Journal of Policy Research, 9(1), 13-19.
https://jprpk.com
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7726248

Social Anxiety, Self-efficacy and Academic Achievement in Matric Students of Lahore, Pakistan

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Abstract

The present research was conducted to investigate the relationship of social anxiety and self-efficacy with academic achievement in boys and girls using1000 Matric students (boys = 500, girls = 500) with age range 13 to15 years (M = 14.55, SD = 1.38) of 9th grade by means of stratified random sampling technique from different high schools in Lahore District. Academic performance was measured by a valid achievement test, especially developed for this purpose. Protocols used in the study were i) Urdu version of Interaction Anxiousness Scale (Leary, 1983) to assess the level of social anxiety and ii) Urdu version of General Self efficacy Scale (GSES) (Schwarzer & Jerusalem,1995) to measure the self-efficacy of participants. Correlation, regression analysis, independent samples t test and one way ANOVA were run for data analyses. The findings suggest that academic achievement has significant positive correlation with self-efficacy and negative relationship with social anxiety. Self esteem, social anxiety, gender, parental education and monthly income of family turned out to be the strongest predictors of academic achievement of students. Girls outperformed boys on academic achievement test. Conversely the boys displayed higher level of self-efficacy and lower level of social anxiety than girls.

Keywords: Social anxiety, Self-efficacy, academic achievement

1. Introduction

Academic performance is an attractive subject for educational psychologists and researchers which can be defined as attainment of academic goals in different areas of studies. Reading, writing, language comprehension and command on mathematical functioning are the major domains of academic achievement (Reynolds, 2002). The quality of students' academic performance is influenced by wide range of environmental and psychological factors such as parental education and profession, monthly income, student's motivation and intelligence. The extended research work conducted in America and Europe has suggested that psychological health of students greatly affects their academic performance (Lockett & Harrell, 2003).

1.1. The Impact of Self-efficacy on Academic Achievement

Education provides people with particular skills and enables them to perform their tasks excellently (Mbathia, 2005). The better the performance of an individual is, the more individual will be rewarded. Many factors have influenced on academic performance. According to Owiti (2001) attitude leads to achievement and abilities are needed for successful performance. Bandura (1997) established that intellectual capability and motivation are significant factors for academic performance.

Self-efficacy affects the choice and commitment in a task, the energy spent in performing it, and the performance level (Bandura & Schunk, 1981); Bandura (1986); Hacket & Betz (1989). One significant factor for the prediction of academic performance of students is self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) points out that attitude and gender are vital for some people regardless of their mediating effects on self-efficacy beliefs.

Good academic performance affects not only students' preferences in higher school but also to their admission to college/university (Mbathia, 2005). It is also established that 7thgrade onwards, girls are moved to underestimate their abilities in science subjects (Pajares, 2000).

Self-efficacy is vital aspect of academic performance as it serves the basis for students to explain their behavior in wide vistas of their lives. The concept of self-efficacy is robustly linked to a sense of competence and effectiveness among individuals. High self-efficacy expresses a sense of self-worth with the implication that a person is self-confident in performing difficult assignments. The relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance has been well documented in the literature and a close relationship exists between self-efficacy and academic achievement(Reasoner, 2004).Many researches are consistent with Reasoner's explanation (Reasoner, 2004) and have concluded that academic performance is positively correlated with self-efficacy and self-esteem (Lockett & Harrell, 2003; Verkuyten & Brug, 2002). Marshet al., (2005) reported that math self-concept was positively correlated with math grades and test scores. Martinset al., (2002) found significant differences between self-efficacy and self-esteem enjoyed by successful and unsuccessful students in the 7th grade. The research also revealed that students with low level of academic achievement attributes less importance to school related areas and shows less favorable attitudes towards school. The results of a longitudinal study revealed that self-efficacy keeps on increasing during the 6 years of university studies and by the end of university studies the level of self-efficacy becomes reasonably good (Salmela-Aro, 2006). The study further concluded that initially lower level of self-efficacy was increased across the period of university years. A significant reciprocal relationship between learners' self-concept and academic performance has also been reported by Dambudzo (2005). Chapell and Overton (2002) concluded significant relationship between global self-efficacy and school GPA on the whole sample. Other researchers have concluded a role of self-efficacy and socioeconomic status in academic achievement (Baumeister et al., 2003).

