

# Social Anxiety in Undergraduate Students

Tejashwini B. P.

\*Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Maharani's Arts College for Women, Mysuru -570005

## ABSTRACT

The concept of Social Anxiety has received much attention from academia over the last decade in India. Widespread research has conceptualized the term Social Anxiety with almost all of the studies either conceptual or based on case studies. The purpose of the present study is to study the Social Anxiety among degree students. To achieve the stipulated objectives a descriptive casual comparative method of research was followed. A total of 80 samples were collected in which, 40 samples were of males and 40 samples were of females. The samples are collected randomly from undergraduate students. The data was collected by administering the Semi structured interview schedule, Social Anxiety scale. The data was then analyzed through Mean, percentage, sd and t-test for the comparison of mean scores between groups with the help of SPSS 20. The findings revealed that there is a significant gender difference in the level of Social Anxiety among college students. Overall, it is found that females have a higher level of social anxiety than males.

## Key words:

*Social Anxiety and degree students*

## Introduction

Students with **social anxiety** feel overly concerned with how others see them. They feel extremely self-conscious and fear being embarrassed, making mistakes, or looking foolish. As a result, they may feel anxious about participating in social and performance-based situations.

Social anxiety is a fear reaction to something that isn't actually dangerous — although the body and mind react as if the danger is real. This means students with social anxiety actually feel the physical sensations of fear, like a faster heartbeat and breathing. Fears that they'll be embarrassed, look foolish, make a mistake, or be judged, criticized, or laughed at (even if these fears aren't realistic) lead them to avoid many situations.

Some students with social anxiety are so fearful about talking to others that they don't speak at all to certain people (such as teachers or students they don't know) or in certain places (like at school or at someone else's house). This form of social anxiety is called **selective mutism**.

Students who have social anxiety may need therapy to help them overcome it. Therapists treat social anxiety with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).

Therapists teach students skills to calm themselves. They also teach ways to adjust thoughts that lead to anxiety and ways to use more helpful thoughts in situations that trigger anxiety. Therapists also use exposure therapy, where students gradually face situations that trigger their anxiety, often using a ranked list of least-to most-difficult situations.

Gradually, students learn to face feared situations rather than avoid them. In some cases where social anxiety interferes with day-to-day functioning, doctors may prescribe medicines to help ease the anxiety. Some students may need this before they are able to face feared situations.

### **Need for the study:**

The impact of social anxiety disorder on quality of life is enormous. Studying social anxiety in undergraduate students is crucial for understanding its prevalence, impact on Social Anxiety, mental health outcomes, and potential interventions tailored to this demographic. It helps educators and mental health professionals develop strategies to support students facing these challenges and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

**Problem:** Social anxiety in undergraduate students.

### **Objectives:**

- To find out the level of social anxiety among males and females.
- To find out the gender differences in the levels of social anxiety.
- To find out the relationship between social anxiety and total fear.

- To find out the relationship between total fear and total avoidance.
- To find out the relationship between total avoidance and social anxiety.

### Hypotheses:

- The level of social anxiety is low in males when compared to females.
- Females have a higher level of anxiety when compared to males.
- Relationship between social anxiety and total fear exists.
- Relationship between total fear and total avoidance exists.
- Relationship between total avoidance and social anxiety exists.

### Sample:

- A total of 80 samples were collected in which, 40 samples were of males and 40 samples were of females. The samples are collected randomly from undergraduate students.

### Tools Employed:

- Leibowitz Social Anxiety Scale ( Dr. Michael R. Leibowitz (1987))

Statements:	24
Duration:	5–10 minutes
Type:	Screening tool
Authors:	Dr. Michael R. Liebowitz
Publishing year:	1987

The Leibowitz social anxiety scale (LSAS), formerly called the Leibowitz Social Phobia Scale (LSPS), was developed in the 1980's to permit the qualification of symptomatic distress and impairment caused by social anxiety disorder (Leibowitz 1987).

The original scale was created as a clinician-rated measure. Administration involves the clinician asking clients to rate their fear and avoidance (from 0-3) for each of the social and performance situations listed. Although client provides the initial rating, the clinician may adjust these scores based upon clinical judgment. Recently, the scale has used as a self-report measure, which allows for quicker and less costly administration. Additionally, a children's version of the scale is also available (Masia -Warner et al., 2003).

The Test consists of 24 statements, giving you 4 choices in two categories for each statement:

#### **Fear**

1. None = 0 points
2. Mild = 1 point
3. Moderate = 2 points
4. Severe = 3 points

#### **Avoidance**

1. Never = 0 points
2. Occasionally = 1 point
3. Often = 2 points
4. Usually = 3 points

#### **Procedure:**

The scale consists of 24 statements which are to be answered by the subjects. The subjects have to choose from 4 alternatives. These alternatives represent how much they would avoid or fear to the given statement.

