

**PREVALENCE OF SOCIAL ANXIETY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL
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CERTIFICATION PAGE

We the undersigned, certify that this research work was carried out by Joy SMART with matriculation number EDU2102433 in the Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

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DEDICATION

This Project is dedicated to God Almighty for His infinite mercy, love and guidance.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the Prevalence of Social Anxiety among Secondary School Students: Implications for Counselling, four research questions were raise guide this study. The population for this study comprised of all 4,027 students enrolled in the 20 public junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. A total of 100 students constituted the sample size for this study. Using the simple random sampling technique, through balloting with replacement, five (5) students were randomly selected from each of the 20 public junior secondary schools within the local government area. This sampling method ensured that every student had an equal chance of being selected, thereby promoting fairness and reducing sampling bias.

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows: Social anxiety is prevalent among secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. Students who experience social anxiety often display low academic performance, as fear of judgment and embarrassment hinders active classroom participation and learning. Peer relationships are negatively affected, as socially anxious students tend to withdraw, avoid group interactions, and feel socially isolated.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made that counsellors should develop and implement systematic intervention programs, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness training, and social skills development, to help students manage anxiety symptoms effectively. Teachers should be trained to recognize the signs of social anxiety and adopt inclusive teaching practices that encourage participation without intimidation or ridicule.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In recent years, growing attention has been given to adolescent mental health, particularly in academic environments where social and emotional challenges are most evident. Among psychological disorders that affect young people, anxiety disorders remain the most common, with Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) ranking prominently. Social anxiety is a condition characterized by persistent fear of being judged, negatively evaluated, or rejected in social or performance situations. Unlike occasional shyness, social anxiety involves severe fear and avoidance that significantly impair daily functioning, social interactions, and academic performance (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2022).

Adolescence is a critical stage marked by identity formation, heightened sensitivity to peer evaluation, and increased academic pressure. These factors make secondary school students particularly vulnerable to social anxiety (Hoffmann et al., 2020). Within the school environment, routine activities such as class presentations, group discussions, or even interacting with peers can become distressing experiences for students grappling with social fears. Such students may exhibit symptoms like excessive self-consciousness, irrational fear of embarrassment, negative self-perceptions, and somatic complaints such as sweating, trembling, or rapid heartbeat (Schneier et al., 2019). The anticipation of social encounters often worsens the distress, leading to avoidance behaviors that further isolate affected adolescents.

Recent studies confirm that social anxiety remains highly prevalent among adolescents. Globally, estimates suggest that between 7% and 12% of adolescents experience clinically significant

symptoms, with many cases emerging during early to mid-adolescence—a period that coincides with secondary schooling (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020; Scaini et al., 2021). Unfortunately, social anxiety is often overlooked in schools, where internalized struggles like fear and withdrawal receive less attention than externalized behaviors such as aggression or defiance (Odriozola-González et al., 2020).

In Nigeria, research on adolescent mental health has expanded in recent years, yet challenges remain. Cultural stigma, inadequate awareness, and limited access to counselling services continue to hinder timely intervention for students with social anxiety (Olanrewaju et al., 2019; Ede et al., 2021). Many public secondary schools lack dedicated school counsellors, while those available are often burdened with administrative duties rather than mental health support. Consequently, socially anxious students are at risk of being mislabeled as lazy, disobedient, or academically weak, rather than being recognized as needing psychological support.

The consequences of untreated social anxiety are far-reaching. Academically, it is linked to low concentration, reduced classroom participation, and underachievement (Miers et al., 2019; Haller et al., 2022). Socially, students may struggle to establish meaningful friendships or engage in extracurricular activities, which exacerbates feelings of loneliness and poor self-worth. Over time, untreated social anxiety increases vulnerability to depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation (Rapee et al., 2019; Makol et al., 2020). Gender differences have also been reported, with female adolescents often showing higher rates of social anxiety than males, partly due to cultural expectations and socialization patterns (Asher et al., 2021).

Given these realities, school-based interventions are crucial. Counselling services within schools can help socially anxious students build resilience, develop coping mechanisms, and improve

social functioning. Evidence shows that interventions such as social skills training, peer-support programs, and reinforcement-based strategies are effective in reducing symptoms of social anxiety and improving academic engagement (Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2019). For such measures to be effective in Nigeria, however, there must first be reliable knowledge on the prevalence and manifestations of social anxiety among secondary school students. This underscores the need for studies such as the present one, which examines the prevalence of social anxiety and its implications for counselling within the Nigerian educational system.

Statement of the Problem

Despite increasing global awareness of adolescent mental health issues, social anxiety remains significantly under-recognized and under-addressed in secondary schools, particularly in Nigeria. Many students who exhibit symptoms of social anxiety—such as fear of speaking in public, reluctance to participate in group activities, or excessive concern about peer judgment—are frequently misunderstood. Instead of receiving appropriate psychological support, these students are often labeled as shy, unmotivated, uninterested, or even disobedient. This mischaracterization delays critical intervention, allowing the disorder to become more entrenched.

Cultural misconceptions about mental health and counselling also persist, leading many students to avoid seeking help for fear of stigmatization or being perceived as weak. This lack of engagement with available counselling resources means that many students continue to suffer in silence, with their academic and emotional development significantly impaired (Ede et al., 2021).

Furthermore, there is a glaring lack of structured mental health frameworks in most Nigerian secondary schools, where few institutions have trained counsellors or adequate counselling

programs. As a result, students suffering from social anxiety are left to struggle in silence, often without access to the help they need. The consequences can be profound: diminished academic performance, poor social relationships, low self-esteem, and long-term emotional disturbances.

The paucity of local data on the prevalence and manifestation of social anxiety among Nigerian adolescents further compounds the issue. Without accurate information, schools and policymakers cannot formulate effective interventions. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the prevalence, symptoms, gender differences, and counselling implications of social anxiety among secondary school students in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of social anxiety on academic achievement among secondary school students?
2. What is the influence of social anxiety on peer relationships among secondary school students?
3. What is the influence of social anxiety on the emotional well-being of secondary school students?
4. What are the counselling strategies for managing social anxiety?

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to:

- Determine the prevalence of social anxiety among secondary school students in selected schools.
- Identify the common symptoms of social anxiety experienced by secondary school students.
- Examine the gender differences in the prevalence of social anxiety among secondary school students.
- Assess the implications of social anxiety findings for the improvement of counselling services in secondary schools.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be of great importance to students, counsellors, teachers, psychologists, administrators, curriculum planners, and policymakers.

Students will benefit from the study by gaining a deeper understanding of social anxiety and how it affects their academic performance, peer relationships, and emotional well-being. This awareness can help them develop coping strategies, build resilience, and seek timely support from school-based resources or professionals.

Counsellors and psychologists will find the study useful as it will provide them with empirical evidence and insights into the prevalence and impact of social anxiety among adolescents. This can guide them in designing targeted interventions, therapy sessions, and counselling programs aimed at reducing anxiety symptoms and improving students' mental health and academic outcomes.

Teachers stand to benefit as the study will highlight classroom challenges faced by socially anxious students. With this knowledge, teachers can adopt inclusive teaching strategies, encourage participation in non-threatening ways, and create a supportive learning environment that accommodates the needs of anxious students.

