



Social Intelligence and Assertiveness as Predictors of Fear of Negative Evaluation among Esut Lecturers'

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Abstract

*The study investigated social intelligence and assertiveness as predictors of fear of negative evaluation among ESUT lecturers, eighty (80) lecturers comprising 49 males and 31 females with a mean age of 40.86 and SD 6.454 were selected using multi-stage (cluster, simple random: by balloting and purposive) sampling techniques as participants from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. Watson and Friend (1969) Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Silvera et al. (2001) Tromso Social Intelligence Scale and Rathus, (1978) Assertiveness Scale were used for data collection, a correlational design was adopted, hierarchical multiple regression using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that social skill dimension of social intelligence $St\beta = .294$ and $t = 3.563^{**}$ at $p < .001$ negatively predicted fear of negative evaluation of ESUT lecturers, Social awareness dimension of social intelligence $St\beta = -.385$ and $t = 4.775^{***}$ at $p < .001$ negatively predicted fear of negative evaluation of ESUT lecturers. Social awareness dimension of social intelligence $St\beta = .095$ and $t = 1.077$ at $p < .05$ did not predict fear of negative evaluation. Assertive $St\beta = .040$ and $t = .498$ did not predict fear of negative evaluation at $p < .05$. Hence, Lecturers should perceive the lecturing process as an interactive one were both lecturers and the students learn from each other, this will help to reduce over expectations and fear of negative evaluation.*

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Introduction

Lecturing can at times be daunting not only for novices but also for veteran professors. Lecturing is a complex and demanding job. It is much more than giving instructions. It is also about engaging students, imparting knowledge in a meaningful and constructive way, as well as effective and efficient management of time, relationships, and resources. Whether you are an offline lecturer transitioning to online classes or a newbie venturing into the online teaching space, this change can be unnerving. Students are generally able to differentiate between lecturers who use assertiveness and social intelligence well and those who do not. When they witness lecturers using assertive communication and social intelligence well, students are inspired to emulate these principles in their own practice. Have you ever felt nervous or experienced negative emotions connected to being unprepared for lectures, being ineffective, or being rejected by students? If the answer is yes, you are not alone. Lecturing anxiety leads to self-doubt and diminishes self-confidence. This anxiety can also trigger stress-related disorders in some leading to fear of negative evaluation (Culler, & Holahan, 1980).

Therefore, fear of negative evaluation (FNE) or fear of failure, also known as atychiphobia, is a psychological construct reflecting “apprehension about others' evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Cleveland Clinic. Retrieved 2023-03). High fear of negative evaluation may operate in situations like talking to one’s superior, paper presentation during conference or defense; being in an interview for a job. But individuals with high fear of negative evaluation will work hard than individuals with low fear of negative evaluation in a boring task if they were told that they will be evaluated by others. Thus, individuals with high Fear of Negative Evaluation undertake behaviors in order to avoid negative evaluations by others (Culler, & Holahan, 1980; Button, Kounali, Stapinski, Rapee, Lewis, & Munafò, (2015).

However, conceptual models of social anxiety have viewed fear of negative evaluation as a central component of social anxiety (Clark & Wells, 1995; (Culler, & Holahan, 1980). Cognitive-Behavioral Model of Anxiety in Social Phobia views fear of negative evaluation as the primary fear of an individual when she/he is in a social evaluative situation (Collins, Westra, Dozois, & Stewart, 2005). Collins, et al, 2005) Opined that these fears exist for persons with social anxiety in any situation where an audience exists; the term "audience" denoting not only a group of intentional observers, but also anyone who may be in a position to evaluate the individual's appearance, behaviour, or mannerisms. Fear of negative evaluation was first examined as a correlate of social anxiety by Watson and Friend (1969), and since has been correlated with other disorders, including depression (Cox, Clara, Sareen, & Stein, 2008) and eating disorders (Chen, (2002) nevertheless, there is still a paucity of studies examining whether fear of negative evaluation is related to social evaluative situations. Individuals who are socially anxious may hold the negative assumption that people are inherently critical and likely to evaluate them negatively (Clark & Wells, 1995; Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). Other researchers have contended that fear of negative evaluation is central to understanding social anxiety (Carleton, et al, 2011; Butler, 1985). Consistent

