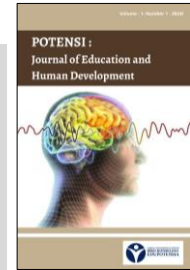




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## A Descriptive Study of Social Anxiety in Islamic Secondary Education Students

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### ABSTRACT

Social anxiety is a psychological problem commonly experienced by adolescents and has the potential to hinder their social and academic development. Students who experience social anxiety tend to fear negative evaluation, avoid social interactions, and experience stress in various social situations in the school environment. This study aims to determine the general description of social anxiety in students at Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Mathla'ul Falah Wakap, examine differences based on gender, and examine the implications of guidance and counseling services in addressing students' social anxiety. This study used a quantitative approach with descriptive methods. The subjects were MA Mathla'ul Falah Wakap students selected using a sampling technique in accordance with the characteristics of the study. The instrument used was a social anxiety scale developed based on the aspects of fear of negative evaluation, social avoidance and stress in new situations, and social avoidance and stress in situations with familiar people. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics. The results showed that in general, students' social anxiety levels were in the moderate category, with fear of negative evaluation as the most dominant aspect. In addition, there were differences in social anxiety levels based on gender, where female students tended to have higher levels of social anxiety than male students. The findings of this study indicate the important role of guidance and counseling services in preventive and curative efforts to help students manage social anxiety adaptively in the school environment.



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## Introduction

Adolescence is a developmental period marked by an increased need for social acceptance and sensitivity to judgment from those around them. During this phase, students are required to adapt socially, express their opinions, and actively participate in various learning activities at school. However, not all students are able to cope with these social demands adaptively. One psychological problem that often arises in adolescents is social anxiety, an excessive fear of negative evaluation by others in social situations (La Greca & Lopez, 1998; Hofmann & DiBartolo, 2014). Social anxiety in students can manifest in various forms, such as a fear of speaking in front of the class, a worry about being judged negatively by teachers or peers, and a tendency to avoid social interactions. This condition not only impacts students' psychological well-being but also has direct implications for academic participation, interpersonal relationships, and the development of self-confidence (O'Day & Heimberg, 2021). Various studies have shown that students with high levels of social anxiety tend to be passive in learning, withdraw from social environments, and experience difficulty in optimally expressing their potential (Suryaningrum et al., 2019; Knappe et al., 2017). Theoretically, social anxiety is understood as a

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multidimensional condition encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. La Greca and Lopez (1998) proposed that social anxiety consists of three main aspects: fear of negative evaluation, social avoidance and distress in new situations or with strangers, and social avoidance and distress in general situations or with familiar people. These three aspects interact with each other and form a pattern of anxiety that can hinder an individual's ability to establish healthy social relationships.

In addition to these internal aspects, social anxiety is also influenced by various external factors, such as family parenting styles, negative social experiences, peer pressure, and excessive use of social media. Research shows that experiences of social rejection, bullying, and lack of social support can increase the risk of social anxiety in adolescents (Lee et al., 2017; Dewi & Mustafa, 2023). In a collectivist cultural context like Indonesia, pressure to conform to social norms and maintain self-image can also exacerbate fears of social evaluation (Chen et al., 2014). Empirical data indicates that social anxiety in adolescents is a serious problem. Surveys of adolescent mental health in Indonesia report that some adolescents exhibit symptoms of anxiety, including social anxiety, which can potentially disrupt their academic and social functioning (Ministry of Health & UNFPA, 2023; UGM & UQ, 2023). These findings underscore the importance of mapping and better understanding the condition of social anxiety in students, particularly in secondary schools. In the educational context, guidance and counseling services play a strategic role in helping students manage social anxiety. Counseling approaches based on cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, and social skills development theories have been proven effective in reducing social anxiety and increasing student self-confidence (Pratiwi & Nurhidayati, 2020; Handayani & Nurdin, 2017). However, designing appropriate services requires empirical data on the social anxiety experienced by students in the school environment.

