RESEARCH PAPER

Academic Self Efficacy, Social Anxiety and Academic Success in University Students

Dr. Saima Majeed*1   Maryum Munir2   Khadija Malik3

1. Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Academic self-efficacy is an important determinant of academic success which could be affected by many factors both psychological and social. The present research was conducted to highlight the role of academic self-efficacy and social anxiety which could affect the academic performance of the students. The present study aimed to assess the relationship between academic self-efficacy, social anxiety and academic success with the hypothesis that academic self-efficacy positively and social anxiety inversely related and predicted academic success. Researchers choose to study the topic with a cross-sectional research design. Through the survey method, a convenient sample of 250 undergraduate students in the age range of 18 to 24 *(M=21.35, SD=1.54)* was obtained. Educational Self-Efficacy Scale for academic self-efficacy, Social Interaction Anxiety scale for measuring social anxiety and CGPA for academic success, along with a demographic sheet were used to collect data. Pearson product-moment correlation results indicated that academic self-efficacy has a statistically significant positive association with academic success (r=.367, n=250, p=.05) and has an inverse relationship with social anxiety(r=-.463, n=250, p=.01). Likewise, social anxiety shares a significant, inverse relationship with academic success *(r=-.389, n= 250, p=.05)*. Moreover, Academic self-efficacy positively (β= .472, *p< .001*) and social anxiety inversely predicted academic success (β= -.431, *p< .001*). For improving academic performance, the focus of students, educators, counsellors and parents must be on improving academic self-efficacy and managing psychological issues like social anxiety as per the implications of the present research.

Keywords	Academic Self Efficacy, Academic Success, Social Anxiety, Undergraduate Students

Introduction

Academic Self-efficacy is a student's belief system that comprises attitude and perception toward their capabilities to accomplish academic tasks, successful completion of learning materials and ultimately attain academic success (Pintrich, 2003., Schunk & Ertmer, 2000). Individual performance is affected by his belief in his capabilities and that he can attain his goals through hard work, commitment and perseverance. Students with high self-efficacy will attribute success to their abilities and failures to the lack of hard work or any other external factors not to the lack of their abilities. On the other hand students with low self-efficacy usually attribute

failures to internal factors like lack of ability and success to external factors like fate or coincidences (Kurbanoglu & Akin, 2010). Success in university is a vital gateway to a prosperous future yet students face numerous challenges that hinder their academic success and make it difficult to get through university years.

Social anxiety is an important variable of study that can affect academic performance as it is a less noticeable and hidden psychological problem. Many factors affect students' ability to learn and succeed and social anxiety is one of them. Social anxiety is a factor that is often overlooked. It harms academic performance (Russel & Topham, 2012). The key factors to success in university life are participating in co-curricular activities and involvement in various social settings which causes distress and anxiousness in students with social anxiety, hampering their achievement in academics. Socially anxious students reportedly had less social control and limited social expressiveness; they were fearful and anxious to get involved in verbal communication (Strahan, 2003).

A person with social anxiety usually avoids stressful situations that ultimately disturb that person's life in nearly all areas like academic career prospects and interpersonal relationships. As a result, people with social interaction anxiety frequently suffer from minimal self-esteem which leads to performing academically less. Social anxiety is defined as having feelings of discomfort, anxiety, and fear of evaluation in social settings, the fear leads to voluntary escape from social gatherings. Social anxiety could take many directions as severe and excessive anxiety while eating in public or giving any speech in class where possible judgment could be done by the audience and usually, it was perceived as stress (Comer,2005). Social anxiety is the fear of social places and communication with other people that can generate feelings of self-awareness, judgment and dependency in an individual (Richards, 2007). Social anxiety is one of the most prevalent anxiety disorders among adolescents. This disorder has damaging impacts on overall health and employment (Asgari, et al., 2015).

Academic achievement refers to the accomplishment of student learning outcomes described in the learning objectives of any educational program. In educational institutions, academic performance is measured in terms of GPA and grades. Grades are calculated after taking into account: exams, quizzes, assignments, class projects, and viva. (Martin Sanz, et al, 2017). Academic achievement could be assessed in many other ways like reading and writing language and mathematical functioning. High school grades, aptitude and achievement test scores, and entrance examinations scores are major sources to get the assessment of students' academic achievement.

