



The Relationship between Personality Dimensions (Introversion, Extroversion) and Self-Assertiveness with Social Anxiety among University Students

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between personality dimensions (introversion- extroversion) and Self-assertiveness with Social Anxiety among university students. The Sample consisted of 360 individuals (180 girls, 180 boys), selected by Moregan table. The tools of the research consisted of three questionnaires: Eysenck personality questionnaire, Self-assertiveness questionnaire and Social anxiety scale. Correlation analysis, t-test and regression were used to test the research hypothesis. Significant correlations were found between the dimensions of Self-assertiveness and those of Social Anxiety. Also, significant correlations were found between the dimensions of personality and Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-N) dimension. In addition, Regression analysis showed that Self-assertiveness was a more powerful predictor of Social Anxiety than personality dimensions. significant difference was found between male and female participants' mean scores on the dimensions of Social Anxiety.

Keywords: Personality Dimensions, (introversion, extroversion), Self-Assertiveness, Social Anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Belonging to the category of anxiety disorders, social anxiety is one of the most common mental diseases (Lampe, 2009), the most common anxiety disorder, and the third common mental disorder among the general population (Hofmann & Barlow, 2002). If not treated, Social Anxiety can become chronic and dormant (Lampe, 2009), which creates major obstacles to social, professional, academic, family-related, and personal functioning (Rapee, 1995) and reduces the quality of life (Stein *et.al.*, 2005). In spite of the great amount of research in this field, the roots of social anxiety disorder are still unclear. In general, researchers in the field of anxiety disorders are increasingly recognizing the importance of the role of the antecedents of anxiety disorders on the ground that ignoring them might affect the treatment and conceptualization processes adversely. Social anxiety might be affected by such factors as inability to assert oneself, and such personal traits as introversion or extroversion. As such, it might be helpful to give clinical attention to the phenomenon of self assertiveness. Self-assertiveness has caught a lot of attention recently. It has been used in both behavioral therapy and improving adaptability with environment. Self-assertiveness reduces social anxiety in interactions with others. Stressing the importance of Self-assertiveness in stressful situations, Eliot and Gramting (2005) hold that self-assertive individuals benefit from

multiple social interactions (Cited from Hejazi and Bahadorkhan, 2007). Self-assertiveness is a skill that enables individuals to emphasize their own rights as well as to express their opinions, feelings, and thoughts appropriately, directly and candidly while respecting other people's rights. The way people interact with others is an important factor in maintaining social interaction (Shahni yeylaq, 2006). Personality traits (introversion, extraversion) are determinants of Social Anxiety. Personality is a relatively fixed trait consistent with certain thought and behavioral patterns (Seyedmohammadi, 2006). As an inter-individual trait, extraversion refers to what individuals do to and for one another. Extraverts are gregarious: yet, gregariousness is just one aspect of their personality. In addition to being friendly and outgoing, they are determined, active, talkative, and sociable. They are adventurous and tend to be optimistic about the future. Successful marketing specialists in the developing countries are an example of extraverts (Haghshenas, 2006). Extraverts tend to respond to external stimuli and love to participate in social activities (Fortunato & Fuery, 2009). They also want interaction with people and gain their greatest energy from the external world. In addition, they tend to be active, sociable, decisive, and courageous (Joshani & Rastegar, 2006). While extraversion is easy to describe, it is not so easy to explain introversion.

In respects, introversion could be defined negatively as the absence of the characteristics pertaining to extraverts. Introverts are conservative. Yet, that does not mean they are not lovable. They are independent. Yet, that does not mean they are not outstanding. They like to do things on their own, but that does not mean they are lazy or dull. Extraverts are normally shy. They like to left alone, if they choose to. Yet, that does not mean that they suffer from Social Anxiety. Introverts are not as joyful as extraverts are; nonetheless, they are not dissatisfied with their life. Introverts are curious and very much research oriented (Haghshenas, 2005).

In spite of the significance of understanding Social Anxiety phenomenon among university students, little research has been carried out in this regard in Iran. Awareness of the antecedents of social anxiety allows authorities to take the necessary educational, cultural, and remedial measures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of researchers have studied the relationship between self-assertion and Social Anxiety. Arindell, Sanderman, Hageman & Pickersgill (1991) studies the correlates of self-assertion in clinical and nonclinical samples. They found relationship between Self-assertiveness and social phobias, Social Anxiety, internal aggression, shyness, and low self esteem.

Delamater and Mcnamara (2001) reported that decisive behavior is a determining factor in critical inter-individual and intra-individual relation among women. In other words, individuals who were less self assertive experienced higher levels of Social Anxiety in their interactions. In the same vein, Daluti (1981) studied the effectiveness of teaching shy and anxious students to be courageous. He reported the experiment to be effective.

