

**Research Paper**

## **A Study on Social Anxiety and Aggression among Young Adults**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Social anxiety is an excessive fear of potentially embarrassing or humiliating situations and it is a common mental health problem. Aggression is overt or covert, frequently harmful, social interplay with the aim of causing harm or different damage upon every other individual. The relationship between social anxiety and aggression is being studied but in a scattered manner. The combination of social anxiety and aggression cause many problems to the individual as well as to the society. It is important to know how social anxiety and aggression affects the individuals in a detailed way. The goal of the study was to assess the impact of social anxiety among young adults and the impact of aggression due to social anxiety in young adults. In the study it was evident that social anxiety is correlated with aggression. People with social anxiety are often perplexed about expressing their emotions and thoughts with someone. This causes social anxiety. As a result of their inability to express their true emotions, their anger builds up. They engage in some socially unacceptable activities to get rid of the unease.

**Keywords:** *Social Anxiety, Aggression, Impact, Young Adults*

**S**ocial anxiety is common among people and aggression is a behavior which is shown by every individual in threatening or unlikely situations. Under some circumstances, aggression could also be a normal reaction to a threat.

Young adulthood is generally defined as people ranging in age between 18 to 24 years. Young adults in their late teens and early 20s comes upon variety of troubles as they finish school and start to carry full-time jobs and combat other responsibilities of adulthood. Young adults become individuals and can set themselves apart. Self becomes the most reliance. Young adults will try to turn out to be independent from parents, take duty for themselves and make their personal decisions. As individuals of these age range go through various life situations, there are high chances of developing social anxiety and having aggression issues.

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**Received: August 15, 2021; Revision Received: October 15, 2021; Accepted: October 27, 2021**

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### ***Social anxiety***

Every individual at a point would have social anxiety. But it turns out like a disorder at a certain point for certain individuals. Some individuals develop extreme fear in social settings. These people find trouble in talking to people, meeting new people and attending social gatherings which is known as social anxiety disorder. These people fear being judged by others or scrutinized by others.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th ed.) defines social anxiety as excessive fear of potentially embarrassing or humiliating situations.

Social anxiety is a common mental health problem that resides on a continuum of distress and disability. In its mildest form, it may present as transient social apprehension, occurring in response to common social-evaluative situations, while its more severe form is characterised by disabling, pervasive fear and avoidance (Crozier, 2001; Liebowitz, 2003; Veale, 2003).

According to the presentation model, social anxiety occurs when an individual wants to present a favourable public image, but doubts his or her ability to do so (Schlenker & Leary, 1982).

### ***Causes of social anxiety***

Factors like past experiences and environment, negative beliefs and maladaptive behaviour, genetics, neurology influence of technology and physical triggers influences some of the others. The causes of social anxiety and social anxiety disorder are the same. But the only difference is that the social anxiety disorder is much more severe. The causes of social anxiety in adults and children are the same. For children, genetics and temperament can be more significant factors whereas for adults experiences and environments are more likely to be a factor as they have had more time to experience trauma and socially anxious environments.

### ***Managing social anxiety***

Some ways to manage social anxiety are learning to become more assertive through self-help strategies, improving nonverbal communication skills, telling others about the social anxiety to avoid such situations, calm breathing, music relaxation, cognitive therapy, exposure therapy, medication and support groups. Although both pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy are reportedly effective for social anxiety, studies indicate that only about half of people with social anxiety ever seek treatment.

### ***Aggression***

Aggression is a behaviour characterized by strong self-assertion with hostile or harmful tones. Aggressive behaviours may be directed at oneself, at others, at animals, or at property. They can be verbal or physical. They can be premeditated and goal-oriented or impulsive. They can be direct or indirect, overt or covert.

The effect of aggressive behaviour is very vast. Social aggression overlaps with both indirect and relational aggression in those spreading rumours, manipulating one's relationships, and damaging one's reputation are often cited as examples of social aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Galen & Underwood, 1997); however, social aggression generally includes direct – as well as indirect – forms of aggression (Cappella & Weinstein, 2006). Unlike

indirect aggression, relational aggression is typically defined as including both direct and indirect behaviours (Archer & Coyne, 2005).

The specific causes of aggression are not known, but some studies have shown that abnormal brain chemistry or structural changes may play a role. Environment and genetics also seem to be involved.

### ***Managing aggression***

Some ways to manage aggression are controlling body language and tone of voice, staying calm, offering a way out, cognitive behavioural therapy, breathing techniques, support groups.

### ***Social anxiety and aggression***

Everyone has anger issues and social anxiety is common among people. A combination of social anxiety and aggression can cause severe problems on young adults as well as the society. There are times when people with social anxiety respond or behave in an aggressive way. And sometimes if both occur at the same time, it would be unmanageable and it might cause problems.

This review examines the impact of social anxiety and aggression among the young adults. People with social anxiety find it very difficult to interact with people and convey what they want to. And this might lead them to develop various behavioural changes. Aggression is one behaviour which is even capable of destruction and which will affect the work efficiency and the total well-being of the individual. The researcher has inclined to select the studies about social anxiety and aggression because, as young adults are people who're very valuable for the country's development, it should be studied and known about the social anxiety and aggression which leads to other behavioural changes in the young adults which would affect them in the future.

*The review aimed on studying the following objectives:*

Objective 1: To study the impact of social anxiety among young adults

Research Question: How does social anxiety affect the young adults?

Objective 2: To study the impact of aggression due to social anxiety among young adults

Research Question: How does aggression due to social anxiety affect young adults?

The present study analyses the impact of social anxiety and aggression on young adults. The review consists of a total of 6 peer reviewed empirical papers which were studied they are broadly from India, Texas, Taiwan and Istanbul all published in English language.