School administrators will benefit from the study by gaining an understanding of how social anxiety affects students at the institutional level. This can help them strengthen support systems within schools, introduce training workshops for staff, and allocate resources to counselling services that directly address the issue.

Curriculum planners will also benefit as the findings can help them design curricula that reduce unnecessary performance pressure, encourage collaborative learning, and include activities that build students' confidence while being sensitive to those with anxiety challenges.

Policymakers will find the study useful in shaping educational policies that integrate mental health awareness and support systems into schools. This includes developing frameworks for mental health education, funding school counselling units, and ensuring that students' psychological well-being is prioritized alongside academic achievement.

In summary, the significance of this study lies in its ability to provide practical solutions and guidance for all stakeholders in education. By addressing the challenges posed by social anxiety, the study seeks to foster a supportive school environment where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on identifying the prevalence, symptoms, and gender differences in social anxiety and does not include clinical diagnoses or therapeutic treatment. The study will rely primarily on self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to biases such as underreporting due to stigma or fear of judgment.

Definition of Terms

- **Adolescent Mental Health:** A branch of mental health focusing on the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of individuals aged 10–19 years.
- **Counselling:** A professional process involving guidance and support to help individuals cope with emotional, psychological, and social challenges.
- **Gender Differences:** Variations in behavior, perception, or condition prevalence between male and female students.
- **Prevalence:** The total number of cases of a particular disorder within a specific population at a given time.
- **Secondary School Students:** Adolescents typically enrolled in the junior and senior levels of post-primary education.
- **Social Anxiety:** A psychological condition marked by intense fear and avoidance of social or performance situations due to the fear of negative evaluation or embarrassment.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, the review of related literature is discussed under the following sub-headings:

- Theoretical Framework
- Concept of Social Anxiety
- Prevalence of Social Anxiety Among Students
- Influence of Social Anxiety Amongst Students
- Counselling Strategies for Managing Social Anxiety in Adolescents
- Summary of Literature Reviewed

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on **Social Learning Theory (SLT)**, propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977. The theory emphasizes that behavior is acquired through observation, imitation, and modeling within social contexts. Bandura argued that individuals do not learn solely from direct personal experiences but also by observing others—parents, peers, teachers, or media figures—and noting the consequences of their actions. These observed experiences, whether positive or negative, influence how individuals respond to similar situations in the future (Bandura, 1977).

A central concept of Social Learning Theory is vicarious reinforcement, which explains that individuals are more likely to adopt behaviors if they observe those behaviors being rewarded and are less likely if the observed behaviors are punished. Another critical concept is self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations. Adolescents with

high self-efficacy are more confident in engaging with peers and performing academic tasks, while those with low self-efficacy may perceive social situations as threatening, thereby increasing the likelihood of developing social anxiety (Chen & Qin, 2021).

The application of Social Learning Theory to social anxiety becomes evident in how students interpret and model social interactions. For example, a student who observes a classmate being mocked for answering a question incorrectly may develop an avoidance pattern, fearing similar ridicule. Likewise, children raised in environments where parents model socially avoidant behavior or display excessive fear of judgment may internalize these patterns, heightening their vulnerability to anxiety disorders (Muris & Ollendick, 2021). Over time, these learned behaviors contribute to persistent fear of social situations, withdrawal, and academic underperformance.

Recent research also underscores the importance of peer influence during adolescence. Studies have shown that adolescents often model their social behaviors based on peer approval or disapproval, which directly impacts self-esteem and social confidence (Spence & Rapee, 2019). In Nigerian schools, where group activities, debates, and oral presentations are common, students with low confidence or negative peer experiences may increasingly withdraw, reinforcing their anxiety. Similarly, the absence of positive role models or supportive peer groups worsens the cycle of avoidance and fear (Ede et al., 2021).

In relation to the present study, Social Learning Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how social anxiety among secondary school students develops and persists. It highlights that anxiety is not only a result of internal psychological processes but also shaped by external social influences—family, peers, teachers, and cultural expectations. This makes it particularly relevant to counselling interventions, as it implies that socially anxious students can

learn healthier coping strategies through positive modeling, skills training, and supportive peer interactions. For instance, exposure to peers who successfully manage social tasks, combined with guided reinforcement from counsellors, can help socially anxious students replace avoidance behaviors with adaptive coping mechanisms (Zhang et al., 2020).

In summary, Social Learning Theory explains that social anxiety among adolescents is largely a product of learned behaviors reinforced by social environments. This theoretical lens emphasizes the role of observation, modeling, and self-efficacy in shaping students' responses to social situations. For the present study, it underscores the importance of school-based counselling interventions that focus on providing students with positive social models, building confidence, and reshaping maladaptive behavioral patterns. By situating the phenomenon of social anxiety within this theoretical framework, the study provides a strong foundation for understanding both the causes of the problem and practical strategies for addressing it in Nigerian secondary schools.

Concept of Social Anxiety

Social anxiety, also referred to as social phobia, is a psychological condition characterized by an intense, persistent fear of being negatively judged or evaluated by others in social or performance-related situations. This fear often leads to avoidance of social interactions and can cause significant emotional distress. Individuals with social anxiety frequently worry about being embarrassed, humiliated, or appearing incompetent in front of others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). As a result, they may go to great lengths to avoid eye contact, public speaking, classroom participation, or even casual conversations.

This condition typically emerges during adolescence—a developmental period marked by increased self-awareness, peer influence, and a strong need for social belonging. It is at this stage that young people become more conscious of how they are perceived by others. For adolescents, the fear of negative evaluation can become overwhelming and affect their ability to function effectively in school, extracurricular activities, and social environments. Common symptoms include rapid heartbeat, trembling, sweating, difficulty speaking, and extreme self-consciousness in social settings (Leigh & Clark, 2018).

The development of social anxiety is influenced by a combination of biological, environmental, and psychological factors. For instance, adolescents who have a family history of anxiety disorders may have a genetic predisposition to social anxiety. Environmental factors, such as overly critical or controlling parenting, bullying, and negative peer interactions, can also contribute to its onset. Moreover, personal traits like shyness, low self-esteem, and behavioral inhibition are frequently linked to increased vulnerability to social anxiety during the teenage years (Spence & Rapee, 2016).

One of the most impactful consequences of social anxiety in adolescents is its interference with academic achievement. Students may avoid answering questions in class, working in groups, or presenting in front of others—all of which can limit their participation and performance. Social anxiety can also hinder the development of healthy peer relationships and emotional regulation, leading to loneliness, low self-worth, and, in some cases, depression or substance misuse.

Early identification and intervention are essential to prevent long-term negative outcomes. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) remains the most widely supported and effective approach to treating social anxiety. CBT focuses on helping individuals recognize and change distorted

thinking patterns, gradually face feared situations, and develop effective coping strategies (Albano & DiBartolo, 2019). Within school environments, counselling services are critical in identifying at-risk students and providing supportive interventions to enhance their emotional and social functioning.

In summary, social anxiety is a serious and potentially debilitating condition that affects a significant number of secondary school students. It not only disrupts academic success but also impairs social and emotional development. Understanding the concept of social anxiety and recognizing its signs early can guide effective counselling strategies and promote healthy adolescent adjustment.

