



Hidden Struggles: Uncovering The Prevalence Of Social Phobia Among Visually Impaired Adolescents

¹Vinish Malik, ²Prof. Sarika Manhas

1. Research Scholars, Department of Home Science (Human Development), University of Jammu, UT of J&K, India.

2. Professor, Department of Home Science (Human Development), University of Jammu, UT of J&K, India.

Abstract: The present study aimed to analyze the level of social phobia among visually impaired adolescents, specifically focusing on gender differences in severity. The sample consisted of 60 participants, evenly split between boys and girls, displaying varying levels of social phobia as measured on a scale ranging from normal to severe. The results show that social phobia is prevalent among visually impaired adolescents, with a significant proportion of participants experiencing mild to severe levels of social anxiety. 43.3% of adolescents meet the diagnostic criteria specified in the DSM-5 for social phobia of which majority were girls. They met the diagnostic criteria of experiencing marked fear or anxiety in one or more social situations. These adolescents reported feeling anxious in a variety of social situations, such as while giving speeches or performing in front of others. Social Phobia was not limited to peer settings but also extended to interactions with authority figures. They also avoided social situations that caused them fear or anxiety such as attending social events, and avoided doing things or speaking to people for fear of embarrassment. Statistically calculations of Chi square values show significant association between gender and severity of level of social phobia at $p < 0.5$.

Key words: Social phobia, DSM-5, Adolescents, Visual impairment

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by rapid physical and psychological changes, accompanied by heightened emotional experiences that increase vulnerability to psychopathology. Anxiety disorders often peak during this stage, with global reports indicating that one in seven adolescents experiences a mental disorder, accounting for 13% of the disease burden in this age group (Casey et al., 2010; Leigh & Clark, 2018).

Social phobia, also known as social anxiety disorder (SAD), is one of the most debilitating conditions of adolescence. It is characterised by an intense fear of negative evaluation in social or performance situations, leading to avoidance or distress (APA, 2013). Typically emerging around age 13, SAD affects approximately 7% of adolescents annually in the United States. Studies across countries such as Germany, Sweden, Spain, and the U.S. confirm its high prevalence, with girls often reporting greater severity, though findings on gender differences remain mixed (Essau et al., 1999; Aune et al., 2022; Ernst et al., 2022).

In India, prevalence estimates range from 12.8% to 30.7% among school-going adolescents (Mehtalia & Vankar, 2004; Harikrishnan et al., 2012). Factors such as age, gender, and lack of school counselling services have been identified as predictors (Yuvaraj et al., 2018).

Visually impaired adolescents may be particularly vulnerable to SAD due to limited social exposure, communication barriers, stigma, and dependence on others (Pandey et al., 2015; Binder et al., 2018). While some evidence suggests they experience higher anxiety and social difficulties, other studies argue that reduced exposure to visual cues may buffer against social anxiety (Raizi et al., 2022). Nonetheless, smaller peer networks, social isolation, and negative stereotypes increase their risk of emotional difficulties (Beteinaki & Bertills, 2019).

Despite growing recognition of adolescent mental health challenges, little research has examined social phobia among visually impaired adolescents in the Indian context. The present study addresses this gap by assessing the occurrence of social phobia among visually impaired adolescents in Jammu and Kashmir, with specific attention to gender differences. Findings aim to inform interventions and support strategies for promoting their psychological well-being.

Objectives: The objectives of the research are to:

- I) Assess the level of social phobia among visually impaired adolescents
- II) Determine Sex differences if any, in the social phobia experience by visually impaired adolescents

Hypothesis: There is no significant association between sex and severity of social phobia.

Research Methodology:

Locale and sampling technique: The data for present study was collected from visually impaired adolescents from the Jammu division of Jammu and Kashmir, Union Territory. The total sample size was 60 adolescents, with an equal number of girls and boys (30 each) selected in the age group of 12-15 years.

Half of the sample, consisting of 30 institutional visually impaired adolescents (15 girls and 15 boys), were selected from two residential institutions located at Roopnagar, Jammu district. One institution catered to girls and was operated by the National Federation of the Blind, New Delhi; while the other institution meant for boys was run by the Social Welfare Department, J&K, UT. A list of adolescents aged 12-15 years residing in these institutions was prepared, and then 15 girls and 15 boys were randomly drawn from the list.

