

Confidence in Social Interactions

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Abstract

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between general self-efficacy, social anxiety and avoidance behaviours in a non-clinical sample of young adults over the age of 18. The sample consisted of sixty-six (46 males and 20 females) young adults in the United Kingdom. All participants completed the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale. The results demonstrated that there is no statistically significant correlation between self-efficacy and social anxiety as well as self-efficacy and social avoidance behaviours. Also, a significant positive relationship was found between social anxiety and avoidance behaviours. Furthermore, in the present study, males were found to exhibit more avoidant behaviours than females.

Self-Efficacy

The construct of the self- efficacy has been first introduced by Bandura in 1977. According to Albert Bandura (1977), self-efficacy, a well-recognised construct in the field of psychology, is "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the desired outcome" (p.193). That is to say, self-efficacy beliefs are concerned with one's belief and competence with respect to his/her abilities to strive with challenges and to perform particular behaviours in a certain way successfully. A significant point should be taken into consideration about self-efficacy is that self-efficacy is based on perceived abilities. Therefore, it is different than one's existing abilities. To illustrate this, individuals, who have low confidence in their ability, are less likely to undertake the given tasks even if they are very competent in their capability to perform these tasks (Muris, 2002).

Pajares (1997) described some characteristic of people with high and low self-efficacy. He determined that a strong belief of personal self-efficacy increases people's achievements and subjective well-being in a various way. Individuals who have a strong sense of self-efficacy view challenging problems as obstacles to be dealt with successfully rather than shy away from them. They are highly interested in activities in which they participate in. They also spend enough efforts to tackle with failures, setbacks, disappointment and difficult tasks. In contrast, individuals who doubt their ability avoid challenging tasks in which they feel stress, depression and unpleasant feelings. Also, people with low sense of self-efficacy have low confidence at problem solving.

The sense of self-efficacy begins to shape in early childhood as children experience a large number of events, tasks and situations and carries on developing throughout human life as they learn new skills and experience a wide range of situations. Bandura (1977) has identified

four major sources that influence self-efficacy beliefs to develop. These are mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasions and physiological states. The first way of creating self-efficacy is mastery experience which refers to personal experiences. People's past success and failures can have an important influence on their sense of self-efficacy. Simply put, achieving a task successfully strengthens individuals' self-efficacy beliefs while repeated failures result in reduction in their self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) defined mastery experiences as the most powerful source of self-efficacy. The second way of strengthening self-efficacy is vicarious experience which contains social comparisons. By vicarious experience, people witness how other people successfully accomplish tasks and by observing them, they judge their own capabilities to perform the same task as other people are. This has a strong positive impact in increasing self-efficacy (Schunk, 1983a). The third source of self-efficacy is the verbal persuasion. Those, who are persuaded and encouraged positively in respect to their skills and capabilities to perform a task, are more able to create and develop their self-efficacy beliefs compare to those who are not. In other words, receiving verbal positive encouragements from others contributes to strengthen self-efficacy while discouragements contribute to weaken self-beliefs (Bandura, 1986). The final way of creating self-efficacy is one's physiological states. A negative physiological state such as stress, anxiety, fatigue, nervousness, rapid heart rate and sweating can weaken one's sense of self-efficacy, while a positive physiological state raises it. Physiological state has the weakest impact in developing self-efficacy among the four presented sources of self-efficacy.

According to Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977), the sense of individual self-efficacy plays a major role to determine how they think, feel and behave. He maintained that

expectations of self-efficacy determine if coping action will be commenced in a situation, how much effort will be spent and how long this effort will be maintained in the face of difficulties.

Magaletta and Oliver (1999) suggested that in the construct of self-efficacy, expectancies, which are associated with one's anticipation regarding the future, constitute an important place. Expectancies can be defined as beliefs that a person wishes to accomplish expected outcomes. These outcomes could be influenced either by interior factors or exterior factors. They maintained that research on expectancies as a framework of self-efficacy demonstrated that people tend to be goal directed about their future goals.

Since Bandura (1977) presented self-efficacy as a construct, research in this area has received increasing attentions. Subsequent researchers have found a different number of variables in diverse disciplines and settings to be associated with self-efficacy beliefs. A variety of supporting evidence has been found that a strong sense of personal self-efficacy is associated with some clinical issues such as phobias within different contexts (Bandura, 1983), assertiveness (Lee, 1983), depression (Davis & Yates, 1982), to smoking behaviors (Garcia, Schmitz, & Doerfler, 1990), to general health (O'Leary, 1985) and social skills (Moe & Zeiss, 1982). Also, self-efficacy beliefs have been found to be related to education such as academic motivation and self-regulation (Pintrich & Schunk, 1995). Among these presented variables, social anxiety is also one of the variables that has been discovered to be linked with self-efficacy (Gaudiano & Herbert, 2003). A number of studies have been carried out on the relationship between self-efficacy and social anxiety which will be discussed in a moment.

