The Relationship Between Social Anxiety and Academic Engagement in a Classroom Setting Among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective(s): The current study aimed to measure social anxiety and academic engagement, analyze the association between social anxiety and academic engagement among college students, and look into differences in social anxiety and academic engagement based on sociodemographic traits.

Methods: To accomplish the aforementioned goals, a descriptive study was conducted at the University of Kerbala in Iraq. from the first of December to the first of February. An adopted Arabic version of the questionnaire was used to collect data from 92 students who made up the convenience non-probability sample.

Results: The results of the study showed that social anxiety was high in most college students (54.3%). In contrast, 46.7% of the students exhibit a low level of academic engagement. Additionally, the findings indicate that students' academic engagement is influenced by their stage of study.

Conclusion: The current study concluded that social anxiety is significantly negatively correlated with academic engagement.

Recommendation: Colleges require to provide mental health support programs, including counseling services and anxiety management seminars, to assist students in managing social anxiety and improving their academic participation in the classroom.

Keywords: Social Anxiety, Academic Engagement, Collage student

INTRODUCTION

In social interactions or public performances, social anxiety disorder (SAD), also referred to as social phobia, is characterized by a severe and persistent fear of embarrassment, humiliation, or rejection when exposed to potential negative evaluation by others[1]. Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is among the most prevalent anxiety disorders and is increasingly affecting a disproportionate number of young individuals. It ranks as the third most common mental health condition, following depression and alcohol dependence. Current estimates indicate a prevalence rate of 5%–10%, with lifetime prevalence ranging from 8.4% to 15% [2]. College students are particularly vulnerable to social anxiety, with global prevalence estimates ranging from 7% to 33% [3]. The college years are essential for cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development; however, social anxiety increasingly hinders students' communication, academic performance, social relationships, and future career prospects[4].College students' evaluative academic and social environments amplify fears embarrassment and judgment, heightening social anxiety susceptibility, which undermines psychosocial adjustment, interpersonal relationships, and academic success [5]. Academic engagement encompasses the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities, commonly conceptualized through three dimensions: vigor (sustained effort), dedication (psychological commitment), and absorption (deep focus) [6]. Academic engagement occurs when students are intellectually and emotionally immersed in learning activities, deeply involved with study materials, and actively interacting with their peers [7]. Academic engagement is a crucial factor in achieving educational success and reducing school dropout rates [8]. Social anxiety negatively impacts class engagement, especially in collaborative environments such as interprofessional education, thereby obstructing teamwork and academic success [9]. Therefore, the objectives of the current study were to ascertain the level of social anxiety and academic engagement, examine the relationship between social anxiety and academic engagement, and look into differences in social anxiety and academic engagement based on sociodemographic characteristics.

METHODS

In order to accomplish the study's goals, a descriptive study design was used to investigate the connection between college students' academic engagement and social anxiety in classroom settings using assessment techniques. College students / University of Kerbala participated in the study. An adopted Arabic version of the questionnaire was used to gather data from 92 students who made up the convenience non-probability sample. The structured interview method was applied for data collection. The research questionnaire included the following sections:

Part I: Demographic data of the students which includes: age, gender, stage and marital status). **Part II**: Social Anxiety Scale: This part contains (24 items) These items. **Part III:** Academic engagement

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scale: This part contains (21) items.A committee of five experts evaluated the questionnaire's content validity, and Cronbach's alpha was used to gauge the instrument's reliability for each subscale. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations) were used to summarize the data, and inferential statistics (Pearson Correlation) were used to look for associations. $P \leq 0.01$ denotes high significance, $P \leq 0.05$ denotes a significant difference, and $P > 0.05$ denotes no significance, according to the interpretation of significance levels.

RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution of the students by their demographic characteristics (n=92)

Variables		n.	%
Age	18-20	45	48.9
	21-23	34	37.0
	24-26	8	8.7
	27 and above	5	5.4
	Total	92	100.0
Gender	Ma	31	33.7
	Fem	61	66.3
	Total	92	100.0
Stage	First	30	32.6
	Second	19	20.7
	Third stage	18	19.6
	Fourth stage	25	27.2
	Total	92	100.0
marital status	Single	86	93.5
	Married	4	4.3
	Widow	1	1.1
	Divorce	1	1.1
	Total	92	100.0

In terms of frequencies and percentages, the results show descriptive statistics of sociodemographic traits. Less than half of the (92) participants in the current study were between the ages of 18 and 20, making up 48.9% of the study sample. Results pertaining to gender show that women made up nearly two thirds of the study's findings and accounted for 66.3% of the total population, with men making up the remaining percentage. In terms of level of class, the sample 1st stage participates, it constituted 32.6%. Finally in this table, regarding marital status, the single participants were predominated, it constituted 93.5%.

Table 2. Overall evaluation of students' social anxiety levels

Evaluation	Frequency	Percent
High	50	54.3
Moderate	39	42.4
Low	3	3.3
Total	92	100.0

Overall related to level of social anxiety. The findings indicate that more than half (54.3%) reported a high-level social anxiety for the students, moderate levels was 42.4%, and low levels was 3.3%.

Table 3. Overall Assessment of level of academic engagement among Student

Overall Assessment of level of academic engagement	Frequency	Percent
High	18	19.6
Moderate	31	33.7
Low	43	46.7
Total	92	100.0

The results reveal that 46.7% reported a low level for the students; moderate levels were 33.7%, and high levels was 19.6%.

