



THE PREDICTIVE INFLUENCE OF PEER PRESSURE AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Social anxiety disorder is the most prevalent and chronic type of anxiety disorder worldwide. It affects the educational and social affairs of adolescents. Adolescents spend a lot of time in school, necessitating a considerable amount of social interaction with peer group and teachers. The present study attempts to find the predictive influence of peer pressure and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents. Data was collected from 500 adolescents studying in government and self-financed schools in Punjab. The sample was drawn from ten randomly selected districts of Punjab state. The data was collected using the social anxiety disorder scale by Nagpal (2018), the Peer pressure scale by [Singh and Saini \(2010\)](#) and the School environment scale by [Misra \(2012\)](#). The findings reveal that social anxiety disorder is negatively related to peer pressure. A significant negative relationship exists between social anxiety disorder and the school environment. It is apparent from the regression model summary that the conjoint effect of peer pressure and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than their individual effects. It implies that peer pressure and school environment would contribute towards predicting social anxiety disorder both independently and conjointly.

KEYWORDS: Social Anxiety Disorder, Peer Pressure, School Environment

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is an important period of transition. Depressive disorders often start at a young age; they reduce people's functioning and often are recurring (Sandal et al., 2017). It is a critical period in social development, marked by an expansion of peer networks, increased importance of close friendships and the emergence of romantic relationships (Greca, 1998), anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health problems experienced by children and young people (Costello Egger & Angold, 2005). Social anxiety is the second most common anxiety disorders in adults (Kessler et al., 2005).

Social anxiety disorder is an excessive fear in response to social situations in which the person believes they may be judged and negatively evaluated by others (American Psychiatric Association, 2014). It is the commonest disorder among adolescents (Polanczyk, Salum, Sugaya, Caye, & Rohde, 2015). Adolescence is the most typical age of onset and the course is often chronic (Beiel, Morris & Turner, 2004; Wittchen & Fehm, 2003). Researchers have found that individuals who experience a higher number of anxiety disorders during adolescence are at increased risk of later anxiety disorders (Woodward & Fergusson, 2001). Social anxiety is a concern for young adults around the world, many of whom do not recognize the difficulties they may experience. A large number of young people may be experiencing substantial disruptions in functioning and well-being which may be ameliorable with appropriate education and intervention (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020).

DSM-V defines social anxiety disorder as marked anxiety of social situations in which the individual may be scrutinized by others and this situation interferes significantly with routines, occupational (academic) functioning, social activities, and relationships. Coleman (2007) explained social anxiety disorder as an anxiety disorder characterized by a phobia of scrutiny by others or of being the focus of attention in social situations involving strangers. Exposure to such social situation either generates anxiety about behaving in an embarrassing or humiliating way, or triggers a panic attack, but the reaction is recognized by the afflicted person (an adolescent or adult) as excessive or irrational, and the avoidance behaviour or anxious anticipation interferes significantly with everyday life, occupational or academic performance, or social relationships. Goldberg (2014) explained social anxiety disorder as an anxiety disorder in which a person has an excessive and unreasonable fear of social situations. Anxiety and self-consciousness arise from a fear of being closely watched, judged, and criticized by others. Peer relationships and school functioning may suffer as a result of child's social anxiety disorder.

Peer pressure is often seen during the adolescence stage of a teenagers because they often seek comfort among their peers and intend to do what

their peers does without knowing it is good or bad for them. Adolescent's relationships with friends and peers play a critical role in the development of social skills and feelings of personal competence that are essential for adult functioning (Ingersoll, 1989). Peer groups gives comfort to children, as it facilitates self-esteem in children and makes acceptable. Adolescents tend to settle with friends of similar problem and situation and where they know their conditions will be accepted (Kandel, 1985; Urberg, Luo, Pilgrim, & Degirmencioglu, 2003). Peer pressure is described to have a positive and negative impact among individuals and even without effect to a person because peer pressure is continuous learning (Gulati, 2017). A person affected by peer pressure may or may not want to belong to these groups. They may also recognize dissociative groups with which they would not wish to associate, and thus they behave adversely concerning that group's behaviours. Peer pressure can also have positive effects when people are pressured toward positive behaviour, such as volunteering for charity or excelling in academics or athletics, by their peers (Vaithyanathan & Sivakumar, 2020).

Adolescents spend a great deal of their life at school, necessitating a considerable amount of social interaction. The prevalence rate of social phobia in school going adolescents in an urban area was 10.3 % in which 5% belonged to the moderate category, 4.3 % to be marked, 0.7% to the severe phobia in adults. Female showed a higher incidence of social phobia when compared to males and in the age group of 14 -15 years showed a higher incidence of social phobia than those aged 16-17 years (Chhabra, Bhatia, Gupta, Kumar, & Srivastva, 2009). Depression, anxiety and stress is highly prevalent in adolescents that leads to suicidal ideation, homicidal ideation, tobacco use and other substance use (Bakshi et al., 2017). Researchers concluded that the levels of depression are high in adolescents and it is associated with female gender and presence of anxiety (Mithra, Jayashree, Nair, Unnikrishnan, & Pai, 2018).

