

# SELF ESTEEM AND SOCIAL ANXIETY AS DETERMINANTS OF DISPOSITIONAL EMBARRASSMENT AMONG WORKERS

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the relationship between self esteem and social anxiety on dispositional embarrassment among workers. A total of 210 workers (84 males, 126 females) were randomly selected from employees in the private sector. Demographic information were filled and the instruments of study were Rosenberg self Esteem scale, Social Anxiety scale and Susceptibility to Embarrassment scale. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and linear regression were used. Result showed that negative correlation exist between self esteem and social anxiety ( $r = - . 540, P < .001$ ). Further regression analysis also yields a significant relationship ( $R^2 = .215, F (2,209)=28.295, P < .001$ ) with dispositional embarrassment as a predictive factor of self esteem and social anxiety.*

**Key words:** Self Esteem, Social Anxiety, Employees, Dispositional Embarrassment, Workers Self Esteem, Social Anxiety

## INTRODUCTION

Self esteem refers to those schemas an individual know to be true about self. The self however, do not exist as a unitary entity. It functions with reference to the manner of quality of treatment such an individual receives from important others within the environment. It is self appraisal of the concepts the individual believes to be true about the self. Self esteem focuses on the individual perception of how they were affected by important others within the environment. Self esteem could be either positive or negative evaluations of the self. Thus, appraisal of self has a profound impact on the manner we think, feel and present ourselves. Heatherton and Polivy (1991) state that self esteem is not engraved in stone; rather it fluctuates with respect to failure, success, ups and downs in fortune during social relations and other experiences in life.

Social and personality psychologists argue that the general rule of self esteem is that it remains stable from childhood through old age. Yet to some others it fluctuates with respect to daily experiences. Baldwin and Sinclair (1996) argue that this is the reason why some are highly responsive to praise and overly sensitive to criticism. Thus, criticism reduces the self esteem. Baumeister (2000) argues on the primitiveness of the construct of self esteem, as fundamental drive from the existence of man. It could be referred to a socio-metre or an indicator to the manner of acceptance or rejection people receive within the social setting.

However, social anxiety arises when an individual becomes uncertain about the manner his personality will be assessed by others within a social situation. La Greca and Lopez, (1998) observe that this situation may give rise to inhibition in developing public individuation. The result of this assessment seems to draw attention of researchers since it gives rise to psychological, mental and physiological issues. Leary and Kowalski (1995) opine that social anxiety comes with intense feelings of discomfort in situations that invite public scrutiny. In the context of the work situation, some individuals may find it difficult to present themselves, before the public, blank in speeches, feel weak in the knees and joint.

Those who are high in social anxiety may find it difficult to urinate in public urinary, eat in public places etc. These persons tend to avoid situations where the public may focus on them. To some high extent, social withdrawal sets in when the individual tends to keep away to avoid meeting people. Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that despite the primitive nature of the motive behind this drive and the need to form and maintain at least minimum quality of lasting positive and significant interpersonal relationship, people voluntarily withdraw from groups or public situations, to avoid being the subject of public scrutiny.

Embarrassment as defined is a feeling of discomfort, shame, nervousness especially in the presence of other people. Embarrassment have been defined by different scholars to have both cultural and gender implications. Miller (1996) suggests that it is a complex interaction between the individual and eliciting situation, on the one hand and

one's personality and real or imagined presence of others, on the other hand. The role of significant others is very important in the perception of embarrassment. This is because it may increase the feelings or reduce it. Miller (1996); Embarrassment evolves negative emotions as overt antecedents to such exposure to stimuli. Such negative emotion does link up with low self esteem and increased social interactions and anxiety disorder. This condition may affect the quality and performance of the worker and potentially incapacitate service delivery and hamper work out put. Page | 3

The onset of consciousness of embarrassment emerges the moment an individual begins to perceive his behavior in other person's perspective. Tangney, Miller, Flicker and Barron (1996) explain that overt signs of embarrassment are blushing, sweating, nervousness, stammering, forgetting and smile control. Miller (1992) and Miller and Taney (1995) argue on the cognitive antecedents of embarrassment, such as forgetting names of a new acquaintance, loss of body control such as belching or uncontrollable flatulence, failure to maintain privacy aid or being the object of undesirable social attention.

Workers are individuals, adolescents and adults who are employed within organizations to perform duties and receive salary, or wage in return for energy expended. Since capitalism often drives the production of human endeavors, profit maximization becomes the motive of most business organizations. The success of any business organization is in the employee behavior within the organization. This involves the psychological and physiological health of workers as these would enhance sustainability of production and achievement of organizational goals.

## **RESEARCH AIM**

The purposed of this work is to establish the relationship between self esteem and social interaction anxiety on dispositional embarrassment among workers, in Awka urban. Since the driving force behind the capitalist economies is profit maximization, the need to pursue a study along these variables become absolutely important to enhance productivity, physical and mental wellbeing of the worker within work organizations.

## **METHOD**

Our study was designed as a survey. Scale measures were administered to randomly selected respondents in Awka urban, Anambra State.

## **Participants**

A sample of 210 (84 males, and 126 females) were randomly selected from organizations within Awka urban. Their age ranges were between 20 years to 70 years.

The participants were of two groups, those with secondary school education (113) and those with university education (97).