Social Anxiety and Avoidance

In the literature, social anxiety is also known as social phobia. The terms of social anxiety and social phobia are frequently used reciprocally. In the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) in 1994, social anxiety is described as excessive and irrational fears about one or more social or performance situations in which individuals feel that they are watched, judged and evaluated by others. Another definition of social anxiety has been introduced by Schlenker and Leary in 1982. According to them, social anxiety is anxiety that results from the prospect or presence of one's evaluations and fears about himself and herself in real or imagined social environment. Kessler, Petukhova, Sampson, Zaslavsky and Wittchen (2012) demonstrated that the twelve-month and lifetime prevalence of social anxiety ranges from 7.4% to 13.0% for people aged between 18 and 64. Epidemiological studies advocated that social anxiety is one of the most common mental health problems. In terms of the gender, Turk, Heimberg, Orsillo, Holt, Gitow, Street and Liebowitz (1998) reported that women are often more anxious and avoidant than men in domain social situations.

In the previous studies, social anxiety has been divided into two main factors as performance situations and social interactional anxiety. These two factors are different from one another (Heimberg, Horner, Juster, Safren, Brown, Schneier & Liebowitz, 1999). Performance fears are related to one's performance such as eating and drinking in public places, working and writing while being scrutinized and giving a speech in front of unfamiliar people. However, social interactional fears are associated with particular social settings such as going to or giving a party and meeting someone for the first time or speaking to people in authority. Similarly, Steinert, Hofmann, Leichsenring and Kruse (2013) stated that the fear of social and performance situations consists of wider range of specific settings such as eating or drinking in front of others,

speaking in public places, casual or formal conversations with strangers and avoiding eye contact with unfamiliar people. They maintained that when individuals are exposed to these phobic social situations, these extreme and persistent fears cause them to develop some anxiety symptoms which may be cognitive (i.e., negative thoughts), behavioural (i.e., leaving early from a party) and physiological symptoms (i.e., blushing easily). As a consequence of this, these fears frequently result in people shying away from threatening situations or they profoundly feel uncomfortable and stressed when escape is impossible. In such a case, individuals with social anxiety experience an extreme anxiety under these undesirable situations.

Researchers have attempted to describe some characteristics of phobic people from the results of their empirical studies. For instance, Clark and Wells (1995) and Rapee and Heimberg (1997) argued that people with social anxiety worry extremely about how other people perceive, evaluate and judge them. They explained the reasons of why phobic people experience such feelings in terms of cognitive perspective. According to them, individuals with social anxiety focus on their weaknesses rather than strengths. Compared to non-phobic people, socially anxious people excessively have negative thoughts about themselves as they have highly unreasonable positive thoughts about others. Socially anxious people also lack confidence in their own performance. For that reasons, people with social anxiety tend to escape from or avoid external threatening social situations. Further findings by Clark and Wells (1997) suggested that people with social anxiety tend to demonstrate some safety behaviours in order to prevent failures in social situations when it is not possible to escape from threatening social situations. Avoiding making eye contact with others can be given as an example of such safety behaviours.

Previous Research

Studies related to the link between self-efficacy and social anxiety have demonstrated a moderate inverse relation between one another (Leary & Atherton, 1986). Also, research has shown that the level and the strength of social anxiety has been linked to avoidance behaviours in both social and performance situations (Liebowitz et al., 1999). Self-efficacy theory clarifies the reasons why individuals feel anxious, unsure and inhibited in social situations and performance such as conversations with strangers for the first time, public speaking and being interviewed for a job (Leary & Atherton, 1986).

