

PREVALENCE OF SOCIAL ANXIETY IN STUDENTS OF COLLEGE OF EDUCATION – UNIVERSITY OF GARMIAN

Rukhos Jabar Ahmad,

Department of Psychology,
College of Educating, University of Garmian, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Bayan H, Tahir Faque,

Department of Psychology,
College of Educating, University of
Garmian, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Dr. Pegah Ali Mardan Seidi,

Department of Psychology,
College of Educating, University of
Garmian, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

ABSTRACT

General anxiety disorder is one of the most common anxiety disorder, especially in college students, because it usually develops in early adolescence or young adulthood. The present study aimed to investigate the prevalence of social anxiety disorder and its associated factors in students of educational science for academic year 2016-2017.

This study was a cross-sectional and descriptive study. One hundred and ninety eight (107 females and 91 males) students in college of education, University of Garmian were randomly selected. A questionnaire in two parts (demographic and Social Phobia Inventory) was used to collect data. Data were analyzed by descriptive and analytic statistics in SPSS -22.

The percentage of participation in the study was 79.2%. Mean and standard deviation of students' age were 20.53 year and 1.86. The majority of the students were female (54%). Findings showed that prevalence of social anxiety disorder was more than 80%. Intensity of social phobia was mild in 20.2%, moderate in 41.9%, and severe in 28.3% of participants. Gender was associated with social anxiety disorder ($p < 0.05$); and social anxiety was more prevalent in freshmen and sophomores ($p < 0.05$).

It can be concluded from this research that social anxiety is a prevalent disorder in students of college of Education. It is more prevalent in females, freshmen, and sophomores. According to the findings of the research, these students need more protection.

Keywords: Social anxiety, students, female, college of education.

INTRODUCTION:

We are social beings and always in emotional need for social communication, but this connection is not easily possible for all. Such factors as lack of self-confidence, fear of rejection, criticism, etc. cause people feel anxious in social situations. The anxiety, in severe cases, becomes a disorder called social phobia or social anxiety disorder (American Psychiatry Association, 2013).

This is one of the prevalent disorders which shows comorbidity with other psychiatric disorders. Social anxiety disorder imposes negative effects on different aspects of patient's life, including educational, social, family and interpersonal relationships dimensions (Taylor and et al., 2016). The disorder causes a persistent fear of social situations in which person may be embarrassed when exposed to unfamiliar people or under observation of others (Ghaedi and et al., 2010). Therefore, people with social phobia may avoid such situations or experience a lot of tension at work.

Due to undesirable process and prognosis of the disorder, psychologists and psychiatrists have recently concentrated on this disorder (Morrison and et al., 2016). The epidemiological studies showed that the prevalence of social anxiety disorder in lifetime is 13.3 %. After major depression disorder and alcohol dependence, this disorder is the third most common disorder in the general population and it is also the most prevalent anxiety disorder (Menezes and et al., 2011).

One of the most common symptoms of social phobia is fear of speaking in front of people. Studies show that 89.4% of people with social anxiety are afraid of speaking to others which is the most common fear factor in these people (Faravelli and et al., 2000). In college, this is normally more important since s/he is required to speak against others and to participate in social activities more than before. In fact, college years are the last years of adolescence, consequently, the other people's opinions are more important for them. That is why people with high self-expectations experience increased anxiety if their expectations are not met.

In recent decades, many studies have addressed the prevalence and factors associated with students' social anxiety; e.g. Momeni and et al. (2015). Relatively high prevalence of social phobia has been reported in Iranian college students. Bani Mustafa and et al. (2014), in a study of Jordanian students, reported similar results. Bella and et al. (2009), in a similar study in Nigeria, investigated the prevalence of social phobia and factors associated with it. They reported Lifetime and 12-month prevalence of this disorder in students respectively as 9.4 and 8.5. Salina and et al. (2008) studied medical students in Malaysia. They found that most students experience significant social anxiety symptoms. The prevalence of social anxiety in this study was reportedly 2.11%.

