Social Phobia among Arts and Science College Students

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ABSTRACT

Social phobia, also called social anxiety disorder, is an anxiety disorder characterized by overwhelming anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in everyday social situations. People with social phobia have a persistent, intense, and chronic fear of being watched and judged by others and of being embarrassed or humiliated by their own actions. Their fear may be so severe that it interferes with work, school, or other activities. While many people with social phobia recognize that their fear of being around people may be excessive or unreasonable, they are unable to overcome it. They often worry for days or weeks in advance of a dreaded situation. In addition, they often experience low self-esteem and depression. The present study consists of 250 college students studying in Arts and Science colleges situated in Namakkal District of Tamil Nadu, India. The present study reveals that the Arts and Science college students are having moderate level of social phobia and irrespective of sub samples of the Arts and Science college students are having moderate level of social phobia. The social phobia of female students is better than male students. The social phobia of urban area students is better than rural students. The social phobia of Government college students is better than private college students. The social phobia of arts group students is better than science group students.

Key Word- Social Phobia
SOCIAL PHOBIA

Social phobia is a type of anxiety problem. Extreme feelings of shyness and self-consciousness build into a powerful fear. As a result, a person feels uncomfortable participating in everyday social situations. People with social phobia can usually interact easily with family and a few close friends. But meeting new people, talking in a group, or speaking in public can cause their extreme shyness to kick in. With social phobia, a person's extreme shyness, self-consciousness, and fears of embarrassment get in the way of life. Instead of enjoying social activities, people with social phobia might dread them and avoid some of them altogether.

Social phobia is a strong fear of being judged by others and of being embarrassed. This fear can be so strong that it gets in the way of going to work or school or doing other everyday things. Everyone has felt anxious or embarrassed at one time or another. For example, meeting new people or giving a public speech can make anyone nervous.

People with social phobia are afraid of doing common things in front of other people. For example, they might be afraid to sign a check in front of a cashier at the grocery store, or they might be afraid to eat or drink in front of other people, or use a public restroom. Most people who have social phobia know that they shouldn't be as afraid as they are, but they can't control their fear. Sometimes, they end up staying away from places or events where they think they might have to do something that will embarrass them. For some people, social phobia is a problem only in certain situations, while others have symptoms in almost any social situation.

Social phobia is a medical condition characterized by extreme and consistent fear of meeting new people or embarrassing oneself in social situations. Social phobia is different than the occasional nervousness or shyness a person may feel before a big social event, and it may dramatically limit a person's ability to engage in ordinary social activities.

Social phobia, one of the most common anxiety disorders in adults, is thought to affect about one percent of children. It is possible that the incidence is higher than one percent because children's symptoms may incorrectly be attributed to a shy personality rather than a treatable condition. The tendency to develop social phobia involves both genetic and environmental factors.

Young people with social phobia are frequently preoccupied with negative views of themselves. These children are afraid they will speak or act foolishly, be rejected by peers, or
publicly fail when performing school tasks. Children with social phobia may in fact be less adept in social interactions. When social phobia develops in childhood, the symptoms generally last at least six months, which distinguishes it from the temporary social awkwardness that many children briefly experience in new environments. Peer relationships, school functioning and attendance, and family functioning may all suffer as a result of a child's social phobia.

Social phobia may look different in young people than in adults. While adults recognize the excessiveness of their discomfort in social situations, children may not have that understanding. Younger children with social phobia may protest when forced to leave a parent's side, have a tantrum when facing a social encounter, refuse to play with friends, or complain about physical illness at the time of a social event. In contrast, adolescents may simply avoid group gatherings or describe little interest in friendships. Childhood social phobia is often identified around age 12, at a time when children are expected to increase their social activities with peers and in school.

**Signs and Symptoms of Social Phobia**

People with social phobia tend to:

- Be very anxious about being with other people and have a hard time talking to them, even though they wish they could
- Be very self-conscious in front of other people and feel embarrassed
- Be very afraid that other people will judge them
- Worry for days or weeks before an event where other people will be
- Stay away from places where there are other people
- Have a hard time making friends and keeping friends
- Blush, sweat, or tremble around other people
- Feel nauseous or sick to their stomach when with other people.

