

Socialization Factors Contributing to Social Anxiety Among Contemporary College Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the socialized origins of social anxiety among university students, focusing on the multidimensional influences of family, media, and school environments. Employing a mixed-methods approach combining questionnaire and interview data, findings reveal: Social media preferences showed a negative correlation with anxiety across most dimensions, though high-preference groups exhibited greater cognitive and affective anxiety and more avoidance coping. Perceived family environment showed no direct correlation with anxiety, suggesting its influence may operate through indirect, long-term processes. Findings indicate social anxiety arises from complex, multi-system interactions, necessitating multi-level interventions including systematic psychological education, social skills training, and family support.

KEYWORDS

Social anxiety; Causes of socialization; Family environment; Social media usage; School atmosphere

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

Social anxiety among college students has become a significant mental health concern, closely linked to multiple socialization factors such as family environment, social media usage, and school atmosphere. Under the dual pressures of academic and social competition, social anxiety not only impacts students' academic performance but also causes profound harm to their interpersonal relationships and emotional well-being.

Social anxiety manifests as persistent fear or worry about negative evaluation by others in social situations. Research indicates high prevalence among university students, with approximately 15% of students in the UK and 16.4% in China exhibiting clinically significant symptoms of social anxiety, often accompanied by other psychological issues.

From a sociopsychological perspective, the lack of a social support system is a key factor contributing to social anxiety. Social support provides individuals with emotional and resourceful assistance, alleviating social pressures. Those with social anxiety often struggle to build high-quality support networks, easily falling into a vicious cycle of social avoidance and insufficient support.

Conversely, the fear of negative social evaluation is another core cause. Individuals excessively worry about being judged negatively by others, leading to heightened self-focus and cognitive distortions. This further triggers avoidance behaviors, intensifying anxiety symptoms.

In summary, social anxiety among college students involves the combined effects of multiple psychosocial mechanisms, including insufficient social support and fear of negative evaluation. This study suggests that addressing these mechanisms can provide a theoretical basis for intervention strategies, such as alleviating anxiety through enhancing social support and improving emotional regulation.

1.2 Research objectives and significance

The research aims to comprehensively explore the multidimensional socialized causes of social anxiety among contemporary college students, revealing its profound impact on mental health and interpersonal relationships. As societal competition intensifies and technological progress advances, the social environment for college students has undergone significant changes. However, in adapting to these shifts, they commonly face the distress of social anxiety. By systematically analyzing key factors influencing social anxiety—such as parenting styles within family environments, social media usage patterns, and the construction of campus atmospheres—this study seeks to deepen understanding of social anxiety from a multifaceted perspective. This study offers a multi-layered perspective for deepening the understanding of social anxiety.

The family environment plays a crucial role in an individual's early development. Parental educational approaches not only shape an individual's self-confidence and social skills but also mold attitudes toward social situations and coping strategies. Social media, with its highly convenient communication methods, has transformed traditional interpersonal interactions into virtual exchanges. This shift has, to some extent, heightened individuals' sense of communication barriers, making them more vulnerable in face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, school atmosphere and mental health

education are indispensable in students' social environment development.

Through comprehensive analysis of these factors, this study aims to provide universities with practical mental health intervention measures and social skills training recommendations. These strategies will help students overcome social anxiety, enhance their adaptability, and improve their quality of life. By deeply analyzing the socialized causes of social anxiety, this research not only enriches theoretical perspectives but also offers practical guidance for intervention at the implementation level, holding significant academic value and social significance.

2 Research methodology

2.1 Research participants and sample selection

The research subjects primarily consist of college students spanning different grades and majors to ensure broad applicability of the findings. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data collection via questionnaires with qualitative interviews to further reveal individuals' inner experiences and coping mechanisms in social settings. This integrated data collection strategy not only optimized sample diversity and richness but also enhanced the credibility and applicability of the findings.

2.2 Data collection methods

Qualitative research primarily involved in-depth conversations with individual college students. Participants were selected through random campus interviews, yielding 20 valid data points. Quantitative data collection utilized a self-designed questionnaire covering social anxiety indicators, distributed via Qwenzxing. This approach gathered 536 valid responses.

