

## Social Anxiety Disorder Among Adolescents in Relation to Peer Pressure and Family Environment

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage of transition where they are more influenced by outside factors such as parents, peers, family, school and society at large. This influence can be both positive and negative. The positive influence could increase self-confidence, good relations with peer, family and society, academic achievements whereas negative impact could lead to low self-esteem, inability to deal with social situations etc. leading to great stress and social anxiety among adolescents. Social anxiety disorder (or social phobia) is a mental disorder with hampered ability of social interaction which causes impairment in academic and social functioning and can seriously limit adolescent's self-beliefs and his ability to succeed. The present study is an attempt to investigate the role and impact of peer pressure and family environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents. For this purpose, 520 adolescents studying in government and self-financed schools in the state of Punjab were selected randomly using multi-stage sampling technique. The tools used for this purpose were Social Anxiety Disorder scale (2018) by Nagpal, Peer Pressure Scale (2010) by Singh and Saini, Family Environment Scale (2012) by Bhatia and Chadha. The study is descriptive in nature. The major findings of the study revealed that (i) a significant positive relationship exists between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents; (ii) a significant negative relationship exists between social anxiety disorder and family environment of adolescents; the conjoint effect of peer pressure and family environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than their individual effects. The study will prove to be an eye opener for society who always judge adolescents as ruthless, insensitive, irresponsible and incapable to handle social pressures. It will also help the parents to redefine their role in relation to their children especially when they are at adolescent stage and also take the friends of their wards with positive but cautious note without undermining the positive influence of peers.

**KEY WORDS:** SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER, PEER PRESSURE, FAMILY ENVIRONMENT.

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a beautiful phase of life when dreams are built and the child turns into energetic and confident individual. They are considered to be as corner stone of a family, society and country. It is a transitional stage of physical and mental human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. This stage involves biological, social and psychological changes, though the biological ones are the easiest to measure objectively, but as they grow and develop, they are influence by outside factors such as: parents, peers, community, culture, religion, school, world events and the media (Spano, 2004). These factors play an important role in the all round development of adolescents. It has been seen that they suffer from mental, emotional and behaviour problems which are very painful and costly to both themselves and their family members. These problems not only disrupt a child's ability to function socially, academically and emotionally but also affect the person as well as his or her family, school, community and the larger society.

This has resulted poor performance in the studies, due to the failures, students' feel stress, tension and anxiety. Empirical data reveals that anxiety is characterized by feelings of distress and tension about real or anticipated threats that may manifest in cognitive, behavioural or physiological patterns ( Huberty, 1997) and particularly social anxiety or phobia which has been ranked by Alonso et al. as one of the ten leading chronic disorders – mental or physical due to its effects on objective outcomes, such as the reduced quality of life in relation to health while Bruce and Saeed (1999) has ranked it as the third most common psychiatric disorder. Results of the various studies found that it is a common disorder with a prevalence of 12.1 % among the people (Kessler et al., 2005).

Social anxiety disorder has both lifetime and 12 month prevalence rates of 12.1% and 7.1% respectively, (Ruscio et al., 2008). Social phobia is highly prevalent among the girls and it has no significant effect on the students demographically ( Rizwan, Inam and Abiodullah, 2015). Social phobia is the most chronic type of anxiety disorder and it effects occupational, educational and social affairs of the individual. It is also known for its association with substance use disorder and depression among school adolescents (Mekuria et al., 2017). Students with social anxiety disorder are more likely to experience depressive symptoms and have poor quality of life and vice versa. Females are mor likely to experience Social anxiety disorder (Ratnani et al., 2020).

It is “uncomfortable and unwanted” psychological problem (Ahmed, 2009). It is due to this disorder adolescents feel fear of meeting new people or embarrassing oneself in social situations. Pagano, Wang, Rowles, Lee and Johnson (2015) studied the influence of social anxiety disorder on clinical severity at intake, peer- helping during treatment and outcomes in 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. The influence of social anxiety disorder on peer- helping and outcomes was examined by hierarchical linear regression and event history methods.