Peer pressure is a social institution that modifies adolescents' behaviours by making them indulge in institutions and among our youths who are leaders of tomorrow. Elliot and McGregor (2001) defined peer pressure as the influence exerted by a peer group in encouraging a person to change his/her attitude, values, behaviour in order to confirm the group norms. Pagano, Wang, Rowles, Lee, and Johnson (2015) investigated the influence of social anxiety disorder on clinical severity at intake, peer- helping during treatment and outcomes in a sample of 195 adolescents (14-18 years) and reported that 42% of adolescents have shown persistent fear of being humiliated or scrutinized in social situations, and 15 % met current diagnostic criteria for social anxiety disorder. Pickering, Hadwin and Kovshoff (2019) studied the role of peers in the development of social anxiety in adolescent girls and results show that while low peer acceptance is significantly associated with increased social anxiety for boys and girls, negative friendship experiences, limited close relationships,

and relational victimisation are highlighted as risk factors specific to girls.

Morris, Larsen, Catterall, Moss, and Dombrowski (2020) reviewed qualitative studies which explored peer pressure within the context of alcohol consumption or alcohol related behaviours and views in adults living in the UK and it was found that pressure to drink alcohol affects individuals across the life span and can be experienced as overt and aggressive, or subtle and friendly. Those consuming little or no alcohol are more likely to feel overt forms of peer pressure. Peer pressure can result in feelings of social isolation or giving in by consuming alcohol against ones wishes.

For adolescent, the school environment presents many potentially stressful situations such as answering in class, participating in groups, giving an oral presentation and making friends. In these situations, they may be ridiculed, excluded or even victimized and these socially anxious students may stop socializing with classmates and friends, refuse to attend school (Blote, Miers, Heyne & Westenberg, 2020). Briere, Pascal, Dupere and Janosz (2012) stated that school represents a universal and influential context of youth development. School can exert a strong influence not only on the intellectual growth, but also on social and emotional well-being of the adolescent. Nagpal (2018) studied social anxiety disorder among adolescents in relation to self-efficacy, family and school environment and a negative relationship was found between social anxiety disorder and the five dimensions (Creative Stimulation, Cognitive Encouragement, Acceptance, Permissiveness and Control) of school environment among urban adolescents Whereas, social anxiety disorder has significant positive relationship with rejection dimension of school environment. Gonzalez et al. (2019) researched on identifying risk profiles of school refusal behaviour: differences in social anxiety and family functioning among Spanish students. Data was collected by using The School Refusal Assessment scale- revised, the Social Anxiety Scale for adolescents and the Family APGAR scale from 1842 Spanish adolescents and results of this study shows that students who reject the school are at increased level of social anxiety problems and manifesting family conflicts whereas non-school refusal behaviour revealed higher scores in the perception of good family functioning.

Shah and Kataria (2020) conducted a study on social phobia and its impact in Indian university students and out of 380 undergraduate students, 19.5% of students, in varied degrees of severity and correlated with various faculties in university, resulting in significant disability in work, family life, and social life, as well as impairment in quality of life. 'Acting, performing or giving a talk in front of an audience' was the most commonly feared/avoided situation.

Since a very limited number of research studies have been addressed on social anxiety disorder among adolescents and because of the seriousness of

its adverse consequences, it was considered important to explore this issue further. It is important to identify anxiety disorders in school students as these predict not just social anxiety disorders but also other psychopathologies such as depression, substance use problems. The present study is an attempt in this direction by unfolding two main factors peer pressure and school environment affecting social anxiety disorder among adolescents as they spend a great deal of their daily life with peers and at school.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To find out the relationship between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents
2. To investigate the significance of relationship between social anxiety disorder and school environment among adolescents.
3. To find out the conjoint effect of peer pressure and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Following are the hypotheses of the study:

1. There is a significant relationship between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents
2. There is a significant relationship between social anxiety disorder and school environment among adolescents
3. The conjoint effect of peer pressure and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than their individual effects.

SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on a descriptive survey method. The sample comprises 500 adolescents studying in government and self-financed schools in the state of Punjab. The sample was drawn from ten randomly selected districts of Punjab state. Multistage random sampling was followed at the district, school and adolescent level. Data collection instruments used were the Social Anxiety Disorder Scale by Nagpal (2018), Peer Pressure Scale by Singh and Saini (2010) and School Environment Scale by Misra (2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1**Coefficient of Correlation Between Social Anxiety Disorder, Peer Pressure and School Environment.**

Variables	Category	N	Correlation
Social Anxiety Disorder and Peer Pressure	Adolescents	500	-0.56**
Social Anxiety Disorder and School Environment			-0.51**

* Sig at 0.01 Level

In order to verify the hypotheses, coefficient of correlation was calculated with product moment method between the scores of social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents. The coefficient of correlation between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents as depicted in Table 1 is -0.56 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance indicating that there is significant and negative relationship between the variables. This result leads to the acceptance of Hypothesis 1 i.e., there is a significant relationship between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents. The findings of [Pickering, Hadwin, and Kovshoff \(2020\)](#) are in line with the present findings as they researched that low peer acceptance is significantly associated with increased level of social anxiety. Similar findings were reported by [Festa and Ginsburg \(2011\)](#) who found that children who perceived themselves as more socially accepted (e.g., have classmates who like them and spend time with them) had lower levels of social anxiety.

