Research Paper

The Effect of Social Anxiety on Self Esteem among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Among young adults, social anxiety is a common and difficult psychological issue. Another important factor that influences human behavior and may be greatly impacted in social anxiety conditions is self-esteem. **Objective** The purpose of this qualitative research is to investigate the interconnection between social anxiety and self-esteem from the perspective of the lived experience perceptions, and coping strategies of young adults grappling with social anxiety and its effects on self-esteem. **Sample** 20 young college students were participated in this study (10 girls and 10 boys). The age of students varied between 18-24 years. The sample was collected from 2 universities. **Tools Used** Self-esteem Inventory by Thakur and Prasad (1975) and Social Anxiety Semi Structured Questionnaire by mentor and researcher. They were applied to access self-esteem and social anxiety of participants. **Result** shows that in most of the students the self-esteem is affected by the social anxiety, as the participants were having the fear of rejection, nervousness and anxiety.

Keywords: *Self-Esteem, Lack of Confidence, Anxiety, Nervousness*

Social Anxiety is an overwhelming fear of being judged, scrutinized, or embarrassed in social situations, often leading to avoidance behaviour and significant distress. This fear can manifest in various situations, social anxiety disorder in people may identify with their irrational fears and they still struggle to control them, leading to avoidance behaviours and isolation.

It is a psychological phenomenon in which person who suffers shows extreme fear along with anxiety in social situations, where individuals fear negative evaluation by other individuals. The fear in some causes become so debilitating that it gets in the way of daily activities, school, work, and relationships of the person. People with social anxiety often includes some of the physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, rapid heartbeat, and nausea when faced with social situations.

Self-Esteem represents the individual assessment of one's own worth or value. It covers the beliefs and feelings about oneself, involves confidence and self-respect. It determines how people perceive themselves and how they engage with the world around them. Healthy self-esteem is important for psychological well-being and have effects on various aspects of life, such as relationships, academic or career success, and overall happiness. Techniques for improving self-esteem often involve improvement of self-awareness, practicing self-

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compassion, setting realistic goals, and challenging negative self-talk. Therapy, self-help resources, and supportive relationship can also play an essential role in boosting self-esteem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bashir and Shah (2018) This research examined "social anxiety during interaction and self-esteem of University students in Kashmir". This research analyzed every human being needs social conversation but getting it is not an easy process for all. Factors that cause discomfort and make it hard for people during social situations are fear of being rejected, other people criticism and their own low confidence were notable in this study and they investigated correlation among this variable. They evaluated their study with the help of several statistical methods like correlation along with regression, Correlational study showed that it was a negative correlation with social interaction anxiety and self-esteem. And there was difference of 23 percent within these variables. And studies done with the help of comparative method displayed that there was not much difference in these variables when it came in context to gender and residence of those participants.

Roshan et al. (2022) The following research was done to understand the connection of social phobia and self-esteem on the young population. It was a cross-sectional study on the medical undergraduates. Within the selected participants some of them where suffering from social phobia and some had just typical social anxiety. They observed that there was an immediate correlation between these variables and displayed a statistically imperative data so they suggested in order to deal these issues one must create awareness and implement a support system along with guidance in colleges.

Mundada (2020) The following research studied the impact of being self-conscious and our value judgement of social anxiety upon college students for this a total of 170 students within the age range of 18 to25 were selected. They used "self-conscious scale", "social interaction anxiety scale" along with "Rosenberg self-esteem scale" to evaluate these variables. It's been noticed that there was an imperative connection between the selected variables although they did not understand the nature of relationship between these variables. There findings displayed a positive connection of "public self-consciousness" with social anxiety and negative correlation of self-esteem with social anxiety. They did not get any connection amidst private "self-consciousness" and "social anxiety".

Objectives of the Study
- To explore the impact of social anxiety on self-esteem among young adults
- To study the impact of gender difference on self-esteem.

Sample
Participant demographic details
- Total number of Participants: 10
- Gender among the 10 participants, 50% (N= 5) participants were Males, 50% (N=5) were Females.
- Age: The average age of participants was 22 years. The youngest participant was 18years old and the oldest participant was 24years old. The average Males (N=5) was 22 years, Females (N=5) was 21.
- Education: The educational qualification among the participants of the study were undergraduate

METHOD

Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach has been chosen as the research method for this study. The research process involves empirical work in the collection of data that can concur, refute or challenge theories that, in turn, make it possible to understand and clarify different observations. Qualitative research involves a process known as induction, which collects data on a specific area of study, and from this data the researcher constructs different concepts and theories. A qualitative approach was considered more relevant to this research as it allowed a greater capacity to gain more depth and meaning on the basis of an individual's experience, along with their beliefs and feelings, as opposed to a quantitative approach that is more structured, broader in scale and more numerically based.

