

## ROLE OF FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION AND ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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### Abstract

The present study was aimed to identify the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy among young adults. It was hypothesized that females are more vulnerable to fear of negative evaluation as compared to males and that they have more tendency to have affected academic self-efficacy as compared to males because of the dread of being negatively evaluated. It is a quantitative research in which a correlational research design was used and non-probability sampling technique was preferred to gather data. A total sample of 89 participants in which 45 were females and 44 were males were recruited through convenient sampling technique. To find out the correlation between the defined variables two scales were added to the questionnaire. These scales are Fear of Negative Evaluation scale and Academic Self-Efficacy scale. It was used to assess the level of fear of negative evaluation among young adults. The academic self-efficacy scale was used to assess the level of academic self-efficacy among young adults. As this study was quantitative in nature SPSS software was used to analyse the data collected from the participants. Independent sample t-test was run on SPSS software and spearman correlation was applied to check if there's relationship between fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy. It was found that females scored high on fear of negative evaluation scale and low on academic self-efficacy scale as compared to males. It was inferred that females are more vulnerable to fear of negative evaluation and have poor academic self-efficacy as compared to males.

### INTRODUCTION

Increment in student anxiety has been one of the major concerns for universities and colleges (Cooper et.al 2020). One of the features of anxiety that students feel is the fear of negative evaluation. According to cognitive theories, fear is caused by skewed information processing, especially when expecting a challenging event (Clark and McManus, 2002). During the university years, when a person leaves the family and opens up to the outside world,

especially when relationships with his or her social environment change and emotional changes begin, students are very concerned with the impressions they make on others and how they are perceived by them (Bozdak,2020). These students experience the fear that they will be negatively evaluated and adversely judged based on their performance such as presenting or speaking in front of the class and during viva in exams (Iqbal and Ajmal, 2018). Findings have shown that the fear of negative

evaluation has adverse effects on students performance (Idri and Akkar, 2018), which is directly related to students academic self-efficacy (Tsang, Hui and Law, 2012).

#### Fear

Fear is one of the primary and powerful emotions. Fear has such an overcoming ability on us that if we are not careful towards it, it can hold a ruling power over our intelligence and over all our activities in its own manner. Fear is the anticipation of any upcoming danger or threat to one's survival. (Lisa Fritscher, 2020). This survival may not be just related to our physical survival but also to our Psychological and mental health survival. The mechanisms through which fears are triggered by are explained by two most important perspectives; the cognitive perspective and the learning perspective.

According to cognitive perspective, whenever an individual considers the perceived absence of having a capacity to give an appropriate response to danger and threatening event then this kind of cognitive process will lead to feeling of fear and anxiety. (Lazarus, 1991). The learning perspective holds the concept that there is a specific evoking force involved in inducing fear and anxiety in someone and this evoking force must be experienced by an unfavourable, pain giving experience at first by individual causing him to experience the same feeling of fear in other such conditions. (Miller, 1948).

#### Fear of Negative Evaluation

Negative evaluation can be vastly considered as an evoking force to induce fear and anxiety in people. Negative evaluation is the degradation of someone by commenting on their shortcomings in a more challenging way. If we talk about young adults, they are more vulnerable to negative evaluation and the fear induced by negative evaluation can greatly affect their efficiency. Thus, fear of negative evaluation is an important and core factor influencing the academic life of young adults and affecting their efficacy and performance in academic life.

Scientifically termed as atychiphobia, fear of negative evaluation was primarily defined as the trait associated with the fear of anticipation

about other's evaluation, tension and anxiety over their negative evaluations and trying not to attend evaluative events where the chance of being evaluated would be higher according to them. Such a vulnerable state of personality is closely associated with nervousness, submissiveness, passivity and escape coping. (Milosevic, 2015).

Many of the young adults are studied and seen to get stuck in their academic performance because of the wide and drastic effects of the anticipated fear of negative evaluation and they reflected a very affected self-efficacy in this regard. To avoid such vulnerable situation they tend to be under the control of their fear and not giving their best output in academics, influencing their performance and self-efficacy drastically. They tend to avoid answering their teachers, presenting in front of class or being the spotlight due to the fear that they will be degraded for their perceived shortcomings. This pessimistic view about themselves make them disorganized with their speech and coordinated body movements while presenting in front of class or doing any academic activity (Wells, et al., 1995).

Due to the fear of negative evaluation young adults in their academic life do not want to be asked by their teachers to present in front of class, read out loud, give response during the lecture or have an assessment and quizzes. The reason is that they want to avoid humiliation, embarrassment, tension and anxiety and the feeling of being less worthy and being judged negatively by their classmates and teachers.

A study conducted through applying brief fear of negative evaluation scale and Dimensional Assessment of Personality Pathology-Basic Questionnaire concluded that fear of negative evaluation has genetic component as well. And due to such genes responsible for the fear of negative evaluation, other personality traits can also be affected such as anxiousness, nervousness, submissiveness, conservation and more. As fear of negative evaluation is proved to be genetically involved too in one's personality therefore it has greater influence on the way one responds to stimuli and can certainly affect one's behaviour. (Stein M. et. al. 2002).

