The Relationship between Social Interaction and Social Anxiety among Adolescents

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Abstract. This article focuses on adolescent social stress. This article primarily delves into the nuanced aspects of social classification, delineating the various strata within adolescent social structures and elucidating the distinctive characteristics that define these groups. Furthermore, it explores the intricate relationship between social interaction and the developmental stages of adolescents, shedding light on how these interactions shape their social understanding and emotional well-being. In addition, this paper offers a comprehensive overview of related intervention strategies designed to alleviate social anxiety in adolescents. It discusses various therapeutic approaches, social skills training, and support systems that can be employed to help young individuals navigate the treacherous waters of social stress. Finally, how society should view and deal with adolescents' social anxiety in the future was discussed. It advocates for a proactive approach, emphasizing the importance of early intervention, ongoing support, and the creation of a more inclusive social environment that acknowledges and addresses the unique challenges faced by adolescents in their journey toward adulthood.

Keywords: Social interaction, social anxiety, adolescents, interventions.

1. Introduction

With the development of society, under the faster and faster pace of life, teenagers are facing unprecedented psychological pressure. According to Rodrigo et al.'s study, 445 students were assessed, 54.4% male and 45.6% female. 36% had positive depression screenings (17% mild, 19% severe), and 28% had positive severe anxiety screenings [1].

Anxiety, as a pervasive emotional experience, is widespread in adolescents and can stem from academic stress, social relationships, self-image, and uncertainty about future plans [2]. Social anxiety, as a form of anxiety, focuses specifically on an individual's feelings of fear and insecurity in social situations [3]. Social anxiety in adolescents may include avoidance of social activities, silence in groups, and excessive worry about being evaluated or rejected. These behaviors not only limit social participation in adolescents but can also lead to feelings of isolation, impaired self-esteem, and a lack of development of social skills. In addition, long-term social anxiety may also be associated with depression, substance abuse, and other mental health problems.

Teenagers with social anxiety may feel extremely upset in social situations and worry about being humiliated or scrutinized by others. This anxiety can affect their interactions with their peers. It can lead to a decrease in the number of friends, a decrease in the quality of relationships, and even becoming a victim of bullying. These social impairments can further affect their social resilience, isolating them. Moreover, for mental health, this is undoubtedly a detriment. Social anxiety not only affects teens' social lives but can also have a profound impact on their mental health. Long-term untreated social anxiety can lead to other psychological problems, such as depression and low self-esteem. In addition, adolescents with social anxiety may have more negative self-perceptions that may exacerbate their anxiety symptoms, creating a vicious cycle. Academic performance can also be affected by social anxiety. Socially anxious teens may avoid these situations because they are afraid to speak in class or participate in group activities, which can affect their learning opportunities and academic performance. Studies have shown that adolescents with social anxiety have a lower average grade point average compared to their peers who do not have social anxiety. Therefore, social anxiety

in adolescence is an important issue to pay attention to, as it may have a negative impact on an individual's social adaptability, mental health, and academic development.

This article will discuss the phenomenon of social interaction as an influencing factor in adolescents' anxiety and the different degrees of anxiety caused by different social styles. This paper analyzes the relationship between social style and anxiety through a literature review and empirical research and puts forward corresponding intervention recommendations.

2. Method

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using Web of Science, ProQuest, and Google Scholar databases. The following search terms related to online videos (and their derivatives) were used: "social interaction," "adolescent anxiety," "social patterns," "social phobia," "anxiety," and "intervention." The research was identified from supplementary sources, such as Google Scholar, in order to generate a more inclusive literature review. Studies were selected based on the following inclusion criteria. The research must include empirical data (ranging from case studies to surveys with thousands.

3. Literature Review

Social anxiety disorder is characterized by extreme and persistent fear or anxiety and avoidance of social situations in which others may negatively evaluate the person.

3.1. Classification and Characteristics of Social Contact

There are three types of teenage socialization: friends, lovers, and groups of friends. Moreover, each type has its characteristics. The key to friendship is common ground. If friends gradually diverge in their views and interests, the strength of the relationship will decrease and may lead to the end of the relationship [3]. Friends are usually randomly selected at a certain opportunity and then screened. To be friends is to have similar values and worldviews. In teenage friendships, friends may have to choose the same school classes and courses and have similar interests. The same goes for people in social groups, and the key word for social is similarity. Therefore, the personalities of a pair of friends may be similar. The relationship between lovers is for the following points: adolescent individuals begin to seek a deeper emotional connection, and love can satisfy their need for intimacy. Since adolescence is a critical period for forming self-identity, romantic relationships allow adolescents to build self-image and self-esteem. Adolescence is accompanied by the awakening of sexual consciousness, and romantic relationships may involve sexual education and the exploration of sexual behavior, Romantic relationships can provide emotional support and comfort to help adolescents cope with the stresses and challenges of life. Being in love can also be a recreational activity that brings fun and excitement to a teenager's life [4]. For different types of socialization, there are different ways to get along. Friends or friends often discuss topics of interest together and help each other in their daily lives. Lovers, on the other hand, are more inclined to a kind of psychological and physical companionship, exchanging something deeper [5].

