Social Intelligence (Social Information Processing, Social Skills and Social Awareness) as a Predictor of Fear of Negative Evaluation Among Undergraduate Students

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Abstract
The study investigated social intelligence (Social Information Processing, Social Skills, and Social Awareness) as a predictor of fear of negative evaluation among undergraduate students. One hundred and twenty-three (123) undergraduate students which comprises 74 females and 49 males, the age range of 17-24 years with a mean age of 20.54 and SD of 2.45 were drawn using multi-stage (cluster, simple random: by balloting and purposive) sampling techniques as participants from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. Watson and Friend (1969) Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Silvera et al. (2001), and Tromso Social Intelligence Scale and Hudson (1982) were used for data collection, the design for this study was correlation, as multiple hierarchical regression using SPSS version 27 was used to analysis the data. The result revealed that social awareness dimension of social intelligence Stβ= .427 and t= 2.323* at p< .05 positively predicted fear of negative evaluation, while the other two dimensions of social intelligence (social skill Stβ= .026 and t= .120 and social information process of Stβ= .117 and t= .608 at p< .05) failed to predict fear of negative evaluation, social intelligence jointly was unable to predict the dependent variable sig.= .067 at p< .05. Hence, therapist should assist undergraduate to always prepare for the worse so when it comes, they will know how to handle the situation.*

Keywords: social intelligence, social information processing, social skills, social awareness, fear of negative evaluation and undergraduate students

Introduction

The current study looked into potential causes of students' fear of negative evaluation. Research shows that young adults are more likely to experience social anxiety due to fear of negative evaluation, especially for university students (Fredrick & Luebbe, 2022). Undergraduate students deal with a variety of stressors during their educational programme. Cognitive models propose that Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) is a hallmark feature of social anxiety. As a result, people with high FNE may process information biased when encountering social evaluation. Hence, the need to investigate the predicting strength of social intelligence on fear of negative evaluation among undergraduate students.

Atychiphobia (Milosevic & Randi, 2015), also referred to as fear of negative evaluation or fear of failure (Fear of Failure,2023), is a psychological construct that reflects anxiety about others'

assessments, distress over others' negative assessments, and the expectation that others would evaluate one negatively. The sensation of impending doom that comes with receiving a negative evaluation when preparing for or engaging in a social scenario is known as fear of negative evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969; Weeks et al., 2005; Cooper & Brownell, 2020). According to Li et al. (2023), fear of negative evaluation is characterized by anxiety about how other people would see one, anguish at the prospect of receiving a bad assessment, avoidance of evaluation-related events, and expectation of receiving a negative evaluation. Low self-esteem and the inability to confront one's strengths and faults rationally and objectively are at the core of inferiority complexes. Students in junior high school in the delicate time are vulnerable to a biased bad self-perception because they remain in the juvenile stage of self-awareness (Portillo & Fernández-Baena, 2019).

According to the cognitive-behavioural model, the fear of bad assessments, or an individual's judgment of the probability of unfavourable evaluations in social circumstances, is the most significant manifestation of social anxiety (Rapee & Heimberg, 1997; Kurita et al., 2023). The more general phrase test anxiety, which describes a person's fear of being evaluated in any setting, including one that is not social, is not the same as "fear of negative evaluation" (Cooper & Brownell, 2020). Although it's easy to misunderstand test anxiety to refer simply to exam or test anxiety, test anxiety refers to a person's fear of any evaluation, whether it be social or non-social. Fear of receiving a poor review is not the same as communication anxiety, which is also known as communication apprehension. Fear or anxiety related to actual or anticipated spoken communication is known as communication apprehension (Cooper & Brownell, 2020). On the other hand, the dread of receiving a poor review refers specifically to a social situation, so the apprehension of a poor review is particularly prominent in active learning classrooms compared to traditional lectures. Over more than 40 years of research, communication anxiety has only been linked to worse academic achievement results (Cooper & Brownell, 2020). Fear of receiving a poor grade explains why a student might feel nervous when communicating, which sets this idea apart from FNE (Cooper et al., 2018). For instance, a student might be hesitant to approach another student in class if they think the other will think poorly of them. One of the most common and alarming mental health disorders among college students, social anxiety is characterized by high levels of worry about receiving a negative evaluation (Watson & Friend, 1969; Cooper & Brownell, 2020).

