

**PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS PREDICTING SOCIAL PHOBIA AMONG FRESH UNDERGRADUATES STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN.****ABDULRAHMON Monsur Olalekan**

*Department of Educational Psychology,  
Federal College of Education, (Special), Oyo, Nigeria.  
[hajjmonsur@yahoo.com](mailto:hajjmonsur@yahoo.com)*

**ASIYANBI, Mutiat Sola**

*Department of Educational Psychology,  
Federal College of Education, (Special), Oyo, Nigeria.  
[mutiatasiyanbi@yahoo.com](mailto:mutiatasiyanbi@yahoo.com)*

and

**ISHOLA, Ajibola Abdulrahamon**

*Department of Psychology,  
University of Ibadan. Ibadan  
[ajibola\\_ishola@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ajibola_ishola@yahoo.co.uk)*

**ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the extent to which self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, age and gender predicted social phobia among fresh undergraduate students in University of Ibadan. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Two hundred and fifty (250) newly admitted University of Ibadan undergraduate students with the age range of 16 and 30 years and mean age of 23.07 (SD = 4.47) were selected using a stratified random sampling technique. A self-report questionnaire consisting of demographic section, and measures of social phobia, self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy was used to collect data. Research objectives were tested using T-test for independence, one-way ANOVA and Multiple Regression Analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there was joint contribution of the independent variables to social phobia of reported by respondents ( $R = 0.28$ ,  $adjR^2 = 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Only self-concept predicted social phobia ( $\beta = -0.22$ ,  $t = -3.35$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Self-efficacy and self-esteem were non-significant predictors of social phobia. There was significant difference in social phobia based on the age of the fresh undergraduate students ( $F(2,249) = 10.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) while there was no significant gender differences in the reported levels of social phobia ( $t(248) = 0.66$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). It was concluded that self-concept significantly predicted social phobia among fresh university undergraduate students. That counselling services should be available to newly admitted students for social adjustment.*

**Keywords:** Social phobia, Self-concept, Self-efficacy, Self-esteem, Gender, and Age Differences.

**BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Social phobia typically has its onset in adolescence and coincides with the age range of fresh students in universities (Sridhar and Surya Rekha, 2017). The expectation for a social or performance situation is one usually coupled with embarrassment. Thus, fresh students need to be adequately orientated to successfully manage the transition from their various previous social situations (such as secondary school or high school) to the University environment which is a much larger heterogeneous society with diverse people of different rationale, religious (belief, organisation and affiliation) (Sridhar and Surya Rekha, 2017). If for any reason, fresh students fail to adequately manage the anxieties naturally involved in this transition (due to low self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy and many more); they are more likely to develop panic attacks which may occur in anticipation of an event or exposure to the actual event. This panic attacks could manifest in various forms such as avoiding - classes, group discussions, responding in class, - lower educational performance due to absenteeism in school, bullying, withdrawal from school activities. The individual is undoubtedly disabled in diverse functional areas of academic life and this is a source of concern. Interestingly, the concept of social phobia is considered to be among the most common anxiety disorders, and despite its early discovery, virtually limited information about this phobia is available on young people especially in Nigerian universities.



Generally, phobia is defined as a strong fear or dislike: an irrational or very powerful fear and dislike of something such as spiders or confined space (Encarta Dictionary, 2009). This irrational fear and its origin not clearly understood (Akinade, 2005). Social phobia widely referred to as, Social Anxiety Disorder in clinical settings refers to everyday interactions that cause irrational anxiety, fear, self-consciousness and embarrassment to the person. According to Egunjobi (2013), social phobia is degree of shyness that is abnormal whenever social expectations are new or ambiguous. This include symptoms include entering social situations, discomfort and inhibition in the presence of others, exaggerated self-concern, and increasing self-concepts" (Egunjobi, 2013).

Anxiety about being negatively judged by others or behaving in a way that might cause embarrassment or ridicule has been termed social phobia. There may be physical, emotional and behavioural signs and symptoms of anxiety such as: Physical symptoms; as sweaty palms and trembling, emotional symptoms; as excessive self-consciousness, and behavioural signs as stuttering, speech loss and so on. The triggers and frequency of social anxiety vary considerably, on the individual. Statistically, Social phobia is common among adults (8%) and children (5%), adolescents (11%) at any given time in their lives (Akinade, 2005).

