

Social Anxiety, Self-Esteem, and Academic Performance among Students at a Philippine State University: Inputs for Support Services

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Abstract. Social anxiety remains a relevant concern in higher education because college students are regularly exposed to evaluative, interpersonal, and performance-based academic situations. This study examined the levels of social anxiety, self-esteem, and academic performance among students in a Philippine state university as a basis for strengthening student support services. Using a cross-sectional descriptive research design, data were gathered from 370 undergraduate students across six campuses through adapted self-report instruments measuring social anxiety, academic performance, and self-esteem. Results revealed that students had a moderate level of social anxiety, with speaking in public or talking to people in authority identified as the situation that elicited the highest anxiety. Students also demonstrated high levels of academic performance, particularly in achievement motivation, and high levels of self-esteem, indicating a generally positive and balanced view of the self. These findings suggest that although social anxiety was not severe, specific social-evaluative situations may still affect classroom participation, help-seeking, student-teacher communication, and involvement in academic activities. The high level of self-esteem may function as a personal resource that supports students' academic functioning despite social discomfort. The study highlights the need for mental health-responsive student support services, including public speaking support, counseling access, self-esteem enhancement activities, faculty awareness training, and programs that promote safe and supportive academic engagement. The findings further underscore the importance of adopting preventive and developmental approaches that build on students' existing strengths while addressing barriers to participation and communication. They may assist university administrators, guidance personnel, faculty members, and student affairs practitioners in designing coordinated interventions that support both psychosocial well-being and academic success.

Introduction

Higher education is more than just an academic environment – it is also a socially evaluative space where students are expected to engage with each other through communication, participation, collaboration and performance as well as interact with authority figures. Tertiary classrooms are common places where students must speak in front of their peers during discussions, answer questions asked by teachers or facilitators, present reports, defend ideas, consult with instructors, participate in group tasks and develop relationships with both their classmates and school personnel. While many students experience ordinary components of academic life when performing these types of activities, these experiences may become very demanding on students who feel discomforted, fearful or extremely self-conscious about being seen and judged by others in social situations. Therefore, because social anxiety can limit how students will actively participate in academic activities, seek help from their faculty members and/or peer support services, develop positive relationships with both their colleagues and university staff and manage the demands associated with living in a collegiate setting, social anxiety remains relevant in higher education.

Social anxiety refers to the level of distress or fear experienced by an individual that results in avoidance behavior due to the perceived evaluation or judgment of another person or group. Examples of situations where individuals may experience high levels of social anxiety include public speaking, interacting with unfamiliar people, approaching authority figure such as administrators or professors, expressing dissent or conflict, or performing any activity in which the individual believes he or she will be observed or evaluated by another person (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). While nervousness in certain situations is normal, persistent or intense social anxiety may impair cognitive functioning, interpersonal functioning and academic functioning. Since higher education institutions have transitioned beyond written assessments and individual assignments as sole means of assessment, students are now required to perform oral presentations, group work, classroom participation, interviews, demonstrations, research defense and other performance-based activities. Consequently, not only do students need cognitive competence to succeed in these environments but also social confidence, communication skills and emotional regulation to successfully navigate them (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

In recent literature, anxiety has been identified as one of the most prevalent mental health concerns among college and university student populations. Researchers using systematic reviews and large-scale studies have identified that anxiety is widespread among undergraduate students and that it contributes to reduced academic functioning, reduced social functioning and poorer emotional wellbeing (Ahmed et al., 2023; Tan et al., 2023). Furthermore, the higher education institution environment may intensify anxiety for several reasons including multiple developmental challenges students face while attending university (e.g., adjusting to independence, pressure to achieve success, financial stress related to tuition fees) as well as competitive academic requirements and uncertainty surrounding post-graduation employment opportunities. Additionally, the post-pandemic period has further highlighted attention to student mental health issues with scholars advocating for universities to improve their mental health policies and procedures for early identification of mental health concerns and accessible mental health support services (Hyseni Duraku et al., 2024). Although data used for the current study was based on data collection prior to the pandemic, its findings remain useful because they provide baseline evidence regarding students' levels of social anxiety, self-esteem and academic functioning prior to the major disruptions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social anxiety may impact students' academic experience in numerous ways. Students with elevated social anxiety may avoid recitation sessions in class, delay asking instructors for help, experience difficulty reporting orally, hesitate to join organizations or clubs at school or participate less frequently in collaborative learning tasks. Similarly, students with social anxiety may believe they will receive negative feedback from their instructor's or fellow students about their contributions in class and therefore worry excessively about embarrassment, criticism, rejection etc. All of these experiences can reduce students' opportunities for engagement in academics because students will withdraw from the very activities that support learning growth in confidence and academic integration. Previous research has indicated that social anxiety may be linked with academic avoidance, poor classroom participation, decreased academic engagement and difficulties developing positive interactions with peers (mou et al., 2022). Social anxiety should not automatically be considered severe or disabling for all cases. Some degree of anxiety can be expected when students are placed in evaluative academic settings especially when they care deeply about their performance or want to meet expectations. Moderately high levels of anxiety can co-exist with motivation, preparation and persistence especially if students possesses adequate coping resources and supportive academic environments. Distinguishing between normal nervousness and pathological social anxiety is important for providing effective support services for students. Therefore, colleges and universities need empirical evidence to identify whether student's levels of social anxiety are low, moderate or high and which academic situations are most likely to produce anxiety.

