



## Relationship Between Social Anxiety and Academic Performance among University Students

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### Abstract:

The present study examined the correlations between social anxiety and students' academic performance. This research aimed to assess relationship between all facets of social anxiety and academic performance. The sample size was 203 which comprised 53.7 percent of female participants and 46.3 percent of male participants. Majority of the participants in the study were single (95.6percent) with middle socio economic status (94.1percent) and they belonged to Punjab Province (59.1%). The inter-items reliability of Leobitz Social Anxiety Scale was  $>.75$ . Moreover, the skewness and kurtosis values were  $\pm 2$ , which indicated the normal distribution of data'. Three valid and reliable instruments were used for data collection including, Liebowitz Social anxiety Scale (LSAS). The alpha reliability varies between 0.61 to 0.98 and Stroop test in psychology is used to assess the cognitive delay. The alpha reliability of Stroop test was 44.7 percent while its validity was reported 77.77percent. The results indicate that students who had high level of social anxiety had low academic achievement while those who had low level of anxiety show good academic performance. Female students score high on social anxiety and academic performance than male students.

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Punjab, social anxiety, academic performance, executive functioning, university students

### INTRODUCTION

Social anxiety is generally considered to be the experience of thinking about oneself, about others, and about some particular situations. Whenever, we encounter some unique situations and circumstances, the element of social anxiety is created in one or the other form. And most specifically when an individual wish to make a good impression on others and at the same time fears to do so, then he or she starts to feel social anxiety. According to Leta (2001), university students, particularly in the study process, have an incredible deal to create social anxiety. And many factors like new subjects, new challenges, and new hostel friends; identifying disasters, cultural shock, and problems of friendships contribute to raise social anxiety. Among university students, social anxiety disorders are increasing, but if a student consistently and continuously feels

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uneasiness '(Social anxiety)', then it could disrupt the output of the student. Moreover, those peoples who are with elevated 'levels of social anxiety' have experienced long duration of symptoms during university years. The researcher has identified that a lot of social anxiety gaps during research cycles, e.g. Exam test social anxiety, 'mathematical social anxiety, language social anxiety, social anxiety, family social anxiety, and social anxiety in the library are the main reasons of low achievements in academic performance (McCraty, 2007; Fatima et al., 2021; McCraty, Dana, Mike, Pam & Stephen, 2000).

Previous 'studies' mentioned (McCraty, 2007; McCraty, Dana, Mike, Pam & Stephen 2000), a significant predictor of academic success in context of social anxiety while studying the research papers had shown that social anxiety had a significant effect on 'academic performance. Luigi, Francesa, Maria, Eleonora, Valentina, Benedetto and McCraty (2007) mentioned in their articles that there is a correlation of social anxiety with academic performance, if there is extreme level of social anxiety then it affects students' academic performance and the severe stage of social anxiety intervenes with memory and concentration which are critical for academic performance. However, lack of concentration in studies of many students is due to exam social anxiety, social anxiety, mathematics social anxiety and many other sources of social anxiety. Furthermore, feeling uncomfortable and uneasiness (Social anxiety) in the classroom does not improve any kind of learning.

Social anxiety symptoms among university students according to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-V (DSM-V) are those that students experience before going to class like; feeling anxious, going blank during exam, feeling powerless while performing 'activities, or loss of interest in challenging subjects, whereas pounding heartbeat or an upset stomach are the physiological symptoms of social anxiety.

According to Spielberger (1983), social anxiety is essentially a cause of 'fear' and nervousness. Social anxiety causes the daily life of an individual, such as interfering 'activities and social life' to be difficult. "One of the large spectrums of mental and behavioral problems is social anxiety" (Rachel & Chidsey, 2005). Students with social anxiety disorder' show in their studies a passive attitude, e.g. low interest in learning, low achievement in examinations, and happen to be bad on assignments. Ruffins (2007) stated that its psychological symptoms in students include blank during a test, dependence on others "while doing assignments, or showing no interest in a difficult subject whereas the physiological symptoms include cold, increasing heartbeat, nervousness, panic, breathing 'fast, or an upset stomach."

Today, social 'anxiety is a' common phenomenon of every day's human life. Social anxiety is of two types:

- i. Trait social 'anxiety is a stable personality'
- ii. 'State social anxiety' is triggered by certain temporary environmental circumstances, such as exams, punishment or accident.

