



A Correlational Study Of Ego-Defense Mechanism And Level Of Adjustment Among College Student

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ABSTRACT

This study examines gender differences in the use of ego defense mechanisms among college students and their relation to adjustment levels. Freud's foundational work on defense mechanisms, particularly repression, and Anna Freud's further elaboration on these psychological constructs provided insight into this research. This research explores the use of various defense mechanisms, such as Turning Against Object (TAO), Projection (PRO), Principalization (PRN), Turning Against Self (TAS), and Reversal (REV), among 100 college students (50 males and 50 females) of Bhagalpur University. The results reveal significant gender differences in the use of defense mechanisms: males scored higher on TAO and PRO, while females showed higher scores on REV. It was observed that no significant correlation was found between defense mechanisms and adjustment scores, suggesting that even though gender differences exist, these mechanisms do not strongly influence adjustment levels. The findings shed light on how different defense strategies are employed between the sexes, which has practical implications for tailored psychological interventions. These insights could enhance therapeutic approaches by addressing gender-specific coping strategies and improving support mechanisms for students.

Keyword:- Defense mechanism, Adjustment, Principalization, Reversal, college student, self.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of defense mechanism was initially introduced in Sigmund Freud's article "Defense Neuro-Psychosis," where he identified conflicts of nature as the underlying pathogenic factor. In this work, along with others such as "The Etymology of Hysteria" and "Further Comments on Defense Neuro-Psychosis," Freud utilized the term to illustrate the ego's efforts to combat distressing or unbearable thoughts and influences. Freud (1894) suggested that actions or occurrences that challenge the superego and undermine an individual's self-image lead to anxiety within the ego. To mitigate this damage and anxiety, individuals develop and employ ego defense mechanisms as a means of self-protection. Anna Freud (1946) expanded upon her father's theories, providing a comprehensive analysis of defense mechanisms. The Modern Encyclopedia (1968) characterizes defense mechanisms as psychoanalytic constructs that encompass various mental processes aimed at excluding painful and troubling emotions from consciousness, along with the associated thoughts, memories, and impulses, through methods such as repression or dissociation.

The first defense mechanism identified by Freud was "repression", which he called "the queen of defense mechanisms", followed by denial, projection, elimination and rationalization. Freud's daughter Anna Freud developed his theory further. Anna Freud (1936) proposed the first intensive study of defense mechanisms in her book *I and the Defense Mechanisms*. She identified nine defense mechanisms: repression, regression, isolation, undoing, reaction formation, projection, turning away from the self, inversion and sublimation. Bibring (1950) found 24 basic primary defense mechanisms and 15 complex secondary defense mechanisms. Cameron (1963) reported 15 defense mechanisms and Coleman (1964) reported 17 defense mechanisms. To date, hundreds of defense mechanisms have been identified. Many psychologists have worked on classifying defense mechanisms. George Valliant. (1993) developed four different levels of defense mechanisms, which he called pathological, immature, neurotic, and mature. Glaser and Ihlevich (1969) classified defense mechanisms into five categories: Distancing from the Object (TAO), Projection (PRO), Principalization (PRN), Distancing from the Self (TAS), and Reversal (REV).

ADJUSTMENT

In psychology, adjustment is the behavioural process that keeps people and other animals in balance between their needs and those of their surroundings, or between their needs and one another. The physical, social, and psychological demands that come with being dependable towards other people can be adjusted to by humans. As a process, adjustment defines and clarifies the manner in which a person adapts to himself and his surroundings without taking into account the effectiveness or failure of that adaptation. It's an organised way of behaving in daily life—at home, at school, at work, as one matures and gets older. It supports the control of fundamental urges to manageable levels, self-belief, and goal achievement. Therefore, self-initiated growth and development along intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and vocational domains is facilitated by adjustment.

The psychological process through which people deal with the rigours and difficulties of daily life is referred to as adjustment. It implies conformity and addresses how a person adjusts to the demands of life and his surroundings. This covers his interpersonal relationships as well as his management of his obligations and emotions. Psychologically, adjustment aids the organism in managing its needs, desires, and internal conflicts in addition to the stresses and demands of the external environment. Currently, revolutionary changes are occurring in a variety of disciplines, and adaptation is required to deal with such an environment. One must adapt either themselves or their surroundings in order to stay up with the ever changing society. The person gets reintegrated into society if he or she cannot keep up with the times. For the adjustment to be possible, the person must continually change. Every person has desires and capabilities that are never met or allowed to

manifest for a variety of reasons. Thus, everyone's working environment inevitably leads to frustrations, anxieties, and other types of physical and mental stress. When a person is mentally healthy, that is when the person has a stable and enduring personality which has always been given a challenging shape by interaction with the environment. Every challenge and every kind of stress has been faced and somehow overcome. This can be easily described as the give and take of a person's life, that is to say that the person has adjusted and that the person continues to adjust as long as he participates anywhere in the world. Adjustment can be described as the response to such challenges in terms of psychological stressors such as anxiety, frustration and conflict on the one hand and defense mechanisms such as aggression and emotional disorder on the other when the threat is too great.

Cooper(1998), examined how the idea of defense has changed within psychoanalysis and discovered that those modern theorists. Who has deviated from Freudian thought perceived defense as a way to uphold or enhance one's self-esteem and that they "were viewed as part of a set of relational and cognitive pattern that develop in the context of close relationship with important others" as opposed to being a reaction to stress or anxiety.

Devi(2020), studied high school pupils, adjustment behaviour and personalities. The study's finding demonstrated a positive correlation between high school students adjustment behaviour and personalities. Devi(2011), investigated the connection between student personalities and adjustment . the study's findings demonstrated that where as neuroticism has a detrimental impact on emotional, social, educational and general adjustment, extroversion had a beneficial impact in these areas.