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1.2. Social anxiety and academic performance

Many psychological problems of students and their impact on academic performance are well established. Psychological problems like anxiety and depression affect their performance inversely; especially high level of anxiety has more lethal effects on academic achievement of students. A significant relationship between academic performance and depressive symptoms in school children with anxiety is reported. It is also reported that reduction in anxiety level improves academic achievement of school children (Wood, 2006).

Most of the researches conducted in this field have found negative relationship between academic performance and social anxiety. One of the major negative effects of social anxiety on academic performance is increased dropout rate of the students. Strahan (1999) concluded that socially anxious students were at the greater risk of dropout as compared to the non-anxious students. Ameringen, Mancini, and Farvolden (2003) administered school leaving scale and self- reported measures of anxiety, depression and social adjustment to the students meeting DSM IV criteria for primary anxiety disorder and established that social phobia is a main reason of early withdrawal from school. Vanaj, Latha, and Rao (2004) carried out a study to explore shyness (a form of social anxiety) in school children and found a significant negative correlation between anxiety and academic achievement. In a study the relationship between academic performance and both anxiety and pessimism was found to be negative in school students (Owayad, 2005).Wetterberg (2004) reported that 21 percent of the respondents from a sample comprising 237 students attending the first year of Swedish upper secondary school had impaired functioning due to social anxiety; the performance of about one half of them was related to their academics.Social phobia is found to be associated with low level of school attendance and educational achievement (Furmark, 2002;Hillebrand, 2001).

1.3. Gender Differences in Self-efficacy and Social Anxiety

It is often observed that in the area of self-efficacy boys seem to have more positive self-efficacy and self-concept in a number of dimensions, such as Mathematics and general self-efficacy, as compared to girls (Funk & Bachman, 1996; Skaalvik& Rankin, 1994). It is reported that boys have a higher self-efficacy than girls, particularly during adolescence (Block & Robins, 1993; Bruce, 2000). There are also gender differences in the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement, which seems to be stronger for boys than girls (Bologninieet al., 1996; West et al..1980). Gender differences are reported in social anxiety between boys and girls and globally it is found that girls experience more fear and social anxiety than boys (Bruce, 2000;Harold et al., 1986).

1.4. Purpose of the Study

Academic achievement is the main objective of any educational system and almost all societies spend a lot of their valuable resources on the amelioration of education standard. In return, they demand a reasonable academic achievement from their educational system. In a developing country like Pakistan, quality of education, especially, at school level is not up to the mark because the overall educational system of the country has many shortcomings (Hayat, 1998). School education is not exception to this generalization (Mehmood, 2006).

Negligence of students' psychological problems by teachers and educational administrators is another reason of poor quality of education in any society. Academic performance is influenced by a number of social and psychological factors. The important psychological factors which can influence the academic performance are social anxiety and self-efficacy.Consequently, it is imperative to have a clear understanding of these factors by teachers, education administrators and other stakeholders for the improvement and effectiveness of an educational system. Understanding of these problems is not possible without thorough research work in this area. A number ofresearch have been conducted on this issue in Western countries with an effort to relate these variables to various aspects of students' performance and these problems have been found closely related to academic achievement (Vanaj et al., 2004). On the other hand research work is scant in our country. So there is a dire need of research based on understanding this relationship. The present study was carried out to explore various dimensions of the relationship of academic performance with self-efficacy andsocial anxiety at school level.

1.5. Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were tested for the study.

1. There is relationship between demographic variables, self-efficacy, socialanxietyand academic performance of students.
2. Demographic variables, self-efficacy and social anxiety are predictors of academic performance of students.
3. There are differences in self-efficacy, social anxiety and academic performance among boys and girls.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Total sample of 1000 Matric students (boys = 500, girls = 500) was taken from different public schools of Lahore. Their age was ranged from 13-15 years (M = 13.87, SD = 1.92).