Academic performance is one of the most common areas of focus in higher education. Traditionally, it has been associated with grades, examinations, and scholastic achievement. However, contemporary views of academic functioning recognize that student performance is also influenced by motivational, behavioral, emotional, and social factors. Academic performance may include students' belief in their ability to accomplish academic tasks, motivation to achieve, engagement in learning activities, and capacity to interact meaningfully within the academic community. These dimensions are particularly relevant in college education, where success often depends not only on intellectual ability but also on persistence, self-regulation, communication, participation, and the ability to use available academic and social resources. Research on university students has shown that mental health, stress, motivation, self-esteem, and academic engagement are closely related to students' academic functioning (Acosta-Gonzaga, 2023; Barbayannis et al., 2022). Recent research further indicates that psychological distress, anxiety, and academic self-efficacy are associated with university students' study satisfaction and academic experiences (Carranza Esteban et al., 2022). A meta-analysis conducted during the COVID-19 period likewise documented an association between university students' anxiety and academic performance, although the magnitude and direction of this relationship varied across studies and contexts (Tang & He, 2023).

Students' self-esteem is an important type of personal resource that can also affect how students respond to the academic and social requirements of their educational environment. Generally defined as an individual's overall assessment of their value or worthiness as a person, self-esteem encompasses an individual's feelings toward themselves, their self-worth and

their acceptance of themselves. Students with high self-esteem are more likely than students with lower self-esteem to perceive themselves as capable individuals who are worthy of respect and capable of handling challenging situations. Therefore, when faced with difficult academic tasks or uncomfortable social situations, high self-esteem students are more likely to continue working at these tasks until completion and to feel confident enough to participate in classroom discussions even if they feel some level of discomfort. Conversely, students with low self-esteem are more susceptible to negative evaluations, self-doubt, comparisons to others and avoidance behaviors. Social anxiety often includes fears of being judged or evaluated poorly by others. Thus, self-esteem is a critical concept used to understand how students cope with academic and social experiences.

There has been growing emphasis in literature on the role of self-esteem in academic motivation and performance. Self-esteem may enhance academic performance and motivation by bolstering students' confidence in their capabilities and fostering active involvement in learning activities. Additionally, self-esteem has been linked to students' emotional wellness, resilience and successful coping strategies. Relative to anxiety, self-esteem may allow students to experience fewer negative interpretations of academic and social challenges and reduce the potential impact of social unease. As such, studying students' self-esteem along side their social anxiety and academic performance presents a more comprehensive picture of their psychosocial and academic functioning. This approach would be beneficial for staff members employed by Student Affairs Offices, Guidance/Counselor Centers, Faculty Advisors and Administrative Staff involved in developing programs designed to assist student success.

In the Philippine higher education setting, there has been increased policy attention paid to promoting student mental health. The Philippine Mental Health Act focuses on the promotion of mental health, prevention and accessibility to quality services. Current policies directed towards higher education also indicate that higher education institutions have a responsibility to foster student health/wellness (Commission on Higher Education, 2026; Republic of the Philippines, 2018). Most available literature concerning student mental health in the Philippines discusses general topics such as stress, depression, anxiety and difficulty adjusting to new environments. While there is still a need for research based on specific needs such as social anxiety in state universities with students coming from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, languages, cultures, geographic regions, there is also a need for local research specifically identifying issues related to state universities in provinces and multi-campus locations. Students attending state universities in provinces or multi-campus locations may encounter different academic, psychological environmental conditions compared to those attending private universities located in urban areas. These differences may include limited availability/accessibility to specialized mental health services, adapting to living away from home/away from family/friends for the first time, language/cultural communication difficulties, among others.

Despite the increasing need for higher education institutions to address the growing need for attention to student mental health (i.e., an increase in awareness about the need to provide some form of intervention), there has been very little data collected within institutions regarding the prevalence of social anxiety among college students. Many studies concerning college students' mental health have studied various aspects of anxiety (generalized, academic related, depressed, etc.), along with overall mental health; few research projects have studied social anxiety as it relates to academic functioning and self-esteem. There are several reasons why this is significant. One reason is that social anxiety may be "invisible" compared to many other student-related issues. For example, a socially anxious student can remain quiet, comply with expectations, and be academically successful without participating in class discussions, consulting peers or professors for assistance, taking on leadership positions, or engaging in peer-to-peer interactions. Additionally, unless empirically measured through formal assessments, colleges and universities may fail to recognize students whose problems are not severe enough to cause them to become non-compliant or failing, yet they are unable to manage the social expectations required to succeed academically.