Young adults' confidence is an important key factor in performing better in every field of life.

If young adults believe in themselves they can perform really well. In academic life if young adults are more positive and confident they will be willing to be in the spotlight in classroom without being feared of negative evaluation. As fear of negative evaluation is one of the main leading cause of students' low academic self efficacy, low self esteem, depression and anxiety during the class therefore researches have been conducted and are still conducting so as to identify and specify the effects of the fear of negative evaluation on young adults and search out for its solution to improve students' academic domain of life.

### **The word "Academic"**

Academic is a term that refers to, or is linked with, an academy or school, particularly one of higher learning. Another meaning of academic is that it is well-versed but unskilled in a given field. "Academic" Education is broadly described as learning that has a positive impact on one's life. Its major goal is to teach. The word "academic" has been linked with "university" by some systems; however this is not the case.

### **Academic Performance**

Academic performance refers to how well students succeed in a variety of subjects. It is the assessment of a student's ability in a variety of academic subjects. Classroom success, graduation rates, and standardized test results are commonly used by teachers and education officials to assess student achievement. Academic performance has been related to a variety of behavioural trends, including time management, active social relations, sleep period and quality, and involvement in sports (Lavin DE (1965) *The Prediction of Academic Performance*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York).

Students' academic performance is influenced by a variety of socioeconomic factors such as class attendance, family income, mother and father's education, teacher-student ratio, presence of a trained teacher in the school, student sex, and school distance. Academic achievement is critical because working people will require higher degrees of education to deal with the technologically deficient world.

### **Theory of Academic Performance**

Elger developed the theory of academic performance (ToP) (2007). Six core concepts are emphasized in the theory to establish a framework that may be utilized to explain performance as well as performance improvements. Producing valuable results is what it means to perform. According to the findings, the student's age had a substantial impact on their academic achievement. Academic performance was higher among the youngest students than among the oldest. He discovered that older students outperformed those who started education at a young age.

According to research, students who spent the majority of their time communicating on social media had better academic outcomes because they were able to communicate and generate ideas and concepts connected to their studies. Female academic accomplishment, both in terms of number and performance, has been discovered to be changing. In fact, as evidenced by the data, female students today not only outnumber male students, but also achieve higher marks in all subject groups.

One of the most significant parts of human resource development is education. Poor academic achievement not only generates low self-esteem in the child, but it also causes tremendous stress in the parents. Student academic performance and achievements are influenced by a teacher's influence, ideas, and expectations of his or her pupils' ability. When pupils are seen negatively by their teachers, such as being sluggish, unmotivated, or lacking in ability, they internalize those beliefs. Student Learning Style has a direct and considerable favourable effect on academic performance. The impact of a student's learning style on his or her personality is also beneficial and substantial. Personality has been discovered to have a considerable favourable impact on student achievement.

### **Self-Efficacy**

A person's core existence, especially as the subject of introspection or reflexive action that separates them from others. Your self is the deepest part of your identity, the sense of who you are. You disclose your actual self to someone else when you let them get to know you well. You're thinking about yourself or,

alternately, yourself if the subject of your thoughts is you. The word “self” comes from Old English and signifies “one’s own person.” As the object of its own reflecting consciousness, the self is an individual person. Because the self is a subject’s relation to another subject, it is inherently subjective. However, having a sense of self or self-hood should not be mistaken with subjectivity.

Now if we talk about the ability to achieve a desired or anticipated effect it is referred to as efficacy. The capacity to do a task at a satisfactory or expected level is referred to as efficacy. Although in pharmacology, a distinction is now often made between efficacy and effectiveness, the word derives from the same roots as effectiveness and has often been used interchangeably.

Self-efficacy is a person’s belief in his or her ability to carry out the actions required to achieve specified performance goals (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Self-efficacy refers to a person’s belief in their ability to manage their own motivation, behaviour, and social environment. Self-efficacy affects how hard one tries to modify risky behaviour and how determined one is to keep trying despite obstacles and failures that can derail motivation. Self-efficacy is linked to health behaviour directly, but it also has an indirect impact on health behaviour through its impact on objectives.

Self-efficacy is defined as the belief in one’s own ability to do a task successfully (Bandura, 1994). Every day, I work with students to critique their work, grade their performance, and provide professional comments.

According to research, young adults who have a high feeling of efficacy believe they can complete even the most challenging assignments. Faced with the prospect of failure, these students boost and maintain their efforts to succeed. They approach tough or dangerous situations with the assurance that they can handle them.

#### **Academic Self-Efficacy**

Young adults who question their capacity to complete tough tasks, on the other hand, regard these tasks as a danger and give up fast. This might result in task avoidance, inactivity, a

lack of participation, and surrender to failure (Bandura, 1994).

It’s a good idea to start with developing efficacy belief in the classroom. We’ve all seen how difficult it is for our students to stay motivated. Motivational adrenaline can be found in self-efficacy. Students who are confident and stress-free are more likely to be motivated. Students who are confident and stress-free are more likely to be motivated. Allow pupils extra time in class for self-observation, self-judgment, and self-reaction. Schedule proximal goals with care. Students lose the benefit of self-efficacy as the goal becomes further away.