The remaining half of the sample, comprising 30 home-based visually impaired adolescents (15 girls and 15 boys), were selected from various urban and peri-urban areas of the Jammu division. Information about these home-based children was obtained from sources such as the Department of Samagra Shiksha, rehabilitation centers, and hospitals. The desired sample was then selected using purposive sampling techniques.

Prior to data collection, formal permissions were obtained from the relevant authorities in the residential institutions housing the visually impaired adolescents. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants, and informed consent was obtained. For the home-based visually impaired adolescents, contact was first established through personalized phone calls. Some participants allowed home visits for data collection, while others provided their responses via phone calls or online platform (google form).

Sampling criteria: The selected sample of visually impaired adolescents were required to be in the age group of 12 - 15 years, and should have a benchmark disability i.e 40% or above mentioned on their certificate. They were also required to be enrolled for formal education at the time of data collection.

Tools for data collection: K. M. Connor's Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN), a self-rating scale that assesses anxiety, avoidance, and physiological symptoms was used for data collection. It is a 17-item scale with ratings ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (very). The scale score ranges from 0 to 68. A score of 19 or above indicates social phobia. SPIN has strong test-retest reliability, internal consistency, convergent and divergent validity, and may be used as a screening and therapy response measure for social phobia. In terms of diagnosing social phobia, it has a threshold of 73-85% and a specificity of 69-84%. Cronbach's alpha is 0.85.

Results and discussion: The results of the study are presented and discussed as follows

1. Demographic profile of the sample adolescents

Socio demographic profile	Girls (n=30)	Boys (n=30)	Total (n=60)
Age (years)			
12 years	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (5%)
13 years	1 (3.3%)	7 (23.3%)	8 (13.3%)
14 years	8 (26.7%)	2 (6.7%)	10 (16.7%)
15 years	20 (66.7%)	19 (63.3%)	39 (65%)
Mean age & Standard Deviation	14.56 ± 1.048	14.26 ± .727	
Educational Qualification			
Middle school (6 th to 8 th)	7 (23.3%)	8 (26.6%)	15 (25%)
High school (9 th to 10 th)	15 (50%)	13 (43.3%)	28 (46.6%)
Higher secondary school (11 th to 12 th)	8 (26.6%)	9 (30%)	17 (28.3%)
Status of Impairment			
Total visually impaired	8 (26.7%)	16 (53.3%)	24 (40%)
Partially visually impaired	22 (73.3%)	14 (46.7%)	36 (60%)
Residential Status			
Institutional visually impaired	15 (50%)	15 (50%)	30 (50%)
Home-based visually impaired	15 (50%)	15 (50%)	30 (50%)

The table 1 presents a comprehensive socio-demographic profile of a group of adolescents, categorized by gender, age, educational qualification, and visual impairment status.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of the participants were in age range of 12 to 15 years, constituting 65% of the total sample. The mean age of the participants is approximately 14.56 ± 1.048 years for girls and $14.26 \pm .727$ years for boys. Educational qualification reveals that the highest proportion of participants were currently enrolled in the high school (9th to 10th grade), accounting for 46.6% of the total sample. 25% of the participants were in the middle school (6th to 8th grade) while 28.3% of the adolescents were in higher secondary school (11th to 12th grade).

Turning to the status of impairment, it is evident that the participants were visually impaired to varying degrees. 40% were totally blind, whereas 60% were partially sighted. As far as their residential setup was concerned, 50% each were from institutional and home-based settings.

Table 2. Social phobia among visually impaired adolescents

Level of social phobia among visually impaired adolescents

Level of Social Phobia	Boys (n=30)	Girls (n=30)	Total (n=60)
Normal	22 (73.3%)	12 (40%)	34 (56.6%)
Mild	8 (26.6%)	8 (26.6%)	16 (26.6%)
Moderate	-	6 (20%)	6 (10%)
Severe	-	4 (13.3%)	4 (6.6%)
Very Severe	-	-	-
Total	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)

The chi-square test statistic is 12.9, with 4 degrees of freedom, and the p-value is 0.01*, yates' chi square 8.86 (0.06). Since the p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05, we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant association between sex and level of social phobia.

Table 2 of the study presents the distribution of level of social phobia among the sample adolescents. It reveals that the majority, 34 (56.6%), of the total adolescents displayed a normal level of social phobia. Out of them, 22 (73.3%) were boys and 12 (40%) were girls.

