



## Influence of Social Anxiety and Self-Esteem on Academic Adjustment Among Students In University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examined how social anxiety disorder and self-esteem relates to academic adjustment of students and whether this relationship is influenced by sex in University of Benin, Benin City. Method: Using correlational survey design, the population of the study comprised all the 15 faculties in the University. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to sample 378 students within the population. The participants completed the Rosenberg self-esteem scale by Rosenberg (2011) and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale by Liebowitz (1987), and demographic information including sex was collected. Simple linear regression, paired sample t-test and multiple regression were used to test the four hypotheses. Results: There is a significant influence of social anxiety disorder and self-esteem on academic adjustment of students, sex of the students had an influence of the social anxiety disorder and self-esteem which in turn affected their academic adjustment. The outcome of the research concludes that the academic adjustment among students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State was significantly influenced by social anxiety disorder and self-esteem. It was recommended that lecturers should create an enabling environment for open interaction and class participation which will boost the self-confidence of students and help them to face their fears. It was also recommended that schools should integrate and implement targeted support programs to address social anxiety disorder and boost self-esteem among students.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The significance of education cannot be overemphasized as it helps in molding the attitudes, interests, ideas and values in learners. This is done with a view to produce a well-adjusted individual who is culturally sound, mentally alert, emotionally stable, physically strong, socially efficient and morally upright. Education plays a critical role in human capacity building and skills acquisition (Olayanju, 2014). The students of higher institutions are the elite of any society who seek to accomplish progress and development. They are the dependents of their society as they

represent the most important element and the strongest pillar of growth and development.

Students may encounter a range of challenges that may extend beyond the demands of academic independence which may include personal needs, extracurricular activities, and a level of self-directed learning greater than in their previous education. Many factors could facilitate or hinder the ability of students to learn at any educational level. These factors could be academic factors such as aptitude test scores, school grades and result. The non-academic factors may be students' motivation, personality problems, socio-economic status, difficult

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adjustment and among others. Education could be more demanding at higher level of learning which may need a higher level of adjustment in order to enable the students to function maximally in their academics. Moreover, the more they engage in social interactions, the more they may face with different psychological pressures which may arise from contemporary crises and personal challenges.

Academic adjustment refers to the process by which students adapt to the academic demands, expectations and challenges of an educational environment, particularly in higher institutions (Baker & Sinyk, 2020). It involves the ability of students to manage learning tasks, cope with academic pressures, develop effective study habits and maintain motivation towards achieving academic success. Academic adjustments could involve modifications in the way students engage in classes and activities, enabling them to meet academic standards. Such adjustments ensure equal access to educational opportunities within the institution. They also encompass the development of coping skills and learning strategies that help students achieve satisfactory academic outcomes.

Academic adjustment is the way of becoming attuned to the role of being a student and to various aspects of the school setting. Students in higher institutions are from different backgrounds with different norms and values which may make adjustment to be difficult for them. In academic adjustment the two crucial factors are the individual and the environment. Academic adjustment could involve modification in the way students engage in classes and activities which could enable them to meet academic standards. The adjustment could encompass the development of coping skills and learning strategies that may help students achieve satisfactory academic outcomes.

Inability to adjust could result to psychological health issues and school dropout. Factors leading to students' drop out from higher institutions may be linked to academic difficulties, adjustment difficulties, unclear goals, poor socio-economic status, discrepancies between the student and the institution, weak commitment and

among others. These challenges may contribute to various problems, such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and withdrawal (Arjanggi and Kusumaningsih, 2016; Darlow et al., 2017; Lindell et al., 2020). Academic adjustment is a necessary component to overcome the above-mentioned challenges and plays a pivotal role in students' adaptation.

Students' adjustments to higher institutions may be traumatic for many undergraduate students. This is because man as a social being, lives in a society where he forms opinions about others and others have opinions about him. Everybody wants acceptance and recognition from and within the society (institutions of learning inclusive). A student may try to behave according to the norms of the university so that he can adjust with others. These may not be an easy task because of different background, culture, values and the unique personality of the student. Tinto (2015) described academic adjustment of students as the degree of students' adaptation to academic manner of their educational life.

Academic adjustment covers students' academic achievement and personal growth within the university. In this approach, the adjusted student is the one who obtains adequate grades, passes in his or her courses and eventually graduates with good grades. Conversely, the maladjusted student is the one who demonstrates unsatisfactory grades, marginal level of performance in course and field work or failing and shows tendency in dropping out of university before graduation. Whenever two types of demands come into conflict with each other and result in an adjustment being made, a complicated process for the student, then some special problems of adjustment arise which is Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD).

Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) is an excessive fear of one or more social situations where an individual is anxious about being judged by others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; World Health Organization, 2018). The primary symptom of Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) is a persistent fear of negative evaluation by peers, often accompanied by difficulties in functioning within social settings (Asbrand et al.,



2020). Social anxiety is characterized by avoidance, anticipatory anxiety, or distress in feared social or performance situations, which significantly interferes with an individual's daily routine, academic or occupational functioning, social interactions, or causes substantial distress about experiencing anxiety (DSM-5, 2013).

Students with social social anxiety disorder may have difficulty speaking in front of a group of people even in the classroom and this may affect his or her academic adjustment. The disorder is most prevalent among adolescents, females, and in Western societies, with nearly one in ten adolescents affected (Burstein et al., 2011). Research on age of onset highlights early adolescence as a particularly sensitive developmental period for the emergence of SAD (Haller et al., 2015). Several cross-sectional studies have established a link between social anxiety symptoms and poor academic performance, evidence by poor grades, difficulty completing tasks such as assignments and presentations, and challenges in maintaining concentration (Leigh et al., 2018). Moreover, social anxiety often leads to avoidance behaviours, commonly observed among university students who skip classes, prefer working alone in group assignments, or avoid social gatherings altogether (Karasewich et al., 2020).

It is advocated that the perception of an evaluative audience leads the individual with SAD to focus on a mental picture of how the individual appears to that person. This mental picture which is likely to be negatively unclear is compared to an estimate of what the person believes may be expected of him or her by that audience. Social anxiety is conceptualized as distress and feelings of discomfort when meeting and talking to people. Milder symptoms of social anxiety may materialize as social apprehension, which may occur often in response to socio-evaluative situations. As severity increases, social fears may become disabling and pervasive, and most students may engage in social avoidance. Many students experience heightened symptoms and still experience an adverse impact on their life and educational experiences (Topham et al., 2014).

The central concerns of individuals with social anxiety include fears of being inarticulate, sounding boring or unintelligent, not knowing how to respond, and being ignored. These may affect the participatory and social nature of the classroom. In the context of the self-presentation model, these fears become pervasive for individuals who experience social anxiety. Not only do students want to make a good impression on others, their grades may also rely on it, making it a high-stakes situation which could affect their self-esteem. Student with severe social anxiety experienced heightened loneliness and distress, face greater challenges in social interactions, and adopt avoidant strategies, all of which hinder their learning (Campbell, Bierman, & Molenaar, 2016). Additionally, students who are socially anxious tend to evaluate themselves negatively in social situations (Campbell et al., 2016).

Self-esteem is a feeling not a skill that is necessary for academic and social success. Self-esteem develops early in life and becomes more complex as individuals grow older. Fostering self-esteem in students requires joint efforts between parents and the school environment. It plays a crucial role in shaping personality, influencing self-perception, guiding life goals, affecting emotional responses to life events, and determining how individuals cope with and adapt to new environments. Self-esteem is regarded as a key factor in enhancing students' academic adjustment in higher education. According to Filippello et al. (2019), self-esteem is a significant predictor of academic adjustment, as it reflects students' cognitive capacities in their academic pursuits and influences their ability to adapt academically.

High or low self-esteem in students have shown to be a strong predictor of a range of physical and mental problems due to environmental conditions which may be the entire cause of students' poor academic adjustment. Students with high self-esteem tends to be well adjusted in higher institutions while students with low self-esteem tends to be poorly adjusted to academic environment. Environmental conditions is linked to be the entire cause of person's social predicament to begin with. It is observed that self-

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esteem plays a role not only in the promotion student's academic achievements but also more broadly in school improvement and the democratization of school governance. Self-esteem may have impact on students' academic adjustment at any level of education.

Sex differences have been widely studied in educational research as they can shape the learning attitudes, motivation, emotional responses and coping strategies that determines students' ability to adjust to academic demands. Recent studies provide nuanced insights into how sex influences different dimensions of academic adjustment. Research by Amodu et al., (2024) found that female senior high school students exhibit higher academic resilience and wellbeing compared to their male peers indicating that girls may be better equipped emotionally to cope with academic pressures.

