

## **SOCIAL INTERACTION ANXIETY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: IMPLICATION FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT**

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### **Abstract**

Literature has demonstrated that a person's degree of social connection greatly influences how brave they will be when speaking in public. In the twenty-first century, it is imperative that all school managers speak boldly in public. As a result, upon completion of their university degree, all undergraduate students must have sufficient social engagement. Moreover, the degree of social contact anxiety among principals is correlated with their level of social interaction. On the other hand, little research has been done on how anxious school principals in Ebonyi State are about social situations. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine secondary school principals' degree of social interaction anxiety. For this study, descriptive survey research was used with a sample of 105 Ebonyi State school principals. Data were collected using the social interaction anxiety scale ( $\alpha = .79$ ), and frequency, percentage, bar chart and chi-square were employed for analysis. The majority of undergraduate students, according to the data, exhibited a very high level of social interaction anxiety. This suggests that if this high level of social interaction anxiety is not addressed, principals will not be able to completely develop their social interaction. This finding has implications for effective school management due to the fact that a high level of social interaction anxiety is inimical to effective school management. Therefore, in order to help principals properly control their anxiety related to social interactions, the researchers advise setting up a suitable intervention program.

**Keywords:** Management, School principals, Social interaction anxiety,

### **Introduction**

Social contact is the cornerstone of the entire social organization. Social groups are created by social interaction. There's also the relationship between birds and animals. It is the real foundation of all social interactions, groups, and endeavors. In sociology, interaction is the gateway to understanding. A social process involving two or more individuals is referred to as a social interaction in sociology. It is always mutually beneficial. One term for it is a single stimulus-response condition. People (or groups) engage in social interaction, which is a dynamic sequence of social behaviors in which they adjust their behavior and replies in response to that of their interaction partner (s).

Social interaction is the term used to describe a social transaction between two or more persons. Because these interactions form the basis of social organization, they are a central focus of fundamental social inquiry and analysis. To investigate social interaction, dyads, triads, and larger social groups can all be utilized. Anxiety disorders, which are frequently referred to as social anxiety disorders, primarily affect social interaction. Social phobia is a

persistent and upsetting anxiety disorder marked by an intermittent dread of humiliation, criticism, or shame that appears in particular contexts and makes the sufferer avoid the stimuli they find frightening [1]. The huge morbidity burden linked to this psychological condition is well explained by prevalence estimates ranging from 10 to 56% [2, 3, 4]. People with social anxiety disorder experience intense terror when they are in social situations, according to [5]. 10% to 20% of young people display one of the diagnostic signs of anxiety disorder, which interferes with their daily routines and activities. These statistics are from [5, 6]. Sixty-two (37.2%), thirty-one (48.8%), and eighty-seven (14%), of the 623 students in total experienced mild, moderate, or severe anxiety [7]. Individuals suffering from this ailment find it difficult to socialize, meet new people, and engage in social activities.

They fear that others will judge or scrutinize them. Even though they know their worries are unwarranted or unjustified, they might not feel confident enough to address them. People with social anxiety disorder tend to take less risks overall and withdraw from or avoid social interactions [8]. Intense fears of situations or interactions in which one may be judged by others, fear of criticism for one's social behavior or the display of anxiety symptoms, aversion to social situations, intense anxiety during social interactions, and anxiety symptoms that are more severe than would be expected for the social experience are the hallmarks of social anxiety disorder, a common psychological diagnosis [9]. A specifier for performance-only social anxiety is included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition [9]. Research has also supported the existence of two presentation categories of social anxiety: social interaction anxiety, which is related to fear of social interaction or speaking with others, and social observation or social performance anxiety, which is related to situations where people are being watched by others, making presentations, or engaging in performances [10]. High levels of social interaction anxiety are associated with decreased energy, a decreased desire to engage in fun activities, relationship dissatisfaction, and increased behavioral inhibition [10, 11, 12, 13].

Individuals who have trouble controlling their emotions—the process by which people feel and react to emotions—have a tendency to act dangerously. People who suffer from social anxiety may get distressed over their emotional experiences [14]. People with social anxiety show negative feelings more than those without, and they express positive emotions less than those without. Furthermore, people who experience social anxiety report having difficulty identifying and labeling their feelings as well as being less aware of them than people who do not [14]. Social anxiety and emotion dysregulation are predicted by experiential avoidance, a behavior in which individuals critique and reject their ideas, feelings, and perceptions. After that, they might display protective behaviors meant to avert emotions [15]. As per [16], those who experience anxiety related to social interactions sometimes misinterpret positive social interactions, respond to them with a broader sense of apprehension, and have a more negative outlook on the future. [16] also demonstrated a positive correlation between low positive affect and social interaction anxiety. Anxiety disorders have an impact on a person's everyday functioning, ability to maintain social relationships, and overall quality of life [17].

