



The Relationship Between Social Anxiety and Self-Esteem Among University Students

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Abstract

The investigation compares effects of social anxiousness on young people's self-esteem. The work identifies various parameters which contribute to the onset as well as intensification of social anxiety, including social comparison, interactions with peers, and academic pressures within a university setting. These factors play a significant role in shaping students' psychological well-being and may influence their perception of self-worth. The primary purpose of present research work for examine comparison between social anxiety and self-esteem in individuals aged 18 - 25 years (N=155), who were purposively selected for this study. Participants completed the Multidimensional Anxiety Questionnaire and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, which respectively evaluate influence of social interactions on anxiety levels as well as measure an individual's self-worth. The selection of these standardized tools ensured the reliability and validity of the data collected. Data analysis was conducted, employing descriptive statistics and correlation matrix analysis. The outcomes demonstrate that among college students, self-esteem, along with social anxiety, are statistically significantly correlated negatively. This study suggests that recognizing the connection between social anxiety and self-esteem can support the fabrication of determined mental health strategies in universities. Improving students' sense of self-worth might prove essential for lowering their fear of social situations.

INTRODUCTION

The association among social anxiety as well self-esteem is complicated since both conditions influence and exacerbate one another. Because low self-esteem fosters poor self-perceptions and anxieties of being judged, it can cause and maintain social anxiety. Social anxiety may be made worse by cognitive distortions that are typical among those with poor self-esteem, such as catastrophizing or unfavorable self-comparisons. On the other hand, avoidance behaviours that restrict constructive social connections and reinforcement can be another way that social anxiety lowers self-esteem. Feelings of inadequacy can be reinforced by negative experiences, such as rejection, which feeds a vicious cycle in which one situation makes the other worse. Targeted interventions, such as social skills training to enhance relationships, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) to address negative thoughts, and techniques to increase self-esteem and self-compassion, are usually necessary to break this pattern.

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Social Anxiety

A psychiatric ailment known as social anxiety disorder causes a person to feel very anxious or afraid in social situations. This fear often stems from the concern of being judged, embarrassed, or rejected by others. Unlike occasional shyness, social anxiety can disrupt daily life, making it difficult to speak in groups, meet new people, or even carry out simple activities in public. The condition commonly begins during the teenage years and may continue into adulthood if left unaddressed. Over time, it can negatively impact education, career growth, and relationships, leading to feelings of isolation and reduced confidence in social interactions.

Numerous variables, such as personality qualities, prior experiences, and genetic history, might impact the development of social anxiety. Social phobias may also develop as a result of childhood experiences like bullying, teasing, or receiving a lot of criticism. People with this condition often expect negative outcomes in social situations and may become overly self-conscious. This can lead them to avoid certain settings, which further deepens their fear and limits their ability to build social confidence over time.

Although social anxiety can be distressing, it is a manageable condition with the right treatment and support. Psychological therapies like Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) are particularly helpful, as they focus on changing unhelpful thinking patterns and gradually facing feared situations. Other approaches, such as exposure exercises, relaxation techniques, and sometimes medication, can also be effective. Early support from therapists, teachers, and family members serves a crucial part in recovery. Promoting awareness and understanding of social anxiety encourages those affected to seek help, empowering them to improve their social skills and lead more confident, connected lives.

Self-Esteem

A sense of self-esteem is a person's overall view of their own value and significance. It is essential in determining how people see themselves as well as communicating with their surroundings. While low self-esteem often results in self-doubt, nervousness, and psychological suffering, high self-esteem is associated with self-assurance, adaptability, and a positive attitude toward life. During young adulthood, particularly in university settings, students face numerous challenges that can impact their self-esteem, including academic pressure, peer

comparison, and identity development. Understanding self-esteem during this stage is essential, as it significantly affects students' academic performance, mental health, and social relationships.

