

**A STUDY OF SOCIAL PHOBIAS AMONG URBAN AND RURAL ADOLESCENT BOYS: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO OBESITY**

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**Abstract**

The aim of the present study is to analyze the effect of obesity upon social phobias among urban and rural adolescent boys. For present study, 200 obese adolescent boys (Av. age 15.25 yrs.) and 200 normal weight adolescent boys (Av. age 15.12 yrs.) from various govt. and private schools of Chhattisgarh operational in rural and urban area were selected to serve as sample for the present study. The criteria for selection of subjects were based on WHO (2000) classification of body mass index (BMI) which BMI between 18.0-24.99 is considered to be normal weight while BMI >30 is considered to be obese. To assess social phobia or unrealistic fear of social activities, Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality Inventory prepared by Joshi and Malik (1981) was preferred. To conduct the study, a 2X2 factorial design was setup in which grades of BMI automatically have two levels i.e. normal and obese. Similarly urban-rural belongingness also have two levels i.e. boys of urban and rural areas. 2X2 ANOVA results showed that the obese adolescent boys had significantly higher level of social phobia as compared to normal adolescent boys. The phobic personality disorder was not found to be significantly different in a group of urban and rural adolescent boys. The two factor interaction effect of obesity and urban rural belongingness upon phobic personality disorder i.e. social phobia among adolescent boys was not found to be statistically significant. It was concluded that obesity in adolescence may lead to unrealistic fear about social circumstances i.e. phobic personality disorder.

**Keywords : Obesity, Adolescence, Social phobia, urban-rural background.**

**Introduction**

In our modern world consumption of junk food or foods high in salt, sugar, or fat coupled with lack of physical activities, sedentary life style, urbanization, and

changing modes of transportation, obesity emerged as major physical and psychological health hazard all over the world. Apart from detrimental effect on physical health, obesity is known to cause

certain personality disorder as have been proved by many scientists.

Personality disorder refers to a class of personality types and enduring behaviors associated with significant distress or disability, which appear to deviate from social expectations (DSM-IV, 2000)<sup>1</sup>.

Personality disorders are included as mental disorders in the diagnostic manual of the American Psychiatric Association and in the mental and behavioral disorders section of the ICD manual of the World Health Organization. Personality, defined psychologically, is the set of enduring behavioral and mental traits that distinguish human beings. Hence, personality disorders are defined by experiences and behaviors that differ from societal norms and expectations.

One of the personality disorder i.e. phobia is a type of anxiety disorder, usually defined as a persistent fear of an object or situation in which the sufferer commits to great lengths in avoiding, typically disproportional to the actual danger posed, often being recognized as irrational. In the event the phobia cannot be avoided entirely, the sufferer will endure the situation or object with marked distress and significant interference in social or occupational activities (Bourne, E.J., 2011)<sup>2</sup>.

As far as connection between obesity and phobias are concerned, Pickering et al. (2007)<sup>3</sup> in their study showed significant relationship between obesity and specific phobia. Similarly Petry et al. (2008)<sup>4</sup> in their study, reported a positive association between obesity and specific phobia.

In a developing country like India too, obesity is fast spreading as epidemic due to changing lifestyle and advent of western culture in our society. In India where large population resides in rural areas and the socio-demographic as well as economic status of rural and urban people differ significantly, it is interesting to analyze the

phobia associated with obesity among urban-rural adolescent boys. Hence in the present study, effect of obesity was analyzed upon phobic personality disorder (social phobia) of urban-rural adolescent boys.

### **Hypothesis**

It was hypothesized that urban obese adolescent boys will show more magnitude of social phobia as compared to normal weight rural adolescent boys.

### **Methodology**

The following methodological steps were taken in order to conduct the present study.

### **Sample**

For present study, 200 obese adolescent boys and 200 normal weight adolescent boys from various govt. and private schools of Chhattisgarh, operational in urban and rural areas, were selected to serve as sample for the present study. The criteria for selection of subjects was based on WHO (2000)<sup>5</sup> classification of body mass index (BMI) which BMI between 18.0-24.99 is considered to be normal weight while BMI >30 is considered to be obese. To select the desired number of subjects for the present study, in all 1200 school children between age ranges 11-15 years was screened and from this population 200 obese and 200 normal weight adolescent subjects were selected.

### **Tools:**

Following tools were used to fulfil the objectives of the study -

#### **Body Mass Index**

In order to classify subjects into normal and obese categories, WHO's classification for Body Mass Index was preferred in the present study.