Meeten (2012) mentioned that Academic social 'anxiety is a' form 'of state social anxiety' that "relates to the difficulties from environment of academic institutions, including teachers," some subjects e.g. mathematics, English. Aronen and his colleagues (2005) mentioned that there is a potential correlation "between high levels of social anxiety" among students and low academic

performance. The previous researches have shown that elevated levels of social anxiety impact students' reduced working memory, diversion, and overall functioning of individuals.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Social anxiety is quite prevalent in the undergraduate population, what might be some of its effects on academic integration of the students who suffer from social anxiety. The evidence is only indirect. For example, in highly competent students, high trait social anxiety may contribute to significant levels of student discomfort and dissatisfaction with the undergraduate experience (Langston & Cantor, 1989). In addition, students high in social anxiety tend to underutilize active coping strategies, and report greater evaluation anxiety at critical junctures (Zeidner, 1994). Particularly, important for the college setting is the possibility that highly socially anxious individuals may "self-medicate" by engaging in alcohol consumption in order to decrease their distress in social situations (Jefferson, 1995).

Social anxiety as a predictor of academic persistence was examined in this study for a number of reasons. These had to do with the nature of the disorder, its prevalence in the undergraduate population, and inferences drawn from the models of student persistence put forth by Tinto, 1975, Tinto, 1993 and Bean, 1980; 1982; Bean, 1985; Metzner & Bean, 1985. There is a large body of work examining these models, and it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss them in any depth. Briefly, however, Tinto, (1975; 1993) suggests that students' willingness and ability to integrate themselves into the social and cultural life of the college community has a major impact on whether they will persist academically. He proposes that student's intentions, personal goals, and institutional commitments mediate the effects of other variables such as student socio-economic status (SES) and ethnicity, and they in turn shape the degree of academic and social integration that ultimately affects the students' decisions to stay or leave. However, thoughts of engaging or interacting with others might foster the social fears that are central to social anxiety, hindering any attempt to participate in the classroom, join in conversations, or ask for help in order to successfully maneuver through the university.

Developmental theories are also relevant to understand why engagement is important to academic success in university/college, most particularly Erikson's (1966) stage theory of psychosocial development. In the sixth stage, labeled intimacy versus isolation, Erikson hypothesized that a successful transition through early adulthood should involve the development of a healthy sense of identity as opposed to isolation.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

This is a correlational study and quantitative in nature. Convenient sampling technique was used to collect the data. This study consisted of research design, sampling strategy, sample size, instruments, procedure, operational definitions of the study variables, and ethical considerations.

#### **Sample**

The total sample size of this research was 203 out of which 94 were male and 109 were female. From the total, 55 males and 66 females were from BS Class and 39 males and 43 females were

from MS Class. The data was collected through convenient sampling technique. This research is based on students with their academic performance, social anxiety and executive functioning.

### Operational Definition of Variables

#### Social anxiety

Intensive social anxiety or fear of being judged, negatively assessed, or rejected during a social or academic performance in academics is the defining characteristic of social anxiety, which is also called phobia.

#### Academic Performance

Academic performance is the measurement of student's achievement across various academic subjects.

#### Executive Functioning

Executive functions are a set of cognitive processes that are important for behavioural cognitive control i.e. choosing behaviour that promote the achievement of chosen objectives and tracking them successfully.

#### Instruments

##### Demographic

Demographic sheet consists of name, gender, age, marital status, area, class, semester, CGPA, Socioeconomic Status, Province, Institute, Faculty and department

##### Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS)

Leibowitz, a researcher and psychiatrist developed LSAS scale to assess social anxiety among individuals. The 24 items self-rated LSAS Likert-scale which lies between 0-3 points (None, Never, Sever and usually) was used to assess how social anxiety plays a role in individual's life across different situations. The scale alpha reliability varies between 0.61 to 0.98.

Demographic Characteristics	Social Anxiety		Total n (%)
	Positive Cases n (%)	Negative Cases n (%)	
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	40 (19.7)	54 (26.6)	94 (46.3)
Female	57 (28.1)	52 (25.6)	109 (53.7)
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Single	93(45.8)	101 (49.8)	194 (95.6)
Married	04 (02.0)	05 (02.5)	09 (04.4)

<b>Locality</b>			
Rural	58 (28.6)	43 (21.2)	101 (49.8)
Urban	39 (19.2)	63 (31.0)	102 (50.2)
<b>Institutional Affiliation</b>			
International Islamic University	65 (32.0)	54 (26.6)	119 (58.6)
Quad-e-Azam University	32 (15.8)	52 (25.6)	84 (41.4)
<b>Socio Economic Status</b>			
Low	04 (02.0)	00 (00.0)	04 (02.0)
Middle	91 (44.8)	100 (49.3)	191 (94.1)
High	02 (01.0)	06 (03.0)	08 (03.9)
<b>Province</b>			
Punjab	53 (26.1)	67 (33)	120 (59.1)
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	32 (15.8)	30 (14.8)	62 (30.5)
Sindh	03 (01.5)	03 (01.5)	06 (03)
Balochistan	04 (02.0)	02 (01)	06 (03)
Azad Jammu Kashmir	05 (02.5)	04 (02)	09 (04.4)
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
<b>Age</b>	22.23 (2.81)	22.49 (3.25)	44.72 (6.06)
<b>Academic Performance</b>	81.83 (8.61)	79.46 (9.94)	161.29 (18.55)