In another study in Sweden, Tillfors and et al. (2007) showed that there were mild to severe forms of the disorder among the students, and reported its prevalence as 16.1% in students compared to 15.6% in the general population. In a research carried out in Turkey, Izgiç and et al. (2004) reported 9.6% for the lifetime prevalence of disorders, and 7.9% for the recent years among college students.

Most of previous studies have shown that anxiety experienced during the college, can cause problems in later life (Tyssen and et al., 2001). Developing social anxiety and fear of talking among others can make a negative impact on academic performance in two ways: firstly, development of the disorder may cause avoidance in situations that require talking to others which is one on of the essentials of educational systems; and secondly, if a person is forced to talk in such situations, s/he will try to use avoidance behaviors (fast-talking and avoiding eye contact). This problem, in both cases, has a negative effect on performance in situations such as lectures and oral exam.

Social anxiety can have more negative effects on teacher candidate students, because they will be required to talk in front of others in many future situations. Considering the importance of the problem and mentioned issues, as well as the lack of similar studies on teacher candidate students in Iraqi Kurdisatn, this study aimed to investigate the prevalence of social anxiety in college of Education Department student's- University of Garmian.

METHODOLOGY:

This was a descriptive –analytic study. The population included all B.A. students at the college of education in University of Garmian in the academic year of 2016-2017 (1918 students). Sample consisted of 250 students who were randomly selected, based on Morgan Table and the limitation of the research.

For collecting data, Social Anxiety Inventory (SPIN) was used which included 17 items and was developed by Connor and et al. in 2000. This inventory consists of 3 subscales: fear (6 items), avoidance (7 items) and physiological conditions (4 items). In each item, grading was based on five-point Likert scale from never (zero) to too much (4). The score of 20 and more for adults indicates social Phobia disorder. The score of less than 20 indicates non-social phobic individual, 21 to 30 shows Mild, 31 to 40 shows average, 41 to 50 shows severe, and more than 50 shows very severe condition. Connor and et al. (2000) reported the test-retest

reliability of 0.89. The internal consistency of 0.87- 0.94 were reported using Cronbach's alpha (Connor, Davidson and et al., 2000).

This questionnaire was not translated into Kurdish; consequently a team of experts at Garmian University translated it into Kurdish. Then, to make sure of its validity, the title and goals of the study along with the Kurdish version of the questionnaire were presented to a group of five psychology experts at University of Garmian. After their approval, the final version of the questionnaire was prepared. A sample consisting of 50 students were investigated to study its validity and reliability. Cronbach's Alpha was used to calculate its reliability, and a correlation coefficient of 0.84 was obtained. As a whole, the results approved the reliability and validity of final Kurdish version of the questionnaire. Then, on several occasions, the students took the final version of the questionnaire in groups. To observe ethics, the goals of the study and thorough completion were stressed. After oral consent of students, the privacy of information was guaranteed. Data were collected and SPSS-22 software was used to provide the descriptive (mean, and standard deviation), and inferential (T-Test, and ANOVA) statistics. The significance level of $p < 0.05$ was considered for all analyses.

Results: From 250 distributed questionnaires, 198 questionnaires were flawless (answering percentage was 79.2). Participants ranged in age from 19 to 27 years old and Mean and Standard Deviation were 20.53 and 1.86, respectively. The demographic information of participants is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information of the participants

		frequency	percents
gender	Male	91	46
	Female	107	54
stage	First year students	71	35.9
	Second year students	36	18.2
	Third year students	40	20.2
	Fourth year students	51	25.8

Based on the total scores obtained for Social Anxiety disorder, only 17 subjects were not social phobic (8.6%). Others demonstrated varying degrees of the disorder, i.e. 40 subjects (20%) suffered from mild disorder, 83 subjects (41.9%) suffered from average degree, and 56 subjects (28.3%) suffered from severe disorder. None of the subjects showed severe social phobia. Graph 1 illustrates the ratio of social anxiety disorder in the study.

