



Effects of Social Anxiety on Academic Performance and Social Behavior

¹**Ridhi Kedia** *Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied sciences, Amity University, Noida
Uttar Pradesh, India*

ridhikedia9@gmail.com

²**Dr. Rita Kumar**, *Professor, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied sciences, Amity
University, Noida Uttar Pradesh, India*

rkumar16@amity.edu

Abstract: This systematic review explores the impact of social anxiety on academic performance and social behaviour among students across various educational contexts. Drawing from 32 empirical studies published between 2012 and 2023, the review identifies consistent patterns indicating that social anxiety adversely affects students' academic engagement, classroom participation, and social relationships. Key symptoms such as fear of negative evaluation, avoidance behaviours, and emotional dysregulation were found to hinder students' ability to perform academically and develop peer connections. The review also highlights psychological factors such as shame, embarrassment, and fear of judgment that maintain and exacerbate social anxiety. Gender differences, with female students showing higher sensitivity to social evaluation, were also noted. The findings underscore the importance of early intervention and supportive academic environments that promote social competence, emotional regulation, and self-confidence to mitigate the effects of social anxiety on student well-being and academic success.

Keywords: *Social Anxiety, Academic Performance, Social Behaviour, Fear of Evaluation, Emotional Regulation, Student Mental Health, Peer Relationships, Classroom Participation, Systematic Review, Psychological Well-being*

1. Introduction

Social anxiety disorder or social phobia is mainly an anxiety disorder which can be identified by anxiety and fear in several social situations causing them distress and unable to

perform basic activities in daily life. People with this be afraid that they might get negatively evaluated by others or that other people are judging them in context to social situation. They find it difficult to share their opinion with others, share what they are feeling or talking about their feelings and thoughts. Social situations like job interviews, group sessions or discussion, presentation, talking in front of large crowd seems daunting and hard. Even performing daily activities becomes a source of distress. Daily activities like going to grocery shopping, going to salon, ordering food at any shop or initiating or participation in any activities are all distressful for the individual. The constant thought of being judged or evaluated in the social situation holds them to take the first step to even start a conversation in social situation. The situation feels out of control to them and they tend to easily lose hope. Worrying about things or situation starts bothering the individual prior to the event say a week before. This leads to sometimes skipping social gatherings and avoiding people and restricting themselves to take part in everything, be it school, or job. The thought of embarrassing themselves in front of others always bother them.

It is mainly concerned with being embarrassed, judged, humiliated in social situations. Sometimes, they find it difficult to understand their own emotions in particular social situations and they are unable to handle the emotional state.

Social anxiety is the third most common disorder after depression and substance abuse disorder. There is range of fear that the individual feels including walking in a room full of people, eating or drinking in public. They feel that their action might bring in humiliation and embarrassment (Leigh & Clark, 2018).

Fear of evaluation is a central component to how people see themselves or think how other people see them. Social presentation theory of social anxiety explained that people often feel anxious while making an impression on others and they also doubt their abilities to do so (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). Earlier it was believed that it was only the fear of being negatively evaluated by people that means being rejected or evaluated harshly. But it was later seen that along with being negatively evaluated it was the fear of positive evaluation that means fear of success or raising the expectation of others are also present (Weeks et al., 2012). People fear being praised because of the mechanism to follow group cohesion. The person who are above them in position or power may come off as superior and they bring out the need to act submissive and any praise, promotion or changes might cause anxiety as it can cause conflict with the one with power (Fergus et al., 2009).

There is a tendency to have biased attention and biased interpretation. They often report fewer positive experiences or moments stating how the constant state of social anxiety distracts

them from their meaningful relations and important activities (Kashdan, et al 2011). Research have shown dysregulation of emotions or impaired emotion regulation. They tend to suppress their emotions, rehearse the conversations before speaking, shifting focus from themselves onto other to take away the attention and restricts free flow of ideas due to the fear of judgement (Clark & Wells, 1995; Werner et al., 2011). These emotion suppressing techniques are ineffective as the more a person try to suppress one's emotion, they come up to surface due to overthinking. There are predictions of things to never change and doubting their ability to make any difference just worsen the situations for them.