Several cross-sectional studies found the relationship between symptoms of social anxiety and reduced academic achievement in the form of low grades, difficulty in accomplishing academic tasks like assignments, presentations and concentration on studies (Vilaplana-Pérez et al, 2021: Leigh, & Clark, 2018). which states that people experience anxiety when they have a negative evaluation of themselves, faulty perception of social setting and excessively high standards. When an individual underestimates himself and evaluates himself negatively, he develops a fear of the social situation. It makes people socially anxious. It was recorded that students felt more worried and anxious while carrying out learning activities that included public speaking (Russell & Topham 2012).

Social anxiety halts students to participate in academic group activities out of fear and embarrassment (Strahan, 2003). There have been researches that show socially anxious students avoid academic tasks related to public speaking or group work. When a person considers a social situation to be important, he is likely to develop anxiety. Several students recorded being absent on the day of presentations due to the social anxiety they face. Social anxiety can result in avoidance behaviour which is generally observed in university students that skip classes, do group work alone, avoiding gatherings (Karasewich, & Kuhlmeier, 2020). Socially anxious people also suffered from the thoughts of socially occurring events and related fear of being judged that affect their attentiveness (Vassilopoulos, 2004). According to cognitive theory, people with social anxiety have irrational beliefs and think of themselves being incompetent when in reality they might be competent, this pattern of thinking affects a person's performance and reduces his chance of success in all domains of life including academics. People having social anxiety perceive themselves as a centre of negative attention and their mental filtering amplifies the thinking that social interactions will lead to negative results. Their anxiety made them insecure and they underestimate their social skills to handle any social situations that may end up with any negative emotional response (Hofmann, 2007).

Literature Review

The link between anxiety and academic success is complicated. While anxiety may enhance performance on a basic, well-practised activity, it appears to interact with academic performance on novel or challenging tasks. Nadeem et al. (2012) performed research on the "Impact of Anxiety on Academic Achievement of Students at the University Level in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. This was a descriptive study; the data was collected using the survey approach. Stratified sampling was used to pick 97 individuals from a total of 200 students for the sample size. The Otis self-mental administering exam was used to assess pupils' IQ levels. Students' anxiety levels were assessed using an anxiety measuring scale. To observe the influence of anxiety on students' academic successes, data were analyzed using the regression formula, and the formula of co-relation was used to see the association between anxiety and the academic achievements of students. They concluded that anxiety influences students' academic results; however, when male and female students are examined separately, anxiety affects both types of students, with female students having a greater impact than male students.

The conclusions of this study contradict the findings of previous research articles. Khan, P. (2021) conducted a study to see if there was a link between social anxiety and university students' academic performance. From the third, fifth, and seventh semesters, a total of 60 individuals were selected using simple random selection (20 students each semester). The Social Phobia Inventory Scale (SPIN) was used to gather data, and several statistical techniques such as Chi-square, Levene's Model, and Regression were used to analyze the data. According to their study, students who experienced social anxiety were unable to embrace life's obstacles. These students were apprehensive and concerned because they were afraid of being criticized, facing an audience, going and participating in social activities, meeting strangers, and lacking confidence. Khan, P study also found that, while social anxiety is common among students and there is a link between social anxiety and academic success, it has no substantial impact on students' GPAs.

According to studies, the capacity to properly communicate with others plays a critical role in the efficient utilization of intellectual potential (Davis, 2010). The development of meaningful and supportive friendships, as well as meeting their requirements as an important part of family, community, and class, are all regarded as significant features of social competency among university students. Tabassum et al. (2021) conducted a study to look at the relationship between social competence and university students' academic achievement. The sample consisted of 4708 people from Pakistan's various institutions. The student's academic achievement in the previous semester was assessed using their CGPA. The percentage, mean comparison, Pearson correlation, t-test, and ANOVA were used in the data analysis. The results revealed a considerable disparity in perceived social competence and academic achievement by gender. Furthermore, there was a strong link between academic success and social competence. Similarly, the influence of social skills, thinking abilities, and strong communication skills on academic accomplishment was separated by the connection among the sub-scales of social competence. Negative behavioural skills lead to social alienation, anger, and anxiety, which in turn lead to a lack of agency and poor academic achievement.

But research conducted by Ejaz et al. (2020) investigated how students frequently avoid discussing difficulties they are experiencing when engaging with others and instead attempt to cope with their concerns in social circumstances. A significant number of students in Pakistan report feeling scared during social interactions, public speaking, and performing in front of an audience. Fear in various social situations, such as being the focus of attention, criticism, and embarrassment, has recently been seen to be more prevalent in women than in men.