The researchers' choice of the selected psycho-social factors is premised on the view of Erikson's psychosocial theory of human development (Santrock, 2005). He posited that human development does not end at adolescence, but continues throughout a person's lifetime. The psycho-social stages of Erikson's theory are based on a series of social conflicts which must be successfully mastered by the individual in order to achieve adulthood. The focus of this is research is on the fifth stage of psycho-social development, between the ages of 12-20 years. Erikson termed it 'Identity versus Role Confusion Stage' (Santrock, 2005)'. Attention is on the formation of identity and self-concept that is coherent and continuous. It is believed that, at this stage, adolescents undergo re-evaluation of who they are, and this stage constitutes a major crisis during adolescence if not properly mastered. These crises if not well managed by the individual and significant persons in the individuals' life may result in the feelings of inadequacy of the 'self' and the resultant effect of wanting to be out of the 'scene' far away from public attention. This may go on for a long time un-noticed probably till the individual exhibits marked symptoms of anxiety to seemingly day-to-day social interactions (Santrock, 2005). So, to live a socially adjusted life free from unwarranted fear and anxiety, it is necessary one acquires a relatively positive self-picture that is adequate and realistic.

Moreover, the concept of the 'self' can be perceived in the concepts of self-esteem and self-efficacy both in one and also individually. Self-concept (also called self-construction, self-identity or self-perspective) is a multi-dimensional construct that refers to an individual's perception of the 'self' in relation to any number of characteristics. In this paper, self-concept refers to- 'the individual's perception of themselves', how they view themselves. A person's self-concept may change with time as reassessment occurs due to situational changes such as learning and maturation, and extreme cases of low self-concept can lead to identity crises as espoused earlier (Santrock, 2005). The assessment of the self if in the negative will significantly influence fresh students' ability not to confidently manage day to day challenges that accompany change of environment and in particular, their academic performance in the university and on the other hand, when the self-concept is relatively positive, the student has a more positive view of themselves, their challenges and they will strive to overcome them in a more constructive ways. It could be seen from these attributes that self-concept is an integral part of "the self" which is the central core of "I" that includes ideas, knowledge, appearance and self-perception. Self-efficacy, a component of the self is best described as self-confidence. It is specifically connected with how one views their abilities in attempting a task (Bandura, 2006). As regards



social phobia in fresh students, it could be detrimental to the personality of the student since such student with low/inadequate/negative self-efficacy will view their challenges in their new situation (the University) as insurmountable. However, fresh students with positive self-efficacy will always search for a better way of coping in their relative difficult situations which might have ordinarily arouse anxiety. Self-esteem is the "evaluative" component of the self. It is where one makes judgments about his or her self-worth. This shows that the concept of the 'self' is intricately interwoven and closely related and its subsequent role in mental development has led to a new perspective in thinking in educational and research circles. A positive self-esteem guarantees a feeling and thinking of possibilities- fresh students need a positive judgement of their new situation and environment so as to develop positive thinking and action towards it. Self-concept is a powerful factor that can predict social adjustment and otherwise social phobia in fresh undergraduate students. This is because it gives a sense of continuity, wholeness and consistency to a person.

Gender difference is a distinction of biological and/or physiological characteristics associated with either males or females of a species (Encarta, 2009). Gender refers to the fact of being male or female; biologically we are of different sexes- male and female. This difference has a way of influencing our response to social changes and our coping mechanisms. There is no doubt in the fact that male gender respond to stress in different ways as the female gender. That is, a fresh male and female student is believed will respond differently in the way they respond to social anxiety that accompany social challenges in the university. Fresh male student may respond negatively by joining secret cult and other illegal group, use drugs in other to cope with their feeling of anxiety and inadequacy, while female students too may join secret cults, gangs and also use drugs among others. Not withstanding, there are positive ways of coping to new situations that these fresh students may employ on the basis of gender. For instance, a fresh student who engages in sporting activities enjoys a feeling of integration and belongingness in their new situation and this is a positive way of coping with social anxiety.