Shark et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between self-assertion and Social Anxiety on 670 college students in Seoul National University. They found a significant correlation between self-assertiveness and social anxiety. They did not find a significant difference between self-assertiveness and social anxiety scores between male and female participants though girls scored higher on a measure of self-assertiveness.

Motamedi and Badri (2006) compared the effectiveness of two instructional methods for increasing self-assertiveness, namely, role play and brochure on mental health, social anxiety, Self-assertiveness, and school performance among 90 male freshman high school students in West Azarbayjan province in Iran. They found no significant relationship between Self-assertiveness and social anxiety.

METHOD

This is a descriptive piece of research using correlation to test its hypotheses. The population consists of all college students at Islamic Azad University -Arsanjan Branch in the school year 2010-2011. On the basis of

Morgan's table, 360 (180 boys and 180 girls) were chosen. Sample randomization was employed for selecting the participants. Using information available at the university's informatics center, a list of all departments was obtained. In the next phase, ten departments were chosen randomly. Afterwards, the weekly schedule of each department was obtained. Finally, two classes were chosen from each department, from which 18 students (9 boys and 9 girls) were selected randomly.

Research Instruments

The Shortened Version Eysenck's Questionnaire. The shortened version Eysenck's Questionnaire was used to collect the data. This instrument measures two dimensions of personality, consisting of introversion-extroversion dimension, neuroticism- emotional stability dimension. The introversion-extroversion dimension includes statements that measures such qualities as liveliness, excitability, activity/passivity, impulsivity, and sociability. An individuals' score represents how extravert he/she is. The maximum score is 24, so the closer one's score is to this score, the more extraverted he/she is. The minimum score is zero. Thus, the closer one's score to this, the more introverted he/she is. Evidence for the reliability and validity of this scale has been reported by several researchers. For instance Mohammadomghadam (1998) investigated the reliability of each of the dimensions of the questionnaire. Moreover, Rahiminezhad and Barheni (1993, as cited in Mohammadomghadam ,1998) reported a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.68 for the introversion dimension, 0.87 for extraversion dimension, 0.78 for neuroticism dimension, and 0.73 for social desirability dimension.

Self-assertiveness questionnaire

The self-assertive questionnaire was designed by Dong Yulec, Ernest T hallberg, Allen G Slemmon, and Richar F Haas in 1985. It has 33 items, each with three options. The items are categorized as indicating Self-assertiveness, lack of Self-assertiveness, aggression, and passive aggression. Lee et al. (1985 as cited by Motamedeen and Badri, 2006) reported the validity of the instrument to be average. They reported the test-retest reliability of the scale after a four week interval to be 0.84, The Cronbach's Alpha 0.80, and split half reliability 0.73. This study investigated the reliability of this scale through Cronbach's Alpha and split-half method, which were 0.84 and 0.75 respectively.

Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A). Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A) (Lagrec, 199) consists of 18 statements, which is composed of three subscales, namely, Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-NEW), Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-GL) (Lagrec and Lopez, 198; Vernberg, Abwender, Ewell, Bry, 1992).

Ostovar and Razavie (2003) obtained evidence supportive the three factor structure of the instrument on a sample of Iranian adolescents. The reported the test-retest reliability of the instrument with one to four weeks intervals to be 0.88. They also calculated the internal consistency of the subscales of the instrument ,namely, Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-NEW), Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-GL) to be 0.84, 0.74, and 0.77 respectively. The scale measures the trait in question through a five point graded scale from 5 (the most like me) to 0 (the least like me). The higher one's score is, the higher his/her Social Anxiety is.

In this study the internal consistency of the subscales of the instrument,namely, Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-NEW), Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-GL) were 0.90, 0. 89, 0.80.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Hypothesis one: Personality dimensions (introversion-extraversion) can predict Social Anxiety and its dimensions.

Table I depicts a correlation matrix among dimensions of personality, Self-assertiveness and dimensions of Social Anxiety.

