

To Study the Impact of Academic Anxiety on Self-Esteem and Social Competence on School Children of Ambala District of Haryana

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ABSTRACT

Education offers a path for overall growth and personality development. It serves both as an activity and a continuous process that shapes an individual's behavior transitioning it from being instinct driven to more refined and humanized. Through education, our personality becomes polished enabling us to think more logically. Enhancing our cognitive abilities, fostering reasoning and analytical reasoning. Moreover, education helps in process of making us responsible citizens who contribute to the nation's progress. Among all the levels of education, senior secondary stage upholds particular significance, as it lays foundation for higher studies. The future of a country is largely influenced by this stage, as a country's success is largely related to the academic success of the children. We are going to study the impact of academic anxiety on self esteem and social competence, because these variables have important implications for student's well-being and academic performance.

Keywords: *Academic Anxiety, Self-Esteem, Social Competence, School Children, Ambala District*

Anxiety is the most widespread mental health issue across societies. Most common symptoms of anxiety include avoidance behaviors- individuals usually withdraw socially and steer clear of social gatherings and any situation that might trigger anxiety, physiological symptoms such as headaches, stomachache and gastrointestinal issues and bodily responses such as sweating, trembling, increased heart rate. Anxiety also increases the likelihood of persistent anxiety, depression, substance abuse and academic underperformance (Woodward and Ferguson 2001). Anxiety can be classified into three types: State Anxiety, which is a temporary emotional response that is triggered by a specific situation, Trait Anxiety, which are lasting characteristics of individual's personality and specific situation anxiety, which arises in response to particular context.

Academic anxiety is a form of specific situation anxiety, occurring when students exhibit cognitive, psychological and behavioral response in educational settings (Cassady, 2010). Academic anxiety can occur due to many reasons such as high expectations from themselves, parents and teachers, competitive nature of high education, financial problems and uncertainty about future. The impact of anxiety on school children are more extreme as

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it can affect their mental, physical and social life. Physically it can lead to sleep disorders and health problems. Mentally it can lead to depression and burnout. Socially it can lead to isolation and strained relationships, further it can exasperate mental health issues. (Jia, Tianqi, 2024). While academic anxiety is often viewed negatively, it is not detrimental. In fact, moderate academic anxiety enhances discipline, commitment and motivation.

Nonetheless if it is left unchecked it can lead to severe consequences. Some of the symptoms of excessive academic anxiety include excessive worrying, increased activity, flushing of the skin, lack of participation in activities, hypersensitivity, sleeping problems, headaches, concentration problems, memory problems and withdrawal from peers (Huberty, T. J. 2009). In the extreme cases, it can lead to skipping classes or dropping out of the school altogether. Maslow (1954) was one of the first pioneers who classified esteem as one of the five levels in his Motivational theory. He classified esteem as a higher order psychological need, which becomes significant once the basic and social needs are met. He separated internal factors (self-esteem, autonomy and achievement) and external factors (status, recognition and attention) into two groups.

Rosenberg (1965) viewed self esteem from more of a social- psychological perspective, defining it as a person's overall attitude towards themselves. He defined self- esteem as an assessment of oneself, positive and negative. According to Rosenberg, self-esteem arises from two internal judgement- one is global judgment of self- worth which is relatively stable overtime but can be influenced by experiences, achievements and feedback from others and the other is discrepancy between desired and achieved self, a smaller discrepancy leads to higher self- esteem and vice- versa. One of the most used instruments to gauge a person's self-esteem, it evaluates both positive and negative self-perceptions.

Hong and Karstensson (2002) suggested that students with low self esteem focus on their weakness rather than opportunities for success, which affects their academic performance negatively.

A person's self-esteem much influenced by their parent amongst other things. The influence comes from a group of genetic factors and quality of love, care and acceptance received by individual throughout childhood and adolescence. While moderate self- esteem can be benefiting, exaggerated self- esteem can lead to frustration and negative emotions, which can hinder the education process rather than aid it (Emler, 2001).

Social competence for secondary school children refers to their ability to interact effectively and accurately with peers, teachers and other individuals within their environment. Social competence includes a range of emotions, including compassion, empathy, cooperation and conflict resolution, which are essential for building and maintaining positive relationships.