## Measures

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) measures the global self-esteem. It consists of 10 items answered on a five-point likert scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. High scores on the scale indicate high self-esteem. In the present study, Rosenberg self esteem scale was used. A pilot study was conducted and Cronbatch alpha was established at 0.762 alpha level.

## Social Interaction Anxiety Scale

This scale assesses interaction anxiety. It consists of 20 items answered on a five point likert scale. High scores indicate high social interaction anxiety. A Pilot study was done and Cronbatch alpha level was established at 0.742.

## Susceptibility to Dispositional Embarrassment Scale

Susceptibility to dispositional embarrassment scale measures dispositional embarrassment. It contains 25 items answered on a five point scale from. “Not at all like me” to very much like me”. Pilot study was carried out and Cronbatch alpha was established at 0.763.

## Procedure

The consent of various management crews of the establishments used were sought before the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in their various places of work. Variables such Age, Gender and Educational qualification were considered demographics. The tests were randomly administered to each participant based on their ability to meet the demographic conditions of the work. The participants were assured of confidentiality of the responses and thanked for participating.

## Scoring and Statistical Analysis

At the end of the field work, the questionnaires were collected and subjected to data analysis using SPSS Version 17.0. Statistics of choice was Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Linear Regression.

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics of demographic variables*

Variable	N	%
Gender Male	84	40
Female	126	60
Age (20 – 30)	23	10.8

(31 – 40)	35	16.8
(41 – 50)	59	27.7
(51 – 60)	62	29.2
(60 – 70)	30	14.5
	210	100
Education West African Examination Council	113	53.8
First degree	97	46.2

Table 1 shows that our respondents were made up of males (40%) and Females (6%); the age ranges were between 20 years to 70 years with (113) about 53.8% possessing School Certificate and 97 (46.2%) being first degree holders.

Table 2: *Correlation Between Self-Esteem And Social Interaction Anxiety*

Scales	Pearson r	Significance
Social interaction anxiety	- 0.540**	0.01
RSE		

Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was conducted. Result, indicated negative correlation at ( $r = -.540, P < .001$ ), for self esteem and social interaction anxiety.

Table 3: *Linear Regression with Susceptibility to Embarrassment as predictor variable of Self-Esteem and Social Anxiety*

Predictor	R	R squared	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the estimate	
SDES	.463 <sub>(a)</sub>	.215	.207	6.21645	
Analysis Variance of Linear Regression					
Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean sum of square	F	Sig
Regression	2186.862	2	1093.431	28.295	1000(a)
Residual	7999.352	207	38.644		
Total	10186.214	209			
Coefficients of Linear Regression with self Esteem and Social Interaction as Predictor of Dispositional Embarrassment					
	B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	62.00	6.974		8.89	.000
SE	1.065	.228	.374	4.664	.000
SIA	.149	.096	.124	1.553	.122

Linear regression analysis yielded significant results, reflecting self esteem and social interaction anxiety and significant predators of susceptibility to embarrassment among worker ( $R^2 = .215, F(1,210) = 28.295, P < .001$ ) causing 12.5% variation. This analysis show that both self esteem and social anxiety are predictors of dispositional

embarrassment among workers at  $R^2 = .215$ ,  $F(2, 209) = 28.295$ ,  $P < .001$ ] causing 21.5% variation.

## DISCUSSION

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Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was conducted. Result, indicated negative correlation at ( $r = -.540$ ,  $P < .001$ ), for self esteem and social interaction anxiety. These findings were consistent with the findings of Sarason et al., (1990). Implications are that adults with high positive self esteem enjoy social interaction. Such individuals leave happily, engage in day to day activity with optimism and enhanced general physical and psychological well being. In line with this, the findings of Kolovski and Endler (2000) with undergraduate young adult confirmed a negative correlation between self esteem and social anxiety at  $r = (-.40)$ . Regression analysis yielded a significant result showing both self esteem and social anxiety are predictors of dispositional embarrassment among workers at  $R^2 = .215$ ,  $F(2, 209) = 28.295$ ,  $P < .001$ ] causing 21.5% variation.

Baumeister, 2000 argue about the importance of social interaction in human endeavors, being basic to normal functioning. La Greca and Lopez 1998, Vernberg et al., 1992 argue that individuals who are not sure of how others may assess them develop social interaction anxiety. This gives rise to inhibitory behaviors and social individuation. Sauza, et al., (2008) supports that individuals who are not sure of how they will be assessed by others in a public setting develop anxiety which may give rise to withdrawal from social events and solitary confinement. This condition leads to antecedents' symptoms that mark dispositional embarrassment among workers.

Burns (1982) argue that self esteem is made up of bits of self schemas that propel and motivate individuals toward achievement of set goals. Thus, the higher the self esteem, the more socially active the individual will be and better result would be achieved. Thus, workers who are highly embarrassed tend to conform to rules and regulation to avoid being exposed to such situations.

Miller, (1996) and Miller, Bower Sox, Cook and Kahikina (1996) opine that the most common response to embarrassment is avoidance approach. Generally, for organizations to achieve goal-oriented projects, workers with high level of self esteem and low level of social anxiety should be employed. Since high level of self esteem and low level of social anxiety predicts high level of dispositional embarrassment, it is believed that workers with these personalities would be the dynamite the capitalist economies needs to enhance both productivity and achieve physical and psychological well being of man. Workers who are high on dispositional embarrassment tend to keep to organizational rules to avoid unethical behaviors that may expose them to shame, dishonor and being subject to public ridicule.

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