Conclusively, age differences as a psycho-social factor to social anxiety is the variability in the number of years a person has lived and its effect on level of anxiety these fresh students experience, depending on the age of each individual. That is, is there a difference in the way an adolescent who constitute the fresh student population respond to social anxiety and in the way adults respond to the same social challenges. Social phobia is not limited to a certain age group, but the focus is to show how this difference in age could predispose fresh students to social phobia in particular. This study thus examine self-concept, self-efficacy, self-esteem, gender differences and age differences as predictors of social phobia in fresh undergraduate students in Ibadan metropolis. The purpose of this study is to investigate the psycho-social factors of the self that could predispose fresh university undergraduate students to social phobia in Ibadan metropolis. Specifically this study:

- Examine the joint contribution of the independent variables (self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy) to the prediction of the dependent variable (social phobia) of fresh undergraduate students.
- Assess the relative contribution of each of the independent variables to the prediction of the dependent variable
- Investigate the Age and gender difference in social phobia of fresh undergraduate students



## METHOD

### Research design

This study was ex-post-facto study which employed the use of simple survey design using to achieve the purpose of the study.

### Participants

The population of this study comprises all University of Ibadan fresh undergraduate students, Ibadan, Nigeria. Two hundred and fifty (250) fresh undergraduate students newly admitted to the University of Ibadan during the 2013-14 sessions were selected from the Halls of residence through stratified random sampling technique. The students were sampled from Kutu, Sultan Bello, Queen Idia and Awolowo Halls purposively selected for the study. The first two halls were male hostels and the remaining two housed the female students. 123 (49.2%) were males while 127 (50.8%) are females, 213 (85.2%) of the newly admitted undergraduate students respondents fall between 16-20 years. 29 (11.6%) fall between the bracket of 21-25 and 8 (3.2%) were between the age of 26-30 years. The mean age of 23.07 (SD = 4.47)

### Instrument

Data was collected using via questionnaires which consist of five sections. The first part of the questionnaire elicit information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age bracket, level of study, and department. Social anxiety was measured with the Liebowitz (1985) Social Anxiety Scale, this rates level of fear/anxiety and avoidance on 10 commonly feared "performance" or "social" situations. The average scores on the 10-items evaluates degree/severity of fear and avoidance in common social situations as mild (<55), moderate (55-64), marked (65-79), severe (80-94) and very severe (>95). The Cronbach alpha obtained in this sample for the fear/anxiety domain was 0.88 and for the avoidance domain was 0.87.

Self-concept among the students was measured by asking the students to respond to 10 items rated on a 4 point Likert scale. The items were selected from the self-concept scale developed by Fey (1955) and Amatora (1951) Sample items include "Do you think you are good-looking?" and "Are you satisfied with the way you are?" The reliabilities of the self- and others-concept questionnaires were 0.54 and 0.57 respectively. The 10 items adapted were also subjected to revalidation by the researchers; the reliability indices of 0.72 and Spearman Brown coefficient of 0.79 were obtained.

General Self Efficacy Scale developed by Jerusalem and Schwarzer, (1979) was used to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy with the aim in mind to predict coping with daily hassles as well as adaptation after experiencing all kinds of stressful life events. Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.76 to 0.90, with the majority in the high 0.80. The scale is uni-dimensional. The 10 items adapted were also subjected to revalidation by the researcher; the Cronbach alpha obtained was 0.843 and Spearman Brown coefficient of 0.91.

Respondents' self-esteem was captured with 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965), the scale a measure global self-worth of positive and negative feelings about the self. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are reverse scored. The reliability when revalidated was 0.73 and Spearman Brown coefficient of 0.82. All the scale items were scored as "Strongly Disagree" 1 point, "Disagree" 2 points, "Agree" 3 points, and "Strongly Agree" 4 points.

### Procedures of Data Collection

The authors sought permission from the Students affairs unit and permission was granted. The researchers visited the halls of residence for the questionnaire



administration. Copies of questionnaires were distributed round to the students through the student proctors and instruction was given to them as to how the questionnaire would be administered in the halls of residence. Explanations were made to the proctors as regards the essence of the research and the procedure of administration. The researcher assured the participants of the confidentiality of the data provided, that the study did not intend to investigate into their privacy and the results of the findings will only be used for research purposes.