Tools Used

1. Social Anxiety Self -Report (Mentor and Student)
2. Self Esteem Inventory Questionnaire (SEI) (M.S. PRASAD and G.P. THAKUR)

1. **SOCIAL ANXIETY SELF-REPORT Constructed by Researcher** The questions were designed to explore the impact Social Anxiety of self-esteem among young adults. Social Anxiety Self-Report Questionnaire were chosen to conduct this study. They enabled the participants to elaborate and thus gave the participant more flexibility, range and therefore the ability to obtain more information. Self-Report Questionnaire allow individuals to respond to questions more on their own terms than standardized questions permit, but still provide a good comparability structure over that of the focused Self-Report Questionnaire views the questions as the most appropriate approach to study complex and sensitive areas as the researcher had the opportunity to prepare a participant before asking for a question.

2. **SELF ESTEEM INVENTORY QUESTIONNAIRE (M.S. PRASAD and G.P. THAKUR)** This self-esteem inventory was developed by the M.S. Prasad and G.P. Thakur (1977) under the Department of Psychology of the University of Bihar, Muzaffarpur. The scale consists 30 items. This is a seven-point scale. The scale assesses two areas one is personally perceived self and other is socially-perceived self. Out of the thirty items, seventeen are socially desirable and thirteen are socially undesirable. The items which are socially desirable would get 7 scores if answered completely true and 1 if answered completely false. Other intermediate answers would get scores accordingly. The socially desirable items would be scored in the opposite manner, i.e., the completely false point would get 7 scores and completely true would get 1 score. Split half reliability co-efficient were found for both the tests were .69 and .66 respectively for personally-perceived self and socially-perceived self. Test Re-test reliability co-efficient were found for both the tests were .69 and .66 respectively for personally perceived self and socially-perceived self.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from the colleges' appropriate authorities prior to the actual data gathering procedure. Once permission was obtained from the respective colleges' administrative departments for data collection, the researcher approached the participants directly during their college hours, explained the purpose and method of using the questionnaires, and also ensured the confidentiality of the data. An effort was made to establish rapport with the students to make them comfortable. All the participants were given an orientation about the research and their consent was taken before administering the questionnaires for data collection.

CASES AND ANALYSIS

Case 1 (R**) Female 22-year-old

She started being self-consciousness about her appearance at the age of 16 when she was in the 10th class. Recently, she found herself in a social setting where she was really anxious when she was in networking event with many unfamiliar faces and high expectations for making professional connections. As she felt a surge of nervousness and self-doubt. When she found herself in a social situation, she felt very anxious at that moment as different thoughts started racing in her mind i.e., What if I say something wrong?", "I'm not as experienced as others here. What if she does not measure up? Will I be seen as awkward? "She gets anxious while introducing herself and initiating conversation with unfamiliar faces. She tried to cope with some strategies like: self-talk, calming herself, meditation, etc.

Case 2 (P**) Female 22-year-old

She started being self-consciousness about her appearance at the age of 18. She has experienced nothing recently but she has mentioned her past experience when was in hostel, she felt anxious at the fresher's introduction day she was very nervous and frightened from inside. In her mind a lot of negative thoughts were going on because of this she forgot the lines what she wants deliver in front of other's and she was about to cry at that time. When someone try to make her feel something intentionally it bothers her little bit. She did not used any kind of strategies or coping techniques to manage her social anxiety.

Case 3 (K**) Female 18-year-old

She started being self-consciousness about her appearance at the age of 14. Few week ago she recently finds herself anxious when she was at the gym she was having feeling of discomfort, shyness, worry and judgmental thoughts of others about her. She is a ambivert kind of person but when it comes to meet new people her introvert self comes out she tries to do not show it in front of others but it is still observable and she felt discomfort herself and make discomfort other person as well She feel very hard to speak in front of many people. And she has experienced sweating, nervousness, fast breathing kind of symptoms too. She did not used any kind of strategies but tries to cope by meeting new people and tries to speak in public

Case 4 (R**) Female 19-year-old

She started being self-conscious about her appearance at the age of 9. She felt anxious when she was at her friend's house and the other situation was when she was at a marriage function in her mind there was a lot of questions in both the situations that what will people think of her? Do they judge her by my looks? Or do they ask her some questions which will bother her very deeply! And what if she speaks something by mistake or something wrong do the people make fun of her. She hesitates will asking for help from other people. Yes, others opinions bother her little bit. She used to apply the strategies to cope her anxiety like breathing, walking, distracting herself by reading motivational books.

Case 5 (N**) Female 21-year-old

She started being self-conscious about her appearance at the age of 21. She was very much conscious because of her health as she was very thin and people around her used to scold her and make fun of her because of this she cannot talk to the other people in front her. She was required to give a speech in front of a quite large audience then the days before it she felt nervousness also some mixed thoughts in her mind like is she keeping the audience towards her so that they don't get bored and my speech must be interested and unique at the same time. Nowadays she felt that the people around are never be happy with your work. They

always comment on it or gave their opinions and because of this feel very nervous and discomfort in front of others. She tries to cope her anxiety issues via meditation, and calming herself in via writing poem's.

