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BEHAVIOR THERAPY IN THE TREATMENT OF ALECTOR-OPHOBIA: A CASE STUDY OF 17-YEAR-OLD ADOLESCENT

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Abstract
Alectorophobia is a rare and overwhelming fear of hens and roosters, which can adversely effect his overall quality of life. This case tells the story of a 17-year-old who had carried this fear since being farms, feeling anxious in social situations, and struggling with embarrassment. Through attacked by a rooster when he was aged six. For long ten years, the fear shaped daily life—avoiding behavioral therapy, including relaxation exercises, building a step-by-step plan to face the fear, and gradually introducing the adolescent to chickens—from pictures to real-life interaction—the fear slowly began to lift. By the end of treatment, the adolescent could approach and interact with chickens without distress, and family members noticed a boost in confidence and willingness to engage socially. This case is a pure example of rare and long-standing fears can be overcome with patience, structured support, and gradual exposure, highlighting the importance of early intervention and compassionate care.
Keywords: Alectorophobia, specific phobia, behavioral therapy, exposure therapy, adolescent, overcoming fear

Introduction

Specific phobias are a type of anxiety disorder where a person experiences intense, persistent fear of a particular object or situation. These fears often lead to avoidance and can significantly disrupt daily life. People are aware of common phobias, like fears of dogs, snakes, or heights, some fears are much rarer and less often studied. One such fear is alectorophobia—the fear of hens and roosters. Although chickens are harmless, individuals with this phobia may experience strong anxiety, rapid heartbeat, sweating, dizziness, nausea, or even panic when exposed to the animals. Alectorophobia often begins in childhood, sometimes following a frightening encounter with a chicken or rooster, and can persist into adolescence if not addressed. This stage of life is particularly sensitive: teenagers are navigating social challenges, emotional growth, and academic pressures. Left untreated, phobias during this period can interfere with school, friendships, and overall well-being. Many researches suggests that if the symptoms are treated early it can prevent long-term anxiety problems and improve coping skills. Behavioral theories help explain how phobias develop. A neutral object, like a chicken, may become linked with a frightening experience, producing a learned fear. Over time, this fear can be reinforced through avoidance and heightened attention to perceived threats. Exposure-based therapies, including systematic desensitization and cognitive-behavioral approaches, gradually the persons are made ready to face their fears in a controlled and safe manner. Through repeated, step-by-step exposure, fear responses can diminish, and confidence can be restored. Advances in technology, such as virtual reality therapy, now allow people to confront fears in realistic but controlled environments, which makes it more better to applied in situations where directly exposing seems to be difficult or impractical. Despite these treatment options, rare phobias like alectorophobia remain underrepresented in research, with most of the proof gathered from isolated case reports. Detailed case studies are very essential for understanding how these uncommon fears affect individuals and how therapy can help. The present study focuses on a 17-year-old adolescent with alectorophobia, exploring how behavioral therapy can reduce fear, improve daily functioning, and enhance social and emotional well-being. By documenting this case, the study adds valuable evidence to the limited literature on rare animal-related phobias.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescents often hesitate to seek help for unusual fears due to embarrassment or social stigma. Alectorophobia, though rare, can severely restrict daily activities and reduce confidence. This study examines whether behavioral therapy can effectively reduce such fear and improve functioning. The current study focuses on a 17-year-old adolescent who experiences persistent fear of hens and roosters. The goal is to explore whether behavioral therapy can help reduce or eliminate the fear, enabling the adolescent to navigate daily life with greater confidence and ease.

Need for the Study

This research is important for several reasons:

- **Rare but impactful:** Alectorophobia is seldom discussed in psychological research, yet it can significantly affect a person's life.
- **Adolescents often go untreated:** Teens with unusual fears frequently do not receive timely intervention, which may

allow anxiety to persist or worsen.

- **Behavioral therapy is effective but underused:** Although evidence strongly supports behavioral approaches for phobias, many adolescents do not have access to these treatments in their communities.
- **Early intervention matters:** Addressing phobias early can prevent long-term anxiety and reduce the risk of related emotional or social difficulties.
- **Case studies provide insight:** Documenting individual cases helps clinicians understand symptom patterns, therapy responses, and practical strategies that can guide future research and treatment.

Objectives of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To assess the severity and characteristics of alectorophobia in the client.
2. To identify the origin and maintaining factors of the fear response.
3. To develop a structured fear hierarchy for exposure therapy.
4. To implement behavior therapy using systematic desensitization and graded exposure.
5. To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in reducing phobic symptoms.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a single-case clinical approach to investigate how behavioral therapy could help an adolescent with a rare phobia. This design allows researchers to explore the treatment process in detail, especially for uncommon conditions like alectorophobia.

Participant

The participant was a 17-year-old male who had experienced a persistent fear of hens and roosters since early childhood. His phobia began at age six, after a rooster unexpectedly jumped on his shoulder and startled him. Since that incident, he had avoided places where chickens were present, such as farms, markets, or family gatherings, and often felt self-conscious about his reactions. The fear had lasted for more than 11 years, significantly affecting his daily life and social interactions.

Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnosis followed the **DSM-5 criteria for specific phobia (animal type).** The assessment revealed that the participant:

- Experienced intense fear whenever exposed to chickens or roosters
- Engaged in avoidance behaviors to prevent encounters
- Experienced distress that interfered with normal activities
- Had symptoms that endured for over six months

Based on these observations, the participant was diagnosed with alectorophobia, a rare but debilitating fear of hens and roosters.

Therapeutic Intervention

The therapeutic process consisted of multiple structured stages:

Rapport Establishment

Initial sessions focused on developing trust and establishing a comfortable therapeutic relationship. Case history was collected in detail, including family background, childhood experiences, and triggers related with the phobia.

Fear Hierarchy Development

A graded hierarchy of fear-provoking stimuli was constructed, ranging from least threatening to most anxiety-provoking situations:

- Viewing cartoon images of chickens
- Looking at pictures of chicks
- Viewing realistic images of adult chickens
- Listening to audio recordings of rooster crowing
- Observing feathers
- Watching chickens from a distance
- Standing near a cage containing chickens
- Touching the cage
- Touching a live rooster
- Petting and holding the rooster

Relaxation Training

To help the client manage anxiety during therapy, a variety of relaxation techniques were introduced. These included:

- Deep breathing exercises to calm the body and mind
- Guided relaxation, where the client focused on imagining peaceful scenes or situations
- Progressive muscle relaxation, helping the client release tension from different muscle groups
- Cognitive reassurance, encouraging positive self-talk and realistic thinking about the feared situation

The client practiced these techniques before each exposure session, which allowed him to approach each stage of the fear hierarchy with greater calm and confidence. During the course of time these strategies has helped reduce physiological and emotional reactions, making exposure to fear-inducing stimuli more manageable.

Gradual Exposure

- Exposure sessions followed the hierarchical sequence. The client initially experienced moderate anxiety while viewing images and videos of chickens. As therapy progressed, the client confronted increasingly challenging stimuli.
- Exposure to live chickens produced strong physiological reactions including sweating, trembling, and crying. However, repeated exposure combined with relaxation training gradually reduced anxiety responses.
- In the final stage of treatment, the client successfully touched and petted a live rooster without experiencing panic.

Results

Post-treatment evaluation revealed substantial improvement. The Important outcomes included:

- Complete elimination of panic reactions when exposed to chickens
- Ability to watch videos and images without anxiety
- Comfortable interaction with live chickens
- Increased self-confidence and social participation

Feedback from family members confirmed that the client no longer avoided environments where chickens were present.

Discussion

This case study highlights the effectiveness of behavioral therapy in helping adolescents overcome specific phobias, even rare ones like alectorophobia. Through structured exposure, the client gradually faced the feared stimulus, which allowed the intense anxiety response to decrease over time. The process works through habituation and extinction, weakening the connection between the fear trigger and the anxiety reaction. The several elements contributed to the success of the intervention:

- A carefully planned fear hierarchy that progressed from the least to the most anxiety-provoking situations
- Regular exposure sessions, which built consistency and confidence
- Relaxation techniques, helping the client manage physiological and emotional reactions
- Opportunities to process the original traumatic memory, which reduced its emotional impact
- A strong therapeutic relationship, providing trust and support throughout the process

The case also emphasizes the importance of early intervention during adolescence, a period when fears can strongly influence social interactions, school life, and emotional development. Addressing the phobia at this stage allowed for lasting improvements in the client's confidence and daily functioning.

While the results are encouraging, the study's single-case design limits generalization. Future research should include larger samples and follow-ups to examine whether the gains are maintained over time.

Ethical Considerations

- We ensured that both the participant and their guardian understood the process and willingly gave consent.
- Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained
- Participation was voluntary
- The right to withdraw at any time was ensured

Limitations of the Study

- Single-case design limits generalization
- No long-term follow-up
- Lack of standardized measurement tools
- Individual differences may influence results

Implications for Practice

This study highlights the importance of early identification and treatment of phobias in adolescents. Behavioral therapy can be effectively applied even in rare cases, guiding clinicians, educators, and counselors in similar situations.

Future Directions

- Include larger sample sizes
- Conduct long-term follow-ups
- Explore virtual reality-based exposure therapy
- Develop standardized intervention protocols

Conclusion

This study highlightes that behavioral therapy, including gradual exposure and relaxation training, can effectively treat alectorophobia in adolescents. By facing fears step by step and practicing coping strategies, the client was able to replace panic with confidence and engage comfortably in situations involving chickens.

The findings underline the value of early identification and treatment of phobias. Structured, exposure-based interventions can help the patient to significantly reduce anxiety, improve daily functioning, and enhance social participation.

Future studies should explore innovative approaches, such as virtual reality exposure therapy, to make treatment more accessible and adaptable for rare or difficult-to-reach phobias.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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