with these assumptions, models of social anxiety posit that fear of being evaluated negatively is a central concern of those with high levels of social anxiety (Clark & Wells, 1995; Carleton, Collimore, & Asmundson, 2007; & Leary, 1983). If this assumption is true, then it follows that these individuals are likely to underestimate their performance on certain social evaluative tasks. Several studies (Biolcati, 2017; Duke, Krishnan, Faith, & Storch, 2006) have shown this biased perception in these individual's assessment of their social performance. There are a number of causes that can lead lecturers to question their career choice thus fear of negative evaluation, this include but not limited to: conflicting personal and professional commitments, inexperience or negative past experiences, personal work ethics, unhealthy work environment, ambiguous role and responsibilities, lack of autonomy, and even opportunities for professional growth. When all these factors are controlled then social intelligence will be improved.

Therefore, according to Thorndike (1920) intelligence involves three mutually independent abilities: such as abstract intelligence which implies the ability to verbal and symbolic thinking. Mechanical intelligence that is the ability to effectively control your body and manipulate objects and social intelligence meaning the ability to communicate with people understand and perform in social relations. Thus, social intelligence according to Thorndike is the ability to understand and manage individuals, to act wisely in human relations. No one is born socially intelligent. Instead, it involves a set of skills that an individual learns over time (Morin, 2020; Goleman, & Boyatzis, 2008). Individuals with social intelligence can sense how other people feel, know intuitively what to say in social situations, and seem self-assured, even in a larger crowd (Morin, 2020).

While some people may seem to develop social intelligence without really trying, others have to work to develop it (Boyatzis, Gaskin, Wei, 2015). Some strategies can help a person build social skills. These tactics can help develop social intelligence: Pay close attention to what and who is around you. Socially intelligent people are observant and pay attention to subtle social cues from those around them (Morin, 2020). Socially intelligent person are like some good lecturers who plans lectures in advance and tend to experience less fear of negative evaluation from students. Obviously, plans can change, but having plans definitely helps reduce fear of negative evaluation and translate into assertiveness (Zautra, et al., 2015).

Besides, assertiveness represents the aspect of social competencies related to indicators of socially-adapted and self-reliable behavior, (Ezer, 2020; Ames, Lee, & Wazlawek, 2017). Given the importance of social competencies in the context of developing professional competencies of lecturers and the realization that assertiveness is a particularly important aspect of social competencies, this research was aimed at examining the level of assertiveness of prospective lecturers at the beginning and during university studies, Parray, & Kumar,(2016). Assertiveness involves appropriately expressing one's own feelings and ideas while respecting other's rights, Ezer, (2020). Systematic studies of Assertiveness began in the late 1940s and 1950s when psychologists believed that mental illness is caused due to non-assertiveness and inability to express feelings and ideas openly Alberti and Emmons (2017). According to Alberti and Emmons (2017) assertive people are

able to behave in their own best interests without having extreme anxiety or ignoring rights of others. Similarly, students are more able to use assertiveness when they have a lecturer who acknowledges the need for, and gives permission to, practice assertive communication. When they witness lecturers using assertive communication well, students are inspired to emulate these principles in their own practice. They need role models who demonstrate not simply assertive behaviours, but also resilience, self-esteem, self-confidence and reflective processes that devoid of fear of negative evaluation.