### Stroop Test

The Stroop test first published in 1935 in English after the work by John Ridely Stroop test in psychology is used to assess the cognitive delay. The effect of mismatch stimuli is assessed by colors e.g. (blue, green, tan and red) and the word red is printed in blue ink instead of red ink. The alpha reliability of Stroop test was 44.7% while its validity was reported 77.77%.

### RESULTS

#### Table 1

#### Socio Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 203)

**Note.** Positive Cases = Scored above 65 on Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale; Negative Cases = Scored below 65 on Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 1 describes 'the socio demographic characteristics of the sample'. 'The ratio of female participants' was 53.7percent whereas the male participants' ratio was 46.3percent. Majority of the participants in the study were single (95.6percent) with middle socio economic status (94.1percent) and they belonged to Punjab Province (59.1percent).

**Table 2**  
Psychometric Properties of Instruments (N = 203)

Measures	<i>Ki</i>	<i>iM</i>	<i>SiD</i>	<i>ai</i>	Range		Skiew	Kurtosiis
					Potential	Actual		
LSAS	24	61	20.68	0.90	0-144	10-138	0.08	0.24
a) PA	13	14.26	7.00	0.80	0-39	1-38	0.32	-0.20
b) SA	11	12.28	6.01	0.77	0-33	1-31	0.32	-0.20
c) PAV	13	18.35	8.26	0.83	0-39	1-38	0.27	-0.47
d) SAV	11	16.12	6.57	0.77	0-33	0-32	0.35	-0.15

**Note.** LSAS = Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale; PA= Performance Anxiety; PAV = Performance Avoidance; SA = Social Anxiety; SAV = Social Avoidance

Table 2 describes the psychometric properties of measures. The inter-items reliability index was  $>.75$ . Moreover, the skewness and kurtosis values were  $\pm 2$ , which indicated the normal distribution of data.'

**Table 3**

Correlations between Social Anxiety Scales and Academic Performance (N = 203)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. LSAS	1	.733**	.696**	.771**	.759**	0.059
a. PA	-	1	.780**	.239**	.219**	0.069
b. SA	-	-	1	.167*	.227**	0.028
c. PAV	-	-	-	1	.754**	0.062
d. SAV	-	-	-	-	1	0.010
2. Academic Performance	-	-	-	-	-	1

**Note.** LSAS = Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale; PA= Performance Anxiety; PAV = Performance Avoidance; SA = Social Anxiety; SAV = Social Avoidance

\* = 'p < .05'

\*\* = p < .01'

'Table 3 describes the correlation between the' sub scales of social anxiety and academic performance. Findings indicated that Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale and Academic Performance had a positive correlation ( $r=0.05$ ;  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 4**

Mean Differences between Positive and Negative Cases on Social Anxiety (N = 203)

Variables	Social Anxiety				<i>iT</i>	<i>Pi</i>	95i% CI		Cohein's d
	Positive		Negative				<i>LiL</i>	<i>UiL</i>	
	<i>Mi</i>	<i>SiD</i>	<i>Mi</i>	<i>SiD</i>					
1. LSAS	78.09	12.12	45.35	13.11	18.41	0.00	-	-	2.56
2. PA	17.96	7.30	10.91	4.68	8.25	0.00	36.24	29.23	1.16
3. SA	15.20	6.23	9.65	4.42	7.35	0.00	-8.73	-5.36	1.03
4. PAV	24.21	6.45	12.90	5.59	13.36	0.00	-7.03	-4.05	1.88
5. SAV	20.73	5.33	11.90	4.41	12.89	0.00	-	-9.64	1.81
							12.97	-7.48	
							10.18		

**Note.** LSAS = Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale; PA= Performance Anxiety; PAV = Performance Avoidance; SA = Social Anxiety; SAV = Social Avoidance

Table 4 indicated the mean differences between positive and negative cases on social anxiety in relation to its subscale. Findings indicated that on average participants with positive social anxiety scored higher as compared to negative cases.

