



## Prevalence and Determinants of Common Fears in Children and Their Socio-Demographic Characteristic

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### Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author AB was involved in data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation of data, writing and editing the manuscript. Author SG was involved in data collection and writing the manuscript. Author EED involved in interpretation of data and writing manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Most children experience some degree of fear during their development. Excessive fears can create serious obstacles to children. The aim of this study was to identify the most common fears in a sample of children and adolescents and examine the socio-demographic correlates of fears.

**Materials and Methods:** This cross-sectional study was conducted during the period from July 2010 to February 2012 at Public and Private Schools of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, State of Qatar. Out of 2188 students approached, 1703 students agreed to participate in this study, with a response rate of 77.8%. The questionnaire includes socio-demographic information, academic performance, behaviour at home and various fears.

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**Results:** More than half of the children experienced fears (56.7%). Most of them were in the intermediate level, 12 – 15 years old (46.1%). Overall, reported fears were significantly more frequent in girls (62.6%) than boys (37.4%) ( $p < 0.001$ ). A significant difference was observed between girls and boys who experienced fears in their age group ( $p < 0.001$ ), education of mother ( $p = 0.04$ ), household income ( $p = 0.008$ ) and academic performance ( $p < 0.001$ ). The most frequent reported fears were fear of someone dying in the family (85.2%), parents getting divorced (84.5%), breaking religious law (82%), being kidnapped (78.2%), family members ill (78%) and dying (76.7%).

**Conclusions:** The study findings revealed that fears were highly prevalent in Arab children and adolescents in Qatar. Girls reported more fears than boys. There was a significant difference observed between girls and boys in their age group and academic performance for the reported fears.

*Keywords: Fear; adolescents; children; Qatar.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Childhood fears are common and universal [1]. Most of them disappear within months without specific treatment and certain fears are more likely to occur at specific developmental stages and at certain age. Most children have some fears and for many children, they are distressing. However, children's fears generally decrease in intensity and frequency in the later years of adolescence [2]. Although childhood fears should be considered as a normal developmental phenomenon, marked individual differences in fearfulness of children can be observed. Fear is an intense aversion to or apprehension of a person, place, activity, event or object that causes emotional distress and often avoidance behaviour. Fears often can be handled with proper guidance and counselling from the Paediatrician [3].

Children report various types of fear including social fears, medical fears, fears related to animals, fears of danger and fears of the unknown [4]. A study by Muris et al reported that anxiety symptoms have been found prevalent in school children with the rates for fears (75.8%), worries (67.4%) and nightmares (80.5%) [5]. It has been suggested that cultures that favour inhibition, compliance and obedience serve to increase internalizing behaviours such as fear, anxiety and depression [6]. Thus, it seems that the prevalence and patterns of fear among children may be influenced by cultural factors.

The exact etiology of childhood fears is poorly understood. Research on normal fears experienced by children and adolescents is important as it provides us with information about developmental patterns and the frequency,

intensity, and duration of the phenomena from which pathological fears and phobias can be identified [7]. Also, initial fear score have been found to be good predictors of later fear scores, suggesting a trait component of fearfulness. Females worldwide tend to report higher percent of fear [8].

As a country develops and urbanizes, life becomes more complex, and problems related to social, cultural and economic changes arise. The rapid social changes and economic growth that occurred in the State of Qatar have produced a dramatic improvement in the standard of living which has caused stress in life of the people. The effects of familial and societal factors seem to have a particularly negative impact on children and adolescents in the society. Also, global events, crisis, diseases and disasters have prompted researchers to study fears of children and adolescents. Everyday social situations which are readily negotiated by most people can provoke extreme fear and anxiety in others. The World Health Organization suggest that screening is well justified, when a disorder poses a significant public health problem [9]. Hence, it was important to conduct a cross-sectional survey among children and adolescents to identify the most common fears reported in students from different grade levels and examine the socio-demographic correlates of fears.

## 2. SUBJECTS AND METHODS

This is a cross sectional study. The study included schoolchildren and adolescents in the age group 6 – 18 years, studying at primary, preparatory and secondary levels in government and private schools in the State of Qatar. A multi-stage stratified random sampling technique was

used and the schoolchildren were selected randomly. The list of names of schools in urban and semi-urban areas was obtained from the Supreme Council for Education and higher Education. Schools were segregated according to sexes. A total of 151,050 students are studying in primary, preparatory and secondary schools. There are 299 schools, of which 152 are for boys and 147 for girls located in 21 different districts. 30 schools were selected with fifteen each of boys' and girls' located in 10 districts. During the first stage, one school from each of these 5 districts was selected randomly, thus overcoming the so called 'cluster effect'. Similarly, the classrooms and schoolchildren were selected in the second and third stages using the same simple random sampling procedure, finally resulting in the selection of 2188 students who were a true random sample of the study population, which is 1.5% of the total students in Qatar.