Early researchers showed that people suffer from fear of being evaluated or what people think about him or her and they always wish to make a first good impression, but they doubt themselves. Research showed that they were quick to judge the facial expressions like an angry face and are quick to catch the emotion on other's person face. As these interpretations might not always be true, they end up overthinking and cause more distress.

Social anxiety is not just about the shyness in particular situations rather it is more intense and painful disorder. It is linked with lower academic performance, lower opportunities or chances missed due to the fear that they might lose control over situations.

Some of the common symptoms are blushing, excessive sweating, trembling, palpitation and nausea. Rapid speech stammering can also be accompanied with above symptoms. Under extreme fear and anxiety panic attacks can also occur. This can make the situation worse for the individuals. Some of the other common symptoms also includes totally going blank in certain situations, having a rigid body posture, unable to make proper eye contact, speaking with very sweat voice, low self-esteem or self-conscious, afraid of being judged and avoiding social gathering specially where they don't know the about the other people present there.

An individual's day to day activities consist of going out, doing his/her job, socially interact with people, expressing their opinion, carrying out conversation, making connections and performing academically. As these activities are essential for nay individual therefore, having social anxiety or experiencing any symptoms of social anxiety can make things difficult for the individual as they will feel restricted while doing any activity due to the symptoms associated with social anxiety.

1.2 Aim

How social anxiety impacts academic performance and social behaviour among students across different educational contexts: a systematic review study

1.3 Research Objectives

- a) To examine the relationship between social anxiety and academic performance which includes classroom participation, grades.
- b) To explore effects of social anxiety on social behavior like peer interactions, friendship formation and withdrawal
- c) To find underlying psychological factors (shame, guilt, fear of evaluation) that are associated with social anxiety.
- d) To categorize and synthesis key themes from studies published between 2012 and 2023 relevant to topic.

2. Review of literature

A systematic search for literature was conducted to identify empirical studies examining social anxiety and its effects on academic performance and social behavior. Google scholar served as the primary database, using the keywords “social anxiety”, “academic performance”, “social behavior.”

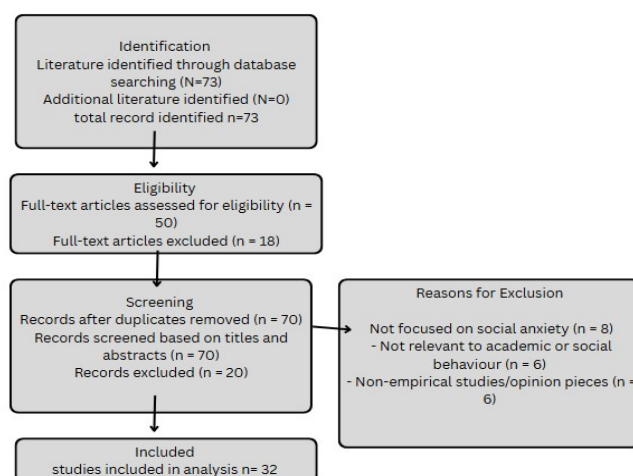


Figure 1: Systematic selection of literature using PRISMA Framework

Explanation of the PRISMA Flow

Identification

An initial pool of 73 studies was taken from academic databases like PubMed, Scopus, google scholar using keywords such as “social anxiety”, “academic performance”, “student behaviour.” No additional records were obtained through manual or grey literature sources.

Screening

After screening duplicates, 70 unique studies remains. These were screened based on their titles and abstracts. Those studies that were irrelevant to topic (like general anxiety and not specific social anxiety, unrelated population) were excluded

Eligibility

Around 50 studies were examined in full text and at this stage studies were removed or not included if they lacked rigorous empirical methods and it did not link social anxiety to either academics or social behavior.