As students track their progress, achieve their goals, and take on new challenges, their self-efficacy grows. Goals that are set too high or too low do not help people believe in their own ability to learn and accomplish. Although there is substantial evidence to support the direct effects of self-efficacy beliefs on academic achievement, few studies have looked into the motivational mechanism that mediates the self-efficacy-achievement relationship, which is necessary to understand how and why self-efficacy influences students’ academic achievement.

This study investigates the links between academic self-efficacy, students’ expectancy-value beliefs, teaching process satisfaction, and academic accomplishment from a socio-cognitive perspective. Its main goal is to discover some motivational-underlying processes that influence student achievement and happiness through academic self-efficacy.

One of the most essential aspects impacting academic achievement is academic self-efficacy. Academic self-efficacy refers to students’ views and attitudes about their capacities to succeed academically, as well as their belief in their capacity to complete academic assignments and understand the materials successfully. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy have outstanding performance as a result of their beliefs. Those who have high levels of self-efficacy have higher levels of dedication, effort, and tenacity, resulting in exceptional performance. Moreover those young adults who have high self-efficacy attribute their failures to a lack of effort rather than a lack of ability, whereas those who have low self-efficacy ascribe their failures to a lack of ability.

As a result, self-efficacy can influence task selection as well as task persistence. In other words, students with poor academic self-efficacy are more likely to be fearful of completing their assignments, avoid them, postpone them, and eventually abandon them. In this study the two main variables; fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy are linked together to find out the correlation between them and the effects they both have on each other in the case of young adults.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Fear of negative evaluation has been an important factor in determining how we behave in situations where there can be a chance of others evaluating us on the basis of our performance, actions etc. Any kind of social interaction, whether it is an event, a family function or in class, inescapably is prone to evaluation. Day to day interactions, inevitably, involve social evaluation (Schoeneman, 1983). Transforming and regulating behaviors by keeping in view these evaluations might have been evolutionary favourable (Gillbert, 2014). Almost all humans face these kinds of emotions or anxiety however some people are more conscious of this factor as compared to others and this does not quite have positive effect on their lives in domains of social, emotional and cognitive functioning (Reichenberger and Blechet, 2018).

When faced with one of three social situations: (1) interacting with an instructor during class, (2) interacting with other students during class, or (3) being asked to speak out in front of the entire class when a student did not volunteer, the majority of students believe they will be negatively evaluated. Worry of negative appraisal has been labelled as the source of this fear. This dread of negative evaluation is one's own thought, and it might manifest itself in one's conduct or performance as a result (Clark & Wells, 1995). People with social anxiety believe that social situations pose a danger. They fear negative evaluation, believing in particular that they are in danger of behaving in an inept and unacceptable fashion, and that such behaviour will have disastrous consequences in terms of loss of status, loss of worth, and rejection" (Clark & Wells, 1995).

People with social anxiety are too concerned about these occurrences and outcomes, both before and after social settings. Speaking or acting in ways that they believe will be embarrassing or humiliating, such as shaking, sweating, blushing, freezing, appearing stupid or incompetent, or looking anxious, are all common fears. They are afraid that others will make negative judgments about them, such as that they are anxious, stupid, crazy, boring, dirty, or unlikable. As a result, they make efforts to ensure that their fears do not come true, causing clinically significant distress and impairment, often across multiple domains of functioning. Consequently, everyone has a tendency to search the surrounding for negative evaluation by others (Rapee & Heinberg, 1997).

FNE is a prominent component of social anxiety, according to a large body of studies. For example, Leary, Kowalski, and Campbell (1988) looked into the role of self-consciousness in anxious and non-anxious people. Participants were asked to envision how they would be judged after a glimpse, a quick chat, or a long conversation in one of the presentational studies. Socially nervous participants, regardless of condition, believed they would be judged more adversely than non-anxious participants. In a follow-up study, socially anxious participants believed the evaluator would rate others similarly adversely, whereas non-Anxious participants believed they would be evaluated more positively than other participants.

Negative thoughts are also widespread in those who are afraid of negative appraisal, according to studies. Schulz, Alpers, and Hofmann (2008), for example, investigated the impact of negative self-focused thoughts and discovered that negative evaluative statements such as "What I say will certainly sound stupid" moderated the link between social anxiety and state anxiety.

During assessment procedures, those with greater levels of FNE are more prone to produce erroneous interpretations of neutral expressions (Winton et al., 1995). These behaviours, combined with the desire to make a good first impression, result in a disconnect between the individual's perceptions and actual performance, which raises the likelihood of

anxiety (Fay et al., 2008). FNE has been linked to social anxiety, according to Schreier and Heinrichs (2010), and has been reported to rise from childhood through adolescence. FNE has been linked to social phobia, somatic symptoms, and anxiety in recent studies. (Fay et al., 2008).