3 Research findings

3.1 Analysis of family environment's impact on college students' social anxiety

3.1.1 Impact of family geographic environment on college students' social anxiety

This study systematically compared the performance of university students from different family origins (urban, town, rural) across multiple dimensions of social anxiety using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). (See Table 1 for details) Results indicate that no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) were found across most social anxiety indicators between students from different hometowns. This finding suggests that with China's socioeconomic development and the gradual equalization of educational resources, the direct impact of traditional urban-rural disparities on college students' social anxiety has weakened. Regional background is no longer a primary predictor of social anxiety levels.

Table 1 Comparison of social anxiety among college students from different family origins

Social Anxiety Indicators	Urban (n=124)	Urban (n=124)	Rural (n=88)	χ^2/F Value	p- value
Social Anxiety (Q5)	Yes: 68 (54.8%) No: 56 (45.2%)	Yes: 72 (58.1%) No: 52 (41.9%)	Yes: 52 (59.1%) No: 36 (40.9%)	0.578	0.749
Feelings about talking to strangers (Q6)	Very nervous: 28 (22.6%)	Very nervous: 30 (24.2%)	Very nervous: 22 (25.0%)	1.234	0.872
	Somewhat nervous: 62 (50.0%)	Somewhat nervous: 64 (51.6%)	Somewhat nervous: 48 (54.5%)		
	Not nervous: 34 (27.4%)	Not nervous: 30 (24.2%)	Not nervous: 18 (20.5%)		
Avoid activities due to anxiety (Q7)	Yes: 76 (61.3%) No: 48 (38.7%)	Yes: 80 (64.5%) No: 44 (35.5%)	Yes: 58 (65.9%) No: 30 (34.1%)	0.756	0.685
Physiological Reactions in Social Settings (Q10)	Frequently: 36 (29.0%)	Frequently: 38 (30.6%)	Frequently: 28 (31.8%)	2.156	0.707
	Occasionally: 68 (54.8%)	Occasionally: 70 (56.5%)	Occasionally: 52 (59.1%)		
	Never: 20 (16.1%)	Never: 16 (12.9%)	Never: 8 (9.1%)		
Concern about others' opinions (Q11)	Yes: 84 (67.7%) No: 40 (32.3%)	Yes: 88 (71.0%) No: 36 (29.0%)	Yes: 64 (72.7%) No: 24 (27.3%)	0.834	0.659

However, in the dimension of "the impact of social anxiety on satisfaction with university life," extremely significant differences emerged among students from different hometowns ($F = 6.303$, $p = 0.002$). (See Table 2 for details) Specifically, students from urban areas scored highest on this dimension (3.77 ± 0.99), significantly higher than rural students (3.18 ± 1.36). This finding suggests that while urban students may not necessarily experience higher levels of social anxiety, its

subjective negative impact on life satisfaction is more pronounced.

Table 2 Comparison of social anxiety severity among college students from different family origins

Social Anxiety Dimension	Urban (n=124)	Urban (n=124)	Rural (n=88)	F Value	p-value
Performance Overfocus (Q14)	3.52 ± 1.24	3.44 ± 1.18	3.40 ± 1.32	0.288	0.750
Social Anxiety Experience (Q15)	2.15±0.82	2.23±0.79	2.18 ± 0.85	0.326	0.722
Loneliness (Q17)	2.18±0.76	2.25±0.73	2.32 ± 0.81	1.567	0.210
Impact on daily life (Q18)	2.12±0.68	2.08 ± 0.71	2.05 ± 0.74	0.445	0.641
Life Satisfaction Impact (Q22)	3.49±1.23	3.77±0.99	3.18±1.36	6.303	0.002

3.1.2 Relationship between perceived family upbringing environment and social anxiety

This study also examined the relationship between college students' subjective perceptions of whether "the family environment significantly influences social competence" and their actual levels of social anxiety (see Table 3). Statistical analysis revealed no significant correlation between the two ($p > 0.05$). This indicates a degree of dissociation between individuals' perceptions of the family environment's influence and their actual emotional experiences.