A study conducted in National Capital Region of India found that students with high social skills tend to perform better academically. Furthermore, social competence contributes to better social adjustment, enabling the students to navigate the complexities of adolescent social life more effectively. Developing these skills in secondary school is important because it lays the foundation for future interpersonal relationships and professional interactions (Kapri, B. C., & Shukla, B. (2019).

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Academic anxieties and social anxieties are increasingly recognized as a significant barrier to student's success and well-being which makes it important for us to know more about these variables as it will lead to schools include more interventions and care.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Demirtas-Zorbaz (2020) examined how perfectionism influences social competence, emphasizing the mediating role of social anxiety and academic competence. The findings reveal that increased perfectionism leads to heightened social anxiety, which subsequently lowers social competence. The research suggests that the stress of academic demands and the pursuit of perfection can adversely influence social adaptability, reinforcing the link between academic anxiety and social competence. The study underscores the importance of interventions addressing perfectionistic tendencies to improve students' social well-being.

Strahan (2003) explored the connection between social anxiety, social skills, and academic performance. The study indicated that students exhibiting elevated levels of social anxiety face challenges with effective communication and peer interactions, which adversely affect their academic performance. The research found that lower social competence due to anxiety creates barriers to participation in classroom activities, impacting both academic outcomes and self-esteem. Strahan stressed on the requirement of having social skills training programs to mitigate the negative effects of social anxiety in educational institutions.

Ayeras et al. (n.d.) conducted a study on examining the effects of social anxiety on self-esteem, academic performance, and coping strategies among high school students. This study revealed that students experiencing alleviated of social anxiety may have lower self-esteem, leading to reduced confidence in academic settings. The research emphasized that socially anxious students often adopt avoidance-based coping strategies, further impairing their academic engagement and performance. The study underscores the necessity of fostering positive coping mechanisms to counteract anxiety-related self-esteem issues.

Qayyum et al. (2022) analyzed the mediating role of social competence in the relationship between academic stress and career anxiety among students of public institutions. Their findings indicated that students with low social competence struggle more with academic stress, which subsequently increases their career-related anxieties. The study highlighted the need for social competence-building interventions to enhance students' ability to manage academic and career-related pressures effectively. The authors advocate for incorporating social skill development programs in educational settings.

Rappo, Alesi, and Pepi (2017) examined the impact of school-related anxiety on the self-esteem and self-handicapping behaviors of the students in primary schools. The study implies that the students who had greater amounts of school anxiety exhibited lower levels of self-esteem and had an increased tendency to engage in self-handicapping behaviors. These behaviors include procrastination and avoidance, further exacerbating academic struggles. The findings stress on the importance of early interventions to address school-related anxiety and promote a positive self-concept in young learners.

Hembree (1988), Zeidner (1988) and Putwin (2007) - Several studies have established a strong correlation between academic anxiety and self-esteem. Anxiety in relation to academic performance often leads to a negative self-concept, wherein children perceive themselves as inadequate learners. Repeated academic failures or fear of failure contribute to

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diminished self-worth, creating a cycle of low self-esteem and heightened anxiety. Additionally, Hembree suggests that high levels of test anxiety negatively impact students' self-perception, making them more prone to avoidance behaviors and reduced motivation to excel academically.

Morris & Cieslak, 1991- In the domain of social competence, academic anxiety often manifests as social withdrawal and difficulty in peer interactions. Children experiencing heightened anxiety may struggle with communication skills, hesitate to engage in group activities, and avoid social situations due to fear of being judged.

Beidel, Turner, and Morris (1999) - Research highlights that socially anxious children exhibit lower levels of assertiveness and confidence in peer interactions, impacting their ability to form meaningful relationships.

Eccles & Wigfield, 2002- Studies suggest that academic anxiety and its effects on self-esteem and social competence are influenced by various socio-cultural factors, including parental pressure, teacher expectations, and peer comparisons.

Chiu, 2018- High parental expectations and academic competitiveness often exacerbate anxiety, further diminishing self-esteem and social adaptability.

