

## The role of self-consciousness in self-esteem and self-efficacy of undergraduate students

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### ABSTRACT

Self has been found to play a key role in psychological studies and is a central aspect for many mental health care practices in India as well as abroad. While acknowledging its importance, the current study aims to explore the role of self-consciousness in self-esteem and self-efficacy among undergraduate students living in the Noida region of Uttar Pradesh-India. Two hundred and nineteen undergraduate participants between eighteen to twenty-three years of age (mean = 19.50, SD = 0.93) residing in the Noida region for more than ten years were purposively selected for this study. Out of these, one hundred and twelve were females and, one hundred and seven were males. Results revealed that social anxiety as a construct of self-consciousness was significantly associated with self-esteem and self-efficacy. Consequently, social anxiety was a significant predictor of both self-esteem and self-efficacy. The current findings point out a strong relationship between social anxiety, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** *Self, Self-consciousness, Self-esteem, Self-efficacy, Undergraduates, Social anxiety*

The self is an aggregate of experiences, thoughts, ideas or feelings that a person has about himself or herself. As social beings, people mostly worry about their relationships with others and often neglect their relationship with their selves. People who have a better awareness of their self are more confident and self-reliant. They also form stronger relations and communicate efficiently (Eurich, T., 2018). Better awareness of the self makes people more productive, enhances acceptance and boosts self-development (Sutton, A., 2016). Focus on prevention and well-being rather than an emphasis on mental illnesses are the new idea of psychological interventions (Slade, M., 2010) and better knowledge along with an understanding of the self may be one way this can be done.

People always tend to evaluate themselves or make judgements about their worth and such value judgement is known as self-esteem. It is explained as the evaluative component of the self. High levels of self-esteem are associated with an affirmative global evaluation whereas, lower self-esteem is associated with a more negative interpretation of the self (Baumeister,

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R. F., et. al, 2003). A study conducted on 80 university students to assess the relation between self-esteem and academic performance reported a significant relationship between the two variables. There was also a significant difference between the scores of male and female students (Arshad, M., et.al, 2015).

Another important psychological aspect self-efficacy can be explained as a belief an individual has in their abilities to regulate and organize their actions to achieve a certain goal (Hui, S. K. M., 2012). It influences the choices of people, their efforts and also their persistence (Schunk, D. H., 1991). A strong sense of self-efficacy in people has been associated with being less fearful in life. A study conducted on 102 people with chronic lower back pain revealed that people who had low levels of self-efficacy had heightened pain-related fear and were more likely to experience pain and disability (Urmston, M., et.al, 2006).

Besides self-efficacy and self-esteem, another major aspect of self is self-consciousness. Fundamentally, self-consciousness is an individual's awareness of himself generally attributed to a constant tendency to direct attention inwards or outwards. A study suggests that people with high self-consciousness are more aware of how other people perceive them. Hence, they are more likely to respond negatively to any rejections (Fenigstein, A., 1979). Self-consciousness generally has three components- private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness and social anxiety. The private self-consciousness component refers to the awareness of one's innate thoughts, emotions and physical sensations. It is also associated with the propensity of introspecting the inner self. The public self-consciousness component was explained as a universal understanding or awareness of one's self as a social entity or object. It is also understood as the cognizance or recognition of an individual's physical appearance to other people. The social anxiety component, in this context, was explained as a certain level of uneasiness or discomfort in unfamiliar social settings (Carver, C. S., and Scheier, M. F., 1985). A study conducted to examine the relationship between strategic self-presentation and the different components of self-consciousness among introductory psychology students revealed that people high on public self-consciousness were likely to indulge in self-presentation patterns or strategies that led to approval instead of disapproval (Doherty, K and Schlenker, B. R., 1991).

### ***The Current Study***

Literature suggests that understanding different aspects of the self, enhances self-esteem, productivity and acceptance (Sutton, A., 2016) and a better knowledge of the self leads to improved relationships with other individuals (Mehl, M. R., 2013). Self-consciousness has also been observed to regulate an individual's position in group settings. People high on private self-consciousness display persistent distinctiveness in a group, while, people high on public self-consciousness are more likely to behave in a way that was more socially desirable (Abrams, D and Brown, R., 1989). Acknowledging the challenges for young undergraduates in today's world, we felt a necessity to address some research questions. Are these aspects of self-related to each other? Do the constructs of self-consciousness have an impact on self-efficacy and self-esteem? Hence, to study the relationship between the constructs of self-consciousness, self-efficacy and, self-esteem among undergraduate students, the following hypotheses were formulated-

1. There will be a significant association between private self-consciousness and self-esteem.
2. There will be a significant association between private self-consciousness and self-efficacy.