Conceptual framework

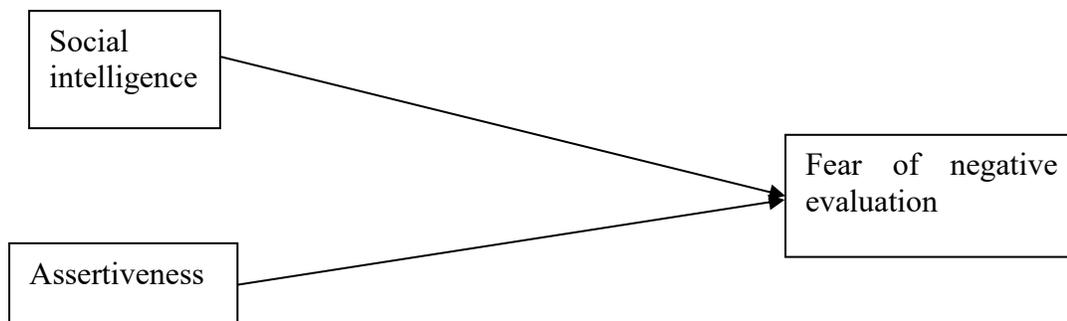


Fig 1: the illustration above explained social intelligence and assertive as predictors of fear of negative evaluation among lecturers.

Theoretical framework

Cognitive behavioural theory is adopted as the theoretical framework for this study because cognitive-behavioural theoretical framework of human functioning is based on the premises that thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are inextricably linked and that each of these aspects of human functioning continuously effects and influences the others. Cognitive-behavioural theory posits that thoughts about the self, relationships, the world, and the future shape emotions and behaviours. The meaning and interpretation one gives to event determine the how the individual react to situations.

Statement of the problem

This study was motivated by insufficient literature connecting the three study variables, and aimed to explore whether demographic variables play a role in the development of fear of negative evaluation and how they interact with the predictor variables. It was observed that some lecturers do not set aside time for lesson/ or lecture preparation. This may be as a result of over commitments and lack of maintaining work-life balance which reduces stress and anxiety. Planning ones work hours, allow adequate time to rest and unwind. Familiarity with the teaching material will give you the confidence to communicate clearly and handle

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questions as such so many lecturers do not entertain questions in the class hence fear of negative evaluation. Again some of them do not actively participate in professional development regularly to ensure their skills remain relevant. Regular attendance to professional development can also improve your teaching quality. The outcome of this study will assist university management, counselors, policymakers and clinical psychologists in developing effective strategies to help lecturers cope with fear of negative evaluation and assert your authority. Therefore, the purpose of this study was specifically to investigate whether Social intelligence (Social Information Processing, Social Skills and Social Awareness) will independently and jointly predict fear of negative evaluation. Secondly, to investigate whether assertiveness will predict fear of negative evaluation and thirdly, to determine whether Social intelligence and assertiveness will jointly predict fear of negative evaluation. And it was hypothesized that:

1. Social intelligence (Social Information Processing, Social Skills and Social Awareness) will independently and jointly predict fear of negative evaluation.
2. That, assertiveness will predict fear of negative evaluation.
3. That, Social intelligence and assertiveness will jointly predict fear of negative evaluation.

Method

Participants

Eighty (80) lecturers comprising 49 males and 31 females with a mean age of 40.86 and SD of 6.454 were selected using multi-stage (cluster, simple random: by balloting and purposive) sampling techniques as participants from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The lecturers were clustered according to their faculties, simple random: by balloting was used to pick the faculties, while purposive: a criterion selection-based sampling technique was used to select the participants from Social sciences and humanities (27), law (8), Agricultural Extension (12), faculty of Applied natural sciences (18), Engineering (9), Pharmacy (6).

Instrument

These set of instruments will be used:

- Watson and Friend (1969) Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)
- Silvera et al. (2001) Tromso Social Intelligence Scale and
- Rathus, (1978) Rathus Assertiveness Scale

Watson and Friend (1969) Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) was a 30-item instrument designed to measure social anxiety characterized by marked and persistent fear of social or performance situations appraised from being evaluated by others. It was scored using Likert response pattern of 1 to 4, where 1 = some or a little of the time, 2 = some of the time, 3

= Good part of the time, and 4 = Most or all of the time. All the items are directly scored. Watson and Friend (1969) reported reliability coefficient of KR -20 = .94 and one month interval test-retest = .78 for FNE. On Nigerian validity, Odedeji (2004) in correlating FNE with STAI Y-2 (Spielberger, 1983), obtained a concurrent validity coefficient of .63.

