

Project Proposal

Childhood Family Social Panorama and its
Impact on Self Image and Social Anxiety

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WORK-BASED LEARNING PROJECT

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Context and Background

According to the study, 75% of mental health disorders begin before the age of 25 (MIELI, 2021). In Finland, about 20% of adults experience significant anxiety in public speaking, and 7% have reported fear of social situations in the last year (DuodecimHealthLibrary, 2023). Social fear can cause long-term anxiety, impair functionality, hinder education and work, and lead to relationship problems. Often, social fear is associated with other mental health disorders, such as depression, and it is commonly treated with psychotherapy and medication (The working group set up by the Finnish Medical Society Duodecim, 2024).

I chose this topic because, through my own experiences, I have become interested in how social anxiety affects people's performance in both education and the workplace. I see social anxiety as a significant challenge for our society, as it can hinder young people's ability to succeed in their studies and enter working life. Furthermore, social anxiety can be associated with burnout, sick leaves, and disability pensions, contributing to the economic consequences of mental health disorders. For instance, even before Covid-19, the costs associated with mental health problems in Finland were estimated to be around 11 billion euros per year, as reported by the OECD (2018) (OECD/European Union, 2024).

Justification and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to investigate the potential underlying factors of social anxiety at a structural level. The aim is to increase understanding of the topic and assess the effectiveness of the methods used in the researcher's work. The goal is also to fill gaps identified in the literature review by deepening the understanding of how early family environment factors affect an individual's self-image and the experience of social anxiety. The research seeks to bring forth a new and previously little-explored

perspective on the factors influencing social anxiety. The objective is to offer alternative approaches to the treatment of social anxiety. The study focuses on examining the experience of social anxiety within the context of the social panorama, which considers the individual's beliefs, self-image, and the influence of the family on this experience. Special attention is given to how changes in the social panorama of the childhood family affect an individual's self-image and experience of social anxiety, as well as how interventions targeting these factors can alter this experience. One of my objectives is to publish the research findings in scientific articles and journals that broadly cover psychological and social phenomena, including social panorama and social anxiety. The purpose is to increase awareness and understanding of the factors affecting social anxiety and the significance of the social panorama. On a broader scale, the research aims to help develop more effective strategies for the prevention and treatment of social anxiety, thereby providing new perspectives and methods for addressing this common psychological challenge.

Key concepts in the study include social anxiety, social panorama, self-image, and the structure of experience.

A literature review of recent studies indicates that social anxiety is a complex phenomenon influenced by both personal and environmental factors.

Previous research has emphasized the importance of a negative self-image, limiting beliefs, and avoidance behavior in the development and maintenance of social anxiety (Dobinson, Norton & Abbott, 2020, Gilboa-Schechtman et al., 2019, Lee, Ahn ja Kwon, 2019, Meral & Vriends, 2022, Gregory et al., 2018, Hopkins et al., 2021, Figueiredo et al., 2023, Wong & Heeren, 2021, Meyer et al., 2019, Daniel et al., 2020, Kelly-Turner and Radomsky, 2022, Clark & Wells, 1995). Strengthening a positive self-image has been linked to a reduction in social anxiety, whereas negative self-beliefs and sensitivity to

negative feedback have been associated with increased anxiety. Family influence, particularly early attachment relationships and parenting styles, are also key factors in the development of social anxiety. Childhood experiences and family behavioral patterns can shape an individual's beliefs and self-image, influencing their experience of social anxiety.

Methodology

In this study, the underlying philosophy is constructivism, which considers reality to be relative and subjective (Metsämuuronen, 2009). This study will apply qualitative research methods, which according to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018), aim to understand people or phenomena. As defined by Puusa & Juuti (2020), these methods focus on human life and existence, emphasizing particularly individuals' experiences, thoughts, emotions, and the meanings they associate with the subject under investigation. The research approach is phenomenological, which means that the focus is on the experiential relationship of humans to the world they live in. In this approach, the researcher brings forward their understanding, pre-thinking, and pre-assumptions about the research subject (Vilkka, 2021).

The research will be conducted as a case study. A case study is an approach in research that allows for an in-depth understanding of phenomena in their real-world context, utilizing diverse sources of information. Its main goal is to integrate theoretical perspectives with practical observations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Hurmerinta-Peltomäki & Nummela, 2004).

In the study, a selected informant collection method will be used. The staff of the psychiatric clinic at the hospital will refer 3–5 clients aged 18–30 who experience social anxiety and are willing to participate in the research. I will interview these clients and select 3–5 cases for my study.

The inclusion criteria for the study are:

- 18-30 years of age
- Consent to record the meetings by audio recording and taking notes.
- Willingness to participate in the study and allow the use of collected data anonymously in future thesis and possibly in further materials, such as articles and dissertations.
- Willingness and ability to participate in interventions directed at childhood family social panorama and self-image as guided by the researcher.
- Proficient in Finnish or English, enabling interaction with the researcher.
- Commitment to the research process from start to finish during the spring and summer of 2024.