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3. There will be a significant association between public self-consciousness and self-esteem.
4. There will be a significant association between public self-consciousness and self-efficacy.
5. There will be a significant association between social anxiety with self-esteem.
6. There will be a significant association between social anxiety with self-efficacy.
7. Social anxiety as a predictor will have a significant impact on self-esteem and self-efficacy.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Sample*

Two hundred and nineteen undergraduate participants, residing in the Noida region of Uttar Pradesh-India for more than ten years, were purposively selected for this study. Out of these, one hundred and twelve were females and, one hundred and seven were males. The participants aged between eighteen to twenty-three (mean age = 19.50, SD = 0.93). The annual income of sixty-three participants was between four to five lakh per annum and, one hundred fifty-six participants were more than six lakh per annum.

### *Instruments*

*Three measures were used in this study,*

1. **Self-consciousness scale revised (SCS-R):** This twenty-two-item test was developed by Scheier and Carver (1985) for assessing individual differences in private self-consciousness and public self-consciousness. Only items eight and eleven are reverse scored. The response scale for the tool ranges from zero (not like me at all) to three (a lot like me). It includes three sub-scales namely, private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness and social anxiety. Cronbach's alphas were determined for each sub-scale. The obtained Cronbach's alphas were 0.75 for private self-consciousness, 0.84 for public self-consciousness and 0.79 for social anxiety. Test-retest correlations were 0.74 to 0.77 for all the three sub-scales.
2. **General self-efficacy scale (GSES):** This ten-item test was developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) for assessing the belief an individual has in his or her capability to respond to tough situations and obstacles. The response scale for the tool ranges from one (not at all true) to four (exactly true). Scores were calculated by computing the sum of all the ten items. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.76 to 0.90 for the tool.
3. **Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES):** This ten-item test developed by Rosenberg (1965), is a self-report instrument and evaluates an individual's self-esteem. It assesses, both, positive and negative emotions related to the self. The response scale ranges from one (Strongly Disagree) to four (Strongly Agree). Test-retest reliability, over two weeks, ranged between 0.85 and 0.88 for the test.

### *Data Analysis*

The data was analyzed with the help of SPSS statistics and SPSS AMOS. 'SPSS statistics' was used for the computation of Pearson's correlation coefficients and, 'SPSS AMOS' was used for computation of regression weights along with the preparation of the path diagram.

**RESULTS**

*Table 1 Coefficient of correlation between self-efficacy, self-esteem and, the dimensions of self-consciousness*

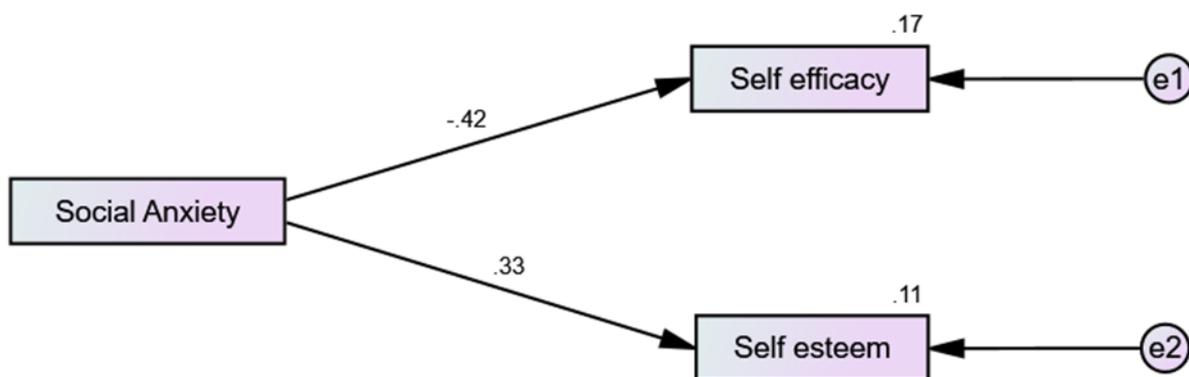
	1	2	3	4	5
1 Private self-consciousness		0.42**	0.15*	0.11	0.03
2 Public self-consciousness	0.42**		0.24**	0.02	0.06
3 Social anxiety	0.15**	0.24**		-0.41**	0.32**
4 Self-efficacy	0.11	0.02	-0.41**		-0.42**
5 Self-esteem	0.03	0.06	0.32**	-0.42**	

