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Relationship between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

Anxiety is an important psychological phenomenon which influences everyone's life. In other words everyone experience some sort of anxiety in a day to day life. Many people experience anxiety when they speak in front of public. For most people especially, students these feelings of anxiety start before they begin to speak and continue throughout the speech but subside immediately after the speech ends. Some may feel only slightly nervous whereas another may feel faded and nauseated. Like anxiety, fear of negative evaluation also one of an important psychological factors which negatively influences performance of students. With this background, the present study attempted to understand the relationship between these psychological factors of students deeply. A study was done at VIT University-Chennai among 64 students studying in different branches of engineering. Samples of the study are both hostel dwellers and day scholars. Of the 64 students, 33 were female and 31 were male, who were selected through simple random sampling method and survey research design was adopted. The tools used in this study are Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE; Watson & Friend, 1969) and State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Speilberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg& Jacobs, 1983). The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. In other words the fear of negativism and State Trait Anxiety correlated highly positively.

Keywords: *Fear of negativity evaluation, Anxiety, State Trait Anxiety, Engineering students.*

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) was first defined by Watson and Friend in 1969 as "apprehension about other's evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively." Anxiousness, submissiveness, and social avoidance are all related to fear of negative evaluation. People who score high on the FNE scale are apprehensive about what others may think about them. High FNE subjects are also more responsive to situational factors. Social anxiety is, in part, a response to perceived negative evaluation by others. Whereas FNE is related to the dread of being evaluated unfavorably when participating in a social situation, social anxiety is defined as a purely emotional reaction to this type of social situation. When patients with social phobia evaluate their relationships, they are

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extremely fearful of negative evaluation and express high degrees of FNE. Anxiety is a state of inner restlessness often described as "nervousness." There are many symptoms which clearly describe anxiety such as Worry, jitteriness, sweating, an increased heart rate, rapid breathing and other feelings. A long-held and still well-known distinction between "state" and "trait" anxiety allows anxiety can be understood in two ways: as an impermanent emotional state that nearly everyone experiences in day to day life and as a consistent personality attribute. Some people with a high level of trait anxiety experience anxious feelings in many different situations that do not evoke anxiety in most people. State anxiety describes the experience of unpleasant feelings when provoked with specific situations, demands or a particular object or event. Generally, State anxiety arises when the person makes a mental assessment of some type of threat with certain stimuli or situation. When the object or situation that is perceived as threatening goes away, the person no longer experiences anxiety. Thus, state anxiety refers to a temporary condition in response to some perceived threat. Like state anxiety, trait anxiety also arises in response to an outward threat, but it differs in level of its intensity, duration and situations in which it occurs. Trait anxiety refers to the differences between people in terms of their tendency to experience state anxiety in response to the anticipation of threatening situations. People with a high level of trait anxiety experience more intense degrees of state anxiety to specific situations than people with low level of trait anxiety.

In a paper titled, Social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and the detection of negative emotion in others, by Emma C. Winton, David M. Clark,Robert J. Edelmann, Overall the results suggest that high social anxiety subjects have a bias towards identifying others' emotional expressions as negative in the absence of an enhanced ability to discriminate between different emotional states in others. So a highly anxious person frequently reads others emotions in general in the negative light.

Authors Kocovski, N.L.; Endler, N.S. in their paper, Social anxiety, self-regulation, and fear of negative evaluation, find that individuals higher in social anxiety were lower on the expectancy to achieve goals, lower on self-esteem and lower on the frequency on self-reinforcement. Multiple regression analyses revealed that expectancy to achieve goals, fear of negative evaluation, and public self-consciousness accounted for 33 per cent of the variance in social anxiety. This again emphasises that FNE and Anxiety are strongly correlated.

METHOD

Participants
The sample comprised of 64 participants (31 males, 33 females) in the age group of 19-21 years. Participants were engineering students and collected from simple random sampling technique.
Research Methodology

The study adopted mixed method - both qualitative and quantitative methods were simultaneously used to collect and analyse data. Quantitative methods were used to measure state

trait anxiety and fear of negative evaluation of students. Interview was conducted to understand the nature and sources of anxiety. In an interview open ended questions were asked in order to confirm the reliability of the data.

Hypotheses
1. There is no significant gender difference in State Trait Anxiety of Students.

2. There is no significant gender difference in Fear of Negative Evaluation of Students.
3. There is no significant difference between Hostellers and Day Scholars of Students in State Trait Anxiety.
4. There is no significant difference between Hostellers and Day Scholars of Students in Fear of Negative Evaluation.
5. There is no significant relationship between State Trait Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation.

Questionnaire and Statistics Used
The Fear of Negative Evaluation scale (FNE; Watson & Friend, 1969) is a 30 item self-report measure in a yes/no answer format that has been designed to measure a core component of social phobia, namely the degree to which an individual fears being negatively evaluated by others. Sample items are: "I feel very upset when I commit some social error", *and "I worry very little about what others may think of me".* The scale has good reliability and validity.

The State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Speilberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg& Jacobs, 1983) pulse is an 18 item measure of anxiety using scale format. The scale ranges from 1 to 7 where 1 is 'Almost Never' and 7 is 'Almost Always'. Sample items are: "I feel satisfied with myself", and *"I wish I could be as happy as others seem to be".* The score of STAI ranges from 18 to 126.

Group statistics like mean, standard deviation and standard error mean were calculated for both the genders. Then T-Test was performed. Finally Correlation between FNE and STAI scores was performed and a significant correlation was found between the two.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Summary Table: N, Mean, SD scores of Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) and State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) with regard to demographic details.