When a student scans their environment for threats, most likely that their cognitive capacity to think critically about a science problem is reduced (Heimberg et al., 2010; Cooper & Brownell, 2020). A student's performance may also be negatively impacted if they fear that their mistakes will reflect poorly on others' perceptions of their overall ability (Cooper & Brownell, 2020). Students with a fear of negative evaluation typically monitor their environment for a possible threat of social evaluation, such as being called on by the instructor in front of the entire class or receiving a question from a student nearby. That may be why it is so challenging for students with FNE to discuss science material with others in class. High levels of anxiety can be crippling especially when students are expected to hold and manipulate speech-based information (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992; Owens et al., 2008; Rapee & Barlow, 1991; Cooper & Brownell, 2020). Finally, students use their cognitive resources to keep an eye on their behaviours that might be interpreted negatively by others, like perspiring, stammering, or mispronouncing words. This adds to their cognitive load and may make it more difficult for

them to express their ideas clearly when discussing science (Heimberg et al., 2010; Cooper & Brownell, 2020).

Specifically, there is evidence that students with high FNE are less willing to participate in class (Cooper & Brownell, 2020) and that they are particularly less willing to participate in active learning college science classes (Cooper, Downing, et al., 2018). In light of these results, it is crucial to think about how active learning strategies could favour students who are more at ease and eager to participate than those who have a high level of anxiety of receiving a poor evaluation. What negative consequences will fear of receiving a poor grade have on students' willingness to participate in active learning? Some students may be particularly reluctant to engage during interactive educational activities due to fear of receiving a poor grade (Cooper et al., 2017). Additionally, some students report feeling less at ease in classrooms with active learning as opposed to conventional lecture settings (Cooper et al., 2017; Cooper et al., 2018). Previous research has demonstrated that people with less confidence in themselves were more likely to be more afraid of receiving a bad review (Ahadzadeh et al., 2018). Therefore, this study's objective is to determine whether the various dimensions of social intelligence can predict the dread of receiving a poor grade.

According to Zautra et al. (2015), Thorndike defined social intelligence in 1920 as the capacity to comprehend and manage men, women, boys, and girls as well as to behave sensibly in interpersonal relationships. Nobody has social intelligence from birth. Rather, it entails a collection of abilities that a person acquires through time (Morin, 2020). Those with social intelligence can read others' emotions, make intelligent conversation topics, and project confidence even amid enormous crowds (Morin, 2020). Those with social intelligence have fundamental characteristics that facilitate interpersonal connections and communication.

Effective Listening: A socially intelligent individual listens to what others are saying instead of just responding to them. The other participants in the conversation leave with the sense that they were heard and that a connection was created (Morin, 2020).

Conversational abilities: The person is capable of having conversational abilities that allow them to engage in a dialogue with almost anyone. In these exchanges, they are diplomatic, acceptable, funny, and sincere. They also recall personal information about the other person that makes the interaction more meaningful (Maloney & Moore, 2020).

Reputation management: People with social intelligence take into account how they come across to others. Keeping a good reputation is one of the trickiest aspects of social intelligence, and it takes balance. It's important to make an impression on someone else carefully while maintaining authenticity (Morin, 2020).

Absence of Arguing: A person with social intelligence knows better than to argue or prove reasons someone else feel awful about themselves. Even when they don't personally agree with someone else opinions, they attend to them with an open mind instead of openly rejecting them (Morin, 2020).

Some people appear to naturally acquire social intelligence, while others must put forth effort to do so. A person can develop their social skills by using certain tactics. These strategies can aid in the growth of social intelligence:

Observe what and who is in your immediate vicinity: Those who possess social intelligence are perceptive and aware of the subtle social signs that those around them are giving out (Graziano, & Kastner, 2011; Morin, 2020). Observe how the person in your life interacts with others if you believe they have good people skills.
More than that, acknowledge and make an effort to comprehend cultural differences by seeking them out. A person with social intelligence recognizes that others may respond and behave differently depending on their upbringing, even though most people acquire interpersonal skills from their friends, family, and the community in which they live (Morin, 2020).