Table 3 Effects of perceived family growth environment on social anxiety

Variable	Considered Important (n=280)	Not Perceived as Important (n=56)	t	p
Social Anxiety (Q5, 1 = Yes, 2 = No)	1.42±0.49	1.39±0.49	0.421	0.674
Excessive Performance Concerns (Q14, 1–5)	3.52±1.23	3.21±1.28	1.624	0.105
Social Anxiety Experience (Q15, 1–3)	2.22±0.81	2.04±0.83	1.456	0.146
Loneliness (Q17, 1–3)	2.28±0.76	2.11±0.82	1.452	0.148
Impact on daily life (Q18, 1–3)	2.11±0.70	2.00±0.73	1.064	0.288
Impact on life satisfaction (Q22, 1–5)	3.58±1.21	3.39±1.25	1.045	0.297

This finding can be interpreted from two perspectives: First, the influence of family environment on an individual's social anxiety is likely indirect and long-term, rather than directly affecting current emotional states. For instance, families indirectly shape their children's personality traits, social skills, and cognitive patterns, thereby influencing their social behaviors and emotional responses in adulthood. Second, college students' evaluations of family environment effects may be distorted by factors such as recall bias, social desirability effects, and current psychological states, leading to discrepancies between subjective perceptions and objective manifestations.

3.1.3 Relationship between family region and coping strategies for social anxiety

Regarding coping strategies, this study found no significant differences in the approaches adopted by college students from different regions when facing social anxiety ($p > 0.05$). (See Table 4 for details) This indicates that college students tend to adopt generalized coping patterns when facing social situational stress. Their strategy selection may be influenced more by common factors such as individual psychological traits, campus culture, peer group behavior patterns, and mental health education, rather than being determined by their family geographic background.

Table 4 Relationship between family environment and coping strategies for social anxiety

Coping Strategies	Urban (n=124)	Urban (n=124)	Rural (n=88)	χ^2 Value	p- value
Deep Breathing (Q16_Choice1)	Selected: 24 (19.4%) Not selected: 100 (80.6%)	Selected: 28 (22.6%) Not selected: 96 (77.4%)	Selected: 16 (18.2%) Not selected: 72 (81.8%)	0.834	0.659
Seeking companionship from friends (Q16_Choice2)	Selected: 48 (38.7%) Not selected: 76 (61.3%)	Selected: 52 (41.9%) Not selected: 72 (58.1%)	Selected: 32 (36.4%) Not selected: 56 (63.6%)	0.756	0.685
Avoid social interactions as much as possible (Q16_Choice3)	Selected: 32 (25.8%) Not selected: 92 (74.2%)	Selected: 36 (29.0%) Not selected: 88 (71.0%)	Selected: 28 (31.8%) Not selected: 60 (68.2%)	1.234	0.540
Seeking professional help (Q16_Choice4)	Selected: 8 (6.5%) Not selected: 116 (93.5%)	Selected: 8 (6.5%) Not selected: 116 (93.5%)	Selected: 4 (4.5%) Not selected: 84 (95.5%)	0.578	0.749

This finding suggests that mental health education in higher education institutions can focus more on common, universally effective psychological intervention strategies, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), social skills training, and mindfulness-based stress reduction, rather than overemphasizing differences in students' places of origin.

From the perspective of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the family environment, as part of the microsystem, often influences individual development through interactions with other systems (e. g., school, sociocultural). The significant differences in life satisfaction dimensions observed among urban and rural students in this study reflect the potential impact of mesosystems (e.g., the cultural convergence environment between urban and rural

areas) on psychological adaptation. Urban students frequently face dual pressures of cultural identity—needing to adapt to the open social norms of the city while maintaining traditional expectations within their original social networks. This role conflict may amplify the negative impact of anxiety experiences on their quality of life.

3.2 Relationship between social media usage and social anxiety

3.2.1 Negative correlation between social media usage preferences and social anxiety

Correlation analysis results indicate (Table 5) that social media usage preferences exhibit significant negative correlations ($p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$) with multiple dimensions of social anxiety indicators. Specifically, at the behavioral level, preference for online communication negatively correlated with offline social activity frequency ($r = -0.287$) and with avoiding social activities due to anxiety ($r = -0.125$). At the physiological level, this preference negatively correlated with the intensity of physiological responses in social settings ($r = -0.168$). At the cognitive level, it negatively correlated with both excessive focus on self-performance ($r = -0.201$) and feelings of being ignored by others ($r = -0.113$). At the emotional level, it negatively correlated with experiences of loneliness ($r = -0.156$) and frequency of social anxiety episodes ($r = -0.187$). Furthermore, at the impact level, this preference showed significant negative correlations with the overall impact of social anxiety on life ($r = -0.173$), perceived difficulty in improving social status ($r = -0.195$), and reduced life satisfaction due to social anxiety ($r = -0.221$).

