

## EFFECT OF SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY YEARS

Parveen Khan<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between social anxiety and academic performance of university students. Sixty students participated in the study. The participants were taken from Institute of Education and Research (B.ED Hons), through simple random sampling. Social phobia inventory scale was used to identify the social anxiety among students. Responses of students were analyzed through SPSS version 20. Besides this Chi-square independence test and regression was used for data analysis. The impact of social anxiety on academic performance was investigated by examining the GPAs of students. Levine's T-test model was used to analyze data of two groups that is the high and low scorer students. The P-value is .333 greater than 0.05, which is insignificant. The result shows no effect of social anxiety on the academic performance of students.*

**Key Words:** *Social anxiety, academic performance, university students.*

### Introduction

Anxiety is quite a common occurrence that almost everyone experiences when they have to take any interview, make a presentation, attend any seminar and face experienced people on the very first day of the event concerned. But when such anxiety becomes serious the issue occurs, and a person becomes more self-conscious and ignore in attending any kind of social gathering (Veale, 2003).

A student with social anxiety also worries about the previous practices and cannot concentrate on teacher lectures and demonstration. And this leads to develop stress in student life (Abraham, 2018). Socially anxious students are at high risk of low academic as well as professional success. They never show interest in improving their performance in schools (Van Ameringen et al., 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Institute of Education & Research, University of Peshawar, KP, Pakistan

According to Abi-Najem (2015) students suffering from social anxiety typically face a salient war. For such students participation in the class is very difficult. They are reluctant to answer the questions when teacher ask from them, although they know the correct answers. They are keen to answer the question but something secret stops them. Class participation at university level holds a lot of importance, as 20% marks is granted to students on the basis of class participation. Because of the fear of being negatively viewed by the participants, significantly affects students' grades. Socially nervous students do not engage in events and group discussion. Most of the people can't talk to a group of people, but they generally conquer their fear in a few minutes when they start their speech, and they can boldly persuade the crowd.

The situation is different for students with social anxiety disorder rather than concentrating on the subject of presentation as they are more worried about their shivering hands, soaring voice, dry mouth and rapid heartbeat. These students usually confront different issues in delivering speech and seeking help from teachers (Cuncic, 2019).

In addition to school social anxiety also has significant effect on the employment of individuals with social anxiety. The career goals of socially insecure individuals are different from those of normal individuals (Himle et al., 2014).

Job sectors need knowledgeable people who can effective communicate and have a high degree of social interaction. Societal engagement and communication skills are very important in every area in today's world. People with social phobia avoid jobs that involve high social contact that greatly affects the development of their careers (Carnevale et al., 2010). Social phobia is considered as one of the main factor in refusal of school by most of the students (Conlon, 2016). According to Russell and Shaw (2009) in UK different researches were conducted and it was revealed from the result that 10% of scholars suffered from acute social anxiety disorder.

Despite the encouraging remarks of the audience and judges, socially insecure learners engaging in presentations or seminars often judge their competence poorly. The individuals still underestimate and weaken themselves in spite of academic accomplishments (Austin, 2004). Socially anxious students face a lot of tension in the undergraduate programme, where lectures, peer work, community events and debates are the core of the overall education. Such immersive events only consciously include emotionally confident

students. On the other hand, such people have to bear a great tension between their willingness to participate in the activity and their fear of negative judgments and humiliation. Despite the fact that it affects student academics in higher education (Strahan and Conger, 1998), social anxiety disorder has not received publicity.

A study was carried by Sholeh et al. (2018), the study concluded that social interaction, anxiety and academic change have a negative relationship. It is also stated that social anxiety has a significant effect on fresh college students' academics. The students who were victim of social anxiety shows low grades and vice versa. Social anxiety disorder is a significant challenge in many areas of college life and also involves academic aspects.