Schlenker and Leary (1985) proposed that all types of social anxiety cases develop when one's concerns arise about how other people consider and assess him. The reason for this explained by Leary and Atherton (1986) is that people are inclined to perform in a particular way in order to introduce themselves to others for positive impressions. By this way, they prevent themselves against unfavorable impressions by others. As a consequence of this, the conviction that one is not capable to make favorable impressions causes people to feel anxious in social situations. Within this context, Mahone, Bruch and Heimberg (1993) carried out a study on undergraduate men to examine the hypothesis that low level of self-efficacy causes social anxiety and plays a significant role to make negative impressions. In their research, participants were asked to complete thought listing protocols after seeing a picture of a beautiful woman. Then, they were encouraged to participate in a role play task, which was five minutes of short conversation, with their beautiful female partner. The level of participants' self-efficacy was measured five times during the five minutes conversation to explore the extent to which self-efficacy influenced in creating positive impressions. The results of their study demonstrated that there was a negative correlation between the proportion of negative self-evaluative thoughts and

self-efficacy ratings earlier and during the conversation. Furthermore, at the end of the interaction, a negative correlation of $-.31$ was found between subjective anxiety ratings and self-efficacy. However, the level of self-efficacy and social anxiety were not predicted by favourable thoughts about the partners. From these findings, the researchers concluded that a low sense of self-efficacy causes social anxiety.

Furthermore, Maddux, Norton and Leary (1988) conducted a study to test the usefulness of the integration of self-efficacy theory and self-presentation theory of social anxiety by asking subjects to imagine themselves in various social situations and rate their degree of self-efficacy and anxiety. The findings suggested that a negative correlation of $-.49$ was found between efficacy expectancies and participants expected social anxiety. Also, a high negative correlation of $-.65$ was found between self-efficacy expectancies and a dispositional measure of social anxiousness in the pictured social scenarios.

Similar results have been obtained from samples of adolescents and adults. For instance, Muris (2002) conducted a study on 596 normal adolescents to explore the relationship between self-efficacy and symptoms of affective disorders. The results of his study demonstrated that there is a negative correlation between the level of global self-efficacy and the level of trait and social anxiety. In other words, adolescents with higher level of global self-efficacy have lower level of trait and social anxiety. In a similar vein, Gaudiano and Herbert (2006) carried out a study in a clinical sample of 50 tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders adolescents' ages 12 to 18 years old and met diagnostic criteria for generalized social anxiety disorder (SAD) to explore the relationship between self-efficacy and generalized social anxiety disorder. The results taken from their study suggested that changes in the level of adolescents' self-efficacy and the level of social anxiety symptoms are strongly correlated to one another in social and performance situations.

More simplistically, compare to high self-efficacy, low self-efficacy may cause adolescents to feel and experience more anxious socially. Also, this situation may result in individuals to show a lower performance in social situations. The same authors (2003) found a similar supporting result from a clinical sample of 131 adults aged from 18 to 59 and diagnosed with social anxiety disorder. Their results revealed that there is a moderate negative correlation (ranged between $-.36$ and $-.47$) between self-efficacy for social situations and social anxiety. From these results, they suggested that an increase in the sense of self-efficacy has positive benefits on phobic people in reduction their level of social anxiety in social situations. Moreover, in a sample of 245 third, fourth and fifth graders children recruited from United States, in terms of peer interaction, a negative correlation of $-.41$ was reported between perceived self-efficacy and social anxiety (Wheeler & Land, 1982).

In addition to these, Tahmassian and Moghadam (2011) conducted a study to find out the correlation between self-efficacy and symptom of anxiety, depression, worry and social avoidance in a normal sample of 549 high school students (266 females and 283 males) aged between 14 and 20 years. The results of their study suggested that a moderate negative correlation of $.459$ was found between self-efficacy and social anxiety. There was also a moderate negative correlation ($-.399$) between self-efficacy and social avoidance. In their study, anxiety was found to be positively ($.432$) correlated with social avoidance.

Aims of the present study

As can be seen from the literature review, research related to the link between self-efficacy and social anxiety has shown that there is a moderate inverse correlation between one another (Leary & Atherton, 1986) and the level and the strength of social anxiety has been found to be linked to avoidance behaviours in both social and performance situations (Liebowitz et al.,

1999). However, it is still necessary to examine the relation between self-efficacy and social anxiety because the lack of self-efficacy has negative effects on one's personal and social life. Hesitating in a public speaking, participating in a small group and meeting first time with strangers can be given as examples. This may cause individuals to feel uncomfortable in society and prevent them not to taking part in social interaction with their peers in one or more social situations (Leary & Atherton, 1986). Therefore, it is necessary to explore this topic more. For these reasons, the current research aimed to examine the relationship between general self-efficacy and social anxiety in a non-clinical sample of young adults over the age of 18. It also aimed to look at the relationship between social anxiety and avoidance behaviors. The reason for conducting the study in a sample of young adults was that prior research has shown that social anxiety is a frequent problem among young adults and most of the previous research to date has focused on either clinical sample suffering from social anxiety or adolescents and children (i.e., Gaudiano & Herbert, 2003). Therefore, it is required to conduct the study on a non-clinical sample. Three questions have been hypothesised in the present study as follows.