Fear of being judged by others, as well as a reduction in self-esteem, are common causes of social phobia. Djidonou et al. (2016) performed research to investigate the influence of anxiety disorders on academic performance among students at the University of Parakou (UP). It was descriptive cross-sectional research with prospective data collected among 363 students selected from the UP campus using rigorous random sampling. Following approved ethical guidelines, data was collected using a questionnaire that included the Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI), the Liebowitz social anxiety intensity rating scale, and the ASSIST. Many students at Parakou University Campus suffer from social phobia, according to their survey. This was especially true among female participants. Furthermore, gender, living location (rural or urban), and the subject of study were all statistically linked to social phobia, which affected academic performance by 57.1 per cent in the study group. Anxiolytics and alcoholic beverage addiction were employed to treat the illness.

Students' academic performance may suffer as a result of their social anxiety. The outcomes of two comparable web surveys performed in the UK, in which 787 university students recounted their experiences with social anxiety, are reported in Russell et al. (2012) study. Their goal was to find out how social anxiety affects student learning and well-being in higher education. Using a screening tool, participants self-selected and completed a web-based questionnaire. In common learning contexts, a Likert-type scale was used to determine how frequently students experienced social anxiety (defined as shame, anxiety, or hesitation). According to the findings, anxiety was most typically associated with participating in learning activities that required (or had the potential to require) public speaking during

presentations, seminars, or lectures. Their findings supported prior studies on social anxiety, suggesting that social anxiety is a persistent, concealed handicap that affects learning and well-being for a sizable proportion of students.

Suleiman et al. (2021) designed a study to assess the incidence of social phobia in a sample of medical students from six different medical schools in Khartoum, Sudan. This cross-sectional investigation was carried out at the six institutions' faculties of medicine. A suitable sample of 375 was constructed using a SAD prevalence of 60% among Saudi university students. The 95% confidence interval was used. The EPI Info 2002 application was used to compute the sample size. The obtained data were analyzed with SPSS version 16. According to the findings, social phobia is fairly common among Sudanese medical students, especially in the severe form of the illness, with no significant gender differences. It appears to have an impact on self-esteem and academic success, and it has been linked to drug addiction.

The goal of the Arjanggi et al. (2016) study was to look at social anxiety as a predictor of college student academic adjustment. The study enlisted the help of 439 students as participants. This study developed two scales: the academic adjustment scale and the social anxiety scale. According to the findings of their study, social anxiety has a detrimental impact on academic performance. That is, if a student is concerned about the opinion of others and feels uncomfortable in social circumstances, as well as meeting new people, he or she will struggle with the academic adjustment.

Hypotheses

- Academic self-efficacy is likely to be positively related to academic success in university students.
- Social Anxiety is likely to be inversely related to academic success in university students.
- Academic Self-efficacy and social anxiety are likely to be predictors of academic success in university students.

Material and Methods

Research Design

It was correlational research with a cross-sectional research design.

Study Population

Both men and women 18 to 24 years old were included in the study population and 250 participants were included from two private universities in Lahore through a convenient sampling technique.

Inclusion Criteria/ Exclusion Criteria

- Undergraduate students must be enrolled in university during COVID 19 Pandemic and took online classes.

- Those with any diagnosed psychological illness were excluded from the present study.

Measures for Data Collection

Education Self-Efficacy Scale was developed by Imperial College London in 2000 to measure students' self-efficacy in an educational set-up. The scale was adapted for the present study and used for measuring academic self-efficacy. The scale consisted of 5 items with a five-point Likert scale. The score ranges from 0 to 20. The higher the score the higher the individual has academic self-efficacy.

The Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (Mattick & Clark, 1998) was used for measuring social anxiety in undergraduate university students. The self-report measure consisted of 20 statements with a five-point Likert Scale. The score range could be from 0 to 80. A higher score indicated a high level of social anxiety. According to the author, a score of 36 is cut off so 36 and above is a clear indication that a person is having social anxiety. The reliability (internal consistency) is found to be 0.88 to 0.96 and test-retest reliability is 0.81.

Academic success was assessed through students' CGPA. The demographic sheet included age, gender, socio-economic status of family, educational institution (public and private) and education level.