Silvera et al. (2001) Tromso Social Intelligence Scale

Developed by Silvera et al. (2001) in order to reveal social intelligence level, the Tromso Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS) is a self-report instrument including 21 items. The TSIS measures intelligence on the bases of three different subscales: (i) Social Information Processing (SIP): This subscale measures the ability of understanding verbal or nonverbal messages regarding human relations, empathizing and reading hidden messages as well as explicit messages. Sample Item: “I usually understand what people are trying to do without feeling the need for their explanations.” (ii) Social Skills (SS): This subscale measures the basic communication skills such as active listening, acting boldly, establishing, maintaining, and breaking up a relationship. Sample Item: “I am good at becoming acquainted with people and being involved in new social circles.” (iii) Social Awareness (SA): This subscale measures the ability of active behaving in accordance with the situation, place, and time. Sample Item: “I usually break others’ heart without being aware.” Each of the subscales comprises of 7 items. A 7-point Likert-type scale form was prepared for the items included in the scale. The minimum and maximum scores in the items are 1 and 7 respectively. By Silvera et al. (2001), Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients for social information processing, social skills and social awareness were found to be .81, .86 and .79 respectively. Regarding validity studies, expert opinion was asked, structure validity was conducted and similar scales validity was applied in the original scale. Among 130 items in the item pool, 21 items having a factor value higher than .045 and .30 correlation were selected. When varimax factor analysis was applied to 21 items, 3 factors were found to correspond to the theoretical basis. In terms of similar scale validity, it was examined by the Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MSCD) and the correlation was found to be .22.

Rathus, (1978) Rathus Assertiveness Scale

The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) was developed by Spencer Rathus (1978) and is used to study the level of Assertiveness. It is a standardized tool comprising of 30 situational statements for which the subject is asked to rank the degree to which each statement is characteristic and descriptive of his/her behavior (-3 to +3) yielding a total Assertiveness score between -90 (least assertive) and + 90 (most assertive).

There was no time limit for completion of the scale. Reliability is .82 for the RAS.

Items are rated in terms of how descriptive the item is of the respondent. Ratings are from +3 to 3. Seventeen items, indicated by an asterisk on the scale, are reversed scored. Scores are determined by summing items rating,

and can range from -90 to +90. Negative scores indicate no assertiveness and positive scores indicate assertiveness

Procedure

The researchers obtained ethical approval from the chairman research ethics committee of the Department of Psychology Enugu State University of science and Technology for this present study. Introductory letter was also obtained from the Head of Psychology Department.

Accordingly, participation in this study remained voluntary, which allowed the participants to withdraw at any time. Before administration of the questionnaires, information about anonymity and confidentiality were discussed. Academic staffs were selected as participants from six faculties in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) using multi-stage sampling (cluster, simple random: by balloting, and purposive) techniques for this study. The lecturers were clustered according to their faculties and departments, simple random by balloting and purposive were used to pick the participants from Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (27), Faculty of Law (8), Faculty of Agricultural (12), Faculty of Applied Natural Sciences (18), Faculty of Engineering (9), Faculty of Pharmacy (6). The researchers employed the research assistants whom are faculties' executives from the selected faculties to help distribute and retrieve the questionnaires. After everything, the researchers gathered eighty (80) properly filled questionnaires out of 100 that were distributed, 12 bears multiple initials, while 8 were missing and 80 were scored and analyzed.

Design and Statistics

The study was a Correlational design study as data were collected to establish the relationship among the variables. The statistical test used for data analysis was moderated hierarchical multiple regression using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 software. This was to determine the directions and strength of the relationships among the study variables.