Pickering et al., (2019) have studied the role of peers in the development of social anxiety in adolescent girls: a systematic review and results shows that while low peer acceptance was significantly associated with increased social anxiety for boys and girls, negative friendship experiences, limited close relationships, and relational victimisation were highlighted as risk factors specific to girls. The review enabled the researchers for the development of prevention and intervention methods to support girls at increased risk and that focus on improving the quality of peer relationships. At adolescence stage of development, susceptibility to peer pressure is particularly high. The fear of isolation and the fear of ridicule may play a role in this. Adolescence is the time when person is most susceptible to peer pressure because peer becomes an important influence on behaviour during adolescence and peer pressure has been called a hallmark of adolescent experience. Peer conformity in young people is most pronounced with respect to style, taste, appearance, ideology and values (Campbell, 2018).

Adolescents are under constant pressure- pressure to perform academically, to become their own person independent of their parents and to deal with the hormonal and physical changes that are happening to their bodies. They are also under constant scrutiny from their classmates, and are often subject to mounting pressure to fit in or do things that earn them approval from their peers. This constant pressure to fit in and to gain approval can be overwhelming for many youngsters, ultimately leading to social anxiety disorder. Peer pressure is not always negative. We are all influenced by our peers/friends at any age, (Yael, 2015).

Family is a primary socialization context and is considered to be a strong factor influencing child development. A family is a source of stability, security and happiness. It can nurture love and togetherness but in the absence of these factors it can become a source of stress and turmoil. A conflictual family environment is associated with adolescent's insecurity and psychological distress, as well as aggressive behaviour and conduct disorder. After informal learning in home child goes to school for formal learning and school is another important factor influencing adolescent's development. A positive, supportive environment can help children feel safe. Adolescents who feel that there are people who care about them at school and feel connected to the school are more likely to be academically motivate and less likely to engage in a variety of negative behaviours including drug use, violence and sexual activity but on the other side, if the school environment is bad it may have drastic effects on their development which further leads to stress and anxiety among adolescents (Nagpal, 2018).

Xu et al., (2017) studied on the relationship between parenting styles and adolescents' social anxiety in migrant families. The data was collected from 1345 adolescents in migrant families from four non-government funded junior middle schools in Guangdong, China. Scales used for measuring parenting style was short form of the EgnaminnenBeträffandeUppfostran and social anxiety measured by social anxiety subscale of self-consciousness scale. The result shows that mother's overprotection is associated with adolescents' social anxiety in migrant families and furthermore, in migrant families, parental emotional warmth could decrease adolescent's social anxiety, whereas maternal overprotection could increase it.

Tahirovic and Demir (2018) conducted a study on influence of parental divorce on anxiety level of adolescents and found that adolescents from divorced families shows higher level of social anxiety than adolescents from intact families and furthermore adolescents divorced families and intact families do not vary in their anxiety level in relation to gender. The sample for the study consists of 162 adolescents from five different high schools from Istanbul, Turkey and for assessment of anxiety level of participants Beck Anxiety Inventory was used.

Recently, Gomez-Ortiz et al., (2019) investigated on parenting practices and adolescent social anxiety: a direct or indirect relationship? The representative sample consisted of 2060 Andalusian students (47.7% girls. Mage = 14.37) assessed by various self reports and found a direct relationship between maternal and paternal educational practices and social anxiety and indirect relationship between parental practices and social anxiety, mediated by negative self-esteem and emotional suppression.

**Social Anxiety Disorder:** Social anxiety disorder is explained by extreme and consistent fear of meeting new people or embarrassing oneself in social situation. DSM-V defines social phobia as marked or intense fear or 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) defined 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.

According to Goldberg (2014) social anxiety disorder, also called social phobia is an anxiety disorder in which a person has an excessive and unreasonable fear of social situations. Anxiety (intense nervousness) and

self-consciousness arise from a fear of being closely watched, judged, and criticized by others. Nagpal (2018) defined social anxiety disorder is a persistent and significant fear of being scrutinized or humiliated by others in social situations wherein the person may have to perform or meet a lot of unfamiliar persons. When these fears become excessive they impede the person's functioning and routine. Furmark (2020) explained social anxiety disorder seems to be a problem that is strongly intertwined with personality, but at the same time it shows great variation. Peer relationships, school functioning and family functioning may all suffer as a result of child's social anxiety disorder.