Inclusion Criteria

- a) It had direct relevance to research topic
- b) Focused on school, college and university students
- c) Empirical data
- d) Published in between 2010-2023
- e) English language

Exclusion Criteria

- a) Non-peer reviewed articles
- b) Non-peered articles
- c) Studies that focused only on Generalized anxiety or unrelated concepts
- d) Interventions or clinical trials without baseline data relevant to the research question

Following the identified and selection of studies, illustrate in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1), an in-depth evaluation of the included studies was undertaken, summarized below in Table 1

Table 1: Characteristics of included studies

Characteristic	Details
Age Groups	Children (10–12), Adolescents (13–18), Young Adults (19–25), Adults (26–35)
Context of Studies	Classroom/Lab-based settings Online self-reports Clinical/non-clinical student samples
Cumulative Sample Size	Approximately 7,500+ participants across all studies
Databases Used	Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus, ResearchGate
Gender Representation	Mixed gender in most studies; some gender comparisons (n = 6)

Geographical Context	International scope: - USA, Brazil, UK, India, China, Turkey, Finland, Nigeria, South Korea, Japan
Measurement Tools Used	- Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN) - Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) - Self-report questionnaires - Custom scales (e.g., on academic performance or peer engagement)
Sample Sizes	Range: 22 to 805 participants
Study Design	Mostly cross-sectional (n = 25), longitudinal (n = 5), meta-analysis (n = 2)
Themes Explored	- Impact of social anxiety on academic performance (n = 22) - Social behavior and peer relationships (n = 18) - Internet and social media use (n = 3) - Cognitive processes like shame, risk-taking, emotion regulation (n = 6)
Timeframe	2012 – 2023
Total Studies	32
Type of Population	- School students (n = 7) - College/University students (n = 22) - Mixed-age general population (n = 3)
Type of Research	Primary empirical research (n = 29), Secondary/meta-analysis (n = 3)

3. Discussion

The present review of literature aimed to understand the effects of social anxiety on academic performance and social behavior. A total of 32 studies published between 2012 and 2023 were systematically reviewed and analyzed. The findings across these studies consistently highlighted the adverse impact of social anxiety on both academic and social functioning. The discussion below integrates key patterns emerging from the review and elaborates on the broader implications of these findings.

3.1 *Impact of Social Anxiety on Academic Performance*

All of the research had a common and central finding that social anxiety has negative impact on academic performance of students. They faced difficulty with classroom participation, public speaking, collaborative academic tasks. This resulted in less

communication with authorities like teachers or professor due to consistent fear of being judged or evaluated or criticized. Avoidance in interaction or participation led to poor classroom engagement and academic scores.

Several studies showed that first year college students were particularly vulnerable, and they had difficulty adjusting to persistent social demand. Socially anxious individuals experienced heightened self-consciousness in educational setting which can lead to withdrawal from discussion and presentations. Research revealed that there is internal dialogue often involving negative self-evaluation, constant doubt, replaying the event before it happens, anticipatory anxiety etc. contributing to lower self-confidence and academic motivations.

There was certain common safety behavior adopted by participants such as writing scripts for conversation before doing anything, arriving early at any place to avoid social anxiety. This behavior is often used to reduce immediate discomfort, persistent anxiety, often reinforced avoidance patterns and limited interactions or engagement in learning environment. Evidence also indicated socially anxious individuals were more prone to conformity, agreeing to people or not sharing their own point of view to avoid conflict, judgement or embarrassment.

Gender differences were reported in some of the studies. Female students often showed high level of social anxiety and effects of academic performance decline. There were signs of dissatisfaction and made efforts to improve while some lacked motivation or confidence to bring change.

3.2 Impact of Social Anxiety on Social Behaviour

There was significant influence in social behavior particularly in the areas of friendship formation and maintaining the friendships or relations. Individuals who reported high social anxiety often had difficulty with initiating conversation or sustaining them which results in limited social circles and increased isolation. The consistent fear of negative evaluation prevented them from having or engaging in social events.

Lower levels of subjective well-being were often associated with this poor social functioning. According to research, socially healthy relationships are frequently the source of happiness and emotional fulfilment; nevertheless, socially anxious people report lower levels of life satisfaction as a result of their avoidance and withdrawal. Feelings of isolation and alienation were made worse by avoiding social risks like striking up a conversation or arguing with peers.

According to a number of studies, people with social anxiety frequently receive neutral or ambiguous feedback negatively because they misread facial expressions and social cues. This misunderstanding exacerbated their worry and strengthened their sense of exclusion or

judgment. Another major topic that surfaced was emotional challenges, as many participants showed a lack of ability to distinguish and comprehend their own feelings, which resulted in maladaptive coping mechanisms.

3.3 Psychosocial and Emotional Triggers

There were recurring themes of shame, embarrassment, and traumatic social memories that led to development of social anxiety and maintaining it. There were link between symptoms to specific past experiences where they felt rejected or humiliated. This contributes to negative self-image and increased need for social feedback.

