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INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL ANXIETY ON CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION PATTERNS AMONG STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE GWALIOR DIVISION

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ABSTRACT

The psychological factor of social anxiety is also a major factor that may affect the academic involvement and the behavior of students in the classroom. The current research discussed how social anxiety affects the patterns of participation in classrooms by students in higher learning institutions of the Gwalior Division. Descriptive and analytical research design was used and 200 students were sampled with the help of a standardized social anxiety scale, and a questionnaire on classroom participation. Data interpretation was done using statistical methods, e.g. frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation and correlation analysis. The results showed that most students had moderate to high levels of social anxiety and this proved to be negatively related to their involvement in verbal responses, group discussions, and classroom interactive activities. Compared to males, gender-wise comparison revealed that female students showed more anxiety, and the level of participation was observed to be decreasing with the rise in anxiety. The study finds that social anxiety is a significant psychological deterrent to active classroom participation on the part of students and the necessity to support pedagogical practice and institutional mental health interventions in the promotion of an inclusive and participatory classroom learning environment in tertiary education.

Keywords: Social Anxiety, Classroom Participation, Higher Education, Academic Engagement, Student Behaviour, Gwalior Division

INTRODUCTION

The issue of social anxiety has become a major psychological issue in the educational setting, especially in the field of higher educational systems where students are supposed to interact with each other on a continuous basis, discuss academic issues, and undertake learning activities that require performance. It is a chronic fear of being criticized, judged or humiliated in a social or performance context. This fear in classrooms is usually exhibited through fear of talking, unwillingness to ask questions, and unwillingness to other classroom activities such as participating in discussions or presentations. With the growing number of higher education systems encouraging interactive and learner-centred pedagogies, the psychological preparedness of the students to participate in the classroom is a critical factor to effective classroom participation. Learners with social anxiety can feel threatened by classroom interaction resulting in withdrawal behaviour and lack of academic engagement.

The involvement in lessons is generally accepted as the essential part of effective learning and academic growth. Throughout active engagement in questioning, group discussions, and collaboration, critical thinking, communication skills, and academic self-confidence will be improved. Social anxiety may however interfere with this process by producing internal psychological interruptions that deny the students the freedom to express their ideas and might also negatively interfere with the academic

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Transparency: The authors affirm that this manuscript presents an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study. All essential aspects have been included, and any deviations from the original study plan have been clearly explained. The writing process strictly adhered to established ethical standards.
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dialogue. The students with high scores in levels of social anxiety tend to shun oral contributions, have passive learning behaviors, and have increased anxiety in interactive learning scenarios. They will therefore not be able to reflect their intellectual capacity or academic readiness in their participation behaviour, which in turn influences their academic involvement and classroom experience.

The influence of social anxiety does not end up in immediate classroom behaviour but goes further to extended academic and psychological consequences. Continuous refusal to participate could lead to low academic motivation, low self-efficacy and social isolation in the learning setting. These trends may have a harmful impact on peer relations, belonging, and psychological health of students. As a situation in the Indian higher education context, there is an improved awareness of student mental health, but there is a lack of empirical studies on the classroom participation and social anxiety in the region. The Gwalior Division which has different higher educational establishments with different socio-cultural student backgrounds offers a proper background to examine the ways in which social anxiety affects classroom participation patterns in a local educational environment.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of the study is that it investigated the problem of social anxiety as an important psychological aspect that determines classroom attendance in institutions of higher learning. It can be used to comprehend how concerns associated with anxiety inhibit the desire of students to participate in discussions and collaborative academic projects. The results can be used to guide teachers to acknowledge that poor performance due to lack of participation might be a result of psychological discomfort and not inability hence promoting the inclusion of all in the teaching process and nurturing the classroom. Also, the research provides geographical evidence of the Gwalior Division, which could inform the institutional policies, counselling services, and student involvement programs and eventually foster psychologically safe and participatory learning environments in the higher education. The research also adds to the current literature on educational psychology by offering empirical information on the student mental health in the classroom settings. Besides, it facilitates the creation of evidence-based treatments to boost student confidence, engagement, and general student participation in academics.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives are suggested to be accomplished in the present study:

