CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Systematic study of exceptional children constitutes a fascinating area of psychological research. It yields information about the unique psychic attributes of different groups; provides insight into their unique developmental patterns and, finally, helps in highlighting the need for evolving educational or counselling programmes geared towards their specific needs. As is known, enormous amount of research has been going on in such like categories of exceptional children as the mentally retarded, the physically handicapped and the delinquents etc. (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1978; Lind, 1987). However, there are some functionally or behaviourally defined categories of exceptional children which, though not neglected, are relatively less thoroughly investigated. They are: lonely children, anxious children and aggressive children (Neubauer, 1987; Mijuskovic, 1988).

One aim of the present investigation is to study three categories of exceptional children, namely, the lonely, anxious and aggressive children. The specific variables selected for making a comparative study of these groups are general personality make-up as assessed by Cattell’s high school personality questionnaire, creative thinking and humour. These variables have been chosen because relatively limited information is available on the standing of these
groups on these variables (Goswick and Jones, 1982; Pettifor, 1982; McCauley, Coolidge and Kulick, 1983; Coleman, 1987; Poterfield, 1987) and because through the study of these variables, important as they are, we can hope to reach the core of the psychic structure of these exceptional children. Further, the inter-relationships among these variables and the variables which prefix the different groups seem to be of immense theoretical interest Freud, 1916; Koestler, 1964; Cattell and Tollefson, 1966; Barron, 1968; Barron and Harrington, 1981). Very little systematic work, indeed, has been reported on the relationship between creativity and aggression and loneliness; humour and loneliness and humour and aggression, etc. (Barron, 1968; McGhee, 1971; Pettifor, 1982; Kaur, 1989) An important objective of the present study, therefore, is to endeavour to unveil the intricate pattern of inter-relationships existing among these variables by using multivariate techniques.

Three categories of children

The lonely children:
The phenomenon of loneliness among children has engaged the attention of many psychologists in the recent years (Asher, 1984; Russell et al., 1978; Marcoen et al., 1987; Russell et al., 1987). Even though conceptually and empirically the construct of loneliness seems to be complex and multi-dimensional (Hojat, 1982; Moore and Shultz 1983, and Larson, 1990). Yet, one distinct feature of the lonely
children is their social isolation, withdrawal and lack of intimate relationships or friendships. They appear to have low self-esteem and are more prone to introspection (Goswick and Jones, 1982; Hojat, 1982; Schmidt and Sermat, 1983; Ovellet and Joshi, 1986). It may be mentioned here in passing that loneliness emerges largely as a negative phenomenon in psychological literature. More akin to negative states like depression, withdrawal, fear, etc. This is in contrast to the views of some writers who associate loneliness with a sense of solitude, tranquility, inner orientation and other positive aspects.

The phenomenon of loneliness among children has been conceptualized to be mediated by complex cognitive and evaluative processes, both with regard to the self of the child as well as the social environment and meanings given thereof. It has, overall emerged as a legitimate phenomenon which needs scrutiny in its own right and seems to have practical utility in predicting behavioural adjustment patterns and mental health status of the children. Since loneliness is a relatively new area of research, very limited work has been reported on its personality and cognitive correlates, as they are psychometrically measured. Similarly, very little systematic work is reported on the relationship between loneliness and creativity, loneliness and humour, loneliness and anxiety and loneliness and aggression (McGhee,
The present study represents a modest attempt to explore the relationship of loneliness to personality, creativity and humour by using reliable psychometric tests and by employing sophisticated statistical techniques of factor analysis and stepwise multiple regression analysis. On the basis of careful theoretical analysis of the phenomenon of loneliness, as well as of the empirical information available regarding loneliness (Weiss, 1973, 1974; Rokach, 1988) it is conjectured that lonely children will be reserved and undemonstrative i.e., they will be low on factor A and D, there will be negative relationship between loneliness and creativity and loneliness and humor.

The anxious children:

The behaviour of the anxious children is characterized by unrealistic fears, oversensitivity, self consciousness, nightmares and chronic anxiety. The child lacks self confidence, is apprehensive in new situations and tends to be immature for his age. Such children are described by their parents as prone to worry, shy, sensitive, nervous, submissive and easily discouraged and moved to tears. Typically, they are overdependent, particularly on their parents (Spielberger, 1966; Nijhawan, 1971; Coleman, 1976, 1987). The personality of the anxious children is characterized by poor self concept, unrealistic fears, more affective needs and they tend to indulge more in self blame (Lipsitt, 1958; Coopersmith, 1959; Cattell, 1969; Ruisel,
Despite the fact that many observations have been made on the personality characteristics of the anxious, these observations are largely clinically based, quite global, overlapping ad lacking in precision.

The present study employs Cattell's high school personality questionnaire in order to get more systematic personality profile of the anxious children in terms of factorially pure dimensions. It is conjectured that anxious children will be more excitable, apprehensive, tense, uncontrolled, shy, and will be affected by feelings, i.e., they will have high scores on factor's D,I,O. and Q_4 and will have low scores on factor's C,H, and Q_3.