In clinical samples, participants occasionally felt ashamed of their diagnosis because they feared being rejected or stigmatized by others. These beliefs aggravated emotions of powerlessness and inadequacy and led to social disengagement.

There was evidence that indicated that social anxiety individuals often demonstrate high level of empathy and there is a strong desire to make them feel comfortable. This paradox highlights the internal conflict faced by socially anxious individuals—desiring connection while simultaneously fearing it.

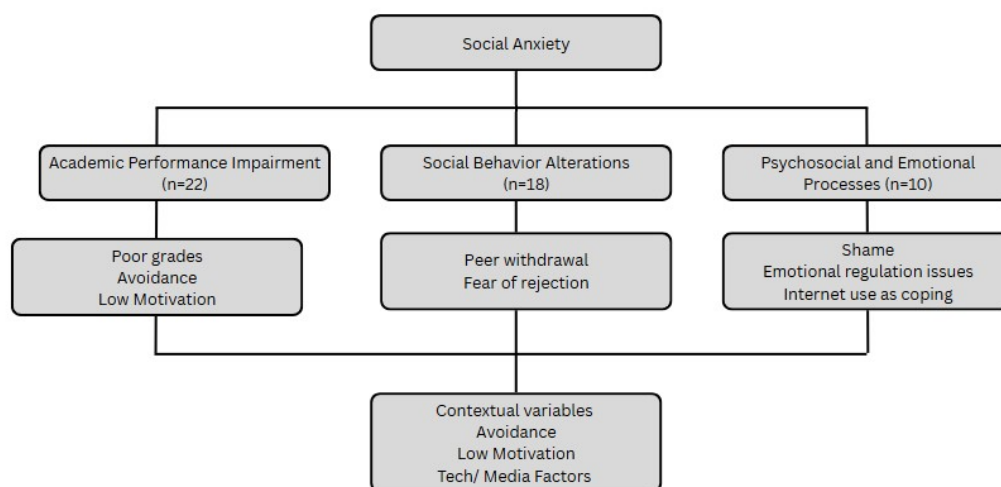


Figure 2: *Systematic Overview of the Effects of Social Anxiety on Academic and Social Functioning*

4. Key Findings

- a) Social anxiety impact academic performance by avoiding participation, fear of evaluation and low self-confidence.

- b) Most of the college students struggles with social anxiety during the transition period
- c) They often engage in safety behaviour and conformity with the fear of judgement and avoiding activities.
- d) There is withdrawal and loneliness as a common or noted behaviour among socially anxious individuals.
- e) Impaired emotional regulation and difficulty differentiating their emotions or interpreting cues.
- f) Common themes: shame, embarrassing experiences and fear of rejection. These factors maintain social anxiety.
- g) There were gender differences, females' students showed higher sensitivity to academic feedback.
- h) Socially anxious individuals possess higher level of empathy and emotional insight.

5. Conclusion

This secondary research elaborates on systematic analysis on existing literature on how social anxiety effects academic performance and social behavior. This study reviewed 32 literature highlighting how social anxiety impairs academic performance and social behavior and its impact on self-esteem, emotional regulation and overall wellbeing.

Firstly, seeing how social anxiety affects academic performance it was noticed that social anxiety has a very negative effect on the academic performance. It was seen that individuals with social anxiety often end up losing grades because they aren't able to participate in the academic pursuits or there is restricted interaction with the teachers and other authority figure. The collage going students find it difficult to adjust in their first semester as they have a constant fear of being judged, evaluated or criticized from teachers, professors or peers. They showed difficulty in forming any relation and was always uncomfortable in the social situations. Because of this they always felt lonely around others. They were seen withdrawing from any activities as to avoid being the centre of attention. Even though they wanted to from any social relation or take part in any activities or academic activities they always had the fear of being negatively evaluated and thought people would make fun of them if they answered wrong or did anything which is not acceptable. They were seen engaging themselves in post evaluation or post event processing.

