

The Impact of Social Anxiety on University Students in Pakistan: An Islamic Perspective on Student Learning and Well-Being in Higher Education

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Abstract

This study investigates the consequences of social anxiety on the learning experiences and general well-being of university students across 20 different universities in Pakistan, from an Islamic viewpoint, with a focus on trends and prospects beyond 2020. The study investigates how social anxiety affects students' mental health and social interactions in the classroom, which runs counter to the Islamic principle of fostering a supportive and inclusive community (Ummah). Data from online questionnaires completed by 787 students are used in the study. Known as a "hidden struggle," social anxiety still affects a large percentage of students worldwide, including those in Pakistan. These students could find it difficult to ask for assistance from the faculty, engage in class discussions, or connect with their peers—difficulties that go counter to Islam's teachings on acquiring knowledge (Ilm) and forming close social relationships. The study's conclusions, which demonstrate that comparable social anxiety patterns are common in Pakistani academic institutions, address these worldwide issues. This highlights the critical need for more focused treatments that are in line with Islamic ideas of mutual assistance and ease of getting help, such as peer support groups and mental health counseling. It also emphasizes how critical it is to increase awareness of mental health issues in higher education and provide more comprehensive support systems so that students may succeed in their academic and personal lives while adhering to Islamic principles of mental health and community service.

Keywords: Social Anxiety, Student Wellbeing, Islamic, Higher Education, Student Learning

Introduction:

As the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) noted, "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim" (Sunan Ibn Majah), pursuing knowledge (Ilm) is seen as a fundamental duty for every Muslim. But a lot of kids struggle with things like social anxiety, which makes it hard for them to participate in class activities. According to Amri (2021) social anxiety is a disorder that makes people afraid or uneasy in social circumstances. It prevents students from interacting with their classmates and taking part in class discussions, which goes against the Islamic goal of fostering inclusive and supportive learning environments. In order to create solutions that are in line with Islamic teachings that promote community (Ummah) and mutual support, it is imperative to comprehend the consequences of social anxiety on student learning and well-being, particularly in higher education.

Islamic teachings also stress the significance of a believer's mental health and well-being in relation to their general health. The verse "Verily, with every difficulty, there is relief" (Quran 94:6) emphasizes the need of addressing issues like social anxiety with the right tools, such peer support groups and counseling. According to recent research, social anxiety and other mental health problems are becoming more prevalent worldwide and are having an impact on both academic achievement and personal growth (Khalifa, 2021). This is in line with the Islamic precept that preserving one's mental health is necessary to carrying out one's duties, which include pursuing knowledge. Universities need to provide comprehensive methods to student assistance that include mental health counseling and emotional well-being initiatives, especially in Muslim-majority nations like Pakistan (Ahmed & Zafar, 2022).

One of the most prevalent mental health disorders in the world, social anxiety disorder (SAD) is typified by a strong, ongoing fear of social situations where one can be the target of scrutiny from others (American Psychiatric Association, 2020). It severely lowers life quality and causes people to avoid social situations and activities—including those that are necessary for succeeding in school. Because higher education environments naturally require frequent social interaction, public speaking, and collaboration—activities that are frequently distressing for individuals with social anxiety—the prevalence of social anxiety among university students has become a growing concern in recent years (Stein & Stein, 2021). Numerous research conducted worldwide have been inspired by the growing awareness of mental health difficulties in academic contexts, underscoring the critical need for more supportive educational frameworks (Brown & Smith, 2021; Chen et al.)

Even if it's a time for intellectual and personal development, higher education also carries a heavy psychological burden. Social anxiety is particularly common, and expectations related to academic achievement, social integration, and future employment possibilities can aggravate pre-existing mental health issues or cause the development of new ones (Wang et al., 2022). Cultural and societal standards, which prioritize social conformity, academic success, and a restrained manner, especially in formal situations, exacerbate these issues for Pakistani students. These elements have the potential to exacerbate social anxiety, which makes it an important subject to research in the context of Pakistani higher education (Hussain & Akhtar, 2022).

Islamic teachings emphasize the value of community in assisting people in overcoming personal challenges as well as the notion of Tawakkul, or confidence in Allah. Islamic ideals align with the creation of settings in higher education that help students in their emotional and academic journeys. Social anxiety, which is frequently a challenge that many students keep hidden, can be lessened with therapies that promote peer cooperation and lessen feelings of loneliness. According to recent studies, putting in place peer support networks promotes a sense of belonging, which is essential for both scholastic performance and personal wellbeing, in addition to assisting in the reduction of social anxiety (Rahman, 2023). Educational establishments can offer students with social anxiety complete help by coordinating their measures with Islamic teachings.

Pakistan's academic atmosphere has particular difficulties that might exacerbate or cause social anxiety to emerge. Large lecture-based lectures, little student participation, and a hierarchical teacher-student relationship are hallmarks of traditional educational approaches, which can be especially intimidating for students who struggle with social anxiety. Anxiety levels may also be increased by the competitive character of academic accomplishment in Pakistan, where performance and grades are highly prized (Ahmad et al., 2023). Despite these obstacles, mental health has received little attention at Pakistani campuses, and social anxiety is frequently ignored and untreated.

New research has started to clarify the frequency and consequences of social anxiety among Pakistani university students. For example, Khan and Ali's (2023) study discovered that almost 35% of students in a sample of ten Punjabi institutions had moderate to severe levels of social anxiety, which had a major impact on their social interactions and academic performance. Hussain and Akhtar (2022) conducted another study that focused on the cultural elements—such as social standards and family expectations—that exacerbate social anxiety among young Pakistanis. These results are consistent with international studies that demonstrates social anxiety is a common and frequently crippling illness in higher education environments (Brown & Smith, 2021; Chen et al., 2022).