3.2. Relationship Between Social Interaction and Adolescent Social Anxiety

Adolescence is a critical time for the development of social skills. Adolescents with poor social skills may feel uncomfortable interacting with their peers, which can lead to increased feelings of anxiety. For example, Khakpoor et al.'s research found that adolescents with social anxiety using self-preservation strategies, like avoidance, may face peer rejection and victimization, hindering intimacy development in relationships. Studies show that social anxiety is linked to peer acceptance and victimization [3, 5].

Meanwhile, adolescents are very sensitive to peer acceptance and social status. Experiences of exclusion or bullying can exacerbate feelings of anxiety. With the popularity of social media,

teenagers are increasingly engaging in social interactions through online platforms [6]. While this facilitates socializing, it also brings with it new sources of anxiety, such as cyberbullying, comparisons on social media, and privacy concerns [7, 8]. Anxiety may affect teenagers' social behavior, making them more reserved and introverted in social situations, which may limit their chances of forming new relationships. Different cultures have different expectations and norms for social interactions, which may affect the anxiety level of adolescents. For example, in some cultures, direct eye contact may be seen as a sign of respect, while in others, it may be seen as impolite [9].

3.3. Social Anxiety Triggers in Social Interactions

There are seven main triggers of social interaction. (i) social skills lacking. Lack of effective social skills or communication skills can make individuals feel unsafe in social situations, triggering anxiety. There are also a few reasons why this is the case. The paper examines how socialization affects social skill development and its impact on introversion and extroversion. It indicates that insufficient social interaction in early years may result in introversion due to fewer chances to develop social skills. The paper also notes that while extroversion can improve social skills, it might heighten social anxiety in sensitive individuals due to more frequent social engagements that could provoke anxiety. Thus, the paper challenges the belief that more socializing necessarily decreases anxiety in teenagers; (ii) negative expectations. Negative expectations about the outcome of social interactions, such as fear of rejection, ridicule, or not being understood, may increase feelings of anxiety [10] (iii) The next is past experiences of social failure or being bullied may trigger anxiety in new social situations. This will also lead to the previous situation. (iv) The fourth is excess self-awareness: Focusing too much on one's own behavior, appearance, or what others think of oneself can lead to social anxiety. This is especially common in adolescents. This is because an individual's sense of self-esteem is usually increased during adolescence. (v) And also, the social media stress: Comparisons, competition, and the quest for the perfect image on social media can increase social anxiety. (vi) The next is Group dynamics: Position in the group, group size, and familiarity with group members can all affect an individual's level of social anxiety. The SAD group experienced more paternal and maternal rejection and overprotection than controls, but less social interaction. Paternal rejection and overprotection, as well as maternal rejection, correlated positively with anxiety levels. Emotional coping styles mediated the relationship between maternal warmth and anxiety in the SAD group [4]; (vii) Cognitive biases such as catastrophic thinking (over-exaggerating the likelihood of a negative outcome) and overgeneralization (treating a negative event as a general phenomenon) may exacerbate social anxiety [11].

3.4. Interventions

There are two basic types of treatments for adolescent social anxiety disorder. Pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy. Psychotherapy will be discussed in this article.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Cognitive Behavioral therapy is the basis of social anxiety disorder treatment, which involves not letting children miss classes, because missing classes will make them more reluctant to go to school. If behavioral therapy is ineffective or children are unwilling to participate, the use of anxiety-reducing drugs may be helpful [12]. This is a problem-oriented, structured, time-limited psychotherapy method that focuses on changing individuals' cognitive distortions such as thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes through psychological intervention techniques, and is action-centered, learning, integrating, and applying the skills required to adapt to individual psychological disorders, so as to improve emotional regulation and solve the psychological problems currently faced by individuals. CBT has been established as a first-line treatment in the clinical practice of social anxiety disorder, and its efficacy has been widely confirmed [13].

Here is a study that proves that this treatm*ent really works.* Since the last Cochrane Review in 2015, the number of studies on CBT for anxiety disorders has increased from 41 to 88, with a significant rise in participant numbers. Moderate-quality evidence suggests that CBT is more

effective than no treatment in the short term, with a remission rate of 49% for primary anxiety disorders, compared to 18% for wait-list or no-treatment controls [14].

However, there is a more different branch of CBT treatment called GCBT. Team cognitive behavioral therapy is also effective in treating social anxiety disorder. On this basis, "Empirical Group Cognitive Behavioral Therapy" (EGCBT) was proposed, hoping to enhance the diversity and complexity of its psychological education stage by adding two major links: the client's independent scientific research "third party" group and the intervention of the client's "evaluation of fear cognition" in the treatment process.