Students at the university are diverse. As a cornerstone of the academic culture, diversity is always accepted and promoted. To create integration among university students, socialization is frequently encouraged. Social interactions can be productive and successful in related fields when they are conducted with practical intelligence. Social interaction is one facet of student participation on college campuses. The main components of campus social engagement are interactions with faculty and staff as well as with friends and peers in the academic and social domains of the university (Zhoc, 2020). Successful social interactions require sociability and social adaptability, which are synonyms for social intelligence. An individual's social behaviour is a sign of their social intelligence (Strang, 1930; Mohd, & Shiva, 2022). (Gilliland & Burke, 1926; Mohd & Shiva, 2022) Sociability is the set of social skills, qualities, and talents that contribute to the achievement of desired social success. These social interaction abilities support social situation adaptation (Gerardi, 2015). According to Boyatzis et al. (2015), social intelligence is a visible social ability that is mostly demonstrated by practical reactions that one experiences for oneself and others. Students' approaches to appreciating peer acceptance and participation in campus events are predicted by their social skills (Chan, 2003; Mohd, & Shiva, 2022). A behavioural repertoire of pro-social behaviours, constructive social behaviours, and social problem-solving abilities that foster the success of friendship is made possible by social intelligence (Newcomb et al., 1993; Mohd, & Shiva, 2022). Therefore, interpersonal intelligence enhances social functioning at universities.

Beck (2011) development of cognitive-behavioural theory serves as the foundation for the theoretical framework of this investigation. According to this theory, thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are all interrelated and constantly impact and influence one another as parts of daily human functioning. The cognitive-behavioural theory states that our emotions and behaviours can be greatly influenced by the ideas and opinions we hold about the world and ourselves. For instance, a student may experience anxiety or frustration if they think they will fail in a particular subject. This can then have an impact on their motivation and behaviour. By comprehending the connections between ideas, feelings, and actions, we can create plans to assist students in overcoming unfavourable thought patterns and beliefs and substituting them with more constructive and positive ones. Better academic achievement as well as increased emotional stability and general quality of life can result from this.

According to cognitive-behavioural theory, an individual's emotions and behaviours can be influenced by their beliefs about the world, themselves, their relationships, and the future. This implies that how one interprets and gives meaning to events can have a big impact on how they respond to them. For instance, a student who feels unworthy or incompetent may exhibit behaviours like procrastination or avoidance and be more prone to negative emotions like anxiety or depression. However, a student who has a positive self-image and constructive self-

beliefs may be more likely to feel good about themselves and act in ways that help them achieve their academic objectives.

Moreover, a student's social intelligence may be impacted by how they interpret information and how much value they place on themselves. For example, students who feel competent and self-assured in social settings are less likely to fear receiving unfavourable feedback from others. On the other hand, a student who experiences social anxiety or insecurity may find it difficult to interact with others and may even avoid social situations entirely. We can assist students in creating more positive self-perceptions and worldviews by helping them recognize the connections between their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. This can enhance their social intelligence, academic achievement, and general well-being. The following questions will be answered:

Will Social intelligence (Social Information Processing, Social Skills, and Social Awareness) independently and jointly significantly predict fear of negative evaluation?

Method

Participants

One hundred and twenty-three (123) undergraduate students which comprised 74 females and 49 males, age range of 17-24 years with a mean age of 20.54 and SD of 2.45 were drawn using multi-stage (cluster, simple random: by balloting and purposive) sampling techniques as participants from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The students were clustered according to their faculties, simple random sampling techniques: by balloting was used to pick the faculties, while purposive (a criterion selection-based) sampling technique was used to select the participants as follows: thirty-one (31) from Applied natural sciences, twenty-eight (28) from Management sciences, twenty-five (25) from Environmental sciences, eighteen (18) from Engineering and twenty-one (21) from Law. Age, gender, and level of education were used as control variables. Inclusive criterion: The participants must be full-time undergraduate students from the selected faculties in ESUT. Exclusive criterion: part-time student, sand-winch student, matured student, post-graduate student, visitors and staff.

Instrument

These set of instruments was used:

- Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) (Watson & Friend, 1969)
- Tromso Social Intelligence Scale (Silvera et al., 2001)

Watson and Friend (1969) Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)

A 30-item test called Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) was created to assess social anxiety in people who exhibit a noticeable and enduring fear of performing in public or having their opinions evaluated by others. The Likert response pattern was used to score it, with 1 denoting occasional or little use, 2 representing some use, 3 representing good use, and 4 representing most or all use. Every item receives a straight score. Reliability coefficients for FNE were reported by Watson and Friend (1969) to be KR -20 =.94 and one-month interval test-retest =.78. In terms of Nigerian validity, Odedeji (2004) obtained a concurrent validity coefficient of.63 when correlating FNE with STAI Y-2 (Spielberger, 1983).