Ashcraft, 2002- Gender differences have been found, female students tend to report greater levels of academic anxiety which influenced their self-perception and social participation.

Schmidt & Wadsworth, 2010- Intervention strategies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness techniques, and structured peer interactions have shown positive results in mitigating academic anxiety and improving self-esteem. Programs promoting emotional resilience and coping mechanisms help children navigate academic challenges while maintaining a healthy self-concept and social competence.

Wood (2007) explored the relationship between academic competence, close relationships, and anxiety in preschool children. The study found that strong emotional bonds with teachers and caregivers significantly reduce academic anxiety, allowing children to develop a positive self-concept and social competences. However, children experiencing insecurity in their relationships displayed heightened anxiety, which negatively impacted their early learning experiences and self-esteem. The study emphasizes the need for early intervention strategies that foster supportive relationships to mitigate academic anxiety and promote healthy self-esteem.

Levpusek and Berce (2012) looked at how social anxiety affected academic self-perception on high school students and social acceptance. Their study indicates that students with elevated degrees of social anxiety perceive lower levels of acceptance from peers and this leads to decreased levels of academic self-confidence and reduced classroom engagement. The study indicates that social competence is a crucial mediator in academic performance, since students with poor social skills most often struggle with academic participation. The authors emphasize on the importance of school-initiated programs in order to enhance the social competence and academic self-perception among adolescents.

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Strahan (1998) investigated the role of social anxiety and social competence in undergraduate retention and academic performances. This study shows that students with increased levels of social anxiety often face difficulties in adjusting to university life, resulting in lower academic achievement and increased dropout rates. Poor social competence was identified as a contributing factor to academic disengagement, as socially anxious students avoided group discussions and peer collaborations. The study suggests that universities should implement programs that foster social confidence and reduce academic anxiety to improve student retention and success.

Magelinskaitė-Legkauskienė et al. (2014) analyzed the influence of learning motivation, social competence and school anxiety on academic achievement in first-grade students. The study found that school anxiety negatively impacts learning motivation and social interactions, which in turn hinders academic performance. Students with higher levels of social competence were able to cope better with school-related stress, demonstrating greater academic success. The research reveals the significance of integrating social competence training in early education to build resilience against academic anxiety.

Qadri et al. (2023) developed a causal model to examine the relationship between school anxiety, emotional competence, academic pressure, and academic self-esteem. Their findings revealed that students experiencing high academic pressure tend to have lower emotional competence, which intensifies school anxiety and diminishes self-esteem. The study emphasized that fostering emotional competence can serve as a protective factor against the negative effects of academic stress, promoting higher self-esteem and academic confidence. The authors suggest incorporating emotional intelligence training in school curricula to mitigate academic anxiety and enhance student well-being.

Hyseni Duraku and Hoxha (2018) examined the influence of self-esteem, study skills, and psychological distress on test anxiety and academic performance. Their findings revealed that low self-esteem and inadequate study skills heightened test anxiety, negatively impacting academic success. Social support and coping mechanisms played a role of cruciality in reducing anxiety, increasing performance. Their research underscores the significance of mental well-being programs to improve academic outcomes through emotional resilience and effective study strategies.

Przepiorka et al. (2021) explored the link between social anxiety, social skills, and problematic smartphone use in predicting somatic symptoms and academic performance in primary school students. The study found excessive smartphone use exacerbated social anxiety and impaired social skills, leading to academic struggles. Increased anxiety contributed to physical symptoms, further hindering learning. The research highlights the need for balanced digital consumption and social skills development to mitigate anxiety's negative academic impact.

Murad (2020) investigated the relationship between social anxiety and self-esteem among university students in Jord. The study found that students with higher social anxiety exhibited lesser levels of self-esteem, negatively affecting their academic engagement and confidence. Social anxiety was a barrier to classroom participation and peer interactions, further diminishing academic performances. The findings emphasize the necessity for interventions aimed at boosting self-esteem and reducing social anxiety to enhance students' academic and social experiences.

