

A cross-sectional study on the prevalence and severity of anxiety among adolescents and young adults

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Abstract

Anxiety is a feeling of fear, tension, or worry that occurs as a response to a real or perceived threats. An emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune. Anxiety is a common emotional response characterized by feelings of tension accompanied by physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating.

In this cross-sectional study, objective was to assess the prevalence and severity of anxiety among adolescents and young adults using GAD7. The study included 310 participants which included 180 female and 130 males. The participants were in the age group of 10-24. The study was carried out at different schools and colleges in Pathanamthitta, Kerala. The data was collected using predesigned questionnaire. In our study 25.97% of the adolescents had minimal anxiety, 37.66% adolescents had mild anxiety, 24.03% adolescents had moderate anxiety and 12.34% adolescents had severe anxiety. While 38.06% of the young adults had minimal anxiety, 34.84% young adults had mild anxiety, 20.00% young adults had moderate anxiety and 7.10% young adults had severe anxiety

Keywords: GAD; Anxiety; Adolescents; Young adults; Prevalence

1. Introduction

Anxiety is a feeling of fear, tension, or worry that occurs as a response to a real or perceived threats. Anxiety in adolescents is a common and often undertreated mental health concern that can significantly impact their daily lives. While some worries are a normal part of growing up, anxiety disorders in teenagers involve overwhelming and persistent worry that can interfere with school, social activities, and overall well-being. Anxiety is linked to fear and manifests as a future-oriented mood state that consists of a complex cognitive, affective, physiological, and behavioural response system associated with preparation for the anticipated events or circumstances perceived as threatening. Anxiety is considered a future-oriented, long-acting response broadly focused on a diffuse threat, whereas fear is an appropriate, present-oriented, and short-lived response to a clearly identifiable and specific threat.

A screening tool that can help identify generalized anxiety, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder is Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7). The GAD-7 is a widely used tool to help identify individuals who may be experiencing GAD symptoms and to monitor treatment response. GAD-7 Scale was verified as a valid and efficient tool for screening for GAD and assessing its severity in clinical practice and research. It consists of 7 items that assess the Frequency of anxiety symptoms over the past two weeks. Each item is scored from 0 (not at all) to 3 (nearly every day), yielding a total score between 0 and 21. It is easy to administer and has been validated for use in both clinical and non-clinical Populations, including adolescents and young adults. To administer the scale, simply Ask the patients

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to rate each of the seven items on a four-point scale from 0-4 being Minimal anxiety, 5-9 indicating mild anxiety. The score of 10-14 implying moderate Anxiety. A Score greater than 15 is a sign of severe anxiety. The results of the GAD-Seven scale can give valuable insights into the patients' level of anxiety.

Objective

The objective was to assess the prevalence and severity of anxiety among adolescents and young adults using GAD7.

2. Materials and methodology

This study was conducted using a cross-sectional design over a period of six months, from December to May, across various schools and colleges in Pathanamthitta district. A total sample size of 310 participants was included in the study. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Nazareth College of Pharmacy prior to its commencement.

The study included individuals between age 10 to 24. Individuals who are unwilling to participate were excluded from the study. All the relevant and necessary data were collected from community survey at schools and colleges using a pre-designed data collection form and an informed consent form.

Data collection forms were given to obtain sufficient data on the prevalence and severity of anxiety among adolescents and young adults. The impact of awareness was also evaluated. The data thus obtained was analysed statistically. The data collected was entered in MS Excel and result was presented in tabular form and presented as frequency and percentages.