This study seeks to fill one of these gaps by assessing the levels of social anxiety and self-esteem as they relate to academic performance in a sample of college students at a Philippine state university. Specifically, the present study will assess how much social anxiety college students report experiencing when faced with five different types of social/academic challenges: (1) being asked to speak publicly, (2) interacting with someone in authority, (3) interacting with a stranger, (4) being criticized or embarrassed, (5) interacting with the opposite sex. In addition, this study will examine three types of academic performance: (1) achievement motivation, (2) academic self-efficacy, (3) both social and academic engagement. Finally, the study will examine students' overall self-esteem. The use of these specific measures allows the researcher to create a psychosocial profile of students attending this particular institution. The creation of such a profile should allow the researcher to develop student support service plans based upon both the academic and psychological needs of students.

In terms of the relevance/importance of this study, the findings could contribute significantly to developing evidence-based student support planning. More generally, the findings from this study could assist guidance counselors, student affairs practitioners, faculty members, and administrators to understand which social situations are most problematic for their students and what forms of academic or psychosocial support may be necessary. For instance, if students experience

anxiety primarily in public speaking or in interactions with authority figures, then institutions might want to offer programs designed to improve students' confidence in communicating verbally; facilitate greater access to instructors; make classrooms safe environments in which students feel comfortable asking questions or expressing opinions; and establish counseling referral processes. Conversely, if students possess high self-esteem and academic performance, despite relatively moderate levels of social anxiety, then the primary focus of support services would be protecting students' existing positive assets (i.e., their self-esteem and academic competence), while minimizing barriers that prevent students from seeking out additional support services or participating in educational opportunities.

Finally, this study assumes that mental health and academic success are interconnected. As such, social anxiety, self-esteem, and academic performance are not separate constructs; rather they are components of a larger experience that all students encounter in higher education. Therefore, a university that strives to achieve academic excellence must also foster the emotional and social environments that enable students to participate actively, communicate effectively, and engage fully in the process of learning. By collecting evidence within a Philippine State University context, this study contributes input toward creating supportive services for college students that are proactive, growth promoting, and relevant to the realities of college life.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The original study examined the relationship among social anxiety, self-esteem, and academic performance among college students; however, the present article reports the descriptive component of the larger investigation to generate evidence-based inputs for student support services. The design was appropriate because the study sought to determine the levels of social anxiety, academic performance, and self-esteem among college students without manipulating any variable or introducing an intervention. Through survey-based measurement, the study provided a psychosocial and academic profile of students that may guide the development of mental health-responsive and academically supportive programs in higher education.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants of the study were 370 undergraduate students enrolled in the six campuses of Ifugao State University during the Second Semester and Summer Term of School Year 2018–2019. The participating campuses were Lamut (Main) Campus, Alfonso Lista Campus, Lagawe Campus, Tinoc Campus, Aguineldo Campus, and Hapao Campus. Random sampling was used in selecting the respondents from the undergraduate student population of the university. The final sample consisted of 163 male students and 207 female students. By campus, 182 respondents came from Lamut Main Campus, 88 from Alfonso Lista Campus, 80 from Lagawe Campus, 9 from Tinoc Campus, 7 from Aguineldo Campus, and 4 from Hapao Campus. A total of 400 questionnaires were initially distributed; however, 30 were excluded from the final analysis due to missing or invalid information. The final sample therefore represented students from all six campuses and provided a broad institutional view of the variables under study.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a survey packet composed of three standardized self-report instruments: the Social Anxiety Questionnaire for Adults, the Academic Performance Questionnaire, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

The Social Anxiety Questionnaire for Adults or SAQ-A30 was developed by Caballo et al. (2012) to measure anxiety across common social situations. The instrument contains 30 items distributed across five domains: speaking in public or talking with people in authority, interactions with the opposite sex, assertive expression of annoyance, disgust, or displeasure, criticism and embarrassment, and interactions with strangers. Each domain contains six items distributed throughout the questionnaire. Responses are rated using a five-point scale indicating the level of unease, stress, or nervousness experienced in each social situation, where 1 means very slight or not at all, 2 means slight, 3 means moderate, 4 means high, and 5 means very high or extremely high. In the present study, the instrument obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .907, indicating excellent internal consistency. The obtained reliability coefficient is consistent with evidence supporting the instrument's internal consistency and construct validity (Caballo et al., 2015).

