

Research Paper

## A Correlational Study to understand Relationship between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement of Undergraduate Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between social anxiety and academic achievement among undergraduate students in India. The sample consisted of 95 students from various colleges. The Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN) was used to assess social anxiety, and academic achievement was measured using the student's First year and Second year marks average. The Spearman's rank order correlation and Mann-Whitney U Test was used to test the hypothesis. The results revealed a significant negative correlation between social anxiety and academic achievement, indicating that higher levels of social anxiety were associated with lower academic achievement. However, gender did not play a significant role in this relationship. The findings highlight the importance of considering social anxiety as a potential barrier to academic success among undergraduate students.

**Keywords:** *Social Anxiety, Academic Achievement, Undergraduate students*

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), published by the American Psychiatric Association, defines social anxiety disorder (SAD) as a psychiatric condition characterized by marked and persistent fear or anxiety about one or more social situations in which an individual is exposed to possible scrutiny by others.

Social anxiety can have a profound impact on an individual's psychological well-being, social relationships, and academic performance, particularly during the formative years of undergraduate education. While social anxiety has been widely studied in Western countries, there is limited research on social anxiety among undergraduate students in India.

According to Leary and Kowalski (1995), social anxiety is described as anxiety brought on by concern over how others view and judge a person. According to Watson and Friend (1969), social anxiety is the feeling of distress, discomfort, fear, and anxiety in social interactions as well as the worry of receiving a bad review, which causes people to purposefully avoid social encounters. The anticipation of being judged and evaluated negatively by others in a real or imagined social context can lead to feelings of inadequacy,

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embarrassment, humiliation, and inferiority in a person and can cause them to purposefully avoid social situations, according to a critical analysis of various definitions.

Existing literature on social anxiety has highlighted its detrimental effects on various aspects of college life, including academic performance. Studies conducted in Western countries have shown that social anxiety is associated with lower academic achievement, reduced class participation, increased school absenteeism, and decreased overall academic success among undergraduate students (Fisher et al., 2016; Schlenker et al., 2019). Social anxiety has also been linked to lower self-esteem, higher stress levels, and diminished quality of life among college students (Peters et al., 2017; Westenberg et al., 2018).

According to Austin (2004), socially anxious students have poor judgments of their competence when participating in a seminar or presentation, in contrast to the more favorable judgments of observers (Strahan & Conger, 1998); Regardless of academic achievement, the risk of receiving a negative social evaluation persists. Academic content becomes increasingly difficult in undergraduate programs, and anxiety increases when performance or presentation assessments are included. Support from peers and teachers is encouraged for students; socially confident Students have more interaction in the classroom. As mentioned above though there are scores of studies in the west, there is a lack of research on social anxiety among undergraduate students in India. Studies focusing on mental health issues in Indian college students have primarily focused on stress, depression, and academic pressure (NIMHANS, 2018; Shevade et al., 2020).

Additionally, cultural influences are likely to be influential in shaping how social anxiety is experienced among undergraduate students in India. In collectivist cultures, like India, where conformity, social harmony, and respect for authority are emphasized, individuals with social anxiety may encounter specific challenges, including fear of judgment, social stigma, and difficulties in assertiveness. These cultural factors could affect the prevalence, expression, and impact of social anxiety among Indian undergraduate students, and further research is needed to investigate these nuances.

The purpose of this research is to ascertain whether undergraduate students' academic performance is affected by their level of social anxiety.

### **METHOD**

#### ***Statement of the problem-***

The specific questions the research problem would like to ask is:

- Is there a significant relationship between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement?
- Is there any difference in social anxiety experienced between male and female?

#### ***Operational definition of the key concepts-***

**Social Anxiety** - A marked and persistent fear of one or more social or performance situations in which the person is exposed to unfamiliar people or to possible scrutiny by others. The individual fears that he or she will act in a way (or show anxiety symptoms) that will be humiliating or embarrassing. (DSM-V)

**Academic Achievement-** Academic achievement represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in school, college, and university.

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### ***Research Design***

A non-experimental correlational research design is used here, as we have two variables and both are observed independently without any manipulation.

### ***Objectives***

This study aims to establish if Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement are correlated; as Social Anxiety increases, Academic Achievement decreases and vice versa.