Based on this description, this study is crucial to obtain a general overview of social anxiety among Madrasah Aliyah (MA) students. The results are expected to form the basis for developing guidance and counseling services that are more responsive to students' psychological needs and support the creation of a safe, inclusive, and conducive school environment for adolescents' socio-emotional development.

## Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with descriptive methods. This approach was chosen to obtain an objective picture of the level of social anxiety among Madrasah Aliyah (MA) students without manipulating the variables under study. Descriptive methods were used to describe the students' social anxiety levels based on empirical data obtained in the field. The subjects were students at Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Mathla'ul Falah Wakap, who were in their teens. The subjects were selected using a sampling technique tailored to the population characteristics and research objectives, ensuring that the data obtained could represent the general state of students' social anxiety.

The data collection instrument used in this study was a social anxiety scale. The scale was developed based on the grand theory of social anxiety proposed by La Greca and Lopez, which views social anxiety as a multidimensional construct encompassing fear of negative evaluation, social avoidance and stress in new situations or with strangers, and social avoidance and stress in general social situations or with familiar people. The scale was constructed in the form of closed-ended statements with alternative responses using a Likert scale. Before being used in the research, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing to ensure it accurately and consistently measured social anxiety. Instrument validity was used to assess the suitability of the statement items to the social anxiety aspects being measured, while reliability was used to determine the instrument's level of internal consistency.

Data collection was conducted by distributing a social anxiety scale to the students participating in the research. The scale was completed directly within the school environment, observing the principles of confidentiality and volunteerism of the respondents. The collected data were then processed and analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis techniques. The data analysis aimed to describe the students' general level of social anxiety and each aspect of social anxiety. The results of the analysis are presented as average scores, percentages, and categories of social anxiety levels. The research findings were then used as a basis for drawing conclusions and providing implications for guidance and counseling services in schools.

## Results and Discussions

### Results

Based on data analysis obtained from social anxiety measurements among MA Mathla'ul Falah Wakap students, the results indicate that social anxiety is a real phenomenon experienced by most students at varying levels. In general, students' social anxiety is in the moderate category, indicating that students frequently experience tension, worry, and discomfort when in certain social situations, especially those involving evaluation by others.

**Table 1.** Overview of Social Anxiety

Category	Score Interval	f	%
Low	$X < 52$	28	25%
Moderate	$52 \leq X < 72$	79	69%
High	$X > 72$	7	6%
Total		114	100%

Based on the data analysis in the table describing social anxiety, it was found that the majority of MA Mathla'ul Falah Wakap students fell into the moderate social anxiety category. Of the total respondents, 79 students (69%) fell into the moderate category, indicating that the majority of students experienced social anxiety at a significant level, but not yet reaching a severe level. This condition indicates that students were still able to carry out social and academic activities, but were often accompanied by feelings of worry, fear of negative judgment, and discomfort in certain social situations. Furthermore, 28 students (25%) fell into the low social anxiety category. This finding indicates that some students have relatively good social adaptation skills, with minimal concerns about social judgment. Students in this category tend to be more confident, able to interact naturally, and less inhibited by fear when faced with social situations in the school environment.

Meanwhile, only 7 students (6%) fell into the high social anxiety category. Although the number is relatively small, the presence of students in this category still requires special attention. Students with high social anxiety are likely to experience significant difficulties in social interactions, exhibit avoidance tendencies, and experience significant psychological distress when placed in situations involving social evaluation, such as speaking in front of a class or interacting with peers. Overall, the distribution of these data indicates that social anxiety among MA Mathla'ul Falah Wakap students is predominantly in the moderate category. This finding indicates that social anxiety is a fairly common condition among students and has the potential to impact social participation and learning engagement if not properly managed. Therefore, these results provide an important basis for guidance and counseling services to design preventive measures and develop social skills to help students manage social anxiety adaptively.

