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## SHYNESS AND SOCIAL PHOBIA IN ISRAELI JEWISH VERSUS ARAB STUDENTS

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Background: Social Anxiety Disorder has been repeatedly shown to be very prevalent in the Western society with prevalence rates of 10% or above. However, very few studies have been performed in the Middle East and in Arab countries.

Methods: Three hundred Israeli students participated in our study and were administered the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS), the Cheek Buss Shyness questionnaire (CBSQ) and a socio-demographic questionnaire.

Results: 153 Jewish and 147 Arab students participated in the survey. SAD was found in 12.33% of the sample, according to the LSAS cutoff score of  $\geq 60$ . The two subsamples had similar LSAS and CBSQ scores and similar positive SAD-positive rates ( $LSAS \geq 60$ ). Females had higher scores on the LSAS, as were those without a spouse and those that had been in psychological treatment. Based on a regression analysis, the significant predictors of the LSAS score were the CBSQ score and female gender. A very high correlation was found between the LSAS score and the CBSQ score.

Conclusions: SAD and shyness are similarly prevalent in Jewish and Arab students in Israel. SAD scores were higher among females, those without a spouse and those that received psychological treatment. Further studies on the clinical and cultural characteristics of SAD in Israeli sub-cultures would add to the growing body of knowledge on SAD in various cultures.