Social phobia sometimes runs in families, but no one knows for sure why some people have it, while others don't. Researchers have found that several parts of the brain are involved in fear and anxiety. Some researchers think that misreading of others’ behavior may play a role in causing social phobia. For example, you may think that people are staring or frowning at you when they truly are not. Weak social skills are another possible cause of social phobia. For example, if you have weak social skills, you may feel discouraged after talking with
people and may worry about doing it in the future. By learning more about fear and anxiety in the brain, scientists may be able to create better treatments. Researchers are also looking for ways in which stress and environmental factors may play a role.

**People with social phobia have both emotional and physical symptoms**

Some of the emotional symptoms include:

- Excessive self-consciousness and anxiety in everyday social situations
- Intense worry for days, weeks, or even months before an upcoming social situation
- Extreme fear of being watched or judged by others, especially people you don’t know
- Fear that you’ll act in ways that will embarrass or humiliate yourself
- Fear that others will notice that you’re nervous

Examples of physical symptoms include:

- Red face, or blushing
- Shortness of breath
- Upset stomach, nausea (i.e. butterflies)
- Trembling or shaking (including shaky voice)
- Racing heart or tightness in chest
- Sweating or hot flashes
- Feeling dizzy or faint

**Behavioural symptoms**

- Avoiding social situations to a degree that limits your activities or disrupts your life
- Staying quiet or hiding in the background in order to escape notice and embarrassment
- A need to always bring a buddy along with you wherever you go
- Drinking before social situations in order to soothe your nerves

**Specific Symptoms of Social Phobia**

Social phobia disorder is characterized by the presence of all of the following symptoms:

- A significant and persistent fear of one or more social or performance situations in which the person is exposed to unfamiliar people or to possible scrutiny by others. The individual fears that he or she will act in a way (or show anxiety symptoms) that will be humiliating or embarrassing. *Note: In children, there must be evidence of the capacity for age-appropriate social relationships with familiar people and the anxiety must occur in peer settings, not just in interactions with adults.*
According to DSM-5, a diagnosis can also be given if the fear occurs exclusively in the context of social performance situations.

Exposure to the feared social situation almost invariably provokes anxiety, which may take the form of a situational bound or situational predisposed Panic Attack. *Note: In children, the anxiety may be expressed by crying, tantrums, freezing, or shrinking from social situations with unfamiliar people.*

The person recognizes that the fear is excessive or unreasonable. *Note: In children, this feature may be absent.*

The feared social or performance situations are avoided or else are endured with intense anxiety or distress.

The avoidance, anxious anticipation, or distress in the feared social or performance situation(s) interferes significantly with the person’s normal routine, occupational (academic) functioning, or social activities or relationships, or there is marked distress about having the phobia.

In individuals under age 18 years, the duration is at least 6 months.

The fear or avoidance is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or a general medical condition and is not better accounted for by another mental disorder.

If a general medical condition or another mental disorder is present, the fear in the first criteria is unrelated to it, e.g., the fear is not of Stuttering, trembling in Parkinson’s disease, or exhibiting abnormal eating behavior in Anorexia Nervosa or Bulimia Nervosa.

**Social Anxiety in Teenagers: Facts**

After depression and alcoholism, social anxiety is the third most common psychiatric disorder. It affects approximately 17 million people. It is more common in women than men and is usually present by adolescence. Rarely does an adult suddenly develop social anxiety disorder, almost always the disorder began in teenage years or in childhood.

**Social Anxiety in Teenagers: Areas of Impairment**

Social anxiety disorder causes impairment in employment and academic functioning and can seriously limit one’s ability to succeed. Specifically in the year leading up to college and the first year of college, I see social anxiety in teenagers cropping up more frequently. It
interferes in the anxious person’s friendly and romantic relationships, academic success and sense of self esteem.

