

SOCIAL ANXIETY, LIFELONG LEARNING TENDENCY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES



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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the level and association between and among social anxiety, lifelong learning tendency and academic performance of high school students with physical disabilities (n=202) enrolled at the public secondary schools in the Division of Tuguegarao City, Cagayan Philippines. It employed descriptive correlational design and the variables were measured using standardized instruments.

Results revealed that the students with physical disabilities generally experienced challenges related to social anxiety and lifelong learning. They struggle with social interactions, which can potentially affect their overall well-being and academic performance. Also, they face certain limitations that prevent them from fully engaging in lifelong learning activities. Notably, those who experience higher social anxiety tend to have poorer academic performance compared to their peers who have lower or do not have such anxiety. Additionally, those who are actively engaged in lifelong learning activities tend to show improved academic performance. Therefore, addressing social anxiety and promoting lifelong learning opportunities are indispensable in supporting the educational success of students with physical disabilities.

Keywords: social anxiety, lifelong learning tendency, academic performance, students with physical disability

1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Inclusive education is a global priority aimed at providing equal opportunities for a diverse range of learners. It enables students with and without disabilities to attend age-appropriate classes within the formal school system. This approach fosters improved access to quality education,

enhancing knowledge, skills, and values, ultimately leading to better economic, political, social, and cultural opportunities in adulthood. Inclusivity is founded on the principle that all learners, regardless of their abilities or differences, have the right to learn together. It recognizes and accommodates their diverse needs, including physical, mental, social, and economic circumstances, as well as their unique learning styles and rates of development. This is achieved through tailored curricula, teaching strategies, instructional resources, and psychosocial support and services.

Inclusive education addresses various sectors, including learners with physical disabilities, and these disabilities can have adverse effects on their psychological well-being, impacting their physical, social, and academic engagement (Thomas, Bax, & Smyth, 2018). Physically, they may encounter difficulties with mobility, posture, object manipulation, hearing, and communication. Socially, they often grapple with social anxiety, which involves discomfort or fear when interacting with peers in a school setting (Lippold & Burns, 2019). Research has shown that adolescents with physical disabilities face challenges in achieving social independence, experience social isolation, and encounter difficulties in maintaining social relationships (Tough, Siegrist, & Fekete, 2017). Furthermore, these learners often lack essential social skills necessary for adapting to the school environment. These circumstances are particularly detrimental for junior high school students during their adolescence stage, as they are expected to increase their social activity and expand their social circles. As a result, learners with physical disabilities may experience apprehension in their school environment, leading to significant challenges in their academic pursuits and lifelong learning (Thomas, Bax, & Smyth, 2018).

Social anxiety among learners can negatively affect their academic performance, leading to difficulties in group tasks and seeking help in class (Ader & Erkin, 2010). Teaching self-regulation may alleviate social anxiety and enhance academic performance. Additionally, social anxiety can hinder lifelong learning by discouraging interaction with diverse individuals. This impediment may prevent learners from acquiring knowledge and competencies from various life contexts, not just in school. Lifelong learning contributes significantly to social existence and overall quality of life.

Significantly, Republic Act No. 7277, the "Magna Carta for Disabled Persons," is relevant to the study on social anxiety and academic performance in students with physical disabilities. This law emphasizes equal opportunities and quality education for individuals with disabilities, aligning with the study's aim to explore social anxiety's impact on academic achievement. It underscores the need for inclusive and supportive learning environments for these students.

Given the foregoing contexts, the need to investigate the relationship between and among social anxiety, lifelong learning and academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities is imperative. The study fills gap in the extant literature revealing a limited research interest on psychological issues relevant to people with physical disabilities (Ioannis, et al, 2017). Most studies along learners with disabilities are focused on their access to support services, accommodations and their academic performance (Lombardi, et al., 2012; Becker & Palladino, 2016; Shallish, 2015). There are a few studies focused on their social anxiety and lifelong learning which are indispensable investigations in making them survive in the 21st century.

The study also addresses the gap on the lack of a baseline data in the Schools Division of Tuguegarao City on the level of social anxiety, lifelong learning and academic performance of their learners with physical disability. To date, the said Schools Division Office does not have essential psychological data regarding this vulnerable group of learners. The absence or lack of data about them may impinge the creation of intervention programs that may enhance their academic performance and total well-being which is one of the basic thrusts under Education For all (EFA), Child Protection Policy and other learner-centered advocacies in the Department of Education. More importantly, having a knowledge on the social anxiety, lifelong learning and academic performance of the learners with physical disability will provide a better understanding of this group towards making them become healthy and successful persons not only as learners but as adults in the future.