Furthermore, 16 (26.6%) adolescents, comprising an equal number of boys and girls (8 each) exhibited mild level of social phobia. 20% & 13.3% of the sample girls had moderate and severe level of social phobia, respectively. None of the boys were found in these two categories.

The findings reveal that majority of the visually impaired adolescents had normal level of social phobia; followed by almost of quarter of them having mild level of social phobia. This indicates that despite of their disability status most adolescents were free of social phobias. Most of adolescents did not meet the diagnostic criteria for social phobia as outlined in the DSM-5 (Diagnostic and statistical Manual)

On the whole 43.3% sample adolescents met the diagnostic criteria specified in the DSM-5 for social phobia, of which the majority of them were girls. The diagnostic criteria they met included experiencing marked fear or anxiety in one or more social situations. These adolescents reported feeling anxious in a variety of social situations, such as giving speeches or performing in front of others. Anxiety was not limited to peer settings but also extended to interactions with authority figures. Adolescents mentioned that they afraid of people in authority and avoid speaking to anyone. Adolescents also avoid social situations that cause them fear or anxiety like going in parties or social events, and avoid doing things or speaking to people for fear of embarrassment or looking stupid. Sex wise significant differences were noted, as more girls than boys had social phobias of varying intensity.

Table 3: Item Analysis of social phobia among total adolescents

S.NO	Statements	Not at all	A little bit	somewhat	Very much	Extremely
1	I am afraid of people in authority	11 (18.3%)	28 (46.7%)	10 (16.7%)	8 (13.3%)	3 (5%)
2	I am bothered by blushing in front of people	17 (28.3%)	21 (35%)	13 (21.7%)	7 (11.7%)	2 (3.3%)
3	Parties and social events scare me	32 (53.3%)	13 (21.7%)	4 (6.7%)	7 (11.7%)	4 (6.7%)
4	I avoid talking to people I don't know	20 (33.3%)	21 (35%)	16 (26.7%)	2 (3.3%)	1 (1.7%)
5	Being criticized scares me a lot	43 (71.7%)	10 (16.7%)	3 (5%)	2 (3.3%)	2 (3.3%)
6	I avoid doing things or speaking to people for fear of embarrassment	10 (16.7%)	31 (51.7%)	7 (11.7%)	6 (10%)	6 (10.0%)
7	Sweating in front of people cause me distress	34 (56.7%)	18 (30.0%)	4 (6.7%)	3 (5%)	1 (1.7%)
8	I avoid going to parties	18 (30%)	17 (28.3%)	8 (13.3%)	5 (8.3%)	12 (20%)
9	I avoid activities in which I am the centre of attention	20 (33.3%)	8 (13.3%)	13 (21.7%)	12 (20%)	7 (11.7%)
10	Talking to strangers scares me	19 (31.7%)	26 (43.3%)	9 (15%)	4 (6.7%)	2 (3.3%)
11	I avoid having to give speeches	15 (25%)	12 (20%)	16 (26.7%)	11 (18.3%)	6 (10.0%)
12	I would do anything to avoid being criticized	46 (76.7%)	7 (11.7%)	4 (6.7%)	2 (3.3%)	1 (1.7%)
13	Heart palpitations bother me when I am around people	9 (15.0%)	23 (38.3%)	19 (31.7%)	7 (11.7%)	1 (1.7%)
14	I am afraid of doing things when people might be watching	18 (30%)	21 (35%)	10 (16.7%)	7 (11.7%)	4 (6.7%)
15	Being embarrassed or looking stupid are among my worst fear	19 (31.7%)	26 (43.3%)	5 (8.3%)	5 (8.3%)	5 (8.3%)
16	I avoid speaking to anyone in authority	15 (25%)	27 (45%)	7 (11.7%)	6 (10%)	5 (8.3%)
17	Trembling or shaking in front of others is distressing to me	22 (36.7%)	26 (43.3%)	6 (10%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)

Table 3 of the study contains the item analysis of social phobia among the sample adolescents. The data on fear of authority figures revealed that 46.7% of adolescents were a little bit afraid, 13.3% were very much afraid, and 5% were extremely afraid which indicated a notable range of fear levels among adolescents regarding authority figures.

Adolescents reported varying levels of concern about blushing in front of others. Most (35%) were a little bit bothered, while 28.3% were not at all bothered. Only 11.7% were very much, and 3.3% were extremely bothered. It was interpreted that blushing in front of others was generally a minor issue, with only a small proportion of adolescents experiencing significant discomfort.