The coefficient of correlation between private self-consciousness and self-efficacy was not significant ( $r=0.11$ ,  $p>0.01,0.05$ ) and it was not significant between private self-consciousness and self-esteem too ( $r=0.03$ ,  $p>0.01,0.05$ ). The coefficient of correlation between public self-consciousness and self-efficacy was not significant ( $r=0.02$ ,  $p>0.01,0.05$ ) and it was not significant between public self-consciousness and self-esteem too ( $r=0.06$ ,  $p>0.01,0.05$ ). The coefficient of correlation between social anxiety and self-efficacy was significantly negative ( $r= -0.41$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) but, it was significantly positive ( $r= 0.32$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) between social anxiety and self-esteem.

*Table 2 Regression weights and squared multiple correlations of social anxiety as a predictor of self-efficacy and self-esteem*

Criterion:	Predictor: Social anxiety					
	B	S.E.	P	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\chi^2$
Self-efficacy	-0.506	0.075	***	-0.415	0.172	26.131
Self-esteem	0.442	0.086	***	0.327	0.107	(df=1, $p<0.01$ )

Table two represents the standardized and unstandardized regression weights along with the squared multiple correlations of social anxiety as the predictor of self-efficacy and self-esteem. Social anxiety as a predictor had about seventeen per cent impact on self-efficacy ( $R^2 = 0.172$ ) and about eleven per cent impact on self-esteem ( $R^2 = 0.107$ ). Figure one represents the path diagram or the model of social anxiety as a predictor of self-efficacy and self-esteem.



*Figure 1 Path diagram of social anxiety as a predictor of self-efficacy and self-esteem*

**DISCUSSION**

The current study illustrates a relationship between the constructs of self-consciousness, self-efficacy and, self-esteem among undergraduate students living in Noida region of Uttar Pradesh-India. Findings revealed that the private self-consciousness as a construct of self-consciousness was not significantly associated with self-efficacy and self-esteem. Hence our

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first hypothesis 'there will be a significant association between private self-consciousness and self-esteem' and the second hypothesis 'there will be a significant association between private self-consciousness and self-efficacy' were both rejected. Results further revealed that the public self-consciousness as a construct of self-consciousness was also not significantly associated with self-efficacy and self-esteem. Hence our third hypothesis 'there will be a significant association between public self-consciousness and self-esteem' and the fourth hypothesis 'there will be a significant association between public self-consciousness and self-efficacy' were both rejected as well.

Social anxiety as a construct of self-consciousness was however significantly associated with self-esteem and self-efficacy. Hence our fifth hypothesis 'there will be a significant association between social anxiety and self-esteem' and the sixth hypothesis 'there will be a significant association between public social anxiety and self-efficacy' were both accepted. This means that a lack of belief in global abilities could lead to difficulties in processing social situations thus explaining the strong correlation between general self-efficacy and social anxiety. Existing literature also provides evidence that both, general and social self-efficacy are strongly correlated with social anxiety (Davis III, T.E., et al., 2012). Similarly, self-esteem is an individual's sense of self-worth and present literature suggest that a person can have regular levels of self-esteem in other spheres of life and just endure social situations with fear or apprehension (De Jong, P.J., 2002).

Finally, social anxiety was a significant predictor of self-esteem and self-efficacy which confirms our seventh hypothesis 'social anxiety as a predictor will have a significant impact on self-esteem and self-efficacy'. A study conducted on thirty-two people diagnosed with social anxiety in Israel also suggested strong correlations between self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-criticism and social anxiety disorder (Lancu, L., et al., 2015). The dimension of social anxiety in the current study just referred to a sense of apprehension or uneasiness related to oneself in the social context. It must be noted that the sub-scale of social anxiety in the revised self-consciousness scale did not ascertain any diagnosis by undermining the complexity of a disorder like social anxiety disorder.

The current findings point out a strong relationship between social anxiety, self-esteem and self-efficacy. An in-depth, mixed study with a larger probability sampling procedure may help in providing very strong evidence. An individual's self consists of a multitude of aspects and the current research explored just a few important of these aspects. Mental health practitioners need to consider various other aspects for an overall state of mental well-being along with the treatment of mental illnesses.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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