The Academic Performance Questionnaire adapted from Huang (2011) was used to assess students' perceived academic functioning. The instrument contains 40 items distributed across four domains: academic self-efficacy, achievement motivation, academic engagement, and social engagement. The original scale used a six-point response format, but the present study used a four-point scale to fit the scoring requirements of the research, where 1 means very poor, 2 means poor, 3 means high, and 4 means very high. Items 12, 34, and 39 were reverse-scored. In this study, the instrument obtained

a Cronbach's alpha of .898, indicating good internal consistency. The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale was employed to determine respondents' overall self-worth and general evaluation of themselves (Rosenberg 1965). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is composed of ten items. Five of these are positively stated and five of the statements are negatively stated. Positive items for this scale include 1, 3, 4, 7, & 10. All other items, which include 2, 5, 6, 8, & 9, had been reverse-scored in accordance with the scoring procedures of the scale. In the current study, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale achieved an internal reliability coefficient of .735.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, permission to conduct the study was secured from the administration of Ifugao State University through a formal request addressed to the University President. Upon approval, the questionnaires were distributed to the intended participants across the six campuses. The researcher personally distributed and collected the questionnaires in the Lamut and Lagawe campuses. For the other campuses, assistance was sought from colleagues in distributing and retrieving the questionnaires. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were asked to answer the instruments honestly and completely. After the questionnaires were collected, the responses were checked for completeness and validity. Questionnaires with missing or invalid information were excluded from the final dataset. The valid responses were then encoded, tabulated, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the distribution of respondents by sex and campus. Means and standard deviations were computed to determine the levels of social anxiety, self-reported academic functioning, and self-esteem. Reverse-worded items were recoded before domain and overall scores were calculated. Social anxiety means were interpreted using the five-point categories of very slight or not at all, slight, moderate, high, and very high or extremely high. Academic functioning means were interpreted using the four categories of very poor, poor, high, and very high. Self-esteem scores were interpreted according to the scoring system adopted in the parent investigation. No correlational, regression, or mediation results are reported in the present article.

Ethical Considerations

Administrative permission to conduct the study was obtained from Ifugao State University before data collection. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. They were advised that participation or nonparticipation would not affect their academic standing and that they could decline participation without penalty. Completed questionnaires were coded, and the results were analyzed and reported only in aggregate form. No personally identifying information was included in the dataset or disclosed in the manuscript. The instruments were used for research and developmental purposes and not for individual diagnosis or clinical labeling.

Results and Discussion

Level of Social Anxiety

Table 1 presents the level of social anxiety of the respondents. Results show that the students had a moderate level of social anxiety overall ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.54$). All five domains of social anxiety were also interpreted as moderate. Among the domains, speaking in public or talking to people in authority obtained the highest mean ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.71$), followed by interactions with strangers ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.65$), criticism and embarrassment ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.66$), interactions with the opposite sex ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.74$), and assertive expression of annoyance, disgust, or displeasure ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.66$).

Social Anxiety Domain	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
Speaking in public or talking to people in authority	2.99	0.71	Moderate
Interactions with strangers	2.82	0.65	Moderate
Criticism and embarrassment	2.81	0.66	Moderate
Interactions with the opposite sex	2.70	0.74	Moderate
Assertive expression of annoyance, disgust, or displeasure	2.63	0.66	Moderate
Overall Level of Social Anxiety	2.79	0.54	Moderate

Table 1. Level of Social Anxiety among College Students

The students' moderately high levels of social anxiety indicate that the students felt some degree of fearfulness, unease, or apprehension in both social and evaluative contexts, however not to such a degree that would be considered either high or extremely high. The data suggest that social anxiety was a significant psycho-social issue for many of the respondents, yet did not represent a debilitating level of distress. The distinction is important for supporting student service initiatives since a moderate level of social anxiety does not imply pathology; nonetheless, it represents a legitimate concern since a moderate level of distress can potentially limit students' participation, help seeking, classroom communication, and engagement in social and evaluative aspects of academic activity. Social anxiety is often noted in college students as being related to interpersonal, participatory and socially evaluative situations (Bolsoni-Silva & Loureiro, 2014; Mou et al., 2022).

Speaking in public or talking to people who are in authority was rated the highest. This finding is particularly germane to higher education given that many times college students are asked to perform acts of participation through recitation, class reports, oral exams, research presentations, group discussion, consulting with instructors and other staff members. These tasks require students to verbally communicate in front of peers and interact with individuals they may consider authoritative and/or evaluative. If students experience anxiety in these types of contexts, then they may choose to abstain from participating in class, hesitate to seek clarification from instructors regarding material presented, procrastinate in seeking consultation with teachers or participate minimally in oral and collaborative academic tasks. Anxiety related to public speaking can include cognitive concern, physiological arousal and behavioral avoidance in anticipation of evaluation by an audience (Bodie, 2010).