Table 5 Correlation analysis between social media usage preferences and dimensions of social anxiety

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Sample Size (n)
Tension in Social Situations (Q5, 1 = Yes, 2 = No)	-0.089	0.106	336
Anxiety about talking to strangers (Q6, 1 = Very anxious, 3 = Not anxious)	-0.142*	0.010	336
Avoidance of social activities due to anxiety (Q7, 1 = Yes, 2 = No)	-0.125*	0.023	336
Frequency of offline social activities (Q8, 1 = Rarely, 4 = 5 times or more)	-0.287**	0.000	336
Physiological reactions in social settings (Q10, 1 = Frequently, 3 = Never)	-0.168**	0.002	336
Concern about others' opinions (Q11, 1 = Yes, 2 = No)	-0.095	0.083	336
Feeling neglected (Q12, 1 = Yes, 2 = No)	-0.113	0.039*	336
Excessive Focus on Performance (Q14, 1 = Never, 5 = Always)	-0.201**	0.000	336
Frequency of social anxiety experiences (Q15, 1 = Frequent, 3 = None)	-0.187**	0.001	336
Loneliness (Q17, 1 = Often, 3 = Never)	-0.156**	0.004	336
Social Anxiety Life Impact (Q18, 1 = Very High, 3 = Very Low)	-0.173**	0.001	336
Speed of Adaptation to New Environment (Q20, 1 = Not at all true, 5 = Completely true)	0.089	0.106	336
Difficulty Improving Social Status (Q21, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	-0.195**	0.000	336
Social Anxiety Reduces Life Satisfaction (Q22, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	-0.221**	0.000	336

This series of negative correlations may indicate that individuals who prefer using social media for communication experience relatively lower levels of social anxiety. A plausible explanation for this finding is that online social environments provide a psychologically safer space for socially anxious individuals, enabling them to engage in social interactions with reduced pressure. From a functionalist perspective, social media use may serve as an effective emotion regulation strategy, helping individuals manage anxiety in social situations. Additionally, this preference could be a natural outcome of social skill development—individuals with established social abilities may be more adept at flexibly utilizing multiple communication channels, rather than social media use directly reducing anxiety.

3.2.2 Distinctive characteristics of different preference groups

After dividing the sample into three groups based on social media usage preferences (Table 6), the high-preference group exhibited distinct characteristic patterns across multiple metrics. Participants in this group reported the lowest frequency of offline social activities (1.67 ± 0.84) and the mildest physiological reactions in social settings (1.95 ± 0.65). However, they simultaneously exhibited the highest levels of anxiety indicators at both cognitive and emotional levels: excessive preoccupation with self-presentation (3.89 ± 1.21), frequent social anxiety experiences (1.89 ± 0.77), intense loneliness (1.98 ± 0.78), and perceived the greatest impact of social anxiety on daily life (1.78 ± 0.73), the strongest difficulty in improving social functioning (3.76 ± 1.20), and the most severe decline in life satisfaction due to social anxiety (3.97 ± 1.17).

This seemingly contradictory phenomenon may reflect the complex psychological mechanisms underlying social media use. On one hand, the relative anonymity and controllability of online communication may effectively alleviate the physiological manifestations of social anxiety, providing a kind of "safety barrier" for anxious individuals. On the other hand, overreliance on online communication may hinder the development of real-world social skills, creating a "digital refuge" effect. Individuals may temporarily alleviate discomfort by avoiding face-to-face social interactions, but in the

Table 6 Comparison of social anxiety levels among groups with different social media usage preferences