Objectives of the Study

The study investigated the level of social anxiety, lifelong learning tendency and academic performance of learners with physical disabilities. It also ascertained if there is a significant relationship between the respondents' social anxiety with their lifelong learning tendency and academic performance.

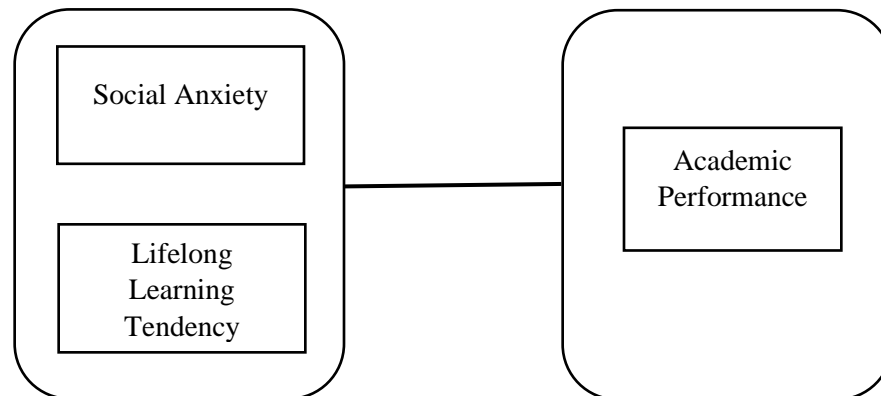
Conceptual Framework

Social Anxiety (SA) is a common human experience where individuals fear social evaluation but becomes a concern when it impairs daily functioning, leading to Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD). Three theories can explain its presence among learners with physical disabilities. First, impression management theory suggests that adolescents, including those with disabilities, aim to create positive impressions, but failure may lead to anxiety and avoidance behaviors like not participating in group activities. Second, stigma theory posits that people often react negatively to those with visible disabilities, leading to social anxiety due to negative judgments. Third, self-concept theory indicates that feedback on physical appearance influences self-worth, and constant negative judgments can result in social anxiety.

Learners with physical disabilities commonly face social anxiety and academic challenges. They may encounter difficulties in social skills, leading to social isolation and hindered lifelong learning. Personal limitations and psychological factors can negatively affect their academic performance. Acquiring essential knowledge and skills for lifelong learning can be challenging for these students, impacting their motivation to achieve and succeed throughout their lives. Understanding the relationship between social anxiety, lifelong learning, and academic performance is vital for creating inclusive and child-friendly schools, which is a primary focus of this study.

Independent Variables

Dependent Variable



Significance of the study

Investigating the relationship between social anxiety, lifelong learning tendencies, and academic performance in junior high school students with physical disabilities holds significant value. The findings can inform the Department of Education (DepEd) and aid in the development of support interventions for such students, particularly in the Schools Division of Tuguegarao City. Understanding social anxiety's impact on lifelong learning and academic performance can guide the creation of psychosocial support systems to enhance students' well-being and scholastic achievements.

Additionally, the study results can benefit the broader educational community by raising awareness among school administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors. They can use this knowledge to create inclusive and supportive learning environments, provide tailored accommodations, and build social support systems for students with physical disabilities. Such initiatives aim to improve the overall school experience and academic success of these students while promoting understanding and empathy among their peers without disabilities. Furthermore, the study's outcomes can contribute to the ongoing discourse on mental health literacy within the DepEd's advocacy. Future researchers interested in this field can also use the study as a foundation for further investigations into the experiences of learners with physical disabilities, ultimately advancing our understanding of social anxiety and lifelong learning for all students.

Scope and Delimitation

This study examined the relationship between and among the social anxiety, lifelong learning tendency and academic performance of the learners with physical disabilities. The schools were delimited only to the junior secondary schools in the Schools Division of Tuguegarao City who have enrolled learners with physical disabilities for the S.Y. 2022- 2023. The limitation of the study was confined on the self-reported data elicited from the administration of the survey questionnaires. The responses of the respondents were based on their disposition during the administration of the questionnaires. Significantly, the academic performance of the respondents was limited to the first and second quarter grades of the respondents in all their subjects.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social anxiety of learners with physical disabilities

Social anxiety is a common challenge faced by learners with physical disabilities, causing them to feel discomfort and fear in social situations (Arrindell et al., 2011). Socially anxious individuals often harbor a persistent fear of drawing attention to themselves and worry that their imperfections will be exposed (Kashdan & Farmer, 2014). They exhibit symptoms such as difficulty in interacting with others, heightened self-consciousness in social settings, and a strong fear of judgment.