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Winarsunu et al. (2023) assessed the impact of life skills training on self-esteem and student anxiety. The study found that structured life skills programs significantly increased self-esteem while reducing anxiety levels, fostering improved academic confidence. Participants demonstrated enhanced emotional regulation and coping mechanisms, leading to better academic engagement. The research suggests that integrating life skills training into educational settings can serve as an effective strategy for reducing anxiety and promoting students' psychological well-being.

Alvini et al. (2023) analyzed the effects of academic self-concept, interest, parental expectations, and social support on academic anxiety in economic education students. Findings revealed that high parental expectations increased anxiety, while strong academic self-concept and social support reduced. Students with greater academic interest exhibited lower anxiety levels and better performance. The study highlights the need for balanced parental expectations and supportive academic environments to mitigate anxiety and enhance student achievement.

Inam et al. (2014) examined the relationship of emotional intelligence with social anxiety and social competence in adolescents. This study showcases that higher emotional intelligence is linked with lower social anxiety and greater social competence, enhancing peer interactions and academic confidence. Adolescents with lower emotional intelligence experienced greater social anxiety, negatively impacting their academic and social engagement. The findings highlight the weight of emotional intelligence development in fostering social adaptability and lowering anxiety.

Brumariu et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis on the interrelations of anxiety, academic achievement, and academic self-concept across different developmental periods. The study revealed that higher anxiety levels were linked to lower academic self-concept and reduced academic performance. The negative impact of anxiety on academic achievement was more pronounced during adolescence, emphasizing the need for early interventions. The research underscores the necessity of fostering positive self-concept and anxiety management strategies for improved academic outcomes.

McCarroll et al (2009) - investigated the link between peer relationships and health status in early adolescence, emphasizing the mediating roles of self-esteem, peer contact and social anxiety. The researchers noted how poor health status has negatively impacted peer relationships, along with self-esteem and social anxiety serving as significant mediators. The research suggests that adolescents experiencing health challenges are at risk of social withdrawal, which can further affect their psychological well-being. Importantly, peer contact was shown to partially buffer these effects, suggesting that social integration can promote positive outcomes. The study used a sample of early adolescents and applied a multi-variable analysis to underscore how psychological constructs interact with physical health to affect social outcomes. The findings highlight the need for holistic adolescent health interventions that incorporate social and psychological dimensions.

Ayed et al (2024) examined the ties between self-esteem and social anxiety among undergraduate nursing students, revealing an inverse correlation in both variables. The authors discovered that students with higher levels of social anxiety exhibited lower levels of self-esteem, which could adversely affect their academic and clinical performance. The cross-sectional study emphasized how the demanding and socially intensive environment of

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nursing education can exacerbate social anxiety symptoms, thus lowering self-worth. The findings are particularly relevant for healthcare education, where interpersonal skills are critical. The study recommends targeted interventions, such as peer mentoring and counseling, to enhance students' coping mechanisms and self-perception. This work adds to the growing body of literature on mental health challenges faced by healthcare students, underlining the need for systemic support within academic institutions.

Jaureguizar et al. (2018) - This research focused on how self-concept, social skills, and resilience moderate the relationship between stress and childhood depression. The authors found that children with a positive self-concept and well-developed social skills exhibited lower levels of depressive symptoms even under high stress. Resilience emerged as a crucial buffer, helping children manage stress more effectively and reducing vulnerability to depression. The study applied a quantitative design and included primary school students to assess these psychological variables using validated scales. These findings emphasize the importance of promoting emotional intelligence and adaptive coping strategies in early education settings. The authors suggest that school-based interventions aimed at building resilience and social competence could serve as preventive measures against mental health issues in childhood.

Bolsoni-Silva & Loureiro (2014) - Study investigated the influence of social skills on the social anxiety of university students and found a strong negative correlation between the two constructs. Students with better social skills were less likely to have high degrees in relation to social anxiety, indicating that training in communication and interpersonal behaviors can mitigate anxiety symptoms. The research utilized behavioral assessments and self-report measures to evaluate a sample of Brazilian university students. Also gender differences, with females reporting higher social anxiety levels, emphasizing the role of cultural and gender expectations. The authors recommend integrating social skills training into university support services to address mental health concerns. The study offers practical insights into how educational institutions can promote psychological well-being through skill-building initiatives.