### Method of Data Analysis

Data was analysed using various statistical tools ranging from the Student t-test, simple percentage, one way ANOVA, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

### RESULTS

The first objective looked at the combined effect of self concept, self efficacy and self esteem on social phobia among fresh undergraduate students? This was analysed and answered using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Composite Influence of self concept, self esteem and self efficacy to Social Phobia**

MULTIPLE R = 0.28 MULTIPLE R <sup>2</sup> = 0.06 ADJUSTED MULTIPLE R <sup>2</sup> = 0.05 df = 249 Std. Error = 3.03						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	175.318	3	58.439	5.345	<0.001
	Residual	2689.566	246	10.933		
	Total	2864.884	249			

The result in table 4.1 revealed that self esteem and self efficacy were not joint predictors of social phobia in the study. The result shows that jointly self concept, self esteem and self efficacy accounted for 5% variance observed in the social phobia of the newly admitted undergraduate students ( $\text{adj}R^2 = 0.05$ ,  $df = 249$ ,  $F = 5.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The result also showed that the collective relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable entered in the model was also significant ( $mr = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This demonstrates that self concept, self esteem and self efficacy have significant joint influence on the development of social phobia among newly admitted undergraduate students.

The relative contributions of Self concept, self esteem and self efficacy to the exhibition of social phobia among newly admitted undergraduate students?

**Table 2: summary of multiple regression analysis showing the relative contributions of self concept, self esteem and self efficacy to social phobia.**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	34.391	2.879		11.944	0.000
Self concept	-0.209	0.062	-0.224	-3.350	0.001
Self efficacy	0.013	0.053	0.017	0.246	0.806
Self esteem	0.199	0.157	0.080	1.267	0.206

The result in Table 2 demonstrates that there was significant independent contribution of only self concept ( $\beta = -0.22$ ,  $t = -3.35$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) to newly admitted undergraduate students social phobia. However, self efficacy ( $\beta = -0.22$ ,  $t = -3.35$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )



<0.01) and self esteem ( $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $t=0.86$ ,  $p >0.05$ ) were non-significant predictors of social phobia of newly admitted undergraduate students. From this result it can therefore be assumed that self concept is the major important determinant of social phobia among fresh admitted students while self efficacy and self esteem did not play significant role in the development of social phobia among fresh admitted undergraduate students.

Gender differences in social phobia was also analysed using the t-test for independence and the result presented in Table 2.

**Table 3: T-Test Summary Table Showing Significance Difference Between Male And Female Newly Admitted Undergraduate Students On Social Phobia.**

Social phobia	Gender	N	Mean	S.D	Df	t	P
	Male	123	32.23	3.28	248	0.66	>0.05
	Female	127	31.95	3.49			

The result from Table 3 shows that the male newly admitted undergraduate students ( $M=32.24$ ,  $S.D =3.28$ ) scores on social phobia scale was not significantly different from that of the female newly admitted undergraduate students ( $M=31.95$ ,  $S.D = 3.49$ ) ( $t(248) = 0.66$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). This implies that gender did not influence the manifestation of social phobia among the newly admitted undergraduate students sampled.

The influence of age differences on experiences of social phobia. This was also analysed using one way ANOVA and the summary of the result presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: One-way ANOVA showing the differences in Social phobia based on the age**

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	215.649	2	107.824	10.053	<0.01
Within Groups	2649.235	247	10.726		
Total	2864.884	249			

The result in Table 4 shows that there is significant difference in social phobia based on the of age of the fresh undergraduate students ( $F(2,247) = 10.05$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), students aged 21 - 25 years reported higher social phobia than students aged 16 - 20 years and students aged 26- 30 years. The result demonstrated that social phobia significantly decline with increase in the age of the fresh undergraduate students. Students aged between 16 - 20 years and 21-25 years reported higher levels of social phobia than older fresh undergraduate students 26-30 years.

