

**Relationship between Social Anxiety, Self-regulation and Fear of Negative Evaluation in Young Adults**

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**Keywords**

Fear of negative evaluation. Gender, Positive relationship, Self-regulation, Social Anxiety

**Abstract**

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**Aim:** The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between social anxiety, self-regulation and Fear of Negative Evaluation in young adults. **Study design:** Participants were 18–30-year-old. An online and offline questionnaire was given to the participants which included Liebowitz scale for social anxiety, Self-Regulation Scale and FNE scale. **Results:** Data analysis included 100 participants (50 males, 50 females). Significant correlations were noted between social anxiety and self-regulation ( $r = 0.81$ ,  $p = 0.211$ ) and significant correlation between social anxiety and Fear of negative evaluation ( $r = .621$ ,  $p = <0.001$ ). Gender difference was also predicted which concluded that females are more anxious than men. **Conclusions:** There is a positive relationship between social anxiety and self-regulation and also social anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

## Introduction

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Social anxiety refers to a condition where individuals tend to avoid social and performance situations due to a fear of being evaluated negatively (Aderka, Haker, Marom, & Hermesh, 2013). People with social anxiety perceive social situations as dangerous wherein other people are scrutinizing them, which leads to feelings of anxiety. This type of anxiety can be seen through somatic symptoms like sweating or feeling hot in the face, cognitive symptoms like mental blanks and arousal symptoms. Safety behaviors provide temporary relief from anxiety and allow the individual to feel more comfortable in the anxiety provoking situation (Clark & Wells, 2001). Research by McManus, Sacadura and Clark (2008) however shows that the use of safety behaviors plays a major role in maintaining anxiety because people with social anxiety misattribute non-occurrence of feared stimuli to their use of these behaviors; whereas the real cause of anxiety is their set of faulty assumptions about the situation and other people. Individuals with social anxiety avoid social situations to relieve themselves from distressing feelings and thus make faulty connections between their avoidance and reduced anxiety. Thus, for people with social anxiety, it is a daily battle to cope with thoughts and feelings of anxiety that persist and show no signs of remitting -- even though they "face their fears" every day of their lives. like hypervigilance (Clark, 2001).

There has not been much empirical research on goal setting in socially anxious individuals. This construct is, however, part of some theories of social anxiety (Carver and Scheier, 1986; Arkin, Lake and Baumgardner, 1986). Some have argued that socially anxious individuals believe that others have high standards for them to meet (Rehm, 1977; Schlenker and Leary, 1982). Wallace and Alden (1991), however, found that anxious participants did not set higher goals for themselves than nonanxious participants and did not rate others' standards as higher than did the nonanxious group.

Cognitive models of social anxiety describe how fear of negative evaluation is an important component of social anxiety (Clark & Wells, 1995; Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) can be described as a feeling of apprehension about and distress over the assumption that others would evaluate oneself negatively (Watson & Friend, 1969). Individuals with social anxiety are overly concerned with how they are being judged or perceived by other people. They tend to imagine that they are being perceived in negative ways, and they are often inhibited in their social behaviors as a result. This fear of being evaluated negatively can cause emotional distress and a heightened level of anxiety which affects their behaviors and choices. This construct can be measured using the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983).

Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and manage your energy states, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in ways that are acceptable and produce positive results such as well-being, loving relationships, and learning. Self-regulated learning is a process that assists individual in managing their thoughts, behaviours, and emotions in order to successfully navigate their learning experiences (Zumbrunn, Tadlock, & Roberts, 2011). According to Canadian researcher, Shanker (2012), "self-regulation refers to a child's ability to deal with stressors effectively and efficiently and then return to a baseline of being calmly focused and

alert.” It is how we deal with stressors and as such, lays the foundation for all other activity. Selfregulation is the process of continuously monitoring progress toward a goal, checking outcomes, and redirecting unsuccessful efforts. In order for students to be self-regulated they need to be aware of their own thought process, and be motivated to actively participate in their own learning process.

Fear of negative evaluation has been well researched in the social anxiety literature and positively correlated to social anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation is the anxiety associated with the learner's perception of how other onlookers (instructors, classmates or others) may negatively view their language ability. Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) was originally defined as a trait related to “apprehension about others’ evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations and the expectation that others would evaluate.

## **Methodology**

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The research was conducted on 100 participants, 50 males and 50 females, and their response was used for data analysis, after removing questionnaires with double responses or those who did not fit the inclusion criteria for the study. Purposive sampling design method was used for sampling method. This method is a valid and reliable method as each and every member of the selected age group has the equal chance of being selected for the study i.e., any individual who belongs in that particular category (young adults) is suitable for the study and has an equal chance of being included in the study. Participants for this study were between the age group of 18-30 years.