**Peer Pressure:** Peer groups play an important role in young people's lives particularly during adolescence. Peer Pressure refers to the influence that these groups can have on how an individual thinks and acts. Peer pressure is the direct influence on people by peers, or the effect on an individual who gets encouraged to follow their peers by changing their attitude, behaviours. Santor, Messervey & Kusumakar (2000) defined peer pressure as the insistence and encouragement of the same age group individuals to make or force the individual to do something. Elliot & McGregor (2001) explained 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. Sharry (2004) stated peer pressure as pressure coevals is associated with wrong decisions, rebellion and humour fluctuations, which will lead to a poor academic performance, because of the fact that adolescents are not cooperative in the process of learning outcomes and as a result their school results fall weakly, Dumas et al (2012).

The pressure among peer group among its member may engage to do undesired things or negative behaviour with the presence of a particular peer group leader who engage its member to do deviant acts or promote undesirable things to the group. Gulati (2017) stated peer pressure towards persons behaviour is said to be a social phenomenon where the members of a particular society or may not be influence negatively but majority are affected by the undesirable behaviour of those people who resist what others do. Moldes et al., (2019) stated 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 if it is good or bad for them.

**Family Environment:** Family is the most important environmental cluster of variables which influence the development of a child. Family environment is the first social setting in which an infant takes birth and start learning, responding and acting. Pfeiffer and Aylward (1990) was of the view that family climate affects the child's cognitive and social development, which in turn influences his/her self-confidence, self reliance, assertiveness, personality characteristics coping skills, academic motivation and success. Ranhotra (1996) defined family environment as the complex of social and cultural conditions, the combinations of external or

extrinsic physical conditions that affect and influence the growth and development of the member of family, the most intrinsic fundamental social group which includes parents and their children. Kayhan, Yazicioglu (2007) Family is a social structure making a person happy to be a member of it; it is a place where a person feels protected in every aspect of life. Basic needs in life are fulfilled by family. The first interaction is experienced within the family. Basic behaviours and habits related to life are acquired by an interaction in the family. Meadows (2010) defined family is the first place of learning which is very important for the child's social and emotional development. Kamble (2014) mentioned that family is major socialization agency and has great influence and bearing on the behaviour of children.

Recently, Lakhota and Dubey (2020) explained a family consists of people who look after us, play an essential role in upbringing us and teach us the lesson in life. Family environment is considered as a system where the behaviour and relationship among all family members is interdependent. A stimulating physical environment, encouragement of achievement and affection are repeatedly linked to better performance of children. Every individual bears an impact of the environment in which she is brought up. Family is almost the exclusive environmental factor, which influences the first few primitive years of life.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

**Emergence of the study:** Adolescents' relationships with friends and peers play a critical role in the development of social skills and feelings of personal competence that are extremely important for adult functioning. It has been seen that peer relationships appear to be instrumental in facilitating adolescents' sense of personal identity and increasing their independence from family influence (Dusek, 1991, Ingersoll, 1989). Consequently, this area has become a great concern to parents, teachers, examination bodies, counsellors and psychologists. In this connection, social anxiety may be an important factor to examine among adolescents. Although social anxiety has long been recognized as an essential factor for understanding adults' interpersonal behaviour and psychological functioning (Leary, 1983), the study of social anxiety among adolescents has been an emerging phenomenon. Thus, the present study is an attempt to investigate the relationship between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure. Among from peer pressure, family environment is another important factor in influencing child's development. A family is a source of stability, security and happiness. It can nurture love and togetherness but in the absence of these factors it can become a source of stress and turmoil.

An ideal home environment is one where there is proper reward to strengthen the desired behaviour, a keen interest in and love for the child provision of opportunities to express its views freely, where parents put less restrictions to discipline the child, not preventing the child from acting independently, not continuing infantile care and

optimum use of physical and affective punishment where children are not compelled to act according to parental desires and expectations (Bandhana & Sharma, 2012). The environment can be strong source of support for developing adolescents, providing close relationship, strong parenting skills and good communication and modelling positive behaviour. However, a review of related literature reveals that the social anxiety disorder has not received attention in the study of peer pressure in the realm of family environment. Definitely, the scarcity of research in this area especially in India provides a convincing rationale to undertake further investigation into examining the relationship between social anxiety disorder, peer pressure and family environment. Therefore, investigator made an attempt to study social anxiety disorder in relation to peer pressure and family environment among adolescents.