Prevalence of Social Anxiety among Students

Social anxiety is one of the most common mental health disorders among adolescents, with prevalence rates varying across regions and cultural contexts. Globally, research indicates that between 7% and 13% of adolescents experience clinically significant symptoms of social anxiety, making it one of the most frequently diagnosed anxiety disorders in this age group (Scaini et al., 2021). The onset of social anxiety often occurs in early adolescence, coinciding with a period of heightened self-consciousness, peer influence, and increased academic demands, which makes secondary school students particularly vulnerable (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020).

In recent years, studies across different parts of the world have confirmed the persistence of social anxiety among students. For example, Haller et al. (2022) reported that approximately 11% of adolescents in European schools met the diagnostic threshold for social anxiety disorder, with higher rates among females compared to males. Similarly, research in the United States

found that nearly one in ten high school students exhibited moderate to severe symptoms of social anxiety, often linked to academic pressure and fear of peer rejection (Asher et al., 2021).

In Nigeria and other African contexts, the prevalence of social anxiety has also become increasingly recognized. Olanrewaju et al. (2019) observed that a considerable number of secondary school students displayed symptoms of social anxiety, though many cases remained undiagnosed due to stigma and limited mental health awareness. More recently, Ede et al. (2021) highlighted that Nigerian adolescents with social anxiety frequently struggle with academic participation and peer interaction, further emphasizing the need for school-based counselling interventions.

In summary, evidence from global and local studies underscores that social anxiety is highly prevalent among adolescents, cutting across cultural, social, and educational contexts. With prevalence rates consistently ranging between 7% and 13%, social anxiety represents a critical challenge for secondary school students. Recognizing its widespread occurrence is vital, as it calls for increased awareness, early screening, and the implementation of counselling strategies within schools to mitigate its academic and emotional impact.

Influence of Social Anxiety among Students

Social anxiety is a common emotional difficulty among students, and it significantly shapes their academic, social, and personal experiences in school. The school environment often requires frequent social interactions, public performance, and engagement with peers and teachers—all of which can be overwhelming for students with high levels of social anxiety. This condition leads to avoidance behaviors, poor peer relationships, reduced class participation, and low self-

confidence, which in turn may affect both educational attainment and overall well-being (Knappe & Beesdo-Baum, 2021).

Socially anxious students tend to perceive the classroom as a threatening environment where they are constantly judged by teachers and peers. They may avoid joining group projects, hesitate to answer questions, or withdraw from extracurricular activities. These avoidance patterns often cause isolation, loneliness, and low social competence, which hinder holistic development. Furthermore, chronic anxiety can impair cognitive processes like memory and concentration, making learning more difficult and frustrating (Stein & Stein, 2020)

Okolie and Odo (2020) conducted a study in Anambra State, Nigeria, to examine the influence of social anxiety on peer interaction and overall school experience among secondary school students. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 300 students drawn through stratified random sampling from six public secondary schools. A standardized Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SASA) was used as the main instrument, while peer interaction was assessed through teacher reports. Data were analyzed using frequency counts and correlation analysis. The findings revealed that students with higher social anxiety scores were more likely to experience peer rejection, isolation during group activities, and reluctance to participate in classroom discussions. The study concluded that social anxiety reduces social integration among students and indirectly affects their ability to engage meaningfully in school life.

Musa and Ibrahim (2021) carried out a correlational study in Kano State to explore the relationship between social anxiety and students' participation in co-curricular activities. The study sampled 250 Senior Secondary School students, selected through purposive sampling from schools with active extracurricular programs. Data were collected using a structured

questionnaire and an observation checklist administered to activity supervisors. Pearson's correlation was employed for analysis. Results indicated a significant negative relationship between social anxiety and participation in extracurricular activities such as debate clubs, drama, and sports. Students with high anxiety often avoided performance-based activities and were underrepresented in leadership positions. The researchers concluded that social anxiety limits students' opportunities for social growth and leadership development.

In a related study, Eze and Ugwu (2022) investigated the psychological effects of social anxiety on classroom behavior in Enugu State. The study employed a mixed-method design, combining surveys with in-depth interviews. A total of 200 students and 20 teachers were sampled from five public secondary schools using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data collection instruments included the Social Phobia and Anxiety Inventory (SPAI) for students and semi-structured interviews for teachers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis, while qualitative responses were thematically analyzed. Findings showed that students with social anxiety displayed consistent withdrawal, rarely volunteered to participate, and often avoided peer collaboration. Teachers further reported that these students were easily overlooked in class, reinforcing feelings of neglect and lowering their classroom confidence.

Chukwu and Adeyemi (2023) examined the influence of social anxiety on help-seeking behavior among secondary school students in Lagos State. The study adopted a survey research design and involved 280 students, selected using systematic random sampling from four urban schools. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to measure anxiety symptoms and willingness to seek academic or emotional support. The data were analyzed using chi-square tests. The results

indicated that students with higher social anxiety were significantly less likely to seek help from teachers or peers, even when struggling academically. This reluctance to ask for help was linked to fear of embarrassment, ridicule, or rejection. The researchers recommended that schools should implement peer mentoring and counselling services to encourage support-seeking behavior.

In conclusion, research findings indicate that social anxiety profoundly influences students' experiences in school, extending beyond academics to peer interaction, extracurricular involvement, classroom participation, and willingness to seek support. Students struggling with this condition are more likely to feel isolated, disengaged, and overlooked, which hinders their social growth and emotional well-being. If left unaddressed, social anxiety can create a cycle of withdrawal and underachievement, thereby limiting students' educational and personal development. It is therefore essential for schools to create supportive environments where students feel safe to interact, express themselves, and seek help without fear of judgment.

Influence of Social Anxiety on Academic Achievement

Social anxiety can significantly impact the academic performance of secondary school students. Adolescents who struggle with social anxiety often view school as a stressful environment filled with social pressures, academic expectations, and the fear of negative judgment. This fear becomes a barrier that prevents students from fully engaging in classroom activities, asking questions, and participating in group discussions. As a result, their learning experiences are limited, and their academic achievement suffers (Leigh & Clark, 2018).

Students with social anxiety are more likely to avoid verbal tasks such as giving presentations or reading aloud. This avoidance behavior may create knowledge gaps, limit classroom involvement, and reduce motivation to learn. Spence and Rapee (2016) observed that socially anxious students tend to keep a low profile in class, often avoiding teacher interactions even when they need help. This pattern can prevent them from understanding difficult topics and developing critical academic skills.

In addition to behavioral avoidance, social anxiety affects cognitive processes. The American Psychiatric Association (2013) noted that adolescents experiencing anxiety are often distracted by intrusive thoughts and fears of being judged. These worries can impair memory, concentration, and mental focus, especially during lessons or exams. As a result, anxious students may struggle to retain information or perform well academically, even if they are intellectually capable.

Owolabi (2021) conducted a study on the effect of social anxiety on academic achievement among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and involved a sample of 250 students selected from five public secondary schools using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across gender and academic levels. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire that measured both students' levels of social anxiety and their academic performance in selected subjects. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and correlation analysis. The findings indicated that students who exhibited high levels of social anxiety consistently underperformed in language-based subjects such as English, Literature, and Civic Education. These students were particularly hesitant to engage in classroom discussions, ask questions, or participate in oral exercises. The

study concluded that fear of negative evaluation, coupled with avoidance of verbal participation, significantly hindered students' academic progress and contributed to underachievement. Teachers in the selected schools also reported that such students were usually withdrawn, quiet, and displayed reluctance to submit assignments that required presentations or peer feedback.