**Inclusion criteria:** There are certain criterions upon which the papers were selected for the study, such as the specific focus on the impact of aggression on young adults, the impact of social anxiety among young adults.

**Exclusion criteria:** The literature review does not include the extremities in the psychological disorder spectrum.

## **RESULTS**

The following reviews provide a brief description of the papers examined with supporting data. These reviews are showing there is some impact of social anxiety and aggression on young adults. The findings showed that there is a specific association between behavioral

inhibition and social anxiety, social anxiety was uniquely associated with coping motives for marijuana use and young adults with social anxiety found it easy to interact with people in online mode than in real life. The findings also showed that people with social anxiety exhibited aggressive responding and anger factors were found to be related to cyber bullying.

### ***Impact of social anxiety among young adults***

Mick and Telch(1998) conducted a research to evaluate the relationship between childhood temperament behavioural inhibition and anxiety symptomology among college undergraduates enrolled in introductory psychology at the University of Texas at Austin, who reports one of the following :social anxiety, generalized anxiety, both social and generalized anxiety and minimal social and generalised anxiety. The study failed to support the hypothesis that a childhood history of behavioural inhibition is associated with anxiety symptoms in general. But the study supports a specific association between the behavioural inhibition and social anxiety. Also, the participants with social anxiety reported childhood inhibition more significantly in social and school situations than participants with other anxiety considered in the study.

Buckner et al(2007) conducted a research on marijuana use motives and social anxiety among marijuana using young adults. The participants were 159 undergraduates who reported lifetime marijuana use. 54.7% participants were females. The study investigated the relationship between marijuana use and social anxiety among the participants and it was found out that social anxiety was related to marijuana use problems among young adults. It was evident that social anxiety was uniquely associated with coping motives for marijuana use. It was also found out that individuals who already have social anxiety, fear negative evaluation because of their marijuana use in social situations and fear of behaving inappropriately under the influence of marijuana in social situations which might engender greater anxiety when faced with subsequent social situations which might again result in marijuana related impairment through several avenues. Another concern which was brought up in the study was that, If the individual finds the method of using marijuana as an effective method to cope up with social anxiety or social situations, then the individual may not strive to learn more effective coping strategies.

Yen et al(2012) compared social anxiety between online and real-life interaction in a sample of 2,348 college students from urban(4 colleges), suburban(2 colleges) and rural areas(2 colleges) of Taiwan. The participants were 1,124 males and 1,224 females. In the study it was found that social anxiety was lower during online interaction than real-life interaction particularly in the participants with high social anxiety. As social anxiety is characterized by a marked fear of social situation, negative self-image, fear of being judged and others contribute to the cognitive mechanism of social anxiety. In online platforms too these embarrassing situations occur, but it is easier for people to cope up with those situation and escape from those as they are not physically present there and because of the anonymity that online provides. In online platform participants had not to give sudden response to a particular situation and threatening facial expressions also are not revealed. This study showed that the attenuating effect of internet on social anxiety is larger in subjects with high social anxiety.

### ***Impact of aggression due to social anxiety***

Mallot (2012) investigated the unexpected presence of aggressive behaviour in individuals who have social anxiety. The sample was of 221 participants who reported high social

## **A Study on Social Anxiety and Aggression among Young Adults**

anxiety. In the study it was evident that some socially anxious individuals exhibited aggressive responding in the study. The male participants showed significant direct aggression. In the study aggression were seen more in individuals who participated in the cold pressor task.

İçellioglu and ozden (2014) assessed the relationship of aggression and social anxiety with the new kind of peer bullying through online technology in a convenience sample of 136 young adults enrolled in different departments of Istanbul kultur university where 61% of the participants were females. In the study, it was found out that the females showed higher social anxiety than males which can be explained with both gender and cultural factors. Because of sociocultural factors, males are more acceptable than females in showing and expressing thoughts and emotions through aggressive behaviours. With all the information, it is evident that anger factors are related to cyber bullying and thus that has become one of the best ways for expressing anger. One of the results obtained from the study was that the social anxiety scores are correlated with creating fake profiles. Fake profiles are created to stay anonymous and to take anger on others via the internet which is included in cyberbullying.

Deason(2015) conducted a study on personality and relational aggression among college students and the role of social anxiety and rejection sensitivity. The participants were 456 college students from the University of Southern Mississippi where 199 participants were females. From the study it was found out that, participants who endorsed experiencing more social anxiety symptoms were more sensitive to social rejection which led them more likely to engage in relationally aggressive behaviour.

### **CONCLUSION**

Social anxiety acts as a barrier for people in engaging in certain social activities and performing very well in them. The constant fear of being judged, and having a negative self-image is seen commonly in individuals having social anxiety. These people get affected in many ways and they try to stand far away from society. Being far away from the society and not engaging with them might create very vast problems for socially anxious people as well as the society. The people with social anxiety find it difficult to show their aggression face to face or talking back to others.

The studies reviewed concluded that, that there is a specific association between behavioral inhibition and social anxiety among young adults. The social anxiety was uniquely associated with coping motives for marijuana use among young adults. It was also found out that people with social anxiety found it easy to interact with people in online mode than in real life.

The findings on impact of aggression due to anxiety showed that people with social anxiety exhibited aggressive responding and anger factors were found to be related to cyber bullying. Young adults with social anxiety used cyber bullying as the best way for expressing anger. Socially anxious young adults also showed relationally aggressive behaviour because of them being sensitive to social rejection they experience.

The results obtained from this study will be helpful for future studies and to know how social anxiety and aggression is related.

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## A Study on Social Anxiety and Aggression among Young Adults

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### **Acknowledgement**

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Roy Choudhury N. & Shejith R. (2021). A Study on Social Anxiety and Aggression among Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(4), 179-184. DIP:18.01.019.20210904, DOI:10.25215/0904.019