Rodebaugh et al. (2011) claimed that FNE is a precursor for social anxiety, regardless of whether the fear is acute or chronic. According to Winton et al. (1995), those who score high on the FNE endorse feelings of social anxiety and have higher levels of distress than those who score low on the FNE. Chen and Drummond (2008) discovered that individuals who reported higher levels of FNE had higher degrees of fear, humiliation, and trembling in a sample of undergraduate females.

Although SAD exists across the life span, the average age of onset is during mid-Adolescence (Alfano, Beidel, 2011). Assessment and evaluation methods are critical for assessing academic skill and performance and are a fundamental aspect of the educational experience. As a result, students are vulnerable to social encounters in which they may dread being poorly judged which may raise their academic stress and have an impact on their psychological symptoms. FNE is linked to depression, according to Wang et al. (2012), since negative appraisal from others can lead to a schema of personal failure, which can lead to depressed symptoms.

Worry of unfavourable assessment in university students refers to the fear of a student's opinion of one's personality, which can lead to the development of social anxiety in young adults. It is related to negative assessment and social phobia, such as dread of delivering classroom presentations, fear of speaking in public, and fear of providing viva exam. Students' social anxiety is caused by their belief that others judge them adversely. Negative assessment is characterized by emotions of embarrassment, inadequacy, inferiority, despair, and humiliation as a result of worries about other people's assessments, anxiety over their negative assessments, and the expectation that other people will assess oneself in a different way. (Iqbal and Ajmal, 2018).

A wide range of variables has been studied along with FNE in various classroom and other

environments where students have to perform. Many studies show how fear of negative evaluation affects a student's performance. Findings of a study done by Amna Iqbal and Amna Ajmal at Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan in 2018 showed a positive relationship between fear of negative evaluation and social anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation was found to be an inciting component of social anxiety and that undergraduates show more social anxiety.

Nancy L. Kocovski and Norman S. Endler (2000) did a research that looks on the relationship between self-control, social anxiety, and the fear of negative feedback. They saw the fear of being judged negatively fill in as a buffer between self-support and social tension, and self-control and social anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation and social tension are directly linked and found in young adults (university students). Students judge themselves based on the perceptions of others and do not feel at ease in social situations that cause them anxiety.

According to research conducted by Professor Hamit Yukuş in 2013 on music teacher candidates who were undergraduate students in the university of Gaziosmanpaşa, it was concluded that fear of negative evaluation has significant effect on how these teachers performed. The sample size included 82 participants and the results showed that the candidates performed well when they were alone compared to when they performed in front of others due to the fear and anxiety of possible judgment and scrutiny from others.

Student's academic experiences have been shown to be negatively affected by high levels of anxiety (McKeachie 1984; Vitasari et al. 2010). Moreover, Anxiety, in particular, has been shown to have a negative impact on student cognitive and affective outcomes (Bostani et al. 2014). Students have reported that one of the things that trigger anxiety is the opportunity for social evaluation (England et al. 2017), while in another study, thematic analysis of interviews from university and college students suggest that anxiety is linked to the fear of being judged unfavourably by others (Cooper et al. 2017; Downing et al. 2020).

Another study was conducted on students enrolled in college science classrooms in

2020 to see how active learning practices influenced student anxiety. The change in study methods from traditional learning to active learning where the students are supposed to participate actively in the classroom has a considerable effect on anxiety the students feel during these classrooms. After interviewing 29 students enrolled in community colleges in US, the study reported that students face anxiety, dread and fear of negative evaluation while participating in activities such as speaking up in front of the whole class or explaining concepts to other students fearing that they might explain a concept incorrect (Cooper, Downing, Gin, Cala and Brownell, 2020). In another research based on active learning classes, cold calling and random calling, according to Downinpupils, simply added to their anxiousness. The fear of negative evaluation, or the dread associated with being unfavourably evaluated while participating in a social situation, was identified as the primary construct underlying students' high levels of anxiety associated with speaking in front of the entire class when they do not volunteer, based on the interviews (Cooper, Brownell and Downing, 2018).

M.B. Shabani (2012) conducted a study to test the levels and sources of language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation among Iranian EFL learners which consisted a sample of 61 EFL learners. The research showed that fear of failing the class and leaving a negative impression on others considerably affected language anxiety. The study further explored that there were no substantial differences between the anxiety levels of male and female learners. Another study of similar nature was conducted by Dr. Selami Aydin (2008) in Balikesir University, Turkey where a sample of 112 English Language learners were included. The most important factor that the study indicated was that fear of negative evaluation itself played a significant role in language anxiety. The final results included three factors to be the inciting sources of language anxiety among the students. The first factor was the preparation level of the students. Students felt more anxiety when they thought they were not prepared for the lesson. The second

factor turned out to be the expectations of teachers and peers. The third anxiety inducing factor was the fear of possible correction from the teacher in front of others. All these factors indicate fear of negative evaluation by others while speaking up in the class, making mistakes that would incite correction or judgement from others and failure in the course.