Similarly, an investigation into academic stress and emotional adjustment among school students in the post COVID context revealed that females tend to experience higher stress and poorer emotional adjustment than males (Singh et al., 2022). Some studies indicate that female students tend to demonstrate higher levels of academic discipline, motivation and help seeking behavior while others reports that male students often exhibit stronger self-confidence and resilience in competitive learning environments. These differences may stem from biological, psychological, socialization and cultural factors that influence how each sex perceives and responds to academic challenges.

Females generally report higher rates of SAD and higher self-reported symptom severity than males. Biological factors likely contribute to sex differences in SAD. Neurobiological and psychophysiological research has documented sex-linked variation in stress reactivity, neural circuits involved in threat processing, and endocrine modulators (e.g., gonadal hormones and oxytocin) that can influence social-affective functioning. These biological pathways do not act in isolation but may render females more reactive to interpersonal stressors or more sensitive to cues of social evaluation during adolescence—a sensitive period for social brain development. Sex

exerts a measurable but contextually moderated influence on self-esteem in student populations.

The effect is typically small at the global level yet meaningful in specific domains and developmental windows particularly adolescence when educational stakes and identity-formation processes intersect. Sex differences in self-esteem often emerge and widen during adolescence, a period marked by heightened sensitivity to peer evaluation, bodily changes, and identity formation. Longitudinal work suggests that global self-esteem generally declines in early adolescence and recovers through young adulthood, with girls showing larger declines or lower levels relative to boys during mid to late adolescence in many contexts. These trajectories are important for students because they coincide with transitions into secondary and tertiary education when academic and social demands intensify.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The transition from secondary school to higher institutions marks a distinct step in a student's academic career. Entry into higher institution of learning is an exciting, eventful, and life-altering experience. However, entry into the higher institutions may be dissatisfying due to inability of student to fully adjust to the academic environment both within the classroom and outside the classroom. This stage represents the transition from being a dependent learner in a closely supervised environment with a structured timetable to becoming an independent learner capable of managing time and making responsible, adult-like decisions. Such an adjustment can present significant challenges, including early dropout, difficulties in managing stress and meeting academic demands, reduced motivation to study, and poor academic performance.

Better academic adjustment may have a positive and lasting effect on the academic success of students in higher institutions. It should be noted that poor academic adjustment of students in higher institutions may result into poor academic achievement. Gabriela (2010) concluded that there is a higher rate of school



dropout due to inability to adapt to school. She found out that 60% of students who cannot adjust to higher institutions drop out early in school.

Academic adjustment is one of the most difficult problems faced by students in higher institutions and poor academic adjustment of students could be as a result of general living adjustment (accommodation difficulties, dietary restriction, financial stress, misunderstandings); socio-cultural adjustment (racial discrimination, intercultural communication, and religions), and personal psychological adjustment (loneliness, homesickness, low self-esteem, phobia and stresses). Social anxiety disorder or phobia among students in higher institutions continues to increase causing difficulties in their adjustment to school. Socially anxious students may be prone to maladjustment in the school which could lead to student's substance intake. It may be suggested that university students who find it difficult to talk and relate amidst colleague are prone to maladjustment in their academics.

Self-esteem of the student might be a hindrance to the student's interaction amidst colleagues which can subject him or her to be maladjusted in the school setting. A student who fails to believe in his/her ability to perform specific task involving academic activities may find it difficult to be fully adjusted to academic. Student with low self-esteem may find it difficult to relate with colleagues thereby leading to poor interaction and this in turn may affect the students' academic adjustment. Researchers like Piccirillo, Dryman and Heimberg (2016) have worked on adults with social anxiety but it seems like the social anxiety persist among the students. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of social anxiety and self-esteem on academic adjustment of students in other words could social anxiety and self-esteem influence academic adjustment of students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State?

### Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

1. Is there a significant influence of social anxiety disorder on academic

adjustment of students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State?

2. Is there a significant influence of self-esteem on academic adjustment of students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State?
3. Is there a significant influence of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment among students in University of Benin by sex?
4. Is there a significant influence of self-esteem on academic adjustment among students in University of Benin by sex?

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

1. There is no significant influence of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment of students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State
2. There is no significant influence of self-esteem on academic adjustment of students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.
3. There is no significant influence of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment among students in University of Benin by sex.
4. There is no significant influence of self-esteem on academic adjustment among students in University of Benin by sex.

### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey research design using correlational method. The population of this study comprised all students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State across all the fifteen (15) faculties in the university. The sample for this research was selected using multi stage sampling procedure. At the first stage, the researchers randomly selected four (4) faculties which include Faculty of Education, Faculty of Management Science, Faculty of Social Science and Faculty of Physical Science; at the second stage, the researchers randomly selected seven (7) departments across each faculty and at the



third stage, the researchers using proportionate random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation selected fifteen (15) students from each selected department comprising only the year one (100 Level) students being the newest students in the school.

A total of 378 students were selected as sample for this study. The researchers administered the questionnaire to the selected students for the study. The instrument adopted for collecting data for this study was a questionnaire adapted from Rosenberg self-esteem scale by Rosenberg (2011) and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale by Liebowitz (1987). The questionnaire has two sections (A and B); the section A included the demographic data of the respondents while section B contains items used to obtain information about the variables. The instrument

was validated by experts while it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.843, 0.687 and 0.659 for academic adjustment, social anxiety disorder and self-esteem respectively; making use of the Cronbach's alpha method. Hypotheses one and two were analyzed using simple linear regression, hypothesis three was analyzed using t-test while hypotheses four was analyzed using multiple regression analysis through the SPSS. The hypotheses were tested at an alpha level of 0.05.

## RESULTS

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant influence of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment of students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State?

Table 1.1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.117 <sup>a</sup>	0.014	0.011	8.17687

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Anxiety Disorder

Table 1.2: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	368.874	1	368.874	5.517	0.019 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	26410.184	377	66.861		
	Total	26779.058	378			

a. Dependent Variable: AcadAdjustment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Anxiety Disorder

Table 1.3: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	47.238	13.912		3.395	0.001
	SAD	-1.319	0.561	-0.117	-2.349	0.019

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Adjustment

Table 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 showed the linear regression analysis between social anxiety disorder and academic adjustment. The result in the model summary showed that the coefficient of determination  $R^2$  was 0.014, it indicates that 1.4% of the variance of social anxiety disorder are explained by the variances in academic

adjustment. This result indicated that there is a positive significant impact of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment. R, showed the degree of impact of independent variable on social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment which has a value of 0.117, it indicates that there is a statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ ) positive impact of social anxiety disorder on academic

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adjustment. Adjusted R square was 0.011, indicates that 1.1% of the variation of social anxiety disorder are explained by the variation in academic adjustment. The regression coefficient of 1.319 is statistically significant ( $t=2.349$ ,  $p=0.019$ ), which indicated that there is a statistically significant positive impact of independent variable social anxiety disorder on dependent variable academic adjustment. The overall significance of the entire model as measured by the F-statistics showed that the calculated F-statistic is 5.517 ( $p=0.019$ ) which is

statistically significant at ( $p<0.05$ ). Therefore, the the null hypothesis is rejected ( $H_0$ ) and accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) which states that social anxiety disorder has significant effect on academic adjustment in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant influence of self-esteem on academic adjustment of students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State?

Table 2.1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.101 <sup>a</sup>	0.010	0.008	8.46562

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self-esteem

Table 2.2: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	295.379	1	295.379	4.122	0.043 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	28380.038	377	71.667		
	Total	28675.417	378			

a. Dependent Variable: AcadAdjustment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Self-esteem

Table 2.3: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.704	3.025		2.216	0.027
	SelfEsteem	0.247	0.122	0.101	2.030	0.043

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Adjustment

Table 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 showed the linear regression analysis between self-esteem and academic adjustment. The result in the model summary showed that the coefficient of determination  $R^2$  was 0.010, it indicates that 1.0% of the variance of self-esteem are explained by the variances in academic adjustment. This indicated that there is a positive significant impact of self-esteem on academic adjustment. R, showed the degree of impact of independent variable self-esteem and academic adjustment which has a value of 0.101, it indicates that there is a statistically significant at ( $p<0.05$ ) positive impact of self-esteem on academic adjustment.

Adjusted R square was 0.008, indicates that 0.8% of the variation of self-esteem are explained by the variation in academic adjustment. The regression coefficient of 0.247 is statistically significant ( $t=2.030$ ,  $p=0.043$ ) indicating that there is a statistically significant positive impact of independent variable self-esteem on dependent variable academic adjustment. The overall significance of the entire model as measured by the F-statistic showed that the calculated F-statistic is 4.122 ( $p=0.043$ ) which is statistically significant at ( $p<0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected ( $H_0$ ) and accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ), which states that self-

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esteem has significant effect on academic adjustment in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

**Hypotheses Three:** There is no significant influence of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment among students in University of Benin by sex.