Cognitive psychology theories explain that when individuals focus on perceived threats, their anxiety intensifies, and their evaluations of social events become distorted (Taylor & Amir, 2010). Research suggests that peers tend to perceive learners with physical disabilities as non-social, worried, anxious, angry, and distressed (Taklavi, 2011). Moreover, learners with physical disabilities often exhibit higher levels of general anxiety, depression, interpersonal relationship challenges, and lower social competence compared to their peers without disabilities (Maag & Reid, 2006).

Furthermore, individuals with physical disabilities may experience judgments of "rejection" based on their appearance, which can lead to social anxiety (Kleck & De Jong, 2003). These individuals often receive pitying looks from their peers without disabilities, reflecting negative judgments due to their physical appearance (Goodwin, Thurmeier, and Gustafson, 2014). Despite these challenges, learners with physical disabilities tend to maintain a positive outlook on life, attributed to the love, care, guidance, and encouragement they receive from teachers and classmates (Idrees & Ilyas, 2012).

The foregoing studies show that learners with physical disabilities often grapple with social anxiety, characterized by fear, difficulty in social interactions, and physical and emotional symptoms. This anxiety is exacerbated by negative perceptions from peers and can result in challenges such as depression, poor interpersonal relationships, and a limited social competence.

Lifelong learning tendency of learners with disabilities

Lifelong learning, a concept with ancient roots and popularized in recent times, encompasses individual and collective learning processes that span one's lifetime (Knapper & Cropley, 2000). It serves various purposes, enhancing knowledge, skills, and competencies across personal, social, political, economic, and cultural domains (Commission of the European Communities, 2011). Jarvis (2009) emphasizes its cumulative nature and transformative impact throughout an individual's life. Lifelong learning influences policy-making, fostering innovation, productivity, social inclusion, responsible citizenship, and personal development (Laal & Salamati, 2012). It involves active self-regulated learning, draws from formal and informal settings, and embraces diverse learning strategies, ultimately aiming to create a learning society (Asia-Pacific Regional Forum for Lifelong Learning, 2004).

Lifelong learning is particularly vital for individuals with physical disabilities, aligning with the global commitment to inclusive and equitable education (UNESCO, 2017). Persons with disabilities often encounter barriers to quality education, making inclusive learning environments crucial (UNESCO, 2019). In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 11560 ensures the provision of lifelong learning for learners with disabilities, promoting their rights and access to support services (UNESCO, 2019).

The benefits of lifelong learning for individuals with physical disabilities are numerous. It enhances self-efficacy, shaping their beliefs in their competence and motivation (Bhatia, 2015). Lifelong learning also fosters tolerance, enabling them to cope with challenging situations, form strong relationships, and achieve personal and professional goals (Chen, 2015). Additionally, it promotes social competence, facilitating effective communication and social networking for employment opportunities and meaningful engagement (Kashinath, 2013).

Academic performance of learners with physical disabilities

Numerous studies have explored the challenges faced by students with physical disabilities in school participation (Eriksson, Welander, & Granlund, 2017; Hemmingsson & Borell, 2010, 2012; Mancini, Coster, Trombly, & Heeren, 2010; Pivik, McComas, & LaFlamme, 2012; Schenker, Coster, & Parush, 2015). These challenges often stem from a complex interplay between individual factors and environmental barriers (Hammal, Jarvis, & Colver, 2014; Hemmingsson & Borell, 2010; Simeonsson, et al., 2010). Despite the advocacy for inclusive education, school buildings are typically designed without considering the needs of students with disabilities, resulting in physical barriers such as inaccessible distances, heavy doors, steep ramps, and rough surfaces (Hemmingsson & Borell, 2010; Palisano et al., 2013; Tieman, Palisano, Gracely, Rosenbaum, et al., 2014). Additionally, settings with unpredictable movement and natural spaces with uneven terrain create further difficulties (Palisano et al., 2013; Tieman, et al., 2014).

Child attributes like physical, cognitive, and communicative skills, emotional and social functioning, activity preferences, sense of control, self-efficacy, age, and gender also impact educational participation (King et al., 2013; Law, 2012). Impairments related to movement, sensation, cognition, and pain or fatigue can significantly restrict activities (Battaglia et al., 2014; Beckung & Hagberg, 2012; Coster & Haltiwanger, 2014; Mancini & Coster, 2014; Schenker et al., 2015).

