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## Level of Shyness among the Public and Private Schools Adolescents (13-18 years): A Comparative Study

Ayesha Manzoor, Kiran<sup>a,b\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Jönköping International Business School, Jönköping University, 551 11, Sweden

<sup>b</sup> Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering & Management Sciences, Quetta 83700, Pakistan

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### Abstract

The relationship between levels of shyness among the adolescents (13-18 years) of public and private schools were investigated in the present study. 120 students studying in different grades from public and private schools in Islamabad (Pakistan) were selected by Random sampling technique. It was hypothesized that levels of shyness among the adolescents of private and public school is different. To measure the levels of shyness, the McCroskey Shyness scale was administered on the sample. Data was analyzed by applying t-test for independent samples and hypothesis was not supported because there is no significant difference found between levels of shyness among the public and private schools adolescents. The research presents evidence that there is no impact of schooling system on shyness levels of adolescents but shy adolescents are less likely to participate in communication and classroom activities or ask questions when they need help with schoolwork. They greatly suffer from social anxiety.

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**Keywords:** Shyness; Adolescents; Schooling System; Social Anxiety.

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The study was conducted as university research project. Firstly, wrote permission letter to school administrations requesting to conduct research. Secondly, Informed Consent Form signed by the parents and students to agree and voluntary participate in this research. The form described the purpose, procedure and confidentiality of the sample.

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\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +46 73 876 7624; fax: +0-000-000-0000 .  
E-mail address: [Ayesha.Manzoor@ju.se](mailto:Ayesha.Manzoor@ju.se)

## 1. Introduction

Shyness is a feeling of apprehension and discomfort which is experienced by everyone to some extent in his/ her life. It becomes problematic when a person is unable to cope and overcome shyness in daily routine which upsets personal, social and professional life. A person confronts difficulties of attending parties, meeting people, visiting others and communicating freely. In such cases, person's social life is badly affected. Particularly, adolescents suffer from shyness which later causes social anxiety and isolation. They do not want any social relation even do not participate in social activities. Teachers feel problem to engage such children in classroom activities as they are not willing to communicate with others. They do not answer the question even they have information.

During class presentation, shy adolescents face difficulty in expressing views and share information. They are destabilised by their social anxiety and unable prompt to convey information. As shy adolescents are often hesitant in asking help from others so because of this, they face lots of complications in their routine activities. They prefer to stay alone, inexpressive, unwilling to talk and inactive to participate in physical activities e.g. sports, outing. The shy adolescents experience tension, apprehension, certain physiological symptoms and feeling of negative evaluation by others during any social interaction. There is a need to identify such adolescents, assess their problems and treat them so they can overcome with this problem and spend a healthy social life. Shyness can be defined "as a fear of, or withdrawal from, other people or social situations, can have many different causes depending on the individual child and the specific circumstances" (Briggs, Cheek, & Jones, 1986). Shy generally means tends to avoid human beings. This is something that all people experience at one time or another. Shyness has been defined as "a heightened state of individuation characterized by excessive egocentric preoccupation and over concern with social evaluation, with the consequence that the shy person inhibits, withdraws, avoids, and escapes" (Random House Dictionary of English Language, 2010). Different psychologist's defined shyness as; "William James (1980), considered shyness as a basic human instinct". Darwin Izard (1972), described "shyness as a discrete, fundamental emotion". An emotion profile in a "shy" situation includes interest and fear, which interacts with shyness. Carver and Scheier (1986), defined "shyness in self-regulation terms, with unfavorable social outcome expectancies leading to disengagement in task efforts". Sometime it is considered as a normal momentary behavior due to different circumstances.

In children, shyness is normal and a part of usual behavior during five months to two years. It is considered as a part of social and personality development. It becomes problem after two years when children face difficulties in relationships. Their personal, social and school life is affected by their shyness. Problems with shyness are usually evident by the time a child reaches three years of age (Rubin, Hymel, & Mills, 1989; Crozier, 1995; Lazarus, 1982). Whatever the causes of shyness in an adolescent, it is a behavior that parents must not ignore. It can be very painful for an adolescent to live with, and it can have negative effects on other aspects of an adolescent's life. These negative effects can follow an adolescent into adulthood, too. For example, many shy adolescent develop low self-esteem and lack self- confidence. This can cause great difficulty for a shy adolescent to make friends. Also, many shy adolescent are so quiet that they don't receive the help they need from teachers at school, which results in poor school performance which could be better (Rubin & Mills, 1988, Hymel, 1990).