Results

Table I: descriptive statistics

Variables	M	S.D	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
Fear of negative evaluation	13.00	3.396	1	.322	.344	-	-	.034	.056	.027	-	.078
Socialskill	32.15	10.73		1	.395	.023	-	-	-	-	.122	.089
Social awareness	29.66	7.140			1	-	-	-	-	.092	.177	.074
Social information process	37.75	5.869				1	.243	-	-	.037	.134	-.003
assertiveness	7.917	20.56					1	.062	.284	.103	-	.150
Age	40.86	6.454						1	-	.278	-	.601
Gender	1.616	.5326							1	-	-	.000
Marital status	2.060	.7360								1	.176	.298
Educational status	2.195	.6680									1	.124
Length of service	7.060	2.779										1

Table I above shows that two dimensions of social intelligence (social skill $r = .322$ and social awareness $r = .344$) shows a positive relationship with fear of negative evaluation among ESUT lecturers, this implies that increase in social skills and social awareness dimensions of social intelligence will bring about an increase in fear of negative evaluation. Social information process $r = -.411$ dimension of social intelligence indicated a negative relationship with fear of negative evaluation among ESUT lecturers, this means that increase in social information process dimension of social intelligence will cause a decrease in fear of negative evaluation. Age $r = .601$ possesses a positive relationship with length of service.

Table II: regression statistics

Model	R	R ²	UnSt β	St β	t	Sig.
1	.534	.286				.000
Social skill			.093	.294	3.563	.001
Social awareness			.045	.095	1.077	.283
Social information process			-.223	-.385	-4.775	.000
2	.536	.287				.619
Assertiveness			.007	.040	.498	.619

3	.554	.307				.608
Age			.044	.084	.742	.459
Gender			.454	.071	.814	.417
Marital status			.522	.113	1.292	.199
Educational status			-.207	-.041	-.457	.648
Length of service			-.050	-.041	-.376	.708

Dependent variable= fear of negative evaluation, at $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{}$, $p < .001^{***}$. R= relationship, r^2 = relationship square, UnSt β = unstandardized beta, St β = standardised, sig.= significant.**

Table II above shows that social skill dimension of social intelligence St β = .294 and $t = 3.563^{**}$ at $p < .01$ positively predicted fear of negative evaluation among ESUT lecturers; this indicated that increase in social skills might lead to fear of negative evaluation among ESUT lecturers. Social information process dimension of social intelligence St β = -.385 and $t = -4.775^{***}$ at $p < .001$ negatively predicted fear of negative evaluation of ESUT lecturers, this means that increase in social information process will lead to a decrease in fear of negative evaluation. Social awareness dimension of social intelligence St β = .095 and $t = 1.077$ at $p < .05$ did not predict fear of negative evaluation. Social intelligence was related to fear of negative evaluation with $r = .534$, it contributed 28.6% variance to fear of intelligence, social intelligence significantly predicted fear of negative evaluation at sig.= .000 at $p < .001$. Assertive St β = .040 and $t = .498$ did not predict fear of negative evaluation at $p < .05$, this implies that assertiveness and fear of negative evaluation are incompatible variables among lecturers. The predictor variables jointly relate to fear of negative evaluation at $r = .554$, they both give account of 30.7% variation to fear of negative evaluation, and social intelligence and assertiveness sig.=.619 failed to predict fear of negative evaluation.

Summary of findings

Social skills dimension of social intelligence positively predicted fear of negative evaluation, social information process dimension of social intelligence negatively predicted fear of negative evaluation, social aware dimension of social intelligence failed to predict fear of negative evaluation. While social intelligence jointly predicted fear of negative evaluation.

Assertiveness failed to predict fear of negative evaluation.

Discussion

The first hypothesis tested which stated that social intelligence (social skills, social awareness and social information process) will independently and jointly predict fear of negative evaluation was confirmed, hence the hypothesis was accepted. This is in line with Ahadzadeh, Rafik-Galea, Alavi, and Amini, (2018). Only social awareness did not significantly predict fear of negative evaluation, but the other dimensions of social intelligence been social skills and social information process significantly predicted fear of negative evaluation.