2.2. Procedure

After obtaining the lists of schools of District Lahore from the office of Director Public Instruction (SE) Punjab and selecting the schools to include them in sample, the schools were entered in a diary. The researchers visited every school and got permission from the heads of those schools. Students of Master classes of Psychology were trained for test administration and their services were hired to administer the tools to the students. All of the tools were administered in one session in each school. The data were collected immediately after the start of new academic year. Every participant of the study was informed about the type and purpose of study. They were also informed that their responses would be used only for the research purposes and would be kept strictly confidential. They were encouraged

to be honest and frank in their responses and to respond to all items. The instructions were read out and the students were asked to give their responses according to the instructions. The researchers and their trained representatives explained the things orally.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the students (*N* = 1000)

Variable	*f*	%	Variable	*f*	%
Gender			Mother's education		
Boys	500	50	Below Matric	621	62.1
Girls	500	50	Matric	119	11.9
No Sibling	40	4.0	Intermediate	76	7.6
1-3	178	17.8	Graduation	96	9.6
4-6	559	55.9	Post graduation	31	3.1
7-9	203	20.3	Not mentioned	57	5.7
10-12	20	2.0	Mother's profession		
Father' education			House wife	881	88.1
Below Matric	474	47.4	Employment	69	6.9
Matric	190	19.0	Not mentioned	50	5.00
Intermediate	98	9.8	Father's profession	469	46.9
Graduation	103	10.3	Employment	214	21.4
Post graduation	104	10.4	Business	278	27.8
Not mentioned	31	3.1	Agriculture	39	3.9

3. Measures

3.1. Demographic questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire was prepared and administered regarding the information of age, birth order, no of siblings, father's education, father's profession, mother's education, mother's profession, monthly income of family of the research participants etc.

3.2. Comprehensive Academic Performance Test for 8th grade students

Academic achievement of the students was assessed by a locally developed comprehensive achievement test. This was constructed comprising information from all compulsory subjects in Matric students. The test was prepared and duly validated for this purpose. Table of specification was prepared prior to the development of the test; it was planned that the test would include 17 items from the subjects of English, mathematics, science, Urdu, Islamic studies, and social studies. The original test was developed and consisted of 102 items.

Initially the test was administered to 50 students (boys = 25, girls = 25) from 9th class of 2 public schools. On the basis of students' responses, item analysis was carried out for each item of the test. The items having difficulty level between recommended range of difficulty and discrimination level were retained in the test. All other items were either improved or replaced with new items. The response options which were not working well were also improved or replaced with new options. Total 30 items were improved or replaced in this way. The new version of the test was again administered to a new sample of 9th graders of the same school and all the items were found fit to be retained in the test.

3.3. Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI)by Solberg et al. (1993)

The Self Efficacy Inventory (Solberg et al., , 1993) consists on 20-items considered to measure level of confidence in performing different academic tasks related with college success. All the items of this inventory are rated on a 9-point Likert-type scale with a range of 0 (totally unconfident), 1 (very unconfident), 2 (unconfident), 3 (somewhat unconfident), 4 (undecided), 5 (somewhat confident), 6 (confident), 7 (very confident) and finally, 8 (totally confident). Coefficient α for the CSEI is 0.93 as reported by authors.

The Urdu version was prepared and translated using standardized dictionaries. Translation along with original questionnaire was given to three persons well versed with both in Urdu, English language and also in psychology. Their mean age was 41 years, their mean qualification was master. The single version was prepared from these translations which were again translated into English. Both of the versions were given to the experts and the difference between the two was minimized after another translation. The reliability of Urdu scale was .72.

3.4. Interaction Anxiousness Scale

Interaction Anxiousness Scale (Leary, 1983) was used to measure the social anxiety of the students. The test consists of 15 items. The Interaction Anxiousness Scale demonstrates high test-retest reliability and internal consistency as reported by author. The response options range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (happens to always). Correlations with other scales relevant to social and general anxiety have reported its discriminant and convergent validity. Total score is obtained by adding up the sore achieved on all items. The scale was translated and adapted into Urdu language and the method of forward and backward translation was used for translation. At first the scale items were given to 10 PhD scholars at the Department of English, University of the Punjab, Lahore. The researchers selected the best translation for each item. The translated version was handed over to a bilingual for expert opinion and required improvements. When the final draft was prepared it was given to 5PhD scholars for Urdu to English backward translation. The backward translation was compared with the original text of the scale. No significant discrepancy was found between the original text of the test and its backward translation.