A study performed on final year undergraduate nursing students to check how social evaluation anxiety would affect simulation based learning. In the three clinically designed environments where 1 to 3 evaluators were present, students accompanied by greater numbers showed to have greater anxiety and performed poorer than those having less number of evaluators (Mills, Carter, Rudd, Claxton, O'Brien, 2016).

Another variable studied extensively along with fear of negative evaluation is perfectionism. Wayne Stephan, Amber Stephan, and Rosealee Palmer conducted a correlational study with 786 undergraduate students at Huntington University in 2008. They discovered that fear of negative evaluation has a positive direct association with perfectionism, and that fear of negative evaluation is more closely linked to the unhealthy form of perfectionism. Furthermore, according to Flett, Hewitt, and Greene (2004), perfectionism in social activities is strongly linked to social anxiety. As a result, perfectionism and its components cause a fear of unfavourable assessment, which is linked to high levels of social anxiety (Saboonchi and Lundh, 1997).

On these two variables, an independent t test revealed the significant differences between males and females, as well as between undergraduate and postgraduate students. Female students had higher levels of social anxiety and fear of unfavourable assessment than male students; similarly, undergraduate students had higher levels of social anxiety (Ajmal and Iqbal, 2018).

The findings revealed a robust link between test anxiety and exam marks, as well as self-efficacy and exam grades. Furthermore, multiple linear regression analyses revealed that test anxiety and self-efficacy level might predict exam grade, and that self-efficacy reduced the effects of anxiety (Barrows, Dunn and Lloyd, 2013).

Academic self-efficacy was positively associated with academic performance, and this association was most pronounced among women students (Mufla et.al. 2019). Students who thought they were more efficient in their examination completion reported higher grades. Appropriate coping strategies (i.e., rational coping) can help dentistry students minimize stress and lead to enhanced academic performance by influencing exam-related self-efficacy evaluations (Crego et.al. 2016).

A research studying the relationship between academic self-efficacy, self-esteem and procrastination in undergraduate psychology students by Nader Hajloo (2014) reported that higher level of procrastination was associated with lower self-efficacy and self-esteem positively correlated with self-esteem.

An overall effect size of 0.08 was found in a meta-analysis of 187 papers encompassing 247 independent investigations (N = 68,429) on gender differences in academic self-efficacy, with a minor difference favouring males. The content domain was found to be a significant moderator in explaining effect size variation in a moderator analysis. Females have stronger self-efficacy in language arts than males. Males, on the other hand, had stronger self-efficacy in mathematics, computer science, and social sciences than females. Academic self-efficacy gaps between men and women vary with age. The responders above the age of 23 had the biggest effect size. Significant variations in mathematics self-efficacy in males appeared in late adolescence (Huang, 2013).

An extensive research has been done studying the fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy with a wide range of constructs, however little can be found on how both of these effect each other especially in the region of Swabi. Moreover, differences based on sex have been identified in academic self-efficacy while they are still no clear differences on how fear of negative evaluation effect males and females. This research is aimed at finding the relationship between academic self-efficacy and fear of negative evaluation and how they affect the university students of Swabia. Furthermore, it is aiming at determining any possible gender differences in fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy.

#### Objectives of the study:

- To investigate the prevalence of fear of negative evaluation and the role it plays in academic performance of university students.
- To find out whether fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy are correlated.
- To navigate the extent of fear of negative evaluation among the university students and how this fear effect academic self-efficacy.
- To find out whether there is any difference in the extent of fear of negative evaluation effect males and females students.
- To investigate the differences between academic self-efficacy of male and female university students.

This study aims at finding out the possible effects that fear of negative evaluation might have on student's academic performance and the related academic self-efficacy. It is to make students aware of how fear of evaluation leads them and most of the time hind opportunities to achievement. It will give them insight into their own fears and their anxiety and will help them find ways to achieve through these fears.

This study will also help in opening ways to determine techniques in how classroom environment should be dealt with in order to reduce fear of negative evaluation and anxiety among the students.

Fear of negative evaluation is one of the important factors that determine the extent and frequency of our social interactions. No social interaction is free of social evaluation however this apprehension of being judged negatively might increase in some situations and its effect can be overwhelming for the bearer. In these situations, it can greatly affect the performance of the individual.

The aim of this research is to explore how fear of negative evaluation affects academic self-efficacy of the students and to see how changes can be brought to minimize its negative effects in classrooms... Moreover, it aims to find any significant differences in how males and females experience fear of negative evaluation an academic self-efficacy.

#### Hypothesis

- Students with high fear of negative evaluation have low academic self-efficacy.
- Female adult students are more vulnerable to poor academic self-efficacy as compared to male adult students.
- Female adult students experience more fear of negative evaluation as compared to male adult students.

#### Operational Definitions:

**Fear of negative evaluation:** Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) is regarded as a defining feature of social anxiety. According to cognitive theories, fear is caused by skewed information processing, especially when expecting a frightening occurrence (Clark and McManus, 2002).

