

Self-esteem, self-consciousness and social anxiety among college students

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to find the effect of self-esteem and self-consciousness on social anxiety among college students. A sample of 170 students from age 18-25 was included in the study. For the present study Self-Consciousness Scale--(SCS-R) by Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S., Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) by Mattick and Clarke's (1998), and Rosenberg self-esteem scale were used to measure public and private self-consciousness, social anxiety and self-esteem respectively. The results showed a positive correlation between Public Self-consciousness and social anxiety, a negative correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety, and no correlation was found between Private self-consciousness and social anxiety.

Keywords: *Self-Esteem, Self-Consciousness, Social Anxiety*

Human is a social being and comes across social situations many times a day. College students especially have to interact with each other and thus are necessarily involved in social interaction. Most college students experience some degree of social anxiety on occasion and many suffer chronic anxiety across social situations coupled with a strong fear of negative evaluation. At this point, it becomes extremely important to find the cause for the same. Many pieces of research have shown the relationship between self-esteem and social anxiety and few have shown relation with self-consciousness. Therefore, this research aims to find a correlation between social anxiety with self-esteem and self-consciousness among Indian college students.

While most of us experience some level of social unease while speaking in public or presenting at meetings, social anxiety disorder (SAD) is defined as an excessive and persistent fear of acting in a way that will be embarrassing and humiliating. This fear is almost invariably provoked by the feared situations, which are avoided with severe distress, and interferes significantly with personal, occupational, and social functioning.

Self-esteem is one's own perception of his or her worth (Ziller, Hagey, Smith, & Long, 1969). Self-esteem is a person's overall opinion of oneself — how they feel about their abilities and limitations. When a person has healthy self-esteem, he/she feels good about self

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and they see themselves as deserving the respect of others. When they have low self-esteem, they put little value on their opinions and ideas and undermine it.

Arlin Cuncic in her blog *How Self-Esteem Affects Social Anxiety Disorder* (March, 2020) mentioned that Self-esteem is known to play role in general anxiety disorder as well as social anxiety disorder. Low self-esteem can put a person at higher risk of having social anxiety that also makes a person feel bad about themselves. In this way the negative cycle continues. If a person wants to work towards social anxiety, they must have a good hard look at how they view themselves. Low self-esteem can create anxiety that can reinforce negative self-image. They might constantly worry that they are not good enough which might result in social anxiety.

According to the Cambridge university dictionary, "Self-consciousness is feeling OD nervous or uncomfortable because you are worried about what people think about you or your actions." Having self-conscious thoughts in moderate amounts is healthy but having overwhelming self-conscious thoughts is not.

Public self-consciousness is associated with phenomena that involve perceptions of how other people view the self. Compared to people low in public self-consciousness, people high in public self-consciousness are more likely to conform to group pressure; they are more accurate in their perceptions of how others perceive them which might again result in social anxiety. Items on this subscale include "I'm concerned about my style of doing things" and "I'm concerned about the way I present myself." Persons high in public self-consciousness are concerned with their social appearance and the impression they give to others.

Private self-consciousness is the tendency to focus on oneself from a non-public point of view. And attend to components of self that are no longer effortlessly obvious to others, such as once thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Two sample items from the private self-consciousness subscale are "I reflect about myself a lot" and "I am generally attentive to my inner feelings." High private self-conscious persons are more aware of their feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and predispositions than are lows.

There are various researches done on different populations that go in line with the objective of this paper.

Mahmooda Fatima, Sadia Niazi, & Saba Ghayas in their paper *Relationship between Self-Esteem and Social Anxiety: Role of Social Connectedness as a Mediator*. A sample of 150 men and 150 women was drawn from Sargodha city. Data was collected using Urdu translated Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (Fatima, 2014), Urdu Translated Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (Shahid, 2012), and Urdu Translated Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Sardar, 1998), were used to measuring social connectedness, social anxiety, and self-esteem respectively. Results revealed that self-esteem significantly negatively predicted social anxiety.