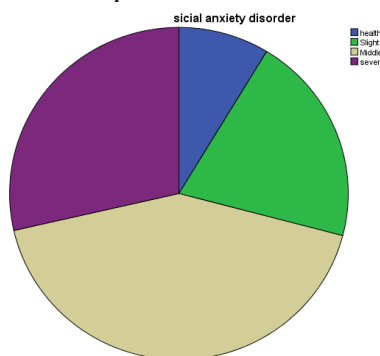


Figure 1: The percentage of social phobic and non-social phobic subjects.

As it is evident in figure 1, the highest percentage is related to average form of social anxiety disorder. To investigate the total scores of SPIN based on gender, t-test was used and results were reported in table 2.

Table 2 : T-test result to investigate the difference between male and female students

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T	Df	Sig
	F	sig			
Equal variances assumed	1.16	0.28	-8.30	194	0.00
Equal variances not assumed			-8.31	190.79	0.00

According to t-test results, there was a significant difference between males and females in prevalence of social

anxiety ($t=-8.30, p= 0.00 > 0.05$) and the means score for females (39.17) was greater than mean obtained for males (30.93). It can be concluded that female experience social anxiety more often than males. Variances were homogenous ($p=0.90 > 0.05$), consequently one-way ANOVA was also used to compare the results based on years spent at the university. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 : result of ANOVA for the comparison of social phobia in student with one to four years spent at the university.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	6128.27	3	2041.75	60.41	0.00
Within Groups	6492.13	192	33.81		
Total	12620.40	195			

ANOVA results showed that there was a significant difference between prevalence of social phobia in students with one to four years spent at the university ($F= 60.41, p=0.00 < 0.05$). The Tukey Test illustrated that this difference more prominent between freshmen & sophomores and juniors & seniors ($p= 0.00, 0.00 < 0.05$). Social phobia was more intense in students who experienced their first or second academic years.

CONCLUSION:

The present study aimed to investigate the prevalence of social anxiety disorder among students of Education College, Garmian University in academic year 2016-2017. To this end, 198 students participated in this study, and data were collected using Social Anxiety Inventory (SPIN) . The findings revealed that more than 80% of students suffered from varying degrees of social anxiety.

No similar study was found in Iraq and Kurdistan to make comparison possible, but similar studies in other countries yielded similar results; e.g. Momeni (2015), Banimustafa (2014) and Salina (2008) and also Tillfors and et al. (2007). These studies show that social anxiety is prevalent in college students.

Although the results of previous studies support the results obtain in this study, the prevalence obtained for the sample is significantly higher than samples in similar studies. These students study at the Teacher Training Center and consequently they are in greater need for social interaction. This difference can be explained by such factors as differences in cultural backgrounds, measurement instruments and different data collection methods.

In addition, other findings showed that the level of anxiety experienced by students in the first and second academic years, is significantly higher than the third and fourth years. A reason for this phenomenon may be their lower experience in social relations. Some studies which show a significant relationship between age and experiencing social anxiety support our explanation. Mohammadi (2006) showed that there was a negative relationship between age and social anxiety and an increase in age significantly reduced the probability of social anxiety experience.

More years spent at university and courses requiring lecturer and seminar for junior and senior students can explain our finding and the role they play in controlling social anxiety in students.

Further analysis showed that females significantly experience higher social anxiety. These findings are also consistent with findings of previous studies (Banimostafa, 2014; Baptista, 2012; Bella, 2009; Tilfors and et al., 2007). As a whole, gender is mentioned as a predisposing factor for developing social anxiety disorder in literature where being female is a risk factor for the disorder (Sheung, 2010).

Present study suffered from such limitations as mental and emotional conditions of subjects that can affect the answers. It was controlled by researchers. Sampling from only one college restricts generalization from our findings, as well. A great number of students did not participate in the study and social anxiety is one of possible reasons for their behavior. Consequently, it is possible that our study does not correctly estimate the prevalence of social anxiety. Due to high levels of anxiety, especially in girls and freshmen and sophomores, they may experience deficiencies in assertiveness and life skills. Similar studies in other departments and universities make comparison and generalization more feasible.

Hereby, we would like to thank Dr. Nazdar Qudrat Abbas for her friendly supports, and last but not least all students who participated in the study.

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