Table 1: Correlation matrix among dimensions of personality, self-assertiveness and dimensions of Social Anxiety.

variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Introversion	1						
Extroversion	-	1					
Self-assertiveness	0.08	-0.07	1				
Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE),	0.16	-0.10	-0.24	1			
Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-NEW)	0.15	-0.17	-0.12	0.06	1		
Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-GENERAL)	0.07	-0.03	-0.13	0.07	0.10	1	
Social Anxiety	0.11	-0.07	-0.23	0.69	0.64	0.47	1

As can be seen in table 1, Introversion and Extraversion have significant relationship only with Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-N). Yet, Self-assertiveness is related to Fear of negative Evaluation ($r=-0.24$, $p<0.01$), Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-N) ($r=-0.12$, $p<0.05$), Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-G) ($r=-0.13$, $p<0.05$), and Social Anxiety in general ($r=-0.23$, $p<0.01$). Given the fact that no significant correlation was found between personality dimensions and Social Anxiety along with its dimensions, the second research question was eliminated from further analysis. In order to investigate the power of personality dimensions in predicting Social Anxiety and its dimensions, the researchers used multiple regressions, the results of which is given table 2. As can be seen in table 2, introversion-extroversion dimensions account for 3% of the variable in Social Avoidance and Distress in New

Situations (SAD-N). Yet, personality dimensions did not account for the variance in Social Anxiety in general of other subscales thereof.

Hypothesis two: Self-assertiveness can predict Social Anxiety and its dimensions. As can be seen in table 3, self assertiveness accounts for 6% of the variance in Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), 1% of the variance in Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-NEW), 2% of the variance in Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-GENERAL), and 5% of the variance in Social Anxiety in general.

Hypothesis three: Boys differ from girls with respect to Social Anxiety and its dimensions.

Independent samples t-test was used to compare the male and female participants' scores on a measure of Social Anxiety and its scales.

Table 2: Regression of personality dimensions on Social Anxiety and its dimensions.

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	B		R	R ²	P
Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)	Introversion	0.05	0.10	0.10	0.02	NS
	Extroversion	0.11	0.20			NS
Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-N)	Introversion	0.39	1.20	0.17	0.03	0.01
	Extroversion	0.35	0.92			0.02
Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-G)	Introversion	0.05	0.10	0.10	0.01	NS
	Extroversion	0.07	0.07			NS
Social Anxiety	Introversion	0.12	0.06	0.11	0.01	NS
	Extroversion	0.13	0.07			NS

Table 3: Regression of Self-assertiveness on Social Anxiety and its dimension.

Criterion Variable	Predictor variable	B		R	R ²	P
Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)	Self-assertiveness	0.27	0.24	0.24	0.06	0.001
Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-NEW)	Self-assertiveness	0.09	0.11	0.11	0.01	0.02
Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-GENERAL)	Self-assertiveness	0.13	0.12	0.13	0.02	0.02
Social Anxiety	Self-assertiveness	0.48	0.23	0.23	0.05	0.001

Table 4: Independent samples t-test between the male and female participants' scores on a measure of Social Anxiety and its scales.

Scale	Group	N	Mean	SD	T value	P
Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)	Girls	180	19.52	6.74	2.20	0.02
	Boys	180	18.01	6.29		
Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-NEW)	Girls	180	14.38	4.51	3.55	0.001
	Boys	180	12.76	4.12		
Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-GENERAL)	Girls	180	12.65	5.15	1.13	NS
	Boys	180	11.98	6.09		
Social Anxiety	Girls	180	47.16	11.88	3.77	0.001
	Boys	180	42.42	11.94		

As can be seen in table 4, a significant difference was found between boys and girls in the subscale of Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) at $p < 0.02$. In this subscale girls scored higher than boys. In addition, a significant difference was found between boys and girls in the subscale of Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-N) at $p < 0.01$. In this subscale girls scored higher than boys. However, no significant difference was found between boys and girls in the subscale of Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-G) at $p < 0.01$. Finally, a significant difference was found in the scale of Social Anxiety in general at $p < 0.01$, in which girls scored higher than boys.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results shown in table 2 indicated that personality dimension have played no role in predicting Social Anxiety and its subscales except for the subscale of Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-N). The results are in line with those reported by Birch and Kamali (2010) and Ahmadi (2010). These results could be interpreted as showing that an individual's personality is formed through the interaction between the individual and his/her environment. That is to say, on the one hand environmental factors play a role, which is constraint to the an individual's hereditary structure and physiological features. On the hand, the an individual's potential for growth requires a appropriate environment to materialize. Factors determining personality are categorized into hereditary and environmental factors (Parvin, 2007), though there is disagreement among

scholars as to which one plays more important role: While some emphasize the role of hereditary factors and believe that the environment provide only a supportive role, others regard the influence of environment as more vital than the hereditary factors (Parvin, 2007). Eysenck does not categorize people neatly into distinct personality type. Rather, he believes personality to be a spectrum along which individuals can vary from one other in degrees (Moradi, 2002), though neurotic individuals are more susceptible to anxiety disorders.