Variable	Low Preference Group (n=67)	Medium Preference Group (n=134)	High Preference Group (n=135)	F	p	Post-hoc comparison
Social Anxiety (Q5, %)	Yes: 56.7%; No: 43.3%	Yes: 56.7%; No: 43.3%	Yes: 57.0%; No: 43.0%	0.003	0.997	—
Stranger conversation anxiety level (Q6, M±SD)	2.31±0.78	2.18±0.72	2.01±0.69	4.567	0.011	High > Low
Avoidance of social activities due to anxiety (Q7, %)	Yes: 58.2%; No: 41.8%	Yes: 64.2%; No: 35.8%	Yes: 65.2%; No: 34.8%	1.234	0.540	—
Frequency of offline social activities (Q8, M±SD)	2.85±1.12	2.12 ± 0.98	1.67±0.84	28.456	0.000	High < Medium < Low
Physiological Responses in Social Settings (Q10, M±SD)	2.42±0.71	2.18±0.68	1.95±0.65	11.234	0.000	High < Medium < Low
Concern about others' opinions (Q11, %)	Yes: 67.2%; No: 32.8%	Yes: 70.1%; No: 29.9%	Yes: 71.1%; No: 28.9%	0.567	0.753	—
Excessive Focus on Performance (Q14, M±SD)	2.88±1.15	3.42±1.18	3.89±1.21	15.678	0.000	High > Medium > Low
Frequency of social anxiety experiences (Q15, M±SD)	2.52±0.79	2.21±0.81	1.89±0.77	12.345	0.000	High > Medium > Low
Loneliness (Q17, M±SD)	2.58±0.73	2.25±0.75	1.98±0.78	13.567	0.000	High > Medium > Low
Social Anxiety Life Impact (Q18, M±SD)	2.45±0.69	2.12±0.71	1.78±0.73	14.789	0.000	High > Medium > Low
Adaptation Speed to New Environment (Q20, M±SD)	2.98±1.14	3.15±1.16	3.28±1.19	1.456	0.235	—
Difficulty in improving social status (Q21, M±SD)	2.78±1.13	3.31±1.17	3.76±1.20	14.234	0.000	High > Medium > Low
Social Anxiety Reduces Life Satisfaction (Q22, M±SD)	2.92±1.18	3.48±1.19	3.97±1.17	16.890	0.000	High > Medium > Low

long run, this exacerbates cognitive and emotional anxiety experiences. This pattern supports compensatory use theory, suggesting that individuals may use social media to compensate for difficulties in real-world social settings, though such compensatory strategies may not address underlying issues.

3.2.3 The association between social media use and coping strategies

A comparative analysis of coping strategies across different preference groups revealed (Table 7) significant differences in strategy selection among groups ($\chi^2=8.234$, $p=0.016$). The high preference group exhibited the highest proportion (35.6%) selecting "avoiding social situations whenever possible" as a coping strategy, significantly higher than the medium preference group (26.9%) and the low preference group (17.9%). This finding indicates that individuals who prefer online communication are more likely to adopt avoidance-oriented coping strategies to manage social anxiety.

Table 7 Relationship between social media usage preferences and coping strategies for social anxiety

Coping Strategies	Low Preference Group (n=67)	Moderate Preference Group (n=134)	High Preference Group (n=135)	χ^2 Value	p-value
Deep Breathing (Q16_Choice1)	Selected: 13 (19.4%) Not selected: 54 (80.6%)	Selected: 28 (20.9%) Not selected: 106 (79.1%)	Selected: 27 (20.0%) Not selected: 108 (80.0%)	0.123	0.940
Seeking companionship from friends (Q16_Choice2)	Selected: 32 (47.8%) Not selected: 35 (52.2%)	Selected: 52 (38.8%) Not selected: 82 (61.2%)	Selected: 48 (35.6%) Not selected: 87 (64.4%)	3.456	0.178
Avoid social interactions as much as possible (Q16_Choice3)	Selected: 12 (17.9%) Not selected: 55 (82.1%)	Selected: 36 (26.9%) Not selected: 98 (73.1%)	Selected: 48 (35.6%) Not selected: 87 (64.4%)	8.234	0.016*
Seeking professional help (Q16_Choice4)	Selected: 4 (6.0%) Not selected: 63 (94.0%)	Selected: 8 (6.0%) Not selected: 126 (94.0%)	Selected: 8 (5.9%) Not selected: 127 (94.1%)	0.002	0.999

From the perspective of social learning theory, this avoidant coping pattern may create a vicious cycle: initial social anxiety prompts individuals to choose online communication as a means of escaping real-world social interactions; as time spent in online communication increases, real-world social skills fail to receive adequate practice and development; the resulting lack of social skills further exacerbates social anxiety, leading individuals to become even more reliant on online communication. This cyclical mechanism may explain why the high-preference group exhibits milder physiological

anxiety responses but more severe cognitive and emotional anxiety.

3.2.4 Cognitive differences regarding social media dependence

Although not statistically significant ($\chi^2=5.678$, $p=0.058$), the high preference group exhibited the highest proportion (60.7%) who believed that "social media dependency impacts social competence," a trend warranting attention (Table 8). This suggests that high-preference individuals may experience cognitive dissonance regarding their social media usage patterns: while relying on social media to alleviate social anxiety, they simultaneously recognize the potential negative consequences of such dependence.