H1: Self-efficacy has a negative correlation with social anxiety.

H2: Self-efficacy has a negative relationship with avoidance behaviours.

H3: Social anxiety has a positive relationship with avoidance behaviours.

Method

Participants

The present sample consisted of sixty-six (46 males and 20 females) young adults in the United Kingdom. Ages of males' participants were ranging between 18 and 41 years and mean age was 27.04 (SD = 3.78), while ages of females participants were varying from 22 to 45 years

and mean age was 29.2 (SD = 5.82). All participants were asked to complete General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale as well as demographic information (age and gender) (for the syntax of the analysis see Appendix A).

Design

This was a correlational study to find out the relationship between variables. In the present study, a survey research design was used to gather the data via self-report questionnaire. The reason for applying this method was that it provides an opportunity to people to participate in the questionnaire at any time they want, and it facilitates those who are not confident to take part in an experimental research or group setting. It is also very fast and economical way for collecting data (Greenlaw&Brown-Welty, 2009). In addition to these, in order to look at the association between variables, important research variables were determined as self-efficacy, fear, fear of performance, fear of social interaction, avoidance, avoidance of performance and avoidance of social interaction. Identification of these variables is very important because as Toomela (2008) argued that in statistical analysis, it is difficult to understand and explain events and their relationship with one another unless variables are well-defined.

Materials

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE): The GSE is a 10-items self-report scale to measure one's general level of perceived self-efficacy (Scholz, Doña, Sud & Schwarzer, 2002). The scale is one-dimensional and each item has to be scored on a 4 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not At All True) to 4 (Exactly True). The overall GSE score ranges between 10 and 40 by summing up responses. A high score close to maximum of 40 represents people who have high level of self-efficacy as a low score close to minimum of 10 represents people who have low level of

self-efficacy. The GSE is an established commonly used scale and has been adapted to twenty-eight different languages. The validity and reliability of this scale has been tested in a variety of previous empirical studies. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the GSE ranges between .75 and .91 (for the questionnaire see Appendix B).

Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS): The LSAS is widely used to assess individual's social anxiety level in a range of social interaction and performance situations (Heimberg, Horner, Juster, Safren, Brown, Schneier & Liebowitz, 1999). The LSAS scale includes 24 items, and those items address both performance situations (13 items) and social interactions (11 items). The scale has six specific subscales: total fear, fear of performance, fear of social interaction, total avoidance, avoidance of performance and avoidance of social interaction. Each response is made on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (None) to 3 (Severe) for anxiety and from 0 (Never) to 3 (Usually) for avoidance. A total LSAS score can be calculated by summing all responses. The overall LSAS score for both subscales varies from 0 to 72 and the highest score is 144. A high score close to maximum of 72 describes individuals who are highly anxious and avoidant while a low score near to minimum of 0 describes individuals who are less anxious and avoidant. The validity and reliability of the scale has been assessed in variety of prior empirical studies. The internal consistency of the LSAS varies between .80 and .85 (for the questionnaire see Appendix C).

Procedure

Permission to recruit and gather information from participants was first obtained from the Psychology Research Ethics Committee in the School of Psychology at the University of Leicester (see Appendix D). Along with demographic questions (age and gender), 10 items General Self-Efficacy scale and 24 items Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale were placed online

using SurveyGizmo software. A link for the survey was created and sent around via Facebook and email to participants to complete the questionnaire on-line. Before participants took part in the research, information about the study was provided to them in the consent form and they were asked to give their consent. Participants, who agreed, were allowed to participate in the study. They were informed that they could withdraw from the research without giving any reasons at any point during completing the questionnaires.

A debriefing statement was provided at the end recommending that if they feel that they have social phobia and would like to get help then they should speak to their doctor. Also, two links related to helping organisations, in which participants can find useful information about social anxiety if they are unable to speak to their doctors and want to get some help, were presented to participants. The survey took less than 15 minutes and participation was voluntarily.