For analysis of this study, equal gender participants were needed to find the difference between response of gender for these variables. The questionnaire was a mix of 3 scales: Liebowitz social anxiety scale which is a 24- item scale. It is a self-rated scale used to assess how social anxiety plays a role in your life across a variety of situations. Each item scoring is based on Likert scale: 0=none, 1=mild, 2=moderate. 3= severe.

Another scale used for this study was Self – regulation (SRQ) scale. Scoring is done on the basis of: 1 = Not at allcharacteristic of me; 2 = Slightly characteristic of me;3 = Moderately characteristic of me; 4 = Very characteristic of me ;5 = Extremely characteristic of me. One more scale was used, Fear of Negative evaluation scale (FNE), which is a 12-item scaleIt is a 5- point Likert scale. Each item on the measure is rated on a 5-point scale (0=Never; 1=Occasionally; 2=Half of the time; 3=Most of the time; and 4=All of the time. General instructions were given to the respondents regarding the purpose and time of task. The questionnaire contains 3 scales, social anxiety, Self-regulation and Fear of negative evaluation.

All the 3 scales have different options and scoring pattern. For each scale, there are instructions mentioned in the form along with the details of the given option. Participants were requested to fill the data sheet after reading the guidelines given and begin reacting.

Data was analysed through SPSS. The data collected via google form were automatically exported to an excel spreadsheet in a de-identified manner. In addition, the data that was collected in offline mode were recorded and added to the spreadsheet. The data in the spreadsheet was then imported to SPSS software (IBM, Version 25) for data analysis.

Normality was checked but data was not normally distributed. Spearman correlation coefficient is used due to the large sample size, the study has continuous variables and are ratio scales. The correlational research method was used as there are three variables present.

## Result and Discussion

**Table 1**

The no. of participants of the study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	50	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Female	50	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Table 2**

Positive correlation between social anxiety and self-regulation

		SA Total	SR Total
<b>SA Total</b>	Pearson correlation	1	.092
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.361
	N	100	100
<b>SR Total</b>	Pearson correlation	.092	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.361	
	N	100	100

**Table 3**

Positive correlation between social anxiety and fear of negative evaluation

		SA Total	FNE Total
<b>SA Total</b>	Pearson correlation	1	.621**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	100	99
<b>FNE Total</b>	Pearson correlation	.621**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	99	99

**Table 4**

Difference in the percentage of social anxiety in gender

				<b>SA Total</b>
<b>Age</b>	18-25	<b>Gender</b>	Female	54.2%
			Male	45.8%
	25-30	<b>Gender</b>	Female	60.7%
			Male	39.3%

**Table 5**

T-test of genders with social anxiety

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
SA Total	Female	50	21.7600	6.05606	.85646
	Male	50	20.8000	5.52545	.78142

For the analysis of result, Spearman Correlational Method is used as the data was not normally distributed. The correlational research method was used as there are three variables present social anxiety, self-regulation and fear of negative evaluation. The objective questions on SA, SR and FNE are analysed for 100 participants (50 males and 50 females). After analysing the responses from the participants, it is concluded that there is a positive correlation between social anxiety and Self-regulation ( $r = 0.81$ ,  $p = 0.211$ ) the magnitude of the correlation is high i.e., as anxiety increases, selfregulation also increases. So, H1 is rejected. The results of Spearman correlation coefficient for Social Anxiety and Fear of negative Evaluation showed that there is a positive correlation between social anxiety and Fear of negative Evaluation ( $r = .621$ ,  $p = <0.001$ ) the magnitude of the correlation is moderate i.e., as anxiety increases, fear of negative evaluation also increases. So, H1 is again rejected. It was hypothesized that Females are more anxious than males. After analysing previous studies, it showed that there is a significant difference between value of fear of negative evaluation while having anxiety and thinking pattern during the anxiety in male and female participants. It was analysed from the current study that; males can easily regulate their emotions according to the situation in comparison to woman because males accept the social situations easily. Table 4 and Table 5 shows the difference between level of anxiety in males and females and it can be concluded that females are more anxious than men. Therefore, H2 is accepted.

### Conclusion

Social anxiety is always a dominating factor in young adults, how one can regulate by being in a situation is a task without getting afraid of evaluated negatively by others. In

conclusion, this research has been proved that young adults are facing anxiety issues but have the ability to control their emotions according to the situation. So, as social anxiety increases, self-regulation decreases have been proved wrong. H1 is rejected, as there is a significant relationship between social anxiety and self-regulation. Fear of negative evaluation is another factor which is facing by both the age groups. In conclusion of the study, it has been proved that people are still struggling by negative evaluated by others so H1 has been rejected as there is a positive correlation between social anxiety and fer of negative evaluation. It can also be concluded that Females percentage is more when it comes to social anxiety in comparison to males. It can be concluded that females are more anxious than males, H2 is accepted.

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