

Too Anxious to Speak: Assessing the Impact of Social Anxiety on High School Students' Self-Esteem, Academic Performance, and Coping Strategies

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Abstract. Social anxiety is one of the most prevalent mental health issues students experience. It is the excessive worry on negative opinions about oneself from people. This study analyzes relative impacts of social anxiety on high school students' academic performance and self-esteem, and evaluates what stimulates social anxiety problems among high school students and how they overcome it. A phenomenological approach was utilized to examine experiences of 12 high school students from Central Luzon State University, Philippines. Through Social Cognitive Theory, the researchers explored the cognitive, social, and behavioral components that contributed to effects of social anxiety on high school students' self-esteem, academic performance, and coping strategies. Data were gathered through semi-structured audio-recorded interviews and were analyzed thematically. Results revealed various factors, including environmental, negative experiences, and inner conflicts that caused social anxiety. Students suffering from social anxiety struggle academically while building relationships with peers as well. Overcoming social anxiety is challenging and effective coping strategy helps reduce students' anxiety. Collectively, social anxiety significantly impacts academic performance, self-esteem, and coping strategies.. This study would contribute to literature and the educational field as it could serve as a guide to what actions should be implemented to improve the mental health of high school students through better guidance on coping strategies, which was revealed to be lacking. Therefore, school-based anxiety treatments, as well as socio-academic programs, must be concretized to develop social skills and succeed in future endeavors. This study would benefit literature and the educational field as it could guide them to what actions should be made to improve the mental health of high school students through better guidance on coping strategies, which was revealed to be lacking.

Keywords: Social anxiety; High school students; Self-esteem; Coping strategy; Academic performance.

1.0 Introduction

The human being is a social animal who interacts with his fellow members and leads a social life (Moghtader, 2019). Although not a new concern, mental health is still an increasingly challenging issue among high school students. A fundamental human right is access to stable mental health (World Health Organization, 2022). Students in higher education face mental health challenges, and poor mental health affects their attitude towards it, negatively impacting their self-reassurance (Kotera & Maughan, 2020). The prevalence of social anxiety and how it relates to students' social abilities have been the subject of several research studies (Thompson et al., 2019). According to The Lancet Global Health (2020), social anxiety affects the world's economy by more than \$1 trillion annually.

Interpersonal communication is one of the ventures required for students to affect their education positively (Luan et al., 2022). Those suffering from social anxiety experience difficulties, whereas some may not even know they suffer from it (Jefferies & Ungar, 2020). Aftermaths of social anxiety, such as distress and impairments, are experienced by adolescents, especially students (Hunt, 2019). Students who suffer from social anxiety are provoked by school activities such as reporting in class or completing a project that demands an audience. Leigh & Clark (2018) defined social anxiety as the dread of being mocked by people. Exposure to such a feared situation often causes anxiety, which can occur as a situationally bound or predisposed panic attack (Richards, 2022). Social anxiety is among most prevalent psychological issues that students face (Luan et al., 2022), thus resulting in diverse coping strategies for them to subsist.

Social anxiety can be incredibly overwhelming and debilitating, inducing immense stress. Coping strategies have a significant role in helping those suffering from social anxiety attain more balanced mental health and reduce stress (Abouammoh et al., 2020). Individuals can learn to handle the intense stress and anxiety that might accompany social anxiety by participating in healthy coping strategies such as engaging in recreational activities and socializing. However, some people also utilize unhealthy coping mechanisms like self-blame and avoidance (Ching et al., 2020), which are likely to impact their self-esteem negatively. In addition, social anxiety often leads to avoidant behavior, which is observed in students that skip classes, work independently, and avoid social interactions (Karasewich & Kuhlmeier, 2020). Social avoidance declines as communication desire rises, leading to low rates of relaxed social deferral in interpersonal communication (Mustafa & Aykut, 2018). Studies have shown that a change in coping strategies could lead to a better understanding and a change in the social anxiety of individuals (Brouzos et al., 2019).