Research on academic performance among students with disabilities yields mixed results (Jorgensen et al., 2015). Some studies find disparities in grade point averages (GPAs) and graduation times (Witte, Philips, & Kakela, 2018), while others report competitive academic performance and similar GPAs compared to peers without disabilities (Sparks, Javorsky, & Philips, 2014; Sachs & Schreuer, 2011). However, nuanced findings indicate potential differences in program rigor and course loads, suggesting that GPAs may be influenced by factors such as the number of courses taken at a time (Jorgensen et al., 2015; Lichtenberger, 2010). Students with disabilities entering higher education face challenges such as low retention rates, prolonged degree completion times, and higher dropout rates (Lombardi, Murray & Gerdes, 2012). These challenges

are compounded by limited access to support services and negative attitudes from faculty, administrators, and peers (Becker & Palladino, 2016). To succeed, students with disabilities must take charge of their academic careers and seek disability services (Lechtenberger, et al., 2012).

Reluctance to reach out for help may stem from embarrassment, discomfort disclosing their disability, fear of labels, shame, stigma, or a lack of knowledge or confidence (Lechtenberger, et al., 2012; Sachs & Schreuer, 2011; Blas, 2014).

Additionally, many physically disabled students face difficulties accessing teaching and learning materials due to infrastructural barriers, limiting their ability to fulfill their academic goals (Firmer, 2005). Furthermore, teaching methods employed by lecturers/tutors often do not consider students with special needs, impacting their academic performance (Govinder, 2009). Therefore, there is a need for innovative teaching methods that accommodate the diverse needs of all students.

Relationship between social anxiety and academic performance

The school environment is inherently social, requiring students to engage in various forms of social interaction. Unfortunately, learners with physical disabilities often grapple with social anxiety, which can significantly impact their academic performance (Abraham, 2020). This anxiety can manifest in various ways within the classroom, such as students opting to sit at the back, hindering their participation in class activities and group work, as well as affecting their concentration during tests and quizzes.

Research studies have shed light on the detrimental effects of social anxiety on students. For instance, it has been found that individuals with social anxiety tend to leave school prematurely (Ameringen et al., 2013), and approximately 21% of Swedish teenagers aged 17 experience impaired functioning due to social anxiety (Wittchen et al., 2019). Furthermore, social anxiety has been linked to increased risks of academic failure, incomplete schooling, and an inability to graduate (Stein & Kean, 2010).

In-depth examinations into the relationship between social anxiety and academic performance have revealed several negative consequences. Socially anxious students often struggle with issues like thought-blocking and excessive self-focus, which affect their ability to learn and perform well in the classroom (Fox et al., 2001; Wenzel & Holt, 2003). This fear and self-doubt can interfere with their focus on academic tasks and memory performance (Fox et al., 2011; Wenzel & Holt, 2013), aligning with Schlenker and Leary's (2012) framework of social anxiety.

Furthermore, the impact of social anxiety on academic performance is evident in students' reduced social engagement, disrupted relationships, reduced focus on studies, and overall diminished school achievements. Academic performance is fundamentally the outcome of knowledge acquisition within an educational context and is typically assessed through tests or performance evaluations (Brook & Willoughby, 2015; Hurley, 2017). Socially anxious learners often withdraw from social and learning opportunities, preferring to avoid both physical and psychological interactions. This avoidance behavior hampers their ability to concentrate and acquire information effectively in the classroom (Clark and Wells, 2015).

Studies consistently highlight the negative correlation between social anxiety and academic performance. Learners with higher social anxiety levels are more likely to experience academic setbacks, including exam failures (Stein and Kean, 2010). Additionally, students with severe social anxiety often exhibit attention and learning difficulties in the classroom (Bernstein et al., 2017). These findings collectively demonstrate the inhibitory effect of social anxiety on students' academic achievements.

Relationship between lifelong learning tendency and academic performance

Lifelong learning offers students numerous advantages, with knowledge acquisition being a prominent one. Those who actively participate in lifelong learning activities go beyond the boundaries of traditional classroom education. They develop a habit of seeking information and gaining comprehensive insights into various subjects (Dealing, et al., 2015). This extended knowledge not only deepens their understanding of academic topics but also enables them to connect ideas across different disciplines. As a result, students who exhibit a penchant for lifelong learning are better positioned to grasp intricate concepts and effectively apply their knowledge, ultimately leading to enhanced academic performance.

Quintanilla, et al. (2017) assert that lifelong learning plays a pivotal role in cultivating critical thinking skills, a cornerstone for academic success. Through activities such as scrutinizing diverse perspectives, evaluating evidence, and engaging in problem-solving exercises, students fortify their capacity for critical thinking. These honed skills empower them to approach academic tasks with a heightened comprehension, participate in thoughtful discussions, and present well-founded arguments. Consequently, students who embrace lifelong learning are more likely to excel in research projects, essay writing, and other assignments that demand higher-order thinking skills.