However, little is known about how social anxiety affects study and wellbeing in Pakistani students, especially given the nation's diversified and quickly growing higher education market. Pakistan has more than 200 universities and degree-granting establishments, although the country's higher education system varies greatly in terms of funding, student demographics, and quality. Due to this variety, research must be conducted locally, taking into consideration the unique possibilities and problems found in various institutions and geographical areas (Government of Pakistan, 2023).

In order to close this gap, this study looks at the experiences of 787 students from 20 different Pakistani universities, with a particular emphasis on the years after 2020. The choice of this time period is especially pertinent as it reflects the ongoing consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic, which has drastically changed Pakistani and worldwide educational environments. One of the most often reported mental health concerns among students is social anxiety, which has grown as a result of the move to online learning, more isolation, and increased uncertainty (Son et al., 2020; Raja et al., 2021). This study intends to investigate how these developments have affected Pakistani students, where layers of complexity have been added

to the situation by the digital divide and different institutional responses. In order to close this gap, this study looks at the experiences of 787 students from 20 different Pakistani universities, with a particular emphasis on the years after 2020. The choice of this time period is especially pertinent as it reflects the ongoing consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic, which has drastically changed Pakistani and worldwide educational environments.

One of the most often reported mental health concerns among students is social anxiety, which has grown as a result of the move to online learning, more isolation, and increased uncertainty (Son et al., 2020; Raja et al., 2021). This study intends to investigate how these developments have affected Pakistani students, where layers of complexity have been added to the situation by the digital divide and different institutional responses. The study's conclusions support other studies on social anxiety while also providing fresh perspectives unique to the Pakistani setting. A sizable proportion of students stated that their schoolwork and general well-being were badly impacted by social anxiety, which they perceived as a chronic, concealed impairment. Numerous students said that they frequently refrained from taking part in class, posing questions, or participating in group activities because they were afraid of being judged negatively or feeling embarrassed. Their academic performance was hampered by this avoidance behavior, which also made it difficult for them to make friends and engage fully in campus life. According to these results, social anxiety has to be addressed in higher education, especially in Pakistan where it hasn't received much attention (Ahmad et al., 2023; Khan & Ali, 2023).

The report also emphasizes how important it is for Pakistani institutions to provide better mental health services and instructional assistance. Although several educational institutions have started to acknowledge the significance of mental health among students, there is a notable disparity in the accessibility and availability of treatments for students who suffer from social anxiety. The study suggests a number of approaches to deal with this problem, such as incorporating mental health awareness into the curriculum, educating teachers and staff on how to spot and help socially anxious children, and creating peer support networks. Universities should also think about changing their teaching strategies and evaluation procedures to lessen the focus on public performance and provide more options for anonymous involvement, according to the study (Hussain & Akhtar, 2022; Wang et al., 2022).

In summary, this study adds to the expanding corpus of research on social anxiety in higher education by providing insightful information about the experiences of Pakistani university students. The study highlights the need for a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that takes into consideration the various needs of students by demonstrating the prevalence and effects of social anxiety. Resolving students' mental health issues will be essential to guaranteeing both their general well-being and academic achievement as Pakistan's higher education industry grows. Policymakers, educators, and university administrators are urged by this study to emphasize mental health and put in place efficient treatments that can help students overcome the difficulties associated with social anxiety (Khan & Ali, 2023).

Review Literature:

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) declared that "the seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim" (Sunan Ibn Majah), highlighting the importance of knowledge acquisition in Islamic teachings. Social anxiety is a serious obstacle to pursuing higher education, especially in Pakistan, since it frequently prevents students from participating fully in classroom settings. According to recent studies, social anxiety is an increasing cause for worry in higher education since it affects students' mental and emotional health in addition to their academic performance. In Amri's (2021) study, for example, the author examines how Islamic principles may be used to enhance mental health. The author argues that Islamic teachings offer a strong foundation for tackling mental health concerns including social anxiety via personal resilience and communal support. This aligns with

Globally, social anxiety disorder (SAD) is becoming more widely acknowledged as a serious issue in higher education. SAD severely reduces a person's quality of life and capacity to perform well in social and academic contexts. It is typified by an intense and enduring fear of being observed or receiving a poor assessment in social situations (American Psychiatric Association, 2020). Because of the increased social expectations and pressure to achieve that come with attending university, these problems are sometimes made worse by the move. The requirement to participate in regular social contacts, public speaking, and cooperative learning can be upsetting and daunting for a lot of children (Stein & Stein, 2021). In Khalifa (2021), the growing incidence of social anxiety in nations where Muslims predominate is discussed, with an emphasis on higher education environments. According to the study, kids who experience social anxiety find it difficult to engage in class discussions, socialize with their classmates, and ask teachers for assistance. These difficulties have an impact on their mental health in addition to their academic achievement, which makes them feel alone and frustrated. According to Khalifa's research, creating a positive learning environment requires treating social anxiety with focused mental health treatments including peer support and therapy. The research also emphasizes how important it is for nations with a majority of Muslims to incorporate mental health education into their curricula, utilizing both Islamic and contemporary psychology theories.

At their 2022 study, Ahmed and Zafar investigate the effects of holistic methods on the mental health of students at Pakistani institutions, with a particular emphasis on fusing Islamic values with mental health programs. Their study emphasizes how critical it is to have a nurturing learning environment in the classroom that attends to students' emotional needs, especially those who are struggling with social anxiety. Their research indicates that pupils who get psychological and emotional assistance are more likely to thrive academically and form wholesome social bonds. Additionally, Islamic counseling techniques should be included in mental health programs, according to Ahmed and Zafar (2022), as they support a more all-encompassing type of care and are in line with the cultural and religious values of the students.