- To examine the prevalence and intensity of social anxiety among students enrolled in selected educational institutions of the Gwalior Division.
- To analyse the effects of social anxiety on different forms of classroom participation, including verbal responses, group discussions, and interactive learning activities.
- To examine the relationship between levels of social anxiety and students' academic engagement within classroom settings.
- To identify demographic and institutional factors, such as gender, educational level, and type of institution, that may influence levels of social anxiety among students.
- To suggest pedagogical and psychological measures that may enhance classroom participation among students experiencing social anxiety.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ali Mohammed et al. (2025) researched the connection among social anxiety and academic participation among college students in classrooms. It was found that the students who had a high rate of social anxiety showed much less classroom interaction and engagement. It was noted that negative evaluation apprehension prevented students to ask questions and engage in academic discussions which ultimately influenced on their learning experience. The results had indicated that social anxiety was a significant psychological obstacle that minimized the level of willingness of students to be actively involved in academic activities in the classroom. One of the researchers further observed that, socially anxious students tended to favor observational learning as opposed to active participation that reduced their chances of learning together. This study emphasized the need to overcome psychological obstacles in the quest to create inclusive and participatory learning institutions.

Archbell (2020) investigated the educational experiences of socially anxious students in higher education and found out that this group of students often did not participate in oral activities and class discussions because they were afraid of being evaluated by peers and teachers. The study showed that, socially anxious students were uncomfortable when it came to presentations and group discussions, thus resulting into passive participation patterns despite their knowledge of the subject that was to be discussed. The study had highlighted that anxiety-related communication avoidance was a key factor that contributed to significant influence on the academic life of students and patterns of interaction in higher education classrooms. It also noted that avoidance behaviour might result in less academic confidence and reduce self-efficacy in the long run. The results indicated that the anxiety can be reduced and gradual participation among these students can be promoted by favorable classroom climates.

Brook and Willoughby (2015) tested the longitudinal relationship between social anxiety and academic performance in the university years. Their results indicated that socially-anxious students tended to had adequate performance in school but low, more or less, levels of classroom and peer interaction. The research was able to conclude that social anxiety did not always affect cognitive ability but greatly affected the engagement of behaviour meaning that the patterns of participation were not always indicative of the actual academic ability of students. This underscored the need to look at psychological aspects as well as academic performance. Also, the researchers had found that socially anxious students were more likely not to pursue leadership or collaborative academic responsibilities. These trends indicated long-term effects of anxiety in social and academic integration of students in the university setting.

Cooper et al. (2018) examined how active learning practices helped in reducing student anxiety in big enrolment college classrooms. The researchers discovered that interactive pedagogical methods though useful in learning in some cases increased anxiety in socially anxious students leading to unwillingness to volunteer responses or discussion. This research indicated that involvement in active learning setting may exacerbate the experience of social evaluation fear and may hence influence the rate and quality of classroom engagement among students with apprehension of social evaluation. They also stated that structured participation methods and smaller discussion groups were useful to decrease anxiety levels and enhance better engagement. This discovery made the necessity to find a compromise between interactive instruction and psychological sensitivity to student comfort levels apparent.

Demir et al. (2023) researched the concept of participation styles and social anxiety as predictors of active involvement in asynchronous academic forums of discussion. The research also noted that those students who were highly affected by social anxiety showed more passive patterns of participation and had less freedom in communication and this adversely affected their performance. The results supported the hypothesis that social anxiety was a significant predictor of low participation behaviour, even in less interactive forms, and that it had such a pervasive effect on academic involvement that it had a significant effect on academic engagement in many learning environments. The researchers also noted that socially anxious students favored the written mode of expression over face-to-face communication as evidence of their fear of evaluation in the present.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology will give the systematic design to be used in the present study to examine how social anxiety affects the classroom participation rates among students in higher institutions of the Gwalior Division. It presents the research design, population, sampling procedures, data collection methods, tools and instruments, and the techniques of data analysis embraced to attain the objectives of the research. An effective methodological framework can also be used to guarantee the reliability, validity, and objectivity of the study since it allows measuring social anxiety levels and correlation with classroom participation behaviours. The methodology has been structured in such a way that it will be able to grasp the psychological aspect of anxiety as well as the behavioural aspect of the involvement in the natural situations in the classroom setting which will enable to make the meaning of the findings significant.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The current research design was descriptive and analytical research design to investigate the association between social anxiety and participation in classroom among the students. The descriptive element allowed determining the current levels and trends of social anxiety and classroom participation whereas the analytical one helped to analyse connections between two variables. This design was deemed suitable because it provided the opportunity to investigate the psychological and behavioural phenomena in real school environments in a systematic manner without controlling the study variables. The method also facilitated statistical comparison and interpretation of participation patterns at different levels of levels of social anxiety.