Kinsella, Tara (2012) in their paper the relationship between social anxiety, self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and social networking among adolescents found no relationship between social networking, social anxiety, self-esteem, and satisfaction with life among the adolescent community. However, a tremendous negative correlation was determined between self-esteem and social anxiety ($r = -.390$, $p < 0.01$, two-tailed).

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Manoj Kumar L (2020) in his study Social Anxiety and Self Esteem among Nursing Students collected data from two prominent nursing colleges of Trivandrum district in the State of Kerala of 418 nursing students found no correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety among nursing students.

Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M. F., & Buss, A. H. in their paper Public and private self-consciousness studied public and private self-consciousness with 130 female and 82 male undergraduates found that Public Self-Consciousness correlated relatively with Social Anxiety, while the correlation of Private Self-Consciousness with Social Anxiety fluctuated around zero. Hope, D. A., & Heimberg, R. G. (2010) in their study Public and private self-consciousness and social phobia found public, not private, self-consciousness was generally related to social phobia.

Fredrik Saboonchi, Lars-Gunnar Lundh, and Lars-Göran Öst (1999) in their paper Perfectionism and self-consciousness in social phobia and panic disorder with agoraphobia discussed in terms of public self-consciousness being a differentiating characteristic of the more severe kind of social anxiety which is typical of social phobia.

Lindsay George and Lusia Stopa in their paper Private and public self-awareness in social anxiety studied Thirty-one high socially anxious participants (26 female, 5 male) and 32 low socially anxious participants (21 female, 11 male) they found that Public self-awareness increased in both groups but was higher in the high socially anxious group. Private self-awareness decreased for the low socially anxious group, but remained same for the high socially anxious group.

METHODOLOGY

Significance and rationale

As said by the eminent philosopher Aristotle, “Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual.” Man cannot live alone, which necessarily suggests that society is the outcome of a collection of individuals who come together to share the resources to sustain themselves and continue the progeny. For this purpose, man has to inevitably interact, communicate, and socialize with other individuals and encounter hundreds of situations on a daily basis. Therefore, it becomes extremely important to understand the social trait of humans and the factors affecting them. Social anxiety is an upcoming problem among college students. Thus, finding the effect of self-esteem and self-consciousness on social anxiety can be a great contribution to the field of human psychology.

A majority of college students face social anxiety on some occasions. Social anxiety, low self-esteem, and self-consciousness have been reported to share a close relationship however their co-relation is not well established yet. A better understanding of these traits may enhance knowledge of people about social anxiety as well as inform the development of an appropriate intervention. Empirically, this relationship and its aspects have not been explored by researchers. Self-esteem and self-consciousness as concepts have received attention only for the past decade. In this rapidly dynamic society, where norms, trends, and rules are always evolving, we notice a change in the way human network with each other. In today's world, with the increased usage of social media platforms, self-esteem and social anxiety issues have seen a rise.

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Objectives

1. To find the relationship between self-esteem and social anxiety among college students.
2. To find the relationship between private self-consciousness and social anxiety among college students.
3. To find the relationship between public self-consciousness and social anxiety among college students.

Hypothesis

1. Self-esteem will be negatively correlated with social anxiety.
2. There will be no significant correlation between private self-consciousness and social anxiety.
3. Public Self-consciousness will be positively correlated with social anxiety.

Variables

Criterion Variable – Social Anxiety

Predictive Variable – Self Esteem, Public Self-consciousness, and Private self-consciousness

Sample

The sample comprised 170 students ranging from 18-25 years of age was collected.

Data collection

The collection of data was done through online social platforms. The questionnaire was formed in Google forms and the link was sent via email or social platforms. After the questionnaires were received, they were further used to analyze the result. Convenience sampling technique and snowball sampling technique was used in the research.

Instruments

Three measures were used in this study,

1. Self-Consciousness Scale--(SCS-R): The self-Consciousness Scale is a measure of public and private self-consciousness by Scheier & Carver. This scale contains 22 questions where a person rates how much each item relates to them on a 4-point scale as follows:

- 3: a lot like me
- 2: somewhat like me
- 1: a little like me
- 0: not like me at all

The Cronbach's alpha for private self-consciousness was found to be .75, for public self-consciousness it was .84. These alphas compared favorably to those of the original scale. The test-retest correlation for the private subscale was .76, for the public subscale .74, and for the social anxiety subscale .77. These suggest that the scale possesses reasonable stability over time.

2. Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS): Social Interaction Anxiety Scale is a measure of social anxiety given by Mattick and Clarke's. SIAS is 20 items scale where a person rates how much each item relates to them on a 5-point scale as follows:

- 0 points: Not at all characteristic of me
- 1 point: Slightly characteristic of me
- 2 points: Moderately characteristic of me
- 3 points: Very characteristic of me

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4 points: Extremely characteristic of me

Internal consistency has been shown to range from .87 to .93 for the SIAS (Heimberg et al., 1992; Mattick & Clarke, 1989). Test-retest correlations coefficients exceeded 0.90 for one and three-month intervals.

Rosenberg self-esteem scale: Rosenberg esteem scale is a 10 item scale that is answered on a four-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale generally has high reliability: test-retest correlations are typically in the range of .82 to .88, and Cronbach's alpha for various samples is in the range of .77 to .88.

RESULTS

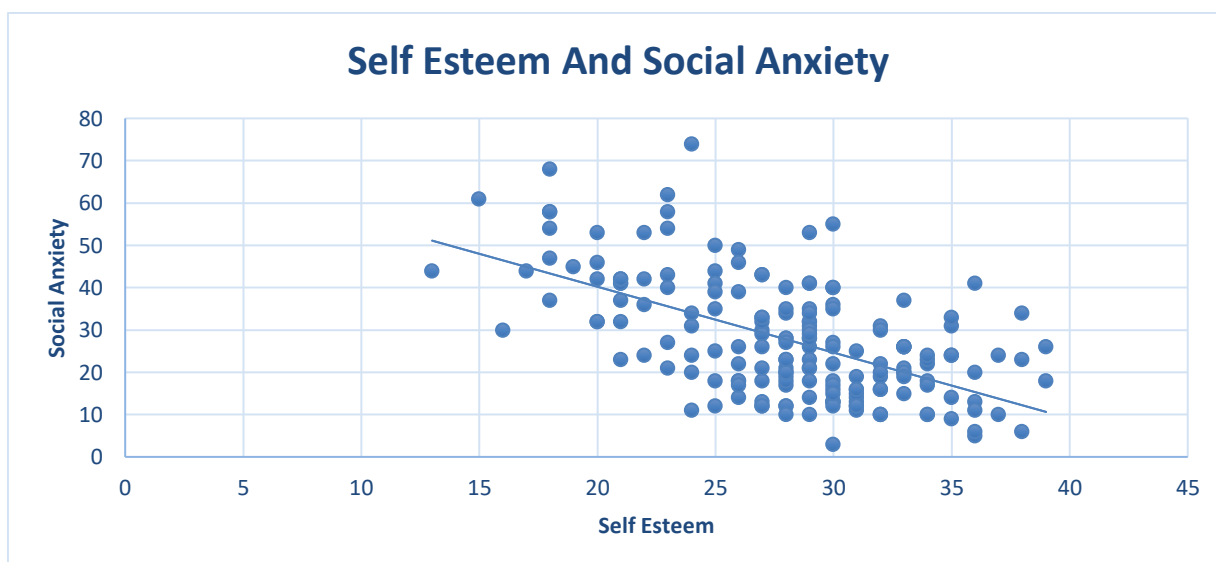
The result for the present research is given below in a table as well as graph format. The independent variables have been correlated with the dependent variable.

Relationship between Self-Esteem and Social Anxiety

Table 1: Correlation between Self-Esteem and Social Anxiety

Variables	Correlation coefficient	Critical value (N-2)	Level of significance
Self-esteem and social anxiety	-0.581872424	0.208	0.01

The above table signifies the strong negative correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety at the level of significance at 0.01.