Rahman (2023) delves more on the function of peer support networks in reducing social anxiety in academic settings. According to the study, creating peer support groups can help kids feel more connected to the community and less anxious about social situations. Rahman also highlights how peer support networks align with the Islamic principle of Tawakkul, or

"trust in Allah," which encourages students to rely on one another and their religion to get through difficult times. In addition to treating the psychological components of social anxiety, this method fortifies the social ties that are essential to Islamic beliefs. Academic institutions may provide a more welcoming and encouraging atmosphere for students who are experiencing social anxiety by incorporating these Islamic principles into their educational solutions.

Recent studies have repeatedly shown that social anxiety is a common problem among university students that is frequently underreported. Research from a variety of nations has shown how social anxiety affects students' social relationships and academic performance on a broad scale (Brown & Smith, 2021; Chen et al., 2022). Social anxiety affects a sizable percentage of students globally, severely impacting both their academic performance and social skills. Social anxiety is becoming a significant issue in higher education, and this tendency has also been seen in Pakistan. A variety of cultural and educational variables influence the impact of social anxiety in Pakistan. For students who struggle with social anxiety, the conventional educational methods used in many Pakistani universities—which are marked by big lecture-based classrooms and little student participation—can be especially difficult (Ahmad et al., 2023). Social anxiety is made worse by the competitive nature of academic performance in Pakistan as well as cultural expectations that place a premium on social conformity and academic achievement (Hussain & Akhtar, 2022). According to recent research, 35% of Pakistani university students report having moderate to severe levels of social anxiety, which has a major negative influence on their social and academic performance (Khan & Ali, 2023).

Pakistan's cultural background has a significant influence on how university students perceive social anxiety. Social conformity and academic success are valued above everything else in some cultures, which can exacerbate anxiety and stress levels. Social anxiety may continue in part due to traditional teaching approaches, which sometimes include little interaction and participation from students (Hussain & Akhtar, 2022). These elements emphasize the necessity for a comprehensive comprehension of the ways in which social anxiety presents itself in Pakistani higher education. The COVID-19 epidemic has given the problem of social anxiety new dimensions. Students' mental health problems, particularly social anxiety, have gotten worse due to the move to online learning, growing isolation, and greater ambiguity about social and academic connections (Son et al., 2020; Raja et al., 2021). Traditional educational settings have been upended by the shift to remote learning, which has also made students' experiences more complicated. In order to address the particular difficulties experienced by students with social anxiety, Pakistani universities urgently need to implement customized treatments and support networks.

The effects of the epidemic on Pakistani students' social anxiety are being investigated in recent research. For example, Raja et al.'s research from 2021 indicated that students' increasing social anxiety was a result of the pandemic's increased isolation and reliance on digital platforms. The mental health of students has been severely impacted by the disruption of their social and academic habits as well as the difficulties they face when adjusting to online learning. This has brought to light the necessity for universities to create and put into practice

plans to assist students who are experiencing social anxiety in light of the current state of education. Numerous approaches have been put up to mitigate the effects of social anxiety. To create a more supportive learning environment, it is imperative to incorporate mental health awareness into university curricula, train professors and staff to help students with social anxiety, and establish peer support networks (Wang et al., 2022). Students with social anxiety may also find some relief from some of the constraints they feel by changing evaluation procedures to place less of a focus on public performance and by providing more options for anonymous involvement (Hussain & Akhtar, 2022). The overarching objective of creating a welcoming and encouraging learning environment that takes into account the various needs of students is in line with these suggestions.

In summary, research indicates that social anxiety has a substantial negative influence on Pakistani university students, reflecting both general worldwide patterns and particular regional issues. In order to improve students' academic performance and general well-being, it will be imperative to manage social anxiety through improved support services and pedagogical adaptations as Pakistan's higher education industry grows. The increasing amount of research highlights the need for a more thorough knowledge of social anxiety as well as the creation of efficient therapies that are tailored to the particular requirements of students in various educational settings. Future studies on these problems should concentrate on practical answers and methods that might assist students in overcoming social anxiety's obstacles and achieving academic success.

Globally, there is growing recognition of the importance of social anxiety disorder (SAD) in higher education environments. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2020), social anxiety disorder (SAD) is characterized by a severe and enduring fear of social settings in which one can be negatively assessed or judged by others. This illness can have a significant negative impact on a person's quality of life, causing them to shun social situations and intellectual pursuits that are essential for success in a university setting. For people who struggle with social anxiety, university can be especially intimidating because of the constant social contacts, public speaking, and team work involved (Stein & Stein, 2021).

Globally, the frequency and effects of social anxiety among university students have been repeatedly demonstrated by recent studies. Studies reveal that social anxiety is a prevalent and frequently unreported problem that adversely impacts kids' academic achievement and social involvement (Brown & Smith, 2021; Chen et al., 2022). Social anxiety negatively affects students' social interactions and academic performance globally. Social anxiety remains a significant concern in educational settings, particularly those in Pakistan, support this conclusion. Social anxiety is impacted by a variety of cultural and educational elements in the setting of higher education in Pakistan. Traditional pedagogical methods, such as huge lecture-based classrooms with little student engagement, are frequently used at Pakistani institutions. These techniques may make students feel more alone and inadequate, which makes them especially difficult for students who struggle with social anxiety (Ahmad et al., 2023). Furthermore, social anxiety is made worse by the competitive nature of academic achievement in Pakistan as well as societal expectations of social conformity and academic performance (Hussain & Akhtar, 2022). The frequency and effects of social anxiety among

Pakistani university students have been clarified by recent study. For example, a research by Khan and Ali (2023) discovered that almost 35% of students in a sample of eleven Punjabi institutions said they had moderate to severe social anxiety. Their social connections and academic performance were greatly impacted by this disease. Hussain and Akhtar (2022) also pointed out that cultural elements, such social conventions and familial expectations, are major contributors to the escalation of social anxiety among young Pakistanis.