SAMPLE SIZE AND POPULATION

The study population was composed of students in selected higher learning institutions of the Gwalior Division. This population was an extremely heterogeneous population of learners who had different socio-economic background, educational levels and institutional experience. Out of this population, the sample of 200 students was selected to get a representative view of social anxiety and patterns of participation. The size was deemed sufficient to do a statistical analysis like correlation and testing of data comparatively as well as making the data collection a possibility within the specified confines of the study.

DATA COLLECTION

The research was based on primary data that was obtained by direct means of research on students themselves using structured questionnaires in the chosen educational institutions. All the participants were informed by seeking permission to take part in the study and the institutional authorities were informed to promote voluntary participation. The questionnaires were conducted in a structured and systematized way that would not cause a lot of disturbance to the normal classroom activities. Participants were

promised of confidentiality and anonymity to participate with honesty and without being biased. The goal of the data collection process centered on establishing a comfortable environment, which is likely to reduce the response anxiety and enable the students to share their perception with respect to the social anxiety and classroom contribution in a precise manner.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS

Data collection was done using standardized and structured tools to verify proper and credible measurement of the study variables. A standardized Social Anxiety Scale was used to find out the level and spirit of anxiety among the students in situations involving the classroom. A Classroom Participation Questionnaire was implemented to evaluate the degree of the participation of students to classroom activities including verbal responses, group discussions, and interactive learning activities. Also, it was supplemented by Demographic Information Schedule that was used to collect some background information on gender and level of education that may impact anxiety levels and patterns of participation. The choice of these instruments is informed by the fact that these instruments are best suited in terms of educational research and psychological research and also because they have the capability of capturing both behaviour and emotional aspects of the study variables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The current section is devoted to the statistical processing and analysis of the data obtained among the students in higher educational establishments of the Division of Gwalior to investigate how the social anxiety affects the classroom participation behavior. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied including frequency distribution, the mean, standard deviation, and correlation. The findings are explained in the form of tables and figures that show the levels of social anxiety, the behavior of participation, gender difference, and interdependence of anxiety and the involvement in the classroom.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the students based on their level of social anxiety which are categorized into the following levels; low, moderate, and high levels of social anxiety. The table will contain frequency, percentage, and cumulative percentages as a way of giving an overall picture of the distribution of social anxiety among the sampled students. This distribution is illustrated in Figure 1 visually, which allows the proportion of students in the various levels of anxiety to be easily compared.

Table 1

Table 1 Distribution of Students Based on Levels of Social Anxiety

Level of Social Anxiety	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Low	47	23.3%	23.3%
Moderate	87	43.3%	66.6%
High	66	33.4%	100.0%