### ***Hypothesis***

- Hypothesis<sub>o</sub> (1): There is non-significant difference between Social Anxiety and Academic achievement in undergraduate students.
- Hypothesis<sub>o</sub> (2): There is a non-significant difference between Social Anxiety experienced by male and female.

### ***Sampling Procedure***

The sample was collected from the population using a non-probability convenience sampling method in which any individual who belonged to the population that was intended for the study and had access to the Google form link could complete the information. A google form was sent to a total of 100 participants, of which 96 participants completed the survey.

Ethical considerations included informed consent and voluntary participation of the participants. The participants were informed about the purpose, duration, procedure and cause of this study which also included a standardised questionnaire of Social Phobia Inventory.

### ***Tools used for the study***

- 1. Socio Demographic Data Sheet:** Following demographic variables were collected: Gender, Socioeconomic Class, Residency, Education.
- 2. Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN):** The Social Phobia Inventory (abbreviated as SPIN) is a 17-item questionnaire for screening and measuring the severity of Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia – SP). It was developed in 2000 by Connor et al. at the Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences Department, Duke University, USA. SPIN assesses different aspects related to social phobia – fear, avoidance, and physiological symptoms. It is suitable for the adult population (18+). The main application is for measuring change following pharmacological treatment. It also appears to be a useful screening tool for distinguishing between people with and without SP. Each item is measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). Respondents indicate how much each item bothered them during the past week. A categorical interpretation is suggested, where scores less than 20 are considered no SP, 21-30 mild SP, 31-40 moderate SP, 41-50 severe SP, and 51 or higher very severe SP.
- 3. Measurement of Academic Achievement:** Given that the respondents to this study were undergraduate students, their average semester score of 3rd year was used to assess their academic progress. Higher academic achievement is indicated by a higher average score.

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### *Procedure of the study*

This study was done by taking a sample of Undergraduate College students of 18-23 years of age from colleges across India. The data collection began in the 3rd week of October 2022.

A Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN) questionnaire was distributed via a Google form in accordance with a standard data collection procedure for the current study respondents. They were made aware of the test's written instructions. In order to ensure that they provide honest responses, it was made clear that their responses would be kept private. The subject's responses were automatically submitted when they were finished. After that, a manual was used to score the tests. In order to analyse the data, appropriate statistical tools, and raw scores were used. A total of 96 responses were obtained from 52 males and 44 females for this study. The descriptive statistics was found out by finding the mean and standard deviation of the data collected. The correlation between the variables (Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement) was also found out to analyse the hypothesis. Spearman's rank order Correlation test, and Mann Whitney test was done to analyse the data.

Statistics were done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

### *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical considerations included informed consent and voluntary participation of the participants. The participants were informed about the purpose, duration, procedure, and cause of this study. They had the right to withdraw from the study at any point of this study. The participants were notified that the details, information, and results will be used only for research purposes.

### *Statistical Techniques*

The data collected was entered into the excel sheet. For further analysis of result the data was categorized and then the application SPSS was used.

In this study there were three analyses performed for the collected data.

For the Test of Normality, Shapiro wilk Test was done. This test shows that the data is not normally distributed, thus, the Spearman's Correlation test was used. The Spearman's rank order correlation was used to assess the relationship between level of social anxiety and academic marks. Mann Whitney U test was used to assess the gender difference in anxiety.

## **RESULTS**

The collected data was coded and analysed using SPSS.

*Table 4.1 The following table shows the descriptive statistics of males and females.*

<i>3rd Semester Average</i>		<i>Social Anxiety Scores</i>	
Mean	55.52	Mean	25.22
Standard Error	3.52	Standard Error	1.71
Median	72.55	Median	23.00
Mode	79.00	Mode	26.00
Standard Deviation	34.52	Standard Deviation	16.77
Sample Variance	1191.96	Sample Variance	281.33
Kurtosis	-1.04	Kurtosis	-0.87

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Skewness	-0.85	Skewness	0.41
Range	99.50	Range	61.00
Minimum	0.50	Minimum	0.00
Maximum	100.00	Maximum	61.00
Sum	5329.97	Sum	2421.00
Count	96.00	Count	96.00
Confidence Level(95.0%)	7.00	Confidence Level(95.0%)	3.40

From the table (4.1.1), the mean score of students' third semester mark is 55.52 and for Social Anxiety Score is 25.2. Their respective standard deviations are 34.52 and 16.77.