It can be seen from Table 1 that value of coefficient of correlation between the scores of adolescents on the variables of social anxiety disorder and school environment is -0.51, which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. The value of correlation is significant and negative meaning thereby that, the unfavourable and bad school environment increases social anxiety disorder and favourable school environment decreases social anxiety disorder among adolescents. Therefore, on the basis of above result, aforesaid Hypothesis 2 i.e., there is a significant relationship between social anxiety disorder and school environment among adolescents' stands accepted. The result of the present study shows that adolescents who feel connected to their school have better peer relationships, motivation, good communication skills and less emotional problems including depression and social anxiety. This finding is similar to the findings of [Briere, Pascal, Dupere and Janosz \(2012\)](#) who found that school level socio educational environment is predictive of depressive symptoms in

children and this association is slightly stronger in girls than boys. Previous research studies also support the fact that poor level of education in the schools and lack of attention and care on the part of the teachers, the child continues to face the disorder; this in turn predisposes the child into social phobia (Chhabra et al., 2009). A study conducted by Gonzalvez et al. (2019) also suggests that students’ school attendance problems negatively affect students’ development. Students who feel rejected by school they are at a higher risk of developing social anxiety problems.

Regression For Predictive Efficiency

The conjoint effect of peer pressure and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than their individual effects as shown in Table 2. The effect of peer pressure on social anxiety disorder among adolescents was found significant at 0.01 level ($F(1, 498)=232.13$). The computed value of R^2 of peer pressure and social anxiety disorder among adolescents (YX_1) is 0.318 which indicates that the contribution of peer pressure on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is 31.8%. The social anxiety disorder among adolescents can be predicted with the equation:

Social anxiety disorder = $58.73+1.06 \times \text{peer pressure}$ i.e., for every unit of increase in peer pressure, social anxiety disorder among adolescents increases by 1.06.

Table 2
Data for Regression Analysis.

Variable	R	R ²	% Variance	F	Regression Equation
YX_1	0.56	0.31	31.8	232.13*	$Y=58.73+1.06X_1$
YX_2	0.51	0.26	26.0	175.04*	$Y=202.59-0.39X_2$
YX_1X_2	0.67	0.45	45.9	211.25*	$Y=117.76+0.87X_1-0.30X_2$

*Sig at 0.01 Level Y - Social Anxiety Disorder, X1 - Peer Pressure, X2 - School Environment

The effect of peer pressure on social anxiety disorder among adolescents was found significant at .01 level ($F(1, 498)=175.04$). The computed value of R^2 of school environment and social anxiety disorder among adolescents (YX_2) is 0.260 which indicates that the contribution of school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is 26%. The social anxiety disorder among adolescents can be predicted with the equation:

Social anxiety disorder = $202.59 - 0.39 \times \text{school environment}$ i.e., for every unit of increase in school environment, social anxiety disorder among adolescents decreases by 0.39.

The conjoint effect of both peer pressure and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents was found significant at 0.01 level of significance ($F(2,497)=211.25$). The computed value of R^2 of social anxiety disorder with peer pressure and school environment ($Y_1X_1X_2$) is 0.459 which indicates the contribution of peer pressure and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is 45.9%.

As percentage variance (45.9) of variables of peer pressure and school environment conjointly on social anxiety disorder among adolescents shows increase in its value from peer pressure (%age variance=31.8) and school environment (%age variance=26), it indicates that the conjoint effect of peer pressure and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than that of peer pressure and school environment separately.

The social anxiety disorder among adolescents can be predicted with the equation:

Social anxiety disorder = $117.76 + 0.87 \times \text{peer pressure} - 0.30 \times \text{school environment}$

Hence, Hypothesis 3, the conjoint effect of peer pressure and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than their individual effects' stands accepted.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the present research suggests that social anxiety disorder is negatively related with peer pressure. A significant and negative relationship was also found between social anxiety disorder and school environment. It is quite apparent from the regression model summary that the conjoint effect of peer pressure and school environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than their individual effects. It implies that peer pressure and school environment would contribute towards the prediction of social anxiety disorder both independently as well as conjointly.

It is suggested that the teachers should create a congenial environment in the class. Teachers should give group assignments and teach healthy competition among students which further contributes to the positive peer pressure among students. Peer pressure can also have positive effect when adolescents are pressured toward positive behaviour such as excelling in academics or athletics, by setting clear goals in education by their peers and teachers can play a vital role in this regard. This means school environment has a great

impact on life of adolescents. A conducive school environment can give better opportunities to adolescents to overcome social anxiety disorder.

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