Figure 1

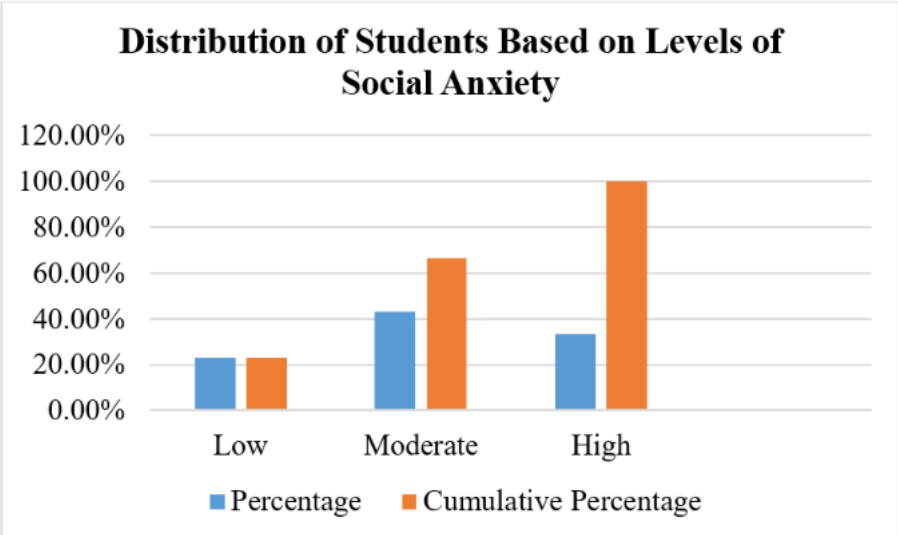


Figure 1 Visual Representation of Distribution of Students Based on Levels of Social Anxiety

The findings show that the greatest percentage of the students (43.3%) reported moderate degrees of social anxiety, 33.4% reported being high-anxiety, and the remaining 23.3% were low-anxiety. The percentages of cumulative ranges indicate that most of the students are in moderate to high anxiety. This trend indicates that the social anxiety is common among a significant proportion of the students and this could likely affect their behavior in terms of classroom participation.

Table 2 illustrates the means of various types of classroom participation and standard deviation of verbal feedback, group discussions, participation in interactive activities, and asking questions to the teacher. The table will classify the degree of involvement in each activity in order to have a systematic perception of the patterns of engagement of the students. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of such mean scores, which enables one to view participating levels comparatively in different activities in a classroom.

Table 2

Table 2 Mean Scores of Different Forms of Classroom Participation

Forms of Classroom Participation	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Level of Participation
Verbal Responses in Class	2.31	0.82	Low
Participation in Group Discussions	2.45	0.76	Moderate-Low
Involvement in Interactive Tasks	2.18	0.88	Low
Asking Questions to Teacher	2.27	0.81	Low

Figure 2

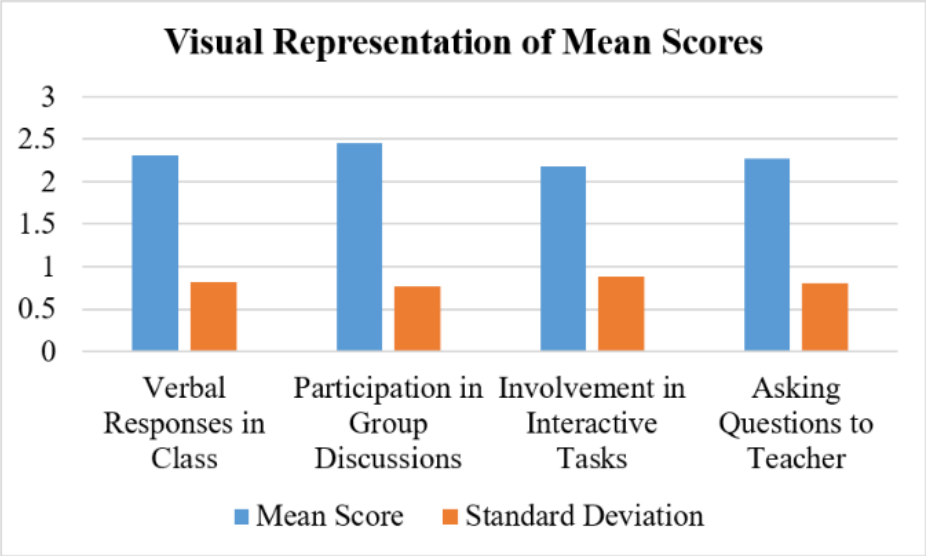


Figure 2 Visual Representation of Mean Scores of Different Forms of Classroom Participation

The results display that the mean participation of the students in group discussions (Mean = 2.45) was the highest, then verbal responses (Mean = 2.31) and asking the teacher questions (Mean = 2.27), and the last participation of the students in interactive tasks was the lowest with the mean participation of 2.18. Generally, the participation levels were low to moderate-low in all activities and this showed that there was not much active participation in the classroom settings. This implies that the participation behaviors of the students were not very aggressive and this might be linked to some of their social anxiety aspects.