Self-esteem is one factor that affects social anxiety, especially from a student's perspective on themselves. Filippello's (2020) study on students' behavior showed that students with high self-esteem have higher expectations for themselves and believe that they are competent once they satisfy them, which leads to the growth of academic responsibility and self-esteem. Self-esteem and academic performance are connected, as shown by a study by Akinleke (2021), that students with relatively soaring self-esteem are more successful in their educational paths. This resulted in the conclusion that a student's perspective on themselves and educational success are connected (Dolgova et al., 2021) thus, impacting their mental health. Self-esteem and different facets of social assistance were mediators in the correlations between anxiety, loneliness, and social skills (So & Fiori, 2022).

Communication is essential for students' rapid cognition, emotion, and behavior development. An individual's social interactions and skills are a natural part of development (Moss & Moses, 2018). Students in high school are mostly exposed to school projects that help them improve their social and communication skills. Social skills influence high academic performance (Torres et al., 2020). Developing high school students' social skills may be beneficial later in life. Students must have strong social skills, especially as they enter college. Improving students' social skills could benefit their emotional control and overall performance in school (Salavera et al., 2019).

Poor academic performance is one of the adverse student outcomes linked to social anxiety. Given that it is connected to lower academic achievement (Leigh et al., 2021), the educational context appears stressful for socially anxious students (Archbell & Coplan, 2022). As a result of its negative effects on learning performance and general well-being, social anxiety is regarded as a severe issue of mental health among students (Nualnong, 2019). They acquire limited chances of learning by rejecting interaction, hence the adverse effect on their academic performance. Although social anxiety is widespread, studies have shown that only 35% of individuals receive medication.

The Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Albert Bandura, explains human behavior as a result of interactions between personal, behavioral, and environmental elements. This theory is relevant to the effects of social anxiety on high school students, suggesting that social anxiety can lead to negative self-beliefs and cognitive distortions, affecting cognitive processes, motivation, and academic outcomes. The study suggests that educational institutions play a vital role in addressing students' mental health issues, and treatment for social anxiety is best conducted in a school environment (Cohen et al., 2020). This study, based on the Social Cognitive Theory, can inform the improvement of guidance and counseling programs, driving educational institutions towards a more structured and inclusive curriculum.

1.1 Social Anxiety as Perceived by Students

Social anxiety is classified as part of the most prevalent mental illnesses students face daily (Luan et al., 2022). It is indicated by an excessive worry about negative opinions about oneself from people in a social setting (Lin et al., 2019). A study conducted by Ma & Lin (2022) showed that students' interpersonal communication abilities are negatively influenced by social anxiety. Furthermore, a study by Akçakoyun (2018) showed that 22.4% of students experience social anxiety, justifying how it engulfed their daily lives and livelihood. Socially anxious students experienced a significantly lower standard of living (Alsamghan, 2020).

Students are obliged to make interpersonal interactions at school, such as public speaking, that cause distress among individuals who experienced social anxiety (Paccarangan, 2018). Social anxiety adversely affected communication with educators, economic functioning, and student experiences (Archbell & Coplan, 2022). Tayag & Gonzales (2021) stated that it has a negative effect as people with social anxiety are afraid of negative social feedback, which lead them to engage in perfectionism and even perfectionistic self-representation.

According to Boyle (2021), students who experienced social anxiety encountered physical symptoms of fear such as rapid breathing and heartbeats. Additionally, in a study by Kozan & Arslan (2022), emotional schemas such as guilt, discrepancy, consensus, and seeing emotions as dangerous significantly correlated with social phobia. Furthermore, learners that have social phobia are most likely inclined to remember social experiences negatively (Gong et al., 2023). According to Yaffe (2021), the students' social anxiety was an indication of their imposter expressions, unfavorably impacted their overall quality of life, especially in school. Likewise, Alsamghan's (2020) study showed that students' average scores for quality of life depreciate as they experience social anxiety more than those who do not have it.