This finding suggests that the most pressing concern for student support is not simply social interaction but performance based and authority related interaction. While students may successfully navigate ordinary peer-to-peer socialization within the confines of a classroom environment, they may experience anxiety associated with verbal communication in a public forum or defending their perspectives when interacting with authority figures. These findings have implications for both guidance service and classroom practice. Counseling professionals may offer students specific techniques to enhance confidence and manage anxiety while faculty may establish a supportive classroom environment which encourages students to freely query issues without undue penalty, commit errors as part of learning and gradually build confidence in their ability to effectively communicate.

Moderate ratings for social Interactions with strangers also suggest that students may experience feelings of unease when interacting with new people. Thus, social anxiety may impact the transition into college for students from smaller towns or rural areas, first year students, transfer students or students attending campus sites where students do not have established social networks. Programs designed to facilitate orientation to campus life, peer mentoring groups and student organizations which foster opportunity for students to engage in small group socialization may assist in reducing anxiety by providing a safe environment for repeated socialization.

Also noteworthy was the moderate rating for fear of Criticism and embarrassment. Criticism is a core component of social anxiety due to the potential for making mistakes or doing something poorly to be viewed by peers and professors. Therefore, fear of criticism may cause students to avoid taking risks by completing assignments that are challenging, contributing to class discussions, creating creative products to submit or engaging in activities that allow for error to occur. Constructive feedback practices are necessary. Faculty may aid in decreasing performance related anxiety through giving private positive/negative feedback when warranted, viewing mistakes as an integral aspect of the learning process and assisting students in seeing criticism as a method for development versus punishment. Fear of criticism may further increase students' self-referent attention and sensitivity to perceiving negative evaluation (Bögels & Mansell, 2004).

Although receiving the least average rating among all domains measured, Assertive expression of annoyance, disgust or displeasure was still ranked as moderate. This suggests that students may also encounter difficulties in asserting themselves when expressing dissatisfaction/disagreement/refusal of request etc. While it had the lowest mean rating it is still relevant to student growth as assertiveness is critical in forming peer relationships, working collaboratively with others (in teams), developing leadership abilities, establishing boundaries and obtaining assistance. As such student support programs may incorporate assertiveness training, communications skills training/workshops as well as other strategies designed to enable students to express their concerns in a respectful/conscientious manner.

The results identify a need for preventative, developmental support services to alleviate student social anxiety. Because the students were not generally identified as possessing a high level of social anxiety, the suggested response would emphasize skill building and development through improved classroom climate; identifying issues early on; and increasing access to counseling services as opposed to assigning clinical labels. A campus wide approach could involve supporting students with public speaking experiences; peer based support systems for adjusting to campus; faculty professional development programs; referral mechanisms for counseling services; and educational programming on managing psychosocial issues including social anxiety.

Level of Academic Performance

Table 2 presents the level of academic performance of the respondents. The students obtained a high overall level of academic performance ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.36$). All domains were also interpreted as high. Achievement motivation obtained the highest mean ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.46$), followed by academic self-efficacy ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.40$), social engagement ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 0.42$), and academic engagement ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 0.42$).

Academic Performance Domain	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
Achievement motivation	2.96	0.46	High
Academic self-efficacy	2.75	0.40	High
Social engagement	2.64	0.42	High
Academic engagement	2.53	0.42	High
Overall Level of Academic Performance	2.72	0.36	High

Table 2. Level of Academic Performance among College Students

The high overall level of academic performance indicates that the students generally perceived themselves as functioning well in academic tasks. This suggests that despite the presence of moderate social anxiety, students maintained favorable levels of motivation, confidence, engagement, and social participation in their academic environment. The finding is important because it shows that social anxiety, when moderate, does not necessarily prevent students from performing well academically. Students with moderate levels of social anxiety appear to maintain persistence and competency academically due to remaining motivated, confident, and supported by the institution. Motivational, psychological, and environmental factors influence university students' academic success. However, differences in these influences occur depending upon the context and measurement methods used (Steinmayr et al., 2019; Richardson et al., 2012).

Achievement motivation received the highest ratings of the three academic performance domains. The large number of students reporting a high degree of achievement motivation indicates that students generally are able to motivate themselves to complete academic assignments, reach their academic goals and avoid failures. Achievement motivation is an essential element in higher education since students are expected to learn independently and take responsibility for completing a growing array of complex academic tasks. A high level of achievement motivation will enable students to continue to pursue educational objectives even if they experience academic difficulties, social anxiety or anxiety related to academic performance. Therefore, this provides a basis for believing that students have at least one motivational resource that can be further enhanced by providing them with opportunities to set academic goals; provide guidance to students using academic advisors and mentors; and recognize and reward students' efforts to achieve their academic objectives.