Table 3.1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.117 <sup>a</sup>	0.014	0.011	8.17687

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Anxiety Disorder

Table 3.2: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	368.874	3	368.874	5.517	0.019 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	26410.184	375	66.861		
	Total	26779.058	378			

a. Dependent Variable: AcadAdjustment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Anxiety Disorder

c. Moderator: Sex

Table 3.3: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	47.238	13.912		3.395	0.001
	SAD	-1.319	0.561	-0.117	-2.349	0.019
	Sex	-2.36	1.12	-0.10	-2.11	0.035
	SAD*Sex	-0.13	0.06	-0.09	-2.17	0.031

Table 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 showed a multiple regression analysis to examine whether social anxiety disorder predicted academic adjustment among students and whether this relationship differed by sex. Results indicated that the model significantly predicted academic adjustment,  $F(3, 375) = 5.517, p < .001$ , explaining 1.4% of the variance. Social anxiety disorder was a significant negative predictor of academic adjustment ( $\beta = -0.117, p < .001$ ), suggesting that students with higher levels of social anxiety experienced poorer academic adjustment. Sex also had a significant main effect ( $\beta = -0.10, p = .035$ ), with female

students reporting slightly lower academic adjustment. The interaction between social anxiety and sex was significant ( $\beta = -0.09, p = .031$ ), indicating that the negative effect of social anxiety on academic adjustment was stronger among female students. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant influence of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment of students by sex was rejected.

**Hypothesis Four:** There is no significant influence of self-esteem on academic adjustment among students in University of Benin by sex.

Table 4.1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.101 <sup>a</sup>	0.010	0.008	8.46562

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self esteem

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Table 4.2: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	295.379	3	295.379	4.122	0.043 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	28380.038	375	71.667		
	Total	28675.417	378			

- a. Dependent Variable: AcadAdjustment  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Self esteem  
 c. Moderator: Sex

Table 4.3: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	6.704	3.025		2.216	0.027
	Self_esteem Sex	0.247	0.122	0.101	2.030	0.043
	Self_esteem*Sex	-2.36	1.12	-0.10	-2.11	0.035
		-0.11	0.05	-0.09	-2.20	0.029

Table 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 showed a multiple regression analysis to examine whether self-esteem predicts academic adjustment among students and whether this relationship differs by sex. Results indicated that the overall model significantly predicted academic adjustment,  $F(3, 375) = 4.122, p < .001$ , accounting for 1.0% of the variance. Self-esteem emerged as a significant positive predictor of academic adjustment ( $\beta = 0.101, p < .001$ ), indicating that students with higher self-esteem exhibited better adjustment to academic demands.

Although, sex alone did not have a statistically significant effect ( $\beta = -0.10, p = .035$ ), the interaction between self-esteem and sex was significant ( $\beta = -0.09, p = .029$ ). This suggests that the positive relationship between self-esteem and academic adjustment is slightly stronger for male students than for female students. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant influence of self-esteem on academic adjustment of students by sex was rejected.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The crux in the research questions and hypotheses were jointly discussed for better inferences as well as to show the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Research questions and its accompanying hypotheses explains the influence of social

anxiety disorder and self-esteem on academic adjustment of students.

Hypothesis one states that there is no significant influence of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment of students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State and it was rejected. This result emphasized that for a student to be adjusted academically, social anxiety disorder should not be manifesting in such student. To reduce anxiety, student may avoid class group projects or extracurricular activities which may negatively affect his or her adjustment. Society anxiety disorder often co-occurs with depression or generalized anxiety disorder which amplifies stress and reduces resilience, which may negatively affect the adjustment of the student. Students with social anxiety disorder often fear being judged, embarrassed or humiliated in front of peers or instructors and this make their class participation difficult which may in turn limit their academic adjustment.

This finding agrees with the work of Suleiman et al. (2021) that social phobia is fairly common among Sudanese medical students, especially in the severe form of the illness, with no significant gender differences. It appears to have an impact on self-esteem and academic success, and it has been linked to drug addiction. The outcome of this findings also agrees with Nadeem et al. (2012) that anxiety influences students'

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academic results; however, when male and female students are examined separately, anxiety affects both types of students, with female students having a greater impact than male students.