Table 3 shows the correlation analysis of the social anxiety and the different variables of classroom participation such as verbal classroom responses, group discussion participation, interactive learning activities as well as question asking behavior. The correlation coefficients and the nature of relationship and significance levels have been reported in the table in order to test the link between social anxiety and various types of classroom engagement.

Table 3

Table 3 Correlation between Social Anxiety and Classroom Participation Variables

Participation Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Nature of Relationship	Significance Level
Verbal Classroom Responses	-0.62	Negative	Significant
Group Discussion Participation	-0.54	Negative	Significant
Interactive Learning Activities	-0.59	Negative	Significant
Question Asking Behaviour	-0.57	Negative	Significant

The findings indicate that there are great negative associations between social anxiety and all the variables of participation, with the highest value of the correlation being in verbal classroom response (r = -0.62), then interactive learning activities (r = -0.59), question asking behavior (r = -0.57), and group discussion participation (r = -0.54). According to these findings, the more the participants had high levels of social anxiety, the less they participated in all classroom activities.

Table 4 shows the gender-based comparison between the social anxiety levels of students whereby both the number of male and female participants together with their mean anxiety levels and standard deviation are presented. The table classifies the level of anxiety of each gender so that it gets compared effectively. The visual representation of these mean scores in Figure 3 allows the easy comparison between the social anxiety levels of male and female students.

Table 4

Table 4 Gender-wise Comparison of Social Anxiety Levels

Gender	Number of Students	Mean Anxiety Score	Standard Deviation	Level of Anxiety
Male	94	3.12	0.71	Moderate
Female	106	3.45	0.69	Moderate-High

Figure 3

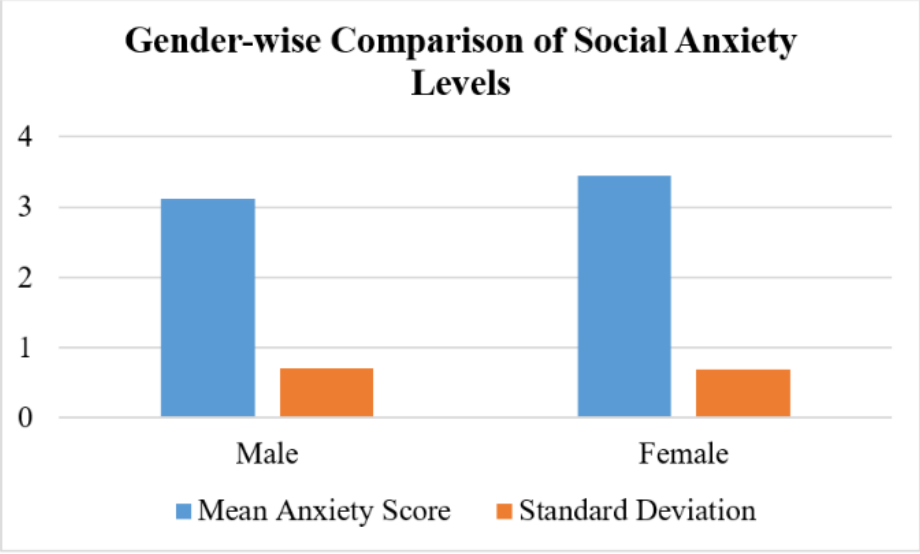


Figure 3 Visual Representation of Gender-wise Comparison of Social Anxiety Levels

The findings have shown that female students scored higher in mean social anxiety (Mean = 3.45, SD = 0.69) than male students (Mean = 3.12, SD = 0.71). Although the level of anxiety in the male students was moderate, the anxiety level among female students

was moderate high. This would indicate that social anxiety among the female students in the classroom scenario was relatively more than that of their male counterparts.

Table 5 shows the comparison between the scores of the classroom participation between students according to varying levels of social anxiety, that is low, moderate, and high. The table contains the mean scores of participations, the standard deviation of the scores, the level of participation, and rankings to offer some hierarchical comparison between the anxiety categories. The differences in the scores on participation are illustrated graphically in Figure 4, which makes it easier to understand the variation in participation with respect to the levels of social anxiety.

