

Perceptual Defence as a Function of Alienation Anxiety and Stress

Dr. Sudhanshu Kumar

ABSTRACT

The study intends to examine the impact of alienation, anxiety and stress on perceptual defense. For the purpose 180 male postgraduate respondents were administered Alienation Scale, Anxiety Scale and Stress Scale along with PDS to measure alienation, anxiety and stress and to seek the necessary information about the respondents. The six groups were formed namely high and low alienated, anxiety and stress groups respectively. The obtained data in relation to perceptual defense were subjected to t-ratio and Pearsonian 'r'. The results revealed that subjects of high alienation, high anxiety and high stress groups showed comparatively more perceptual defense than their counterparts. The alienation, anxiety and stress were found significantly and positively correlated. Thus, it was concluded that high alienated, high anxiety and high stress all are significant contributors to perceptual defense.

Introduction:

The study under reference comprised of psychological components like perceptual defence, alienation, anxiety and stress which need elaboration. Operationally, perceptual defense is said to occur whenever the recognition threshold for a stimulus is raised. Evidence for such an effect was put forward by workers in the so called New look approach in which tachistoscopically presented words with unpleasant connotation and taboo words had higher threshold than neutral words. Such effects were hailed as significant demonstrations of the role of emotional and motivational factors in perception- not to mention as support for psychoanalytic theory, where considerable stress is phased on unconscious defences. Enthusiasm was tempered somewhat when it was recognized that these early experiments did not clearly distinguish between unconscious perceptual defense and conscious response inhibition (Reber et. al., 2009).

Alienation refers to dynamic organisation of number of cognition and such feelings as isolation, powerlessness of neglect and despair, a vague

blurred vision of identity and being swept away from the main stream (Banerjee, 1978). It also means a divergence from one's own self. So an alienated person is cut-off not only from the springs of his own creativity but also from groups of which he would otherwise be a part. It is felt that the person who fails to achieve a meaningful relation with others is deprived of some part of himself (Anderson, 1975, Heaven & Bester, 1986).

Stress refers to an unpleasant state in which people perceive the demands of an event as taxing or exceeding their ability to satisfy or alter those demands. Peter Straton and Nicky Hayes (1991) states, "Stress is a feeling or reactions, individual has when faced with situation that demands action from them especially action that may be beyond their capabilities." Anxiety refers to a vague, unpleasant emotional state accompanied physiological arousal and cognitive elements of apprehension, guilt and a sense of impending disaster (Sarason and Sarason - 2003).

Several studies have been made in India and abroad concerning the phenomenon of perceptual

Kali Asthan, P.O. - Begumpur, Patna City, Patna

defense. Postman et al. (1955) found that the concept of perceptual defense is directly related to the saliency of the disposition to respond. Pierce (1963) and Eriksen (1964) found that motivational factors play vital role and reported significant positive relationship between anxiety and perceptual defense. It is also obvious that perceptual defense has not been studied in context with alienation anxiety and stress and hence the necessity of this present study. However the studies of Mustafa, 2012 and Singh (2008) are important in this connection.

Objectives:

- i) to examine the influence of alienation on perceptual defense. It was intended to compare the high and low alienated and normal groups of subjects in terms of perceptual defense.
- ii) to examine the influence of anxiety on perceptual defense. It was intended to compare high and low anxiety groups of respondents in terms of perceptual defense.
- iii) to examine the influence of stress on perceptual defense of the respondents. It was intended to compare the high and moderate stress groups of subjects in terms of perceptual defense.
- iv) to examine the relationship among alienation, anxiety and stress.

Hypotheses:

1. It is likely that high alienated group of subjects would show higher threshold in perceiving the taboo words as compared to normal subjects.
2. It is likely that high anxiety group of subjects would show higher threshold in perceiving the taboo words as compared to low anxiety subjects.
3. It is likely that high stress group of subjects would show higher threshold in perceiving the taboo words as compared to moderate stress group of subjects.
4. It is likely that alienation, anxiety and stress would be significantly correlated.