The relationship between shyness and academic achievement among adolescents in Karachi was investigated by Kanzah et al. (2018). The analysis presumed that the two variables had a significant relation. The study concluded that the connection between shyness and academic achievement is significantly negative. Clarke and Fox (2017) conducted research to assess the effect of social anxiety disorder on six Irish students' occupational participation. The researchers concluded from their research that research participants indicated that they were more worried with how others viewed them and defined negative attitudes with themselves. The ability to completely engage in the student role was profoundly affected by this form of over self-consciousness. This attitude prevents them from engaging with others, participating in social events and that is why certain people appear to be dull and disconnected from society.

Rizwan et al. (2015) conducted research to recognize social phobia and its effect on postgraduate girls' academic achievements. Social phobia, according to the report, is a psychological condition that is generally overlooked. The study showed that while the ratio of social anxiety is more prevalent in girls, there is no major impact on students' academic achievement. The findings of this research paper contradict with other studies.

Mazhari et al. (2014) conducted a study among students of the Kerman University of Medical Sciences to find the correlation between social phobia and academic success. The study concluded that there was no difference between students with and without social anxiety in the Grade Point Average (GPA), but students suffering from anxiety disorder faced serious public speaking difficulties.

Wagner et al. (2014) investigated the social anxiety disorder among students of Brazilian university. The study showed that this mental illness strongly affects academic achievement, learning abilities public speaking and relationships with teachers and classmates.

Russell and Topham (2012) conducted a study to find out the effect of social anxiety on higher education students' learning and well-being. The study concluded that social phobia is a disguised disorder that affects students' learning and wellbeing. Activities involving public speaking may cause social phobia. The study proposed that teachers should be adequately able to distinguish between social anxiety and shyness, and should provide, to those who is suffering from social anxiety, with pedagogical help.

A study was carried out by Al Khafaji (2012) to evaluate the prevalence of social phobia and its effect on the academic performance of Al Qadissya medical students. The study concluded that social phobia is more prevalent in female students than in male students. It was recorded that eating or speaking in public was the most frequently feared situation faced by socially nervous students. Besides this, the study was the most frequently feared situation faced by socially nervous students. Besides this, the study stated that social phobia did not seem to have any impact on students' academics.

In order to find out the influence of shyness on isolation, social anxiety and school love, Walker (2011) conducted a review. The study concluded that, as opposed to other typical children, shyer children are more socially insecure and lonely. Typically, these kids have less positive feelings about education. Shyness is an essential phenomenon in late childhood and such children face problems of adjustment in schools.

Ahmad (2009) conducted a research on psychiatric condition known as social phobia. It was concluded from the study that social anxiety is a major problem that leads to poor academic performance. Study has shown that certain people tend to dislike group work in the classroom, which is now a modern learning strategy for days. One of the reasons for the low academic performance of learners with social anxiety is that they hesitate to ask questions during learning.

Strahan (2002) conducted studies to determine the effect of social anxiety and social skills on academic achievements. The research explored whether or not the two factors that are social anxiety and

social skills impact the college result. This study concluded that emotional instability lower GPA and social anxiety is not a responsible factor for affecting the grades of students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Most of the students feel anxious in certain situations, even most confident people feel nervous in situations like presentation, seminars, meeting and conferences etc. But the problem lies with those who are over anxious about their social interaction. As this disorder and its impacts on academics are often ignored the researcher preferred to study on the effect of social anxiety on university students' academic performance.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To find out the association between social anxiety disorder and academic achievement.
- To find the effect of social anxiety on students' academic achievement.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

H<sub>01</sub> There is no association between social anxiety disorder and academic achievement of students.

H<sub>02</sub> There is no effect of social anxiety disorder on students' academic achievement.

H<sub>03</sub> There is no significant difference between social anxiety and academic achievement.

### **Methodology**

This research is designed as a quantitative research. Quantitative research is a type of research which involves statistical analysis of data. The data of this study is also in numerical form which is analyzed statistically by the researcher using SPSS version 20.

Population of study consisted graduates of B.Ed (Hons) of Institute of Education and Research, University of Peshawar. Total 60 students were taken through simple random sampling (20 students per semester) from 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> semesters. As this is a quantitative research, data was collected through Social Phobia Inventory Scale (SPIN) introduced by Jonathan Davidson in 1995. It is a 17-item self – rating scale for social anxiety disorder. Written permission was taken from Jonathan Davidson. For data analysis different statistical measures were applied such as Chi-square, Levene's Model and Regression.

