

A study on Gender differences and Defense Mechanisms among University Students

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Abstract- The aim of the present study was to investigate gender differences in the use of defense mechanism among university students. So by using purposive sampling, the researchers selected the sample of (N=100) students, 60 female and 40 males students from University of Gujarat, Hafiz Hayat campus. The Defense Style Questionnaire – 40 (DSQ-40; Andrews, Singh, & Bond, 1993) was used to collect the data on gender differences in defense mechanisms among university students. Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics (mean, median, Standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent t-test). The results of this research showed that there were no statistically significant gender differences in the use of defense mechanisms among university students.

Keywords: Gender difference, Defense mechanisms, Descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics.

Introduction

In the modern age the behavior of people is very technical. So it is very interesting to illustrate technical behavior of people. That provides us huge information about how people think and deal about themselves and others? Whether the behavior of people is constructive or destructive? Due to analysis of behavior we can identify why people behave destructively and where and why conflict occurs? So the study of how people use defense mechanisms in daily life help us to understand certain types of behavior expressed by people about ourselves and others.

The idea of defense mechanism was first defined by Sigmund Freud in 1874. Freud identified several forces that impact on personality development and strategies that protect us from anxiety and tension (Phaneuf, RN, 2000)

Word “defense” is commonly used in linguistic, fun and in literature with different meanings. Researchers and clinicians used defense theory to illustrate different kinds of behavior, thoughts, emotions and psychological ailments (Blackman, 2011).

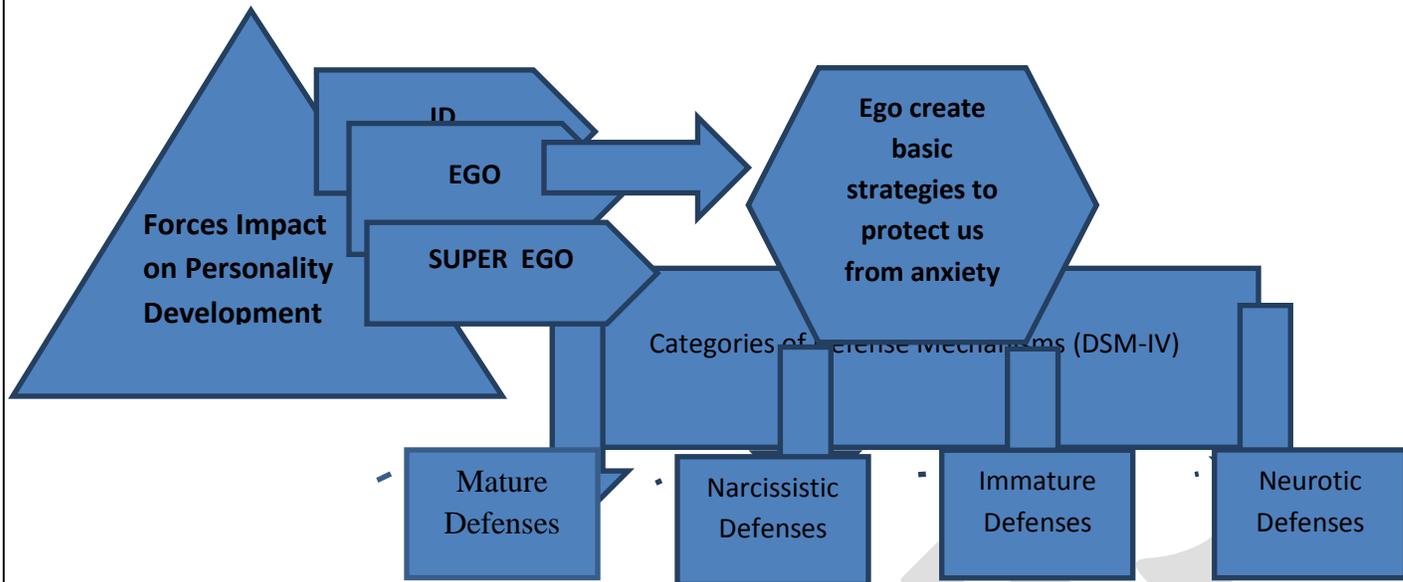
Shaver et al.,1987 define defense mechanisms address a vital part of human ability to sustain emotional balance. Without emotional homeostasis our consciousness would be more defenseless and people will experience negative emotions like anxiety, fear and sadness (as cited in Bowins, 2004).

Defense mechanisms can be defined as “regulatory processes that allow individuals to reduce cognitive dissonance and to minimize sudden changes in internal and external environments by altering how these events are perceived” (Vaillant, 1993, p. 44).

Concept of defense mechanisms was introduced by Sigmund Freud. According to DSM-IV Defense mechanism is defined as an unconscious psychological procedure that is used to cope with stressful and anxious situation. When the individual defense mechanisms are theoretically and empirically divided into various groups are known as defense level.