**Table 5**

Mean Differences between Males and Females on Social Anxiety (N = 203)

Variables	Gender				<i>ti</i>	<i>Ip</i>	95i% CiI		Coihen's d
	Male		Female				<i>LiL</i>	<i>UiL</i>	
	<i>iM</i>	<i>SiD</i>	<i>iM</i>	<i>SiD</i>					
1. LSAS	57.69	18.16	63.84	22.33	2.13	.02	-11.84	-0.45	0.30
2. PA	13.18	6.80	15.19	7.07	2.06	.41	-3.39	-0.08	0.28
3. SA	11.00	5.14	13.40	6.50	-2.89	.004	-4.04	-0.75	0.40
4. PAV	18.27	7.88	18.41	8.61	-0.12	.90	-2.43	2.15	0.01
5. SAV	15.29	6.49	16.83	6.58	-1.68	0.09	-3.36	0.26	0.23

**Note.** LSAS = Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale; PA= Performance Anxiety; PAV = Performance Avoidance; SA = Social Anxiety; SAV = Social Avoidance

Table 5 describes the gender differences in participants with regard to social anxiety and academic performance. Findings indicated that females scored significantly higher on Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scales as compared to males.

**Table 6**

Mean Differences between BS and MS Class on Social anxiety (N = 203)

Variables	Class				T	P	95% CI		Cohen's d
	BS		MS				LL	UL	
	M	SD	M	SD					
1. LSAS	61.88	21.24	60.56	19.94	-49	.618	- 7.32	4.367	0.07
2. PA	13.72	07.08	15.06	06.85	-1.3	.179	- 3.31	.623	0.25
3. SA	12.21	06.42	12.39	05.39	-.20	.837	- 1.87	1.522	0.03
4. PAV	18.28	08.48	18.45	07.97	-.14	.884	- 2.50	2.160	0.02
5. SAV	16.21	06.82	15.98	06.22	.254	.800	- 1.62	2.098	0.03

**Note.** LSAS = Leibowitz Social anxiety Scale; PA= Performance Social anxiety; PAV = Performance Avoidance; SA = Social anxiety; SAV = Social Avoidance

Table 6 describes the education wise differences between BS and MS participants with regard to social anxiety and academic performance. The findings indicated that BS students scored significantly higher on Leibnitz Social anxiety Scale as compared to MS students.

## DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to analyze the impact of social anxiety on academic achievement among university pupils: In 2001, Leta stated that university students, particularly in the study process, have an incredible deal to create anxiety. These include subjects, challenges, and new friends; identify disasters, cultural differences, and relationship issues that increase social anxiety. Social Anxiety disorder is rising in students. But maintaining to feel uneasiness (Social Anxiety) could disrupt the output of student. Individuals with elevated levels of social anxiety have experienced duration symptoms during university years.

In first hypothesis academic performance was more in normal students than in social anxiety students, so from result chapter table-4 it is clear that those students who had high level of social anxiety had low academic achievement while those who had low level of anxiety, they are good in 'academic performance (Vukovic, & Lesaux, 2013; Ren et al., 2015).'

After that in second hypothesis mentioned that social anxiety was negatively correlated with academic performance. 'The psychological symptoms of anxiety among students include feeling anxious before a study class, panic, going blank during a test', feeling powerless during tasks or loss of interest in difficult subjects, sweaty palms, racing heartbeat or indigestion are the physiological symptoms. However, due to review of anxiety, social anxiety is also because of mathematical anxiety, classmate's anxiety, presentation anxiety, stage phobia and many other causes. Most scholars had skipped the concentration of research inside the classroom where students feel



nervous and anxious which does not boost learning of any sort. As the findings of the current study revealed the relationship between social anxiety and academic achievements. The findings are in consistence to those reported in other jurisdictions (Luigi, Francesca, Maria, Eleonora, Valentina and Benedetto, 2007; Khan et al., 2022; MsCraty, 2007; Xue et al., 2021).

Further, the hypothesis that female students will score high on social anxiety and academic performance than male students is approved. Similarly, the same findings are reported in previous studies (Bandalos et al., 1995; Khan et al., 2022; Hembree, 1988; Volkmer & Feather, 1991; Zeidner, 1990).

## CONCLUSION

This research aimed to assess relationship between social anxiety and academic performance among the university students. The results indicated that those students who had high level of social anxiety had low academic achievement while those who had low level of anxiety were good in academic performance. Mostly participants had skipped the concentration of research inside the classroom where students feel nervous and anxious which does not boost learning of any sort. The findings of the study revealed the strong relationship between social anxiety and academic achievements. Furthermore, the hypothesis that female students would score high on social anxiety and academic performance then male students has been proved.

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