Parties and social events scared 21.7% of adolescents a little bit, while 11.7% were very much scared and 6.7% were extremely scared. However, 53.3% were not scared at all. It is interpreted that most adolescents did not experienced significant fear regarding parties and social events, though a notable minority felt considerable discomfort.

Adolescents responded to the statement about avoiding talking to people they didn't know. Of them, 33.3% said they did not avoid it at all, while 35% admitted to avoiding it a little bit. Around 26.7% somewhat avoided talking to unfamiliar people. Only a few adolescents, 3.3% and 1.7%, reported avoiding it very

much and extremely, respectively. It indicated that, for most adolescents, avoiding conversations with unfamiliar people was only a mild concern, with very few showing significant avoidance.

A significant majority of adolescents (71.7%) reported that being criticized did not scare them at all, while only 3.3% each stated they were very much or extremely scared by criticism. It is interpreted that criticism had little to no impact on the majority, with only a small fraction feeling considerable fear in such situations.

Slightly more than half of the adolescents (51.7%) reported that they avoided doing things or speaking to people for fear of embarrassment a little bit. Additionally, 11.7% somewhat avoided such situations, while 10% each stated they very much or extremely avoided speaking to others due to embarrassment. It represents that, while the majority experienced only mild avoidance, a notable portion of adolescents had a significant fear of embarrassment that impacted their social interactions.

Sweating in front of people caused no distress for 56.7% of adolescents, while 30% felt a little bit distressed. Only 5% to 1% reported feeling very much to extremely distressed by it. It was interpreted that, for most adolescents, sweating in front of others was not a significant source of discomfort, with only a small minority experiencing high levels of distress.

30% of Adolescents reported that they did not avoid going to parties at all, while, 28.3%, avoided a little bit and 20% extremely avoided going to parties. It represents that most adolescents preferred not to engage in social interactions or did not feel comfortable attending such events.

33.3% of adolescents reported that they avoided activities where they were the centre of attention, 21.7% avoided these activities somewhat, and 20% to 11.7% avoided them very much to extremely. It was interpreted that many adolescents tended to avoid situations that placed them in the spotlight. Their avoidance might reflect feelings of discomfort or unease with being the focus of attention, which may be due to feelings of self-consciousness or social anxiety.

43.3% of adolescents reported being a little bit scared of talking to strangers, 6.7% were very scared, and 3.3% were extremely scared. It indicated that only a small proportion of adolescents had a significant fear of interacting with strangers, interpreted that most adolescents were relatively comfortable in such situations.

Table 4 : Item analysis of social phobia among visually impaired adolescent girls and boys

S.N O	Statements	Gender	Not at all	A little bit	somewhat	Very much	Extremel y	X ²
1	I am afraid of people in authority	Boys	9 (30%)	13 (43.3%)	5 (16.7%)	3 (10%)	-	Yates x ² = 4.86 p value = 0.30
		Girls	2 (6.7%)	15 (50%)	5 (16.7%)	5 (16.7%)	3 (10%)	
2	I am bothered by blushing in front of people	Boys	12 (40%)	11 (36.7%)	4 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	X ² = 6.139 p value = 0.18
		Girls	5 (16.7%)	10 (33.3%)	9 (30%)	5 (16.7%)	1 (3.3%)	
3	Parties and social events scare me	Boys	16 (53.3%)	6 (20%)	2 (6.7%)	4 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)	X ² = 0.22 P value 0.99
		Girls	16 (53.3%)	7 (23.3%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10%)	2 (6.7%)	
4	I avoid talking to people I don't know	Boys	8 (26.7%)	15 (50%)	6 (20%)	1 (3.3%)	-	Yates X ² = 4.56 P value = 0.33
		Girls	12 (40%)	6 (20%)	10 (33.3%)	1 (3.3%)	1 (3.3%)	
5	Being criticized scares me a lot	Boys	24 (80%)	5 (16.7%)	1 (3.3%)	-	-	Yates X ² = 4.24 P value = 0.37
		Girls	16 (63.3%)	5 (16.7%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	
6	I avoid doing things or speaking to people for fear of embarrassment	Boys	9 (30%)	17 (56.7%)	3 (10%)	1 (3.3%)	-	Yates X ² = 1.69 P value = 0.79
		Girls	7 (23.3%)	14 (46.7%)	4 (13.3%)	5 (16.7%)	-	
7	Sweating in front of people cause me distress	Boys	22 (73.3%)	6 (20%)	2 (6.7%)	-	-	Yates X ² = 5.35 P value = 0.25
		Girls	12 (40%)	12 (40%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10%)	1 (3.3%)	
8	I avoid going to parties	Boys	10 (33.3%)	7 (23.3%)	3 (10%)	1 (3.3%)	9 (30%)	X ² = 6.05 P value = 0.50
		Girls	8 (26.7%)	10 (33.3%)	5 (16.7%)	4 (13.3%)	3 (10%)	
9	I avoid activities in which I am the centre of attention	Boys	10 (33.3%)	4 (13.3%)	11 (36.7%)	3 (10%)	2 (6.7%)	X ² = 10.51 P value = 0.03
		Girls	10 (33.3%)	4 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)	9 (30%)	5 (16.7%)	
10	Talking to strangers scares me	Boys	14 (46.7%)	12 (40%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)	-	Yates X ² = 5.93