**Social Anxiety in Teenagers: Treatment**

Treatment of social anxiety disorder consists of education about the disorder from the therapist who may recommend self help materials. Each person who has social anxiety disorder is different and so treatment is tailored individually after a thorough assessment. Carefully planned activities are utilized therapy to reduce anxiety around social situations. The therapist will also examine the beliefs and ideas that are driving the behavior, and will teach new skills to help the adult or teen who is struggling to interact with others more comfortably.

**Therapy for social phobia**

Cognitive-behavioral therapy for social phobia typically involves:

- Learning how to control the physical symptoms of anxiety through relaxation techniques and breathing exercises.
- Challenging negative, unhelpful thoughts that trigger and fuel social anxiety, replacing them with more balanced views.
- Facing the social situations to fear in a gradual, systematic way, rather than avoiding them.

Group therapy involves:

Group therapy for social anxiety disorder uses acting, videotaping and observing, mock interviews, and other exercises to work on situations that make an anxious in the real world.

**REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES**

**Stefan G. Hofmann et.al., [1996]** Issues related to social anxiety among controls in social phobia research. Twenty-four social phobic individuals and 22 nonphobic controls participated in an interview and questionnaire study. By applying the same criterion that was used in a previous study, both phobics and controls were retrospectively subdivided into groups with or without generalized social fear, yielding four groups: nongeneralized phobic’s \((n = 9)\), generalized phobic’s \((n = 15)\), nongeneralized controls \((n = 10)\), and generalized controls \((n = 12)\). The four groups differed in the severity ratings of their social anxiety. Generalized controls scored as high as nongeneralized phobic’s. These two groups showed lower scores than generalized phobic’s and higher scores than nongeneralized controls. A comparison with scores reported in other studies indicated that the nongeneralized controls
can be characterized as “supernormal,” and generalized controls as “subclinical.” The results illustrate problems related to the use of control groups in social phobia research.

Turk, C.L., et al., [1998] An investigation of gender differences in social phobia. The present study was an exploratory investigation of gender differences in a large sample of persons with social phobia. Potential differences in demographic characteristics, comorbidity, severity of fear, and situations feared were examined. No differences were found on history of social phobia, social phobia subtype, or comorbidity of additional anxiety disorders, mood disorders, or avoidant personality disorder. However, women exhibited more severe social fears as indexed by several assessment instruments. Some differences between men and women also emerged in their report of severity of fear in specific situations. Women reported significantly greater fear than men while talking to authority, acting/performing/giving a talk in front of an audience, working while being observed, entering a room when others are already seated, being the centre of attention, speaking up at a meeting, expressing disagreement or disapproval to people they do not know very well, giving a report to a group, and giving a party. Men reported significantly more fear than women regarding urinating in public bathrooms and returning goods to a store. Additionally, there were some differences in the proportion of men and women reporting fear in different situations. Specifically, more women than men reported fear of going to a party, and more men than women reported fear of urinating in a public restroom. Gender differences among patients with social phobia are discussed in the context of traditional sex-role expectations.

Carla A. Hitchcock, et al., [2009]. Recent findings in social phobia among children and adolescents. Childhood social phobia (SP) is common and associated with varying forms of impairment. The cause of social anxiety disorder is often complex, involving both genetic and environmental factors. Shyness in young children may be a possible precursor to social anxiety later in life, although not the sole antecedent. Current assessment of childhood social anxiety includes psychometrically sound self report and clinician administered measures either specifically targeting SP disorder or including the construct as a subscale of a broader measure. The type of measure that is used most often depends on the purpose of the assessment, the setting, time constraints, and required training. Extant data support the efficacy of both psychosocial and pharmacological interventions, with response rates ranging from 50–80%. Further research is needed to clarify the developmental stages of SP, the psychometric properties of brief measures, as well as the efficacy of combined interventions.
NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Social anxiety disorder, also known as social phobia, is an intense fear of becoming extremely anxious and possibly humiliated in social situations. A person who suffers from social phobia tends to think that other people are far better at public speaking, or hanging out in a social and mingling with others at a party. The person tends to focus on every little small mistake they do in a social situation, and exaggerate them out of proportion. Simply blushing may seem painfully embarrassing to a person with a social phobia, and they may feel as though all eyes are focused on them.