**Table 4: Descriptive statistics and Scheffe post hoc test showing mean difference in social phobia based on age**

Age category	N	Mean	S.D	Scheffe Post Hoc Analysis		
				1	2	3
16-20 years	213	32.01	3.22573	-	-1.73*	4.01*
21-25 years	29	33.75	3.94294		-	5.75*
26-30 years	8	28.00	1.06904			-
Total	250	32.09	3.39198			

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The descriptive statistics and post hoc analysis showing the mean differences and multiple comparisons of the mean values revealed that in the students aged 21 - 25 years ( $M= 33.75$ ) reported higher social phobia than students aged 16 - 20 years ( $M= 32.01$ ) ( $Scheffe$  test = 1.73,  $p<0.05$ ) and students aged 26- 30 years ( $Scheffe$  test = 5.75,  $p<0.05$ ). The result also demonstrated that students aged 16 - 20 years ( $M= 32.01$ ) reported higher social phobia than students aged 26 - 30 years ( $M= 28.00$ ) ( $Scheffe$  test = 4.01,  $p<0.05$ ). Thus the mean comparisons indicate that social phobia



significantly decline with decrease in age as younger fresh undergraduates reported higher levels of social phobia than older undergraduate students.

## DISCUSSION

In response to the research question which asks whether there is any joint effect of the independent variables on the social phobia among the fresh undergraduate students. The result shows that the independent variables, that is, the psycho-social factors (self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy) predicted social phobia of the fresh students. Self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy have significant joint influence on the development of social phobia among newly admitted undergraduate students. In line with this findings, a combination of variables like social adjustment, adolescent self-concept has been observed by Harter, 2002, Santrock, (2005) to play some role on migration from primary to secondary school while the combination of variables like poor family and school environment have also been observed by (Santrock, 2005). Students with well structured, relative high self-concept will significantly adjust better in managing social anxiety than students with low self-concept in this study. This finding support earlier findings by Santrock (2005), Harter (2002), Ohene, Ireland and Blum (2004) and Ebigbo (2005) all the studies proposed that self concept and confidence often compound the environment where they live and school, they are less likely to be socially adjusted compared to the students who are adequately orientated in their new social environment. Gender differences influence on social phobia among newly admitted undergraduate students' social phobia was significant. The result implied that that gender did not influence social phobia among fresh university undergraduate students in this study. This finding is in contrast to earlier works by Ebigbo (1985), Harter (2002), and Santrock (2005) who observed that female adolescent are the mostly poorly adjusted because they are discriminated against, they often lack access to most resources as boys. The reason for these low differences may be due to the fact that the era of girl child discrimination and abuse is changing and coming to an end as females are now being equally exposed to equal opportunities like their male counterparts. Also, attending mixed school often have effect on the social adjustment of the adolescent girls as they would adapt more easily to pressures of gender role, peer pressure and sexual socialization probably than those in the girls only schools. There were significant age differences in social phobia. Result implied that social phobia significantly decreased with increase in age of fresh undergraduate students in this study. Basically, students aged 16-20 years and 21-25 years reported higher levels of social phobia than older fresh undergraduate students aged 26-30 years; this could be due to their level of exposure and maturity that comes with age and the possibility of being a transfer student from other institutions such as Colleges and Polytechnics. This finding is in line with the work of Ferrari (1986), in a comprehensive review of research on developmental changes in children's fears noted a decline in the number of fears with age, also a change in the type of fear with age.

## Conclusion, recommendation and implication of findings

This research work has established that, there is positive relationship between student's self-concept and social phobia of fresh university undergraduate students. Inverse relationship was also found between age, self-concept and social phobia of newly admitted undergraduate students. These have practical implication for school social adjustment, which is of great concern as the effect of maladjustment can lead to academic underachievement and academic failure. Due to the inadequate counselling services in Nigeria tertiary institutions, especially with the recent advent of cyber-



bullying as regards the convention school bullying, substance use and abuse and other anti-social behaviours being experienced campus wide, which are evidences of social maladjustment, poor home cum school problem management evident in most university campuses. It is therefore important that a planned programme to address social adjustment in tertiary institutions be put in place. Such programmes should be provided with professional, vocational and adequate educational counselling. Nonetheless, there is need for replication and refinement of this work in the future. There are a number of potential issues or limitations within this study. One of the limitations is the sample size compared to the total population of students newly admitted undergraduate students this restricted the generalisability of the findings. Secondly, the study was correlation in nature as such causal effect relationship could not be inferred. Future study should increase the sample size and should utilise the longitudinal methodological approach in its inquiry.

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