**Table 4.2** The following table shows the tests of Normality

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Sem Avg marks	.199	95	.000	.935	95	.000
SocialAnxiety1	.097	95	.028	.949	95	.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As the sample size is 95, Shapiro-Wilk test is done. From table 4.3 it can be observed that the data is not normally distributed, thus, the Spearman Rank Order Correlation, a non-parametric test of correlation was used.

**Table 4.3**

Correlations				
			Sem Avg marks	SocialAnxiety1
Spearman's rho	Sem Avg marks	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.263*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.010
		N	95	95
	SocialAnxiety1	Correlation Coefficient	-.263*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.
		N	95	95

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From Table 4.3 it can be observed that there is a significant correlation between undergraduate college students' average semester marks and their level of social anxiety. The scores indicate that there is a negative correlation between individuals' semester average marks and social anxiety.

This means that individuals with high anxiety scores are more likely to have lower semester grades, while those with high average semester grades are more likely to have lower levels of social anxiety. Thus, null hypothesis which states that **H<sub>0</sub> (1) 'There is no significant relationship between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement in Undergraduate students'** is not accepted. R = -.26, N= 95, P= < .05, (Two-tailed)

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**Table 4.4**

<b>Ranks</b>				
	<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>
SocialAnxiety1	Female	53	49.14	2604.50
	Male	42	46.56	1955.50
	Total	95		

**Table 4.5**

<b>Test Statistics<sup>a</sup></b>	
	<b>SocialAnxiety1</b>
Mann-Whitney U	1052.500
Wilcoxon W	1955.500
Z	-.454
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.650
a. Grouping Variable: Gender	

From Table 4.5, it can be observed that there is no difference in society anxiety experienced between male and female,  $Z = -.45$ ,  $P = .650$ . Thus, the null hypothesis **H<sub>0</sub> (2): There is no difference in social anxiety experienced by male and female is accepted.**

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the study was to determine whether there was a significant correlation between academic achievement and social anxiety among college students and to find whether there is gender difference in the social anxiety experienced by the college students. Since, there have not been many studies on social anxiety and how it affects college students' academic success in the Indian context, this study made a unique contribution to the body of knowledge.

The study employed the data collected from 96 individuals with 52 number of males and 44 females of age group 18 – 23 years.

The results of the study showed that there is a negative correlation between individuals' semester average marks and social anxiety. This means that individuals with high anxiety scores are more likely to have lower semester grades, while those with high average semester grades are more likely to have lower levels of social anxiety. The negative correlation obtained fails to accept the hypothesis **H<sub>0</sub> (1)** which states that “there is a non-significant relationship between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement in Undergraduate students”.

While assessing gender differences, Mann Whitney U test was used to assess the gender difference in anxiety and it shows that there is no difference in Social Anxiety experienced by male and female, thus the hypothesis **H<sub>0</sub> (2)** “There is a non-significant difference between Social Anxiety experienced by male and female” is accepted.

The findings highlight the need for universities and policymakers to implement effective strategies to promote mental well-being and reduce social anxiety among undergraduate students in India. Further research with a larger sample size and diverse student populations

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is recommended to gain a deeper understanding of social anxiety among undergraduate students in India and inform targeted interventions.

### ***Limitations of the Current Study***

The limitations the researcher faced while conducting this research was that Sample Representativeness: The undergraduate student population in India is vast and diverse, with students coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds, regions, and educational institutions. Accessing a representative sample of undergraduate students may be challenging, as some students may be less willing to participate due to cultural or social reasons, and sampling from only one institution may not provide a comprehensive picture of social anxiety among undergraduate students in India. Also, there was no measure taken to understand and combat the influence social desirability if there are any.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The aim of the research is to understand the relationship between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement among undergraduate students in India. The specific research questions asked were “Is there a non-significant relationship between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement?” and Is there any gender difference in social anxiety experience by undergraduate students in India.” A total 96 samples were collected; 52 males and 44 females. The consent from each participant was taken. The data collected was scored according to manual and was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Firstly, the test of normality was run. Since the data was not normally distributed, non-parametric test i.e., spearman correlation and Mann-Whitney U test were used for further analysis.

## **CONCLUSION**

Depending on the findings that was drawn from the study, the following conclusion were made:

- There was a significant relationship between Social Anxiety and Academic Achievement in Undergraduate students.
- There is a non-significant difference between Social Anxiety experienced by male and female’

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***Conflict of Interest***

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