Data Analysis

Prior to the main analysis, an overall score was created for overall self-efficacy, overall fear, fear of performance, fear of social interaction, overall avoidance, avoidance of performance and avoidance of social interaction by adding all items on the General Self-Efficacy Scale, and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale. The overall summed scores were used to perform Pearson product-moment correlation in order to explore the relationship between self-efficacy and social anxiety and among the LSAS specific subscales. In order to ensure that there are no data points within the data set that follow an unusual pattern, outliers were also treated for self-efficacy, anxiety and avoidance. However, no scores were found to be treated as a outlier. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency of the GSE scale for the 10-items was measured as .853. Also, the alpha coefficient of LSAS scale for anxiety factor was assessed as .913 while

the Cronbach's alpha internal consistency for avoidance factor was evaluated as .920. All the data analysis was obtained by using SPSS 20 (for the syntax of the analysis see Appendix A).

Results

Table 1 presents means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for Self-Efficacy and subscales of Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale used in this study. It also separately represents the means and standard deviations for males and females scores obtained from GSE and LSAS scales. In addition to these, *t*-test value was presented in the table.

As it is presented above that high scores on GSE scale demonstrate high level of general self-efficacy and low scores indicate low level of general self-efficacy (see in the material section). According to this criterion, Table 1 demonstrated that total participants reported a high general self-efficacy ($M= 29.3$) Furthermore, based on the LSAS scale criterion mentioned in the material section, participants shown low scores in anxiety ($M= 29.1$) and avoidant behaviours ($M= 24.7$) in terms of the total fear and avoidance. It is also apparent from Table 1 that, fear of social interaction ($M= 13$) was low than fear of performance ($M= 16.1$). Similarly, avoidance of social interaction ($M= 11.3$) was less than avoidance of performance ($M= 13.3$) (for the syntax of the analysis see Appendix A).

An independent sample *t*-test was performed to explore whether there was a statistically significant difference between males and females participants in terms of their level of self-efficacy. The results displayed that there was a non-statistically significant difference ($t(64) = -.754, p=.454$) between males ($M= 29$) and females ($M= 30$) in the scores of self-efficacy. Furthermore, a separate independent sample *t*-test was also run to explore statistically significant difference between males and females in terms of their level of anxiety. The results demonstrated

a non-statistically significant difference ($t(64) = 1.359, p = .179$) between males ($M = 30.4$) and females ($M = 26.2$) in the score of social anxiety. An independent sample t -test also shows a statistically significant difference in terms of avoidance behaviours. The results shown a statistically significant difference ($t(64) = 2.503, p = .015$) between males ($M = 27.0$) and females ($M = 19.2$) in the score of overall avoidance behaviours. This result suggests that males show more avoidant behaviours than females (see Table 1).

Table 1.

T-test, Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for age, Self-Efficacy and Subscales of Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale split by Gender

Variable	Gender								<i>t</i> -test
				Male		Female			
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Age	66	27.7	4.6	27.0	3.8	29.0	6.0	Null	
Overall Self-Efficacy	66	29.3	4.7	29.0	4.6	30.0	5.0	-.754	
Overall Fear	66	29.1	11.6	30.4	11.3	26.2	12.1	1.359	
Fear of Performance	66	16.1	6.5	16.6	6.4	14.9	6.6	Null	
Fear of Social Interaction	66	13.0	5.7	13.8	5.4	11.3	6.2	Null	
Overall Avoidance	66	24.7	12.2	27.0	11.4	19.2	12.4	2.503*	
Avoidance of Performance	66	13.3	6.8	14.5	6.6	10.8	6.9	Null	
Avoidance of Social Interaction	66	11.3	5.9	12.6	5.6	8.5	5.8	Null	

* $p < .05$. Note: $N = 46$ for Males and 20 for Females

First, a Pearson product - moment correlation has been evaluated between age, gender, self-efficacy, anxiety (fear) and avoidance. At this point, it is important to note that the r value shows the strength of the correlations between variables. A criterion for deciding whether the correlation is weak or strong as follows. If the r value ranges between 0 and .2, the correlation is usually considered as weak. However, if the r value ranges between .3 and .6 and .7 and 1, the correlation is considered as moderate and strong, respectively (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2012). Table 2 shows the correlations among these five variables. As can be seen from Table 2, the correlations show that there was a positive correlation ($r = .742, p < 0.01$) between overall anxiety (fear) and overall avoidance. That would suggest that as individuals' level of social anxiety increase, their level of social avoidance increase at the same time when they interact in social and performance situations. On the other hand, Pearson's correlation demonstrated that there was no correlation between self-efficacy and social anxiety as well as self-efficacy and avoidance behaviours. In the same way, age was not found to be correlated with gender, self-efficacy, social anxiety and avoidance behaviours.

Table 2.