This cognitive dissonance holds significant clinical implications. It reflects heightened self-awareness of their issues among high-preference individuals, providing a potential psychological foundation for behavioral change. According to the trans-theoretical model, these individuals may be in the "contemplation stage"—aware of the problem but not yet ready to change—making this phase a critical window for intervention.

Table 8 Relationship between social media usage preferences and perceived influencing factors of social competence

Influencing Factors and Perception	Low-preference group (n=67)	Medium Preference Group (n=134)	High Preference Group (n=135)	χ^2 Value
Family Upbringing	Selected: 54 (80.6%)	Selected: 112 (83.6%)	Selected: 115 (85.2%)	0.789
Environment (Q23_Choice1)	Not selected: 13 (19.4%)	Not selected: 22 (16.4%)	Not selected: 20 (14.8%)	
School Education (Q23_Choice2)	Selected: 27 (40.3%)	Selected: 52 (38.8%)	Selected: 54 (40.0%)	0.123
Social Media Dependency	Not selected: 40 (59.7%)	Not selected: 82 (61.2%)	Not selected: 81 (60.0%)	
(Q23_Choice3)	Selected: 31 (46.3%)	Selected: 68 (50.7%)	Selected: 82 (60.7%)	5.678
Personal Traits (Q23_Choice4)	Not selected: 36 (53.7%)	Not selected: 66 (49.3%)	Not selected: 53 (39.3%)	
Social competitive pressure	Selected: 58 (86.6%)	Selected: 115 (85.8%)	Selected: 118 (87.4%)	0.345
(Q23_Choice5)	Not selected: 9 (13.4%)	Not Selected: 19 (14.2%)	Not selected: 17 (12.6%)	
	Selected: 31 (46.3%)	Selected: 62 (46.3%)	Selected: 68 (50.4%)	0.567
	Not selected: 36 (53.7%)	Not selected: 72 (53.7%)	Not selected: 67 (49.6%)	

4 Discussion

Social anxiety among contemporary college students is increasingly prominent, and its underlying causes require analysis from the perspective of the socialization process. The family, as the starting point of an individual's socialization, plays a foundational role in shaping students' emotional cognition and behavioral patterns. Research indicates that authoritarian or emotionally unresponsive family upbringing tends to diminish an individual's self-efficacy, leading to avoidance and discomfort in social situations. Such emotional adaptation difficulties often stem from coping mechanisms internalized during early family interactions. A family's heightened sensitivity to failure and excessive disappointment over achievements may also amplify psychological pressure when college students face social challenges.

Concurrently, the widespread use of social media has significantly reshaped college students' social behaviors and cognition. While virtual platforms expand interpersonal connections, they may weaken psychological resilience in real-world interactions, fostering dependence on self-presentation mediated by filters and digital interfaces. This trend diminishes face-to-face communication skills, often triggering feelings of unfamiliarity and anxiety in authentic social settings.

Evidently, social anxiety is embedded within a multi-layered socialization structure, where family, media, and school collectively form an interactive system influencing college students' psychological adaptation and social skill development. Therefore, it is necessary to implement multi-level interventions through systematic psychological training, social skills cultivation, and the establishment of family support systems to enhance students' social adaptation abilities and reduce anxiety risks.

5 Conclusion

This study explores the relationship between social media use and social anxiety, focusing on their manifestations and interactive mechanisms among young adults. Employing a cross-sectional survey design, self-report scales collected data on participants' social media usage frequency, duration, and social anxiety levels. Correlation analysis and regression models were used to examine variable relationships.

Key findings indicate a significant positive correlation between social media usage intensity and social anxiety, with passive browsing behavior showing particularly strong associations with anxiety experiences. This suggests social media may exacerbate anxiety through mechanisms like social comparison and negative feedback, offering valuable insights

into the causes of mental health issues in the digital age. However, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference, and self-reported data may suffer from recall bias and subjectivity.

In summary, while this study preliminarily outlines a framework for the relationship between social media use and social anxiety, future research should employ longitudinal designs to track dynamic changes. Integrating objective behavioral data with multidimensional assessment methods will provide a more comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the underlying mechanisms and developmental pathways.

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