Freud, 1946 defined “id” is a personality force that operates on pleasure principle and wants gratification of all wishes and impulses. When individual face anxious situation that is uncomfortable and stressful then individual take immediate action to change it. Ego creates involuntary

actions to eradicate stress and anxiety is known as defense mechanism. Freud described four categories of defense mechanisms. Figure 1. 1 shows categories of defense mechanisms (DSM IV, 1994).



There are a lot of evidences that indicate an impact of involuntary forces on personality development. So it is very crucial and interesting to study such type of reactions. And also very crucial to investigate how people deal with stressful and anxious situations. To study defense mechanisms are very important to understand and treat patients both medical and psychiatric (Cramer, 1995).

According to Million, 1994 “A systematic assessment of defense mechanism is central to a comprehensive personality assessment” (as cited in Cramer, 1995).

Vaillant, 1992, p.3, defined “Today, no mental status or clinical formulation should be considered complete without an effort to identify the patient’s dominant defense mechanism” (as cited in Cramer, 1995).

This study is socially significant as it measure gender differences in the use of defense mechanism in university students. As we know young generation is very important for society and our family structure and for whole nation.

Gender is an important consideration. Therefore, it is socially and clinically worth to explore gender variation in the use of defense mechanisms.

Because clinicians can take better insight by identifying defensive style used by their male and female client. That is very crucial for treatment. On the other hand, to improve and promote healthy life style it is very important to study which type of defensive pattern are useful.

The objectives of the study are:

- To investigate gender differences in the use of defense mechanisms.

A REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

There are diverse types of researches on gender difference and defense mechanism. A research was conducted on gender difference of self-report defense mechanisms by Petraglia , Thygesen, Lecours & Drapeau (2009). In this study it was identified how the men and women’s are differ in the use of defense mechanisms. It was concluded that there is no significant gender difference in the use of defense mechanisms.

Cramer (1987) identified gender differences in self-report defense mechanisms among university students. It was concluded that women scored considerably higher on narcissistic defenses than male participants (as cited in Petraglia , Thygesen, Lecours & Drapeau, 2009) .

Watson & Sinha (1998) found that university male students are more likely to score high on neurotic defense mechanism than female university students (as cited in Petraglia , Thygesen, Lecours & Drapeau, 2009). Whereas, Munteanu (2002), investigated that overall scores of females are high on defense mechanisms scale than male (as cited in Petraglia , Thygesen, Lecours & Drapeau, 2009).

This study is publicly substantial as it measure gender differences in self-report defense mechanism in university students. Young generation is very important for society and nation.

In a study the defense mechanisms were identified in adults, adolescents, and children. This study has confirmed a linear design for the development of different defenses, as theorized by Anna Freud. The study testified here also delivers pragmatic provision for the basic psychoanalytic notion of the defense mechanism. The investigation also goes outside of psychoanalytic theory in order to explore who the males and females respondents are different in the use of different type of defense mechanisms. The results of study suggested that there were no significant gender differences in defense mechanisms (Robert & Joseph, 2002).

A research was conducted on gender difference of defense mechanisms among a sample of 162 males and females respondents. Defense Style Questionnaire was used in order to explore gender differences in the use of defense mechanisms. Substantial alterations were identified between males and females respondents on the measures of projection, isolation, and denial. The results of this tests specified there was an important outcome of gender (male, female) on the expression of defense mechanisms (McNichols, 2014).

Methodology

This study used survey research design and a convenience sample of 100 (female = 60, Male = 40) university students having age 15-25 years. The students of B.S (Hones) and M.sc from University of Gujrat Hafiz Hayat Campus was selected as the participants. Permission from the author of the scale was obtained prior to use the instrument for data collection. English version of the DSQ-40 scale was used. The Defense Style Questionnaire – 40 (DSQ-40; Andrews, Singh, & Bond, 1993) was used in order to measure the variable of interest. DSQ- 40 consists of 20 defense mechanisms that are mentioned in the DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2003). This questionnaire consists of 40 items that measure four groups of defense mechanisms that are mature, narcissistic, Immature and neurotic. For the purpose of taking demographic information, participants asked to indicate age, gender, department, class and semester.

Procedure

Once permission to conduct study was taken, pilot study was conducted to check the language difficulty of instruments on sample of 15 students from target population. The researcher identified the respondents by using convenience sampling technique. Importance of research and necessary information regarding the research was given to participants. Researcher personally distributed the questionnaire to the participants. An informed consent form attached with the scale so that the respondents first read that and fill the questionnaires. It was informed to the respondents that the information derived from them will be kept confidential and will not be used for any other purpose except research. The instructions about how to respond to the statements, written on the questionnaires, were read to respondents and respondents were encouraged to ask to repeat the statement if

they could not understand. In addition to completing the questionnaire, participants required to provide demographic details in term of name, age, gender, class, department and semester. An appropriate time was given to participant to complete the questionnaire.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0 version). Firstly reliability and validity of coefficient of the scale for the present sample was examined by computing Cronbach's alpha. Secondly descriptive statistics including mean, median, and standard deviation were computed for the study variables. After that inferential statistics including independent sample t-test was used in order to explore gender differences in the use of defense mechanisms among university students.