Procrastination had a favorable relationship with social anxiety. Previous studies showed that procrastination is more common in people with social anxiety. Ko & Chang (2019) explained that people tend to put off tasks out of fear of failure, negative feedback, and other unpleasant or disagreeable situations. Various studies showed that treatment and proper recognition of students' mental health, particularly those with social anxiety, have an extra effort to eradicate students' social anxiety (Hajure & Abdu, 2022). A proper intervention of the educational community by implementing efforts is needed to prevent students from acquiring social anxiety (Desalegn et al., 2019).

1.2 Social Skills Influencing Academic Performance

Social skills are intellectual capacities that allow someone to engage efficiently and appropriately in a particular social setting (MacCann et al., 2020). Students need these skills due to their relation in context with academic performance and social life (Suryaningrum, 2021). Social skills and outcomes related to mental health have been linked in several studies (Moeller & Seehuus, 2019). Given that research has linked anxiety symptoms to issues with behaviors involving socializing and academics, students with social anxiety may suffer interpersonal and scholastic difficulties (De Lijster et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2022).

Based on a framework developed by Farrington and colleagues, Farruggia et al. (2016) discovered that academic perception, schooling techniques, interpersonal skills, and school engagement contribute to academic accomplishment. Thus, people who lack social skills often encounter tension and solitude which raised the probability of mental and physical health problems (Segrin, 2019). In an academic context, students' mental health affect their social skills which are great determining factors for their academic success. With these, it is clear that academic stress and social anxiety varies depending on an individual's emotional intelligence score (Cejudo et al., 2019). Vilaplana-Perez et al. (2020) stated that social anxiety contributed to the academic underachievement of students. Additionally, the degree of anxiety in students affected their self-capacity in terms of academics (Hood et al., 2021).

As shown in a study by Paroginog et al. (2018), inadequate communication skills negatively impacted performance in school, as active academic performance had an outstanding contribution to students' overall well-being (Meo et al., 2020). Pieces of evidence are test results, homework completion, problems of tardiness, and inability to maintain social interactions among peers. In addition, social skills have shown to impact students' capacity to

participate in appropriate study techniques, analytical skills, topic-mastering strategies, and assignment management approaches, resulting in low academic performance. Cohen et al. (2019) expounded that better student achievement is typically related to active learning curriculums, which frequently involve partnered or group work. However, these curriculums provided interpersonal and academic difficulties for socially anxious pupils. That being the case, implementing effective preventive strategies could minimize the consequences of social anxiety for students and conceivably improve students' educational and interpersonal performance (Przepiorka et al., 2021).

Social anxiety as well as low academic achievement are only two of the adverse consequences of low social competence (Sørli et al., 2020). Sørli et al. (2020) further conclusively stated that such interpersonal skills had been linked to other significant areas of development, including academic success. Individuals with an elevated degree of social phobia experience high amounts of self-contradictory awareness (Murad, 2020). Correspondingly, Sultana et al. (2021) disclosed that pupils with decreased self-confidence outperform students with medium and high social anxiety regarding academic achievement. They argued that social phobia is inversely alike with students' academic progress. Several studies have supported this view and revealed that socially skilled students have more positive attitudes toward learning, adapt to the school setting more efficiently and achieve better grades than their less socially adept peers.

1.3 Coping Strategies of Students Towards Enhanced Self-Esteem

A crucial aspect of psychological health is self-esteem. According to Freire & Ferreira (2019), self-esteem is an effective tool in managing, balancing, or reducing an adolescent's stress levels and increasing happiness resulting in significantly better mental health. Students with higher self-esteem exhibit more risk-taking, inventiveness, and resiliency in the midst of difficulties (Bridge et al., 2022). Meanwhile, depression, anxiety, social isolation, and decreased motivation are observed more in students with lower self-esteem (Moksnes et al., 2019). Additionally, uncertain self-perception resulted in an increased possibility of experiencing issues with mental health and identity development is more likely experienced by individuals with greater self-esteem (Masselink et al., 2018).

