

INTERACTION BETWEEN SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER AND LOW SELF-ESTEEM

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Abstract: This article investigates the relationship between social anxiety and low self-esteem among young people, particularly university students. The findings indicate that low self-esteem exacerbates social anxiety, leading to discomfort in social environments. This topic is of great importance in clinical and social psychology and can be utilized to develop effective psychological interventions aimed at improving mental health.

Keywords: social anxiety, low self-esteem, self-evaluation, youth psychology, mental health.

Аннотация: В данной статье исследуется взаимосвязь между социальной тревожностью и низкой самооценкой среди молодежи, в частности студентов. Результаты показывают, что низкая самооценка усугубляет социальную тревожность, приводя к дискомфорту в социальных ситуациях. Тема имеет большое значение в клинической и социальной психологии и может использоваться для разработки эффективных психологических вмешательств, направленных на улучшение психического здоровья.

Ключевые слова: социальная тревожность, низкая самооценка, самооценка, психология молодежи, психическое здоровье.

Introduction. Social anxiety is an intense psychological state characterized by a person's fear of negative evaluation, criticism, or rejection in social situations. This condition limits the individual's social activity and reduces their ability to express themselves. In the years 1870–1900, the first concepts of social phobia (social fear) were introduced by Francis Galton. During the 1960s–1970s, Aaron T. Beck and other cognitive psychologists suggested that social anxiety arises from cognitive distortions and faulty thinking patterns. Clark and Wells (1995) developed one of the most well-known cognitive models of social anxiety. According to them, social anxiety is based on uncertain and negative thoughts when evaluating oneself and others. Heimberg et al. (1995) confirmed the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy in treating social anxiety. Main symptoms of social anxiety include Avoidance of social situations (e.g., refusing to speak in public), intense anxiety in social settings, increased heart rate, sweating, blushing, viewing oneself negatively in the presence of others, constant self-criticism, restriction of social interactions, and social isolation. Types of Social Anxiety:

Generalized social anxiety – characterized by anxiety across a wide range of social situations. Specific social phobias – such as public speaking or dating situations. Low self-esteem is

a condition in which a person perceives themselves as unworthy, inadequate, or incompetent. It negatively affects a person's internal satisfaction, mental health, and social relationships

Formation of Self-Esteem. Childhood experiences – parental attitudes, relationships with close individuals, and the social environment play a significant role in shaping self-esteem.

Social comparison – individuals compare themselves to others and focus on their shortcomings.

Inner dialogue – the evaluations and criticisms individuals direct toward themselves.

Researchers: Rosenberg (1965) was the first to systematically study the concept of self-esteem, presenting it as a key indicator of mental health and social functioning. Coopersmith (1967)

emphasized that when self-esteem changes, an individual's behavior and psychological state also change. Consequences of Low Self-Esteem:

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Difficulties in social relationships;

Mental health disorders, particularly depression and anxiety disorders;

Delays in personal development.

Scientific Relationship Between Social Anxiety and Low Self-Esteem

Theoretical Foundations:

Cognitive Model (Clark & Wells, 1995): Low self-esteem leads to persistent self-criticism in social situations, which in turn intensifies anxiety.

Social Cognitive Theory: Individuals perceive themselves negatively through the eyes of others and, based on these beliefs, underestimate their own social abilities.

Empirical Studies: Several studies have demonstrated a significant positive correlation between low self-esteem and social anxiety (Sowislo & Orth, 2013; Heinrichs & Hofmann, 2001).

Example of Research: In Shah's (2010) study, low self-esteem was identified as an important factor in predicting social anxiety among young people.

Heimberg and colleagues (1992) found that individuals with social anxiety feel negatively when comparing themselves to others, which increases self-criticism.

Research shows that low self-esteem intensifies social anxiety symptoms and increases social isolation.

Practical Significance and Treatment Approaches

In cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), exercises aimed at improving self-esteem are used to help reduce social anxiety. Psychotherapy places special emphasis on developing social skills and strengthening self-confidence. Mindfulness and relaxation techniques are also considered effective in coping with social anxiety.

Psychological Mechanisms of Social Anxiety: Cognitive-Behavioral Mechanisms:

People with social anxiety interpret social situations as threatening.

They pay excessive attention to others' opinions and fear being negatively evaluated.

They restrict their behavior based on inaccurate thoughts such as, "I look ridiculous to others," or "They think badly of me." Emotional Mechanism: Individuals with social anxiety experience unpleasant emotions (shame, anxiety, discomfort) in social situations.

This condition leads to their avoidance of social situations, which in turn reinforces negative experiences. Social anxiety is one of the widespread problems among modern youth, especially students, characterized by feeling uncomfortable in social settings, worrying about being evaluated by others, and consequently withdrawing from social activities. One of the primary psychological factors contributing to this condition is low self-esteem. Feeling inadequate, lacking confidence in one's abilities, and constantly comparing oneself negatively to others contribute to the intensification of social anxiety. Scientific research shows that low self-esteem not only triggers social anxiety but also maintains and stabilizes it over time. This, in turn, negatively affects an individual's social adjustment, ability to express themselves freely, and overall psychological well-being.

Among young people, increasing self-esteem, developing a positive self-image, and enhancing social skills can help prevent social anxiety. Therefore, psychological support, training programs, and self-development initiatives play an invaluable role in this regard.

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