Sandplay Therapy. This is a psychotherapy method that integrates the individual's subconscious into consciousness by freely placing toys in a specific box with fine sand, thereby stimulating the individual's psychological self-healing ability and achieving the purpose of solving psychological disorders. Psychological counselors analyze the toy collections created by the visitors, discover the unconscious content projected by the visitors on the sandplay works, make them "conscious", and combine the healing power of the therapy itself to explore and analyze the inner world of the visitors, and then help them make behavioral changes.

There is also a study that shows the positive therapeutic effects of sand tray therapy in adolescents. This study indicates that sandplay therapy can positively impact adolescents with substance use disorders and trauma. Clinicians might find it beneficial to incorporate sandbox games into their treatment plans, particularly for high-risk and vulnerable youth [15, 16].

Social Skills Training. Through education and training, help adolescents understand the nature of social anxiety, learn effective social skills, improve self-confidence, and reduce anxiety. A study can support this treatment. This study investigates the impact of a parent-led social skills program on friendship quality and social abilities in teens with autism, aged 13-17, compared to a control group. Skills focused on include conversational abilities, engaging with peers, forming friendships, sportsmanship, hosting events, improving reputations, and managing teasing or bullying. The program led to significant gains in social knowledge, more frequent hosting of events, and better overall social skills as reported by parents, compared to the control group [17].

Relaxation Training. Teach adolescents relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, etc., to help them better manage stress and anxiety in social situations. The reduction of depressive symptoms in both the cognitive-behavioral and relaxation training groups was better than that of the waitlist control group in both the posttest and 5-week follow-up assessments. Active treatment was equally effective in reducing depression. Participants in cognitive-behavioral and relaxation training groups improved from moderate to non-depressive levels, which were sustained at follow-up. Additionally, positive effects on anxiety and academic self-concept were observed [18].

4. Future Directions

The future direction of adolescent social anxiety is likely to focus on the following key areas: Research will focus more on early recognition and intervention of social anxiety, especially in childhood and adolescence. Early intervention may help prevent the development and worsening of social anxiety. Adolescents may manifest and deal with social anxiety differently in different cultural contexts. Future research may explore how cultural differences affect the understanding and treatment of social anxiety. As neuroscience advances, future research is likely to focus more on the biological basis of social anxiety, including genetic, neurophysiological, and neurochemical factors. Research may explore new psychosocial interventions, such as internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy, virtual reality technology, etc., to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of interventions. In order to better understand the trajectory and stability of social anxiety, future studies may conduct long-term follow-ups in order to observe the evolution of social anxiety from childhood to adulthood. For specific groups, such as left-behind children and adolescents with special educational needs, studies may develop and evaluate specific interventions. With the proliferation of social media and new

technologies, research is likely to explore how these new technologies affect social anxiety in adolescents and how these technologies can be used for effective interventions. Future research may focus more on the distribution, trends, and associated factors of social anxiety in different populations in order to better develop public health strategies. Through the in-depth discussion of these research directions, the psychology community can better understand the complexity of adolescent social anxiety and provide more effective strategies for prevention and intervention.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, the prevalence and complexity of social anxiety in adolescents are explored in depth, and how multiple factors of social interaction influence it. Through an extensive review of the literature and empirical research, we have come to a range of conclusions about social anxiety and its triggers.

The lack of social skills was first identified as one of the main causes of social anxiety in adolescents. Deficiencies in social skills can cause anxiety by making teens feel insecure when socializing with their peers. The absence of this skill may stem from the home environment, such as overprotection or lack of opportunities to encourage participation in social activities. It was also found that even adolescents with social skills may experience social anxiety if they have negative expectations of social outcomes, such as fear of rejection or not being understood. Past experiences of failure in social situations, such as embarrassment in public speaking or being bullied, can also exacerbate teens' anxiety in new social situations. These experiences may lead adolescents to develop avoidance behaviors to reduce potential negative evaluations. In addition, excessive self-awareness, i.e., being overly concerned about one's own behavior, appearance, or what others think of oneself, is also an important trigger for social anxiety, especially during adolescence, when individuals become more sensitive to self-perception.

The article also discusses the impact of the home environment on adolescent social anxiety. Parental rejection, overprotection, and lack of emotional warmth were all significantly positively correlated with adolescent anxiety levels. These family factors may influence a teen's social behavior and their perception of the social situation. When it comes to cultural diversity, different cultures have different expectations and norms for social interactions, which can affect teens' anxiety levels.

Finally, we highlight the role of cognitive biases in social anxiety. For example, catastrophic thinking (over-exaggerating the likelihood of a negative outcome) and overgeneralizing (treating negative events as a general phenomenon) may exacerbate social anxiety. Adolescent social anxiety is a multifactorial and multi-faceted problem which involves individual psychology, family environment, social culture, and cognitive processes. In order to effectively address this challenge, a comprehensive intervention strategy is needed, including social skills training, cognitive behavioral therapy, family therapy, and relaxation training, though these approaches, we can help teens build self-confidence, improve their social skills, and reduce the impact of social anxiety on their daily lives. Future research should continue to explore the long-term effects of these interventions and consider how they can be adapted to groups of adolescents from different cultural and social backgrounds.

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