Secondly, seeing how social anxiety affects social behavior it was noticed that social anxiety has a negative impact on the social behavior in terms of friendship, forming social

relations etc. They were also seen to be low on risky behavior i.e.; they did not go for risky decision. In one of the types of research, it was seen individuals are often bas at making friendship as they are unable to initiate any conversations or carry on any conversation for long. They found it difficult to take the friendship which led to withdrawing themselves the social situation and often spending time alone.

When taken as a whole, the results highlight the need of early detection, encouraging learning environments, and interventions that focus on developing social skills, emotional control, and self-worth. In addition to increasing academic performance, addressing social anxiety is crucial for promoting students' mental health and more positive social interactions.

References

- Archbell, K. A., & Coplan, R. J. (2022). Too anxious to talk: Social anxiety, academic communication, and students' experiences in higher education. *Journal of emotional and behavioral disorders*, 30(4), 273-286.
- Arjanggi, R. Kusumaningsih, L. (2016). Collage adjustments of first-year students: *The role of social anxiety*, 5(1). DOI: 10.12928/jehcp.v5i1.
- Bapista, C. Loureiro, S. (2012). Social phobia in Brazilian university students: prevalence, under-recognition and academic impairments in women. *Journal of affective disorder*, 857861. DOI: 10.1016/j.jad2011.09.022.
- Biggs, B. Vernberg, E. Wu, Y. (2012). Social Anxiety and Adolescents' Friendships: The Role of Social Withdrawal. *Journal of early adolescents*, 32(6), 802-823. DOI: 10.1177/0272431611426145.
- Brook, C. A., & Willoughby, T. (2015). The social ties that bind: Social anxiety and academic achievement across the university years. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 44, 1139-1152. The British Psychological Society & The Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2013.
- Campbell, C. Bierman, K. Molenaar, P. (2016). The individual day-to-day process of social anxiety in vulnerable collage student. *Boise state university scholar works*, 1-15. DOI: 10.1080/10888691.2015.1026594.
- Clark, D. M., & Wells, A. (1995). A cognitive model of social phobia. In R. G. Heimberg, M. R. Liebowitz, D. A. Hope, & F. R. Schneier (Eds.), *Social phobia: Diagnosis, assessment, and treatment* (pp. 69-93). Guilford Press.
- Clarke, J. Fox, J. (2016). The Impact of Social Anxiety on Occupational Participation in College Life. *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health*, 33(1), 31-46. DOI: 10.1080/0164212X.2016.1222323

- Dietal, F, Wilhelm, S. (2021). Interpretation Bias Across Body Dysmorphic, Social Anxiety and Generalized Anxiety Disorder—A Multilevel, Diffusion Model Account. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10608-020-10180-7>
- Donald, C. Olayinka, O. (2017). Prevalence and co-related of social phobia and its impact on academic performance among university students at a territory hospital in Nigeria. *International Journal of Medical Research and Pharmaceutical*, 4(4). DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.569479
- Elhanany, Y. Tsoory, S. (2011). Social cognition in social anxiety: first evidence for increased empathic abilities. *Isr J Psychiatry Relat Sci*, 48(2), 98-106.
- Hachem, M., Gorgun, G., Chu, M. W., & Bulut, O. (2022). Social and emotional variables as predictors of students' perceived cognitive competence and academic performance. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, 37(4), 362-384.
- Karasar, B. Bayteemir, K. (2018). Need for social approval and happiness in collage students: The mediation Role of social anxiety. *Universal journal of educational research*, 6(5), 919927. DOI: 10.13189/ojer.2018.6660513.
- Kashdan, T. (2021). Social anxiety. In R. Biswas-Diener & E. Diener (Eds), *Noba textbook series: Psychology*. Champaign, IL: DEF publishers. Retrieved from <http://noba.to/vz2qug96>
- Kashdan, T. Farmer, A. (2014). Differentiating Emotions Across Contexts: Comparing Adults with and without Social Anxiety Disorder Using Random, Social Interaction, and Daily Experience Sampling. *Emotion*, 14(3), 629-638. DOI: [10.1037/a0035796](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035796).
- Ketay, S. Welker, K. et al (2019). Social anxiety, Cortisol, and early-stage friendship. *Journal of social and personal relationship*, 36(7), 1954-1974. DOI: 10.1177/1026507518774915.
- Lee, H. Ahn, J. (2018). Effects of Self-Image on Anxiety, Judgement Bias and Emotion Regulation in Social Anxiety Disorder. *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 47, 81–94. DOI: 10.1017/S135246581800022X
- Leigh E, Chiu K, Clark DM (2021) Is concentration an indirect link between social anxiety and educational achievement in adolescents? PLoS ONE 16(5): e0249952. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0249952>
- Lyngdoh, T., El-Manstrly, D., & Jeeshia, K. (2023). Social isolation and social anxiety as drivers of generation Z's willingness to share personal information on social media. *Psychology & Marketing*, 40(1), 5-26.
- Leigh, E., Clark, D.M. Understanding Social Anxiety Disorder in Adolescents and Improving