**Operational definitions of the terms used:** Social anxiety disorder: Social anxiety disorder is a persistent and significant fear of being scrutinized or humiliated by others in social situations wherein the person may have to perform or meet lot of unfamiliar persons. When these fears become excessive they impede the person's functioning and routine (Nagpal, 2018)

**Peer Pressure:** Peer pressure refers to as any attempt by one or more group peers to compel an individual to follow in the decisions or behaviours favored by the pressuring individual or group.

**Family environment:** It is the general environment of the family consisting of eight dimensions namely cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and acceptance and caring, independence, active-recreational orientation, organization and control (Bhatia & Chadha, 2012).

**Objectives of study:** 1. To investigate the significance of relationship between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents. 2. To study the significance of relationship between social anxiety disorder and family environment among adolescents. 3. To study the conjoint effect of peer pressure and family environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents.

**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 family environment among adolescents. 3. The conjoint effect of peer pressure and family environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than their individual effects. The Present study was a descriptive survey method conducted on 520 adolescents studying in government and self-financed schools in the state of Punjab. The sample was drawn from ten randomly selected districts of Punjab. Multistage randomization was followed at the district, school and adolescent level. Data collection instruments are Social anxiety disorder scale (2018) by Nagpal, Peer Pressure Scale (2010) by Singh and Saini, Family Environment Scale by Bhatia and Chadha (2012).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to test the first hypothesis stating "there is a significant relationship between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents", coefficient of correlation was calculated using product moment method between the scores of social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents. The value of correlation is given in Table 1

**Table 1. Showing Coefficient of Correlation between Social Anxiety Disorder and Peer Pressure among adolescents**

Category	Variables	N	r	Inference
Adolescents	Social anxiety disorder and peer pressure	520	0.45	Significant at 0.01 level
	Social anxiety disorder and family environment		-0.46	Significant at 0.01 level

The coefficient of correlation between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents as depicted in Table 1 is 0.45 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance indicating that there is significant and positive relationship between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure. It implies that more the peer pressure on the

adolescents more is the social anxiety disorder in them. Results of the present study are consistent with earlier researches (Pickering, Hadwin, Kovshoff, 2019) which also results low peer acceptance was significantly associated with increased social anxiety for boys and girls, negative friendship experiences, limited close relationships and relational victimization were highlighted as risk factors specific to girls and (La Greca and Lopez, 1998) resulted adolescents with higher levels of social anxiety reported poorer social functioning (less support from classmates, less social acceptance and less intimacy).

The findings of present study is supported by Tilltors et al. (2012) which resulted that social anxiety was negatively and significantly correlated with peer relationship support at baseline. Cavanaugh and Buehler (2016) found the association between cumulative social support from parents, teachers and peers was associated with decreased anxiety in early adolescence, with this association being stronger for boys than girls. A recent study Moldes et al. (2019) also explored the correlation between the perceived level of peer pressure in terms of curiosity, social belongingness, education and cultural-parenting orientation of parents. In general, adolescents are expected to face the effects of peer pressure optimistically to cope up the negative influence of peer pressure. Effects of student peer pressure are based on their approach towards their peers. Hence the above stated objective that there exists a significant relationship between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents' accepted.

**Table 2. Showing the conjoint effect of peer pressure and family environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents (N=520)**

Variable	R	R2	% Variance	F	Inference	Step-up Regression Equation
YX1	0.448	0.201	20.1	130.15	Sig at 0.01 level	$Y=69.05+0.90X1$
YX2	0.458	0.210	21.0	137.84	Sig at 0.01 level	$Y=213.88-0.33X2$
YX1X2	0.584	0.341	34.1	133.72	Sig at 0.01 level	$Y=141.40+0.75X1-0.27X2$

Here, Y stands for Social anxiety disorder, X1 - Peer pressure and X2 - Family environment