As demonstrated above, social interaction anxiety is common in young people, and it has a detrimental impact on their quality of life. It is concerning, nevertheless, since there is no information in the literature about how socially anxious Ebonyi State school principals are. In light of the study's objectives, the primary research issue that was addressed throughout was: To what extent do secondary school principals experience anxiety related to social interactions?

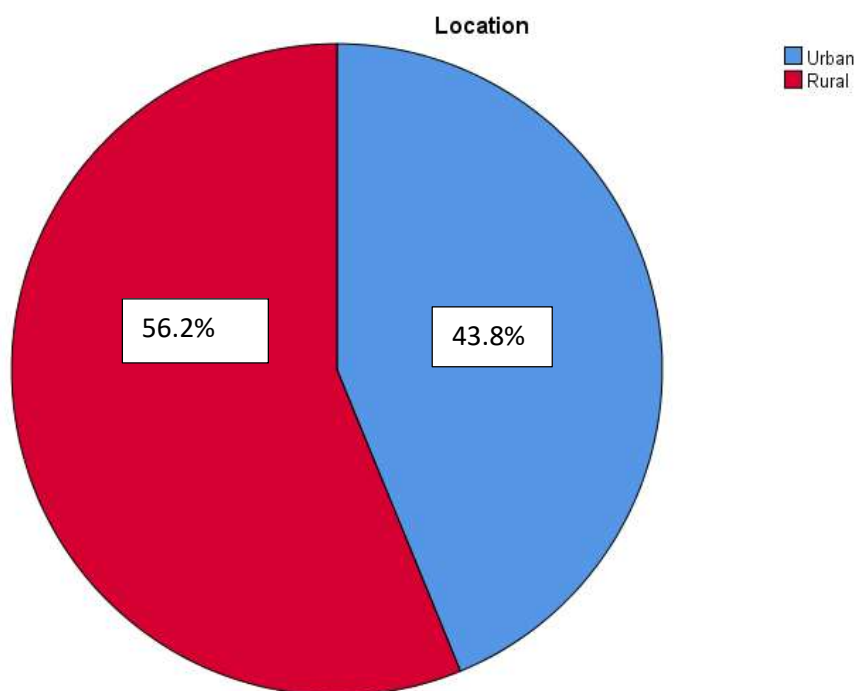
## Material and Methods

Descriptive survey research which is one of the quantitative research designs was used in this study. Since the research was primarily a description of the participants' features of interest to the researchers, the design allowed the researchers to empirically explore the degree of social interaction anxiety among school principals in Ebonyi State. Recently, this design has been used in investigations [18–24]. A sample size of 105 participants was drawn from the secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The social interaction anxiety scale (SIAS), which has been appropriately face and construct verified, was used to gather data. Face validation was carried out by professionals in test creation and educational psychology. The validators were asked to review both the instrument's wording and the items' suitability for the study's objectives.

On the other hand, factor analysis was used to guarantee construct validation of the instrument. This was accomplished by first giving the validated scale to 20 principals in secondary schools in Enugu State. Varimax rotation was used for the principal component analysis of the data gathered from such an injection. It was discovered that factor loadings above 0.50 were present in all 20 SIAS items. Subsequently, the Cronbach alpha method was utilized to evaluate the internal consistency reliability index ( $\alpha = .79$ ) for the SIAS items. After giving each participant fifteen minutes to finish the SIAS items, the completed copies of the instrument were immediately recovered and prepared for analysis. Frequency, percentage, bar chart and chi-square analysis were used to examine the data.

## Results

Demographic characteristics of the participants



**Figure 1:** Pie chart representation of the principals' school location

Figure 1 shows that 43.8% (46) of the participants work in urban school location while 56.2% (59) of the participants work in rural school location.