**Hypothesis -1**

**HO1 There is no association between social anxiety disorder and academic achievement of students.**

S. N	Questions	Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Very much	Extremely	Chi-Square	P-Value
1.	Afraid of people in authority	26 43.3%	22 36.7%	11 18.3%	01 1.7%	0 0%	25.47 6 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
2	Blushing in front of people	12 20.0%	25 41.7%	11 18.3%	09 15.0%	03 5.0%	21.67 7 <sup>b</sup>	0.000
3	Parties and social event scare me	32 53.3%	15 25.5%	08 13.3%	03 5.0%	02 3.3%	50.50 0 <sup>b</sup>	.000
4	I avoid talking to people I don't know	17 28.3%	20 33.3%	13 21.7%	08 13.3%	2 3.3%	17.16 7 <sup>b</sup>	.002
5	Being criticized scares me a lot.	09 15.0%	23 38.3%	10 16.7%	14 23.3%	04 6.7%	29.50 0 <sup>b</sup>	.000
6	Fear of embarrassment causes me to avoid doing things or speaking to people	06 10%	26 43.3%	17 28.3%	08 13.3%	03 5.0%	19.16 7 <sup>b</sup>	.000
7	Sweating in front of people causes me distress.	20 33.3%	12 20%	19 31.7%	06 10%	03 5.0%	19.16 7 <sup>b</sup>	.001
8	I avoid going to parties	22 36.7%	19 31.7%	04 6.7%	09 15%	06 10%	21.50 0 <sup>b</sup>	.000
9	I avoid activities in which I am the center of attention	25 41.7%	13 21.7%	13 21.7%	07 11.7%	0.2 3.3%	24.66 7 <sup>b</sup>	.000
10	Talking to strangers	22 22%	38 38%	10 10%	19 19%	11 11%	25.50 0 <sup>a</sup>	.000

	scares me							
11	I avoid having to give speeches	13 21.7%	23 38.3%	14 23.3%	08 13.3%	02 3.2%	20.16 7 <sup>b</sup>	.000
12	I would do anything to avoid being criticized	16 26.7%	24 40.0%	12 20%	07 11.7%	1 1.7%	25.50 0 <sup>b</sup>	.000
13	Heart palpitations bother me when I am around people	17 28.3%	16 26.7%	19 31.7%	04 6.7%	04 6.7%	18.16 7 <sup>b</sup>	.001
14	I am afraid of doing things when people might be watching	16 26.7%	15 25.0%	20 33.3%	07 11.7%	02 3.3%	17.83 3 <sup>b</sup>	.001
15	Being embarrassed or looking stupid is among my worst fears	09 15.0%	18 30.0%	20 33.3%	08 13.3%	05 8.3%	14.50 0 <sup>b</sup>	.006
16	I avoid speaking to anyone in authority	29 48.3%	11 18.3%	12 20%	04 6.7%	04 6.7%	34.83 3 <sup>b</sup>	.000
17	Trembling or shaking in front of others is distressing to me	10 16.7%	17 28.3%	24 40.0%	08 13.3%	01 1.7%	24.30 5 <sup>b</sup>	.000

### Analysis of Data

- Table no 4.1 indicates that 26(43%) of the respondents gave response to not at all, 22(36%) of them gave a little bit, 22(18.3%) agreed to somewhat whereas only 01(1.7%) agreed to very much whereas chi -square is 25.46 with p-value is 0.000 which is less than the significant value that is 0.05 hence the data is significant.