Data collection took place from July 2010 to February 2012. The questionnaires with a letter of explanation were distributed to the children studying in primary Preparatory and secondary school students. They had completed the questionnaires and returned to the nurse in-charge of the school. A total of 2188 students were approached and 1703 students participated in the study with a response rate of 77.8%. The survey instrument was tested on 100 students and thus validated the questionnaire. The study excluded students aged below 6 years and above 18 years and who refused to give consents to take part in the study.

This is a self reported questionnaire covering the full range of fear behaviours for children 6 – 18 years. The questionnaire included the socio-demographic details of the students, behaviour at home, academic performance and various 39 fears. Students were asked to answer the questions by not frightened "1", quite frightened "2" and extremely frightened "3". IRB approval was obtained from the Hamad Medical Corporation for conducting this research in Qatar.

Student-t test was used to ascertain the significance of differences between mean values of two continuous variables and confirmed by non-parametric Mann-Whitney test. Chi-square analysis was performed to test for differences in proportions of categorical variables between two or more groups. The level  $p < 0.05$  was considered as the cut-off value for significance.

### 3. RESULTS

Table 1 compares the socio-demographic characteristics of the students with fear and without. A significant difference was observed in nationality ( $p=0.02$ ), rank of students in school exams ( $p=0.005$ ), occupation of mother ( $p=0.03$ ), type of house ( $p < 0.011$ ) and consanguinity ( $p=0.04$ ) between students with and without fear.

Table 2 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the children and adolescents who experienced fears according to gender. More than half of the children were sufferers of fears (56.7%). Fears were more frequent among girls (62.6%) than boys (37.4%). Nearly half of the children with fears were in the intermediate level, 12-15 years old (46.1%). A significant difference was observed between girls and boys who experienced fears in their age group ( $p < 0.001$ ), education of mother ( $p=0.04$ ), household income ( $p=0.008$ ) and academic performance ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 3 presents the top 20 fears reported in children according to gender and age group. Reported fears were significantly more frequent in girls than boys ( $p < 0.001$ ). Fear of someone dying in the family was the most frequently reported fear in boys (79.8%) and girls (88.4%), followed by fear of parents getting divorced (78.7% and 87.9%), then breaking religious law (75.1% and 86.1%) with a significant difference between both the genders ( $p < 0.001$ ). The top three fears; fear of someone dying in the family (89.3%), fear of parents getting divorced (85.6%) and breaking religious law (87.2%) were more frequent in adolescents in the age group 16-18 years.

Table 4 reveals the mean score of top 20 fears reported in children according to gender. The mean score of every type of fear was significantly higher in girls compared to boys ( $p < 0.001$ ). Children clearly scored highest mean score on fear of someone dying in the family ( $2.49 \pm 0.74$ ), followed by parents getting divorced ( $2.47 \pm 0.75$ ) and breaking religious law ( $2.37 \pm 0.77$ ).

Table 5 shows the predictors of fear in studied children and adolescents using multivariate logistic regression. Socio-demographic factors were considered as the main factors associated with fear in children. Among the socio-economic factors, female gender was found to be the most significant determinant of the fear (OR=2.01;  $P < 0.001$ ), followed by children in urban area (OR=1.51;  $P=0.035$ ) and poor exam results (OR=1.43;  $P=0.05$ ).

**Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the studied subjects according to fear (N=1703)**

Variables	Fear		P-value
	Yes (n=965)	No (n=738)	
<b>Age (Mean±SD)</b>	12.4±3.4	12.1±3.7	0.096
<b>Age group</b>			
06-11 Years (primary)	333(34.5)	277(37.5)	0.143
12-15 Years (Intermediate)	445(46.1)	305(41.3)	
16-18 Years (Secondary)	187(19.4)	156(21.1)	
<b>Nationality</b>			
Qatari	673(69.7)	552(74.8)	0.021
Non-Qatari	292(30.3)	186(25.2)	
<b>Rank of students in school exam</b>			
Very Good	313(32.4)	198(26.8)	0.005
Good	280(29.0)	255(34.6)	
Average	268(27.8)	226(30.6)	
Poor	104(10.8)	59(8.0)	
<b>Father's education</b>			
Illiterate	29(3.0)	22(3.0)	0.403
Primary	82(8.5)	51(6.9)	
Intermediate	254(26.3)	221(29.9)	
Secondary	273(28.3)	193(26.2)	
University	327(33.9)	251(34.0)	
<b>Father's occupation</b>			
Not Working	85(8.8)	65(8.8)	0.813
Sedentary/Professional	295(30.6)	219(29.7)	
Manual	56(5.8)	43(5.8)	
Business Man	219(22.7)	186(25.2)	
Government Officer	310(32.1)	225(30.5)	
<b>Mother education</b>			
Illiterate	87(9.0)	70(9.5)	0.556
Primary	113(11.7)	75(10.2)	
Intermediate	246(25.5)	172(23.3)	
Secondary	214(22.2)	182(24.7)	
University	305(31.6)	239(32.4)	
<b>Mother occupation</b>			
House Wife	519(53.8)	417(56.5)	0.030
Sedentary/Professional	274(28.4)	175(23.7)	
Manual	68(7.0)	74(10.0)	
Business Women	104(10.8)	72(9.8)	
<b>Marital status of parents</b>			
Married	885(91.7)	676(91.6)	0.320
Divorced	33(3.4)	18(2.4)	
One of the Parent is Dead	47(4.9)	44(6.0)	
<b>Household income (QR)</b>			
< 5000	58(6.0)	34(4.6)	0.567
5000 – 9999	288(29.8)	234(31.7)	
10,000 – 14,999	250(25.9)	188(25.5)	
> 15,000	369(38.2)	282(38.2)	
<b>Type of house</b>			
Popular House	195(20.2)	137(18.6)	<0.011
Flat	101(10.5)	51(6.9)	
Villa	520(53.9)	450(61.0)	
Bungalow	149(15.4)	100(13.6)	
<b>Place of living</b>			
Urban	905(93.8)	674(91.3)	0.053
Semi-Urban	60(6.2)	64(8.7)	
<b>Consanguinity</b>			
No Relation	483(50.1)	375(50.8)	0.036
1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	322(33.4)	272(36.9)	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Degree	160(16.6)	91(12.3)	

**Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics of children and adolescents with fear by gender (N=965)**

Variables	Total	Gender		P-value
		Boys (n=361)	Girls (n=604)	
<b>Age (Mean±SD)</b>	12.4±3.7	12.5±3.6	12.3±3.2	<0.001
<b>Age group</b>				
06-11 Years (Primary)	333(34.5)	134(37.1)	199(32.9)	<0.001
12-15 Years (Intermediate)	445(46.1)	139(38.5)	306(50.7)	
16-18 Years (Secondary)	187(19.4)	88(24.4)	99(16.4)	
<b>Nationality</b>				
Qatari	673(69.7)	247(68.4)	426(70.5)	0.490
Non-Qatari	292(30.3)	114(31.6)	178(29.5)	
<b>Rank of students in school exam</b>				
Very Good	313(32.4)	85(23.5)	228(37.7)	<0.001
Good	280(29.0)	116(32.1)	164(27.2)	
Average	268(27.8)	113(31.3)	155(25.7)	
Poor	104(10.8)	47(13.0)	57(9.4)	
<b>Father's education</b>				
Illiterate	29(3.0)	15(4.2)	14(2.3)	0.106
Primary	82(8.5)	27(7.5)	55(9.1)	
Intermediate	254(26.3)	106(29.4)	148(24.5)	
Secondary	273(28.3)	104(28.8)	169(28.0)	
University	327(33.9)	109(30.2)	218(36.1)	
<b>Father's occupation</b>				
Not Working	85(8.8)	24(6.6)	61(10.1)	0.013
Sedentary/Professional	295(30.6)	129(35.7)	166(27.5)	
Manual	56(5.8)	25(6.9)	31(5.1)	
Business Man	219(22.7)	69(19.1)	150(24.8)	
Government Officer	310(32.1)	114(31.6)	196(32.5)	
<b>Mother education</b>				
Illiterate	87(9.0)	36(10.0)	51(8.4)	0.148
Primary	113(11.7)	37(10.2)	76(12.6)	
Intermediate	246(25.5)	106(29.4)	140(23.2)	
Secondary	214(22.2)	79(21.9)	135(22.4)	
University	305(31.6)	103(28.5)	202(33.4)	
<b>Mother occupation</b>				
House Wife	519(53.8)	191(52.9)	328(54.3)	0.256
Sedentary/Professional	274(28.4)	101(28.0)	173(28.6)	
Manual	68(7.0)	33(9.1)	35(5.8)	
Business Women	104(10.8)	36(10.0)	68(11.3)	
<b>Marital status of parents</b>				
Married	885(91.7)	334(92.5)	551(91.2)	0.778
Divorced	33(3.4)	11(3.0)	22(3.6)	
One of the Parent is Dead	47(4.9)	16(4.4)	31(5.1)	
<b>Household income (QR)</b>				
< 5000	58(6.0)	23(6.4)	35(5.8)	0.775
5000 – 9999	288(29.8)	114(31.6)	174(28.8)	
10,000 – 14,999	250(25.9)	90(24.9)	160(26.5)	
> 15,000	369(38.2)	134(37.1)	235(38.9)	
<b>Type of house</b>				
Popular House	195(20.2)	82(22.7)	113(18.7)	0.004
Flat	101(10.5)	51(14.1)	50(8.3)	
Villa	520(53.9)	172(47.6)	348(57.6)	
Bungalow	149(15.4)	56(15.5)	93(15.4)	
<b>Place of living</b>				
Urban	905(93.8)	338(93.6)	567(93.9)	0.879
Semi-Urban	60(6.2)	23(6.4)	37(6.1)	
<b>Consanguinity</b>				
No Relation	483(50.1)	175(48.5)	308(51.0)	0.389
1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	322(33.4)	130(36.0)	192(31.8)	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Degree	160(16.6)	56(15.5)	104(17.2)	