Educational success is linked to self-esteem (Weisskirch, 2018). Extra classes increased students' self-esteem and anxiety (Nguyen et al., 2019). Students who have an elevated view on themselves typically exhibit higher conviction to deal with challenges. They are more likely to exercise superior emotional control and take proactive steps to deal with stressful situations, such as approaching professors and classmates for assistance. Significant determinants of self-esteem include negative coping, avoiding coping, and active coping (Esin & Hamdi, 2022). Additionally, social anxiety impaired students' ability to express themselves in various contexts. It is reflected in their self-awareness, particularly compared to their peers, which lowers their self-esteem and frequently triggers depression (Murad, 2020). This implies that schools should raise students' awareness of defective coping and direct them toward healthy coping methods like self-compassion and mindfulness (Madhuri & Senel, 2021).

A study by Nguyen et al. (2019) indicated the necessity for school programs and provisions to enhance students' self-esteem through coping mechanisms in response to academic stress. Individuals, especially students, engage in active coping strategies to lessen that fear of being in an interpersonal situation (Stentz & Cogle, 2022). Likewise, coping strategies enabled students to thrive under academic pressure by lowering psychological anguish, which leads to students developing mental health problems (Ali, 2018). Self-esteem and resilience significantly impacted how people think, feel, and act, and they may even be able to forecast how they will cope. While both positive and negative emotional ontologies influenced social anxiety and were a possibility for it to develop (Kozan et al., 2022).

Coping strategies gave individuals a sense of mastery over their own lives, which helped increase their self-worth. Furthermore, effective coping strategies that help individuals be more compassionate toward themselves helped improve their self-esteem (Bridge et al., 2022). Early treatment and effective coping strategies for social anxiety in children are significant and could lessen the possibility of developing mental health disorders in the future (Krygsman & Vaillancourt, 2020). Additionally, by utilizing coping strategies, individuals can learn to recognize and take responsibility for their emotions and experiences, increasing their self-esteem. Finally, through coping strategies, individuals can learn to take an active approach to manage their experiences and emotions, leading to increased self-esteem.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

Approved and given the protocol code 2023-164 by the Central Luzon State University-Ethics Review Committee (CLSU-ERC), the researchers examined the students' experiences with social anxiety using a phenomenological approach. Through the Social Cognitive Theory, the researchers explored the cognitive, social, and behavioral components that contributed to the effects of social anxiety on high school students' self-esteem, academic performance, and coping strategies. A purposive sampling method was employed, selecting 12 high school students from Central Luzon State University Science High School, Philippines, with two students chosen from each grade level (seventh to twelfth grade), identified as R1~R12. The researchers conducted semi-structured recorded interviews with the participants and analyzed the recorded responses to identify common themes using thematic analysis.

2.2 Research Participants

The study was conducted at Central Luzon State University, Science City of Muñoz, Province of Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The researchers conducted the semi-structured interview inside Central Luzon State University, Laboratory for Teaching and Learning - University Science High School. The researchers used a purposive sampling method to select 12 high school students in grades 7-12 with Social Anxiety Disorder for this qualitative study. A total of 55 high school students were screened via Google Forms using the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS), where two students per grade level with the highest mean were chosen. Subsequently, the selected 12 high school students were subjected to a semi-structured interview. The inclusion criteria include: (1) matching the cut-off point during the screening; (2) must be a high school student; (3) able to comprehend and interact with interviewers and others; (4) have given an informed consent form and are willing to participate in the study.