3.5. Statistical Analyses

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were used to estimate personal information of respondents like gender, age, parents' education level, no of siblings, birth order and annual income of family (Table 1).To make sure the reliability of tools, we carried out reliability analyses for all instruments of the study. Then correlation analysis was run to address our first hypothesis of study and calculated correlations among demographic variables, self-efficacy, social anxiety and academic performance of students. Afterwards we utilized multiple regression analysis to address 2nd hypothesis of study that demographic variables, self-esteem, social anxiety are predictors of academic achievement of students. Independent samples t test was carried out to examine the difference of self-efficacy, social anxiety and academic performance of boys and girls.

Table 2

Correlation of Demographic Variables with Self-efficacy and Social Anxiety of Students (*N* = 1000)

Variable	N	M	SD	α	SE	SA	AP
Marks of Middle	825	495.40	100	-	.24***	-.25***	.19***
Class Size	897	48	20.35	-	.03	-.00	-.04
Father's education	972	2.03	1.39	-	.15***	-.23***	.15***
Mother's education	946	1.53	1.09	-	.16***	-.19***	.18***
No. of siblings	957	-	-	-	.06	-.04	.07*
Monthly family income	921	9466	2120	-	.17***	-.13***	.08*
Age	986	14.55	1.38	-	.04	-.02	.93
Birth order	895	3.92	1.77	-	.06	-.04	.07
Self-Efficacy	997	18.30	3.48	.72	-	-.48***	.33***
Social Anxiety	997	45.36	8.15	.58	-	-	-.31***
Academic performance	997	291.41	26.31	.66	-		-

*Note.**p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, SE = self-efficacy, SA = social anxiety, AP = academic performance

The table 2 shows correlation of academic performance with marks of middle standard exam, class size, father's education, mother's education, siblings, monthly family income, age, birth order, self-efficacy and social anxiety of students.

Table 3

Demographic variables, self-efficacy and social anxiety predicting overall academic Performance of students (*N* = 1000)

Variable	*B*	SEB	β	t- value	95%	CI
(Constant)	22.55**	7.99		2.82	289.44	322.26
Gender	11.94***	1.26	.31	9.46	2.44	9.46
Father's Education	.53*	.55	.04	.96	-2.25	-1.02
Mother's Education	1.47**	.64	.10	2.28	-1.99	2.19
Monthly Income	8710.70*	.84	.00	.12	.000	.000
Self-efficacy	.95***	.12	.30	7.61	-.80	.22
Social Anxiety	-.43***	.06	-.23	-6.29	-.74	-.30

Note; β = coefficients

4. Regression analysis

Table 3 shows the results of regression analysis in which four variables are statistically significant. Regression coefficients of gender (B =11.94, ***p< .001), mother education (*B* =1.47, **p < .01) and self-efficacy (*B*= .95, ***p < .001) have positive effect on academic performance and social anxiety (-.43, *** p < .001) has negative effect on academic performance of students.

Table 4

Effect of Gender on Academic Achievement in Various Subjects (*N* = 1000)

Variables	Boys (*n*= 500)		Girls (*n* = 500)		*t* (998)	Cohen's *d*	*95% C.I*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			*LL*	*UL*
Self-efficacy	18.31	3.76	8.29	1.07	-5.25***	1.34	-8.42	-4.56
Social anxiety	20.13	3.89	45.64	7.60	-7.87***	1.24	3.45	5.36
AP	289.58	24.72	350.60	29.84	-15.74***	3.23	123.90	320.20

Note: ***p<.001; AP = academic performance

4.1. Group differences

Significant differences were found on self esteem, social anxiety and academic achievement of students. Results suggested that boys scored high on self-efficacy and girls scored high on social anxiety and academic performance.

5. Discussion

Results support the first hypothesis 1 (H1) which stated that academic performance has relationship with self-efficacy and social anxiety. The results of the study indicated that academic performance has significant positive correlation with self-efficacy. Furthermore regression analysis showed that students' self-efficacy was a significant predictor of their academic performance. The present finding supports the earlier findings which have concluded significant correlation between self-efficacy and academic performance of students. Various studies have shown that academic performance and self-efficacy are significantly positively correlated (Lockett & Harrell, 2003; Verkuyten & Brug, 2002). The findings are corroborative with the findings of Lockett& Harrell's (2003) research which explained that self-efficacy and academic performance link directly to a moderate degree. The finding is in line with the findings of Orr and Dinur (1995), who has established statistically significant correlation between self-efficacy and academic performance.