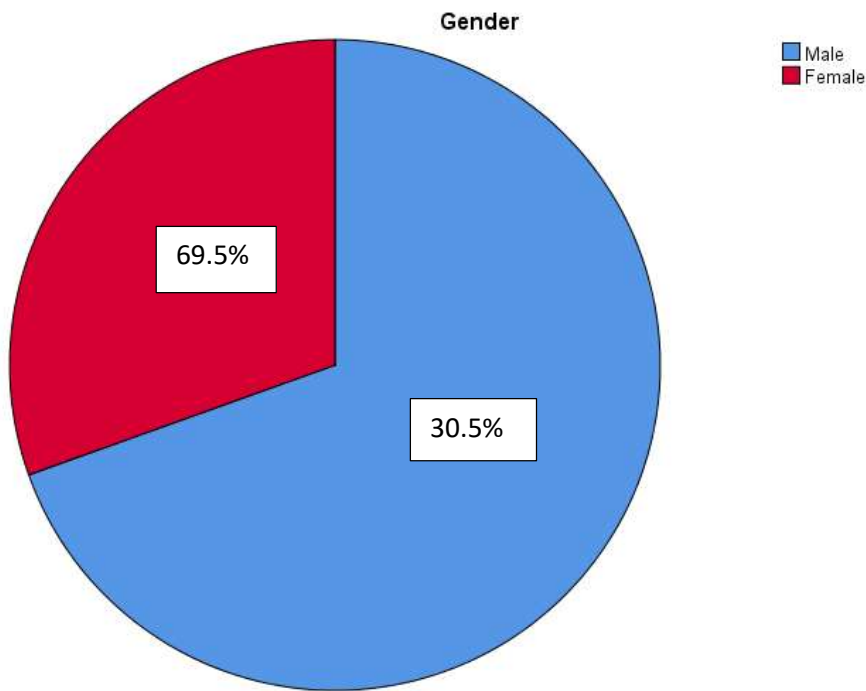


Figure 2: Pie chart representation of the principals' gender

Figure 2 indicates that 69.5% (73) of the participants are male principals while 30.5% (32) of the participants are female principals.