2.3 Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview was conducted with 12 high school students, which were screened using the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) via Google Forms. Subsequently, a set of ten (10) open-ended questions were asked to the selected respondents. The instrument is divided into three components: (1) informed consent form and data privacy clause; (2) Google Forms survey consisting of the Social Interactions Anxiety Scale; (3) questions on the impacts of social anxiety on the respondents' self-esteem, academic performance, and coping strategies. The respondents were willing to participate and are well-informed regarding the documentation process using audio recordings.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The phenomenological approach of qualitative research acquires information through a semi-structured interview. The interview outline regulates using the following questions: (1) What do you think about the extracurricular activities at school?; (2) What worries you in interpersonal situations?; (3) How do you perceive yourself in various social contexts?; (4) How do you think social anxiety affects you?; (5) Does your social anxiety affect your self-esteem?; (6) How do you cope with boosting your self-esteem?; (7) Do you think your social anxiety affects your performance in school?; (8) How do you manage social anxiety during collaborative or social activities?; (9) What coping mechanism/s do you think work best for your social anxiety?; and (10) Does social support from friends and family help lessen the negative impacts of social anxiety on students' self-esteem in high school? The discussion content is audio-recorded to document the interviewees' responses comprehensively. The researchers used thematic analysis in identifying patterns in the data to synthesize prevalent notions and establish central themes for the study.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The study was approved and conducted according to the guidelines of the Central Luzon State University (CLSU) Ethics Research Committee (ERC), with protocol approval code 2023-164 on March 14, 2023. The following are noted as part of the study's ethical consideration:

Informed Consent and Data Privacy Clause and Consent

The modified consent form provides participants with each of the details they require to make an informed choice about participating in the study. The purpose, benefits, and risks of the study were explained to participants before they decided whether or not to participate.

Voluntary Participation

In accordance with what is stated on the consent form, participants have the freedom to join or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. Participation in this survey is voluntary for those who are asked.

Confidentiality and Data Privacy Clause and Consent

All participants have a right to privacy. Since the participants are remaining anonymous, the researchers cannot identify them. The public is not given access to any of the personal information and data of the respondents.

Results Communication

Both plagiarism and research misconduct are not present in the study. The study adheres to all ethical standards and guidelines. The results shall be represented truthfully by the researchers.

3.0 Results and Discussion

This section includes the summary of main findings in conducting the research to assess the impact of social anxiety in high school students' academic performance, self-esteem, and coping strategies.

Table 1. Thematic analysis of the social anxiety's impact on students' self-esteem, academic performance, and coping strategies

THEMES	CODE IDEAS
Factors Influencing Social Anxiety	Constant Pressure Fear of others' unfavorable responses Self-doubt Distorted self-consciousness
Academic Effect of Social Anxiety	Hold back the students' potential
Overcoming Social Anxiety	Ineffective coping Supportive relationships in boosting self-esteem Assurance

3.1 Theme 1: Factors Influencing Social Anxiety

The pressure to succeed has an impact on how long social anxiety persists. People who struggle with social anxiety frequently steer clear of social events to avoid criticism or attention. Students who suffer from social anxiety and feel under pressure to perform well may also avoid situations out of worry that they won't live up to their standards and will receive unfavorable feedback from others.

"Pressure not from family but from myself because I think highly of myself. A small mistake and it is like my world will collapse."

Respondents who struggle with social anxiety frequently exhibit heightened sensitivity to other people's perceptions and a fear of being adversely appraised. This proves a direct link between social anxiety and fear of judgment. In accordance with this, Grieve et al. (2021) stated that those who struggle with social anxiety have intense fears of being judged negatively, negatively affecting their academic experience.

"[People talk] let us say negatively about my performance and after the performance, people will criticize me not so nicely."

The COVID-10 quarantine impacted social interactions and skills, which contributed to social anxiety. Students did not have many opportunities to develop their social skills or could feel unprepared after spending much time alone. Excessive fear or discomfort in social circumstances are indications of social anxiety, a prevalent mental health issue (Jefferies & Ungar, 2021). High school students tend to experience pressure, particularly social and academic pressure in school which perpetuates a vicious cycle that can lead to emotions of pressure and anxiety in social situations.

"I have difficulty in thinking, I feel that I will do something wrong, it is embarrassing – I do not want to participate."

Research has shown that students who face social anxiety have difficulty refusing because of social pressure from peers, parents, and teachers. Some students desire to please others and may feel guilty about saying "no" to a request which can lead to negative consequences. With social anxiety lurking in the system of students,

opportunities are usually missed out because of their difficulty in socializing which hinders their participation in extracurricular activities, which has a negative impact on their academic performance.