Table 5

Table 5 Comparison of Classroom Participation Based on Levels of Social Anxiety

Level of Social Anxiety	Mean Participation Score	Standard Deviation	Participation Level	Rank
Low Anxiety	3.82	0.68	High	I
Moderate Anxiety	3.01	0.72	Moderate	II
High Anxiety	2.36	0.75	Low	III

Figure 4

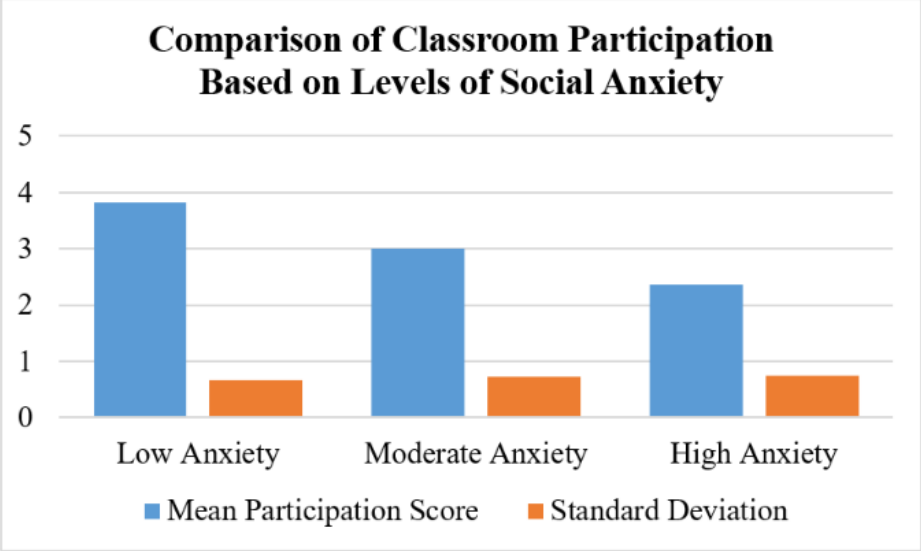


Figure 4 Visual Representation of Comparison of Classroom Participation Based on Levels of Social Anxiety

The scores indicate that the participation of the low social anxiety students achieved the highest mean score of (Mean = 3.82, SD = 0.68) and ranked first, which implies high participation. The medium anxious students showed moderate participation (Mean = 3.01, SD = 0.72) and the high social anxiety students showed the least score in participation (Mean = 2.36, SD = 0.75) and were ranked third. These results show a definite drop in the classroom interaction with an increase in the level of social anxiety.

DISCUSSION

The study results suggest that social anxiety plays a great role in classroom participation behaviour among higher learning institutions of Gwalior Division students. One of the aspects that was evident in the academic environment was the moderate social anxiety levels experienced by a significant percentage of students. The scores were low to moderate participation in activities like verbal responses, group discussions, and interactive activities. The correlation analysis showed that there was a significant negative relationship between social anxiety and all forms of participation implying that the greater the anxiety, the less the engagement in classroom. Comparison in terms of gender showed that there was only a slight variation of anxiety in the female students, and participation was observed to be on the low to high anxiety levels. On the whole, these findings represent the indication that social anxiety is one of the psychological obstacles that restrict active classroom learning in students.

CONCLUSION

The study gives a conclusion that social anxiety plays a significant role in determining the patterns of classroom participation among students in institutions of higher learning of the Gwalior Division. The percentage of students who were of average to high levels of social anxiety was significant and it was observed to have adverse effects on their participation in verbal responses, group discussions, and interactive classroom activities. The results of the analysis showed that the connection between social anxiety and participation existed significantly and was negative, which means that the higher the level of anxiety, the less the academic engagement is. The female students were noted to experience comparatively higher levels of anxiety indicating that the socio cultural and psychological factors have impact on the participation behaviour. Altogether, the study confirms that social anxiety is a significant psychological hindrance that restricts the confidence and active engagement of students in the classroom learning process, which is why supportive pedagogical methods, inclusive classroom setting, and mental health programs in institutions are necessary to improve student engagement and overall learning experience.

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