- Treatment Outcomes: Applying the Cognitive Model of Clark and Wells (1995). *Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev* 21, 388–414 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-018-0258-5>
- Levinson, C. Rodebaugh, T. (2013). Social appearance anxiety, perfectionism, and fear of negative evaluation: Distinct or shared risk factors for social anxiety and eating disorders. *Appetite*, 125-133. DOI: 10.1016/j.appet.2013.04.002.
- Lynn, S. Bui, E. et al (2018). Associations between feelings of social anxiety and emotion perception. *Journal of behaviour therapy and Experimental psychiatry*, 59, 40-47. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbtep.2017.10.001>
- Lai, F.; Wang, L.; Zhang, J.; Shan, S.; Chen, J.; Tian, L. Relationship between Social Media Use and Social Anxiety in College Students: Mediation Effect of Communication Capacity. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2023, 20, 3657. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20043657>
- Makkar, S. Grishan, J. (2011). The predictors and consents of post-event processing in social anxiety. *Cogn ther Res*, 118-133. DOI: 10.1007/s10608-011-9357-z
- Manuel Prieto, J., Salas Sánchez, J., Tierno Cordón, J., Álvarez-Kurogi, L., González-García, H., & Castro López, R. (2023). Social anxiety and academic performance during COVID-19 in schoolchildren. *Plos one*, 18(1), e0280194.
- Matos, M. Gouveia, J. Gilbert, P. (2012). The effect of shame and shame memories on paranoid ideation and social anxiety. *Clinical psychology and psychotherapy*, 20(4), 334-349. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.1766>.
- Michail, M & Birchwood, M (2013). Social anxiety disorder and shame cognitions in psychosis, *Psychological Medicine*, 43(1), 133-142. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291712001146>
- Rapee, R. M., & Heimberg, R. G. (1997). A cognitive-behavioral model of anxiety in social phobia. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 35(8), 741-756. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S00057967\(97\)00022-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S00057967(97)00022-3)
- Richards, J. Patel, N. (2015). Social Anxiety, Acute Social Stress, and Reward Parameters Interact to Predict Risky Decision-Making among Adolescents. *J Anxiety Disord*, 29, 25–34. DOI: 10.1016/j.janxdis.2014.10.001
- Russell, G. Tophan, P. (2012). The impact of social anxiety on student learning and well-being in higher education. *Journal of mental health*, 21(4), 375-385. DOI: 10.3109/09638237.2012.694505.
- Scanlon, C. Toro, J. Wang, M. (2020). Socially Anxious Science Achievers: The Roles of Peer Social Support and Social Engagement in the Relation Between Adolescents' Social

Anxiety and Science Achievement. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 49(6). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01224-y>

Tang, X., Liu, Q., Cai, F., Tian, H., Shi, X., & Tang, S. (2022). Prevalence of social anxiety disorder and symptoms among Chinese children, adolescents and young adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 792356.

Vilaplana-Pérez, A., Pérez-Vigil, A., Sidorchuk, A., Brander, G., Isomura, K., Hesselmark, E., ... & de la Cruz, L. F. (2021). Much more than just shyness: the impact of social anxiety disorder on educational performance across the lifespan. *Psychological medicine*, 51(5), 861869.

Weinstein, A., Dorani, D., Elhadif, R., Bukovza, Y., Yarmulnik, A., & Dannon, P. (2015). Internet addiction is associated with social anxiety in young adults. *Annals of clinical psychiatry*, 27(1), 4-9.

Zhang, P. Deng, Y. (2016). Social anxiety, stress type, and conformity among adolescents. *Front psychol*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2016.00760>