Numerous elements, encompassing interactions with other people, cultural norms, family dynamics, and individual accomplishments, affect how self-esteem is formed. Early experiences of acceptance or criticism can shape one's self-view, and these perceptions often persist into adulthood. For university students, shifting social environments, performance expectations, and growing independence may either enhance or harm their sense of self. Positive reinforcement and supportive relationships often contribute to higher self-esteem, whereas frequent failure or rejection can lower it. Because self-esteem is closely tied to emotional well-being, monitoring as well as fostering healthy self-perception among students is a key concern for educators and mental health professionals.

Self-esteem is not only a psychological concept but also a predictor of various behaviours and emotional responses. Youngsters who are having more self-esteem are more often seen to take charge, respond positively to criticism, and preserve positive connections. Nevertheless, those who have poor self-esteem might struggle to cope with obstacles and suffer from worry and despair. Research into self-esteem helps in identifying students who are at risk and in developing preventive measures to support their mental health. As self-esteem influences academic motivation, social participation, and emotional resilience, studying it in the context of higher education is essential for promoting student success and well-being.

Li et al. (2023) intended to look into the correlation among social anxiety and low self-esteem in Chinese high school students, as well as mediating function of fear of receiving a poor grade. The research found that social anxiety, fear of a negative appraisal, as well as inferiority complexes were significantly positively correlated. The effect of four social anxiety subscales—personality, academic aptitude, physical ability, and self-esteem—was mediated by the dread of receiving a poor assessment. Nevertheless, neither the social dependency scales nor the total subscale scores showed this mediation. Therefore, social anxiety may be influenced by elements like self-worth, academic achievement, physical characteristics, and attractiveness via the dread of receiving a poor judgment.

Murad & Suleiman (2020) identified various behaviours associated with social anxiety disorder, including fear and panic, which impact mood and self-esteem. Main objectives of their research were to investigate the association between college and university students' self-esteem and social anxiety. The findings present an unfavorable correlation between the two dimensions, with subjects reporting high self-esteem and low social anxiety. With objective of reducing stress and social anxiety and boosting young people's self-esteem, the authors suggested holding workshops as well as seminars at the start of every year.

Khan (2022) shows that this study explored how social anxiety relates to self-esteem among university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Malakand division. Using a quantitative correlational approach, data were collected from 139 randomly chosen participants through two validated tools—the Students' Social Anxiety Questionnaire (SSAQ) and the Students' Self-Esteem Questionnaire (SSQ). Statistical analysis using SPSS indicated that while students displayed moderate social anxiety, their self-esteem levels were relatively high. Social anxiety negatively affects the self-esteem of students. The research concluded that many students struggle with social interactions, suggesting that families and educators should promote social engagement and extracurricular participation to improve confidence and communication skills.

In a summarized form, students at colleges and universities' social and emotional experiences are greatly influenced by the psychological concepts of social anxiety and self-esteem, which are closely interconnected. As students navigate academic pressures and social environments, challenges in self-perception and fear of judgment can influence their overall well-being. Understanding the dynamics between these two variables is essential, as it can provide a clearer picture of the struggles faced by students in higher education. With the objective to contribute to a more comprehensive knowledge of how psychological variables affect the college experience and personal growth, this study aims to evaluate characteristics of this link.

Research Methodology

Aim

To study "the relationship between social anxiety and self-esteem among college students.

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between social anxiety and self-esteem.
2. To study the comparison of social anxiety and self-esteem on the basis of gender and family.

Hypotheses

H₁: There is a significant relationship between social anxiety and self-esteem.

H₂: There is significant difference in men and women on social anxiety.

H₃: There is significant difference in men and women on self-esteem.

H₄: There is significant difference in joint and nuclear family on social anxiety.

H₅: There is significant difference in joint and nuclear family" on self-esteem.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was utilized to select a total of 155 university students, including both males and females. This approach was chosen to ensure that the participants specifically met the study's criteria, enabling the researcher to gather relevant, detailed, and meaningful data aligned with the research aims and objectives.