The international classifications of overweight and obesity proposed by the World Health Organization (2000) [19] states that, a BMI <18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup> is defined as underweight, 18.5-24.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup> as normal weight, 25.0-29.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup> as overweight, and >30.0 kg/m<sup>2</sup> as obesity. Obesity can be

further stratified into moderate obesity (BMI 30-34.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>), severe obesity (35-39.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>), and very severe obesity (<40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>). BMI was calculated by the formula wt (kg) / Ht (m)<sup>2</sup>

**Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality**

**Inventory:**

To assess phobic personality disorder i.e. social phobia, one of the dimensions of personality disorder, Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality Inventory prepared by Joshi and Malik, 1981<sup>6</sup> was preferred. The coefficients of stability for three validity and AS scales are found to vary between 0.73 to 0.80 when the retesting interval is of two weeks.

**Procedure:**

First of all height and weight of the selected samples were recorded as per the method described under the caption tools. Body mass index was calculated by using the formula given by WHO (2000). Afterwards

subjects were classified into two categories i.e. normal weight and obese.

Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality Inventory prepared by Joshi and Malik (1981) was administered to all 400 selected subjects as per their convenience, availability and with prior permission from the head of the concerned institution. After scoring of the responses according to author’s manual, obtained data related with phobic personality disorder was tabulated according to their respective groups.

To find out the effect of obesity (Obese-Normal) and urban-rural belongingness on phobic personality disorder of selected adolescent boys, 2 (Grades of BMI) x 2 (urban-rural belongingness) i.e. 2x2 ANOVA technique was adopted.

The results are presented in table 1 and 1(a) respectively.

**Table No. 1:** Obese-Normal (A) x Urban Rural Belongingness (B) on Phobic Personality Disorder i.e. Social Phobia in Adolescent Boys (N=400)

|                | Urban-Rural Belongingness (B) |                       | M     |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
|                | Urban (b1)                    | Rural (b2)            |       |
| a1<br>(Normal) | Mean = 8.88<br>N=131          | Mean = 8.43<br>N = 69 | 8.66  |
| a2<br>(Obese)  | Mean = 21.04<br>N=146         | Mean = 20.51<br>N=54  | 20.78 |
| M              | 14.96                         | 14.47                 |       |

M- Marginal Means

**Table No. 1 (a):** ANOVA Summary

| Source of Variation      | SS        | df  | MS        | F         |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------|-----------|
| A                        | 12370.894 | 1   | 12370.894 | 196.13**  |
| B                        | 19.946    | 1   | 19.946    | 0.31 (NS) |
| AB                       | 0.109     | 1   | 0.109     | 0.002(NS) |
| Within treatment (Error) | 24977.474 | 396 | 63.074    | treatment |

\*\* Significant at .01 level

NS Not Significant

From the analysis of table 1 and 1 (a) following inferences can be drawn :

- The F of 196.13, an indicator of the main effect of grades of BMI upon phobic personality disorder was found to be statistically significant at .01 levels. It thereby reveals that the obese adolescent boys had exhibited higher level of social phobia or unrealistic fear syndrome (M=20.78) as compared to normal adolescent boys (M=8.66).
- The main effect of urban rural belongingness upon phobia turned out to be statistically insignificant. The reported F=0.31, which is statistically insignificant confirms this result.
- The two factor interaction effect of obese-normal and urban-rural belongingness upon phobic personality disorder i.e. social phobia among adolescent boys turned out to be statistically insignificant (F=0.002, p>.05).

### Result

1. Obese adolescent boys have shown significantly higher tendencies to develop unrealistic fear or phobic personality disorder as compared to normal weight adolescent boys.
2. Urban-rural belongingness did not emerge as factor which influences phobic personality disorder among adolescent boys.
3. Two factor interaction effect of obesity and urban-rural belongingness unable to generate any significant effect upon avoidant personality disorder among adolescent boys.

### Conclusion

Unlike specific phobias, social phobias include fear of public situations and scrutiny which leads to embarrassment or humiliation in the diagnostic criteria. Unlike specific phobias which may develop before the age of 10, social phobias are typically

not present until pubertal transition. After this transition, the prevalence of social phobia increases with age. The results of the present study highlight that social phobia is significantly higher in obese adolescent boys as compared to normal weight boys. This is quite expected because obese adolescent boys fear social situations due to their body image and they shun themselves from social activities. Hence on the basis of results it can be concluded that obesity is major factor that causes social phobia in adolescent boys but same cannot be said about urban-rural belongingness or its joint action effect.

### References

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