In a parallel vein, Tennant (2017) contends that lifelong learning is frequently driven by intrinsic motivation and an authentic thirst for knowledge. Students with a propensity for lifelong learning are intrinsically motivated to delve deeper into subjects beyond the scope of their academic curriculum. This intrinsic motivation translates into increased effort, active involvement in classroom discourse, and a readiness to exceed minimum requirements. Furthermore, as posited by DeSantis & Smith (2011), these students tend to take ownership of their learning journey, actively seek additional resources, and engage with course materials in a meaningful manner. Consequently, their sustained commitment and engagement contribute to elevated levels of academic performance.

The correlation between lifelong learning inclination and students' academic performance is unmistakable. Engaging in lifelong learning activities bolsters knowledge acquisition, nurtures critical thinking skills, fuels motivation and engagement, and fosters adaptability and transferable skills (Field, 2012). Students who possess a proclivity for lifelong learning showcase improved academic performance by leveraging these skills and knowledge in their coursework. It is imperative for educational institutions and policymakers to acknowledge the value of lifelong learning and offer opportunities for students to partake in diverse learning experiences. By nurturing a lifelong learning mindset, educators can empower students to reach their full academic potential and equip them with the skills needed for success in an ever-evolving world..

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher used quantitative research design particularly the descriptive-correlational method as it investigated the social anxiety, lifelong learning tendency and academic performance of the respondents and the relationship of these variables.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Division of Tuguegarao City. It utilized five (5) public secondary schools namely: Cataggamman National High School, Gosi National High School, Cagayan National High School, Linao National High School and Tuguegarao City West High School as these were identified by the Division of Tuguegarao City to have enrolled learners with physical disabilities. These schools are public comprehensive secondary schools catering to the educational needs of learners in the heart and periphery of Tuguegarao City.

Respondents of the Study

The 202 respondents of the study were the identified students with physical disabilities enrolled in the five secondary schools. The names of these respondents were taken from the Schools Division of Tuguegarao City. The study used Cochran formula in computing for the total sample and stratified random sampling was used in determining the total sample per school.

Research Instruments

The study employed three instruments. The first instrument was a questionnaire aimed at gathering information on the personal and disability profiles of the participants. The second instrument utilized was the social anxiety scale, adapted from Caballo et al. (2010). This scale comprised 24 items that assessed various dimensions of social anxiety, including interactions with the opposite sex, criticism and embarrassment, speaking in public or with teachers, assertive expression of negative emotions, performing in public, and interactions with strangers. Respondents rated each item on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), and the questionnaire demonstrated a high level of reliability with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.89.

The third instrument employed in the study was the lifelong learning tendency scale, adapted from Coukuna & Demirelb (2010). This scale consisted of 27 items that measured four dimensions: motivation, perseverance, lack of regulating learning, and lack of curiosity. Respondents provided responses using Likert scales, ranging from 1 (Not evident) to 5 (Very evident). The scale exhibited high reliability with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .89, indicating its trustworthiness.

Additionally, to ensure the questionnaire's comprehensibility for the respondents, it was translated into Filipino. The translation process was conducted by a Filipino professor and subjected to content validation by two colleagues who were experts in the Filipino language. Lastly, academic

performance data were collected by obtaining the first and second-quarter grades of the study participants.

Research Procedure

Prior to the distribution of questionnaires, the researcher secured official permission to conduct the study. This permission was obtained from the Superintendent of the Schools Division of Tuguegarao City, with endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School. Subsequently, letters requesting permission to administer the questionnaires were sent to school principals. These letters also included requests for the names and sections of identified learners with physical disabilities, information provided by the school's Special Education Coordinator. Once approval was granted, the researcher collaborated with the Special Education Coordinator to schedule the questionnaire administration. During this phase, the enumerators, along with other teachers from the school's Special Education Team, facilitated the questionnaire completion process for the respondents. In particular, those with visual impairments received assistance, with some items being read aloud to ensure accurate responses. All interactions took place in air-conditioned schoolrooms where eligible participants were invited to participate in the survey.

Given that the respondents belonged to vulnerable groups, ethical considerations were carefully observed. In preparation for engaging the students, the researcher and research enumerators developed an assent form tailored to the students' cognitive and emotional capacities. The language used was simplified and devoid of jargon, ensuring clarity and conciseness. Before formally seeking assent, individual meetings were conducted with each prospective participant, aiming to create a comfortable and trusting atmosphere. The researcher explained the study's purpose, methods, and potential implications using age-appropriate language and communication tools to ensure comprehension. Once the students demonstrated a satisfactory understanding, they were invited to provide their assent. The assent form was presented, and students were encouraged to read it at their own pace. The researcher and school Guidance Counselors were available to address any questions or concerns, emphasizing the anonymity of identities and the confidentiality of responses.