Márquez, Martín, and Brackett (2006) explored how emotional intelligence relates to social competence and academic achievement in high school student. It was seen that students with elevated emotional intelligence exhibited better interpersonal relationships and higher academic performance. The study emphasized the role of emotional regulation, empathy, and self-awareness in shaping both social and academic outcomes. The authors suggested that integrating emotional intelligence training in school curricula could foster students' holistic development.

Junttila, Vauras, Niemi, and Laakkonen (2012) studied social competence as a predictor of loneliness, social anxiety, and social phobia in children and adolescents. Using multisource assessments, they found that low social competence in early years was linked to greater emotional difficulties later in life. The study stressed the importance of early social skill development to prevent long-term mental health issues. Their findings support school-based interventions that promote peer interaction and emotional support.

Al-Ali, Singh, and Smekal (2011) studied social anxiety in comparison to social skills, aggression, and stress among male and female commercial institute student. Results showed that higher social anxiety was associated with lower social skills and higher stress levels,

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with significant gender differences. Male students showed more aggression, while females reported more anxiety and stress. The study called for gender-sensitive approaches to addressing social anxiety through skill-building and stress-reduction strategies.

Morales, Rodríguez-Menchón, Espada, and Orgilés (2023) examined academic self-concept as a mediator between anxiety and depression in adolescents using a longitudinal design. The study found that low academic self-concept heightened the effect of anxiety on depressive symptoms over time. Strengthening academic self-concept was shown to reduce the progression from anxiety to depression. The authors emphasized the importance of promoting positive academic self-beliefs in school settings to safeguard mental health.

Gogol, Brunner, Preckel, Goetz, and Martin (2016) investigated the developmental changes in general and subject-specific academic self-concept, academic interest, and anxiety among student. They found that academic self-concept and interest vary significantly across subjects and develop dynamically over time. Academic anxiety was negatively associated with self-concept and interest, affecting performance and motivation. The study highlighted the importance of tailored academic support to balance self-concept and reduce anxiety in school settings.

Baibing (2024) investigated the correlation between social anxiety and self-esteem among college students, aiming to understand how these psychological constructs interact in a university environment. The study saw a significant negative relation between social anxiety and self-esteem, showing that students with high levels of social anxiety generally exhibited lower levels of self-worth and confidence. The research suggested that social anxiety impairs interpersonal relationships and limits participation in social and academic settings, which in turn diminishes self-esteem. This study underscores the need for colleges to implement mental health interventions and peer support programs that address social fears and promote self-affirming practice. The findings contribute to the broader literature by reinforcing the bidirectional nature of the relationship—where not only does anxiety reduce self-esteem, but low self-esteem may also exacerbate social withdrawal and fear of judgment. These insights are valuable for counselors and educators seeking to foster a more inclusive and emotionally supportive campus environment. Targeted group therapies, self-esteem workshops, and stress management strategies were recommended as practical tools to mitigate these issues and enhance students' social functioning and academic engagement.

Karcher (2005) explored the effects of developmental mentoring on younger mentees' self-esteem, social skills, and sense of connectedness, focusing on the role of high school mentors and their attendance patterns. The study involved structured mentoring programs where older students provided guidance and support to younger peers, emphasizing relationship-building and consistent engagement. Results indicated that regular mentor attendance significantly enhanced mentees' self-esteem and social skill development while fostering a stronger sense of school belonging and emotional security. The study highlighted the importance of mentorship continuity, showing that irregular mentor involvement led to reduced program effectiveness and less improvement in participants' social competencies. He also emphasized that developmental mentoring benefits both mentors and mentees by strengthening interpersonal awareness and leadership capacity among older students. The findings support the integration of mentorship models into educational frameworks to aid students during transitional phases, such as entering middle or high school. By promoting positive role modeling and consistent peer interaction, such programs serve as effective tools

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for enhancing youth well-being, reducing isolation, and encouraging resilience in academic and personal spheres.

