

# **An Assessment of Water Fear of School Children**

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**Abstract – A study was conducted to assess the water fear of school going children. The children who were enrolled for summer swimming 'learn to swim' program in Lakshmibai National Institute of Physical Education Gwalior, were selected for the study.**

**An observable water fear checklist consisting of ten points was used to assess the water fear score.**

**A total of one hundred and forty nine children who have had no previous experience in swimming and the age of the children were between 8 years to 14 years.**

**All the children who were enrolled for 'learn to swim' program were enquired about their previous experience in swimming and those who were having any previous experience in swimming were then separated from the study since the zero point of experience was required..**

**Out of the remaining children one hundred forty nine children were randomly selected for the study.**

**The subjects were asked to enter the water one by one and all the ten points in the observable fear checklist were observed on the very first day. And the scores were awarded out ten.**

**The data for the water fear was checked for its normality and the percentile technique was used to assess the water fear of the school going children.**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Aqua phobia, more commonly known as water fear, is a social phobia that is defined as the persistent, unwarranted and irrational fear of water.

Many people have an extreme fear of water. They tend to form images of dying in water, drowning, gasping for breath, or sometimes they may even encounter unseen things such as snakes or sharks in the water especially in deep or hazy water. Those suffering from water fear are often non swimmers, not only fear large water bodies, like sea, lakes, ponds or rivers, and in extreme cases many even fear running water.

The fear of drowning is considered as rational and logical fear especially experienced by many of those who cannot swim. Individuals, who experience great deal of anxiety, face variety of problems. Logically, few are aware that they will not 'drown' but still they are unable to control fearful thoughts which come up in their minds.

In learning of any sport, anxiety and fear play very important roles. This may even play higher role in swimming because of the difference in the medium, water Vs land. Man is by nature a land animal and has to learn to adjust and to cope with the water.

Teaching of swimming has always been a challenging task to the teachers especially because of the water fear among the beginners and this may be because of the different media involved. The fear of water hampers the progress made by the beginners; People learn swimming at different paces. A few learn very quickly while others take a longer time. And because of this there are also lots of variations in their learning rates. This variation in the learning capacity has been a matter of great concern to physical educators and swimming coaches. Because this presents difficulty to the teachers in giving optimum attention to all. Neither the teacher can afford to neglect any student nor disregard his progression in the method of teaching.

## CAUSES

The literature show that the most common causes for water fear may be

- People are not used to water may be because they do not have any exposure they might have grown up in places or areas where they could not get any experience, such people are more likely to develop water fear.
- A previous negative and unpleasant experience associated with water.
- A near-drowning incident like those experienced while learning to swim or a death caused with water may cause that terror in the mind of the person.
- The fear of water can sometimes be even learned. A parent who is afraid of water is likely to pass on their fear to their children. Too many cautionary warnings about going into or near the water to the child may also produce fear.
- The news reports, movies, stories or some incidents about drowning etc can also lead to fear of water.

## Symptoms

The symptoms of water fear may vary from person to person and it also depends upon the intensity of fear the person carries. The common symptoms are an elevated heart rate, shivering, freezing, sweating, hyperventilation, anxiety and panic attacks with the sight or thought of water. Extreme evasion of water bodies is another common symptom.

In case of teaching swimming to any novice, who have come to the pool willingly or have been sent to the pool because of their parent's wish the symptoms may be somewhat different. The coaches should try to locate the level of fear in the initial stages itself to have better results and progress.

## METHODOLOGY

The children, who were enrolled for the summer swimming 'learn to swim' program in Lakshmbai National Institute of Physical Education Gwalior, were selected as the subjects for the study.

A total of one hundred and forty nine children who have had no previous experience in swimming and the age of the children were between 8 years to 14 years.

All the children who were enrolled for 'learn to swim' program were enquired about their previous

experience in swimming and those who were having any previous experience in swimming were then separated from the study since the zero point of experience was required..