Furthermore, the first and second quarter grades of the respondents were obtained from class advisers with the assistance of the Special Education Coordinators. Notably, the researcher took several psychological preparations before administering the questionnaire and conducting focus group discussions with respondents and participants. These measures were taken to create a supportive and empathetic environment, foster open dialogue, and facilitate meaningful insights. Firstly, the researcher and enumerators familiarized themselves with the unique challenges and experiences faced by the students in their schools, building rapport through storytelling and understanding their circumstances. Additionally, they acknowledged the potential emotional impact of discussing social anxiety and adopted a compassionate and non-judgmental stance, emphasizing confidentiality and encouraging participants to share without fear of criticism. Active listening and empathy were practiced to sensitively respond to participants' disclosures, and

strategies for managing potential emotional reactions were in place. Finally, the researcher and enumerators anticipated communication challenges due to the participants' disabilities and explored alternative methods of expression, ensuring accommodations tailored to each participant's preferences.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages and means) was utilized to present the social anxiety, lifelong learning tendency, and academic performance of the respondents. The following scales were utilized to describe the levels of the following variables:

Scale	Social Anxiety	Lifelong Learning Tendency
4.20 – 5.00	Very high	Very high
3.40 – 4.19	High	High
2.60 – 3.39	Moderate	Moderate
1.80 – 2.59	Low	Low
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	Very Low

Moreover, the academic performance of the respondents was analyzed using the following scale of the Department of Education:

- 90 – above (Outstanding)
- 85 – 89 (Very Satisfactory)
- 80 – 84 (Satisfactory)
- 75 – 79 (Fairly Satisfactory)

On the other hand, the Pearson- R correlation was used to test relationships. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

4. RESULTS

Social Anxiety Level of the Respondents

Table 1. Social Anxiety Level of the Respondents

Dimensions	Mean	Interpretation
Interactions with the Opposite Sex	3.48	High
Criticism and embarrassment	3.52	High
Speaking in public/talking with teachers	3.65	High
Assertive expression of annoyance	3.35	Moderate

Performing in public	3.40	High
Interactions with strangers	3.42	High
Overall	3.47	High

Table 1 reveals that the respondents have high overall social anxiety (\bar{x} =3.47) which signifies that they may experience significant fear, discomfort, or distress in social situations related to their disability. Their social anxiety may arise due to fear of being stigmatized or treated differently due to their condition. They might worry about being perceived as "different" or facing negative stereotypes, leading to anxiety in social settings. Due to their physical disabilities, they may feel self-conscious about their appearance, mobility aids, or any visible signs of their disability. They may also worry about drawing attention to themselves or about being the focus of curiosity or judgment from others.

The dimension which has the highest mean is *Speaking in public/talking with teachers* (\bar{x} =3.65 - high) and the lowest mean is obtained by *Assertive expression of annoyance* (\bar{x} =3.35 - moderate). The high social anxiety of the respondents relative to *Speaking in public/talking with teachers* means they may feel particularly self-conscious or anxious about speaking in public or talking with teachers due to their visibility. They may worry about drawing attention to their disability or feeling judged based on their appearance or physical limitations. It may also be possible that they may fear being scrutinized or evaluated by others, including teachers. They may worry about making mistakes, being judged for their communication abilities, or facing negative evaluations, which can contribute to anxiety in speaking or interacting with teachers.

On the other hand, the dimension which has the lowest mean is *Assertive expression of annoyance* (\bar{x} =3.35 - moderate) suggests that the respondents may sometimes struggle with assertiveness skills, which involve effectively expressing one's needs, boundaries, or dissatisfaction while respecting the rights and feelings of others. They may have difficulty finding a balance between being appropriately assertive and being overly passive or aggressive. It may also connote that they are hesitant to express annoyance assertively due to a fear of conflict or negative reactions from others. They may worry about the potential consequences, such as damaging relationships or facing further criticism or judgment.

Lifelong Learning Tendency level of the Respondents

Table 2. Lifelong Learning Tendency Level of the Respondents

Dimensions	Mean	Interpretation
Motivation	3.67	High

Perseverance	3.27	Moderate
Lack of Regulating Learning	2.96	Moderate
Lack of Curiosity	3.33	Moderate
Overall	3.31	Moderate

Table 2 reveals that the respondents have an overall **moderate** lifelong learning tendency ($\bar{x}=3.33$) suggesting that they may sometimes demonstrate a level of engagement and curiosity in specific areas of interest or fields, seeking opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills in those areas. However, their interest and motivation may not extend to a wide range of fields or domains. The moderate lifelong learning tendency of the respondents may also indicate that they can be selective in their pursuit of new knowledge and skills. They may prioritize learning experiences that align with their immediate needs, personal goals, or career aspirations. They may not also actively seek out learning opportunities beyond those areas unless they find them directly relevant or compelling.