The subject has to answer for both fear and avoidance. Later on interpretations are made to find out the social anxiety of the subject.

### Statistical Tools Employed:

**Correlation:** Correlation is a statistical measure that expresses the extent to which two variables are linearly related (meaning they change together at a constant rate). It's a common tool for describing simple relationships without making a statement about cause and effect.

**t-Test :** A t-test (also known as Student's t-test) is a tool for evaluating the means of one or two populations using hypothesis testing.

### Analysis and interpretation of the data

**Table-1 :** Mean social anxiety scores of males and females :

Source	Gender	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean	t	p
Social Anxiety Score	Male	40	43.9750	22.73875	3.59531	-2.154	.034
	Female	40	55.9250	26.72403	4.22544		

A significant difference existed between males and females in their levels of social anxiety scores ( $t = -2.154$  ;  $p = .034$ ). From the mean scores it is clear that females have higher levels of social anxiety scores compared to males i.e, 55.9250 and 43.9750 respectively

**Table-2** : Mean total fear scores of males and females

Source	Gender	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean	t	p
Total Fear Score	Male	40	20.1750	11.03581	1.74491	-1.582	.118
	Female	40	24.8000	14.84138	2.34663		

A non-significant difference existed between males and females in their levels of total fear scores ( $t = -1.582$  ;  $p = .034$ ). From the mean scores it is clear that females have higher levels of social anxiety scores compared to males i.e, 24.8000 and 20.1750 respectively.

**Table-3** : Mean total avoidance scores of males and females

Source	Gender	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.Error Mean	t	p
Total Avoidance Score	Male	40	23.800	13.18157	2.08419	-2.388	.019
	Female	40	31.125	14.23104	2.25012		

A significant difference existed between males and females in their levels of total avoidance scores ( $t = -2.388$  ;  $p = .019$ ). From the mean scores it is clear that females have higher levels of social anxiety scores compared to males i.e, 31.125 and 23.800 respectively.

**Table-4** : Results of Pearson's product movement correlation between the domains of social anxiety scores :

V1	V2	r	p
Social Anxiety Score	Total Fear Score	.924	.000
Total Fear Score	Total Avoidance Score	.725	.000
Total Avoidance Score	Social Anxiety Score	.934	.000
N = 80			

Between social anxiety scores and total fear scores, a highly significant relationship existed ( $r = .924$  ;  $p = .000$ ). In other words, as the social anxiety increased, total fear also increased linearly and vice-versa.

Between total fear score and total avoidance scores, a highly significant relationship existed ( $r = .725$  ;  $p = .000$ ). In other words, as the total fear increased, total avoidance also increased linearly and vice-versa.

Between total avoidance scores and social anxiety scores also, a highly significant relationship existed ( $r = .934$  ;  $p = .000$ ). In other words, as the total avoidance increased, social anxiety also increased linearly and vice-versa.

## DISCUSSION:

### Major Findings Of The Research

1. Females have a higher level of social anxiety when compared to males.
2. The total fear score is at the same level for both males and females.
3. Females have a higher score in total avoidance score when compared to that of males.
4. Relationship between social anxiety scores and total fear scores exists.
5. Relationship between total fear scores and total avoidance scores exists.
6. Relationship between total avoidance scores and social anxiety scores exists



## Verification Of The Hypotheses

Sl no	Hypothesis	Accepted/Rejected
1.	The level of social anxiety is low in males when compared to females.	Accepted
2.	Females have a higher level of anxiety when compared to males.	Accepted
3.	Relationship between social anxiety and total fear exists.	Accepted
4.	Relationship between total fear and total avoidance exists.	Accepted
5.	Relationship between total avoidance and social anxiety exists.	Accepted

## CONCLUSION:

This is a research conducted to find out the extent of social anxiety in males and females and the gender differences in social anxiety. 80 students had taken the test of LSAS-SF out of which 40 were males and 40 were females. It is found that females have a higher level of social anxiety when compared to males (Mean of social anxiety score males = 43.9750 ; Mean of social anxiety score females = 55.9250). There is no difference in the scores of males and females in total fear scores. Females have a higher score in total avoidance score when compared to that of males (Mean of total avoidance score of males = 23.800; Mean of total avoidance score of females = 31.125). Overall, it is found that females have a higher level of social anxiety than males.



## References:

- Heimberg, R. G., Horner, K. J., Juster, H. R., Safren, S. A., Brown, E. J., Schneier, F. R., & Liebowitz, M. R. (1999). Psychometric properties of the Liebowitz social anxiety scale. *Psychological medicine*, 29(1), 199-212.
- Baker, S. L., Heinrichs, N., Kim, H. J., & Hofmann, S. G. (2002). The Liebowitz social anxiety scale as a self-report instrument: a preliminary psychometric analysis. *Behaviour research and therapy*, 40(6), 701-715.