**Table 3. Percent distribution of top twenty fears by gender and age (N=965)**

Variable	Total N=965 n(%)	Boys n=361%	Girls n=604%	P-Value	Age group			P-Value
					6-11 n=333 n(%)	12-15 n=445 n(%)	16-18 n=187 n(%)	
1 Someone dying in the family	822 (85.2)	288 (79.8)	534 (88.4)	<0.001	280 (84.1)	375 (84.3)	167 (89.3)	0.209
2 Parents getting divorced	815 (84.5)	284 (78.7)	531 (87.9)	<0.001	279 (83.8)	376 (84.5)	160 (85.6)	0.865
3 Breaking religious law	791 (82.0)	271 (75.1)	520 (86.1)	<0.001	261 (78.4)	367 (82.5)	163 (87.2)	0.041
4 Being kidnapped	755 (78.2)	233 (64.5)	522 (86.4)	<0.001	253 (76.0)	364 (81.8)	138 (73.8)	0.039
5 Someone in the family getting ill	753 (78.0)	247 (68.4)	506 (83.8)	<0.001	250 (75.1)	354 (79.6)	149 (79.7)	0.273
6 Dying	740 (76.7)	235 (65.1)	505 (83.6)	<0.001	260 (78.1)	337 (75.7)	143 (76.5)	0.743
7 Going Crazy	736 (76.3)	252 (69.8)	484 (80.1)	<0.001	253 (76.0)	335 (75.3)	148 (79.1)	0.574
8 Being adopted	687 (71.2)	223 (61.8)	464 (76.8)	<0.001	234 (70.3)	315 (70.8)	138 (73.8)	0.673
9 Separation from parents	674 (69.8)	211 (58.4)	463 (76.7)	<0.001	225 (67.6)	319 (71.7)	130 (69.5)	0.462
10 Germs / poisoned food	657 (68.1)	226 (62.6)	431 (71.4)	0.005	232 (69.7)	292 (65.6)	133 (71.1)	0.297
11 Becoming ill	648 (67.2)	197 (54.6)	451 (74.7)	<0.001	230 (69.1)	292 (65.6)	126 (67.4)	0.596
12 War	644 (66.7)	160 (44.3)	484 (80.1)	<0.001	226 (67.9)	306 (68.8)	112 (59.9)	0.084
13 Having an operation	636 (65.9)	187 (51.8)	449 (74.3)	<0.001	216 (64.9)	300 (67.4)	120 (64.2)	0.650
14 Hell / Evil spirit	633 (65.6)	161 (44.6)	472 (78.1)	<0.001	221 (66.4)	297 (66.7)	115 (61.5)	0.419
15 People with deformities	610 (63.2)	160 (44.3)	450 (74.5)	<0.001	202 (60.7)	293 (65.8)	115 (61.5)	0.288
16 Nightmares	598 (62.0)	160 (44.3)	438 (72.5)	<0.001	212 (63.7)	276 (62.0)	110 (58.8)	0.551
17 Making mistakes	597 (61.9)	184 (51.0)	413 (68.4)	<0.001	197 (59.2)	273 (61.3)	127 (67.9)	0.136
18 Seeing someone wounded	593 (61.5)	161 (44.6)	432 (71.5)	<0.001	207 (62.2)	277 (62.2)	109(58.3)	0.613
19 Tests or examinations	565 (58.5)	168 (46.5)	397 (65.7)	<0.001	178 (53.5)	264 (59.3)	123 (65.8)	0.021
20 Rats or mice	556 (57.6)	122 (33.8)	434 (71.9)	<0.001	185 (55.6)	265 (59.6)	106 (56.7)	0.515