Students reported a very high degree of Academic self-efficacy. The high rating of academic self-efficacy implies that students generally feel confident about achieving success in academic endeavors. Confidence in one's own abilities to perform well in academic areas is a strong predictor of how much time and effort students will expend on studying and how long they will persist when confronted with challenging academic work. Furthermore, confidence is crucial in helping students cope with anxiety-provoking situations such as examinations, group discussions, presentations, and consulting with faculty members. Although the high ratings may lead some educators to conclude that students do not require additional support, there are many students who, regardless of their belief in their ability to succeed, may still require additional instruction or practice in various areas of academic skills including research writing, oral communication and seeking help.

Students also provided high ratings regarding their levels of Social engagement. High ratings for social engagement indicate that students generally establish and maintain positive relationships with both other students and other members of the university community. Positive relationships between students and others in the university environment are helpful in supporting the psychological adaptation of new students. Social engagement can serve as a protective factor against problems in college adjustment. Students who develop positive relationships with other students and staff may find it easier to seek out and obtain emotional support, academic advice and collaborate in learning processes.

Although the ratings indicate a general sense of comfort when engaging with others on campus, the presence of moderate social anxiety could indicate that social engagement is not experienced consistently across all environments. As examples, students may feel comfortable in certain groups but uncomfortable when communicating with strangers, authority figures or individuals evaluating their performance.

Finally, the ratings for Academic engagement were the lowest among the three domains of academic performance. However, the mean remains within the high range. The rating suggests that while students generally report being highly

engaged in academics, there appears to be room for improvement. Academic engagement refers to students becoming involved in a variety of ways in learning experiences; applying persistent effort to academic work; and participating in activities that promote intellectual growth. Lower ratings in this area may indicate that students are motivated and self-confident; however, they may not necessarily be active participants in classes or engage in tasks that require exposure to social interactions. The results appear to align with the finding that speaking in front of a group or communicating with authority figures was the most anxiety-provoking social situation. Additionally, recent research has found that academic engagement represents one way through which social anxiety is positively correlated with students' academic functioning (Mou et al., 2022, 2024).

Overall, the data collected suggest that academic support services should not be limited to only addressing deficiencies in knowledge or skill deficits identified through testing or evaluations of student performance. Given that the majority of respondents indicated they were performing well academically, support service programs could focus on sustaining and building upon existing strengths. Examples of program elements could include individualized coaching; support for research writing; developing effective communication skills; peer-assisted learning; study skills workshops; and strategies to encourage increased participation in classrooms. Such programs would assist students in translating their motivation and self-efficacy into deeper forms of academic engagement.

Taken together, the findings on academic performance show that the students possessed important academic resources. Their high achievement motivation and academic self-efficacy may help explain why moderate social anxiety did not appear to prevent favorable academic functioning. However, the relatively lower rating for academic engagement suggests that institutions should continue strengthening active learning opportunities and supportive classroom practices, especially for students who may avoid participation due to fear of embarrassment or negative evaluation.

Level of Self-Esteem

Table 3 presents the level of self-esteem of the respondents. Results show that the students had a high overall level of self-esteem ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.38$). The highest-rated item was "I take a positive attitude toward myself" ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.66$), interpreted as very high. Most items were interpreted as high, while the item "I wish I could have more respect for myself" obtained the lowest mean ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 0.70$), interpreted as low.

Self-Esteem Indicator	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
I take a positive attitude toward myself	3.32	0.66	Very High
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	3.24	0.69	High
I feel that I have a number of good qualities	3.04	0.58	High
I am able to do things as well as most other people	2.97	0.65	High
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	2.95	0.65	High
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure*	2.90	0.80	High
At times, I think I am no good at all*	2.54	0.76	High
I certainly feel useless at times*	2.81	0.76	High
I feel I do not have much to be proud of*	2.71	0.79	High
I wish I could have more respect for myself*	1.87	0.70	Low
Overall Level of Self-Esteem	2.83	0.38	High

*Reversed-scored items

Table 3. Level of Self-Esteem among College Students

The high overall level of self-esteem suggests that the students generally held a positive evaluation of themselves. They tended to perceive themselves as persons of worth, capable of doing things as well as others, and possessing good qualities. The very high rating on taking a positive attitude toward oneself is particularly important because it indicates a favorable self-orientation that may support academic confidence, emotional resilience, and social adjustment. Self-esteem has been associated with academic engagement and achievement, although such relationships cannot be inferred from the descriptive results of the present study (Acosta-Gonzaga, 2023; Zhao et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2020).

Self-esteem is an important personal resource in higher education. Students with positive self-regard may be better able to cope with academic challenges, recover from mistakes, and continue participating even when they experience discomfort or anxiety. In the context of the present findings, high self-esteem may help students manage the possible negative effects of moderate social anxiety. While students may feel nervous in public speaking or authority-related situations, a generally positive self-view may enable them to continue performing academically and engaging socially.