Dr. Zimbardo (1981) writes, "We believe that the pain and pressures of the teen-age years are considerably greater for today's young people than they have been for previous generation. If it is a bad time generally for all adolescents, one can safely assume that it is far worse for the shy ones. He recommended his book "The Student's Shyness and Behavior Modification" to the parents of adolescent shy children, working indirectly to make their children feel secure and have fewer things over which to feel self- conscious. He advised parents to provide personal appearance assistance and participating in the education system of the shy child. Extreme shyness usually leads to psychological problems in adolescent's i.e. low self-esteem, lack of confidence, social phobia and social withdrawal (Allen Richmond, & McCroskey, 1981). If it develops phobia (social fear) among children who are unhappy because they are unable to make friends, it is called "conflicted shyness"; if it is based on the lack of a strong motivation to engage in social interaction, it is called "social disinterest." Both types can be detected at an early age (Cheek, & Busch, 1981).

The major behavioral components of excessive shyness in adolescents are as follows: difficulty talking, stammering, stuttering, blushing, shaking, sweating hands when with other people, difficulty in thinking of things to say to people, absence of outgoing mannerisms such as good eye contact or an easy smile, reluctance to play with other kids, to go to school, to visit relatives and neighbors. Psychologists have two views of shyness. The nature view is that some infants are genetically predisposed to be shy. The nurture view is that infants learn shyness from their environment (Harris, 1984). A shy adolescent avoids social interactions, and is very uncomfortable when he inadvertently finds himself in one. He doesn't say much, and has a very weak presentation. He doesn't handle any form of criticism very well, and does very little to defend himself.

*1.1 Symptoms of Shyness*

Shyness reactions can occur at any or all of the following levels: cognitive, affective, physiological and behavioral (see Table 1) according to CBT Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Model (Carducci, 2005).

Cognitive	Affective	Physiological	Behavior
Negative Thoughts	Embarrassment and Painful	Enhanced Heart Rate	Reserve/ Passivity
Fear of negative evaluation	Shame	Dry Mouth	Stare/ Hate
Worry/Apprehension	Anxiety	Trembling/ Shaking	Avoidance / Nervous
Self-Pity	Sadness	Sweating	Low Speaking Voice
Weak/ Dull	Loneliness	Feeling Faint/ Dizzy	Lethargic
Negative biases in the Self-concept	Depression	Leave Place Removed	Speech Problem/ Escape

Shyness described by CBT Model adopted (Beck, 2011).

*1.2 Causes for Shyness in Adolescents*

Shyness can have many different causes. There may be a specific cause for shyness in some adolescents, while in others it may occur for a number of different reasons. Here are some of the reasons why adolescents become shy. In adolescents it may arise from different biological and environmental factors (Carducci, & Marion, 1997). Majority of causes are related to how these adolescents are nurtured while growing up. Adolescents learn everything through imitation (Carducci, 2005). If parents themselves are not that outgoing and shy by nature, then shyness in their adolescents is highly apparent. That is because parents are role models. Adolescents who have abusive parents tend to be insecure and shy by nature (Carducci, Marion, Lynch, Dosch, & Boley, 1997). Another type is over critical and dominating parents because they criticize to their child a lot and always controlling them. So adolescents are pushed into a shell when they are criticized so much, that they fear making mistakes which leads to shyness (McCroskey, 1977). An overall low confidence in personality can be the reason for shyness in adolescents. This low confidence may have been induced by peer pressure, comparison with siblings or even bullying in school (Malouff, 1998).

- **Lack of Experiences in Social Situations:** Adolescents may have problem to participate in social activities. They do not learn how to socialize with others. How to make friends and how to express emotions and feelings in any social setup? As friendship is a very important part of socialization. If child do not make friends he/she will remain alone and isolated. Many shy adolescents hesitate to talk with others because they are weak in social skills. As they have a fear of shame, embarrassment, rejection and humiliation, so they prefer to avoid others and happy to live alone and isolated.
- **Difficulties with Effective Communication:** As shy adolescents are reluctant to interact with others so they do not learn effective communication skills. They have problem in speaking freely and in expressing their views. They do not answer any question and remain quite due to lack of confidence. Even they have problem in writing skills because they use limited words to describe any question and situation.