#### Differences in Social Anxiety Based on Gender

Based on a comparison of social anxiety by gender, the study results indicate a difference in social anxiety levels between male and female students. Female students tend to have higher levels of social anxiety than male students. This finding indicates that female students are more sensitive to social judgment and more prone to anxiety in interpersonal situations.

**Table 2.** Differences in Social Anxiety Based on Gender

Gender	Category	f	%	M	SD
Male	Low	21	42	43.260	7.881
	Moderate	27	54		
	High	2	4		
Female	Low	7	11	47.213	6.900
	Moderate	52	81		
	High	5	8		

Based on Figure 1, there are differences in social anxiety levels between male and female students. Among male students, the majority fell into the moderate social anxiety category (27 students (54%)), followed by 21 students in the low category (42%), and only 2 students (4%) in the high category. These findings indicate that male students tend to have moderate levels of social anxiety, with relatively few experiencing high levels of social anxiety. Meanwhile, among female students, social anxiety was predominantly in the moderate category, with 52 students (81%). Only 7 students (11%) experienced low levels of social anxiety, while 5 students (8%) experienced high levels of social anxiety. This distribution indicates that a greater proportion of female students experienced moderate and high levels of social anxiety than male students.

Referring to the mean scores, female students had a higher mean social anxiety ( $M = 47.313$ ;  $SD = 6.900$ ) than male students ( $M = 43.260$ ;  $SD = 7.881$ ). This difference in mean scores indicates that, in general, female students experience higher levels of social anxiety than male students. Therefore, these results demonstrate a gender-based difference in social anxiety tendencies, with female students being more susceptible to social anxiety than male students.

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### Implications of Guidance and Counseling Services

The findings of this study indicate that social anxiety among students predominantly falls within the moderate category, with a smaller proportion experiencing high levels of social anxiety, particularly among female students. These results have important implications for the implementation of guidance and counseling services in schools. The dominance of moderate social anxiety suggests that most students are still functioning adaptively; however, they remain vulnerable to experiencing discomfort, fear of negative evaluation, and avoidance in social situations if appropriate support is not provided. Based on these findings, preventive guidance services should be prioritized. School counselors are encouraged to implement classroom guidance or psychoeducational programs focusing on social skills development, emotional regulation, and positive self-perception. Such services may help students better understand social anxiety, normalize emotional experiences, and develop adaptive coping strategies when facing evaluative social situations.

Furthermore, the presence of students with high social anxiety, although relatively small, highlights the need for responsive counseling services. Individual counseling can be directed at students who demonstrate intense fear, avoidance behaviors, and significant emotional distress in social interactions. Counseling interventions may focus on restructuring negative thoughts, enhancing self-confidence, and gradually increasing students' engagement in social situations within a supportive environment. The observed gender differences, where female students show higher mean scores of social anxiety, indicate that counselors should adopt a gender-sensitive approach in service delivery. Female students may benefit from counseling programs that emphasize emotional expression, self-acceptance, and assertiveness training, while still ensuring that male students who experience social anxiety are not overlooked.

Overall, the results underscore the strategic role of guidance and counseling services in addressing social anxiety among students. By integrating preventive, developmental, and remedial services, school counselors can support students in managing social anxiety more effectively, thereby promoting healthier social interactions and optimal academic participation.

### Discussions

The results of this study indicate that social anxiety among students at MA Mathla'ul Falah Wakap is in the moderate category, indicating that social anxiety is a significant psychological problem that requires attention from the school, particularly guidance and counseling services (La Greca & Lopez, 1998; Erath et al., 2010). This finding aligns with the view that adolescence is a developmental phase vulnerable to social pressure, particularly related to the need for acceptance and positive evaluation from the social environment (Santrock, 2018; Hurlock, 2015). The predominance of the fear of negative evaluation aspect supports the theory that the core of social anxiety lies in excessive concern about the judgments of others (Leary & Kowalski, 1995; Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). Students who experience a fear of negative evaluation tend to limit self-expression, avoid active participation in class, and choose to remain silent despite having adequate academic abilities (Beidel et al., 2007; La Greca, 2001). These conditions have the potential to hinder the development of students' self-confidence, communication skills, and overall academic achievement (Albano & Detweiler, 2001; Santrock, 2018).