3. Result

3.1. Severity of anxiety

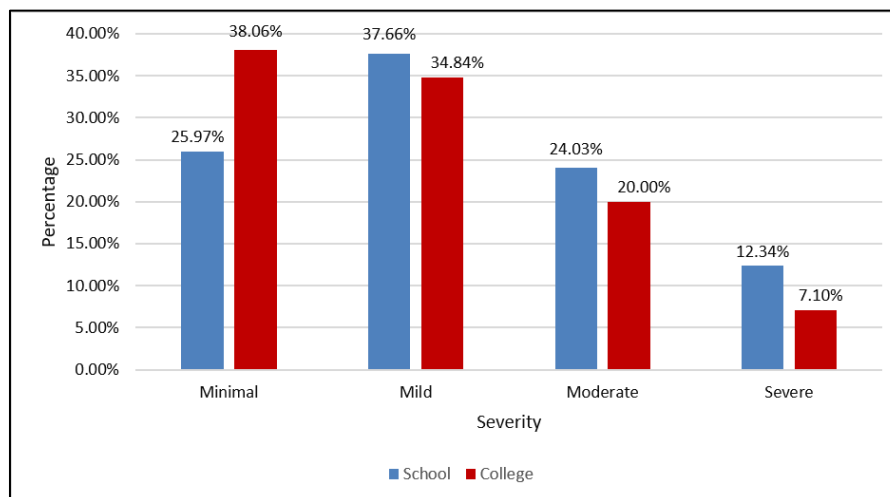


Figure 1 Distribution of severity of anxiety

In our study 25.97% adolescents had minimal anxiety, 37.66% adolescents had mild anxiety, 24.03% adolescents had moderate anxiety and 12.34% adolescents had severe anxiety which is similar to the study conducted by **Rahul Mandaknalli et al. (2021)** where 31.48% of the adolescents had minimal anxiety, 39.81% of the adolescents had mild anxiety, 39.81% adolescents had moderate anxiety and 12.96% of the adolescents had severe anxiety level of anxiety based on GAD scoring among the students.

In our study 38.06% young adults had minimal anxiety, 34.84% young adults had mild anxiety, 20.00% young adults had moderate anxiety and 7.10% young adults had severe anxiety similar to the study conducted by **Md Dilshad Manzar et al. (2021)** where 23.30% young adults had minimal anxiety, 42.20% young adults had mild anxiety, 29.30% young adults had moderate anxiety and 5.20% young adults had severe anxiety based on GAD scoring among the university students.

4. Discussion

In our study 2.58% of 10-14 year-olds had severe anxiety, 4.51% of 15-19 year-olds had severe anxiety and 2.58% of 20-24 year olds had severe anxiety which is in contrast to the study conducted by fengsai bie (2021) where the anxiety was prevalent in individuals aged 20 to 24 years equal percentage of the population i.e., 50.00% were school going and 50.00% were college going. And 5.80% female students were found to have severe anxiety while 3.87% of the male students were found to have severe anxiety that is female students had more severe anxiety than male students which is similar to the study conducted by a cross-sectional study on the prevalence and severity of anxiety among adolescents and young adults 64kaushik nag et al. (2019) where female students had more severe anxiety compared to male students. In our study 25.97% adolescents had minimal anxiety, 37.66% adolescents had mild anxiety, 24.03% adolescents had moderate anxiety and 12.34% adolescents had severe anxiety which is similar to the study conducted by Rahul Sandaknalli et al.(2021) where 31.48% of the adolescents had minimal anxiety, 39.81% of the adolescents had mild anxiety, 39.81% adolescents had moderate anxiety and 12.96%of the adolescents had severe anxiety level of anxiety based on gad scoring among the students. In our study 38.06% young adults had minimal anxiety, 34.84% young adults had mild anxiety, 20.00% young adults had moderate anxiety and 7.10% young adults had severe anxiety which is similar to the study conducted by Md Dilshad Manzaret al. (2021) where 23.30% young adults had minimal anxiety, 42.20% young adults had mild anxiety, 29.30% young adults had moderate anxiety and 5.20% young adults had severe anxiety based on gad scoring among the university students.

5. Conclusion

Anxiety is a prevalent mental health concern among adolescents and young adults, with far-reaching implications on their overall well-being and development. Adolescence and young adulthood are periods of significant emotional, cognitive, and social development. These stages can also be a time of increased vulnerability to mental health issues, particularly anxiety disorders. Mental health conditions in this age group can have long-lasting effects on their well-being, academic performance, and future life choices. Studies indicate that anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health issues in adolescents and young adults. This study provides valuable insight into the prevalence and severity of anxiety among adolescents and young adults. We used GAD 7 to screen for the severity of anxiety. It was discovered that anxiety was prevalent among both adolescents and young adults.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent forms. The patient has consented to the reporting of clinical information in the journal. The patient understands that his name and initials will not be published and due efforts will be made to conceal his identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

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