Demographic Details		N	State Trait Anxiety		Fear of Negative Evaluation	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Gender	Male	31	56.323	16.4993	10.806	6.4571
	Female	33	60.455	13.7865	13.242	5.6460
Hosteller/Day Scholar	Hosteller	35	58.396	15.6578	12.528	6.0307
	Day Scholars	29	58.727	14.3123	9.818	6.3846

From the demographic table above, it was observed that female students (STAI mean score = 60.45, SD=13.78; FNE mean score = 13.242, SD=5.64) reported higher levels of both State Trait Anxiety Inventory and Fear of Negative Evaluation than male students (STAI mean score = 56.32, SD=16.49; FNE mean score = 10.80, SD=6.45).

From the table, it was the day scholars (STAI mean score = 58.72,SD=14.31; FNE mean score = 9.81, SD=6.38) that showed more State Trait Anxiety Inventory but showed less Fear of Negative Evaluation compare to hostellers (STAI mean score = 58.39, SD=6.38; FNE mean score = 12.52, SD=6.03).

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant gender difference in State Trait Anxiety of Students.

Table 1: Mean, SD, t-value on State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) across gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	't'-value	Sig
Male	31	56.323	16.4993	1.090	0.280
Female	33	60.455	13.7865		

The above table shows difference in STAI scores between the two genders. The result clearly indicates that there is no significant difference in social anxiety between male and female. Hence the hypothesis stating that "There is no significant gender difference in State Trait Anxiety of Students" is verified based on available evidences. The mean STAI score of female participants is

slightly higher than male participants which indicate that female participants have slightly higher anxiety than male participants. The reason for anxiety being higher in female can be because of the fact that females are subject to more scrutiny in a patriarchal society.

Hypothesis 2:
There is no significant gender difference in Fear of Negative Evaluation of Students.
Table 2: Mean, SD, t-value on Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) across gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	't'-value	Sig
Male	31	10.806	6.457	1.609	0.133
Female	33	13.242	5.646		

The above table shows difference in FNE scores between the two genders. The result clearly indicates that there is no significant difference in fear of negative evaluation between male and female. Hence the hypothesis stating that "There is no significant gender difference in Fear of Negative Evaluation of Students" is accepted. The mean FNE score of female participants is slightly higher than male participants which indicate that female participants have slightly higher fear of being rejected than male participants.

Hypothesis 3:
There is no significant difference between Hostellers and Day Scholars of Students in State Trait Anxiety.
Table 3: Mean, SD, t-value on State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) between Hostellers and Day scholars.

Hosteller/Day Scholar	N	Mean	SD	't'-value	Sig
Hosteller	35	58.396	15.657	0.65	0.948
Day Scholar	29	58.727	14.312		

The above table shows difference in STAI scores between the hostel dwellers and day scholars. The results clearly indicate that there is no significant difference in social anxiety between hostellers and day scholars. Hence the hypothesis stating that "There is no significant difference between Hostellers and Day Scholars of Students in State Trait Anxiety" is not accepted. The mean STAI score of day scholars is slightly higher than that of hostellers which indicates that day scholars have slightly higher anxiety than hostellers. The reason for anxiety being higher in day scholars can be because of the long distance travel, responsibilities at home that put a strain on them. Economic crisis, diseases among family members also creates anxiety among day scholars

who come across these things regularly than hostellers who do not have such experiences. There is a chance for experiencing some sorts of violence from unknown people in society.

Hypothesis 4:
There is no significant difference between Hostellers and Day Scholars of Students in Fear of Negative Evaluation

Table 4: Mean, SD, t-value on Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) between Hostellers and Day scholars.

Hosteller/ Day Scholar	N	Mean	SD	't'-value	Sig
Hosteller	35	12.528	6.0307	1.343	0.184
Day Scholar	29	9.818	6.3846		

The above table shows difference in FNE scores between the hostel dwellers and day scholars. The results clearly indicate that there is no significant difference in social anxiety between hostellers and day scholars. Hence the hypothesis is not accepted. The mean FNE score of hostellers is slightly higher than day scholars which indicate that hostellers have slightly higher fear of rejection than day scholars. The reason for this maybe because of the fact that hostellers are surrounded with people of the same group, this leads to constant peer pressure. They may get intimidated by other students. They want to get accepted in groups of people they want to be with.

Hypothesis 5:
There is no significant relationship between State Trait Anxiety (STAI) and Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE).

Table 5: Correlation between State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE).

STAI State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI	N	Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)
	64	0.627^{**}

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It can be concluded from the table that FNE and STAI scores highly correlate with each other. Hence the hypothesis stating that "There is no significant relationship between State Trait Anxiety (STAI) and Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)." is not retained based on available evidence. The reason for this is probably because social anxiety is, in part, a response to perceived negative evaluation by others. When the individuals with social anxiety disorder perform badly in social situations and this poor social performance cause the observers to feel

negatively towards them. When people feel negatively about someone, they tell themselves that they are nothing like that person, and this belief and their negative feelings leads to the social rejection that we witness. Fear of rejection is one of the core problems for people with social anxiety disorder, but it's their anxious behaviour that is actually causing this to happen. We can find ways to help people with social anxiety disorder improve their outward social performance which could stop this vicious cycle. This is in accordance with the findings of Social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and the detection of negative emotion in others, by Emma C. Winton, David M. Clark,Robert J. Edelmann.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the table 6 that FNE and STAI scores highly correlate with each other. When the individuals with social anxiety disorder perform badly in social situations and this poor social performance cause the observers to feel negatively towards them. When people feel negatively about someone, they tell themselves that they are nothing like that person, and this belief and their negative feelings leads to the social rejection that we witness. Fear of rejection is one of the core problems for people with social anxiety disorder, but it's their anxious behaviour that is actually causing this to happen. We can find ways to help people with social anxiety disorder improve their outward social performance which could stop this vicious cycle.

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