**Academic Self-Efficacy:** Academic self-efficacy is defined as “an individual's belief (conviction) that they can successfully achieve a designated level on an academic task or attain a specific academic goal” (Bandura, 1997; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

#### METHODOLOGY

This research study aimed to find the correlational relationship between two constructs, i.e. Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Self-Efficacy which happens to effect students at different times. Data required for this study involved quantitative data from participants who were young adults, temporary or permanent residents of district Swabi and were enrolled in any university.

Research Design: Research design of this study is correlational.

**Population of study:** Young adult, people in between the age range of 18-25 and students who were residents of District Swabi were targeted as the population of study.

**Sampling:** Convenient sampling method was used due to Covid 19 restrictions.

**Demographics:** The demographic information that was required for this study included;

- Residential district
- Age of the participants
- Gender
- Their respective institute of education.

**Method of Data Collection:** Data from participants was collected through a thoroughly developed Google form which was circulated among the students as physically approaching the participants was prohibited as per Covid-19 guidelines.

**Participants:** 89 participants completed the thoroughly developed Google form that consisted some of their demographic information along with the Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Self-Efficacy questionnaires. Among the 89 participants, 45 were females and 44 were males, belonging to various socio-economic backgrounds. Convenience sampling was used due to time shortage and Covid-19 restrictions. Data was collected from different departments of BS and Masters Program students of various universities of district Swabi.

**Inclusion Criteria:** Students available having an age range of 18-27 years enrolled in any university of Swabi.

**Exclusion Criteria:** Students above the age range of 18-27 years and belong to other Universities are excluded.

#### Instruments:

**Fear of negative evaluation scale:** The Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (FNE) is a 30-item, self-rated scale used to measure social anxiety. The FNE was developed by David Watson and Ronald Friend and described in an article published in the Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology in 1969. The FNE is used widely still and has been translated and validated in other languages.

**Academic self-efficacy scale:** The Academic Self-efficacy scale which was developed by Abdul Gafoor k. and P. Muhammad Ashraf (2006) is a 40 items questionnaire which assesses the academic self-efficacy of high education learners. This scale tries to assess academic dimensions as memory, learning, problem solving ability, comprehension concentration and so on. This scale is based on Albert Bandura self-efficacy theory which he proposed in the framework of social cognitive

theory. The scale is widely used to assess

different dimensions of learning abilities.

**Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 1**

Frequency and percentage of Students

Characteristics of Participants	Categories	f	%
Gender	Male	44	49.4
	Female	45	50.6
Participants' Age	18	4	4.5
	19	8	9
	20	12	13.5
	21	15	16.9
	22	16	18
	23	24	27
	24	6	6.7
	25	3	3.4
Participants' Education	27	1	1.1
	Undergraduate	78	87.6
	Graduate	11	12.4
	Postgraduate	0	0

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the study variables. Demographic information of the respondents is based upon their gender, age and education level. Table is showing frequency and percentage of students. 87.6% of the students were under graduate while 12.4% of the students were graduate. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the age group of the participants. 27% of the participants were 23 years of age which is the most frequent age

group. 18% of the participants were 22 years of age. 16.9% of the participants were 21 years of age. 13.5% of the participants were 20 years of age. 9% of the participants were 19 years of age. 6.7% of the participants were 24 years of age. 4.5% of participants were 18 years of age. 3.4% of participants were 25 years of age and 1.1% Of them were 27 years of age. The ratio of males to females was 44 to 45 respectively.

**Table 2**

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Gender of Participants	1.51	0.503	-0.023	-2.046
Participants' Age	21.67	1.814	-0.037	-0.119
Participants' Education	1.12	0.331	2.327	3.492

Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics of the study variables. Mean of the gender was 1.51 with standard deviation of 0.503. Mean of participants' age was 21.67 with standard deviation of 1.814. Mean of their education level was 1.12 with standard deviation of 0.331.

Skewness for the gender, age and education level of participants was skewed which means the data for these variables is not normally distributed.

**Table 3**

Descriptive Statistics of FNE Total and ASE Total

Variables	M	F	Skewness	Kurtosis
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FNE	44	45	0.875	2.954
ASE	44	45	-0.011	0.093

This table indicates the skewness and kurtosis of Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Self Efficacy. The skewness distribution is 0.875 and the kurtosis distribution is 2.954 for fear of negative evaluation. For Academic Self Efficacy the skewness distribution is -0.011 and the kurtosis distribution is 0.093. The skewness and kurtosis values for both the variables indicate that they are not normally distributed.

**Results**

The overall results of the study indicate that there is a negative relationship between fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy among young adults. Students who reported

higher levels of fear of being negatively evaluated tended to have lower confidence in their academic abilities. Additionally, gender differences were observed, where female students showed slightly higher levels of fear of negative evaluation and comparatively lower academic self-efficacy than male students. Although the differences were not highly significant, the pattern suggests that fear of negative evaluation may play an important role in shaping students' academic beliefs and performance. Overall, the findings support the hypothesis that increased fear of negative evaluation is associated with reduced academic self-efficacy among university students.