Some people with social phobia have specific fears, such as public speaking or needing to talk to their boss about a concern at work. Other times, the fears may be more generalized — such as a fear of any social situation whatsoever, especially those involving strangers. Some people confuse shyness with social phobia. In some rare instances, social phobia may involve a fear of using a public restroom, eating out, or talking on the phone when others are present.

Social phobia disorder is not shyness, although sometimes people mistake the two. While shy people may be uneasy around others, they generally don’t experience the same kinds of extreme anxiety someone with a social phobia does. Additionally, shy people generally do not engage in the extreme avoidance of social situations that a person with social phobia does. Social phobia disrupts normal life, interfering with career or social relationships. The present study deals with the social phobia among college students, so the present study is need of the hour.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem undertaken by the investigator is stated as “Social Phobia Among Arts And Science College Students”.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The investigator of the present study framed the following objectives:

1. To find out the level of social phobia among Arts and Science college students in Namakkal district of Tamilnadu, India.

2. To find out whether there is significant difference between the following sub samples with respect to social phobia.
   a) Gender [Male / Female]
b) Locality [Rural / Urban]
c) Management [Government / Private] and
d) Subject [Science / Arts]

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The investigator of the present study framed the following hypotheses:

1. There is significant mean difference between male and female students with respect to social phobia.
2. There is significant mean difference between rural and urban area students with respect to social phobia.
3. There is significant mean difference between Government and private college students with respect to social phobia.
4. There is significant mean difference between science and arts group students with respect to social phobia.

THE METHOD

In the present study, the investigator applied normative survey as a method. The normative survey method studies, describes and interprets what exists at present.

SAMPLE

A sample is a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis. By observing the characteristics of the sample, one can make certain inferences about the characteristics of the population from which it is drawn.

The present study consists of 250 college students studying in Arts and Science colleges situated in Namakkal District of Tamil Nadu, India. The sample was selected by using simple random sampling technique. The sample forms a representative sample of the entire population.

TOOL USED

The investigator of the present study selected and used the social phobia scale was constructed and standardized by ‘Dr. Devendra Singh Sisodia’ for data collection.

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

For the analysis of the data, the following statistical techniques have been used.

a. Descriptive analysis (Mean & S.D) and
b. Differential analysis (‘t’ test)
TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

TABLE - 1
SHOWING THE MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF SOCIAL PHOBIA SCORES OF ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Significant at 0.05 level</th>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>63.62</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>142</td>
<td>61.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Locality</td>
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<td>Management</td>
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<td>15.93</td>
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</table>

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
The following are the main findings of the present investigation.

1. The Arts and Science college students are having moderate level of social phobia and irrespective of sub samples of the Arts and Science college students are having moderate level of social phobia.
2. Male and female students do not differ significantly in their social phobia scores.
3. Rural and urban area students do not differ significantly in their social phobia scores.
4. Government and private college students do not differ significantly in their social phobia scores.
5. Science and Arts group students do not differ significantly in their social phobia scores.

CONCLUSION
The present study reveals that the Arts and Science college students are having moderate level of social phobia and irrespective of sub samples of the Arts and Science
college students are having moderate level of social phobia. The social phobia of female
students is better than their counter part. The social phobia of urban area students is better
than their counter part. The social phobia of Government college students is better than their
counter part. The social phobia of arts group students is better than their counter part.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The result of the study shows that the level of Arts and Science college student’s
social phobia, social phobia is one of the most common mental disorders. It usually begins in
the early to mid teens, although it can sometimes start earlier in childhood or in adulthood.
Meeting new people, giving a speech in public or making an important work presentation
may trigger social phobia symptoms for the first time. These symptoms usually have their
roots in adolescence, however. Social phobia is a chronic mental health condition, but
treatment such as psychological counseling, medication and learning coping skills can help
the students to gain confidence and improve their ability to interact with others. Avoidance of
anxiety-producing social situations or enduring them with intense fear or anxiety. In
psychotherapy, the students can learn how to recognize and change negative thoughts about
their self and develop skills to help them to gain confidence in social situations.
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