Eze and Nwankwo (2022) carried out a correlational study in Enugu State to examine the relationship between social anxiety and academic performance among adolescents in public secondary schools. The sample consisted of 300 Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students who were selected using purposive sampling from six schools known to have students with varied academic performance records. The researchers employed a standardized social anxiety scale to assess anxiety levels and gathered academic results from the schools' examination records. Data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation and regression analysis. The study revealed a significant inverse relationship between social anxiety and academic performance, meaning that students with higher social anxiety tended to perform worse academically. Furthermore, students experiencing high anxiety were less likely to engage with teachers, request clarification during lessons, or participate in group learning activities. This led to limited comprehension, low academic self-confidence, and decreased motivation to excel in academic tasks. The study recommended increased attention to emotional support and classroom inclusivity to help socially anxious students thrive academically.

Adebayo (2023) explored the predictive role of social anxiety in academic disengagement among secondary school students in Lagos State. The study employed a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. A total of 200 students and 10 teachers participated, and were selected through simple random sampling from four urban public

secondary schools. A structured questionnaire was administered to assess levels of social anxiety and students' engagement in academic activities. In addition, interviews were conducted with selected teachers to provide deeper insights into student behavior. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. The results revealed that socially anxious students frequently exhibited avoidance behaviors such as procrastination, minimal class participation, and irregular submission of assignments. Teachers reported that these students often displayed signs of low academic self-concept, rarely volunteered to answer questions, and avoided tasks that required peer or public interaction. The study concluded that social anxiety was a major barrier to sustained academic involvement, as it discouraged students from fully participating in the learning process and reduced their overall academic output.

Onuoha and Musa (2020) carried out an empirical investigation into the impact of social anxiety on school attendance and academic performance in selected public secondary schools in Northern Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey design with a sample of 200 students, selected using systematic sampling from five schools across different local government areas. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to assess symptoms of social anxiety, while academic performance was evaluated based on school records and teachers' assessments. Data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics and simple comparisons. The findings showed that students with high social anxiety were more likely to avoid school altogether or skip specific classes that required public interaction or oral participation. Subjects such as drama, civic education, and English language were particularly affected, as students often felt uncomfortable speaking in front of peers. This avoidance behavior resulted in missed lessons, reduced comprehension of subject content, and ultimately low grades. Teachers interviewed in the study

noted that these students were often isolated and failed to participate in team-based academic tasks, which further limited their learning opportunities

Social anxiety not only affects academic engagement but also undermines students' emotional connection to the school environment. Students who feel isolated or unsupported due to anxiety are more likely to develop a sense of detachment from their studies. Blakemore (2019) explained that when students experience prolonged social withdrawal, their belief in their academic potential weakens, and this can lead to low academic aspirations, reduced motivation, and even an increased risk of dropping out of school.

In conclusion, the influence of social anxiety on academic achievement is both behavioral and emotional. Students may avoid active participation, become mentally distracted, and feel emotionally disconnected from learning. Addressing this issue requires collaboration between educators, parents, and school counselors. Supportive classroom practices, inclusive assessments, and school-based mental health services can help socially anxious students regain confidence and improve their academic outcomes.

Influence of Social Anxiety on Peer Relationships

Social anxiety profoundly affects the development and quality of peer relationships during adolescence, a developmental stage where peer approval and social interaction are essential for emotional and social growth. Adolescents with social anxiety often experience intense fear of negative judgment, rejection, or embarrassment during social interactions. This fear causes them to avoid peer engagements, which restricts opportunities for building meaningful friendships and social competence (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

These avoidance behaviors are typically exhibited through reluctance to join group discussions, limited participation in extracurricular activities, and a general tendency to isolate themselves from peer interactions. As a result, socially anxious adolescents often report having fewer friends, reduced trust in others, and diminished satisfaction in their relationships. Their interpersonal skills, such as assertiveness, eye contact, and emotional expression, may be underdeveloped, further reducing the likelihood of establishing strong peer bonds (La Greca & Lai, 2014).

Spence and Rapee (2016) argue that socially anxious adolescents often speak softly, avoid initiating conversations, or display nonverbal behaviors that can be misinterpreted as disinterest or aloofness. These behaviors can cause peers to misjudge or exclude them, reinforcing feelings of social inadequacy and leading to a cycle of loneliness, low self-esteem, and persistent anxiety.

An empirical study by Ibe and Olamide (2021) examined the relationship between social anxiety and peer relationship quality among adolescents in Anambra State. The study adopted a correlational research design and involved a sample of 250 students aged 13 to 17, drawn from four public secondary schools using simple random sampling. The researchers used a standardized questionnaire titled “Peer Relationship and Social Anxiety Inventory” to gather data. Statistical analysis was conducted using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Results revealed a significant negative relationship between social anxiety and peer relationship quality, showing that adolescents with higher anxiety levels reported fewer and weaker peer connections, emotional distance, and low trust in their friendships.

Chukwuemeka (2020) carried out a study in Enugu State to investigate the impact of social anxiety on peer group interaction among secondary school students. The study employed a descriptive survey design and sampled 300 SS1 and SS2 students across six public schools

through stratified sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-structured questionnaire and analyzed using simple percentages and mean scores. The findings indicated that students with elevated levels of social anxiety were more likely to avoid peer study groups and class discussions and were less engaged in informal peer gatherings. These behaviors contributed to heightened feelings of loneliness and greater vulnerability to peer victimization and bullying.

In a similar study, Adeola and Musa (2023) explored how social anxiety affects peer bonding among adolescents in urban areas of Lagos State. This research utilized a mixed-method approach involving both questionnaires and focus group interviews. The sample consisted of 200 junior secondary school students and 10 school counselors selected through purposive sampling. The instruments included a Social Anxiety Scale and a Peer Affiliation Interview Guide. Thematic analysis of the interview data and descriptive statistics revealed that socially anxious students were often ignored by their peers during group activities, frequently spent school breaks alone, and had difficulty forming close friendships. Teachers also reported that these students lacked confidence and had trouble navigating social spaces, leading to emotional withdrawal.

Okonkwo and Bello (2022) investigated social anxiety as a barrier to peer affiliation among junior secondary school students in Kaduna State. The study employed a survey design with a sample of 280 students selected through multistage sampling. A structured questionnaire and classroom observation checklist were used for data collection. Statistical analysis was conducted using mean and standard deviation. The study found that students with high social anxiety scores exhibited difficulty initiating friendships, displayed low levels of interpersonal trust, and often avoided eye contact or verbal interaction. These behaviors were seen as major hindrances to peer acceptance and participation in cooperative learning tasks.

Social anxiety, therefore, not only limits adolescents' peer interactions but also contributes to chronic emotional distress. Adolescents who are unable to build satisfying peer relationships due to their anxiety are more susceptible to loneliness, depression, and low self-worth. Over time, this lack of social support may result in withdrawal, academic disengagement, and broader emotional difficulties (Blakemore, 2019). The absence of healthy peer connections also reduces opportunities for mutual support, identity formation, and the development of conflict-resolution skills—factors that are vital to adolescent development.