As to the second hypothesis, results shown in table 3 indicate that Self-assertiveness predicted Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-N), Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-G). The results are in line with those reported by Clark, Holms, and Deed (2007), Smith and Mouse (2007), La Dossour et. al (2009), Olandick (2009), Shark et.al. (2009), Simon et.al. (2009) (as cited by Moosavi, 2009 and Eslami, 2008), which reported negative correlations between Social Anxiety and Self-assertiveness. In other words, the higher a person scores on each of the subscales Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-N), Social Avoidance and General Distress (SAD-G), the lower he/she scores on a measure of Self-assertiveness. The results could be interpreted as showing that lack of Self-assertiveness may pave the way for anxiety disorders. Therefore, it is important to increase an individual's Self-assertiveness in order to control or decrease his/her Social Anxiety.

According to Wolpe (1958), people who suffer from Social Anxiety are not able to assert themselves or express their disagreements to others. Therefore, it could be inferred from the results of this study perhaps college students with high Social Anxiety are not courageous enough to express their opinion for the fear of being evaluated negatively, or being avoided by others.

As to gender related difference, the results obtained shows the girls significantly scored higher in the subscales of Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) and Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-N) as well as in Social Anxiety in general. The results are in line with those reported by Inderbitzen and Hope (1995) and Shark *et. al.* (2009), Eslami (2008), Moosavi (2009), and Ahmadi (2010).

The results might be due to the fact that girls are more anxious about their own social capabilities since social skills and interpersonal relations are vital skills for them. The differential treatments that boys and girls receive from the society might be another factor. For example, while boys are encouraged to take part in social activities and interactions by the society, girls are not encouraged to do so. Anxiety is a natural response to sources of perceived threat, which warns a person about the possible dangers ahead. A moderate amount of anxiety might be helpful in the sense that it motivates the person to get prepared for possible social and natural dangers and dangers. Nonetheless, excessive anxiety cause individuals to lose their self-confidence and reduces their capability to interact with others. \Such people are more likely to avoid than to face the situations they deem as stressful. Perhaps girls with high social anxiety feel that in every situation, others will start scrutinizing them. Therefore, they try to avoid others as much as possible. In sum, though all people like to be praised rather than to be scolded, there are some are too afraid to be willing to expose themselves to such potentially threatening social situations as they are fearful of criticism and evaluation by others.

Family relationships and early life experiences of boys and girls especially in pre-school years play an important role in the formation of their personality. Adults' behavior models, television programs, the type and amount of verbal and affective relationships between adults and kids influence social growth in children. Parents' illogical expectations of their daughters in various situations such as asking them to behave in a way they deem desirable or appropriate puts a lot of strain on them. These strains normally pop up in parties while taking to the guests, while sightseeing, shopping, cooking, dressing, and talking, etc. Strict parents are often too demanding. They often rebuke or belittle their daughters, which is often counterproductive. Likewise, over supportive parents do their daughters a disservice by disturbing the normal path of growth in their children. Parents' and adults'

inconsistent or contradictory behavior may also be a contributing factor to social anxiety among children as they grow up. Psychological and moral pressures, sever discipline, threats, punishment, and illogical limitations and constraints cause children to become to submissive, lacking the courage to express themselves, which in turn paves the way to Social Anxiety and shyness. A girl who is incapable of connecting with friends and relatives feels separated and secluded. Such a person cannot share her visions and feelings with others to get answers from them. Saeedi, a socialist at Tehran University, believes that the reason why women are twice socially anxious as men is that women are increasingly moving from the familiar home environment to the new exotic work environment, which is undeniably a male dominated environment. As a result, women unconsciously feel stressful in the new environment. Unlike the home environment, the new environment is characterized with seriousness. Therefore, to be taken seriously, they have to work harder, become more conservative, and strict. In sum, we may say the it is the environment that brings about anxiety in women rather than their own personality.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The present research was carried on a sample a particular college students. The study could be replicated using a different sample. Moreover, given the cultural differences, and the fact that perhaps self-assertiveness varies across cultures, a different cultural setting might be used for further study.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Mental and behavioral disorders pose a serious problem to many people and societies. Mental health, prevention and identification of mental disorders are increasingly becoming important. In this light, the findings of the present study are important. The fact that self-assertiveness plays a role in Social Anxiety has important implications for educator and mental health authorities, and families. Given that in the field of self-assertiveness instruction, new methods and treatments are being proposed; new horizons are opened for improving and enriching the quality of life especially among the young.

A college students who have learnt how to be more self-assertive can adapt to his/her environment and communicate with others more easily, and avoid verbal and physical tensions in awkward situations. On the contrary, A college student with low self-assertiveness will find himself in constant struggle with others paving the way to more mental disorders. As such, it is extremely important to teach self-assertiveness to college students, so that they can improve their social and educational performance.

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