Procedure

After taking permission for data collection from authorities of universities researchers collected in-person data from undergraduate students. It took one month to collect data. Along with two research questionnaires, a research information sheet consent form and demographic sheet were presented to the participants to be filled. Data was collected from only such students who gave written informed consent.

Ethical Considerations

Following principles were maintained during the research process

- Formal permission was sought for data collection.
- The participants were communicated that their information will remain confidential and anonymous and will be used for this specific study only.
- Informed consent was signed with the information that they have the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty, harm or risk.

Results and Discussion

This study was conducted to explore the relationship between academic self-efficacy, social anxiety and academic success in undergraduate university students in Pakistan.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=250)

Variable	M (SD)	f (%)
Age	21.35 (1.54)	-

Gender		-
Men	-	117(46.8)
Women	-	133(53.2)
Day scholars		131(52.4)
Hostelites		119(47.6)
Socio-Economic Status		-
Middle Class	-	190 (76)
Upper Class	-	60 (24)

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, f= Frequency

The average age of the participants was twenty-one years. Most women participated in the survey and they were day scholars. Most of the participants reported their socio-economic status as middle.

Table 2
Relationship between Academic Self-Efficacy, Social Anxiety and Academic Success (N=250)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Academic SE	15.17	4.2	1	-.463**	.367*
Social Anxiety	9.15	3.14		1	-.389*
Academic Success	2.75	1.53			1

*Note. SE= Self Efficacy *= p<.05, **=p<.01*

Pearson Product Moment Correlation has been carried out to find the relationship between academic self-efficacy, social anxiety and academic success. Results indicated that academic self-efficacy has a statistically positive association with academic success r=.367, n=250, p=.05 and has an inverse relationship with social anxiety=-.463, n=250, p=.01. Likewise, social anxiety shares a significant, inverse relationship with academic success *r=-.389, n= 250, p=.05. Both of the research hypotheses accepted as per analyses*

Table 3
The Regression Coefficient of Academic Self-efficacy and Social Anxiety for Academic Success (N=250)

Variables	B	B	R²	R	P
Academic SE	0.727	0.472	0.306	0.354	.00
Social Anxiety	-0.398	-0.431	0.467	0.606	.00

Multiple Regression Analysis has been carried out to find out the predictive strength of Academic self-efficacy and social anxiety for academic success in undergraduate students. The R^2 of .30 revealed that the predictor of academic self-efficacy explained the 30% variance in the outcome of the variable of Academic success with $F (1, 249) = 80.70$, $p< .001$. The findings revealed that academic self-efficacy significantly inverse predicted academic success (β= .472, $p< .001$). Likewise, the R^2 of .46 revealed that the predictor of social anxiety explained the 46% variance in the outcome of the variable of Academic success with $F (1, 249) = 70.23$, $p< .001$. The findings revealed that social anxiety significantly inversely predicted academic success (β= -.431, $p< .001$).

The present research study was designed to study the relationship between academic self-efficacy, social anxiety and academic success. Another aim of this study

was to figure out the predictive role of academic self-efficacy and social anxiety in terms of academic success. According to the results, the first hypothesis was proved that academic self-efficacy has a positive relationship with academic success. Present study results are in line with the previous literature as Mohsen (2017) conducted a study with 214 students and also concluded that those who were high in academic self-efficacy also scored high on educational results. Many other studies also proved with mild to moderate statistically significant results that academic self-efficacy has positively related to academic success (Doménech-Betoret et al, 2017., Putwain, et al 2013 & Ferla, et al 2009). Usher and Pajarees (2008) indicated that students' self-efficacy predicted academic achievement across different areas and levels. Dewitz and Walsh (20 02) argued that self-efficacy also leads to students' well-being and course satisfaction which ultimately increases educational performance. Self-efficacy is highly correlated with academic success like with high CGPA but it is also mediated by motivation and emotional regulation (Köseoglu, 2015).

