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PREVALENCE OF SPECIFIC FEARS IN CHILDREN OF KARACHI

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Introduction: Children's fears are not only a part of their development but can also reflect unique cultural and societal norms as well as the influence of current affairs on cognition & behaviour

Objectives: Identifying prevalent fears in children of Karachi, Pakistan and gender/age differences.

Aims: Identifying common fears and assessing the impact of sociopolitical factors on children's perception

Methods: 1171 children (731 boys, 440 girls) from classes 3-10 of a large school were selected and completed the Fear Survey Schedule for Children (Revised).

Results: The highest overall fear was of 'Bombing attacks/being invaded', which was also the highest in boys ('Snakes' in girls). The greatest gender difference was seen in the fear of lizards ($p < 0.001$). The overall average FSSC-R score was 133(27.5) and frequency of intense fears was 16(12.4), both higher in girls. Younger children had greater scores and intense fears compared to adolescents.

Conclusions: Children are uniquely sensitive to "adult" issues, evidenced by the highest fear overall: bombing attacks/invasions, while fear of terrorists also ranked high (#11). Fears related to academic performance increased with age whereas younger children were more fearful of items perceived as causing physical harm; reflecting that stresses of education displace fears of danger and injury. Of the ten items with the greatest gender-differences, all belonged to the "Minor Injury/Small Animals" category. Lastly, comparison with previous studies showed no significant difference ($p > 0.1$) in either total scores or intensity of fears, suggesting that despite varying individual fears the overall profile remained constant for children of different cultures.