The finding that most self-esteem items were rated high also suggests that students possessed a generally healthy sense of worth and competence. This is significant for student support services because interventions do not have to begin from a deficit-oriented perspective. Instead, programs may build on existing strengths by helping students use their positive self-regard to increase participation, communication, and help-seeking. Self-esteem enhancement programs may therefore be integrated with confidence-building, leadership training, peer mentoring, and academic skills development.

However, the low rating on the item "I wish I could have more respect for myself" requires careful interpretation. Since the item is negatively framed, the low rating may still be consistent with a generally positive level of self-esteem depending on scoring procedures. Nevertheless, the item points to the importance of continuing to strengthen students' self-respect, self-acceptance, and self-compassion. Even students with generally high self-esteem may experience moments of self-doubt, especially in competitive, evaluative, or socially demanding academic contexts.

The findings indicate that self-esteem can be used as an anchor for student development programs. Guidance and counseling centers may design activities that reinforce students' awareness of their strengths, normalize academic mistakes, and promote healthy self-evaluation. Faculty members may also contribute by giving constructive feedback, recognizing effort, and creating classroom environments where students are encouraged to participate without fear of humiliation. Peer support programs may further strengthen self-esteem by helping students experience belongingness, affirmation, and shared academic growth.

Inputs for Student Support Services

The collective findings demonstrate that the students surveyed represented a distinct profile (moderate social anxiety, high academic performance, high self-esteem). Thus, the majority of these students seemed to perform at a satisfactory academic level, and had a positive outlook regarding their self-worth. However, when considering their responses as related to social-evaluative situations (i.e., being evaluated by others), the students indicated considerable unease. Given such findings, the suggested focus of the developmental student support service is to develop skills, prevent problems and encourage growth rather than to simply fix current shortcomings and/or mental health issues.

Therefore, the first area of priority for the university would be to provide students with support in regard to communication and public speaking. As a result of public speaking and interaction with someone in authority having been rated as the most socially anxious situation for these students, it would seem that the university could provide students with workshops focused on public speaking, giving oral presentations, preparing for research defenses, and communicating effectively within classrooms. Workshops could be provided through the guidance office, student affairs office, academic departments, or even general education classes. Ultimately, the purpose of providing these types of experiences would be to allow students to become increasingly confident in their ability to communicate verbally to other people and interact with professors.

Secondly, the communication between faculty members and students may need to be enhanced. For example, students' anxiety about interacting with people in positions of authority may lead them to be less likely to seek out consultation time, ask for feedback, engage in class discussions etc. There are several ways in which faculty members can create an environment that will allow them to assist their students. One way is to establish a welcoming consulting system where students feel comfortable approaching instructors for advice. Another method is for faculty members to use supportive language when providing students with feedback. Finally, faculty members can help alleviate their students' anxieties by clearly explaining expectations and allowing students to inquire about topics they are unsure about without fear of reprisal. Additionally, the university could host workshops for faculty members to raise awareness about how often shyness and/or social anxiety may be mistaken for a lack of preparation or interest in a course.

Additionally, counseling and referrals should be made more available and noticeable. While the overall level of social anxiety exhibited by students was moderate, there are undoubtedly many students experiencing much higher levels of distress than what is reflected in the group mean. In order to identify those students who exhibit symptoms consistent with anxiety disorders (e.g., persistent fear/avoidance/distress) the university may choose to enhance its screening methods for students seeking mental health assistance. Psychoeducation and referral processes can also be enhanced for students who are experiencing significant distress. Counseling services may include anxiety reduction strategies, cognitive restructuring, relaxation training, social skill training, and self-esteem building activities.

Further, student organizations and peer mentoring programs can provide additional avenues of reducing discomfort associated with engaging in social interactions with individuals unknown to them. Structured peer mentoring programs can provide support to students who are transitioning to campus life or have difficulties making friends with peers. Peer

led activities such as small group discussions, buddy systems, and involvement in student organizations can provide a safe context for increasing social exposure and feelings of belonging.

Additional support services for enhancing academic engagement are warranted. Academic engagement received the lowest rating across all three academic domains. It appears that academic engagement activities which promote active participation in learning activities, collaborative learning projects, inquiry based learning projects, and learning opportunities which enable meaningful academic participation may benefit this population. Additional support services that can benefit this population may include study skill training sessions, assistance with writing research papers, academic coaching, and programs that help motivate students to translate motivation into continued academic engagement.

Lastly, the university has a responsibility to continue supporting the self-esteem enhancement of their students. The high level of self-esteem reported by the students represents an important protection against further stressors including academic challenges. Self-esteem enhancing programs such as self-awareness seminars, strengths based counseling, leadership development programming, value clarification exercises, and self-acceptance/resilience promoting activities should be encouraged. Such programming can facilitate students maintaining confidence while acquiring the social and academic competencies required to achieve academic success during college.