**Table 4**  
**Demographic Characteristics of students**

Demographic Characteristics	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Males	44	49.4
Females	45	50.6
<b>Participants' Age</b>		
18	4	4.5
19	8	9
20	12	13.5
21	15	16.9
22	16	18
23	24	27
24	6	6.7
25	3	3.4
27	1	1.1
<b>Participants' Education</b>		
Undergraduate	78	87.6
Graduate	11	12.4
Postgraduate	0	0.00

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of the study variables. Demographic information of the respondents is based upon their gender, age and education level. Table is showing frequency and percentage of students. 87.6% of the students were undergraduate while 12.4% of the students were graduate. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the age group of the participants. 27% of the participants were 23 years of age which is the most frequent age

group. 18% of the participants were 22 years of age. 16.9% of the participants were 21 years of age. 13.5% of the participants were 20 years of age. 9% of the participants were 19 years of age. 6.7% of the participants were 24 years of age. 4.5% of participants were 18 years of age. 3.4% of participants were 25 years of age and 1.1% Of them were 27 years of age. The ratio of males to females was 44 to 45 respectively.

**Table 5**  
Results of Independent t-test for Gender

Variables	Males		Females		t	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Level of fear of negative evaluation	17.84	5.00	17.933	6.716	-0.073	0.942	
Level of academic Self-efficacy	1.32	10.317	1.285	13.084	1.468	0.146	

Table 5 indicates that females score high level of fear of negative evaluation as compared to males and low scores on level of academic self-

efficacy. Table 2 shows Mean, Standard deviation and t value.

**Table 6**  
Correlation between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Self Efficacy

Variables	Fear of Negative Evaluation	Academic Self-Efficacy
Fear of Negative Evaluation	-	-0.027**
Academic self-efficacy	-0.027 **	-

Table 6 indicates correlation which is negatively significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed) (r= -0.027\*\*, p<0.05)

## DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to investigate the correlation between fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy among young adults currently enrolled in any of the universities of Swabi. A total of 89 students completed the Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Self-Efficacy questionnaires. The results of the study showed a negative correlation between the two constructs representing that fear of negative evaluation negatively effects academic self-efficacy, thus proving the first hypothesis of this research study; "Students with high fear of negative evaluation have lower academic self-efficacy".

Previous researches done on the same constructs have almost revealed the same results. Research by Bandura (1993) revealed lower self-efficacy to be associated with high fear of failure. Students' concentration shifts to worrying about their poor grades when they start doubting their own capabilities. In another study, where social anxiety and

academic self-efficacy were studied side by side, it was shown that students who had lower

academic self-efficacy rated the courses as high anxiety inducing while students with higher academic self-efficacy reported them as less anxiety inducing. At the beginning of the term, students who were more socially anxious and feared failure in the finals had low academic self-efficacy. However an increase in academic self-efficacy played a role as mediator between social anxiety and final grades in the course, representing the negative relationship between the two (Hood et al., 2021).

Study conducted by Hood et al. (2020) on first generation college students who were new to higher education showed higher anxiety, anticipating to do poorly in the course and attaining lower final grades, representing lower academic self-efficacy. While continuing generations of students showed less anxiety and higher academic self-efficacy. Experimental design was applied to study the effect of messages from teachers prior to a test or exam on fear appeals and academic self-efficacy of the students. The study revealed that students with higher academic self-efficacy perceived the fear eliciting messages as challenging. These were the students who expected to do well on the tests or exams. Students, who did not expect to

do well and had lower academic self-efficacy, appraised these messages as threatening, thus eliciting fear of failure and negative assessment (Putwain and Symes, 2014).

An extensive research based on academic self-efficacy over the years has revealed that academic self-efficacy is higher for females in some subjects while males having a higher academic self-efficacy in others. A research conducted by Lars Fallan and Leive Opstad in 2016 on male and female students in a course in Principles of Economics suggest that female students have significantly lower self-efficacy level as compared to their male peers. Another study revealed that male students have considerably higher academic self-efficacy in computing and marketing while lower academic self-efficacy in statistics as compared to their female peers (Busch, 1995).

Research has shown that female students display higher academic self-efficacy in language arts while males score higher in mathematics, computer and social sciences than females (Huang, 2013).

This research study aimed at finding the overall gender differences in academic self-efficacy. Our hypothesis 2 of this study suggested that, "male adult students have generally higher academic self-efficacy as compared to female adult students", which was proven to be true by the end results. A sample of both males and females students from heterogeneous department or fields were studied. Mean value of male students indicated higher academic self-efficacy (Mean=1.32) than female students (Mean=1.285).

Gender differences in fear of negative evaluation and social anxiety have been mixed throughout various research studies. Some researches has shown that females score higher on social anxiety as compared to their male counterparts ((Lee, Ng, Kwok, & Tsang, 2009; Wittchen, Stein, & Kessler, 1999). While other researchers found no significant gender differences (Bourdon et al., 1988; Lee, Lee, & Kwok, 2005).