Silvera et al. (2001) Tromso Social Intelligence Scale

The Tromso Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS), a self-report tool with 21 items, was created by Silvera et al. (2001) to determine social intelligence level. Three distinct subscales are used by the TSIS to measure intelligence: (i) Social Information Processing (SIP): This subscale assesses the capacity to read both explicit and implicit cues, empathize, and comprehend verbal or nonverbal cues pertaining to interpersonal relationships. Example Item: "Most of the time, I can understand what people are attempting to accomplish without needing to hear their justifications." (ii) Social Skills (SS): This subscale assesses the fundamental communication abilities, including bold behaviour, active listening, building, sustaining, and ending relationships. Example Item: I'm skilled at getting to know interacting with others and entering new social circles. (iii) Social Awareness (SA): This subscale assesses the capacity to act in a way that is appropriate for the occasion, setting, and time. Example Item: "I usually cause unintentional heartbreak to others." Every subscale has seven items on it. For the scale's items, a seven-point Likert scale form was created. The items have minimum and maximum scores of 1 and 7, respectively. According to Silvera et al. (2001), social information processing, social skills, and social awareness had Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients of.81,.86, and.79, respectively.

Procedure

Undergraduate students were selected as participants from five faculties in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) using multi-stage sampling (cluster, simple random: by balloting, and purposive) techniques for this study. The students were clustered according to their faculties, Simple random (by balloting) was used to pick the faculties, while purposive sampling techniques were used to select students from the faculties studied. The researchers employed research assistants who are student faculty executives from the selected faculties to help distribute and retrieve the instruments. One hundred and thirty-four (134) were sent out, and one hundred and twenty-eight copies of the instruments were returned. Among the returned ones, three (3) bear multiple initials, and the other two (2) were not properly responded to, which made the numbers properly responded to be one hundred and twenty-three (123), which was used for data analysis.

Design and Statistics

Correlational design was adopted based on the fact that the relationships between the predictor variables and dependent variable are being investigated, and also they do not manipulate or control any of the variables. The statistical test that was used for data analysis is moderated hierarchical multiple regression using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 software.

Results

Table I: descriptive statistics

S/N	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Fear of negative evaluation	12.94	5.755	1	.265*	.437**	-.058	-.029	-.005
2	Social skills	28.86	5.932		1	.424**	.335**	-.467**	-.087
3	Social awareness	28.23	5.714			1	-.070	.203	-.265*

4	**Age**	**20.54**	**2.454**	**1**	**-.187**	**.533****
5	**Gender**	**1.771**	**.4260**		**1**	**.020**
6	**Year of Study**	**280.0**	**136.8**			**1**

Table I shows that the social awareness dimension of social intelligence r= .437** at p< .01 positively related to fear of negative evaluation, this implies that the increase in social awareness will cause an increase in fear of negative evaluation. Also, age and year of study positively related at r= .533** at p< .01, which indicated that the increase in age will lead to an increase in year of study. The social skill dimension of social intelligence and gender show a negative relationship at r= -.465** at p< .01, this means that an increase in gender will cause a decrease in the social skills dimension of social intelligence.

Table II: regression statistics

model	R	R^2	UnStβ	Stβ	t
1	.451*	.204*			
Social skills			.025	.026	.120
Social awareness			.430*	.427*	2.323*
Social information process			.085	.117	.608
3	.623	.388			
age			-.718	-.306	-1.235
gender			-2.421	-.179	-.828
Year of study			.012	.280	1.263

Dependent variable: fear of negative evaluation, at p< .05*. r= relationship, r^2= relationship square, UnStβ= unstandardized, Stβ= standardised, sig.= significance

Table II above shows social awareness dimension of social intelligence Stβ= .427* and t= 2.323* at p< .05 positively predicted fear of negative evaluation, this means increase in social awareness dimension of social intelligence will lead to the presence and increase fear of negative evaluation among undergraduate student. While the other two dimensions of social intelligence (social skill Stβ= .026 and t= .120 and social information process of Stβ= .117 and t= .608 at p< .05) failed to predict fear of negative evaluation. Social intelligence shows a relationship with fear of negative evaluation with r= .421, and possesses 20.4% variation to fear of negation evaluation, while the predicting variable failed to predict the dependent variable sig.= .067 at p< .05.