Correlations between Age, Gender, Self-Efficacy, Social Anxiety (fear) and Avoidance (N=66)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	-				
2. Gender	.219	-			
3. Overall Self-Efficacy	.143	.094	-		
4. Overall Fear (anxiety)	-.190	-.168	-.050	-	
5. Overall Avoidance	-.058	-.299*	-.115	.742**	-

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

From the results shown in the Table 1, a statistically significant correlation was found between social anxiety and avoidance. This result was expected. However, the current study is also interested in the relationship between self-efficacy and LSAS subscales. As stated earlier, LSAS scale has six specific subscales. In order to see in detail, the strength of correlations among all subscales of LSAS scale and their relationship with self-efficacy, a separate Pearson product - moment correlation was run to find out the correlation between self-efficacy and LSAS subscales. The results of these correlations were presented in the Table 3. As can be seen from Table 3, all the specific subscales of social anxiety have a positive correlation with one another and the correlations among subscales ranged in magnitude from .598 to .963. It is apparent from the Table 3, high positive correlations were found between overall fear and fear subscales. For instance, the correlation between fear and fear of performance were found as .960 ($p < 0.01$), while fear and fear of social interaction were .947 ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, overall avoidance was also highly correlated with its subscales. For example, a positive correlation of .963 ($p < 0.01$) was found between avoidance and avoidance of performance, whereas avoidance and avoidance of social interaction was .951 ($p < 0.01$). It would be predicted from these results that those who are more anxious compared to those who are less anxious are more likely to experience fear and escape from this fear (avoidance behaviours) within performance situations and within social interaction situations.

In addition to these, the present study was expected to find a correlation between self-efficacy and LSAS subscales. However, as can be seen from Table 2 that no significant correlations were found between self-efficacy and all 6 LSAS subscales.

Table 3.

Correlation between Self-Efficacy and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Subscales (N=66)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Self-Efficacy	-						
2. Overall Fear	-.050	-					
3. Fear of Performance	-.095	.960**	-				
4. Fear of Social Interaction	.006	.947**	.819**	-			
5. Overall Avoidance	-.115	.742**	.718**	.696**	-		
6. Avoidance of Performance	-.115	.759**	.766**	.676**	.963**	-	
7. Avoidance of Social Interaction	-.103	.654**	.598**	.655**	.951**	.833**	-

** $p < .01$

Discussion

The main purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between self-efficacy, social anxiety and avoidance behaviours among young adults over the ages of 18. For this purpose, three research questions were hypothesised in the study. The first research question aimed to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and social anxiety. Surprisingly, the results of correlation matrix demonstrated no significant correlation between self-efficacy and social anxiety. This result was not expected and it is inconsistent with previous research results because prior research shown a moderate negative relationship between self-efficacy and social anxiety (Gaudiano & Herbert, 2006; Gaudiano & Herbert, 2003; Leary & Atherton, 1986; Maddux, Norton & Leary, 1988; Mahone, Bruch & Heimberg, 1993; Muris, 2002; Tahmassian & Moghadam, 2011; Wheeler & Land, 1982). One explanation for this unexpected result would be that a small sample size was used in the current study and this small sample might not be

enough for a statistically significant correlation between these two variables. In the same way, for the second research question, which sought to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy and avoidance behaviours, no significant correlations were found between self-efficacy and avoidance behaviours. This result was also surprising and unexpected because it is inconsistent with prior research. For example, Tahmassian and Moghadam (2011) found a moderate negative correlation between self-efficacy and social avoidance. The third research question in the present study aimed to find out the relationship between social anxiety and avoidance behaviours. As it was expected that the results of the present study revealed a significant positive correlation between social anxiety and avoidance behaviours. This result is not surprising, and it is consistent with previous research results. Research by Steinert et al. (2013), Tahmassian and Moghadam (2011) and Liebowitz et al. (1999) provided supportive evidence for the link between social anxiety and avoidance behaviours. It can be concluded from this result that as individuals' level of social anxiety increase, their level of social avoidance increases at the same time when they interact in social and performance situations. In other words, this current data would suggest that those who have a high sense of social anxiety are more likely to avoid in social (i.e. going to or giving a party and meeting someone for the first time or speaking to people in authority) and performance situations (i.e. eating and drinking in public places, working and writing while being scrutinized and giving a speech in front of unfamiliar people) compare to those who have a low sense of social anxiety. Furthermore, the present result suggests that males exhibit more avoidant behaviours than females. That is to say, males shy away from threatening social and performance situations more than females. This is an interesting result, and it is in contrast to Turk et al. (1998), who demonstrated that women are often more anxious and avoidant than men in domain social situations. One possible explanation

for this interesting finding may be related to small sample size or measurement concern with social anxiety and avoidance used in this study may not be adequate to explore the gender difference. The final conclusion can be drawn from the current data is that the present study also dealt with the relationship between self-efficacy and LSAS subscales. However, no statistically significant correlations were obtained between self-efficacy and all 6 LSAS subscales.