Out of the remaining children one hundred fifty children were randomly selected for the study.

The subjects were asked to enter the water one by one and all the ten points in the observable fear checklist were observed on the very first day. And the scores were awarded out ten.

The data for the water fear test was checked for its normality and the percentile technique was used to assess the water fear of the school going children.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data for the water fear test was collected on the basis of observable fear checklist on the very first day. And the scores were awarded out ten. The data was checked for its normality and the percentile technique was used to assess the water fear of the school going children. The analysis of scores was done with the help of SPSS -20. On the basis of the analysis the findings are as follows-

TABLE-1

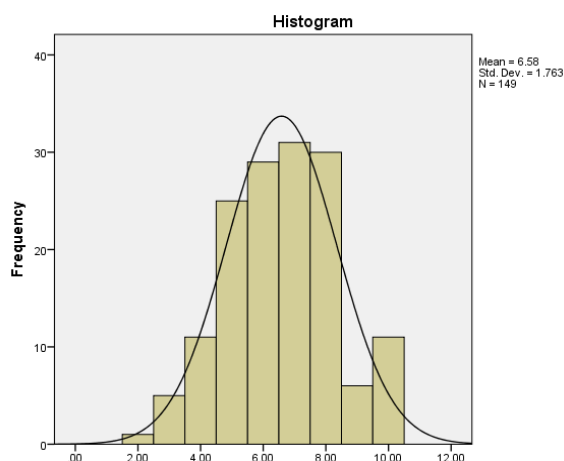
### STATISTICS FOR WATER FEAR TEST

N	Valid	149
	Missing	0
Skewness		-.013
Std. Error of Skewness		.199
Kurtosis		-.339
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.395
Percent iles	10	4.0000
	20	5.0000
	25	5.0000
	30	6.0000
	40	6.0000
	50	7.0000
	60	7.0000
	70	8.0000
	75	8.0000
	80	8.0000
90	9.0000	

**TABLE-2**

**PERCENTILE FOR WATER FEAR TEST**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2.00	1	.7	.7	.7
3.00	5	3.4	3.4	4.0
4.00	11	7.4	7.4	11.4
5.00	25	16.8	16.8	28.2
6.00	29	19.5	19.5	47.7
7.00	31	20.8	20.8	68.5
8.00	30	20.1	20.1	88.6
9.00	6	4.0	4.0	92.6
10.00	11	7.4	7.4	100.0
Total	149	100.0	100.0	



The data for the water fear was checked for its normality and from table 1 it can be seen that the value attained is in negative so it is slightly left skew but the data shows normality as the attained value of skewness is  $-.013$  and when it is divided by standard error of skewness the value lies between  $+1.96$ .

The percentile technique was used to assess the water fear of the school going children. It can be seen from the table-2 that 16.8 percent children scored 5, 19.5 percent children scored 6 points, 20.8 percent children scored 7 points, 20.1 percent children scored 8, points, 4 percent children scored 9 points, 7.4 percent children scored 10 points,

Score

- 1-2 Low
- 3-4 Average
- 5-6 High
- 7-8 Very High

9-10 Extremely High

From table- 2 it can be inferred that seventy two percent of the total children who underwent the test for the water fear scored more than five. It means that majority of the children possess quite high level of water fear i.e. 41 percent possess very high and 11 percent possess extremely high percent of fear.

Such high degrees of fear act as a hurdle in learning of swimming. It hampers the rate of learning. In case of extreme level the person even tends to withdraw or run away from the site.

In the light of the findings it was suggested that extra effort have to be taken to deal with the cases of fear high level of fear. Water fear removal and the confidence building drills should be introduced first before actually teaching them swimming. There are some psychological methods which are helpful in overcoming fear should also be introduced

Dealing with fear of water can be harsh on the victim but it can be managed and successfully overcome. The fearfulness associated with water can be removed and the quality of life can surely be improved.

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