Students that already struggle with social anxiety now face new difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. Social anxiety and other mental health problems have become more severe due to the change to online learning, growing isolation, and more ambiguity about social and academic relationships (Son et al., 2020; Raja et al., 2021). The shift to remote learning complicated student experiences and upended conventional learning environments. Raja et al. (2021) revealed that students' elevated levels of social anxiety were caused by their greater reliance on digital platforms and social isolation. These findings highlight the important influence of the epidemic on social anxiety.

The problem of social anxiety is made more difficult by Pakistan's distinct cultural and educational background. Students may experience increased stress and anxiety as a result of cultural norms that place a high value on social conformity and academic success. The continuation of social anxiety may be attributed to traditional educational techniques, which are marked by low student involvement and a hierarchical teacher-student dynamic (Hussain & Akhtar, 2022). To tackle these obstacles, one must have a sophisticated comprehension of the ways in which social anxiety presents itself in Pakistani higher education. In order to mitigate the effects of social anxiety, many approaches have been suggested. Developing peer support networks, teaching professors and staff how to help students who struggle with social anxiety, and incorporating mental health awareness into university curriculum are all crucial components of a supportive learning environment (Wang et al., 2022). Furthermore, modifying evaluation techniques to lessen the focus on public performance and expanding the number of possibilities for anonymous involvement will help ease some of the stress that students with social anxiety experience (Hussain & Akhtar, 2022). These suggestions support the overarching objective of creating an inclusive learning environment that meets the varied requirements of students.

This body of research emphasizes the profound effects of social anxiety on Pakistani university students, taking into account both worldwide patterns and particular regional difficulties. In order to improve students' academic performance and general well-being, it will be imperative to manage social anxiety through improved support services and pedagogical adaptations as Pakistan's higher education industry grows. The increasing amount of research highlights the necessity of developing effective therapies that are customized to meet the specific requirements of students in various educational environments as well as a thorough knowledge of social anxiety. Future studies on these problems should concentrate on practical answers and methods that might assist students in overcoming social anxiety's obstacles and achieving academic success.

Methodology:

The methodology for this study is designed with careful consideration of cultural and technological shifts in Pakistan after 2020. To examine the effects of social anxiety on university students, particularly regarding their academic achievement and overall well-being, the research focuses on two of Pakistan's top universities. One survey is conducted at a prominent institution in a major city, such as Lahore, while another takes place at a leading university in a smaller city, such as Multan. Combined, these surveys target a diverse student population of over 1000 individuals, representing both urban and rural backgrounds.

Opportunistic sampling is initially employed to gather participants. However, given the sensitive nature of mental health issues in Pakistan, adjustments are made to address cultural concerns around privacy and confidentiality. As mental health is often stigmatized in this region, direct interviews or focus groups prove less effective for gathering data on social anxiety. Therefore, an online survey format is used, utilizing culturally sensitive instruments such as the Mini-Social Phobia Inventory (Mini-SPIN) to assess key aspects of social anxiety, including avoidance behaviors, performance-related anxieties (e.g., public speaking), and fears of social interaction.

To encourage participation, especially from students who may feel shy, embarrassed, or anxious about public exposure, the survey is promoted through university portals, student organizations, and social media platforms. The online nature of the survey is further enhanced by ensuring the software is user-friendly and tailored to the technological capabilities of Pakistani students. Instead of relying on commonly used platforms like SurveyMonkey or Pegasus, custom-built tools hosted on locally trusted platforms are developed to increase accessibility and trust.

Ethical considerations are integral to the study's design. Participants are fully informed about the purpose of the research, with strict measures in place to ensure confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process. Additionally, recognizing the potential for emotional distress stemming from discussions of social anxiety, the study provides links to local mental health organizations and university counseling services. Culturally appropriate support services are also offered to ensure that students in need of assistance receive adequate support. This methodological approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how social anxiety affects university students in Pakistan, taking into account evolving cultural and technological factors.

Results and Discussion:

Descriptive Analysis:

Distribution by gender and age:

The study was conducted with a total sample of 787 participants, comprising 63.4% females (n=499) and 36.6% males (n=288). The participants were divided into several age groups: 16-20 years (36.5%, n=287), 21-30 years (55.8%, n=439), 31-40 years (7.7%, n=61).

Distribution by Educational Level and Undergraduate Year:

Participants were also categorized based on their educational level and year of study. The

majority was undergraduates, distributed as follows: Year 1 (32.05%, n=252), Year 2 (30.05%, n=237), Year 3 (26.4%, n=208), and Year 4 (4.8%, n=38). Additionally, 6.7% (n=52) of the participants were pursuing postgraduate and other advanced studies.

The frequency of social anxiety was assessed in common learning situations, as depicted in Figure 1. The study measured the percentage of participants experiencing social anxiety across different scenarios commonly encountered in

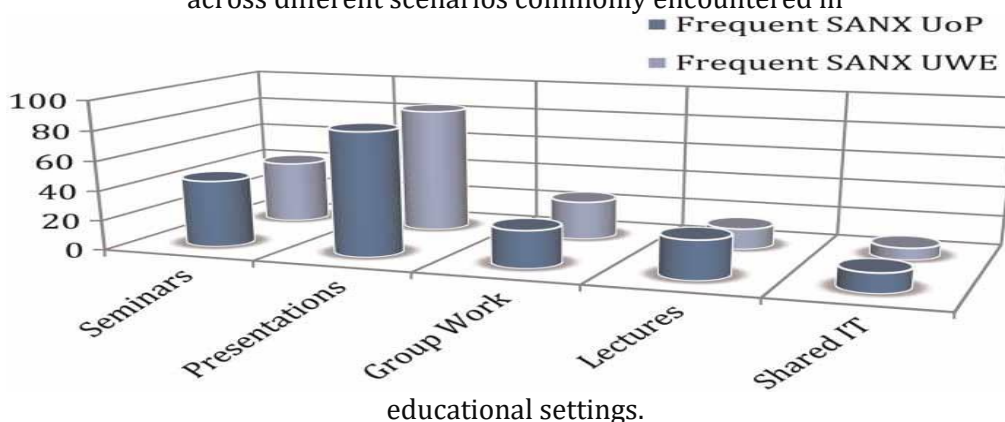


Figure 1. Frequency of social anxiety in common learning situations (%).