However a greater number of researches, if studied, around different domains of life have found females to score higher on fear of negative evaluation and social anxiety scales. Female pupils are more afraid of being judged negatively than male students. The value of

dread of unfavourable assessment in male and female students differs significantly. Girls are more concerned than boys about what others are thinking or evaluating about their behaviour, particularly unfavourable peer group appraisal (La Greca & Lopez, 1998). Girls may also be able to internalise their difficulties more successfully than boys, making them more vulnerable to negative feedback (La Greca & Lopez, 1998).

Men have an overall low level of fear of negative evaluation as compared to women (Crawford et al. 2015). A research conducted on high school students revealed that female students reported more symptoms of social anxiety as compared to male students (Dell'osso et al. 2002).

Atasoy, Karabulut and Yalçinkaya (2016) in their study on fear of negative evaluation and appearance anxiety, in which various students engaged in futsal participated, found that female students involved in the game showed higher fear of negative evaluation in comparison to male students.

A sample of 230 students was studied by Ajmal and Iqbal (2018) where brief fear of negative evaluation and social anxiety scales were completed by the participants. The study revealed that female students showed higher fear of negative assessment and negative judgment in comparison with the male students. Most of the above research studies mentioned are consistent with one of the current research hypothesis, "Female adult students experience more fear of negative evaluation as compared to male adult students." Statistical analysis of the data collected from the students proves the above hypothesis to be true.

Results of this study show descriptive statistics of the study variables. Demographic information consist of age, educational institution, 87.6% of the students were undergraduate while 12.4% of the students were graduate. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the age group of the participants. 27% of the participants were 23 years of age which is the most frequent age group. 18% of the participants were 22 years of age. 16.9% of the participants were 21 years of age. 13.5% of the participants were 20 years of age. 9% of the participants were 19 years of age. 6.7% of the

participants were 24 years of age. 4.5% of participants were 18 years of age. 3.4% of participants were 25 years of age and 1.1% of them were 27 years of age. The ratio of males to females was 44 to 45 respectively.

The correlation coefficient, "r" derived through statistical analysis of the data collected was -0.027, a negative value indicating that there exists a negative correlation between fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy. This proves the first hypothesis of this research study which claims that students with high fear of negative evaluation have low academic self-efficacy. This result is also consistent with previous research done on the same constructs. Mean value of Academic Self-Efficacy for females is 1.285 which is lower than the mean value for males i.e. 1.32. It indicates that female's adult students have lower academic self-efficacy as compared to male adult students, thus proving the second hypothesis of this research.

Female students scored higher than males, on fear of negative evaluation scale. The mean value for female students is 17.933 and that for male students is 17.84. These values represent that female adult's students experience higher fear of negative evaluation as compared to male adult students, thus proving the third hypothesis of the study to be true.

### Conclusion

We conclude that fear of negative evaluation plays a negative role in students' academic self-efficacy because these two variables are negatively correlated with each other. It indicates that whenever a student has a belief that they are being negatively evaluated by classmates, teachers and other people in their social group, it will affect their academic self-efficacy negatively. The dread and anxiety due to the feeling that one is being negatively evaluated by others can lower down one's potential of doing well in a classroom. Such fear effects the efficiency of a student in a classroom such as more confusion and blunders during delivering a presentation to the class, effected interaction with classmates, not being able to talk to teachers because of thinking of being negatively evaluated by them and so on. It implies that fear of negative evaluation has the tendency to lower down the confidence to

give more input into academic activities. Moreover this study also concluded that females are more vulnerable to fear of negative evaluation as compared to males. There is probability that in a given situation if chances of negative evaluation are high females, as compared to males, will have more affected academic self-efficacy. These inferences are made because females scored high on the scale for the fear of negative evaluation and scored low on the scale for academic self-efficacy as compared to males. The correlation statistics between fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy imply that the more the fear of negative evaluation is experienced by individual the less will be their academic self-efficacy. It also implies that those who have more confidence and potential to do well in academics are highly believed to have less or no fear of being negatively evaluated. Thus fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy are inversely correlated to each other.

### Limitations

The study has the following limitations;

- For the study, the sample size was small (N=89), due to which the study cannot be generalized.
- The research is based on quantitative research methods. Results are statistically generalized based on quantitative methods.
- The research targeted the population of only one district of Pakistan and the sample is limited to one district only.
- The research is based on Pakistani norms, culture, and values. It cannot work in any other society.
- The result of the study cannot be generalized.

### Recommendations

The current research was conducted to identify the impact of influence of fear of negative evaluation and academic self-efficacy among university students. The idea of dread of fear of negative evaluation and its effect on academic performances is exceptionally wide. More work ought to be done to investigate all the more profoundly. New analysis can investigate their ideas in more profundity with new varieties. Hence, conference to emphasize the importance of academic self-efficacy could be held for teacher and students. This way their awareness on the subject could be raised. Additionally psycho educational programs could be structured for students to control fear and raise ASE level. Further research should be carried out on this topic for more reliable results. The research can be carried out for a qualitative study with different strategy and methodology. Finally, future research could explore the associations among these variables in other populations, such as, college students from other majors, younger children or other cultural groups at high risk for being negatively affected by academic stress due to socio-cultural or environmental factors.

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