The exclusion criteria are:

- Under 18 years of age.
- Refusal to collect, record data, and use the research material in the thesis and possible future materials.
- Inability or unwillingness to participate in the guided interventions of childhood family social panorama and self-image.
- Insufficient Finnish or English language skills, hindering interaction with the researcher.
- Failure to attend research meetings or discontinuation of the process.

Research Schedule

My plan is to study patients suffering from social anxiety at a psychiatric clinic of the hospital in Southern Finland. The research is intended to be conducted during the spring and summer of 2024 (Attachment 1.), primarily in the

hospital's facilities or, if necessary, in my own office. I will meet with the participants in the study 5–7 times.

The first meeting involves an introduction, mapping social anxiety using tools like FIN-SPIN and LSAS questionnaires, self-assessment scales, and identifying the individual's goals related to social situations. 2. In the second meeting, I will model the structure of the individual's experience of social anxiety and their self-image in social situations. 3. (and if necessary, in the 4th–5th meetings), the intervention directed at the childhood family social panorama will be conducted. In the following session (4th–6th), we will remap the self-image in social situations and assess the level of social anxiety using the SPIN-FIN scale, LSAS questionnaire, and self-assessment scale. If necessary, a self-image intervention will be directed. In the final meeting, we will again assess the level of social anxiety with the FIN-SPIN scale, LSAS questionnaire, self-assessment scale, and by checking the self-image in social situations. I will start the transcription and documentation of the data concurrently with the interviews and interventions. At the end of the meetings, I will analyse the results, draw conclusions in a summary, and finally write the report.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics Special attention is paid to the protection of participants, transparency, and honesty in data collection, and considering the impact of the researcher's insider status. To protect participants, it is ensured that they understand the voluntariness of their participation and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Written consent to use the research data is obtained. To ensure anonymity and privacy protection, all data collected in paper and audio format will be stored and processed anonymously and kept securely under double lock and on an external hard drive. Strict ethical practices in data collection and storage, including data encryption and

restricted access to the researcher, are adhered to. The influence of the researcher's background and relationship to the research topic is acknowledged, and efforts are made to actively identify and manage potential biases. During the interventions, particular attention is paid to adhering to ethical principles. Participants are informed about the potential effects of the interventions, ensuring their understanding of the significance of their participation. Participant wellbeing is prioritized, and efforts are made to actively minimize any potential adverse effects. To ensure ethical standards in the research, commitment is made to adhere to the ethical guidelines and standards of the field.

Learning Objectives

During my research, I aim to achieve personal learning outcomes that are crucial for my professional development as a researcher, neuro coach, and trainer. My primary goal is to deepen my understanding of the structure of social anxiety and the impact of childhood family social panorama on an individual's self-image and experiences. Concurrently, I will develop my skills in qualitative research, particularly in data analysis, interpretation of results, and critical evaluation of information. Additionally, I will focus on enhancing my ability to present research findings clearly and concisely, both in writing and verbally. An important part of my learning also involves a deeper understanding of ethical aspects in qualitative research, including handling sensitive topics, considering participants' rights, and adhering to research ethics principles. In the future, this comprehensive development process will help me function more effectively in my professional roles.

Summary

I chose this research topic based on my own experiences, which have sparked my interest in the impact of social anxiety on people's performance in

both academic and professional settings, including its effects on society. In particular, my interest lies in the structural level of the experience of social anxiety and how structural changes affect this phenomenon. This research aims to investigate the factors influencing social anxiety, with a specific focus on the impact of the childhood family's social panorama on an individual's self-image and the experience of social anxiety. The goal is to deepen understanding of the structure of social anxiety and to offer new perspectives on its treatment methods. The intention is to publish the research findings in scientific articles, thereby enhancing awareness and understanding of the diversity of social anxiety and the significance of the social panorama. On a broader scale, the purpose of the study is to help develop more effective strategies for the prevention and treatment of social anxiety. On a personal level, this project supports my development as a researcher, neuro coach, and educator, enriching my expertise in the field of social anxiety and improving my research and presentation skills.

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Attachment 1

Research Work	02/2024	03/2024	04/2024	05/2024	06/2024	07/2024	08/2024	09/2024
1. Meeting: Initial Discussion, Acquaintance, Mapping Social Anxiety with FIN-SPIN +LSAS tests + Self-Assessment and Goal Setting	X	X						
2. Meeting: Modeling the Experience of Social Anxiety and Mapping Self-Image in Social Situations 1		X						
3.-5. Meeting: Family Social Panorama Intervention in Childhood (1-3 sessions as needed)		X	X					
4. (5.-6.) Meeting: Mapping Self-Image in Social Situations 2, Assessing Experience of Social Anxiety, FIN-SPIN +LSAS tests + Self-Assessment, Checking Goal Achievement, and Self-Image Intervention (if needed)			X	X				
Transcribing, Documenting, and Analysing Interviews and Interventions		X	X	X				
5. (6.-7.) Meeting: Checking Self-Image in Social Situations 3, Assessing Experience of Social Anxiety FIN-SPIN +LSAS tests + Self-Assessment				X	X			
Formation of Results					X			
Summary of Results					X	X		
Research Conclusions						X	X	
Report Writing							X	X