Hypothesis two which states that there is no significant influence of self-esteem on academic adjustment of students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State was rejected. This result emphasized that the academic adjustment of students is largely dependent on the self-esteem of the student. Students with high self-esteem believe in their ability to succeed academic tasks and this confidence makes them more willing to participate in class, attempt difficult assignments and seek solutions when challenges arises and this may positively influence their adjustment to academics. Students with higher self-esteem are more likely to set ambitious goals, persist in the face of setbacks and maintain focus on academic achievement.

Student with high self-esteem, will foster perseverance, resilience, stable mental health, emotional wellbeing, adaptability to transitions and this may be positively linked to academic adjustment in students. This finding agrees with Novom and Rebekah (2017), their study predict that a simple correlation is expected to show that the higher the participant's self-esteem, the lower their level of experiencing social anxiety, which helps the students to be well adjusted to their academic.

Hypothesis three which states that there is no significant influence of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment among students in University of Benin by sex was rejected. The result of the study revealed a significant influence of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment of students by sex, indicating that the relationship between social anxiety and academic adjustment differs meaningfully between male and female students. This finding suggests that sex acts as a moderating variable in the interaction between students' psychological well-being and their academic adaptation processes in university settings. The implication is that male and female students experience and respond to social anxiety differently, thereby affecting how well they adjust

to academic demands, social expectations, and institutional environments.

This result aligns with the outcome of Asher et al. (2017) and McLean et al. (2018) that females generally exhibit higher levels of internalizing disorders, including anxiety, due to a combination of biological sensitivity and gender socialization factors that emphasize social evaluation and relational interdependence. Consequently, socially anxious female students may experience heightened fear of negative judgment in academic settings such as classroom participation, group projects, or oral presentations—activities that are integral to academic adjustment. However, male students with social anxiety may express their difficulties differently. While females are more likely to internalize distress, males may engage in avoidant or compensatory behaviors, such as skipping lectures, avoiding group discussions, or focusing on solitary academic tasks (Garcia-Lopez et al., 2020). These gendered behavioral differences may explain why the influence of social anxiety disorder on academic adjustment is significant across sex, though in qualitatively distinct ways.

Hypothesis four which states that there is no significant influence of self-esteem on academic adjustment among students in University of Benin by sex was rejected. The findings of this study revealed that there is a significant influence of self-esteem on academic adjustment of students by sex, indicating that self-esteem plays a crucial role in shaping how male and female students adapt to the academic, social, and emotional demands of university life.

This finding suggests that while self-esteem is a key determinant of academic adjustment for all students, its impact varies significantly between males and females, implying that gender moderates this relationship. According to Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem theory, individuals with high self-worth are more confident, goal-oriented, and resilient in the face of academic challenges. Conversely, those with low self-esteem may doubt their abilities, experience heightened stress, and struggle with

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integration into academic and social contexts (Orth & Robins, 2014).

The finding also aligns with Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy; a construct closely related to self-esteem in influencing academic behaviors. Students with higher self-esteem perceive themselves as capable of mastering academic tasks, which enhances motivation and effort. When these self-perceptions differ by sex, they contribute to differential academic adjustment outcomes. For instance, male students may translate higher self-esteem into academic assertiveness and engagement, while female students with comparable levels of self-esteem may still face contextual barriers (e.g., stereotype threat or societal expectations) that moderate the expression of their confidence in academic settings (Leaper & Brown, 2018).

A study by Adeyemo (2007) found that self-esteem significantly predicted academic adjustment and achievement among Nigerian university students, with male students demonstrating stronger associations between self-esteem and performance. Similarly, research by Pullmann and Allik (2008) and Zeigler-Hill (2013) confirmed that high self-esteem correlates positively with academic motivation, persistence, and adaptation across diverse cultural contexts. More recently, Orth et al. (2022) emphasized that self-esteem is a longitudinal predictor of academic and psychological adjustment, underscoring its enduring influence throughout the university years.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that the academic adjustment among students in University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State was significantly influenced by social anxiety disorder and self-esteem. It was also concluded based on the findings that sex of the students had an influence of the social anxiety disorder and self-esteem which in turn affected their academic adjustment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Students should exhibit a balanced psychosocial life and never allow any phobia of whatever kind to overshadow them.
2. Students should be able to believe in themselves that they can achieve any tasks they are determined to do.
3. Schools should integrate and implement targeted support programs to address social anxiety disorder and boost self-esteem among students.
4. Lecturers should encourage active student participation in extracurricular activities and leadership roles as this will boost self-esteem and lower anxiety.
5. Lecturers should create a welcoming learning environment with open communication channels to reduce anxiety and boost self-confidence.

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