Table 4. Academic engagement and social anxiety have a Pearson correlation

Correlations

		"Social Anxiety"	"Academic engagement"
Social Anxiety	"Pearson Correlation"	1	-.208*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.047
	N	92	92
academic engagement	Pearson Correlation	-.208*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.047	
	N	92	92

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate that social anxiety is significantly negatively correlated with academic engagement (r = -.208) at $p \leq 0.05$.

Table 5. The differences in the overall level of social anxiety of the sample and their Demographic Data

		S-Squares	d.f	M-Square	F	Sig.
Age	Between Groups	.855	2	.428	.592	.555
	Within Groups	64.221	89	.722		
	Total	65.076	91			
Stage	Between Groups	1.318	2	.659	.448	.641
	Within Groups	130.987	89	1.472		
	Total	132.304	91			

Table 5: findings indicate that there are non-significant differences in students' overall levels of social anxiety based on demographic information at $p \leq 0.05$.

Table 6. Association between the overall level of academic engagement of the sample and their demographic Data

		S-Squares	d.f	M-Square	F.	Sig.
Age	Between Groups	1.313	2	.656	.916	.404
	Within Groups	63.763	89	.716		
	Total	65.076	91			
Stage	Between Groups	23.307	2	11.653	9.515	.000
	Within Groups	108.997	89	1.225		
	Total	132.304	91			

The results show that the overall level of academic engagement among Student has a significant difference with regard to class at p-value $\leq$ 0.05 and non- significant difference with regard to age at p-value $\leq$ 0.05.

Table 7. Mean difference among overall of social anxiety and academic engagement according to their gender

Overall	Gender	Mean	S. D	P-value
Social anxiety	Male	1.23	.425	.001
	Female	1.62	.582	
Academic engagement	Male	2.45	.768	.111
	Female	2.18	.764	

Table (7) demonstrates that there are non-significant differences in the overall level of academic engagement with respect to gender at P≤ 0.05 and a significant difference in the overall level of social anxiety with regard to gender.

DISCUSSION

The study results show that nearly half of the sample was aged between 18 and 20 years, representing 48.9% of the participants. This outcome runs counter to the results of a prior study by [10], which found that only 36.1% of participants were between the ages of 18 and 20, while the majority (60.4%) were between the ages of 21 and 23.Gender distribution revealed that females accounted for approximately two-thirds of the sample, making up 66.3%, while the remaining participants were male. This outcome is consistent with research by [11], which discovered that women made up 61.3% of the sample and were the majority of study participants. Regarding academic level, first-year students represented 32.6% of the sample. The result finding corresponds with study conducted by [12]. The study findings show that the majority of participants were first-year students, accounting for 50.38% of the sample. Lastly, marital status analysis showed that the majority of participants were single, comprising 93.5% of the sample. This suggests that the findings of the study may primarily reflect the experiences of single college students, potentially limiting the generalizability of the results to those who are married or in relationships. Further analysis could examine how marital status might influence the study's key variables.In terms of social anxiety levels among students, the results reveal that more than half (54.3%) of the participants experienced high levels of social anxiety. Moderate levels were reported by 42.4%, while 3.3% of students reported low levels of anxiety (table 2). According to the study by [13], 39.1% of participants had no or very mild social anxiety, which is in contrast to this finding. Concerning academic engagement levels among students, the findings indicate that 46.7% of students reported low levels of engagement, while 33.7% showed moderate levels, and 19.6% demonstrated high levels (table 3). This result diverges from the findings of [14], who reported exceptionally high levels of student engagement. According to their survey, almost 80% of educators noted that at least 75% of their pupils thought the course was "engaging." In terms of the relationship between social anxiety and academic engagement, the findings show that the two variables are significantly correlated negatively (table 4). This result is in contrast to a study by [15], which discovered that academic engagement was significantly positively impacted by social anxiety.However, another study by [16-19] aligns with these findings, showing that social anxiety was negatively related to student Engagement. In terms of the correlation between the general degree of social anxiety and demographic information, the findings show that there are no appreciable variations in social anxiety levels among students according to their demographic traits (Table 5). This finding is consistent with a study by [20], which found no relationship between social anxiety and participants' age or gender. The findings of the association between demographic information and overall academic engagement show that there is a significant difference in academic engagement levels by stage but no significant difference in academic engagement levels by gender (table 6).This outcome runs counter to research by [21,26], which showed that gender significantly affects college students' academic engagement. Furthermore, this finding runs counter to the research by [26-30], which found no discernible stage-based differences in academic engagement levels. Lastly, the mean difference in overall social anxiety and academic engagement based on gender shows a significant difference in the overall level of social anxiety, while no significant differences are observed in the overall level of academic engagement based on gender (table 7). The findings, which show a significant difference between males and females, imply that gender affects social anxiety. However, there were no discernible gender-based variations in the degree of academic engagement. This indicates that while social anxiety may vary by gender, it does not appear to directly affect academic engagement in the classroom setting. Further research may explore these relationships more deeply.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study concluded that college students exhibited a high level of social anxiety while their overall academic engagement remained low. Additionally, there is a significant negative correlation between academic engagement and social anxiety. The results show that the stage of study has an impact on students' academic engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Colleges should offer mental health support, presentation skills workshops, and peer networks to help students manage anxiety, build confidence, and actively participate in seminars and academic activities.

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