Inclusion criteria:

- Individuals aged between 18 – 25 years.
- Individuals who can read and comprehend English as well as know how to text through phone or any other device.
- Both males and females.
- Individuals who are college going students.

Exclusion criteria:

- Individuals below 18 or above 25 years.
- Individuals who cannot read and comprehend basic English.
- Individuals who are not college going students.

Research Design

The alliance among social anxiety along with self-esteem was examined using correlational study method. Furthermore, the independent t-test has been utilized to distinguish social anxiety as well as self-esteem by sexual orientation and family.

Data Analysis

Over the course of ten days, 155 individuals provided quantitative data. Data analysis and scoring were done using SPSS and MS Excel.

Tools Used

1. Multidimensional Anxiety Questionnaire (MAQ)

M. Reynolds in 1999 developed MAQ, which evaluates social anxiety. The MAQ includes 40 items with four response options: "almost never," "sometimes," "a lot of the time," and "almost all the time," and is divided into five subsections: a total score, worry, fear, social phobia, negative affectivity, and physiological panic. MAQ demonstrates strong reliability, with test-retest and Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.96 and 0.95, respectively. Validity studies further confirm its clinical effectiveness and diagnostic accuracy at the designated cutoff score.

2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Questionnaire (RSES)

Morris Rosenberg, in 1965, developed RSES, which evaluates self-esteem through a series of ten statements—five positive and five negative. Respondents indicate their agreement with each statement on a four-point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The scale demonstrates strong reliability, with an internal consistency of 0.77 and a minimum coefficient of reproducibility of 0.90. Alpha coefficients from various studies range from 0.72 to 0.87, reflecting robust reliability across diverse populations. Test-retest reliability was recorded at 0.85 over two weeks and 0.63 over seven months.

Ethical Considerations

Using Google Forms, volunteers gave their knowledge of consent while maintaining the confidentiality of the results.

Statistical Techniques

To achieve research goals and test hypotheses, descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, and correlation analysis were utilized.

RESULT

In order to compare social anxiety, including self-esteem, the study's results are presented in this part using correlational evaluation. Furthermore, the association between social anxiety and self-esteem by gender and family type was evaluated using an independent samples t-test.

Table 1: Correlations

		MAQ TOTAL	RSE TOTAL
MAQ	Pearson Correlation	1	-.175*
TOTAL	Sig. (two-tailed)		.029
	N	155	155
RSE	Pearson Correlation	-.175*	1
TOTAL	Sig. (two-tailed)	.029	
	N	155	155

*. At threshold of 0.05, the correlation has been considered significant (two-tailed).

Table 1 shows a statistically noticeable adverse association among social anxiety (MAQ Total) and self-esteem (RSE Total), $r = -0.175$, $p = .029$, which suggests that as levels of social anxiety increase, self-esteem tends to decrease slightly among university students. Although strength of the relationship is weak, significance value determines that correlation is unlikely to take place by chance. This finding supports the idea that higher social anxiety may be linked to lower self-worth, highlighting the importance of addressing both variables when designing mental health interventions for young adults in academic settings.

Table 2 : Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.						Lower	Upper
MAQ TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	2.8 56	.093	3.333	153	.001	10.848	3.255	4.418	17.278
	Equal variances not assumed.			3.637	112.52	.000	10.848	2.983	4.939	16.757

RSE TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	.005	.943	.008	153	.994	.003	.333	-.656	.661
	Equal variances not assumed.			.008	92.99	.994	.003	.329	-.652	.657

Table 2 demonstrates outcomes of independent samples t-test comparing genders on social anxiety (MAQ Total) with self-esteem (RSE Total). For MAQ Total, a notable difference was found among the two groups, $t(153) = 3.333$, $p = .001$, with Levene's test indicating that equal variances can be considered ($p = .093$). Mean difference had 10.85, with a 95% confidence interval ranging 4.42-17.28, suggesting a meaningful

variation in social anxiety levels between groups. In contrast, for RSE Total, no significant difference was observed, $t(153) = 0.008$, $p = .994$, and Levene's test confirmed equal variances ($p = .943$). Mean difference was negligible (0.003), with the confidence interval ranging -0.656 - 0.661. These observations demonstrate that while the groups differ notably in social anxiety, their self-esteem levels are statistically similar.