- **Difficulty Expressing Emotions:** Shy adolescents have problem in expressing feelings and emotions. They try to repress emotions which later on create psychological distress i.e. depression, anxiety and stress etc. among them.

Buss (2003), explained early developing shyness means fear of novelty and physical reactivity. Later developing shyness (4-6 years) is due to excessive parental evaluation of observable aspects of a child's behavior. Self-conscious shyness seems to be higher in self-blame and shame than fearful shyness. He added self-blaming attributions as dependent variable means fearfulness, not shyness, predicts self-blaming attributions for interpersonal failure. Both fearfulness and shyness predict internal attributions and state shame in hypothetical interpersonal failure situations and both predict shame. Shyness has still been a negative predictor of control. Research from varying sources over the past 20 years indicates that approximately 40% of adults and adolescents surveyed currently consider themselves to be shy (Carducci, & Zimbardo, 1995). In addition, past research has also consistently demonstrated that there are certain situations, such as interacting with authority figures and other unknown person, that are more likely to elicit shyness than others for both adults and adolescents. In attempt to cope with their shyness 85% of adults (Carducci, 2003), and 72.5% of adolescents surveyed indicated their willingness to do something about their shyness. While the previous research has investigated a variety of the self-selected strategies used by adults to deal with their shyness. Given the developmental significance associated with peer relationships during adolescents (Atwater, 1996), the study of shyness as a barrier to such interpersonal relations is of critical importance (Cheek & Krasnoperova, 1999).

Research was done on influence of shyness on anxiety and academic achievement among high school students of 160 samples were selected through stratified random sampling from three high schools of Mysore City, India. The students were assessed using Shyness Questionnaire and Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale. Results revealed that high levels of anxiety and contradictorily shyness did not influence the academic achievement of the students. Boys and girls were found to have equal level of shyness. Remedial measures for reducing shyness have been suggested (Malouff, 1998). Another Study investigates the relationship between shyness and fear among high school students of Mysore city, India. A total of 311 high school students studying in 8, 9 and 10 grades in English and Kannada medium were randomly selected for the study. They were administered the shyness Questionnaire and fear checklist the results revealed that, as the level of shyness increased linearly. Students studying in Kannada medium were found to be more fearful as compared to students studying in English medium (Kimberley, Arbeau, Robert, & Coplan, 2005). The view of nurture or environmental triggers is also linked to the manifestation of shyness. Malouff (1998), Associate Professor of Psychology at Nova Southeastern University, Florida states in his Internet article, "Helping Young Children Overcome Shyness" the following environmental reasons (a) a less than firm attachment bond between parent and child, (b) poor acquisition of social skills, or (c) parents, siblings or others harshly and frequently teasing or criticizing a child.

The study goal was to explore the moderating role of teacher-child relationships in the relation between shyness and socio-emotional adjustment in early elementary school. Child adjustment was assessed by both child and teacher reports. Among the results, shyness and negative teacher-child relationships were related to socio-emotional difficulties, whereas close teacher-child relationships were associated with indices of positive adjustment. However, several interaction effects were also observed, with teacher-child relationships moderating the relations between shyness and adjustment. The pattern of results suggested a potential protective role for teacher-child relationships in shy children's adjustment. The study considered the relationship between shyness, some related personality variables and socio-economic status. Adolescent shyness levels were examined using two self-report questionnaires which cover the spectrum of inherent, emotional and situational shyness. Furthermore, shyness is related significantly to the socio-economic class of adolescents: a relatively higher percentage of shyness occurs among adolescents of lower socio-economic class (Scott Reamy, 2003).

Learning to be successful in social interactions is one of the hallmarks of late childhood and early adolescence. Children who lack social initiative may be hesitant to engage in the social practice necessary to become socially skilled and successfully integrated into social networks. Lack of social integration may be manifested as poor social acceptance for these youth who tend toward shy behavior (*Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*,

2010). Socially anxious youth who exhibit shy behavior may also be at risk for poor social acceptance and self-esteem (Asendorpf, 1990). Social anxiety involves a marked and persistent fear of social or performance situations in which embarrassment may occur. This fear response may cause noticeable discomfort, avoidance of specific social situations, and interference with daily functioning. This is highly consistent. The conceptualization of shyness, which combines a high desire to interact socially with a pronounced tendency to avoid social interactions is due to fear of negative evaluation. Furthermore a strong association has been found between shyness and social anxiety.