It was perceived that social anxiety is an intense and persistent fear of people and social gatherings in general that influence a student's academic performance in a sense that grades, GPA, class performance and participation in academic activities all degrade due to the presence of social anxiety. The second hypothesis that has been generated for this cross-sectional correlational study design suggested that it is likely for undergraduate students suffering from social anxiety to have poor academic performance. According to the Pearson correlation analysis result, that was run on the sample data obtained for the study, social anxiety and academic success have a significant inverse correlation with each other. This finding was in line with the literature and hypothesis of this study that also claims social anxiety to be a depleting factor for academics of many university students who have not only had difficulty handling criticism but also felt that they had a hard time presenting their work to the class even. Social anxiety coaxed the students to avoid situations that demanded social interactions and subsequently they missed opportunities of gaining extra credit in their classes (Ejaz et al, 2020). In light of Pakistani culture, education is considered an integral part of a student's early and middle years of life and they are expected to excel in this area due to which there is always a huge spike of induced performance anxiety that leads to damaging negative effects on academic performance. Similarly, Pakistani University students are more concerned with grades over knowledge or information that they are gaining because of the societal pressure of achieving these grades which yield from the mindset of higher grades being equivalent to greater academic excellence (Ali et al, 2021).

While on the other hand, the third hypothesis exclaimed that academic self-efficacy and social anxiety play a significant role in the prediction of academic success and it was put through a regression test whose analysis proved that it is justified. It showed that social anxiety significantly predicts the academic performance of Pakistani university students which again is supported by the existing literature that says that "social anxiety symptoms reduce the ability of the adolescent to concentrate in class which, in turn, impacts on their educational achievement over time, over and above baseline educational achievement and depression symptoms" (Leigh, 2021).

These findings are consistent with previous research on social anxiety or academic performance which were carried out with slightly different study designs that said for a significant minority of student's social anxiety is, and has been for a while, a persistent hidden disability that negatively influences learning ability and

mental well-being (Russell, 2012). This stumbling block has been heavily enforced by our circumstantial norms as well because ever since the unprecedented pandemic Pakistan has undergone several lockdowns and this confinement has resulted in a lot of changes. These changes have further forced people to be more comfortable in their solidarities rather than social gatherings hence the transition back to on-campus studies has not been as smooth as expected. The fact that Pakistani education systems lack prior experience and knowledge about online studies became a prominent contributor to this problem because they took a long time to get accustomed to a new mode of education which directly blemished the academic performance of many students.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is stated that to improve academic performance it is deemed necessary to enhance students; self-efficacy and eliminate or at least diminish social anxiety to a point that it does not have as negative of an impact on the academic success of university undergraduates. Self-efficacy is a personality trait that develops during early periods of life so parents and educators need to enhance self-efficacy through healthy parenting and mentoring respectively. For this very cause, mental health awareness needs to be raised and disorders like social anxiety have to be dealt with from the beginning of time. So the risk of permanence or rate/instance of occurrence can be decreased. Especially because the drawbacks of social anxiety could linger on for a very long time. Another important point to take away from this research study is that other factors that facilitate the depletion of the quality of studies should be identified first and then tackled accordingly. Since social anxiety is only one determinant of this diminution in the quality of academic performance and there could be more of them out there. Furthermore, narrower research on this kind of topic should be carried out while keeping extraneous variables out of the picture or accounted for so they can't possibly manipulate the results for the worse. More research data is required to reach the bottom of the matter and rectify it from there onward. Research like these can help come up with feasible solutions to pinpoint problems with evidence to back them up as well.

Limitation and Recommendations

This research was restricted to undergraduate university students only. Further research can include students from various academic years and grades. In this research study, only a quantitative approach is applied which does not allow in-depth information to be collected from participants that could reveal more useful information. Further research can come up with the qualitative approach and conducting in-person interviews with students to gain more in-depth information from research participants. This research faced an issue of shortage of time and resources, future studies can work on a greater sample and more resources are needed which would reveal more useful information.

Implications

Many psychological problems influence academic efficacy and performance but some of them are not recognized and fully understood, and social anxiety is one of the less understood problems that can influence a student's academic achievement so this research study will provide a deep understanding of how this problem

prevails and affects students' overall academic achievement. This research will be helpful for teachers and educational institutions to come up with a better curriculum to assist socially anxious students. It will provide useful information related to the role of social anxiety in psychologists and how it plays a part in the academic performance of Pakistani university-level students. This study will help psychological health professionals to develop or highlight the resources that psychologists and parents of university students can use to overcome related issues. The university students themselves could use these resources to deal with situations in which social anxiety impacted their ability to perform well in academics. Moreover, this research study will be advantageous as it will add to the indigenous literature of Pakistan. it would provide more knowledge on the indigenous level on how social anxiety manifests and works in college students and how it can be recognized. This could also reveal the level of prevalence of social anxiety among Pakistani students which will provide a chance to the Psychologists and University administration to advocate for their awareness and need for help among them.

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