2. Table 4.2 indicates that 12(20%) of the respondents gave response to not at all, 25(41.7%) of them agreed to a little bit, 11(18.3%) responded to somewhat, 09(15.0%) to very much, and 03(5%) of the respondents gave response to extremely. The value of Chi-square is 21.667 with P-Value 0.000, which is less than the significant that is 0.05, therefore, the data is significant.
3. Table 4.3 indicates that about 32(53.3%) of the respondents gave response to not at all, 15(25%) responded to A little bit, 08(13.3%) agreed to Somewhat, 03(5%) agreed to very much and 02(3.3%) responded to extremely to the given statement. The value of Chi-Square is 50.500 with the P-Value 0.000 which is less than the significant value that is 0.05. So, the data is significant.
4. Table 4.4 indicates that 17(28.3%) of the respondents, responded to not at all, 20(33.3%) gave response to a little bit, 13(21.7%) agreed to somewhat, 08(13.3%) respondents gave response to very much and 02(3.3%) responded to extremely to the statement. The value of Chi-Square is 17.167 with a P-Value .002 that is less than the significant value which is 0.05 hence the data is significant.
5. Table 4.5 indicates that 09(15%) of the respondents responded to not at all, 23(38.3 %) agreed to a little bit, 10(16.7%) gave response to somewhat 14(23.3%) responded to very much and 04(6.7%) agreed to extremely to the given statement. The value of Chi-Square is 29.500 with P-Value which is less than the significant value that is 0.05. So, the data is significant
6. Table 4.6 indicates that 06(10%) of the respondents gave response to not at all, 26(43.3%) responded to a little bit, 17(28.3%) agreed to somewhat, 08(13.3%) responded to very much while 03(5%) responded to extremely to the given statement. The value of Chi-Square is 19.167 with P-Value 0.000 which is less than the significant value that is 0.05. So, the data is significant.
7. Table 4.7 indicates that 20(33.3%) of the respondents agreed to not at all 12(20.0%) responded to a little bit, 19(31.7%) gave response to somewhat, 06(10.0%) of the respondents responded to very much and 03(5%) agreed to extremely to the statement. The value of Chi-Square is 19.167 with P-Value 0.001 which is less than the significant value that is 0.05; therefore, the data is significant.
8. Table 4.8 indicates that 22(36.7%) of the respondents, responded to not at all, 19(31.7%) responded to a little bit,



04(6.7%) agreed to somewhat, 09(15.0%) responded to very much and 06(10.0%) gave response to extremely to the statement, whereas the value of Chi-Square with P-value 0.000 which is less than the significant value that is 0.05 so the data is significant.

9. Table 4.9 shows that 25(47.1%) of the respondents responded to not at all, 13(21.7%) responded to a little bit, 13(21.7%) agreed to somewhat, 07(11.7%) gave response to very much and 02(3.3%) responded to extremely to the statement. The value of Chi-Square is 24.667 with P-Value 0.000 which is less than the significant value so the data is significant.
10. Table 4.10 indicates that 24(40.0%) of the respondents gave response to Not at all, 20(33.3%) responded to A little bit, 09(15.0%) agreed to somewhat, 03(5.0%) gave response to very much and 04(6.7%) responded to extremely to the statement whereas the value of Chi-Square is 30.167 with P-Value 0.000 which is less than the significant value 0.05. Therefore the data is significant.
11. Table 4.11 shows that 13(21.7%) of the respondents, responded to not at all, 23(38.35%) responded to a little bit, 14(23.3%) agreed to somewhat, 08(13.3%) responded to very much and 02(3.3%) gave response to extremely to the statement. The value of Chi-Square is 20.167 with P-Value 0.000 that is less than the significant value 0.05 hence the data is significant.
12. Table 4.12 indicates that 16(26.7%) of the respondents, responded to not at all, 24(40.0%) responded to a little bit, 12(20.0%) agreed to somewhat, 07(11.7%) responded to very much and 01(1.7%) gave response to extremely to the statement. The value of Chi-Square is 25.500 with P-Value 0.000 which is less than the significant value that is 0.05. So, the data is significant.
13. Table 4.13 indicates that 17(28.3%) of the respondents responded to not at all, 16(26.7%) responded to a little bit, 19(31.7%)5 agreed to somewhat, 04(6.7%) gave response to very much and 04(6.7%) responded to extremely to the statement. The value of Chi-Square is 18.167 with P-Value 0.001 which is less than the significant value that is 0.05 hence the data is significant.
14. Table 4.14 indicates that 16(26.7%) of the respondents responded to not at all, 15 (25.0%) responded to a little bit, 20(33.3%) agreed to somewhat, 07(11.7%) gave response to very much and 02(3.3%) responded to extremely to the