**Table 4. Mean score of top twenty fears by gender (N=965)**

Variable	Total Mean $\pm$ SD	Boys Mean $\pm$ SD	Girls Mean $\pm$ SD	P-Value
1 Someone dying in the family	2.49 $\pm$ 0.74	2.34 $\pm$ 0.80	2.59 $\pm$ 0.69	<0.001
2 Parents getting divorced	2.47 $\pm$ 0.75	2.32 $\pm$ 0.81	2.55 $\pm$ 0.70	<0.001
3 Breaking religious law	2.37 $\pm$ 0.77	2.23 $\pm$ 0.83	2.46 $\pm$ 0.73	<0.001
4 Being kidnapped	2.32 $\pm$ 0.81	1.96 $\pm$ 0.82	2.54 $\pm$ 0.72	<0.001
5 Someone in the family getting ill	2.10 $\pm$ 0.73	1.93 $\pm$ 0.75	2.20 $\pm$ 0.70	<0.001
6 Dying	2.33 $\pm$ 0.83	2.06 $\pm$ 0.87	2.49 $\pm$ 0.76	<0.001
7 Going Crazy	2.24 $\pm$ 0.81	2.06 $\pm$ 0.82	2.35 $\pm$ 0.79	<0.001
8 Being adopted	2.21 $\pm$ 0.86	2.01 $\pm$ 0.89	2.32 $\pm$ 0.83	<0.001
9 Separation from parents	2.21 $\pm$ 0.88	2.00 $\pm$ 0.91	2.34 $\pm$ 0.83	<0.001
10 Germs / poisoned food	1.91 $\pm$ 0.73	1.81 $\pm$ 0.73	1.96 $\pm$ 0.73	<0.001
11 Becoming ill	1.92 $\pm$ 0.75	1.71 $\pm$ 0.74	2.03 $\pm$ 0.74	<0.001
12 War	2.02 $\pm$ 0.83	1.63 $\pm$ 0.78	2.25 $\pm$ 0.76	<0.001
13 Having an operation	2.00 $\pm$ 0.83	1.74 $\pm$ 0.80	2.16 $\pm$ 0.80	<0.001
14 Hell / Evil spirit	2.06 $\pm$ 0.87	1.69 $\pm$ 0.84	2.29 $\pm$ 0.80	<0.001
15 People with deformities	1.96 $\pm$ 0.84	1.63 $\pm$ 0.78	2.16 $\pm$ 0.81	<0.001
16 Nightmares	1.99 $\pm$ 0.87	1.66 $\pm$ 0.82	2.19 $\pm$ 0.84	<0.001
17 Making mistakes	1.84 $\pm$ 0.76	1.67 $\pm$ 0.74	1.95 $\pm$ 0.76	<0.001
18 Seeing someone wounded	1.84 $\pm$ 0.77	1.57 $\pm$ 0.70	2.00 $\pm$ 0.76	<0.001
19 Tests or examinations	1.80 $\pm$ 0.77	1.64 $\pm$ 0.77	1.89 $\pm$ 0.75	<0.001
20 Rats or mice	1.91 $\pm$ 0.87	1.51 $\pm$ 0.77	2.16 $\pm$ 0.83	<0.001

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The present study has demonstrated that fears are quite common in children of all ages and those younger children reported fears more frequently than the older children of 16-18 years. Also, the study revealed the significant differences in the number and type of reported fears and related anxiety in students by grade level and gender, controlling for perceptions of family atmosphere. In this study, we first explored the most common self-reported fears in 1703 Arab children. Consistent with other studies, fears were highly prevalent in the Arab children [10-13]. The overall prevalence rate of fears in children was 56.1%. The Child Anxiety Network reports that fear is such a natural part of a child's development that 90% of children aged 2 to 14 admits having "atleast one specific-fear" [14].