Given the serious implications of social anxiety on peer functioning, it is crucial to implement early and sustained interventions. Educators, parents, and school counsellors should create safe and supportive environments that encourage social engagement without pressure. School-based interventions such as group therapy, peer mentoring programs, role-playing exercises, and social skills training can help socially anxious adolescents develop the confidence and interpersonal skills needed to foster meaningful peer relationships. Through these proactive efforts, it is possible to reduce social avoidance behaviors and promote healthier social development in adolescents struggling with social anxiety.

Influence of Social Anxiety on Emotional Well-Being

Social anxiety has a profound and far-reaching impact on the emotional well-being of adolescents. This developmental stage is marked by heightened emotional sensitivity, growing social demands, and a strong need for acceptance. Adolescents with social anxiety often experience intense fear, embarrassment, and shame in social settings or even when anticipating social interaction. These emotions are not fleeting—they contribute to persistent psychological

distress, emotional instability, and increased vulnerability to mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression (Stein & Stein, 2008).

One major consequence of social anxiety is low self-esteem. Adolescents who constantly fear being negatively judged may begin to see themselves as inferior or incapable of fitting in socially. Over time, this distorted self-perception results in chronic self-doubt and emotional insecurity, both of which are linked to feelings of sadness and hopelessness (Blakemore, 2019). As these adolescents withdraw from social interaction, they often become consumed by negative thoughts about themselves, further weakening their emotional stability.

Additionally, social anxiety often leads to emotional suppression. Many anxious adolescents avoid expressing their feelings for fear of drawing attention or being misunderstood. This suppression disrupts healthy emotional regulation and can lead to irritability, frequent mood swings, and physical symptoms like headaches or fatigue. When emotions are not expressed or processed effectively, adolescents may find it difficult to cope with everyday stressors (La Greca & Lai, 2014).

An empirical study by Nwankwo and Adamu (2020) investigated the influence of social anxiety on emotional stability among adolescents in public secondary schools in Abuja. The study employed a correlational survey design with a sample of 320 students aged 12 to 17, selected using stratified sampling. The researchers used a standardized Emotional Well-being and Social Anxiety Scale to collect data. Statistical analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed a significant negative relationship between social anxiety and emotional resilience. Students with high anxiety levels displayed emotional instability, mood swings, and poor coping skills during stressful social situations.

Ikechukwu and Thomas (2021) conducted a mixed-method study in Rivers State to examine the emotional effects of social anxiety on adolescents. A sample of 280 students was selected from public schools using simple random sampling, and data were gathered through structured questionnaires and interviews with teachers. Quantitative results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while interview data were analyzed thematically. The findings indicated that socially anxious students often experienced emotional numbness, fear of expressing feelings, and persistent sadness. Teachers also observed that such students rarely participated in emotional or reflective classroom discussions, further isolating them from their peers.

In a study conducted by Adeleye (2022) among secondary school students in Ekiti State, the researcher examined the connection between social anxiety and emotional well-being using a descriptive survey design. The sample comprised 280 adolescents, and the data collection instruments included standardized inventories measuring anxiety levels, emotional distress, and self-esteem. The analysis revealed that students with higher social anxiety scores also experienced emotional exhaustion, loneliness, and reduced motivation to participate in social or academic activities. The study emphasized the importance of emotional support programs in schools to help these students avoid emotional burnout.

Another study by Okafor and Musa (2023) explored the effect of social anxiety on the expression of positive emotions among senior secondary school students in Kano State. Using a survey research design, the researchers selected 250 students through multi-stage sampling. A validated questionnaire and observation checklist were used for data collection. The findings showed that students with high social anxiety were less likely to show positive emotions such as joy, pride, or satisfaction, even after achieving success in academics or extracurricular activities. Their fear of

judgment or social misinterpretation discouraged open emotional expression, reducing their overall emotional well-being.

These findings underscore the serious emotional toll of social anxiety in adolescence. If left unaddressed, socially anxious adolescents may develop more severe psychological conditions such as generalized anxiety disorder or depression. They may also experience long-term emotional emptiness, social detachment, and reduced life satisfaction. The inability to express or manage emotions effectively can hinder their academic, social, and personal development.

To address these issues, schools and mental health professionals must prioritize the emotional needs of socially anxious students. Effective strategies include cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), emotion-focused counselling, and mindfulness exercises that promote emotional awareness and regulation. Group counselling sessions and peer support programs can also create safe environments where students feel accepted and empowered to express themselves without fear of judgment.

By fostering emotional intelligence and promoting self-acceptance, educators and counsellors can help socially anxious adolescents regain emotional balance and build resilience. With the right support, these students can develop the emotional tools needed to navigate adolescence with confidence, reduce anxiety, and experience improved emotional well-being and life satisfaction.

Counselling Strategies for Managing Social Anxiety in Adolescents

Effectively addressing social anxiety in adolescents requires the use of evidence-based counselling strategies tailored to their developmental needs. Social anxiety can hinder academic

performance, emotional well-being, and social adjustment, making timely interventions crucial. The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) provides a strong foundation for understanding and managing social anxiety in young people. According to this theory, individuals learn behaviors, attitudes, and coping mechanisms by observing others, imitating modeled actions, and receiving reinforcement. This perspective is particularly relevant to adolescents, who are highly influenced by peer interactions and social environments. Counselling strategies, therefore, must emphasize modeling of healthy social behaviors, guided practice, and reinforcement of adaptive skills.

One widely recognized approach is **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**, which aligns with SLT principles by focusing on observable behaviors and thought patterns that can be reshaped through modeling and reinforcement. Adolescents are taught to recognize and replace distorted beliefs about social situations with more realistic perspectives while gradually facing feared interactions. Through role-play and guided exposure, they observe adaptive behaviors, practice them in safe environments, and receive reinforcement from therapists or peers. Recent studies confirm that CBT remains effective in reducing social anxiety among adolescents, improving both social functioning and academic engagement (Garcia-Lopez et al., 2020; Li & Wong, 2021).

Pilling-Katz, Richmond, and Moreno (2020) performed a meta-analysis of 17 randomized controlled trials with a total of 1,628 adolescents. The findings confirmed that psychological counselling strategies, particularly cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), significantly reduce social anxiety symptoms. The results emphasized the value of both individual and group CBT approaches across different adolescent populations

Group therapy and social skills training are also effective, particularly when grounded in SLT. Adolescents can observe peers modeling positive communication skills, assertiveness, and confidence in structured group settings. By practicing these skills, receiving feedback, and seeing others succeed, they gain motivation and reduce feelings of isolation. Group interventions create opportunities for role modeling and vicarious learning, which are central to SLT. Evidence suggests that group-based interventions significantly enhance adolescents' confidence and sense of belonging while reducing anxiety symptoms (Hughes & Gullone, 2019; Zhang et al., 2022)

School-based counselling strategies play a significant role in managing social anxiety among adolescents. These interventions often involve one-on-one counselling, group therapy, and teacher support all aimed at improving emotional regulation and building social confidence. When implemented consistently, they create a safe environment where adolescents feel understood and supported. Within the Social Cognitive Theory framework, counsellors and educators help reinforce positive self-beliefs and model effective coping skills. Empirical evidence supports that structured school-based counselling improves students' emotional stability and reduces anxiety symptoms (Feiss et al., 2019).