The frequency of social anxiety reported by participants in a range of typical learning scenarios is shown in Figure 1. Understanding how social anxiety appears in classrooms is made easier with the help of this chart, especially when considering Pakistani pupils of various ages and educational backgrounds.

The graphic classifies social anxiety into many learning contexts, including asking questions in class, presenting, participating in group discussions, dealing with peers, and communicating with teachers. The percentage of participants who reported substantial levels of anxiety is shown for each scenario.

- **Group Discussions:** A significant number of participants expressed high levels of nervousness when taking part in group discussions, underscoring the unease that many students have in settings that promote collaborative learning.
- **Presentations:** The majority of individuals reported great discomfort during presentations, which is indicative of a fear of public speaking and performance evaluation. Anxiety levels peaked during these events.
- **Class Participation:** A lot of students also mentioned feeling uncomfortable asking questions or participating in class discussions, which might be a hindrance to their ability to participate fully in class and succeed academically overall.
- **Peer Interactions:** Social anxiety was also common in peer interactions, indicating that a considerable portion of students may find interpersonal dynamics in learning situations difficult.
- **Interactions with professors:** Lastly, several students reported significant anxiety during interactions with professors, especially when they asked for assistance or explanation on

to consider strategies to create a more supportive and less anxiety-inducing environment, particularly in activities that require public speaking or active participation.

Emotional Distress:

Significant emotional suffering that participants in different learning settings experienced is highlighted by the data shown in Figure 1. According to the high levels of social anxiety recorded, many students appear to feel quite uncomfortable emotionally in these settings, particularly while participating in group discussions and giving presentations. This emotional discomfort might seem as anxiety, a fear of being poorly judged, and an increased sensation of vulnerability. The rise in anxiety that occurs during presentations highlights the unique difficulties associated with public speaking and performance-related stress, which can lead to a decline in self-esteem and general wellbeing.

Social Difficulties:

The results also show that kids face significant social challenges in classroom environments. Excessive levels of anxiety in situations like talking with classmates and asking questions in class suggest that a lot of kids have trouble forming social bonds in learning settings. Students who experience anxiety may exhibit avoidance behaviors, such as a reluctance to participate in class or group activities, which can further isolate them and negatively affect their academic performance. In addition to highlighting obstacles to asking for assistance and getting clarification on academic material, difficulties interacting with instructors can heighten feelings of inadequacy and impede academic success.

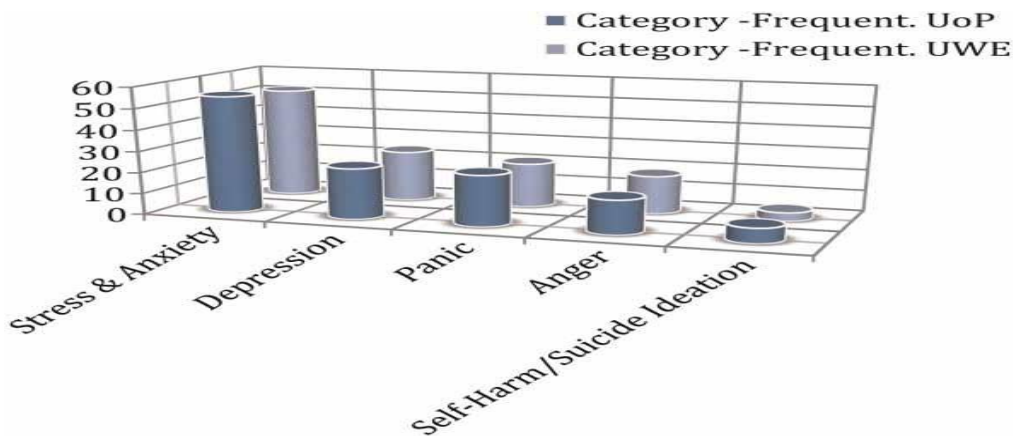


Figure 2. Frequency of emotional distress in common learning Institution

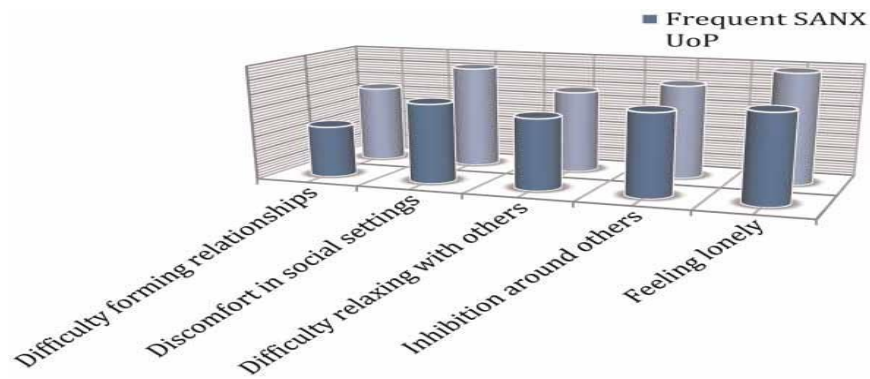


Figure 3. Frequency of distress associated with social relationships (%)