Spence et al. stated that girls generally report greater number of fears than do boys and there are developmental changes in the types of fears children exhibit [2]. This is true in our study that girls (62.6%) reported significantly higher levels of fearfulness than boys (37.4%). Even the logistic regression supported this study finding that female gender was found to be the most significant determinant of the fear (OR=2.01; P<0.001). The studied girls (62.6%) reported more fears than older adolescents in the age group 12-15 years old (46.1%) which is similar to a study done by Ollendick et al. [10]. It is interesting to note that children of 12-15 years

expressed more fears than their counterparts. Also, there was an age related decline in fears observed in the studied children. Nearly half of the sufferers were in the age group (12-15) years, and then it declined to 19.4% in the older students of 16 – 18 years. A fear survey also noted a similar age decline in fears. Fear in children suddenly become different as the child approaches adolescence [11].

With regard to the mean score of fears of children and adolescents in the study sample, significant gender differences have been noted with girls experiencing more fear on worries of family members, fear of physical illness, fear of dangers and death than boys (P<0.001). But, another study of Stevenson-Hinde et al reported a gender difference regarding the type of fear with girls experiencing worries on family members, while boys tend to worry about their own performance [15]. Our study sample of girls had higher fearful behaviour compared to boys in every type of fear. A similar study done in UAE cited that the six most frequent fears fell in the category of physical injury [16]. The possible explanation for the difference in type of fears is that children's fears differ in nature across different ethnic groups because culturally mediated beliefs, values and traditions may play a role in their expression.

According to surveys, the top ten list of fears are flying, heights, clowns, intimacy, death, rejection, people, snakes, success and driving [17]. The Arab children in Qatar rated the top six fears as

fears about someone dying in the family (85.2%), parents getting divorced (84.5%), breaking religious law (82.0%), being kidnapped (78.2%), someone in the family getting ill (78.0%) and dying (76.7%), while children in Australia reported fears about burglars, bombing attacks, and being hit by car to be among their ten most common fears; a result found by Muris et al. [13]. This shows that fears related to death and danger were the most commonly reported fears and phobia [18,19] among children in Qatar which is similar to the study findings of other studies, while for children in Australia it was related to fear of unforeseen dangers [3,12]. Findings in few western studies indicated a different pattern of fears related to physical injury based on man-made dangers [20]. These study findings show that in general, children appear to be most afraid of two things; the threat of pain or death and the threat of social rejection and isolation. Media exposure and societal changes could be the main causes of the contemporary fears of children.

Findings in the present study indicated that the top 20 fears were remarkably consistent across gender. For the top list of ten fears, girls endorsed the same fears in exactly the same order as the total. More girls consistently endorsed each fear. But all ages endorsed 5 of the 20 fears in the same order as the total. Many common childhood fears emerge because the child is increasingly being able to perceive danger in the situation, but has not advanced to the point of fully understanding it, not able to exercise control over it.

**Table 5. Predictors of fear among studied children and adolescents using multivariate logistic regression**

Predictors	Adjusted OR	P value
Age(in years)	1.04(1.01-1.08)	0.013
Gender (female)	2.01(1.63-2.47)	<0.001
Exam ranking (poor)	1.43(1.13-2.11)	0.050
Living in flat	1.41(1.10-2.18)	0.001
Urban resident	1.51(1.03-2.21)	0.035
Consanguineous parents	1.41(1.04-1.89)	0.025

*Outcome variable (fear Yes=1, No=0)*

During the last decade, mass media has emerged more frequently as a factor in children's fears. It is important that we develop a better understanding of children's fears, using a wider variety of assessment approaches and developing a range of strategies to assist them to cope with their fears. The fears in children should

not be under-estimated since they cause personal distress to the child and also much interference with daily activities [21].

Fear among children is recognized as a major global public health problem and one of the main chronic syndromes currently affecting child population regardless of socio-economic status and geographic location [22,23].

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study findings revealed that fears were highly prevalent in Arab children and adolescents in Qatar. Girls reported more fears than boys and age differences also were found; younger children reported a greater number of fears than older children of 16-18 years. There was a significant difference observed between girls and boys in their age group and academic performance for the reported fears. Nearly half of the sufferers were in the age group (12-15) years. Fears were related to death and danger was the most commonly reported fears among children. Fear of someone dying in the family and parents getting divorced were the most commonly reported fears.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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