		Girls	5 (16.7%)	14 (46.7%)	7 (23.3%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)	P value = 0.20
11	I avoid having to give speeches	Boys	8 (26.7%)	6 (20%)	11 (36.7%)	4 (13.3%)	1 (3.3%)	X ² = 9.19 P value = 0.05
		Girls	7 (23.3%)	6 (20%)	5 (16.7%)	7 (23.3%)	5 (16.7%)	
12	I would do anything to avoid being criticized	Boys	29 (96.7%)	1 (3.3%)	-	-	-	Yates X ² = 7.66 P value = 0.10
		Girls	17 (56.7%)	6 (20%)	4 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	
13	Heart palpitations bother me when I am around people	Boys	6 (20%)	8 (26.7%)	13 (43.3%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	X ² = 6.99 P value = 0.13
		Girls	3 (10%)	15 (50%)	6 (20%)	5 (16.7%)	1 (3.3%)	
14	I am afraid of doing things when people might be watching	Boys	11 (36.7%)	11 (36.7%)	3 (10%)	4 (13.3%)	1 (3.3%)	X ² = 3.67 P value = 0.45
		Girls	7 (23.3%)	10 (33.3%)	7 (23.3%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	
15	Being embarrassed or looking stupid are among my worst fear	Boys	11 (36.7%)	14 (46.7%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10%)	-	Yates X ² = 3.44 P value = 0.48
		Girls	8 (26.7%)	12 (40%)	3 (10%)	2 (6.7%)	5 (16.7%)	
16	I avoid speaking to anyone in authority	Boys	10 (33.3%)	13 (43.3%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	1 (3.3%)	X ² = 3.64 P value = 0.45
		Girls	5 (16.7%)	14 (46.7%)	4 (13.3%)	3 (10%)	4 (13.3%)	
17	Trembling or shaking in front of others is distressing to me	Boys	14 (46.7%)	12 (40%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)	-	Yates X ² = 2.67 P value = 0.61
		Girls	8 (26.7%)	14 (46.7%)	4 (13.3%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (10%)	

Table 4 of the present study showed item analysis of social phobia between visually impaired girls and boys. Starting with the fear of authority figures, a gender-based comparison reveals noteworthy differences. Girls exhibit a higher percentage 15 (50%) of reporting a 'little bit' of fear, in contrast to boys with 13 (43.3%). Concerning blushing in front of others, a significant proportion of boys (40%) express 'not at all' botheration, compared to only 16.7% (5) of girls. On the contrary, the majority of girls display varying degrees of blushing botheration, with 30% (9) of boys slightly bothered, 16.7% (5) of girls very much bothered, and 13.3% (4) of boys somewhat bothered.

Parties and social events emerge as shared triggers for anxiety, evoking 'not at all' fear among both genders, with 53.3% of boys and girls expressing concern. A gender disparity surfaces in the tendency to avoid interactions with unfamiliar individuals, as 50% (15) of boys and 20% (6) of girls demonstrate a 'little bit' inclination towards avoidance. The apprehension of criticism demonstrates distinct gender trends, as 80% (24) of boys report 'not at all' fear compared to 63.3% (19) of girls. Avoidance behaviors linked to embarrassment showcase a comparable pattern among both genders, with 56.7% (17) of boys and 46.7% (14) of girls indicating 'a little bit' of such tendencies. Notably, sweating in front of others elicits considerably less distress among boys, with 73.3% (22), compared to 40% (12) of girls. Avoidance towards attending parties slightly appears among 23.3% (7) of boys and 33.3% (10) of girls.