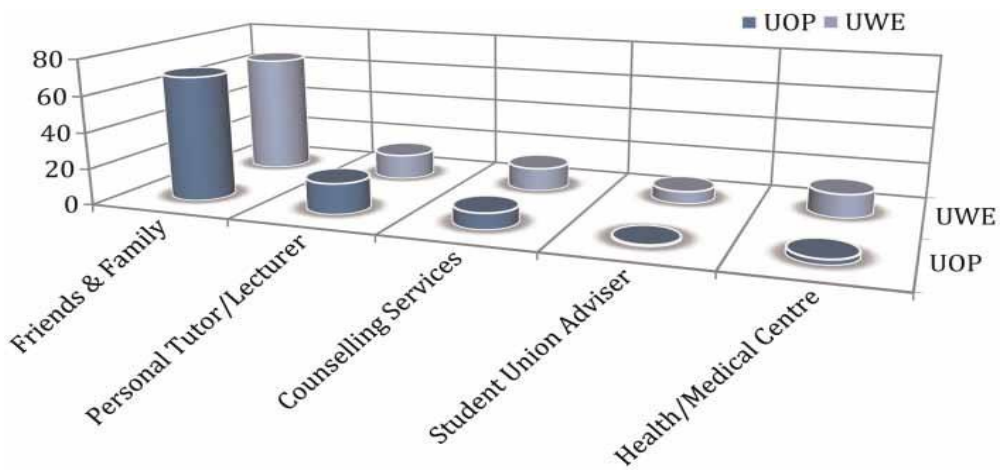


Figure 4. Frequency of types of help-seeking behaviour (%)



Figure 5. Frequency of strategies to manage social anxiety (%)

Avoidance Behaviors: Avoidance is a common tactic used by students to deal with their social anxiety. Avoiding social circumstances where anxiety can be generated, including group discussions or presentations, is part of this. The high frequency of avoidance suggests that many students could find it difficult to face their worry head-on.

Seeking Support: Getting assistance from friends, family, or counselors is another popular tactic. The graph indicates that a sizable percentage of participants seek out emotional support and guidance from others. This implies that students understand the need of outside support networks for anxiety management.

Preparation and Planning: To reduce worry, a lot of students plan and prepare in great detail. This might involve planning study materials ahead of time, practicing presentations, or being ready for debates. The focus on being ready shows a proactive strategy for reducing worry by boosting self-assurance and control.

Relaxation Techniques: It's also common to employ relaxation methods including deep breathing, meditation, and exercise. According to the chart, students who employ these techniques report that their anxiety levels have decreased. This suggests a propensity for self-control techniques that aid in stress management and encourage serenity.

Cognitive Behavioral Strategies: Some pupils use cognitive-behavioral techniques including cognitive restructuring and questioning unfavorable ideas. This method suggests an understanding of the influence of thinking patterns on anxiety by helping students reframe their perspectives of events that cause them worry.

The study's identification of social challenges and emotional discomfort highlights the necessity of supporting measures. In order to address these problems, educational environments that promote security and lower stress levels must be established. The implementation of methods like peer support programs, anxiety-reducing seminars, and compassionate communication training for instructors might potentially mitigate the emotional and social issues that children encounter. Institutions may help students' mental health and academic success while also enhancing their overall learning experiences by concentrating on these areas.

- **Seeking Peer Support:** The graph indicates that a significant portion of students ask their peers for assistance. Peer support may be a great source of intellectual and emotional support, providing understanding and useful guidance.
- **Consulting Teachers:** A significant percentage of pupils approach their teachers for assistance. This include asking questions about coursework-related personal issues, getting comments, and getting clarification on academic topics.
- **Using Counseling Services:** The regularity with which students use formal counseling services is also shown in the chart. Professional therapy, however less prevalent than peer and teacher assistance, is essential for resolving more serious emotional and psychological concerns.
- **Peer connections:** The figure indicates that a significant portion of pupils are

distressed as a result of their inability to establish positive peer connections. Stressful situations include things like social isolation, arguments, and friendship formation challenges.

- Relationships with teachers: There is also clear distress in relation to interactions with teachers. Anxiety and discomfort can be exacerbated by things like communication difficulties, a lack of support system, and feelings of judgment.
- Group Dynamics: Distress resulting from group dynamics in cooperative work is also shown in the chart. Emotional strain can result from issues with group cohesion, leadership disputes, and uneven involvement.
- Group Projects: As seen by the graphic, a sizable portion of students report feeling extremely distressed when working on group projects. This might be the result of peer pressure, internal tensions, and worries about making a meaningful contribution.
- Exams and Tests: During exams and tests, there is a noticeable increase in emotional anxiety. Anxiety levels are raised by perceived academic evaluation stakes, fear of failure, and pressure to do well.
- Presentations: Another significant cause of mental strain is watching presentations. Stress and anxiety can be greatly increased by the dread of public speaking and the possibility of receiving unfavorable comments.

According to Figure 5's findings, students employ a variety of techniques to deal with their social anxiety. Because avoidance behaviors are so common, it is important to provide treatments that support kids in confronting and addressing their worries instead of running away from them. Students appear to value both internal and external resources for anxiety management, as seen by their use of relaxation techniques and support systems.

These understandings can direct the creation of focused support initiatives, such peer support groups, relaxation courses, and cognitive-behavioral therapy sessions. Educational institutions may provide a more complete support system that accommodates many coping methods and aids students in efficiently managing social anxiety by addressing the varied tactics employed by students.

How Social anxiety impacted on engagement in learning activities

Based on the provided data and the frequency of strategies for managing social anxiety, here's a revised version that reflects the findings:

Avoidance Actions:

Avoidance was often cited by participants as a coping mechanism for social anxiety, especially in situations when public speaking was required, such presentations and group discussions. Many students said they steer clear of these kinds of events to avoid the anxiety they bring. "I tend to avoid group projects and presentations because I feel anxious and uncomfortable in those situations," one participant said, as an example. The frequency of avoidance emphasizes how difficult it is for pupils to face their worry head-on.