Contribution

The results of present study may have some implications for health professionals who treat people with social anxiety. Understanding the level and strength of social anxiety in relation to avoidance behaviours in detail may be helpful for health professionals to treat people with social anxiety more effectively because by being aware of the relationship between social anxiety and avoidance behaviours may enable them to run an appropriate program and interventions for their patients so that patients would be able to overcome from social anxiety more easily and with less cost. The results also may be useful for university administrators. University student, specifically freshmen, may suffer from social anxiety which may cause them to withdraw from social interaction with their peers and even it may affect their academic performance as well. In this circumstance, university administrators may want to look at some ways for implementing some workshops or programs to encourage students with social anxiety for a reduction in their social anxiety and avoidance behaviours. By this way, students with social anxiety would be able to engage in social activities. This may have a positive effect on their academic performance and a reduction in their social anxiety and avoidance behaviours. Furthermore, determining the level and strength of social anxiety and how it affects avoidance behaviours may give a better insight and understanding to socially phobic young adults for seeking a self-help or treatment for their anxiety.

Limitation

There are three limitations of the present study. First, the sample size of the study was small. Specifically, males were more than doubles than females. Therefore, enough sample size (both males and females) should be recruited for the further study in order to obtain a representative result for young adults over the age of 18. Another limitation of the study is that this study was an online study. As a result of this, participants could lack opportunity to ask and clarify questions if they did not understand in the questionnaire. Misunderstanding questions could affect participants' responses negatively. Therefore, future research should use paper-based questionnaire along with an interview at the same time. This may give a better result. The last limitation of the study is that in this study, questions related to education level, martial statues, types of job and other background information were not asked. These factors may affect participants' level of self-efficacy, social anxiety and avoidance behaviours. Future research should take these factors into account to see to what extent these factors have affect on self-efficacy, social anxiety and avoidance behaviours.

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Appendix A**Syntax for All Analysis**

SORT CASES BY gender12.

SPLIT FILE LAYERED BY gender12.

DATASET ACTIVATE DataSet1.

DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=age

/STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX.

GRAPH

/SCATTERPLOT(BIVAR)=OVERALLFear WITH OVERALLselfefficacy

/MISSING=LISTWISE.

GRAPH

/SCATTERPLOT(BIVAR)=OVERALLavoidance WITH OVERALLselfefficacy

/MISSING=LISTWISE.

GRAPH

/SCATTERPLOT(BIVAR)=OVERALLavoidance WITH OVERALLFear

/MISSING=LISTWISE.

RELIABILITY

/VARIABLES=GSE1 GSE2 GSE3 GSE4 GSE5 GSE6 GSE7 GSE8 GSE9 GSE10

/SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL

/MODEL=ALPHA.

RELIABILITY

/VARIABLES=LSASAnx1 LSASAnx2 LSASAnx3 LSASAnx4 LSASAnx5 LSASAnx6
LSASAnx7 LSASAnx8 LSASAnx9 LSASAnx10 LSASAnx11 LSASAnx12 LSASAnx13
LSASAnx14 LSASAnx15 LSASAnx16 LSASAnx17 LSASAnx18 LSASAnx19 LSASAnx20
LSASAnx21 LSASAnx22 LSASAnx23 LSASAnx24

/SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL

/MODEL=ALPHA

/STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVE SCALE

/SUMMARY=TOTAL MEANS.

RELIABILITY

/VARIABLES=LSASAvoid1 LSASAvoid2 LSASAvoid3 LSASAvoid4 LSASAvoid5
LSASAvoid6 LSASAvoid7 LSASAvoid8 LSASAvoid9 LSASAvoid10 LSASAvoid11
LSASAvoid12 LSASAvoid13 LSASAvoid14 LSASAvoid15 LSASAvoid16 LSASAvoid17
LSASAvoid18 LSASAvoid19 LSASAvoid20 LSASAvoid21 LSASAvoid22 LSASAvoid23
LSASAvoid24

/SCALE('ALL VARIABLES') ALL

/MODEL=ALPHA

/STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVE SCALE

/SUMMARY=TOTAL MEANS.

DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=age OVERALLselfefficacy OVERALLFear

FearOfPerformance FearOfSocialInteraction OVERALLavoidance AvoidanceOfPerformance
AvoidanceOfSocialInteraction

/STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX.

SORT CASES BY gender12.

SPLIT FILE LAYERED BY gender12.

DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=age OVERALLselfefficacy OVERALLFear

FearOfPerformance FearOfSocialInteraction OVERALLavoidance AvoidanceOfPerformance
AvoidanceOfSocialInteraction

/STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX.

T-TEST GROUPS=gender12(1 2)

/MISSING=ANALYSIS

/VARIABLES=OVERALLselfefficacy

/CRITERIA=CI(.95).

T-TEST GROUPS=gender12(1 2)

/MISSING=ANALYSIS

/VARIABLES=OVERALLFear

/CRITERIA=CI(.95).

T-TEST GROUPS=gender12(1 2)

/MISSING=ANALYSIS

/VARIABLES=OVERALLavoidance

/CRITERIA=CI(.95).

CORRELATIONS

/VARIABLES=age gender12 OVERALLselfefficacy OVERALLFear

OVERALLavoidance

/PRINT=TWOTAIL NOSIG

/MISSING=PAIRWISE.

CORRELATIONS

/VARIABLES=OVERALLselfefficacy OVERALLFear FearOfPerformance

FearOfSocialInteraction OVERALLavoidance AvoidanceOfPerformance

AvoidanceOfSocialInteraction

/PRINT=TWOTAIL NOSIG

/MISSING=PAIRWISE.

Appendix B

The General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale

Here is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself.

If you feel the statement is **not at all true**, circle 1.

If you feel the statement is **hardly true**, circle 2.

If you feel the statement is **moderately true**, circle 3.

If you feel the statement is **exactly true**, circle 4.

Keep the following scale in mind as you rate each of the statements below:

NOT AT ALL	HARDLY	MODERATELY	EXACTLY
TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
1	2	3	4

Please do not skip any statements – circle the response that is closest to your feeling.

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough. 1 2 3 4
2. If someone opposes me, I can find means and ways to get what I want. 1 2 3 4
3. I am certain that I can accomplish my goals 1 2 3 4
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events. 1 2 3 4

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I can handle unforeseen situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can find several solutions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. If I am in trouble I can think of a good solution. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. I can handle whatever comes my way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Appendix C

Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS)

Fill out the following scale with the most suitable answer provided below			
Fear of Anxiety	Avoidance		
0=None	0=Never		
1=Mild	1=Occasionally		
2=Moderate	2=Often		
3=Severe	3=Usually		
		Fear or Anxiety	Avoidance
1. Telephoning in public			
2. Participating in small groups			
3. Eating in public places			
4. Drinking with others in public			
5. Talking to people in authority			
6. Acting, performing or giving a talk in front of an audience			
7. Going to a party			
8. Working while being observed			
9. Writing while being observed			
10. Calling someone you don't know very well			
11. Talking with people you don't know very well			

12. Meeting strangers		
13. Urinating in a public bathroom		
14. Entering a room when others		
15. Being the centre of others' attention		
16. Speaking up at a meeting		
17. Taking written tests		
18. Expressing disagreement or disapproval to people you don't know very well		
19. Looking at people you don't know very well in the eyes		
20. Giving a report to a small group		
21. Trying to chat someone up		
22. Returning goods to a store		
23. Giving a party		
24. Resisting a high pressure salesman		

Appendix D

University of Leicester Ethics Review Sign Off Document

To: **Murat Yildirim**

Subject: Ethical Application Ref: **my98-95ef**

(Please quote this ref on all correspondence)

28/05/2014 18:17:39

Psychology

Project Title: **Confidence in social interactions**

Thank you for submitting your application which has been considered.

This study has been given ethical approval, subject to any conditions quoted in the attached notes.

Any significant departure from the programme of research as outlined in the application for research ethics approval (such as changes in methodological approach, large delays in

commencement of research, additional forms of data collection or major expansions in sample size) must be reported to your Departmental Research Ethics Officer.

Approval is given on the understanding that the University Research Ethics Code of Practice and other research ethics guidelines and protocols will be compiled with

- <http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice>
- <http://www.le.ac.uk/safety/>

The following is a record of correspondence notes from your application **my98-95ef**.

Please ensure that any proviso notes have been adhered to:-

May 28 2014 11:03AM

This study should raise no problematic ethical issues.

Briony Pulford

--- END OF NOTES ---