Case 6 (S**) Male 21-year-old

He started being self-conscious about his appearance at the age of 18. He recently finds a situation when he was in carnival he found everywhere crowded and he was afraid and anxious in the carnival he was searching for open space but he couldn't he was getting faint there somehow, he get out of it. He mentioned that other's opinion does not bothers him but he feels hesitated while talking in group he feels uncomfortable at that time. He feels nervous in group because he has negative thoughts that they will judge him by his speaking skills, what if his opinion will not match with him or they will bother by his opinion. He just copes his overthinking and nervousness by calming himself, and doing sketching these all make him better.

Case 7 (S**) Male 23-year-old

He started feel being self-conscious about his appearance at the age of 20. He recently finds a situation where his professor asks him a question in front of whole class, he did not answer the question because he was feeling hesitate and nervous in front of others. He felt anxious when he was gone giving interview for his H.M. Job and he did a lot of mistakes in front of the panelist. As he mentioned that he is an introvert person he hesitates or feel shy while giving presentation or speech in front of sizable audience. Other's opinion bothers him a lot he mentioned that he overthinks too much and get offended easily, He gets judgmental thoughts about what if I will not perform good? What if I will not be selected, how judges will perceive my answers. He tries to cope his nervousness and anxiety by cooking, watching recipes and thrill movies.

Case 8 (V**) Male 22-year-old

He started feeling conscious about his appearance at the age of 20. He feels anxious in social settings like being in group and he mentioned that it was started from the pandemic because everyone was at the home in lockdown, because of no interaction with others when the lockdown was over he started going to college he feels hesitated while connecting with others and feels very shy in front of others, few week ago he was in the fest he was getting faint because he didn't attend kind of social situation like this, He mentioned that he has issue of thinking too like he thinks everyone will judge him and they will never include him in their group, He has lack of confidence, and discomfort being in group, because of this sometimes he have suicidal thoughts too, He tries to cope with these issues by sitting alone and listen music in dark room rather than this he did not apply any kind of strategies.

Case 9 (A**) Male 20-year-old

He felt self-conscious about himself when he was 18years old. He feels anxious while speaking in public, He feels that what people think about him, how will be his presentation? He is afraid at that time really. Sometimes If He meet new people, he tries to first understand unfortunately he compare himself from them, other opinion does bother him a lot, if he has to deliver a speech in front of others, he has negative thoughts in his mind that he will not perform properly and he get anxious while speaking, having judgmental thinking about him, in crowded situations sometimes he gets faint. As he mentioned he smoke for coping his anxiety, rather it he does not use any kind of strategies.

Case 10 (U**) Male 23-year-old

He started feeling conscious about his appearance at the age of 20. In social settings he feels like there a lot of people who will judge him, He mentioned that he was meeting other people in family function there was so many people and his relatives were introducing him in front of others he was worried that what if I said something wrong in front of them? what if they will make fun of my looks? And what will he say if someone approach him? Also, he mentioned that there will be a chance in which he has to speak in front of others like if he has to deliver a speech, he has continuous thoughts in his mind that everyone will start laughing on him! Everyone will talk about him this is his biggest fear ever. He did not follow any kind of strategies he just takes a nap, listen songs for coping his anxiety.

ANALYSIS

The findings of the data are classified into various domains of social anxiety such as fear of rejection, nervousness, overthinking, discomfort, hesitation.

Fear of rejection is an irrational fear of being socially excluded. Individual's fear of rejection may lead to suppress their emotions for rejections from others. People who are having fear of rejection also hide their emotions instead of expressing them openly. Nervousness refers to a state of being easily agitated, anxious. People has experienced physical symptoms like: sweating, rapid breathing, increasing heart rating.

Overthinking refers to the repetitive, unproductive thoughts. People do overthink about their future, what if they make fun of them? What people think about them? Mostly people imagine worst case imagining worst-case scenarios. Discomfort is a feeling of embarrassment or feeling of irritation. Most of the people did not feel comfortable in sizable audience or in the crowded places. Hesitation is defined as reluctant or indecision. People having hesitation while giving speech or presentation in front of others and also feels hesitate while talking and asking questions to others.

CONCLUSION

 In this qualitative research, it is investigated how college students perceive effects of social anxiety on their self-esteem by conducting in-depth interviews and analyzing. The study was conducted on 20 college students (10 girls and 10 boys). The sample was collected from two universities and it was observed that the individuals which are having a very high level of anxiety are suffering from a negative self-assessment, and thus they need behavioural preparations for incompatibility. As self- report measures are used in the present study, therefore it might cause social relevance. It also shows that the symptoms in most of the people that they get nervous, having fear of rejection also having lack of confidence. The findings of this study align with the idea that people who are anxious in various social situations tends to possess lower self-esteem than people who acts normally in social situation.

Limitation of the Study
- The present study was conducted on urban adolescents, which cannot be generalized for rural population as well to adult population.
- The study was conducted on adolescent samples only.

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

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