Graph 1: Correlation between Self-Esteem and Social Anxiety

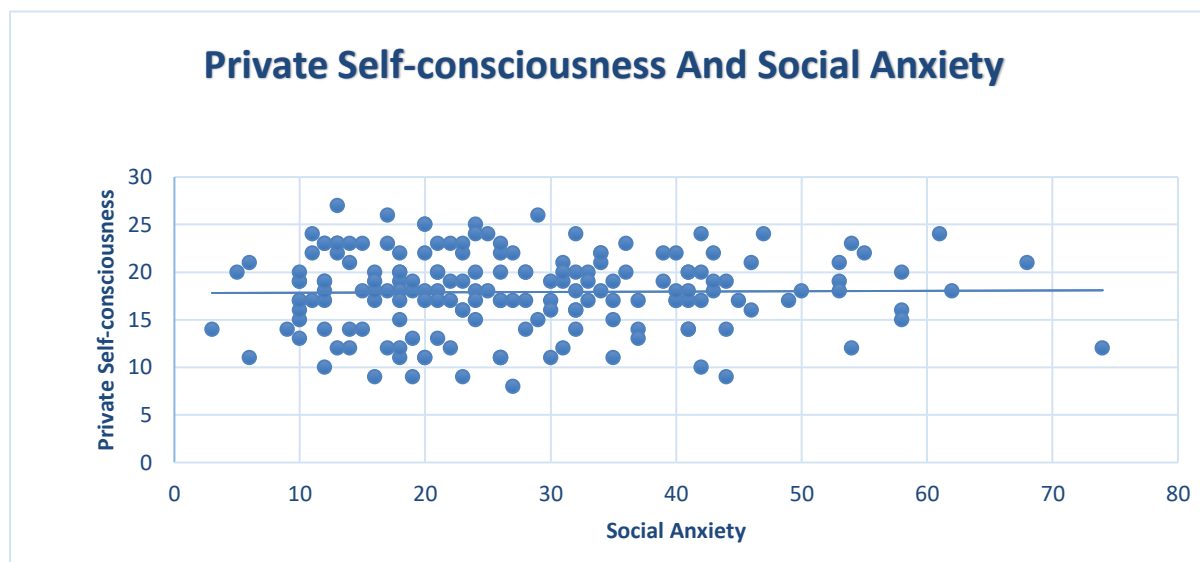
Relationship between Private Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety

Table 2: Correlation between Private Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety

Variables	Correlation coefficient	Critical value (N-2)	Level of significance
Private Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety	0.013300289	0.208	0.01

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About table signifies no correlation between private self-consciousness and social anxiety at a level of significance at 0.01.



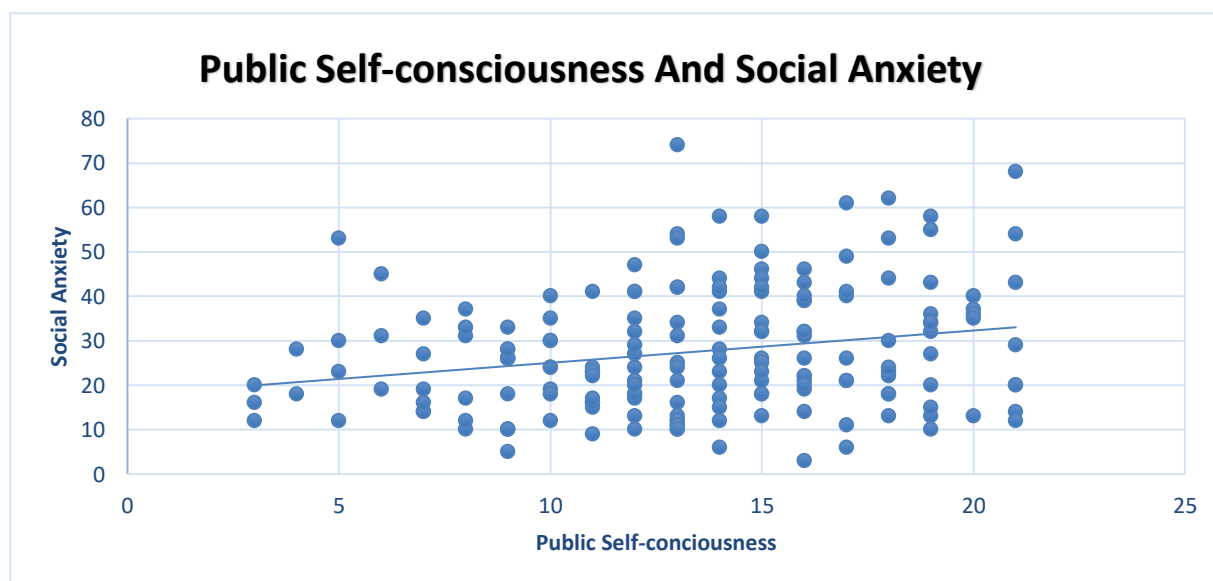
Graph 2: Correlation between Private Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety

Relationship between Public Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety

Table 3: Correlation between Public Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety

Variables	Correlation coefficient	Critical value (N-2)	Level of significance
Public Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety	0.227935032	0.208	0.01

About table signifies a positive correlation between public self-consciousness and social anxiety at the level of significance at 0.01.



Graph. 3: Correlation between Public Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to find the relation between self-esteem, social anxiety, and public and private self-consciousness. The results obtained have been displayed above and the same has been discussed here.

The first hypothesis stating that Self-esteem will be negatively correlated to social anxiety was supported. The correlational coefficient was -0.581872424 which was found to be significant at 0.01 level.

The result was found to be consistent with the literature that was referred to. For instance Kinsella, Tara. (2012) determined a tremendous correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety ($r = -.390$, $p < .01$, two-tailed) among adolescence. Ghayas, Saba. (2018) published that self-esteem significantly negatively predicted social. So lowered self-esteem may put a person at risk of later social anxiety, having an anxiety disorder can also make a person feel worse about themselves.

The second hypothesis stating that Private Self-consciousness will be positively correlated to social anxiety was rejected. The correlational coefficient was 0.013300289 which does not show any significant correlation.

The result was found to be consistent with the literature that was referred to. For instance Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M. F., & Buss, A. H. found the correlation of Private Self-Consciousness with Social Anxiety fluctuated around zero, and Hope, D. A., & Heimberg, R. G. in their study found that public, not private, self-consciousness was generally related to self-report and naive observer ratings of nervousness and to behavioral disruption at some stage in the simulation. This can be explained as Private self-consciousness is a tendency to introspect and examine one's inner self and feelings and not how others view them as a person.

The third hypothesis stating that Public Self-consciousness will be positively correlated to social anxiety was supported. The correlational coefficient was 0.227935032 which was found to be significant at 0.01 level.

The result was found to be consistent with the literature that was referred to. For instance, Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M. F., & Buss, A. H. found Public Self-Consciousness correlated relatively with each Private Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety Hope, D. A., & Heimberg, R. G. in their study found that public, not private, self-consciousness was generally related to self-report and naive observer ratings of nervousness and to behavioral disruption at some stage in the simulation. Public self-consciousness is related to phenomena that involve perceptions of how other human beings view the self.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The following results were obtained and subsequent conclusions were drawn from the present study after the data was subjected to analysis.

1. The correlational coefficient between Self-Esteem and Social Anxiety was found to be -0.581872424 which was significant at 0.01 level. This implied that self-esteem is negatively correlated to social anxiety.
2. The correlational coefficient between Private Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety was 0.013300289 which did not show any significant correlation. This implied that

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there is no significant correlation between private self-consciousness and social anxiety.

3. The correlational coefficient between Public Self-Consciousness and Social Anxiety was 0.227935032 which was found to be significant at 0.01 level. This implied that Public Self-consciousness is positively correlated to social anxiety.

Limitations of the study

1. Data were collected during the global pandemic of COVID-19 which might have affected the results.
2. The sample size was 170 which is relatively less to generalize the study to the given population.
3. There was geographical constraint as data was collected through online platforms due to COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing and lockdown.

Suggestion for further researches

1. Other variables such as introversion and extroversion can be taken into consideration.
2. Research based on gender differences for self-esteem, social anxiety, and self-consciousness can be conducted.
3. More number of students can be taken into consideration for better and justified representation of the population.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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