Overall, the results suggest that students do not merely need academic instruction; students also need psychosocially supportive learning environments. Social anxiety, self-esteem, and academic performance are interconnected aspects of student life. A university that seeks to improve academic outcomes should therefore also attend to students' emotional comfort, confidence, communication opportunities, and access to supportive relationships. The findings provide evidence-based inputs for student support services that are responsive to both mental health and academic development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the levels of social anxiety, self-esteem, and academic performance of the students of a Philippine State University in order to provide evidence based information for student support service. The results showed a moderate level of social anxiety among the students, high academic performance, and high self-esteem. These results suggest that the students functioned reasonably well academically and had a positive opinion of themselves; however, the students experienced significant distress when in specifically socially evaluative situations.

The most significant source of social anxiety was identified as speaking in front of others (talking to groups), or having discussions with those in authority. In the context of higher education this can include oral presentations, recitation exercises, defense of thesis/research projects, consultation with instructors/advisors/faculty/staff etc. While the total amount of social anxiety was not very high it could potentially limit participation, seeking feedback/help/developing communication skills in these types of situations. Therefore, moderate levels of social anxiety cannot be ignored solely on the basis that students have remained functionally successful academically. They may be able to perform adequately while simultaneously avoiding opportunities to learn which involve public expression or interacting with authority figures.

Respondents indicated a high level of academic performance with achievement motivation being rated the highest. This would suggest that students possess a high degree of motivation to complete academic tasks and meet the expectations of educators. Social engagement and academic engagement were rated as being high indicating that students perceive themselves as capable of participating in their academic environment. However, the domain representing academic engagement was rated as the low point. This suggests that institutions need to continue to provide opportunities for active participation, intellectually engaging activities, and meaningful engagement- especially for students who may be hesitant to participate due to fears of criticism or embarrassment.

The students' high level of self-esteem reflects a generally positive, balanced, and affirming view of the self. A positive self-image is a useful asset to students due to the potential ability to manage the demands of academics, recover from setbacks, and continue to pursue difficult tasks. While this study provides some evidence regarding the strength of self-regard, it does not provide direct evidence regarding how self-esteem will reduce anxiety related to social interactions or improve academic success. Rather, it supports the idea that a program promoting confidence, self-acceptance, resilience, and effective coping strategies would reinforce the already existing resources that these students possess.

The finding that students experienced anxiety when interacting with people in authority also has implications for administrative processes. Universities may review whether procedures for consultation, enrollment, advising, scholarship applications, complaints, and access to services are unnecessarily intimidating or difficult to navigate. Clear communication channels, respectful frontline services, student-friendly procedures, and accessible feedback mechanisms may reduce barriers to seeking institutional assistance.

The high ratings in achievement motivation and academic self-efficacy further suggest that academic support should not be limited to students with low grades. Even high-functioning students may benefit from academic coaching, research writing support, study skills development, mentoring, and opportunities for leadership and scholarly participation. Programs should help students translate motivation and perceived competence into sustained academic engagement rather than focusing solely on performance outcomes.

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. The study relied on self-report instruments, making the responses vulnerable to social desirability, impression management, and subjective interpretation. Academic performance was measured through perceived academic functioning rather than official grade records. The data were also collected during School Year 2018–2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic substantially altered students' learning environments, social interactions, and mental health experiences. The results therefore provide useful pre-pandemic institutional evidence but should not be assumed to represent current student conditions without further investigation. Moreover, the descriptive-correlational design does not permit causal conclusions.

Future research should examine whether the observed levels of social anxiety, self-esteem, and academic functioning remain evident among contemporary university students. Comparative studies may investigate differences across campuses, academic programs, year levels, sex, socioeconomic background, and modes of learning. Longitudinal research may determine how these variables change over the course of students' university education. Future studies may also include objective academic indicators, qualitative interviews, behavioral measures, and variables such as coping strategies, personality traits, social skills, perceived social support, psychological safety, and help-seeking attitudes. Intervention studies may evaluate the effectiveness of public speaking programs, peer mentoring, counseling services, and faculty development initiatives in reducing participation barriers and improving student engagement.

Overall, the study demonstrates that academic success and psychosocial functioning must be considered together. Students may maintain high academic performance and positive self-esteem while still experiencing social discomfort that constrains participation and communication. Higher education institutions should therefore promote student support systems that are preventive, inclusive, accessible, and responsive to both academic and mental health needs. By strengthening communication confidence, supportive faculty-student relationships, counseling access, academic engagement, and positive self-regard, universities can create learning environments in which students are not only able to perform but are also able to participate, connect, and develop with greater confidence.

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Data Availability Statement

The data used in this research can be accessed through a formal request to the author of the study.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.