- statement. The value of Chi-Square is 17.833 with P-Value 0.001, which is less than the significant value that is 0.05; therefore, the data is significant.
15. Table 4.15 shows that 09(15.0%) of the respondents, responded to not at all, 18(30.0%) responded to a little bit, 20(33.3%) agreed to somewhat, 08(13.3%) gave response to very much and 05(8.3%) responded to extremely to the statement, whereas the value of Chi-Square is 14.500 with a P-Value 0.006 which is less than the significant value that is 0.05. So, the data is significant.
  16. Table 4.16 indicates that 29(48.3%) of the respondents, responded to not at all, 11(18.35%) responded to a little bit, 12(20.0%) agreed to somewhat, 04(6.7%) responded to very much and 04(6.7%) gave response to extremely to the statement. The value of Chi-Square is 34.833 with a P-Value 0.000 which is less than the significant value 0.05 hence the data is significant.
  17. Table 4.17 shows that 10(16.7%) of the respondents, responded to not at all, 17(28.3%) responded to a little bit, 24(40.0%) agreed to somewhat, 08(13.3%) gave response to very much and 01(1.7%) responded to extremely to the statement. The value of Chi-Square is 24.305 with a P-Value .000 which is less than the significant value 0.05. So, the data is significant.

**Analysis**

Table- 4.1 shows that responses of all items are significant which less than 0.05 is. It means that all these statements support the objective No.1. So, the  $H_{01}$  is rejected.

**Hypothesis- 2**

$H_{02}$  There is no effect of social anxiety disorder on students' academic performance

Model	R	Adjusted Square	R F	Sig.	
1	.062	.40	-.017	.023	.004

**Analysis**

To test the hypothesis regression analysis was applied. Result of hypothesis showed that R Value is .62 (62%),  $R^2$  is .40 overall

probability value is .004. So, there is no effect of social anxiety disorder on students’ academic performance.  $H_{02}$  is accepted.

**Hypothesis-3**

**$H_{03}$  There is no significant difference between social anxiety and students’ academic achievement.**

**Table 4.19: Levene’s test was used for showing the difference between the results of two groups**

Marks	N	Mean	St.D	T	P-value
Low	40	1.3475	.71754	.791	.333
High	20	1.2000	.59824	.841	

**Analysis**

Table 4.19 revealed the total number of students with low and high GPAs. The mean scores were 1.3475 and 1.2000 respectively, and standard deviation was .71754 and .59824 respectively. The Levene’s T- test model was used for two groups of data i.e students with high and low GPAs. The result shows that the P-value is .333 which is insignificant because it is more than the significant value of 0.05. Hence the result showed that social anxiety has no effect students’ results. So, the  $H_{02}$  is accepted.

**Conclusion**

It was concluded from the current study that students who suffered from social anxiety failed to accept the challenges of life. The fear of being criticized, facing audience, attending and participation in social events, meeting with strangers, lack of confidence made these students anxious and stressed. The current study also reported that although social anxiety exists among students and there is association between social anxiety and academic achievement but it has no significant effect on the GPAs of the students. Hence the findings of this study are in contrast to the other results of other research papers but the findings of this study are in conformity to the study conducted by Strahan (1998) and Rizwan (2015). They also conducted a study to investigate the impact of social anxiety on the academic achievement of students but the results of their study also reported that social anxiety has no effect on the academics of students.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

1. Government and Ministry of Education may pay attention to psychiatric disorders of students, in order to introduce compulsory guidance services at all levels of education.
2. Each educational institution may be provided with a professional guide or counselee as well as psychologist.
3. Seminars regarding the awareness of guidance and counseling may also be arranged for teachers so that they can in turn support students having psychological issues.
4. Government may also provide funds to professional organizations to carry out orientation programs in our educational institutions.
5. Parents-teachers and counselee meetings may be arranged regarding the mental issues of students.

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