A Fear of the Unexpected:

recurring issue was anticipatory anxiety, as many kids expressed serious concern before to

engaging in educational activities. This covers worries about one's performance as well as shame fears. One participant said, for example, "I worry about my presentation for days and get really nervous before it." The biggest concern is that of seeming silly and making blunders. Another participant stated that in extreme circumstances, anticipatory anxiety has a negative impact on students' wellbeing: "I get so nervous before presentations that I feel sick and can't sleep." The fear never goes away.

Coping Strategies:

The graphic shows that students deal with their nervousness in different ways. Students frequently comment, "I often talk to friends or family for advice and reassurance before a big presentation," indicating that they turn to their peers and families for assistance. Participants reported feeling more confident when they prepare well in advance: "I find that preparing extensively helps me feel more in control and less anxious." Preparation and planning were also often utilized.

Physical and Cognitive Impairments:

Participating in educational activities might cause anxiety that manifests physically as stuttering and obvious uneasiness. "My voice shakes and I stutter when I speak in front of others, which makes me even more anxious," noted one participant. Another participant reported that cognitive consequences included thought-blocking and extreme self-consciousness, saying, "When I'm put on the spot, my mind goes blank, even if I know the answer." I also start flushing and get really self-conscious. The necessity for supportive therapies that address the psychological as well as the practical components of controlling social anxiety is highlighted by these findings. Offering tools for preparation, promoting support systems, and teaching students how to control their bodily anxiety symptoms may all help students deal with the difficulties they encounter in the classroom.

Discussion:

The study's conclusions shed important information on the effects of social anxiety on Pakistani university students, supporting worldwide patterns but drawing attention to particular difficulties unique to the Pakistani setting. It has been demonstrated that social anxiety, which is typified by an overwhelming fear of social scrutiny, has a significant impact on students' academic achievement and general well-being. The results of the survey show that social anxiety is still a major problem, with many students reporting social anxiety as a chronic, invisible handicap.

Anticipatory Anxiety and Avoidance Behaviors

Anticipatory anxiety, when students express significant levels of tension and worry prior to engaging in academic tasks involving public speaking or social contact, is one of the main themes that emerges from the data. Premature anxiousness frequently results in avoidance behaviors, such avoiding group discussions or missing presentations. The research shows that avoidance methods are frequently used, which emphasizes how social anxiety prevents students from fully engaging in academic pursuits. For instance, a sizable portion of participants said they would rather stay out of settings where they would be examined or

evaluated, which is consistent with a larger trend of people withdrawing from difficult circumstances in order to deal with anxiety.

Coping Strategies and Support Needs

The study also identifies the coping mechanisms students use to control their social anxiety. The most popular tactics include doing extensive preparation, practicing relaxation methods, and asking friends and family for support. These results demonstrate how students manage their nervousness in a variety of ways, like chatting to friends for comfort or putting in a lot of preparation before presentations. There is still a gap in the provision of professional mental health help inside the school setting, and these tactics' efficacy varies. Given that certain students may find that the present coping techniques are insufficient, particularly those who suffer from acute anxiety, it is clear that institutional help is required.

Cultural and Institutional Factors

The way that Pakistani culture shapes students' experiences with social anxiety is very important. There are extra levels of pressure from cultural expectations and society conventions surrounding social conformity and intellectual performance. Students with social anxiety have more difficulties because of Pakistan's competitive academic atmosphere and the hierarchical character of traditional teaching approaches. Customized treatments that take into account institutional and cultural influences are necessary in this setting since they have a substantial impact on students' experiences and coping mechanisms.

Summary

The body of research highlights the crucial relationship that exists between Islamic teachings and social anxiety treatment in higher education, especially in Pakistani institutions. Islamic values, such as the need to pursue knowledge and the significance of community (Ummah), offer a helpful foundation for resolving social anxiety, a disorder that has a negative influence on students' emotional and intellectual well-being. Amri (2021) emphasizes the applicability of Islamic teachings in fostering mental health, proposing that students may overcome social anxiety because Islamic principles build a feeling of community and resilience. The predominance of social anxiety in nations with a majority of Muslims is further explained by Khalifa (2021), who also shows how it negatively affects student involvement and interaction. The study suggests combining Islamic teachings with contemporary mental health therapies to develop a supportive learning environment. This study offers a thorough analysis of social anxiety among Pakistani university students, demonstrating its significant effects on both academic achievement and general well-being. The study emphasizes the prevalence of social anxiety and its relationships to anticipatory anxiety, coping mechanisms, and avoidance behaviors by examining data from 787 students at 20 universities. The results are consistent with other study conducted worldwide, but they also provide new insights into the educational setting of Pakistan, where institutional and cultural variables influence the intensity and treatment of social anxiety. Key features identified by the study include the frequency of anticipatory anxiety, the extensive use of avoidance as a coping technique, and the dependence on unofficial support networks. These findings highlight the necessity of

increased institutional assistance as well as the inclusion of mental health education in the classroom. There has been some improvement in identifying the mental health needs of kids, but there is still a glaring lack of assistance and focused treatments for students who are struggling with social anxiety. In order to promote holistic approaches to student well-being, Ahmed and Zafar (2022) propose fusing contemporary psychology techniques with Islamic counseling techniques. According to their findings, social interactions and academic achievement are enhanced when emotional and psychological support is in line with religious and cultural norms. Rahman (2023) concludes by highlighting the significance of peer support systems in lowering social anxiety and highlighting how they are consistent with Islamic principles like communal cooperation and Tawakkul, or faith in Allah. All of these research point to the possibility that managing social anxiety in higher education with treatments influenced by Islam might promote students' academic progress as well as their emotional wellbeing, resulting in a welcoming and encouraging learning environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to improve support for students with social anxiety in Pakistani universities:

1. Integration of Islamic Counseling and Mental Health Support Programs:

Universities should develop mental health support programs that combine contemporary psychology techniques with Islamic counseling approaches, especially in Pakistan. These programs can encourage students to seek assistance for social anxiety without stigma by providing culturally and religiously relevant counseling that respects their values. Counselors with training who are aware of Islamic principles may offer advice based on faith as well as contemporary mental health techniques, creating a comforting atmosphere for students who are experiencing social anxiety.