Regarding the relationship between creativity and anxiety, very contrasting kind of views have been offered. Freud (1973) believed that creativity is rooted in neurosis. It is only when unconscious neurotic conflicts are sublimated and transformed into socially desirable and communicable forms that creativity results. Maslow, Rogers and other humanistic psychologists, to the contrary, believe that creativity is an equivalent of self actualisation which is a mental state characterized by freedom, tranquility and inner poise (Maslow, 1962; Rogers, 1962). Freedom from neurotic conflicts, anxieties and fears, in this view, is a prerequisite for creative productivity.
While making a comparative analysis of these different views, some writers (Barron, 1968; Story, 1976) have pointed out that neurosis does not necessarily lead to creativity and conversely all creative people are not necessarily neurotic. It would appear that neurosis perse does not determine creativity, rather it is some positive controlling function within the personality which is responsible for creativity. Anxiety or neurosis can be a hinderance to creativity. Taking stock of the experiential state of the neurotic mind, torn as it is, by too many intrapsychic conflicts and the studies of the personality of the anxious people which reveal many unfavourable traits, it may be conjectured, that there will be a negative relationship between creativity and anxiety. Review of empirical work in this area (Belcher, 1975; Mathews, 1986), reveals that the results are equivocal and inconsistent and call for systematic exploration.

The phenomenon of humour is a complex one and has been dealt with by many eminent writers like Allport (1950), Freud (1960), Koestler (1964) and Cattell and Tollefson (1966). According to Allport (1950), the neurotic who learns to laugh at himself may be on the way to self management, perhaps to cure (pp.92) pointing thereby; to a limited capacity of the neurotic to enjoy humour. Freud (1960), consistent with his psychoanalytic theory, associated humour with release of repressed sexual and aggressive energy.
Koestler (1964), who considered humour to be one manifestation of creativity, attributed it to the perception of incongruity. Finally, Maslow (1954), while describing the characteristics of the self actualising personality, listed 'philosophical humor' as one of the salient characteristics.

While, all these views, regarding the nature of humour reflect the complexity of the phenomenon of humour and the way its dynamics may be conceptualized, it appears that, true, healthy and genuine sense of humour requires a psyche which is essentially free-free from crippling tensions and distractions, which pervade the anxious mind (Storr, 1976). It would, therefore, look plausible that there exists a negative relationship between anxiety and humour. In passing, it may be mentioned here that empirical work in this area is relatively very limited and whatever results have been reported are equivocal, calling for more systematic exploration (Ribordy, Holmes and Buckshaum, 1980; Deffenbacher, Deitz and Hazaleus, 1981; Martin and Lefcourt, 1983 and Poterfield, 1987).

The aggressive children:

In general, the unsocialized aggressive children manifest such characteristics as overt or covert hostility, disobedience, physical and verbal aggressiveness and destructiveness. Lying, solitary stealing and temper tantrums are common. Such children tend to be sexually uninhibited
and inclined towards sexual aggressiveness. A minority may engage in fire setting, solitary vandalism and even homicidal acts. Aggressive children are considered to be the product of pathogenic family background, which generates an overall deficit and a tendency to act out frustration in hostile, antisocial behaviour (Coleman, 1976; Lefkowitz et al., 1977; Stewart, 1985; Huesmann et al., 1987). Most of the descriptions of the aggressive children are clinically based and are quite global. One objective of the present study is to have a more systematic look into the personality make up of the aggressive children by making use of Cattell’s HSPQ. It is broadly conjectured that aggressive children will be assertive, will disregard rules, will be toughminded and will follow their own urges i.e., they will score high on factor E and low on factor G, I and Q3. Getzels and Jackson (1962) found creative children to be high on both aggression and humour. Barron (1968) analyzing the relationship between creativity and aggression, found creative people to be relatively higher on aggression scale of MMPI. On the other hand, there are observations which point to the negative effects of aggression on the overall development of cognition (Lowenstein, 1977; Olweus, 1978 and Huesmann, Eron and Yarmel, 1987). It appears that aggression perse cannot determine creativity. Creative people might show high scores on relatively innocuous aspects of aggression (e.g. self assertion), which reflect more of their intellectual
independence and basic vitality. But, it is difficult to imagine that they might necessarily be high on aggression in the negative, destructive and vulgar sense of the term (Smith & Carlsson, 1986). Overall, it seems plausible that there might exist a differential association between creativity and different dimensions of aggression. However, it must be mentioned here in passing, that the sample used in the present study comprised relatively younger group. It is possible, that, aggression is not as differentiated in their case, as it might be in older groups; were it to be so, aggression might, as a sign of general vitality, bear a positive relationship with creativity.

According to Koestler (1964), humour represents a kind of creativity. If it were so, it would look plausible that a similar kind of relationship would exist between aggression and humour, as there exists between aggression and creativity. To the extent aggression signifies a basic vitality and has relatively innocuous form, it might have positive relationship with humour. But, when aggression aggravates into a negative, vulgar and pathological force, it might not facilitate humour.

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**The main objectives of the study:**

1. To discover the basic characteristics and traits (in terms of personality, creativity and humour) of the three groups of children, namely the lonely, anxious and aggressive.

2. To study the intercorrelations among the different variables included in the study using Pearson’s product moment correlation.

3. To discover the factorial structure underlying all the indices included in the study.

4. To set up regression equations for the prediction of loneliness, anxiety and aggression (criterion variable) using personality, creativity and humour as predictors.

5. To study the relationship between independent variables (loneliness, anxiety and aggression) and the dependent variables using one way analysis of variance.

**Hypotheses:**

Some specific conjectures are as follows:

1. Loneliness will display negative association with factors A and D of HSPQ.

2. Loneliness will have negative relationship with creativity.
3. Loneliness will be negatively correlated with humour.
4. Anxiety will have positive association with factor’s D, I, O and Q4 and negative association with factors C, H and Q3.
5. Anxiety will display negative association with creativity.
6. Anxiety will have negative relationship with humour.
7. Aggression will show positive association with factor E and negative association with factors G, I and Q3.
8. Aggression will have positive relationship with creativity.
9. Aggression will display positive association with humour.