Results

Cronbach's alpha coefficients of each measure were determined for present study and are reported in the following table.a

Table 4.1

Psychometric Properties of Major Study measures

Variables	N	M	SD	A
Defense style Questionnaire-40	100	2.00	1.48	.059

Table: 4.2

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (N=100)

Characteristics	N	%	M	SD
Age (years)			1.53	.61
15-20	51	51		
2-25	49	49		
Gender			1.6	.49
Male	40	40		
Female	60	60		

The above table shows the frequencies and percentages of demographics including students' age & gender.

Table: 4.3

Comparison of male and female students on total DSQ-40 (Defense style Questionnaire-40)

Measures	Male (N=40)		Female (N=60)		t-value	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
DSQ-40	1.97	2.73	2.02	12.7	-1.69	.12	

The above table reveals that the value of p= .12. Which suggest that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students for DSQ-40as the value of p= .12.

Table: 4.4

Comparison of male and female students on Neurotic defense mechanisms for DSQ-40 (Defense style Questionnaire-40)

Measures	Male (N=40)		Female (N=60)		t-value	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
DSQ-40	40.6	6.64	40.7	6.13	-.039	.96	

Above table identify gender difference for neurotic defense mechanism, so above table suggest that there is no statically significant gender difference for neurotics defense mechanism as the value of $p=.95$

Table: 4.5

Comparison of male and female students on mature defense mechanisms for DSQ-40 (Defense style Questionnaire-40)

Measures	Male (N=40)		Female (N=60)		t-value	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
DSQ-40	38.9	8.83	39.3	5.69	-.248	.81	

Above table identify gender difference for mature defense mechanism, so above table suggest that there is no statically significant gender difference for mature defense mechanism as the value of $p=.81$.

Table: 4.6

Comparison of male and female students on immature defense mechanisms for DSQ-40 (Defense style Questionnaire-40)

Measures	Male (N=40)		Female (N=60)		t-value	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
DSQ-40	1.17	13.56	1.22	9.97	-1.96	0.5	

Above table identify gender difference for immature defense mechanism, so above table suggest that there is no statically significant gender difference for immature defense mechanism as the value of $p=0.5$.

Discussion

The current study investigated the gender differences in defense mechanism among male and female University students. Moderating role of demographic variables (age, gender) was also examined.

Findings of the study indicated that there was no significant gender differences in defense mechanism of university male and female students are in agreement with findings of Cheah and Tang (2011) as they found no significant gender differences among male and female students in self-report defense mechanism. Finding of current study also identify the gender differences in different categories of defense mechanism. Mature, Immature and neurotic defense mechanisms are included in these categories. Analyses of all these categories suggest that there is no statistically significant gender difference in the use of different categories of defense mechanism. Finding of current study is consistent with Abdel-Khalek (1991) as their

study found no significant gender difference with respect to defense mechanism among university students. Cheah & Tang (2011) found no significant relationship in self-report defense mechanism.

A study discovers the association between gender and defenses mechanisms using the Defense Style Questionnaire (DSQ-60; Trijsburg Bond, & Drapeau, 2003). As likely, no important gender differences were showed in Overall Defensive Functioning (ODF). Indication is delivered to maintain the idea that general adaptivity of defenses is analogous; both males and females trust on diverse defensive establishments during stressful conditions (Petraglia, Thygesen , Lecours & Drapeau , 2009).

Various researches have revealed that males and females differ in their use of defense mechanisms (e.g. Cramer, 1991; Watson and Sinha, 1998).

But, how and why these changes occur is a question that is open to debate (as cited in, Petraglia, Thygesen , Lecours & Drapeau , 2009).

Overall findings of the study suggest that students comes from different background are facing similar environment at University they face same sort of problems related to their study and other. As a Result of conflict, poor marital satisfaction is inevitable. Along with consistent and effective use of coping strategies; they are overcoming different conflict, directing and fulfilling demands, duties, and responsibilities of various area of life in a better way.

Conclusion

The current study investigated the gender difference in the use of self-report defense mechanism. Overall, results supported that there is no significant difference in the use of self-report defense mechanism among male and female students of Gujrat University. Demographic variables including gender also did not played a significant role on study variables.

Limitations and Future Directions

The scales were not adapted to the cultural norms. It is suggested that future researches should take into account the translation of scales in local language. The sample of this study was conveniently selected hence no claim can be made about sample being representative of general population. Findings of present research cannot necessarily be generalized because sample was relatively small. It is suggested that future researches should focus on the selection of large sample from multiple educational groups. Some of the contextual variables such as personality factors had not been taken into consideration while conducting this study. These variables may influence the strength of defense mechanism. Future researches might consider the influence of uncontrolled variables.

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