

## Social Anxiety: A Comparative Study

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### ABSTRACT

Society is acquainted to every individual's life, even an introvert person makes one or two social contacts to survive. But a major problem of social acceptance is rising in today's modern world. Everyone in this term, are running behind to match themselves with the society's status so that they could be easily accepted by them, and if this failed, then it could lead to a problem named as SOCIAL ANXIETY, an anxiety where a person is afraid to be accepted, to stand in front of others, to be judged by others and so on. So, to get more knowledge about this issue, a comparative study has been designed on the sample of 100 individuals of age range (18-25) years with the help of Social Anxiety questionnaire for Adults (SAQ-A-30), and this study had been majorly conducted on the adults so as to examine the Gender differences (male/female) in the issue of suffering from social anxiety. This questionnaire also focuses of 5 sub-dimensions like, Speaking in public/talking with people in authority, Interaction with the opposite sex, Assertive expression of annoyance, disgust, or displeasure, Criticism and embarrassment and interaction with strangers. Therefore, it was studied that individuals are awfully becoming a part of social anxiety which can lead to social phobia.

**Keywords:** *Social Anxiety, Social Phobia, Behavioral Inhibition, Personality*

The evolution in the society is taking place, thereby, evolving trends in the culture, and in individuals are emerging with an extensive concern about dealing with Social Anxiety. Anxiety is a common term used and applied amongst all. Everyone is piled up with this ever raising growth of the society, the people, and the world around them. Stress doesn't lead to anxiety, rather anxiety leads to stress, and also to many other related problems and disorders, and Social Anxiety is one of them.

*Social Anxiety* is a state when a person has a fear to be judged in the society, by the people, and also that whether they will be able to cope up or survive in the environment or not. Social anxiety just not only covers one aspect rather it takes many more things into account. That how a person is thinking while he/she is facing the people, a social environment, a group, and is rather anxious about how they are bringing up themselves in front of the society, about their body shape, their personality, how they look, how they speak, are they considered to be important or are people are interested enough to hear and listen to them carefully and understand, will people make fun of them, and doubts his/her ability to present themselves in

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public (Schlenker and Leary 1982)., etc. These all questions comes together to form a social anxiety in a person which when worse, can lead to social phobia.

There is a little difference between Social Anxiety and Social Phobia by which we often gets confused with, that *social anxiety* ought to be a milder discomfort a person experiences on a daily basis which we suffer when we are trying to connect or face in public or with society, but whereas, *social phobia* is a proper diagnostic criteria of (DSM-IVTR) i.e, a described disorder, which states it has irrational, persistent and intense fear of facing, circumscribed objects or situations. Social anxiety can lead to social phobia and there by social phobia further can lead to other major disorders and mental problems like depression, body image issue, suicidal attempts, personality problem, OCD, panic attacks, etc.

Various different researches had been conducted for discussing how social anxiety takes place in adults or in individuals, and how it effects their performance, their personality, their life and also how they are being a part of substance abuse.

It was said that (NIMH, 2006) only 5 percent of people gets the treatment or diagnosis. Research has found that approximately half of the population and people with drug, or alcohol problem are suffering from social anxiety (Sanderson, DiNardo, Rapee & Barlow, 1990, Kushner, Sher, Beitman, 1999). It also increases the risk of depression, and suicidal attempts and other anxiety disorders. (Lipsitz, & Schneier, 2000).

People feel difficult to face the society, and asking for their own societal demands of safety and security, by restricting themselves from the outer world/society, because they have a fear of being judged and or being ignored by others (Bruce & Saaed, 1999). Therefore, it was termed as “shyness” (Walker, 2001). When talking about “shyness”, the first word which comes into mind is Introverts, it is also observed that people who are introverts suffer from high degree of social anxiety and are more prone to build their anxiety into some severe anxiety disorder. As they have a basic tendency, to be aloof, and live alone, they don’t have much of social interaction, and thereby, they don’t have large number of friends, they feel shy or happy with only themselves, and don’t try to interact/discuss with others much, so whenever any situations come where they have to present themselves in front of the society, they hesitate and thereby, leading to social anxiety in them. They also become self-focused, and some somatic symptoms like, trembling, nervousness, hesitation takes place (e.g., Heckelman & Schneier, 1995).

Sometimes, high expectations from oneself if failed, can lead to self-criticism, and a high level disappointment, that we are not able to achieve the goal, or we are not worth to do this work, etc. and when they self-criticize themselves, they think themselves as inferior to others and to others achievement, and start comparing themselves with others, forgetting their own essence in life (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990).

Studies also show that Genetics also play a key role in social anxiety, as suppose if the parents’ are suffering from any phobia or any reacted anxiety disorder, then the chances of the offspring to acquire social anxiety or related anxiety could be high which is known as *Behavioral Inhibition*. It can also be considered in the case of personality, i.e, if a parent is high in neuroticism, and low in extroversion, the child is likely to have the same personality trait in him in later life, if not provided with a better environment or exposure.