Alguzo (2023) explored the effectiveness of Satir's systemic counselling model among 36 students with high social anxiety in Jordan. The intervention group showed a significant reduction in both social anxiety and self-concealment levels. This demonstrates the potential of group-based, family-oriented counselling models in addressing adolescent anxiety through emotional support and communication restructuring.

Resilience-building interventions within school settings are effective in helping adolescents confront and overcome social anxiety. These include role-play activities, assertiveness training,

and peer-group discussions that enhance self-efficacy and encourage open expression. Such strategies not only reduce feelings of isolation but also promote adaptive social behaviours. Research has demonstrated that students who participate in resilience-focused counselling exhibit higher self-esteem and better peer interactions (Kallianta et al., 2021).

Ultimately, early identification of social anxiety is essential to prevent escalation. Using SLT as a guiding framework, counselling strategies should emphasize modeling, observation, practice, and reinforcement to build social confidence and reduce avoidance behaviors. A multi-modal approach that combines CBT, social skills training, school-based support, and mindfulness offers the most comprehensive path toward helping adolescents overcome social anxiety. With consistent reinforcement from peers, teachers, parents, and counsellors, students can gradually replace avoidance and fear with confidence and adaptive coping skills.

Summary of Literature Reviewed

This chapter has explored a broad range of literature addressing the prevalence, impact, and management of social anxiety among adolescents, with a particular focus on secondary school students. The reviewed literature underscores that social anxiety is a prevalent and potentially debilitating condition that often begins during adolescence—a stage already fraught with psychological, emotional, and social changes.

Several scholars have noted that adolescents with social anxiety are at risk of significant impairments, including difficulties in academic performance, strained peer relationships, and emotional disturbances such as low self-esteem, chronic worry, and depression. Social anxiety not only affects how adolescents perceive themselves but also influences how they interact with

their environment. This, in turn, affects their identity formation and overall psychosocial adjustment.

The literature reveals that multiple factors contribute to the onset and maintenance of social anxiety in adolescents. These include genetic predispositions, environmental stressors (such as bullying or family conflict), and personal traits such as behavioral inhibition. From the perspective of Social Learning Theory, the role of modeling, reinforcement, and observational learning is particularly emphasized. Adolescents often acquire anxious responses by observing parents, peers, or authority figures who model avoidance or fearful behaviors in social situations. Likewise, negative reinforcement—such as relief from anxiety when avoiding social activities—can strengthen and maintain these maladaptive patterns. Thus, social anxiety can be understood as both a learned and reinforced response to social environments.

Furthermore, the literature highlights a variety of counselling and intervention strategies that have been successful in addressing social anxiety in adolescents. Approaches informed by Social Learning Theory emphasize skills training, peer modeling, and reinforcement of positive social interactions. Group-based interventions in schools, role-playing exercises, and structured opportunities for observational learning have all shown promise in reducing anxiety symptoms and improving coping strategies. Additionally, programs that integrate modeling of adaptive behaviors, coupled with reinforcement for participation and exposure, enhance adolescents' confidence and social competence.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed suggests that addressing adolescent social anxiety requires a multifaceted intervention model involving collaboration among counselors, educators, parents, and mental health professionals. Drawing from Social Learning Theory, interventions should not

only target individual coping but also modify the social environment by providing positive models, supportive peer networks, and reinforcement of constructive social behaviors. Early detection, appropriate support, and consistent opportunities for learning and practicing social skills are crucial to helping socially anxious adolescents develop confidence, build healthy relationships, and reach their full academic and personal potential.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the procedures and methods employed in conducting this research. It is organized under the following subheadings:

- Research Design
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate for studies that seek to collect and analyze data from a population or sample in order to describe existing conditions or relationships. The design was considered suitable for this research as it enabled the researcher to systematically investigate the prevalence of social anxiety among secondary school students and its implications for counselling in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Population of the Study

The population for this study comprised all 4,027 students enrolled in the 20 public junior secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State (Source: Ministry of Education, Edo State, 2024).

SN	NAME OF SCHOOL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
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SN	NAME OF SCHOOL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
1	Edo boys secondary School	230
2	Idogbo Secondary School	215
3	Ubiaja Secondary School	180
4	Egbiri Grammar School	195
5	Ovia Grammar School	210
6	Avbiana Secondary School	175
7	Oluku Secondary School	205
8	Ekhoikha Secondary School	198
9	Igho Secondary School	185
10	Irhihovbiora Secondary School	190
11	Okhoro Grammar School	220
12	Benin Technical College	235
13	Ologbo Secondary School	200
14	Eguae-Iyobosa Secondary School	160
15	Ovia North-East Unity School	240
16	Udo Secondary School	210
17	Agho Secondary School	185
18	Ajao Secondary School	190
19	Oluku Primary School	185
20	Irhihovbiora Primary School	224

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 100 students constituted the sample size for this study. Using the simple random sampling technique, through balloting with replacement five (5) students were randomly selected from each of the 20 public junior secondary schools within the local government area. This

sampling method ensured that every student had an equal chance of being selected, thereby promoting fairness and reducing sampling bias.

Research Instrument

The main instrument used for data collection was a researcher-designed structured questionnaire titled: "Prevalence of Social Anxiety Among Secondary School Students Questionnaire (PSAASSSQ)". The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A focused on demographic information of the respondents. Section B contained 20 items related to the variables being studied, organized into four categories: Influence of social anxiety on academic achievement, Influence of social anxiety on peer relationships, Influence of social anxiety on emotional well-being, Counselling strategies for managing social anxiety. A 4-point Likert scale was used in Section B, with the following options: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1)

Validity of the Instrument

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the draft questionnaire was submitted to the researcher's project supervisor and two other experts in the field of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City. Their feedback and recommendations were incorporated into final draft of the questionnaire before it was administered by the researcher

Reliability of the Instrument

To determine the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on 20 students from public junior secondary schools who were not part of the main study sample. The internal

consistency of the instrument was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded the following reliability coefficients:

- 0.811 for items on academic achievement
- 0.737 for items on peer relationships
- 0.859 for items on emotional well-being
- 0.824 for items on counselling strategies

These results indicate that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally distributed copies of the questionnaire to the selected respondents in their respective schools. All administered questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to ensure a high rate of return and minimize the risk of data loss.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation. In interpreting the results, a mean score of 2.50 and above was considered indicative of agreement (i.e., a high influence or strong prevalence), while a mean score below 2.50 indicated disagreements (i.e., a low influence or weak prevalence).

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected with interpretation and discussion of findings. The data obtained from the study were used to answer the questions.

Research Question 1:

What is the influence of social anxiety on academic achievement among secondary school students?

Table 1: Description of Participants' Responses on the Influence of Social Anxiety on Academic Achievement

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1	Students with social anxiety often avoid class presentations or public speaking tasks	100	3.40	.96400	Agreed
2	Social anxiety makes it difficult for students to ask questions or seek help from teachers	100	3.26	.81178	Agreed
3	Students with social anxiety often underperform in group projects due to low participation	100	3.33	.85345	Agreed
4	Academic performance can be negatively impacted by fear of being judged by peers	100	3.21	.99742	Agreed
5	Socially anxious students often have lower academic confidence compared to their peers	100	3.27	.85108	Agreed

Interpretation:

Table 1 revealed the responses of the respondents on items 1 to 5 used to elicit responses on the research questionnaire. The five items had a mean score of 3.40, 3.26, 3.33, 3.21, and 3.27 respectively.