Brouzos, Vassilopoulos, Vlachioti, and Baourda (2020) implemented a coping-oriented group intervention for students anticipating the transition to secondary school, examining its effects on coping strategies, self-esteem, and social anxiety. The study wanted to teach students with psychological tools to manage the stress and uncertainty associated with academic transitions. Findings revealed that participants who completed the intervention demonstrated significantly reduced social anxiety symptoms and improved coping mechanisms compared to those in the control group. Furthermore, levels of self-esteem increased, highlighting the intervention's effectiveness in building personal confidence and emotional regulation. The program involved cognitive-behavioral techniques, peer-sharing activities, and skill-building exercises designed to promote emotional expression and interpersonal effectiveness. The authors emphasized that early interventions are crucial in preventing the development of chronic anxiety patterns, especially during critical educational transitions. They concluded that group-based psychological support not only enhances individual coping and social competence but also fosters a sense of solidarity among peers facing similar life changes. The study offers practical insights for educators and psychologists in designing preventive strategies tailored for school populations.

Shechtman and Silektor (2012) compared the social competencies and difficulties of gifted children to their non-gifted peers to assess the emotional and interpersonal implications of high intellectual ability. The research identified that while gifted children often excel academically, they may struggle with peer relationships, communication, and emotional expression. Gifted students were found to experience feelings of isolation, heightened sensitivity, and sometimes social anxiety due to the mismatch between their intellectual level and their peers' social maturity. However, they also displayed advanced problem-solving skills and creativity in social interactions when provided with supportive environments. The study argued that educational institutions should not assume that academic talent equates to emotional well-being and social ease. Tailored interventions, such as peer mentoring, emotional intelligence workshops, and group counseling, were recommended to address the unique social-emotional needs of gifted students. The findings challenge traditional views of giftedness, advocating for a holistic understanding that includes both cognitive and socio-emotional development.

Dyson (2003) examined the self-concept, academic self-perception, and social competence of children with learning disabilities in comparison to their non-disabled siblings within the family context. The study shows that children with learning disabilities generally exhibited lower global self-concept and academic confidence than their siblings. These children often internalized their academic struggles, leading to diminished self-worth and strained peer relationships. Despite these challenges, family support played a significant role in moderating the impact of learning disabilities on self-esteem and social adaptation. The study underscored the importance of inclusive family dynamics and parental involvement in promoting resilience and social competence among children with learning difficulties. It also pointed out the emotional burden often experienced by these children due to comparison with higher-achieving siblings, which may lead to feelings of inadequacy or withdrawal. The research advocated for targeted support strategies, both at home and in school, such as personalized academic plans, confidence-building exercises, and social skills training to enhance emotional well-being and peer interaction.

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METHODOLOGY

Aim

To study the impact of academic anxiety on self-esteem and social competence on school children of Ambala district of Haryana.

Objectives

- To investigate the role of academic anxiety on self-esteem.
- To investigate the role of academic anxiety on social competence.

Hypothesis

- Ho1- Academic Anxiety has a negative relationship with self-esteem
- Ho2- Academic Anxiety has a negative relationship with social competence.

Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative correlational research design to assess the impact of academic anxiety on self-esteem and social competence among the school children aged 13 to 16. The design is appropriate as it enables the researcher to explore how the variables are related and the intensity of their connection without altering the variables.

Sample

The sample consisted of 140 school children aged 13 to 16, drawn from schools in Ambala district of Haryana. Schools were selected through Random Sampling, ensuring that each school had an equal chance of being included in the study. When the schools were selected, students were chosen who met the criteria.

Inclusion Criteria

- Students aged between 13 and 16 were selected.
- Students actively enrolled in schools during the period of data collection.
- Students who have provided assent, along with written informed consent obtained from their parents or legal guardian.

Tools Used

Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC): Dr. A.K. Singh and Dr. A. Sen Gupta developed this scale which is a standardized instrument designed to assess academic anxiety among school-aged children, specifically those in VIII, IX, and X (aged 13 to 16). This scale evaluates anxiety related to various academic settings and subjects, and is widely utilized in educational research within the Indian context.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale: Developed by Morris Rosenberg, it is a globally recognized measure for self-esteem. Comprising of 10 items. It is rated on a 4-point Likert Scale, the RSES has demonstrated robust reliability and validity, making it one of the most widely used tools for assessing self-esteem in psychological research.