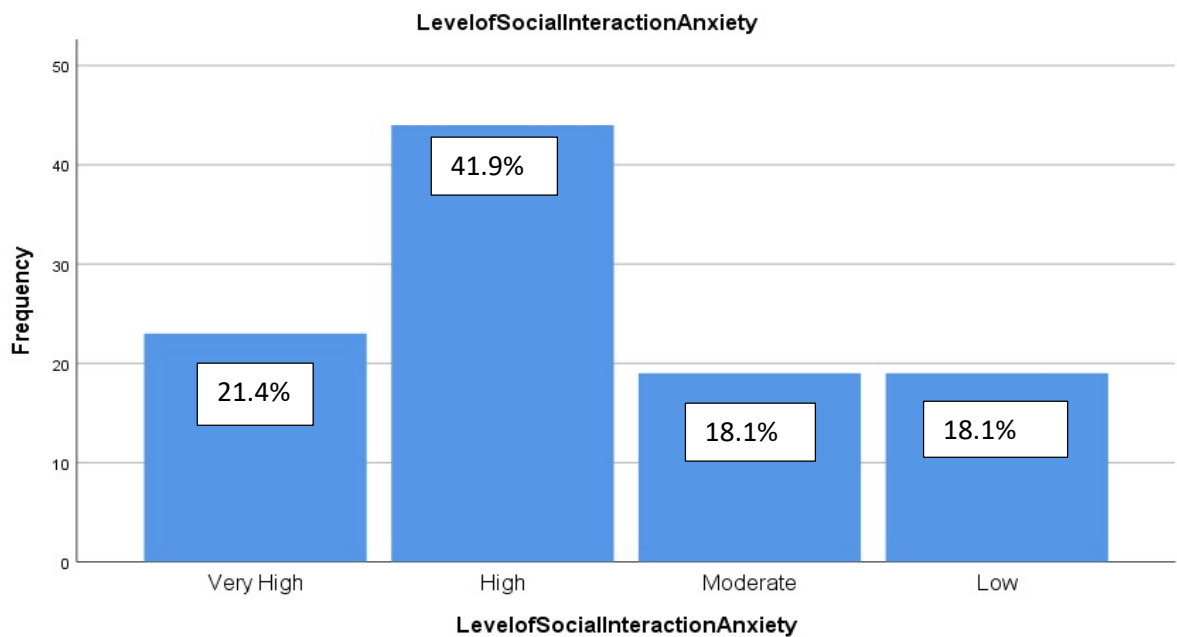
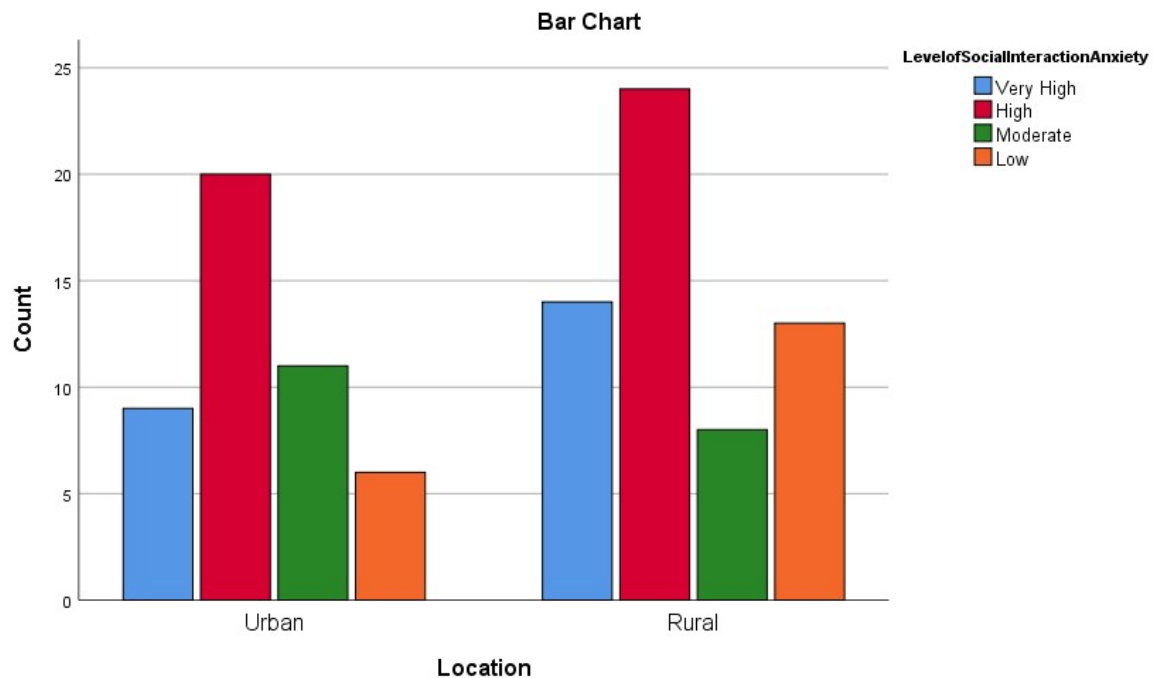


Figure 3: Bar chart representation of principals' level of social interaction anxiety

As illustrated in Figure 3, 21.4% (23) of the principals reported having very high anxiety related to social interactions, 41.9% (44) of the principals reported having high, 18.1% (19) reported having moderate anxiety, while 18.1% (19) reported having low anxiety related to social interactions. This suggests that a significant proportion of the subjects experienced high anxiety related to social interactions.



**Figure 4:** Bar chart representation of urban and rural school participants' level of social interaction anxiety

Figure 4 showed that a higher percentage of rural school principals had high anxiety related to social interactions than urban school principals.

**Table 1**

*Chi-Square Test for the difference in the male and female principals' levels of social interaction anxiety*

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.939 <sup>a</sup>	3	.401
Likelihood Ratio	2.963	3	.397
Linear-by-Linear Association	.030	1	.862
N of Valid Cases	105		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.45.

Table 1 however, revealed that the school location of the principals does not influence their level of social interaction anxiety,  $X^2(3) = .401, p > .05$ .