Social skills positively predicted fear of negative evaluation; this implies that increase in social skills might lead to fear of negative evaluation. This shows that the lecturers that possesses the social skills might be scared that student may not listen or take them serious, they might think the student are just there to either listen or came to embarrass them: such as asking technical questions that might throw them off balance, their mastering and easy use of the English language along with grammatical blunder, and other things. The lecturers might be scared that student may rate them negatively.

Social information process of social intelligence negatively predicted fear of negative evaluation. This means that increase in social information process will help to contribute to a decrease in fear of negative evaluation among lecturers. When the lecturers are able to understand their right and the status they are standing for, it will help to reduce the fear of negative evaluation among themselves. A better social information processes will help to guide the lecturers on what to do and what not to do, and it will increase the confidence level of the lecturers thereby assisting them to bring out their best.

The second hypothesis tested which stated that assertiveness will significantly predict fear of negative evaluation was not confirmed, hence the hypothesis was rejected. The result obtained shows that assertiveness is not a major determinant of fear of negative evaluation among ESUT lecturers, this outcome shows that been assertive or not cannot lead to fear of been evaluated negatively. The result obtained is incongruity with the work of Himaja and Kiran (2021) which postulated that assertiveness and fear of negative evaluation are two side of a coin that their outcome cannot be determine by each other. This finding implies that been assertive or not is not the major trouble of ESUT lecturers, rather, other factors that are not been mentioned might have a full control of ESUT lecturers fear of negative evaluations.

The third hypothesis tested which stated that social intelligence and assertiveness will jointly predict fear of negative evaluation was not confirmed. This is because only social intelligence predicted fear of negative evaluation. Hence, this is in line with the findings of Cox, Clara, Sareen, and Stein, (2008) which revealed an insignificant effect of social intelligence in the relationship of feared social situations and diagnosis of social anxiety. While assertiveness failed to predict fear of negative evaluation. Personal qualities could be the major reason amid other factors why assertiveness did not predict fear of negative evaluation.

Implication of the findings

The findings is in congruity with cognitive behavioural theory which was adopted as the theoretical framework for this study because cognitive-behavioural theoretical framework of human functioning is based on the premises that thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are inextricably linked and that each of these aspects of human functioning continuously effects and influences the others. Cognitive-behavioural theory posits that thoughts about the self, relationships, the world, and the future shape emotions and behaviours. The meaning and interpretation one gives to event determine how the individual react to situations.

Findings from the study shows that social skill and social information processes significantly predicted fear of negative evaluation, when social skills reported a positive outcome, while social information process negatively

predicted fear of negative evaluation. Hence clinicians should bring out a modality that can increase social information processes so as to reduce fear of negative evaluation. School management should frequently organize workshops on how to manage self and others among the lecturers. Lecturers should perceive the lecturing process as an interactive one where both lecturers and the student learn from each other, this will help to reduce over expectation.

Suggestion for further study

Future researchers should consider sampling more than one school so as to increase the numbers of lecturers that will participate in the work.

Future researchers should consider carrying out this study when lecturers are less busy and available.

Summary and Conclusion

Social skills dimension of social intelligence positively predicted fear of negative evaluation, social information process dimension of social intelligence negatively predicted fear of negative evaluation, social aware dimension of social intelligence failed to predict fear of negative evaluation. While social intelligence jointly predicted fear of negative evaluation.

Assertiveness failed to predict fear of negative evaluation. Hence, lecturers should be encouraged to increase their social information processes.

Recommendations

The following recommendation emanated from the findings of the study.

1. Setting aside time for lecture preparation, reduce over commitment and maintaining work-life balance reduces stress and anxiety will boost the lecturers' assertiveness and social intelligence.
2. Familiarity with the teaching material will give the lecturers the confidence to communicate clearly and handle questions accordingly thereby reducing fear of negative evaluation.
3. Dressing professionally will also boost your self-confidence, social intelligence and assertiveness as such will reduce fear of negative evaluation.
4. Actively participating in professional development regularly to ensure your skills remain relevant. Professional development can also improve your teaching qualities that facilitate performance efficacy.

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