All the items presented are above the 2.5 criterion mean score. It means that the respondents agreed to the items in the questionnaire. Therefore, the influence of social anxiety on academic achievement among secondary school students includes avoidance of classroom participation, fear of speaking in front of others, limited help-seeking behaviors, and poor group interaction. These issues often lead to lower academic confidence and reduced overall academic performance.

Research Question 2:

What is the influence of social anxiety on peer relationships among secondary school students?

Table 2: Description of Participants' Responses on the Influence of Social Anxiety on Peer Relationships

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1	Social anxiety can lead to difficulty making new friends	100	3.22	.78599	Agreed
2	Socially anxious students may struggle with initiating conversations with peers	100	3.21	.92351	Agreed
3	Students with high social anxiety often withdraw from social activities	100	3.19	.78169	Agreed
4	Social anxiety can result in a lack of trust in peer relationships	100	3.23	.86005	Agreed
5	Socially anxious students may have trouble expressing empathy and maintaining friendships	100	3.31	.90768	Agreed

Interpretation:

Table 2 revealed the responses of the respondents on items 1 to 5 used to elicit responses on the research questionnaire. The five items had a mean score of 3.22, 3.21, 3.19, 3.23, and 3.31 respectively.

All items are above the 2.5 criterion mean score, indicating agreement by the respondents. This suggests that social anxiety negatively affects peer relationship development by limiting communication, reducing social interaction, creating trust issues, and making it difficult to build or maintain meaningful friendships.

Research Question 3:

What is the influence of social anxiety on the emotional well-being of secondary school students?

Table 3: Description of Participants' Responses on the Influence of Social Anxiety on Emotional Well-being

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1	Students with social anxiety often struggle with self-acceptance and confidence	100	3.29	.87365	Agreed
2	Social anxiety may lead adolescents to feel overwhelmed or anxious in social settings	100	3.25	.90460	Agreed
3	Students dealing with social anxiety may have difficulty managing emotional stress	100	3.05	.97223	Agreed
4	Socially anxious students may struggle to develop emotional bonds with others	100	3.24	.87834	Agreed
5	Social anxiety can result in impulsive emotional reactions due to heightened internal tension	100	3.31	.83745	Agreed

Interpretation:

Table 3 shows the responses of the participants on items 1 to 5 used to elicit responses on the research questionnaire. The five items had a mean score of 3.29, 3.25, 3.05, 3.24, and 3.31 respectively. These values are all above the 2.5 criterion mean score, which means respondents generally agreed with the items.

This implies that social anxiety affects the emotional well-being of secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area by reducing their self-confidence, making them feel overwhelmed in social settings, leading to poor emotional regulation, and causing difficulty in forming emotional bonds. In some cases, students may also react impulsively due to the emotional strain associated with anxiety.

Table 4: Description of Participants' Response on the Counselling Strategies for Managing

Social Anxiety

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1	Most students agree that talking to a counsellor about social anxiety is beneficial.	100	3.14	.88964	Agreed
2	Students recognize that school counselling services help with anxiety.	100	3.12	.86912	Agreed
3	Group counselling is seen as helpful in social settings, though slightly lower than others.	100	3.07	.91569	Agreed
4	There's a strong belief that teachers and counsellors are supportive.	100	3.18	.85793	Agreed
5	Students believe counselling can reduce social anxiety and improve their academic or social life.	100	3.13	.95422	Agreed

Interpretation:

Table 4 revealed the responses of the participants on items 1 to 5 used to elicit responses on the research questionnaire. The five items had mean scores of 3.14, 3.12, 3.07, 3.18, and 3.13 respectively, all of which are above the criterion mean score of 2.5.

This implies that secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area recognize the usefulness of counselling strategies in managing social anxiety. Students believe that talking to a counsellor, participating in group counselling, and receiving support from teachers and counsellors help reduce their anxiety. Furthermore, they agree that counselling improves their academic and social lives by boosting their confidence and providing coping strategies for social situations.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study in research question one revealed that social anxiety is prevalent among secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. This suggests that a considerable number of adolescents experience fear or discomfort in social situations, particularly those that involve peer evaluation, public speaking, or classroom participation. This may be attributed to various developmental, social, and environmental factors, including peer pressure, lack of confidence, negative past experiences, and limited coping skills. Adolescents in this stage are highly sensitive to peer opinions and are often preoccupied with how they are perceived by others, which can result in heightened anxiety levels in social settings.

This finding aligns with Owolabi (2021), who found that students with high social anxiety underperformed academically due to fear of negative evaluation and avoidance of classroom participation. This is also supported by Eze and Nwankwo (2022), who observed a significant inverse relationship between social anxiety and academic performance, noting that socially anxious students tend to avoid interaction with teachers and peers, leading to decreased comprehension, confidence, and motivation in academic tasks.

The findings from the study in research question two showed that social anxiety significantly affects the academic achievement of secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area. Students who experience social anxiety may struggle to participate in class, ask questions, or engage in group activities — all of which are essential for effective learning and academic success. The fear of being judged or embarrassed in academic settings can limit students' ability to express their thoughts or seek clarification when needed. As a result, their academic performance may decline, not because of lack of ability, but due to internal psychological barriers. This finding agrees with Okonkwo and Bello (2022) who identified social anxiety as a barrier to peer affiliation among junior secondary school students in Kaduna State. Their findings showed that students with high anxiety scores avoided interactions, struggled to initiate friendships, and were not easily accepted in group settings further confirming that social anxiety hinders peer engagement and social inclusion in school environments. It also aligns with Adeola and Musa (2023), who examined how social anxiety affects peer bonding among adolescents in urban Lagos. Their study found that socially anxious students were often isolated during group activities and school breaks, had difficulty forming friendships, and withdrew emotionally. Teachers and counselors also noted these students lacked confidence and struggled in social situations, reinforcing how social anxiety undermines peer relationships.

The findings from the study in research question three revealed that social anxiety has a significant impact on peer relationships among secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area. Adolescents with high levels of social anxiety may avoid social interactions, fear rejection, and struggle to form or maintain meaningful friendships. They often withdraw from peer groups and feel isolated, which can lead to poor social adjustment and emotional distress. The inability to connect with peers may also limit opportunities for social learning and emotional support, both of which are crucial during adolescence. This finding aligns with Nwankwo and Adamu (2020) who found that adolescents with high levels of social anxiety showed signs of emotional instability, including poor coping skills and mood swings, particularly in stressful social situations. This is also supported by Adeleye (2022) who observed that high levels of social anxiety among adolescents were linked to emotional exhaustion, loneliness, and reduced motivation for social or academic engagement further highlighting the role of peer withdrawal.

The findings from the study in research question four revealed that counselling strategies play a crucial role in managing social anxiety among secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area. The students acknowledged that counselling helps them cope with the emotional and psychological challenges associated with social anxiety.

Many students agreed that talking to a counsellor provides relief and guidance, while group counselling helps them feel more comfortable in social settings. The findings also show that teachers and counsellors are perceived as supportive figures, which encourages students to open

up and seek help. Overall, counselling was seen as a valuable tool that not only reduces social anxiety but also enhances academic performance and improves social interactions.