Table 3: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
MAQ TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	.179	.673	.932	153	.353	3.014	3.235	-3.377	9.405
	Equal variances not assumed.			.960	124.64	.339	3.014	3.141	-3.202	9.230
RSE TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	5.170	.024	-.722	153	.472	-.231	.320	-.863	.401
	Equal variances not assumed.			-.664	89.222	.508	-.231	.348	-.922	.460

Table 3 illustrates outputs of an independent samples t-test evaluating family type differences in social anxiety (MAQ Total) and self-esteem (RSE Total). MAQ Total, difference among the 2 groups had not statistically notable, $t(153) = 0.932$, $p = .353$, with Levene's test confirming equal variances ($p = .673$). Mean difference was 3.01, as well as the 95% confidence interval ranged from -3.38 to 9.41, which is recommending no meaningful change in social anxiety among the groups. For RSE Total, results also demonstrate no notable difference, $t(153) = -0.722$, $p = .472$, though Levine's test suggested a violation of equal variances ($p = .024$). Still, using the adjusted values, the mean difference remained small (-0.231)

alongside 95% confidence interval from -0.863-0.401. These findings indicate that the groups did not significantly differ in either self-esteem or social anxiety levels.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between social anxiety and self-esteem among university students aged 18 to 25 years and revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between the two variables. This finding suggests that students with higher levels of social anxiety tend to have lower self-esteem, supporting the notion that self-perception and social fears are closely intertwined.

Individuals who fear social judgment often internalize negative beliefs about themselves, which, in turn, diminishes their sense of self-worth. These results are consistent with the findings of Murad and Suleiman (2020), who also observed an inverse association between social anxiety and self-esteem among university students. Their study highlighted that students with high self-esteem experience lower social anxiety and recommended the implementation of workshops and seminars to enhance self-confidence and emotional resilience.

The gender-based analysis in the present research demonstrated significant differences in social anxiety, with one gender reporting higher anxiety levels than the other. However, no significant gender difference was observed in self-esteem, indicating that both male and female students perceive their self-worth similarly despite variations in anxiety levels. This finding is further supported by Khan (2022), who found that while university students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa displayed moderate social anxiety, their self-esteem levels remained high and did not differ significantly across genders. This suggests that gender may influence the expression of anxiety more strongly than it affects self-esteem, possibly due to differing social expectations and coping mechanisms among males and females. Additionally, no significant differences were found between students from nuclear and joint families in either social anxiety or self-esteem, implying that family type may not play a major role in shaping these psychological constructs during young adulthood.

Overall, the findings emphasize that academic and social pressures within university settings significantly affect students' emotional well-being. Universities should integrate preventive mental health strategies, including counselling sessions, social skills training, and peer support programs, to foster self-esteem and reduce social anxiety. Strengthening students' confidence and coping mechanisms can contribute to healthier psychological adjustment and improved academic and social functioning.

CONCLUSION

This investigation investigates the correlation among young people's self-esteem along social anxiety throughout the age group 18-25 years old. Utilizing Pearson correlation, the research identifies the adverse involvement among social anxiety and self-esteem. It indicates that those who are "suffering from social anxiety also have poor self-esteem. The

outcomes of independent t-test show that although there is no noticeable gender difference in self-esteem, and the prevalence of social anxiety varies significantly by gender. Outcomes of the independent t-test demonstrate, there is no statistically notable variance in family type between social anxiety and self-esteem.

Limitations

The typical age bracket had been constrained. Compared to earlier studies, the sample size (SS) of 155 was very small, which could have reduced its relationship. According to the findings, those who having greater levels of social anxiety also show lower self-esteem. Nevertheless, there isn't enough solid data in this research to back up this claim.

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