The fear of being the center of attention evokes varied responses, with an equal percentage of 33.3% (10) reporting 'not at all' tendencies in both genders. Girls express a notably higher percentage (46.7%) of 'a little bit' fear when talking to strangers, compared to 40% (12) of boys sharing such sentiments.

When it comes to avoiding giving speeches, most boys (36.7%) and some girls (16.7%) opt to somewhat avoid them. The desire to avoid criticism 'not at all' emerges as a predominant sentiment in most boys (96.7%) compared to girls (56.7%).

Botheration due to heart palpitations during social interactions exhibits a higher percentage among girls (50%) compared to boys (26.7%) who experience 'a little bit' of botheration. The fear of doing things while being observed by others was slightly higher among boys (36.7% with 'a little bit' fear) than girls (33.3%). Being embarrassed or appearing foolish reflects a slightly higher distress among boys (46.7%) compared to girls (40%). Interactions with figures of authority result in almost comparable avoidance tendencies among both genders, with 46.7% of girls and 43.3% of boys avoiding speaking to anyone in authority. Similarly, trembling or shaking in front of others generates almost similar levels of distress, with 46.7% of girls and 40% of boys."

Conclusion: The present study aimed to analyze the level of social phobia among visually impaired adolescents specifically focusing on gender differences in severity. The sample consisted of 60 participants, evenly split between boys and girls, displaying varying levels of social phobia as measured on a scale ranging from normal to severe.

Results of the present study showed that majority 34 (56.6%) of the total adolescents displayed a normal level of social phobia. Among them, 22 (73.3%) were boys and 12 (40%) girls were categorized in this range. However, it is important to note that these individuals did not meet the diagnostic criteria for social phobia as outlined in the DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual).

Furthermore remaining, 16 (26.6%) total adolescents, comprising an equal number of boys and girls 8 (26.6%) each, exhibited a mild level of social phobia. However, only girls fell under the categories of moderate and severe levels of social phobia, with 6 (20%) classified as moderately affected and 4 (6.6%) classified as severely affected. No boys were found in these two categories. By adding the mentioned percentages 26 (43.3%) of the adolescents meet the diagnostic criteria specified in the DSM-5 for social phobia in which the majority of these adolescents were girls. Similar results found in study by (Aune et al, 2022) where female were more to meet the diagnostic criteria.

The diagnostic criteria they met included experiencing marked fear or anxiety in one or more social situations. Results of item analysis of social phobia between visually impaired girls and boys demonstrated noteworthy differences between gender. Adolescents reported feeling anxious in a variety of social situations, such as giving speeches or performing in front of others. Girls exhibit a higher number of reporting a 'little bit' of fear, as compared to boys. This anxiety was not limited to peer settings but also extended to interactions with authority figures. Adolescents mentioned that they afraid of people in authority and avoid speaking to anyone. Similar results mentioned in the study of (Ernst et al, 2022) where adolescents experienced fear in test situations when speaking or performing in front of others. The fear of being the center of attention evokes varied responses, with an equal number reporting 'not at all' tendencies in both genders. Girls number were higher in experiencing little bit' fear when talking to strangers, as compared to boys sharing such sentiments.

Summary: The present study highlights the significant implications for psycho-social development, as fears, including anxiety in the presence of authority figures, apprehension about blushing, and discomfort in social interactions, may impede adolescents' ability to engage with confidence in diverse social contexts. This can limit their participation in school activities, extracurricular events, and academic endeavours requiring public speaking or group interactions. Over time, these limitations could impede the development of essential social skills, negatively affecting self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Additionally, the emotional well-being of adolescents appears to be significantly impacted by social phobia. Fear and avoidance behaviours may contribute to heightened stress and anxiety, exacerbating the emotional vulnerabilities typical of adolescence. Persistent fear of judgment and social interactions can lead to feelings of isolation, which may affect overall mental health (Pandey et al., 2015). These anxieties may be intensified by societal pressures and the desire to conform to social norms.

The findings emphasize the urgent need to address social anxiety during this critical developmental stage (Binder et al., 2018). Early screening, diagnosis, and treatment of social anxiety disorder are crucial for improving the mental health of visually impaired adolescents. Furthermore, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes socialization and self-confidence could significantly enhance their quality of life and well-being. Further research is essential to explore the factors contributing to social phobia in this population and to develop effective interventions.

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