Among the four dimensions of lifelong learning tendency, the respondents have the highest rating along *Motivation* ($\bar{x}=3.67$ - high) which implies that they show strong inclination and drive towards continuous learning and personal growth. These respondents may possess a deep desire and enthusiasm for acquiring new knowledge, skills, and experiences. They approach learning as an exciting and fulfilling process, actively seeking out opportunities to expand their horizons and explore new subjects. They are motivated by the intrinsic rewards of learning itself. In addition, they may demonstrate a growth mindset, believing in their ability to develop and improve through effort and learning. They embrace challenges, view setbacks as opportunities for growth, and have a positive attitude towards learning from both successes and failures. They are motivated to continually push their boundaries and develop their potential.

The lowest mean was obtained by the dimension *Perseverance* ($\bar{x}=3.27$ - moderate) which means that the respondents have a balanced approach to learning and a moderate level of determination and persistence. In other words, they demonstrate a consistent effort and commitment to their learning goals. They persevere through challenges, setbacks, and difficulties, maintaining a resilient attitude. While they may not have the highest level of perseverance, they show a moderate level of determination to overcome obstacles and make progress in their learning journey. Moreover, they may strike a balance between challenging themselves and ensuring a certain level of comfort. They recognize the importance of pushing their limits and facing difficulties, but they also acknowledge the need for breaks or periods of rest to maintain their motivation and well-being.

Academic Performance of the Respondents

Table 3. Academic Performance of the Respondents

Grade	Frequency	Percentage
90% – above (Outstanding)	37	18.32
85% – 89% (Very Satisfactory)	66	32.67
80% – 84% (Satisfactory)	38	18.81
75% – 79% (Fairly Satisfactory)	61	30.20
Mean Grade = 84.05%	202	100.00

Table 3 reveals that the respondents have **Satisfactory** General Weighted Average (\bar{x} =84.05) suggesting that they are meeting the academic expectations and are likely in good standing within their educational institution. It also implies that they are successfully completing their coursework and maintaining a level of performance that is considered acceptable for their grade levels. Specifically, most of the respondents have Very Satisfactory grades ranging from 85-89% (32.67%) while 61 or 30.20% obtained a Fairly Satisfactory grade ranging from 75%-79%. Moreover, 38 or 18.81% have Satisfactory grade between 80%-84% and 37 or 18.32% obtained an Outstanding grade of 90% and above.

Relationship between the academic performance of the respondents with social anxiety and lifelong learning

Table 4. Relationship between the academic performance of the respondents with social anxiety and lifelong learning tendency

Relationship between the academic performance and...	Computed Value	Probability-Value	Interpretation
Social Anxiety	-0.623*	0.000	Significant
Lifelong Learning tendency	0.570*	0.000	Significant

*Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4 shows the significant relationship between the social anxiety and academic performance of the respondents. The negative relationship between social anxiety and academic performance ($p=0.000$) implies that the higher is the social anxiety of the respondents the lower is their academic performance and vice versa. In other words, when social anxiety is higher among the respondents, their academic performance tends to be lower, and conversely, when social anxiety is lower, their academic performance tends to be higher. This finding can be attributed to the fact that students with social anxiety often experience excessive self-consciousness, worry about being judged by others, and fear embarrassing themselves. These feelings can significantly impact their ability to

engage in social interactions, participate in class discussions, or seek help from teachers or classmates.

On the other hand, the result shows that there is a positive correlation between the lifelong learning tendency of the respondents with their academic performance. When students are actively engaged in lifelong learning activities, their academic performance tends to improve. In short, the more individuals engage in lifelong learning activities, the higher their academic performance tends to be.

Such finding can be attributed to the fact that students who continuously expand their knowledge base tend to apply their acquired knowledge to their academic pursuits. The more they learn, the more they are likely to understand and grasp concepts presented in their academic studies. Moreover, the finding can be accounted to the fact that engaging in lifelong learning activities stimulates cognitive processes such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills. These cognitive abilities are transferable and can positively impact academic performance by enhancing comprehension, reasoning, and the ability to synthesize information.