Social Competence Scale- School Setting (SCS- SSS): Founded by Prof. V.P. Sharma, Dr. Kiran Shukla, Dr. Prabha Shukla, this scale is utilized for evaluating students' social competence inside the school environments and giving us a comprehensive assessment about their interpersonal and social functioning within the academic settings.

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Procedure

Prior to the data collection, formal permission was secured from the administrative authorities of the randomly selected schools. Written consent was acquired from the parents or the legal guardians, and assent was obtained from the participating students.

Data collection was done during the regular school hours within the classroom environment. The questionnaires were administered to the students under the supervision of the researcher. Clear and standardized instructions were provided to ensure comprehension. The average time required for completion of questionnaires was 35 to 45 minutes. Throughout the process, participant's anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and students were encouraged to provide honest and accurate responses.

Statistical Analysis

- Data was analysed using the statistical package for Data Analysis (SPSS) software. The following methods for SPSS were employed:
- Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was utilized to examine the strengths and direction of the relationship between the variables.
- Simple linear regression was conducted to examine the predictive power of academic anxiety on self esteem and social competence.

Scoring

Academic Anxiety Scale for Children (AASC)

AASC consists of a total of 20 items. Each item is scored dichotomously, with possible scores of either 1 or 2. The scales includes two types of items: positive and negative. for positive items, a response of Yes is scored as 1, while for negative items, a response of No is scored as 1. All other items receive a score of 0. Consequently, higher total scores reflect greater academic anxiety and lower scores indicate lower academic anxiety.

Rosenberg Self- Esteem Scale (RSES)

The RSES has 10 items, each evaluated using a 4-point Likert scale

Strongly Agree- 3

Agree- 2

Disagree- 1

Strongly Disagree- 0

Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are scored reversely. After scoring all 10 items, total scores vary from 0-30.

Scores ranging from 15- 25 deem to be within the normal limit.

Scores falling below 15 indicate low self- esteem, whereas scores exceeding 25 suggest high self-esteem.

Social Competence Scale- School Setting (SCS- SSS)

SCS- SSS has over 50 items with responses rated on 5-point Likert scale. Very high with 5 scores and very low 1 score. The final score is determined by summing up the responses, with elevated scores showcasing greater degrees of social competence.

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RESULTS

Table-1

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	AASC ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: SE

b. All requested variables entered.

Table-2

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.726 ^a	.526	.523	3.242

a. Predictors: (Constant), AASC

Table-3

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1612.454	1	1612.454	153.385	<.001 ^b
	Residual	1450.717	138	10.512		
	Total	3063.171	139			

a. Dependent Variable: SE

b. Predictors: (Constant), AASC

TABLE-3 It shows $F = 153.385$, $p < .001$: The regression model is statistically significant. Academic anxiety reliably predicts self-esteem.

Table-4

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	26.902	.755		35.619	<.001
	AASC	-.899	.073	-.726	-12.385	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: SE

Table-4 shows academic anxiety significantly negatively predicts self-esteem (SE), with a strong negative correlation ($r = -.726$, $p < .001$). The model shows 52.6% of variance in SE ($R^2 = .526$). For every unit increase in academic anxiety (AASC), self-esteem decreases by 0.899 units ($B = -0.899$, $t = -12.385$, $p < .001$).

H-2. Academic anxiety has a negative relationship social competence

Table-5

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	AASC ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: SC

b. All requested variables entered.

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Table-6
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.315 ^a	.099	.093	27.244

a. Predictors: (Constant), AASC

Table-7
ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11268.739	1	11268.739	15.183	<.001 ^b
	Residual	102425.053	138	742.211		
	Total	113693.793	139			

a. Dependent Variable: SC

b. Predictors: (Constant), AASC

Table-7 shows Model is statistically significant: $F(1, 138) = 15.183, p < .001$. Indicates academic anxiety significantly affects social competence, though the explained variance is small.