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Traumatic childhood experiences, academic anxiety can also lead to social anxiety which is commonly observed in everywhere (Nelson & Harwood, 2011). We can't visualize how severe could be someone's childhood, what he/she has actually faced in their childhood, in their families, or society, that while they are adult they build a personality full of social anxiety. And when we are talking about academic anxiety, it is basic problem which every adolescent is facing until they are in college, which are directly linked to high expectations of their parents to them, that whether they will be able to achieve the desired scores demanded by the parents and accepted by the society. It somewhere give rise to low self-concept and low motivation in child which leads to high level of anxiety. This can affect an individual, cognitively, physically and behaviorally, and can also be Depression prone stage and tend to have submissive behaviors (Forrest and Hokanson, 1975; Allan and Gilbert, 1997). Where, a person feels unable to attain the desired scores, which are needed to be accepted by the society, they also feel shame and social anxiety (Gilbert, 1998, Tangney and Miller, 1996).

Another major reason is deficits of SOCIAL SKILLS, when a person fails to adapt with other people, lack in social interactions, low performance when performing in front of others, lack of verbal and non-verbal abilities and many other impairments takes its way towards developing social anxiety.

Clark and Wells (1995) argued that fear of negative evaluation; exposure and social avoidance are the *hallmarks* of social anxiety. Leary and Kowalski (1995) and Beck et al. (1985) described social anxiety as *Evaluation anxiety*, because a person completely evaluates themselves, is concerned with the status of inferiority (Rapee and Heimberg, 1997).

*Stuttering*, is kind of a communication disorder described in DSM-IVTR, which states the difficulty in fluency of speech, from the early years, and in these cases, people are made fun of, when they stammers, or speak up in public, which leads to form the fear of other people/society or embarrassment. (*Stuttering was defined as a disorder in the rhythm of speech, in which the individual knows what he or she wishes to say, but is unable to say it because of an involuntary, repetitive prolongation or cessation of sound.*)

So, all these findings gives a clear evidence to support the meaning of social anxiety that, it consists of fear of rejection, self-blaming, negative evaluation of self, avoidance from situations and withdrawn in unfamiliar social settings.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Sample*

The research is conducted, to study the rate of social anxiety amongst Gender differences, on the sample size of 100 individuals, with age 18-25 years around Delhi/NCR, and Chandigarh. Random sampling method and descriptive statistics was used.

### *Instruments*

The questionnaire named *Social anxiety questionnaire for adults* (SAQ-A30) Author: Caballo, V. E., Salazar, I. C., Iruetia, M. J., Arias, B., and CISO-A Research Team. was used, which consists of 30 items in total, with further 5 sub-dimensions: 1) Speaking in public/talking with people in authority, 2) Interactions with the opposite sex, 3) Assertive expression of annoyance, disgust, 4) Criticism and embarrassment, 5) Interactions with strangers. The results were calculated with the help of Statistical method of (t-test) to get a comparative analysis of the gender differences and their level of significance.

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vast and much more, when examined as a diagnostic criteria. Various evidences have been discussed in detail, through different researches which took place across the world. Those researches mentioned about, the importance of child's growth from the childhood, the parenting, the genetics, the use of drugs/substance abuse, behavioral inhibition, stuttering, depression, performance, and many more.

So, a survey was conducted on 100 samples of age between 18 to 25 years, to examine the level of social anxiety in people in today's generation. A questionnaire named *SOCIAL ANXIETY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADULTS (SAQ-A30)*, AUTHOR: Caballo, V. E., Salazar, I. C., Iurtia, M. J., Arias, B., and CISO-A Research Team. Which comprises of 30 items, linked with 5 sub-dimensions: : 1) Speaking in public/talking with people in authority, 2) Interactions with the opposite sex, 3) Assertive expression of annoyance, disgust, 4) Criticism and embarrassment, 5) Interactions with strangers. A detailed list of descriptive statistics is shown in the results for both males and females, to study the Gender differences. But the results, of both the genders showed a minute difference between the **MEANS** i.e, **86.58 for Females, and 87.24 for Males**. The males were slightly higher than females, thereby, comparing both the results, **T-TEST** was scored to be of **0.437**, which was measured to be significant at **0.05 level** ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The hypothesis for the current research study tend to stand correct, which was high in the level of social anxiety, but not much difference was found when compared to that of females. The above mentioned table of 5 sub-dimensions of the questionnaire, clearly shows the differences in scores of all the 5 dimensions between males and females. The data showed that scores were nearly same but if compared, males scored more than females in the area of Assertive expression of annoyance, disgust and displeasure and in interactions with strangers, whereas, females scored more than males in the area of Interaction with opposite sex, same level of scores were calculated on the dimensions of speaking in public/talking with people in authority and criticism and embarrassment. The high scores show more level social anxiety as compared to the other.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude the study, it is verified that people are actually facing a severe problem of social anxiety, which can turn into a dangerous disorder, and it is important for every individual to take care of themselves and their family members by giving them the freedom of speech, from at early stage of development, and to open up their shyness, and stage fear from childhood, and mold their childhood in a way that they build up a bold personality in future, and keep away from the problems of anxiety.

## Recommendations

1. Motivate people to speak.
2. If anyone around you is anxious when with other people, make him/her cool and calm and boost themselves to take part in societal events.
3. Give them opportunities to share their views, and correct them if needed.
4. Don't let them feel offended, or as if they did a mistake to speak up in public.
5. Don't self-criticize.
6. Consider everyone's views.
7. From the early age give people their own space and don't restrict them while sharing their own thoughts.
8. Never make fun of them.