"My socialization limits within the friend group or those that I am close with. It is like I cannot interact outside of my comfort zone."

Despite having anxiety about participating in extracurricular activities at school, proper guidance and support from academic institutions enable students to have a more comfortable setting for social anxiety, not to foster and achieve their own goals and aspirations (Sahu, 2020).

"SayHay (USHS) gives me the opportunity to overcome this anxiety by enforcing these performance tasks"

Lack of engagement in group conversations due to communication anxiety might result in missed opportunities to participate and interact with others. Social anxiety results in complete avoidance of social interactions, which influences regular tasks in life and school and may restrict career and social chances.

"I become more anxious because my thoughts are enclosed, I do not express them properly, including my feelings, they bottle-up because I cannot express them freely."

Concerns about social acceptance can result in a preoccupation with how individuals see themselves, which can start a chain reaction of unfavorable thoughts and feelings that negatively affect their daily life. Students with social anxiety tend to have a fear of embarrassment that limits their daily life and activities.

"I become conscious of what I say, I sometimes think of what to say because there is that fear of embarrassment or afraid of people judging what you say."

These concerns have an adverse effect on one's self-confidence and self-esteem, which can hinder one's capacity to develop deep connections with others. Furthermore, this lack of self-confidence negatively impacts their self-esteem (Murad, 2020). Therefore, it is difficult for them to start a conversation and approach others in interpersonal communication. Miftahudin (2021) revealed that overthinking and lack of self-confidence are mostly what students feel, which influence their speaking anxiety. With this said, socially anxious students are more confident in writing than speaking out.

"Most of the time, my social anxiety is what affects my communication with other people..."

A study by Roberts & Osler (2023) revealed that a person who feels extremely anxious and self-conscious might experience a more pervasive collapse of social confidence. Since self-esteem and social anxiety are closely linked and correlated (Jeelena et al., 2020), socially anxious students often doubt their capabilities. Students who experience Social Anxiety often have low social skills.

"However, when interacting with new people, I try to show the best version of myself. I want to show them that I am always perfect, like I do not make any mistakes to make a good impression on them."

Lack of self-confidence is another thing observed in students with social anxiety. Students with high levels of social anxiety have a lower self esteem than those who have lower levels of Social anxiety (Murad, 2020)

3.2 Theme 2: Academic Effect of Social Anxiety

According to a study conducted by Ma & Lin in 2022, social anxiety has a negative impact on students' interpersonal communication abilities. Scanlon et al. (2020) found out that students experiencing social anxiety were proven to have struggled academically and have a hard time creating relationships with others. Those with social anxiety find it hard to participate in group activities because they do not know how they need to communicate and how they will give their suggestions to others, which keeps them from expressing their full potential. Students who experience social anxiety tend to avoid participating in group activities (Rosen, 2018).

"I still do my work, but I do not communicate as much with my group partners."

Students' academic performance was affected negatively when they were experiencing social anxiety. It affects their confidence, how they connect with others, and building and maintaining relationships. This is affected by worrying about what others think, making a bad impression, and other experiences (Luan et al., 2022). Those who experience this often feel loneliness and a decreased support from friends due to the detachment (Weymouth, 2019).

"In terms of expressing my thoughts to my family, I think I do not express myself well enough to them. While at school, it seems like what I can say is pretty much limited because not all the things that I share with my friends are shareable to my family and vice versa."

Students with SAD are often worried about making wrong impressions. People who experience social anxiety tend to fear negative evaluation as they worry about people judging them in social interactions (Hunt, 2019). Overthinking also affects how they perceive themselves, which contributes to their self-esteem. This impacts their daily lives as it gives them worries that trigger their anxiety and its symptoms, hindering their social interactions.