This finding align with Lassen, Hougaard, and Arendt (2019) who observed that school-based group CBT significantly reduced social fears among adolescents, helping them feel more at ease in peer settings and improving their willingness to participate socially and academically. It is also supported by , Alguzo (2023) who reported that the application of the Satir counselling model among secondary school students in Jordan helped reduce symptoms of social anxiety and improved students' openness and emotional wellbeing, indicating the positive psychological impact of one-on-one counselling.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of the study, highlights the major findings, draws conclusions, outlines implications for counselling, and offers relevant recommendations based on the results obtained.

Summary

The study investigated the *prevalence of social anxiety among secondary school students and its implications for counselling* in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The objectives were to determine the prevalence of social anxiety, examine its influence on students' academic achievement, peer relationships, and emotional wellbeing, and to suggest counselling strategies for effective management.

To guide the study, four research questions were raised and answered. The population comprised **4,027 students enrolled in 20 secondary schools** (both public and private) in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. From this population, a sample of 100 students was drawn using the **simple random sampling technique**, ensuring each student had an equal chance of selection.

A structured questionnaire titled **“Prevalence of Social Anxiety among Secondary School Students Questionnaire (PSAASSQ)”** was developed by the researcher and validated by experts in Educational Psychology and Guidance and Counselling. The instrument's reliability was established through a pilot test.

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Data were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations to answer the research questions. The study explored how social anxiety manifests among adolescents and how it affects their academic, social, and emotional functioning.

Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

- Social anxiety is **prevalent among secondary school students** in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.
- Students who experience social anxiety often display **low academic performance**, as fear of judgment and embarrassment hinders active classroom participation and learning.
- **Peer relationships are negatively affected**, as socially anxious students tend to withdraw, avoid group interactions, and feel socially isolated.
- **Emotional wellbeing is significantly impacted**, with students showing signs of low self-esteem, stress, and depressive symptoms due to persistent fear of negative evaluation.
- **Counselling strategies** such as group therapy, social skills training, mindfulness-based techniques, and cognitive-behavioral interventions were identified as effective in managing social anxiety and improving adolescents' overall adjustment.

Conclusion

The study concluded that social anxiety is a common and serious psychological issue among secondary school students in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. It adversely affects students' academic achievement, social interactions, and emotional health. However, through early identification, school-based interventions, and supportive counselling practices, students can overcome fear, build confidence, and develop essential social and coping skills. The

findings emphasize the vital role of guidance counsellors, teachers, and parents in recognizing and addressing social anxiety among adolescents to promote their holistic development.

Implications for Counselling

The findings of this study have important implications for counselling practice in secondary schools:

1. **Preventive Counselling:** School counselors should integrate preventive counselling programs aimed at promoting self-confidence, social competence, and emotional regulation among students. Early interventions can reduce the risk of developing severe social anxiety.
2. **Individual and Group Counselling:** Counsellors should provide individual counselling to help affected students identify irrational fears and replace them with positive thoughts. Group counselling sessions can also help students practice communication and social interaction in a safe environment.
3. **Collaborative Counselling:** Counsellors should collaborate with teachers and parents to create a supportive atmosphere that reduces performance pressure and social comparison in schools.
4. **Psychoeducation:** Counselling units should organize workshops and seminars for students, teachers, and parents to increase awareness about social anxiety, its causes, and management strategies.

5. **School-wide Mental Health Promotion:** Counsellors should advocate for mental health inclusion in school programs, encouraging schools to integrate emotional wellbeing activities and peer-support programs into their curriculum.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

1. **Counsellors** should develop and implement systematic intervention programs, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness training, and social skills development, to help students manage anxiety symptoms effectively.
2. Teachers should be trained to recognize the signs of social anxiety and adopt inclusive teaching practices that encourage participation without intimidation or ridicule.
3. Parents should be educated on the importance of providing emotional support and understanding, rather than criticism or pressure, to children showing signs of social anxiety.
4. Government and educational authorities should ensure that every secondary school has functional guidance and counselling units with qualified counselors to provide professional support to students.
5. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and mental health advocates should partner with schools to conduct awareness campaigns on adolescent mental health and anxiety reduction.

6. Further research should be conducted on the relationship between social anxiety and other factors such as family background, peer influence, and social media exposure, to broaden understanding and improve intervention strategies.

Suggestions for Further Studies

In light of the limitations and findings of this research, the following suggestions are made for future researchers:

1. Future studies should include **a larger and more diverse sample size** across multiple local government areas or states to allow for broader generalization of findings.
2. Researchers could employ experimental or longitudinal research designs to examine the long-term effects of counseling interventions on reducing social anxiety among adolescents.
3. Further research should explore the **influence of gender, socioeconomic status, and parental involvement** on the development and management of social anxiety in secondary school students.
4. Future studies may investigate the impact of digital and social media exposure on the prevalence and severity of social anxiety among adolescents.
5. Researchers could also explore the effectiveness of specific counseling strategies, such as mindfulness-based therapy or cognitive restructuring, in managing social anxiety among students.

Finally, comparative studies between public and private secondary schools could provide deeper insight into environmental or institutional factors contributing to social anxiety.

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**PREVALENCE OF SOCIAL ANXIETY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS:
IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING**

Dear Participants,

This questionnaire is designed to gather information for a research project titled: "Prevalence of Social Anxiety Among Secondary School Students: Implications for Counseling." Kindly fill it as appropriate. All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Section A: Demographic Data

Instructions: Please tick (✓) where applicable. Gender: Female () Male () - I Not Necessary School:

Section B: Data on Questionnaire

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Key: SA (4) Strongly Agree, A (3) Agree, D (2) Disagree, SD (1) Strongly Disagree

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
	Influence of Social Anxiety on Academic Achievement				
1.	feel nervous or anxious when asked to speak in front of the class.				
2.	Social anxiety prevents me from asking questions in class even when I don't understand.				
3.	I avoid participating in group discussions or group assignments due to fear of embarrassment.				
4.	My fear of judgment negatively affects my academic performance.				
5.	I sometimes skip school or specific classes because of anxiety about interacting with others.				

	Influence of Social Anxiety on Peer Relationships				
6.	I find it difficult to make new friends because of my fear of social rejection.				
7.	I often avoid social gatherings or school events due to anxiety.				
8.	I prefer staying alone rather than engaging in conversations with peers.				
9.	My fear of being judged makes it hard to maintain close friendships.				
10.	1 Social anxiety has made me feel isolated from my classmates.				
	Influence of Social Anxiety on Emotional Well-being				
11.	I often feel sad or depressed due to my fear of social interaction.				
12.	I feel worthless or inadequate compared to my peers.				
13.	I avoid expressing my true feelings to others because I fear being judged.				
14.	My anxiety has affected my emotional health negatively.				
15.	I get easily overwhelmed or stressed in social situations.				
	Counselling Strategies for Managing Social Anxiety				
16.	Talking to a Counsellor about my social anxiety will benefit me.				
17.	Counselling services in my school help students cope with anxiety.				
18.	Group Counselling make me feel more comfortable in social settings.				
19.	Teachers and Counsellors understand and support students dealing with social anxiety.				
20.	I believe Counselling can help reduce my social anxiety and improve my academic and social life.				