### *1.3 Schooling System*

Shyness may lead to problems in school. Education is not only a basic human right it is also critical for personality development and socio-economic development. A school is an institution designed for the teaching of students (or "pupils") under the supervision of teachers. Education in Pakistan is carried out in two languages, Urdu and English. There are two types of schooling systems in Pakistan i.e. public and private. The public, government-run schools, which educate the vast majority of children while the private sector has played a crucial role in filling the vacuum left by the public sector in providing quality education. It nevertheless leaves a lot to be desired. High-quality private education remains outside the reach of the majority. Nevertheless schooling system play important role in socialization, personality development and all other aspects of student's life.

### *1.4 Rationale of Study*

First and foremost, it is important for a teacher to differentiate between shy students, and students who are quiet because of disinterest or those who need scholastic help and support. While it is true that a student who does not speak up in class may not have done his/her homework, some students may not speak up or even answer questions because they are shy. The present research aims to study whether level of shyness is high in adolescents of public schools or private schools. The reason behind selection of this criterion is to highlight that which schooling systems develop shyness vs. confidence in adolescents. The present study also aims to find out whether Dr. Zimbardo's (1981), definition of shyness can be applied in Pakistan with enough face validity to establish and generalize research. The study is beneficial, as we have highlighted the role of schooling systems including public and private in formation of shyness among adolescents. Further, we made an attempt to make the people aware of outcomes of the shy behavior such as severe social anxiety. Enabling the parents, schools management and the teachers to provide productive, supportive and healthy environment to the adolescents, in order to prevent or stop shyness from developing and if an adolescent exhibit any shy behavior recognize and detect the attitudinal change in them.

## **2. Methodology**

In this study, a problem related to adolescents has been highlighted, to investigate the level of shyness among private and public school adolescents. Here it is aimed to find the relationship between Level of shyness and schooling system. Finally to recommend the teachers, parents and school administration how to handle shyness among adolescents.

### *2.1 Participants*

This study carried out on 120 adolescents aged 13-18 years, selected from Pakistan from two different types of schooling system i.e. 60 adolescents from public schools and 60 adolescents from private schools. They were studying in different grades, from 7 to 12 grade. The random sampling technique was used to select sample.

### *2.2 Measures*

#### *2.2.1 Demographic Information Sheet*

Demographic information sheet was given to the subjects to get their information regarding age, gender, class, school name, and so on.

#### *2.2.2 Shyness Scale (SS)*

For measurement of shyness we used McCroskey Shyness Scale. This measure has generated high alpha reliability estimates (>.90) and has excellent face validity. Research has indicated that it also has high predictive validity. It is five point Likert scales with 14 items. Scores above 52 indicate a high level of shyness. Scores below 32 indicate a low level of shyness. Scores between 32 and 52 indicate a moderate level of shyness.

2.3 Procedure

The present study was a Natural Group Design. The study was administered on 60 public and 60 private schools adolescents, thereby constituting the total sample size of 120. The adolescents constituting the sample were instructed to give the true response. They took few minutes for the completion of demographic sheet then they completed shyness scale. The results obtained from sample were statistically treated, and adolescent’s responses on every item were calculated. The t-test was applied and to determine the research hypothesis was supported.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data acquired by this study has been analyzed by using SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The tabulation form of data was presented for quick understanding the statistical procedures.

3. Results

3.1 Reliability Analysis

The instrument used to carry out this study was based on scale format having 5 response styles to answer. The appropriate method of calculating the reliability coefficient was the Alpha Cronbach Technique. The reliability coefficient of 0.82 was calculated which is high reliability.

Table 1. Alpha Reliability Coefficient of Shyness Scale (SS) (N= 120).

Scale	No. of items	Cronbach’s Alpha
McCroskey Shyness Scale (SS)	14	.82

The table 1 shows the value of the reliability coefficient indicates that the scale is reliable for the present study.

3.2 Descriptive Statistic and T-test

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviations and T-Score of Level of Shyness among Adolescents of Public and Private Schools (N= 120).