3.3 Theme 3: Overcoming Social Anxiety

Managing and overcoming social anxiety is a hard task to do. An effective coping strategy can help in lessening the anxiety a student experiences. Some students set aside their social anxiety when it involves the need to communicate for academic purposes. According to them, it is easier to manage social anxiety during collaborative or group activity when they have someone close or know someone in their assigned group.

"I only talk to them when it comes to pressing matters."

Students who are experiencing social anxiety also shared what they do when they need to talk to others. Some try to communicate with their members as much as possible and think it will end soon.

In conclusion, overcoming social anxiety is easier when they have someone they can comfortably talk to during collaborative work and if it involves their academic performance. Being competitive in academic performance can help in lessening social anxiety (Kaplanova, 2019).

Social anxiety can result in ineffective coping strategies, further complicating interpersonal relationships and increasing self-consciousness (Daros et al., 2019; Konan & Celik, 2019). Students with social anxiety have shared the following ineffective coping strategies. Some students try to ignore or escape their social anxiety by thinking that no one is there during social events, which worsens their anxiety.

"Imagining people are not there when you are performing. That does not help at all because when you are faced with the reality that people are there, and people will be looking at you, they will be speaking in their head, they will be thinking. It is more anxiety-inducing."

Ineffective coping mechanisms for social anxiety, such as imagining no one is there or relying on friends and family for support, worsen social interaction difficulties. These strategies increase self-consciousness and anxiety. Recognizing the limitations of these methods is crucial. Seeking alternative coping strategies promotes personal growth and resilience. By addressing these concerns, individuals with social anxiety can navigate social situations more effectively, leading to increased well-being and fulfillment.

By fostering positive close relationships, individuals can develop prosocial behaviors that subsequently contribute to increased school engagement and academic achievement (Tan et al., 2018). Therefore, students who have supportive relationships are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities, which can enhance their academic performance and overall well-being. These activities allow students to practice their social skills and develop their self-esteem in a safe and supportive environment.

"Everyone needs supportive parents, especially when it comes to something as social anxiety, especially with social anxiety in school because apart from home, the other place that students usually socialize is in school. So having your friends or family support you inside or outside the school for your social anxiety is very helpful."

In addition, supportive relationships can help individuals develop positive coping strategies (Shao et al., 2022). These strategies may include seeking reassurance from trusted friends, using relaxation techniques, or engaging in positive self-talk.

“Maybe another big factor is having a comfort person... There are many examples that I can call my comfort people and it seems that when I feel the symptoms, I just look at them and then I am okay as if it lessens the worry.”

Socially anxious students often felt the need to seek assurance through finding social support. Kamaludin et al. (2020) revealed that finding social support and using acceptance coping mechanisms were substantially related to anxiety levels. A high level of anxiety was linked to seeking social support, whereas a low level of anxiety was linked to the strategy of acceptance. A study conducted by Smith et al. (2018) confirmed the effectiveness of writing in reducing stress and anxiety. As all the interviewees affirmed that building self-esteem is achievable for everyone, thinking positively is the most common way of feeling assured with increased self-esteem.

4.0 Conclusion

Academic performance, self-esteem, and coping mechanisms among high school students could be significantly impacted by social anxiety. Socially anxious students struggle to participate in class, make friends, and participate in extracurricular activities, which affects their grades and academic performance. Their negative self-talk and incorrect perception of their skills are factors in their poor self-esteem. Avoidance and isolation are coping mechanisms that offer momentary respite but eventually exacerbate the issue.

The study serves as a foundation and driving force for school administrators, curriculum experts, and guidance counselors to work on concretizing socio-academic programs for students to improve mental health conditions. School-based anxiety treatments must be considered and implemented to alleviate the potential adverse effects of social anxiety on students by developing social skills and exposing students to situations hindering them from achieving success in future endeavors.

In light of these findings, future researchers are recommended to prioritize clinically-diagnosed students for more comprehensive results. Furthermore, surveys should be conducted face-to-face for more efficient data gathering. Finally, a larger sample group is recommended, as well as widening the scope of the study such that participants are not limited to high school students and must consider those from higher levels of education.

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6.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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