gave them challenges as academic competition, generational biases and personal struggles. So, the new scale AAS (Adolescent Anxiety Scale) is developed to identify the anxiety triggers in four areas i.e. Career, Educational, Behavioural and Personal and giving a comprehensive anxiety score of the student.

➢ Objective of the study:

To develop and validate a culturally sensitive anxiety scale (AAS) for Indian adolescents, assessing anxiety symptoms and triggers specific to their context, and providing a reliable and valid tool for mental health professionals to identify and address anxiety disorders.

II. METHODOLOGY

After following rigorous steps of formulating standardized scale 25 items questionnaire assesses anxiety score in four areas Academic, Career, Behavioral and Personal. The sample taken was on 150 adolescents and validated against Tailors Manifest Anxiety Scale.(TMAS).

➤ *Reliability:*
The split half reliability coefficient of .86 calculated using the Spearman -Brown formula. This is indicative of strong correlation among two halves and scale as a reliable measure to assess Anxiety among adolescents.

➤ *Validity:*
On sample size of 150 students AAS scores were correlated with TMAS (Tailors Manifest Anxiety Scale). AAS and TMAS were found significantly correlated ($r=0.690$, $p < 0.001$),suggesting the Adolescent Anxiety Scale has convergent validity with TMAS.

➤ *Factor Structure:*
Exploratory factor analysis revealed a 3 factor structure: academic anxiety, social anxiety and emotional symptoms.

➤ *Result:*
The AAS appears to be a reliable and valid tool for assessing anxiety in Indian adolescents. It can help bridge the gap in assessment and support for Indian adolescents.

➤ *Potential Utility of the test:*
It can be used for assessing individuals as well as with groups. The application can be used in the following ways:

- School/ College based interventions: It will help identifying students needing support and tailor sessions to address anxiety triggers.
- Clinical Settings: It can be used as screening tool for therapeutic interventions.
- Research: It can also be used for studying the prevalence of anxiety in any section of society, risk factors and planning awareness and interventions accordingly.

III. IMPLICATIONS OF THE AAS

➤ *Early Identification:*
Enables timely interventions, potentially reducing long-term mental health impacts.

➤ *Targeted Support:*
Schools can integrate AAS into counselling programs, addressing specific anxiety triggers like academic pressure or social media.

➤ *Cultural Relevance:*
The AAS can inform policy-makers and educators about anxiety concerns specific to Indian adolescents.

➤ *Research Opportunities:*
Facilitates studies on anxiety trends, helping develop effective interventions.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE SCOPE

➤ *Large-Scale Validation:*
Conducting studies with diverse populations to further establish AAS's reliability and validity.

➤ *Norm Development:*
Creating norms for different age groups, genders, and regions in India

➤ *Intervention Studies:*
Using AAS to evaluate anxiety-reduction programs in schools and clinical settings.

➤ *Digital Adaptation:*
Develop a digital version of AAS for easier administration and feedback.

➤ *Teacher and Parent Involvement:*
Educate them on AAS and involve in support strategies.

V. CONCLUSION

The development and validation of the Adolescent Anxiety Scale (AAS) aimed to create a culturally sensitive tool for assessing anxiety in Indian adolescents. The AAS shows promise as a reliable and valid tool for assessing anxiety in Indian adolescents. Its development is a step towards addressing the mental health needs of this population. The AAS can also inform policy-makers and educators about anxiety concerns specific to Indian adolescents, enabling more effective support systems. Further studies can build on these findings, exploring AAS's applications in diverse settings and populations.

In conclusion, the AAS is a valuable contribution to mental health assessment in India. Its development and validation demonstrate the importance of culturally sensitive approaches in addressing anxiety among adolescents. By supporting the mental health needs of Indian youth, we can promote healthier development and well-being.

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