5. DISCUSSION

It is clearly shown in the study that students with physical disabilities experience high level of overall social anxiety. While some studies have found inconsistent results when comparing rates of anxiety in youth with physical disabilities to typically developing youth (Masnari & Ravaud (2013), this finding supports the notion that physical disabilities are associated with increased social anxiety. The finding also affirms a scoping review on mental health problems among adolescents and young adults with childhood-onset physical disabilities which found that students with physical disabilities are twice as likely to report feeling sad or hopeless on a daily basis (Lal, 2022). This suggests a higher prevalence of mental health issues, including anxiety, among students with physical disabilities. Additionally, the finding echoes that children and students with disabilities experience higher rates of mental health challenges compared to their peers without disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). This includes higher levels of social anxiety, which can be attributed to various factors such as physical, cognitive, and neurological impairments, pain, and family-related factors (Lal, 2022).

The finding of this research strengthens some studies suggesting that students with physical disabilities have moderate overall lifelong learning tendencies. Such level of lifelong learning tendency may be attributed to numerous factors. For example, students with disabilities may experience moderate level of engagement in school and in seeking opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills because of the perception of their disability by other members of society, as well as the availability of inclusive education and teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities (Babik & Gardner, 2021). Additionally, students with disabilities may be more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes, such as less education and lower levels of employment, which can impact their lifelong learning tendencies (World Bank, 2023). While more research is needed to fully understand the level of lifelong learning tendency of students with

physical disabilities, it is clear that they face unique challenges that can impact their ability to access education and achieve academic success.

Significantly, the satisfactory General Weighted Average or academic performance of the respondents supports the study of Jorgensen et al., (2015) and Sachs & Schreuer (2011) examining the academic performance of students with physical disabilities in a secondary setting. These researchers found that students with physical disabilities had comparable or satisfactory Grade Point Average (GPA) compared to their peers without disabilities. The satisfactory academic performance of students with disabilities may be accounted to numerous interplaying factors. For instance, students with disabilities face negative school experiences related to their disability, which can impact their academic performance (Milsom, 2006). In addition, students with disabilities may be more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes, such as less education and lower levels of employment, which can impact their academic performance and lifelong learning tendencies (Mosia & Phasha, 2017).

Notably, the study uncovered that there is a significant relationship between the social anxiety and academic performance of the respondents. The negative relationship between social anxiety and academic performance implies that the higher is the social anxiety of the respondents the lower is their academic performance and vice versa. Such finding strengthens the finding of Heinzl et al. (2017) who indicated that higher levels of social anxiety were associated with lower academic achievement, including lower grades and reduced engagement in academic activities. Similar research by Galassi et al. (2013) was confirmed in this study which investigated the impact of social anxiety on academic performance among high school students. The study found that students with higher levels of social anxiety had lower grades and poorer academic performance compared to their peers with lower social anxiety.

On the other hand, the result shows that there is a positive correlation between the lifelong learning tendency of the respondents with their academic performance. When students are actively engaged in lifelong learning activities, their academic performance tends to improve. In short, the more individuals engage in lifelong learning activities, the higher their academic performance tends to be. The foregoing finding affirms the claim of Field (2012) that engaging in lifelong learning activities enhances knowledge acquisition, develops critical thinking skills, fosters motivation and engagement, and cultivates adaptability and transferable skills. He averred that students who possess a lifelong learning tendency demonstrate improved academic performance by utilizing these skills and knowledge in their coursework.

6. CONCLUSION

The students with physical disabilities enrolled in public secondary schools in Tuguegarao City generally experience challenges related to social anxiety and lifelong learning. They struggle with social interactions, which can potentially affect their overall well-being and academic performance. Also, they face certain limitations that prevent them from fully engaging in lifelong learning activities. The high social anxiety among the respondents is more evident in big schools while factors like being male, only child, and older age contribute to differences in their lifelong

learning tendency. Notably, those who experience higher social anxiety tend to have poorer academic performance compared to their peers who have lower or do not have such anxiety. Additionally, those who are actively engaged in lifelong learning activities tend to show improved academic performance. Therefore, addressing social anxiety and promoting lifelong learning opportunities are indispensable in supporting the educational success of students with physical disabilities.

Recommendations

Respondent schools should strengthen their policies to support students with physical disabilities in line with Republic Act No. 7277, offering resources and specialized support for addressing social anxiety. This is essential in creating inclusive learning environments that encourage lifelong learning which is crucial in promoting collaboration and diverse learning opportunities. Also, there is a need to encourage active engagement in lifelong learning activities as this can improve academic performance and personal growth. To counter the negative impact of social anxiety on academic performance, schools should provide additional academic support. A similar study should be conducted in the Schools Division of Cagayan to understand social anxiety and lifelong learning among students with physical disabilities in the region.

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