Discussion

The hypothesis tested which stated that social intelligence (social skills, social awareness and social information process) will independently and jointly predict fear of negative evaluation was not confirmed, hence the hypothesis was rejected. The social awareness dimension of social intelligence positively predicted fear of negative evaluation among undergraduate students, this implies that an increase in social awareness among university students might bring about an increase in fear of negative evaluation. Being aware of the social environment the students find themselves can trigger anxiety, and getting a negative result or scolding from a lecturer can worsen the situation for the student because this might make them nurse the idea that they are not good enough to achieve their targeted goal, which will bring about fear of being evaluated negatively. Not wanting to be talked down on, shyness, fear of failure, and other factors are most times end product of social awareness. The ability to be aware of one

present social environment, the component that makes it up, the factors that determine it and the end product or what it can produce are extremely important. All this make up the awareness of social environment, and list factors can contribute to the variation of fear of negative evaluation, if the student don't manage the social awareness properly, it might contribute to increase in anxiety, because they will want to make a statement, if the desirable is not obtained, if the student is scared the wanted behaviour might not exhibited, then fear of negative evaluation will creep in.

Possessing the social communication skills and the ability to process the perceived information from the environment was said not to have predicted fear of negative evaluation. This result shows that the ability to communicate and interact in the social context cannot determine fear of negative evaluation, and also the ability to process information obtained from the environment is not a strong factor that can help to determine fear of negative evaluation. The study shows that these two factors are not key component to decide fear of negative evaluation.

The result obtained is not in congruity with the study carried out by Agata, Marianna and Azzurra (2012) which find out that all the dimensions of social intelligence significantly predicted fear of negative evaluation, and that the dimensions each can possess the strength to cause the presence of been evaluated negative. Either positively or negatively.

The result obtained shows that social awareness is strong factor that can determine fear of negative evaluation, that if not properly checkmated can bring about positive reaction to fear of been evaluated negatively. Hence, undergraduate student needs to work on the level of their social awareness, so as it can bring about negative presence of fear of been evaluated negatively

Implications of the findings

The result obtained was in congruity with cognitive behavioural theory and was adopted as the theoretical framework for this study because it stated that human functioning is based on the premises that thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are inextricably linked and that each of these aspects of human functioning continuously affects and influence student thought. Cognitive-behavioural theory posits those thoughts about the self, relationships, the world, and the future shape emotions and behaviours. The meaning and interpretation one give to an event determine how the individual reacts to situations, the way students perceive information will determine how much worth he or she will place on themselves, which might bring about social intelligence that will determine whether there will be presence or absence of fear of negative evaluation.

Also, the findings were in line with some of the empirical work reviewed. The outcome of this study has added to the literature which can be cited by future researchers.

The result obtained shows that social awareness positively predicted fear of negative evaluation. Hence, parents and caregivers should assist undergraduate students to always prepare for the worst, so that when it comes, they will know how to handle the situation. School management should introduce a course in self-management and self-awareness which will help to deal with the issue of over-expectations from the environment. Parents and caregivers on the other side should always give words of encouragement to their wards, this will help to slow down the over expectations from the social angle.

Limitation of the study

Some factors militated against this study, one of such is the sampled population. Sampling the participants during exams period reduces the numbers of participants, more students would have participated assuming students were sampled outside examination period.

Insecurity in the region affected the school calendar. Unnecessary call for sit at home by non-state authorities, frequent kidnapping and other insecurity factors reduces the numbers of days students comes to school, which reduces the numbers of participants.

Some demographic variables were left unanswered by the participants which lead to the researcher not including the outcome in the study.

Suggestion for further study

Future researcher should consider sampling population of students who are not writing exams, so as to give room for more participants to take part in the study.

A suitable sampling technique should be considered by future researchers because this will give room for the selection of a larger population.

The future researcher should consider arranging the demographic variables in such a way that the participants will not leave them unattended.

Summary and Conclusion

The study investigated the moderating role of self-esteem on social intelligence as a predictor of fear of negative evaluation among undergraduate students, and findings revealed that only social awareness positively predicted fear of negative evaluation and self-esteem only moderated social awareness to positively predicted fear of negative evaluation. While other dimensions failed to predict fear of negative evaluation. Hence, clinical psychologists should assist undergraduate to always prepare for the worse so when it comes they will know how to handle the situation.

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