Method of Study:

Sample

The study was conducted on 180 male post graduate subject selected on the basis of random sampling method. They were selected from among 250 subjects. They were equal in respect of high (N = 30) and low (N = 25) groups in respect of each variable namely alienation, anxiety and stress. High and low groups were determined using P_{40} and P_{60} responsibility. The high group on a variable was formed with the subjects scoring above P_{60} on that variable and between P_{40} and P_{60} on remaining variables. Similarly, low group was formed with the subjects scoring P_{40} and below on a particular variable and between P_{40} and P_{60} on remaining variable. In this way six separate groups were formed namely : alienated and normal groups, high and low anxiety groups and high and moderate stress groups. They were matched in respect of sex, inhabitation and SES respectively so far as possible.

Tools Used:

1. A PDS was used to seek the necessary information about the subjects.
2. Hindi Adaptation of Dean's Alienation Scale by Singh was used to measure alienation of the subjects.
3. Sinha's Manifest Anxiety Scale was used to measure anxiety of the respondents.
4. Stress Scale by Kumari, Sinha and Singh was used to measure level of stress of the respondents.
5. Nonsense program (10 taboo + 10 neutral) were used as materials.

Experiment:

Ten neutral words and ten taboo words were used as material for experiment. The threshold for each of the neutral and taboo words were measured in terms of mili seconds with the help of tachistoscope. The recognition times were treated as raw scores obtained by the subjects.

Results and interpretations

Table-1

Mean, SD and t-value showing a comparison between alienated and normal groups of subjects in terms of their perceptual defense.

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P
Alienation	Alienated	30	342.96	10.65	8.00	58	<.01
	Normal	30	321.52	10.13			

The results displayed by table-01 revealed the dominance of alienated group of subjects (\bar{X} =342.96) over high normal group of subjects (\bar{X} =321.52) in recognition of threshold of taboo words. The means differed significantly ($t=8.00$; $df=58$; $P<.01$). This finding might be interpreted on the ground that alienated group of subjects show more inhibition and resistance towards any kind of change including the recognition of taboo words as compared to normal subjects.

Table-02

Mean, SD and t-value showing a comparison between high and low anxiety groups of subjects in terms of their perceptual defense.

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P
Anxiety	High	30	344.50	9.95	8.53	58	<.01
	Low	30	322.67	9.87			

The results displayed by table-02 clearly revealed the dominance of high anxiety group (\bar{X} =344.50) over low anxiety group (\bar{X} =322.67) in terms of recognition of threshold of taboo words. The t-ratio showing the significance of difference between the means was found significant ($t=8.53$; $df=58$; $P<.01$). This finding might be interpreted on the ground that high anxiety group of subjects show more resistance and inhibition in recognition of taboo words as compared to their counterparts.

Table-03

Mean, SD and t-value showing a comparison between high and moderate stress groups of subjects in terms of their perceptual defense.

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P
Stress	High	30	356.20	10.22	7.97	58	<.01
	Moderate	30	335.31	10.06			

The results displayed by tables-03 clearly revealed that stress has significant influence on perceptual defense. The high stress group of subjects (\bar{X} =356.20) showed more perceptual defense than moderate stress group of subjects (\bar{X} = 335.31) and the difference of means was found significant ($t=7.97$; $df=58$; $P<.01$). The more perceptual defense on the part of high stress group of subjects might be interpreted on the ground of greater inhibition towards the taboo words than neutral words due to their frustration, depression etc. on the part of high stress group of subjects than respondents of moderate stress group.

Table-4
r-showing the correlation among alienation, anxiety and stress.

Variables	N	r	df	P
Alienation vs Anxiety	60	0.501	58	<.01
Alienation vs Stress	60	0.496	58	<.01
Anxiety vs Stress	60	0.514	58	<.01

The results displayed by table-04 clearly revealed the significant positive correlation between alienation Vs anxiety ($r = 0.501$; $df = 58$; $P < .01$), alienation Vs stress ($r = 0.496$; $df = 58$; $P < .01$) and between anxiety Vs stress ($r = 0.514$; $df = 58$; $P < .01$). These findings are very much consistent with the findings of table-01, 02 and 03 respectively.

Conclusions:

1. Subjects belonging to alienated group showed more perceptual defense in terms of higher threshold for taboo words as compared to high normal group of subjects.
2. Subjects belonging to high anxiety group showed more perceptual defense in terms of higher threshold for taboo words as compared to low anxiety group of subjects.
3. Subjects belonging to high stress group showed more perceptual defense in terms of higher threshold for taboo words as compared to their counterparts.
4. Alienation, anxiety and stress all are found significantly and positively correlated.

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