	Public School		Private School		t	p	95% CI		Cohen’s d
	Students (n =60)		Students (n =60)				LL	UL	
	M	SD	M	SD					
Level of Shyness	36.14	5.91	36.83	6.59	.39	.68	-4.3	11.09	.11

Note. CI= Confidence Interval; LL= Lower Limit; UL= Upper Limit.

Table 2 shows that the mean level of shyness of public school adolescents is 36.14 with standard deviation 5.91 and the mean of level of shyness of private schools adolescents is 36.83 with standard deviation 6.59. The value does not lie at 0.05 level of significance which means our research hypothesis is not supported.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The study examined was related to the levels of shyness among public and private school adolescents. For this purpose McCroskey Shyness Scale (SS) was applied to measure shyness level of adolescents (13-18 years). The scale consists of 14 items which measured three different level of shyness i.e. high, moderate and low level of shyness. Sample was selected from the Public and Private schools of Islamabad. Scale was filled by the students of 7<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grades. The result of this research narrates that there is no difference in level of shyness among the adolescents of public and private schools. Furthermore, after given consideration to just the means of public schools (36.14) and private schools (36.83), it is clearly observed that there is very minor difference in level of shyness in both schooling system adolescents. It presents the clear picture that schooling system does not affect the level of shyness among the adolescents. The study proved that different schooling systems could not be the cause of shyness among the adolescents. Both private and public schools adolescents equally scored moderate and high level of shyness on scale.

In fact shy adolescent does not want to communicate with others especially in classroom; even they know the answer but do not response because of fear, embarrassment and humiliation. "Bruno stated "Shyness leads to shyness" (Zimbardo, Philip & Shirley, 1981). A troubled adolescent tends to be distressed in the presence of others and avoidance of others relieves anxiety. Thus the shy behavior is reinforced and becomes a habit. The study proved that different schooling systems could not be the cause of shyness among the adolescents. Both private and public schools adolescents equally scored moderate and high level of shyness on scale. A shy adolescent have problem in participating, interacting and communicating with others class fellows. Furthermore, interpersonal factors are found to have played a role in chronic shyness. These adolescents do not know how to stand up for their rights or themselves in interpersonal contexts and therefore tend to find them avoiding others (Carducci, 1999).

The present study had limitations for which suggestions and other future research options have been advised. There has been little work done on this phenomenon, largely due to a lack of reliable nationwide data either in private schools or public schools. The conclusions of this work point towards the importance of a nationwide analysis of private schooling and public schooling and their role in educational delivery, personality development and build confidence in adolescents to participate in communication. Although the scale was reliable enough to be used in the present study, it had some faults and limitations e.g. locally developed scale is only limited to the present culture and more age appropriate for which it was developed. Scale has not much number of statements for covering the whole measurement of level of shyness. The other limitation of the research is that, it was conducted in Islamabad. The sample was limited to a small area although the hypothesis has been supported it must be kept in mind that individual differences do exists.

Finally, the study of adolescent shyness has implications for understanding some of the more extreme examples of adolescent violence as exhibited by recent high school shootings perpetrated by shy, socially isolated, angry adolescents labeled as "clinically shy" (Carducci, 2005). It is suggested that if any replication of the present study is done, it will utilize a large and more diverse sample, so as to be more representative of the population. It is hoped that in future the researcher will give special attention to the problem of the truly representative sample which is very much possible at a group level and also the number of items in the scale would be increased for recording proper variables.

The results of the present study have a number of suggestion implications for parents, teachers, and mental health professionals to help shy adolescents deal with their shyness. In support of the benefits of the "tend-and-befriend" response, parents and teachers should encourage shy adolescent, especially shy males, to become more involved in social activities as a means of establishing a social support network. For example, service learning programs through the school and other community volunteer activities have been proposed as offering shy individuals non-threatening opportunities for practicing and developing their social skills in a semi-structured social environment

while minimizing feelings of social anxiety and self-consciousness (Caspi, Glen, Elder, & Bem, 1988). In addition, to help shy adolescents in their efforts to make conversation with others, teachers should consider including in the general curriculum information on such topics as the basic elements and protocol for approaching and engaging others in social conversation (Carducci, 2009). Finally, parents, teachers, and mental health professionals should also be sensitive to the possibility of substance abuse issues. If students are aware of their shyness and are given strategies to cope with the feelings of anxiety and fear, they will be able to report more effectively.

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