Further, the results presented in Table 1 show that value of coefficient of correlation between social anxiety disorder and family environment is -0.46 which is significant at 0.01 level of confidence indicating that there is significant and negative relationship between social anxiety disorder and family environment among adolescents, which show that adolescents who are more under parental control and overprotection higher the social anxiety disorder in adolescents. The result of this study also shows that parents of children with high anxiety are likely to be more protective and less accepting than those of low anxious children which is consistent with previous study (Bögel et al.; Fiesta and Ginsberg, 2011). This result of present study is in line

with the studies which explore parents' overprotective attitudes, especially mother's attitude, can increase children's social anxiety (Verhoeven et al. 2012). Results of the present study also support (Tahirvoic and Demir, 2018) adolescents from divorced families shows higher level of social anxiety than adolescents divorced families and intact furthermore adolescents divorced families and intact families do not vary in their anxiety level in relation to gender. Ortiz et al. (2019) also explored parental education practices seem to act as a family asset which either hinders or promotes the development of self-esteem, basic attitudes ad by doing this, either prevents or encourages the emergence of problems such as social anxiety disorder.

Therefore, on the basis of above result, aforesaid Hypothesis 'there exists a significant relationship between Social anxiety disorder and family environment among adolescents' stands accepted. The findings of the present study extend the association of social anxiety in adolescents by testing the relative importance of peer factors and parental. Previous researches has shown that both parental and peer factors are strong predictors of social anxiety in adolescents, however there is a lack of research exploring the association of these factors to adolescents in India. Further research on risk factors for social anxiety disorder with a larger sample of adolescents of India be conducted to broaden and strengthen the findings of this study.

Regression results: Table 2 showing the conjoint effect of peer pressure and family environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents (N=520)

To verify hypothesis 3 i.e. 'The conjoint effect of peer pressure and family environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than their individual effects'

To test this hypothesis, the step-up regression technique was employed. The effect of peer pressure on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents was found significant at .01 level (F (1, 518) =130.15). The computed value of R<sup>2</sup> of peer pressure and Social anxiety disorder among adolescents (YX1) is 0.201 which indicates that the contribution of peer pressure on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents is 20.1%. The Social anxiety disorder among adolescents can be predicted with the equation Social anxiety disorder=69.05+0.90 x Peer Pressure

i.e. for every unit of increase in peer pressure, Social anxiety disorder among adolescents increase .90

The effect of family environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents was found significant at .01 level (F (1, 518) =133.84). The computed value of R<sup>2</sup> of family environment and Social anxiety disorder among adolescents (YX1) is 0.210 which indicates that the contribution of peer pressure on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents is 21%. The Social anxiety disorder among adolescents can be predicted with the equation Social anxiety disorder= 213.88-0.33 x Family Environment.

i.e. for every unit of increase in family environment, Social anxiety disorder among adolescents decrease .33

The conjoint effect of both peer pressure and family environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents was found significant at 0.01 level of significance (F(2,517)=133.72). The computed value of R<sup>2</sup> of Social anxiety disorder with peer pressure and family environment (Y1X1X2) is 0.341 which indicates the contribution of peer pressure and family environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents is 34.1%. As %age variance(=34.1) of variables of peer pressure

and family environment conjointly on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents shows increase in its value from peer pressure (%age variance=20.1) and family environment (%age variance=21), it indicates that the conjoint effect of peer pressure and family environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than that of peer pressure and family environment separately.

Social Anxiety Disorder can be predicted with the equation

$$\text{Social Anxiety Disorder} = 12.49 + 0.10 \times \text{Peer pressure} + 0.19 \times \text{family environment}$$

Hence hypothesis stating that 'The conjoint effect of peer pressure and family environment on social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than their individual effects' stands accepted. The revelation clearly indicates that when family and friends together, the influence is more pertinent and hence instead of always doubting and blaming friends of own wards for all odds in their behaviour and personality, parents should develop a good affinity with them, of course with a watchful eye.

## CONCLUSION

There exists a significant relationship between social anxiety disorder and peer pressure among adolescents. There exists a significant between social anxiety disorder and family environment among adolescents. The conjoint effect of peer pressure and family environment on Social anxiety disorder among adolescents is higher than their individual effects. Educational Implications :The study is beneficial for planners and educational authorities to consider the relationship between social anxiety disorder, peer pressure and family environment and should try to provide suitable environment in educational institutions so that all round development of student takes place.

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