Table-8
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	195.951	6.346		30.876	<.001
	AASC	-2.377	.610	-.315	-3.896	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: SC

Table-8 shows academic anxiety also significantly negatively predicts social competence (SC), though the effect is weaker ($r = -.315, p < .001$). This model accounts for 9.9% of the variance in SC ($R^2 = .099$). Each unit increase in academic anxiety reduces SC by 2.377 units ($B = -2.377, t = -3.896, p < .001$).

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the impact of academic anxiety on self esteem and social competence among school children, aligning with the substantial body of literature that identifies academic anxiety as a critical factor influencing students psychological well-being and academic performance (Hembree, 1988; Zeidner, 1998).

Our results demonstrated that academic anxiety significantly negatively predicting self esteem as supported by statistical analysis ($F(1, 138) = 153.385, p < .001$). according to the analysis, academic anxiety accounted for 52.6% of the variance in self- esteem ($R^2 = .526$), with a standardized coefficient of ($r = -.726, p < .001$), which further confirmed that for every unit of academic anxiety, self-esteem decreases by 0.899 units. This aligns with the existing literature that highlights the detrimental impact of anxiety on a person's sense of self-worth and confidence. Students experiencing elevated levels of academic anxiety often

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exhibit lower self-esteem, potentially creating a negative cycle, where anxiety undermines self-perception, which in turn exacerbates anxiety.

Academic anxiety also significantly negatively predicted social competence. The regression model demonstrated statistical significance with $F(1, 138) = 15.183, p < .001$, but the effect size was smaller than that for self-esteem, with academic anxiety explaining 9.9% of the variance in social competence ($R^2 = .099$). The standardized coefficient ($B = -2.377, p < .001$), further indicated negative association, though less pronounced. This suggests that while academic anxiety does impact social competence, though other factors play a more prominent role. These factors could include individual emotional intelligence, quality of peer interactions or external social support (McCarroll et al. 2009; Inam et al., 2014).

Our findings align with the existing literature, Demirtas-Zorbaz (2020) indicated that perfectionism heightens social anxiety, subsequently diminishing social competence, a dynamic that echoes the struggles faced by students in our study. The work of Strahan (2003) also supports the findings, noting that social anxiety impairs communication and peer interactions, negatively affecting academic performance and self-esteem, a sentiment further echoed by Ayeras et al. (n.d.). The current study also resonates with Qayyum et al. (2022), which highlights the academic stress with low social competence, escalates career related anxiety, suggesting a broader impact of academic anxiety beyond immediate academic settings.

Conversely studies like Wood emphasize the role of close relationships in buffering against anxiety, demonstrating the strong relationship between teachers and caregivers can reduce academic anxiety. Similarly, studies done by Magelinskaitė-Legkauskienė et al. (2014) suggests that integrating social competence training in early education builds resilience against academic anxiety. These findings suggest a multifaceted approach, combining anxiety reduction with social skills training can be very effective.

Given the detrimental impact of academic anxiety on both self-esteem and social competence, it is crucial to implement targeted interventions. Life skills training as suggested by Winarsunu et al. (2023), has been shown to increase self-esteem and reduce anxiety, enhancing emotional regulation and coping strategies. Furthermore, as mentioned by Qadri et al. (2023), fostering emotional competence can serve as protective factor for academic stress, promoting higher self-esteem and academic confidence.

Alvini et al. (2023) found that high parental expectations increased anxiety, while strong academic self-concept and social support reduced it. Schools should therefore strive to create a balanced and supportive environment that mitigate anxiety and enhance student achievement.

Despite these insights, study is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design constraints our ability to draw causal relationships between academic anxiety, self-esteem and social relationships. Longitudinal studies would provide a more nuanced of the dynamics of these variables. Furthermore, the generalizability maybe limited by the specific sample of school children included in the study. More studies need to be done to integrate the comprehensive approaches that combine anxiety reduction, social skills enhancement and emotional intelligence development (Brumariu et al., 2023).

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CONCLUSION

The study reinforces the need for intervention and support systems that targets both academic anxiety and related psychological factors in school children. It builds upon the existing research, providing empirical evidence of the markedly negative relationships between academic anxiety and both self-esteem and social competence. Implementing multi-faceted strategies that integrate anxiety reduction, social skills training and emotional competence development will promote academic success and overall well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

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