Regarding social avoidance and feelings of distress in new situations or with strangers, research shows that students experience difficulty adjusting to social environments that require new interactions (Rapee et al., 2011). This is understandable, given that adolescents often feel insecure in unfamiliar situations, especially if they have had previous negative social experiences (Erath et al., 2010; Mash & Wolfe, 2016). If this social avoidance is not addressed appropriately, students can potentially experience limitations in developing broader and more adaptive social relationships (La Greca & Harrison, 2005). Furthermore, the emergence of social avoidance in common situations or with familiar people suggests that social anxiety not only arises in new situations but can also develop in everyday social interactions (Heimberg et al., 2014). This indicates that social anxiety in students has formed relatively persistent thought and behavioral patterns, requiring systematic and ongoing intervention through professional services (Beck, 2011; Corey, 2017). Gender differences in social anxiety indicate that female students tend to have higher levels of social anxiety than male students (McLean et al., 2011; La Greca & Lopez, 1998). This finding can be explained through developmental and sociocultural perspectives, where female students are generally more sensitive to interpersonal relationships and social judgments from their surroundings (Rose & Rudolph, 2006; Santrock, 2018). This sensitivity makes female students more susceptible to anxiety when facing evaluative situations, although male students can also experience social anxiety with different forms of expression (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013).

The implications of this study's findings suggest that guidance and counseling services play a strategic role in helping students manage social anxiety adaptively (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). Guidance and counseling teachers need to identify students exhibiting symptoms of social anxiety early, particularly those experiencing fear of negative evaluation (Prayitno & Amti, 2015). Individual and group counseling services can focus on strengthening self-confidence, managing negative thoughts, and developing students' social skills

(Corey, 2017; Erford, 2019). Furthermore, preventive services through classroom guidance and psychoeducation on social anxiety are crucial for creating a supportive and inclusive school environment (Yusuf & Nurihsan, 2019). Overall, these findings and discussion confirm that social anxiety among students at MA Mathla'ul Falah Wakap is a real phenomenon and requires serious attention from the school (La Greca & Harrison, 2005). With appropriate and ongoing guidance and counseling support, students are expected to be able to manage social anxiety adaptively and thus develop optimally both academically and socially (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Santrock, 2018).

## Conclusions

This study concludes that the level of social anxiety among students of MA Mathla'ul Falah Wakap is generally classified in the moderate category, indicating that social anxiety is a fairly prevalent psychological condition that may affect students' social interaction and academic engagement. The dominant aspect of social anxiety identified in this study is fear of negative evaluation, which suggests that students tend to experience excessive concern about being judged unfavorably by others in social and academic situations.

Furthermore, social avoidance and distress were found not only in new social situations or interactions with unfamiliar individuals, but also in everyday interactions with peers and known individuals. This finding indicates that social anxiety among students has developed into relatively stable behavioral and cognitive patterns, rather than being situational or temporary in nature. Such conditions may hinder students' confidence, communication skills, and overall social development if not addressed appropriately.

The results also reveal gender differences in social anxiety, where female students tend to experience higher levels of social anxiety compared to male students. This difference may be influenced by developmental and socio-cultural factors, particularly greater sensitivity to interpersonal relationships and social evaluation among female adolescents.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that guidance and counseling services play a crucial role in addressing social anxiety among students. School counselors are expected to implement early identification, preventive programs, and responsive interventions through individual counseling, group counseling, classical guidance, and social skills training. Comprehensive and continuous counseling services are necessary to help students manage social anxiety more adaptively, thereby supporting their optimal personal, social, and academic development.

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