2. Establishment of Peer Support Groups Based on Islamic Values:

Peer support groups centered around Islamic ideals, such as Ummah (community) and Tawakkul (faith in Allah), should be established by institutions inside universities. These groups would foster a feeling of community and trust among the children while offering a secure environment for them to discuss issues connected to social anxiety. Peer-led programs that are based on the ideas of cooperation and mutual support may be able to improve students' mental health, lessen feelings of loneliness, and promote active engagement in both social and academic activities.

3. Integration of Mental Health Awareness:

Universities have to incorporate mental health education within their curricula and on-campus events. This entails educating people about social anxiety and supplying them with information on coping mechanisms and other resources.

4. Training for Faculty and Staff:

Training on identifying and assisting students with social anxiety should be provided to faculty and staff. The main objectives of this training should be to identify social anxiety symptoms, provide encouraging treatments, and improve inclusive learning environments.

5. Development of Peer Support Networks:

Students can get extra sources of support and encouragement by creating peer support networks. These networks can foster candid conversations about mental health and a

feeling of belonging among students.

6. Revised Assessment Methods:

Universities should consider revising assessment methods to reduce the emphasis on public performance. Implementing alternative assessment strategies, such as anonymous participation or written submissions, can help alleviate anxiety and allow students to demonstrate their knowledge without the added pressure of public speaking.

7. Expansion of Counseling Services:

Improving counseling services' accessibility and availability is essential. Universities should provide more funds for mental health services, such as psychological therapy and professional counseling, in order to better serve the requirements of students who suffer from social anxiety.

8. Cultural Sensitivity in Interventions:

Interventions must be attentive to cultural differences and specifically designed to address the difficulties that Pakistani students confront. This involves taking society norms and cultural standards into account while developing and implementing mental health services.

Universities in Pakistan may help students who struggle with social anxiety by putting these suggestions into practice. This would enhance both the academic performance and general well-being of these students. The report is a call to action for educators, university administrators, and lawmakers to emphasize mental health and create practical plans of action for students who are experiencing social anxiety.

Conclusion:

The results of this study demonstrate that a more sympathetic and inclusive strategy is needed to alleviate social anxiety in higher education. This approach is consistent with Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of community (Ummah) and mutual support. Islam places a strong emphasis on establishing conditions that allow every person to flourish, whatever their obstacles. "The believers are like one body; if one part of the body hurts, the rest of the body suffers with it," the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reportedly remarked (Sahih Bukhari). This emphasizes how educators and institutions must work together to help kids who are experiencing social anxiety so they don't fall behind in their academic path. Islamic principles also promote confidence in oneself and the fearless pursuit of knowledge. According to the Quran (2:286), "Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear," which serves as a reminder that students who deal with social anxiety may overcome their obstacles if the proper support networks are in place. Through the implementation of customized treatments grounded in both Islamic and psychological principles of care, higher education institutions may create more inclusive learning environments where students are encouraged to participate fully in their study. This study advocates for a change in educational approaches that provide equal weight to students' mental health and academic performance, enabling them to thrive in both domains while upholding Islamic principles.

The findings of this exploratory study highlight the pressing need for enhanced pedagogical support for students struggling with social anxiety in Pakistan's higher education system. It has become evident that learning activities, particularly those that involve public speaking or

group interactions, can trigger intense anxiety for a significant portion of the student population. While these activities are typically considered essential for academic and personal development, they present substantial challenges for students with social anxiety. This study underscores the responsibility of educators and institutions to recognize that a small but crucial subset of students may require tailored interventions aimed at boosting their self-confidence and participation in academic settings. The results affirm that social anxiety remains a pervasive issue that negatively impacts the academic performance, well-being, and engagement of university students in Pakistan. The anticipatory anxiety, avoidance behaviors, and heightened stress experienced by socially anxious students are clear indicators of how deeply this condition can affect their overall academic journey. The study calls for educational institutions to adopt a more proactive approach in addressing social anxiety, moving beyond the traditional academic framework to foster environments that are more inclusive and supportive of students' mental health needs.

Furthermore, the widespread reliance on unofficial coping mechanisms, such as withdrawing from social interactions or avoiding public speaking altogether, reflects the inadequacy of existing support systems within universities. This gap in formal mental health resources points to an urgent need for more structured, accessible, and culturally sensitive support services. Educational institutions must prioritize the development of comprehensive mental health frameworks that not only provide professional counseling but also integrate mental health awareness into the academic and social fabric of university life. The experiences of students with social anxiety are also heavily influenced by the unique cultural and institutional factors present in Pakistan. Traditional educational practices, which often prioritize performance-based evaluations and public displays of competence, can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and anxiety in students who are already predisposed to social anxiety. Similarly, societal expectations, which may discourage open discussions about mental health, further complicate students' ability to seek help. These challenges underscore the need for a more nuanced and sophisticated approach to mental health within academic environments. Institutions must actively work to dismantle the cultural stigma surrounding mental health issues, creating safe spaces where students feel comfortable seeking the help they need without fear of judgment or discrimination. In conclusion, this study serves as a critical call to action for educators, policymakers, and academic institutions to recognize the impact of social anxiety on students' academic success and mental health. By implementing targeted pedagogical strategies, enhancing mental health support services, and fostering a culture of openness and empathy around mental health issues, universities in Pakistan can help ensure that all students—especially those affected by social anxiety—are able to thrive both academically and personally. Addressing these challenges is not only vital for the well-being of individual students but also for creating a more inclusive and supportive educational system that nurtures the potential of every student.

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