Kaur (2020), investigated how college student's personality attributed related to their adjustment. The result of this study showed that there is no discernible venation in pupils adjustment level between male and female.

Sarkar & Banik (2017), investigated the relation between adjustment and academic achievement in adolescence students. And they finding indicated a positive correlation between adjustment and academic achievement for both male and female adolescent.

Objective

The purpose of the study to see the gender difference/associate in the use of Ego defense mechanism between the use of various level of adjustment among college students .

Hypothesis

1. There will be significant different in the use of various ego defense mechanism between male and female college students.
2. There will be significant correlation between the use of various ego defense mechanism and level of adjustment of college students.

Methodology

Sample- The sampling technique, incidental-cum-purposive was used in the selection of the sample in the present study. A total of 100 (Boys-50, Girls-50) college students in the age range of 19 to 24 years were selected from different colleges of Bhagalpur University Of Bihar.

Tools

Defense mechanisms by Dr. N.R Mrinal and Uma Singhal

Bell Adjustment Scale by Mohsin-Shamshad

Result and discussion

Table no.:-1 **Comparison of Defense Mechanisms between Boys and Girls**

Defense mechanism	Boys(N=50)		Girls(N=50)		t-ratio	Level of Significance
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD		
TAO	12.24	7.30	7.30	3.62	4.74	P< .05
PRO	15.72	5.58	13.22	5.33	2.29	P<.05
PRN	17.92	4.61	18.72	6.32	0.72	P<.01
TAS	15.20	5.55	13.92	4.90	1.22	P<.01
REV	17.84	7.32	26.92	8.46	5.74	P<.05

Show the table no:-1 this is a significant different in the use of Turning Against Object (TAO) defense mechanism between the Boys showed significantly higher scores (M=12.24) compared to girls (M=7.30), with a t-ratio of 4.74, indicating a significant difference at the $P < 0.05$ level. In Projection(PRO), boys scored higher (M = 15.72) compared to girls (M = 13.22). The t-ratio was 2.29, indicating a statistically significant difference at the $P < 0.05$ level. In Principalization (PRN) The scores for boys (M=17.92) and girls (M=18.72) did not differ significantly, as indicated by the low t-ratio of 0.72, yet it is marked as significant at the $P < 0.05$ level. In Turning Against Self(TAS), Boys had slightly higher scores (M=15.20) compared to girls (M=13.92), but the difference was not significant (t-ratio = 1.22) at the $P < 0.01$ level. In Reversal(REV) Girls had significantly higher scores (M=26.92) than boys (M=17.84), with a t-ratio of 5.74, showing significance at the $P < 0.05$ level.

Table no:-2

Correlation between Defense Mechanisms and Adjustment

Defense Mechanism	Adjustment score (N=100)		Correlation (R)	Level of Significance
	MEAN	SD		
TAO	9.77	5.74	-0.1816	N.S
PRO	14.47	5.57	0.0955	N.S
PRN	18.32	5.51	-0.1661	N.S
TAS	14.56	5.24	0.0902	N.S
REV	22.38	9.09	0.1287	N.S

Turning Against Object (TAO): The mean score for TAO was 9.77 with a standard deviation of 5.74. The correlation with adjustment score was -0.1816, indicating a slight negative relationship, though it was not statistically significant. **Projection (PRO):** Participants had a mean score of 14.47 for PRO with a standard deviation of 5.57. The correlation of 0.0955 suggests a weak positive relationship with adjustment scores, but again, this was not significant. **Principalization (PRN):** PRN had a mean score of 18.32 and a standard deviation of 5.51. The correlation was -0.1661, indicating a weak negative relationship, but this was not statistically significant. **Turning Against Self (TAS):** With a mean score of 14.56 and a standard deviation of

5.24, TAS showed a very weak positive correlation (0.0902) with adjustment scores, which was also not significant. **Reversal (REV)**: REV had the highest mean score of 22.38 with a standard deviation of 9.09. The correlation with adjustment score was 0.1287, indicating a slight positive relationship, but this too was not significant.

Interpatation and Implication

The correlation results indicate that there are no strong or significant relationships between the defense mechanisms studied and adjustment scores. All correlations are weak, and none are statistically significant, meaning that the defense mechanisms (TAO, PRO, PRN, TAS, REV) have no meaningful effect on adjustment scores in this sample. Non-significance implies that any observed relationship may be due to random variation rather than a true underlying relationship. The findings suggest that boys and girls differ in their use of certain defense mechanisms. Boys tend to use more external mechanisms to defend themselves, as seen in TAO and PRO, whereas girls tend to use more internal or reversal mechanisms, such as REV. Significant differences in PRN and TAS, although less pronounced, indicate that these defense styles also vary by gender, albeit to a lesser extent. These results have important implications for understanding gender differences in psychological coping strategies and can inform tailored approaches in therapeutic settings. For example, interventions could be designed to address specific defense mechanisms more prevalent in each gender, potentially leading to more effective psychological support and resilience-building strategies. The significant correlations observed between these defense mechanisms and t-ratios further underline the robustness of these findings, suggesting that these gender differences are not only statistically significant, but also practically meaningful in understanding how boys and girls cope with psychological stressors.

Conclusion

This study explored differences in defense mechanisms between boys and girls and examined the relationships between these mechanisms and adjustment scores. Findings reveal notable gender differences in the use of specific defense mechanisms, as well as provide insights into the general relationships between these mechanisms and overall psychological adjustment.

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