The correlation between self-efficacy and academic performance is well established but there is difference among the investigators about the nature of correlation. Some say that students give excellent academic results to safeguard their positive self-efficacy, whereas, others argue that positive self-efficacy is a requirement for academic performance (Reasoner, 2004). Still many investigators agree that self-efficacy and academic performance are reciprocally correlated: positive self-efficacy directs to good performance in studies and good achievement in education increases self-efficacy of students. Self-efficacy is found to be a strong predictor of academic accomplishments and is also strongly affected by results achieved and appreciation shown by others for a student for the whole school education period. Academic achievement up to an expected and desired level plays an important role in raising students' self-efficacy (Crocker &Luhtanen, 2003).

The results of our study also supported the relationship of academic performance with social anxiety. The results of the study indicated that academic performance is significantly negatively correlated with social anxiety. Regression analysis showed that social anxiety scores significantly predicted academic performance scores. The finding is in collaboration with earlier findings which elucidate that high anxiety level causes reduced academic performance (Furmark, 2002; Vanaj, et al., 2004). The finding also supports earlier findings which explain that high level of anxiety causes poor academic performance. Wood (2006) concluded that decreased level of anxiety ameliorates academic performance of school children. This may be explained that social anxiety provides basis for difficulties in interaction which cause poor presentation by students. Social anxiety is also linked with other maladaptive behaviors such as drug addiction among adults (Gills et al.,2005) and excessive internet use (Caplan, 2007). The students with higher levels of social anxiety avoid performing group work in class (Cantwell&Andrews, 2002). Another reason of bad performance by socially anxious students is their hesitation in inquiring questions from their teachers and in seeking help from their class fellows (Leary, 1983).

The result supported H3 which stated that there is difference in self efficacy, social anxiety and academic performance between boys and girls adolescents. The boys' self-efficacy was significantly greater as compared to girls which corroborates with previous findings (Funk & Bachman, 1996; Skaalvik& Rankin, 1994). The difference between the self-efficacy of boys and girls can be explained with reference to the social cultural context of Pakistan. Boys are brought up to be self confidant, leading and self dependent. Such social role expectation may contribute to the development of higher level of self-esteem among boys. Contrarily, girls are brought up to be self-restrained. Similarly, there were significant differences of academic performance between boys and girls and girls performed better than boy's academic performance test. It is noteworthy that girls have shown better academic performance despite their lower level of self-esteem and higher level of social anxiety than boys; both of the mental conditions have undesirable effects on academic performance. One potential clarification of the finding is that girls are usually more motivated for education than boys (Su & Chen, 2007). Girls show good results than boys in reading motivation (Pecjak & Peklaj, 2006). The effect of gender on academic performance has been investigated by many researchers and some of them have differences; however most of the research shows girls ahead of the boys (Skalvik, 1990).

In the present study, effect of gender on social anxiety was also found significant; girls scored higher level of social anxiety than boys. The finding supports the previous findings that women are likely to have higher level of social anxiety as compared to men (Furmark, 2002; Mack et al.,2007).

Parents' education has been found to have a significant effect on academic performance of the students. The reason may be that educated parents provide more support and help to their children as compared to less educated parents. Another reason may be the modeling of educated parents for their children. Empirical evidence also confirms the positive relationship between students' academic performance and their parents' education (McLoyd, 1998; Ryabov & Hook, 2007).

Monthly family income showed a positive correlation with academic performance of the students. The parents with more income can afford to spend more for their children's' education and resultantly the performance of their children is better as compared to the children of poor parents. The finding also verified the results of earlier researches (McLoyd, 1998; Ryabov & Hook, 2007). The relationship between monthly income of family and social anxiety was found to be negative in the present study. The finding supports the results of other research findings in this field (Furmark, 2002). People belonging to lower socioeconomic status are at high risk of developing social anxiety, especially when they have to interact with the people of higher socioeconomic status (Wilkinson, 1999).

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