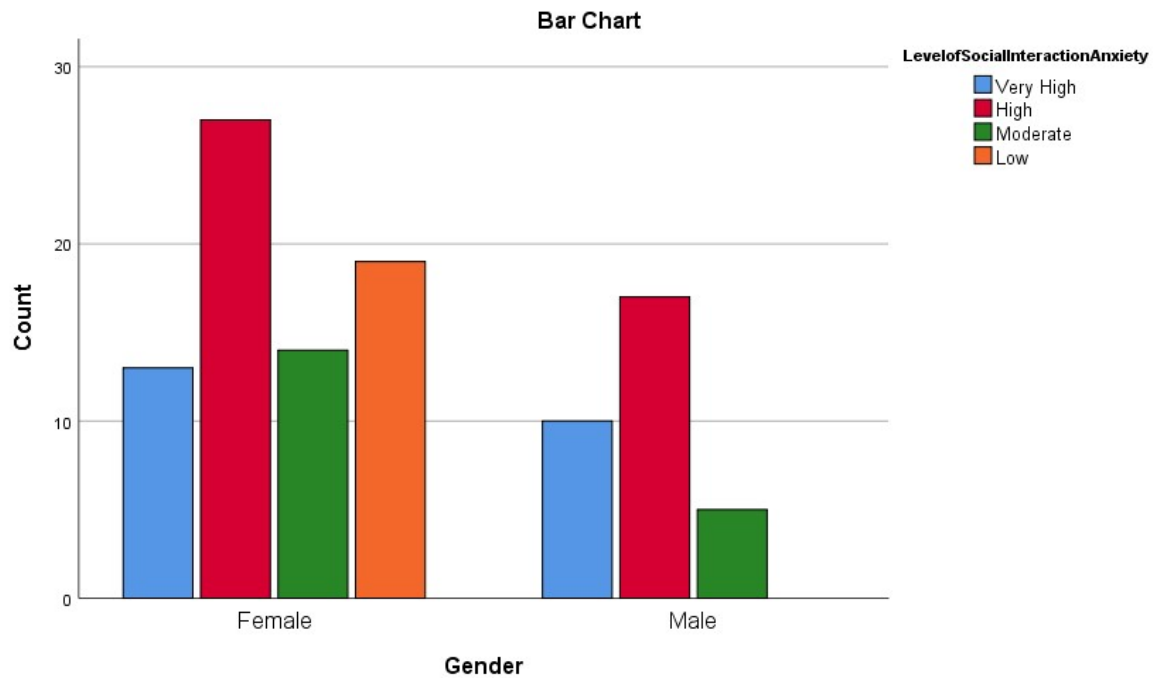


Figure 5: Bar chart representation of male and female participants' level of social interaction anxiety

Figure 5 showed that a higher percentage of female principals had high anxiety related to social interactions than male principals.

Table 2

Chi-Square Test for the difference in the urban and rural principals' level of social interaction anxiety

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.702 <sup>a</sup>	3	.008
Likelihood Ratio	17.020	3	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.311	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	105		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.45.

Table 2 however, revealed that the gender of the principals significantly influences their level of social interaction anxiety,  $\chi^2 (3) = 11.702, p < .05$ .

## Discussion of the Findings

Due to the paucity of literature on the degree of social interaction anxiety among school principals, this study used descriptive survey research to examine the degree of social interaction anxiety among school principals in Ebonyi State. The majority of school principals, according to the data, exhibited a very high level of social interaction anxiety. It was also discovered that compared to male principals, female principals had higher levels of social interaction anxiety. As seasoned school managers, the researchers' imaginations were not exceeded by this conclusion. The researchers' long-term interactions with these principals have demonstrated that, despite most of them having trouble carrying out their responsibilities, these principals exhibit symptoms of social interaction anxiety.

Supporting the results of this study, [14] discovered that people with social anxiety report being less conscious of their emotions than people without it, as well as having difficulty identifying and discriminating them. As per [16], those who experience anxiety related to social interactions sometimes misinterpret positive social interactions, respond to them with a broader sense of apprehension, and have a more negative outlook on the future. Anxiety disorders impact people's everyday functioning, ability to maintain social relationships, and overall quality of life [25]. One of the most well-studied conclusions in mental epidemiology is that women are significantly more likely than males to suffer from an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives [26].

Boys and girls differed significantly in their anxious thoughts (health anxiety, social anxiety, and meta-worry) [27]. In addition to having stronger metacognitive beliefs about the uncontrollability of concern and the need to avoid it, girls are more likely than boys to have worried thoughts. The practical implications of this research lie in its ability to address school principals' social interaction anxiety through appropriate management based on its findings. Based on the study's findings, school principals can implement the required intervention program to help them control their social interaction anxiety and maximize the improvement in their public speaking skills.

### **Conclusion and recommendation**

The researchers concluded that social interaction anxiety is incredibly high among school principals. In addition, compared to their male counterparts, female school principals experienced greater social interaction anxiety. The existing state of school principals' social interaction anxiety is detrimental to their ability to build social skills. among light of the previously described findings, the researchers advise that the appropriate university authorities implement a suitable intervention program to address social interaction anxiety among school principals.

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