



Social Phobia in Young Adults: Causes, Impact, and Treatment

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Abstract. Although there is a lot of literature on social phobia, most research focuses on the correlation between a single factor and social phobia. The purpose of the present review is to systematically summarize the causes, manifestations, prevention, and treatment of social phobia. The results showed that the research on the causes of social phobia is more in-depth, but there is still lacking exact evidence, and the impact of the interaction between different factors on social phobia remains to be studied. The impact of social phobia on young adults is multifaceted, which can also be summarized into three points: individual, family, and society. The methods of prevention and treatment are gradually increasing, but the effectiveness needs more experimental conclusions. These findings contribute to a better understanding of social phobia and are of great significance for effective prevention and treatment.

Keywords: Social phobia · Young adults · Cause · Impact · Treatment

1 Introduction

Social phobia, also known as social anxiety disorder, is a neurosis dominated by an excessive and unreasonable fear of external objects or situations. Patients know it is unnecessary, but they still can not prevent fear attacks. Fear attacks are often accompanied by significant anxiety and autonomic nerve symptoms. Patients try to avoid the object or situation they fear or endure it with fear. With the increase in people's attention to mental health, social phobia, as a common psychological obstacle, has attracted more and more attention. It generally exists in young people in different degrees under the background of rapid development in contemporary society, which has brought varying degrees of distress and pain in all aspects and has an important impact on young people's physical and mental health. Studies have shown that social phobia can cause different degrees of heart rate rise [1]. There are two different subtypes of social phobia, generalized social phobia (GSP) and non-generalized social phobia (NGSP) [2]. GSP is relatively serious. Patients face pain in a wide range of social situations, which are irregular and unpredictable. Patients with NGSP show social phobia only in specific situations, such as public speaking.

The causes of social phobia are very complex, and until now, no research has been able to accurately define the causes. In the past research, the causes can be divided into the

following three aspects: individual, family, and society. Each aspect also includes many different factors, which will be described in detail later. In previous studies, the effects of social phobia on people are mostly physiological changes and observable external states, such as the heart rate rise [1]. Individuals with high levels of social phobia blushed more [3]. Some studies show that social phobia is closely related to some neuroses. However, the relationship between social phobia and neurosis needs further research. With the popularity of the word “social phobia”, people will consciously take some measures to prevent it. Most people with mild social phobia will take psychotherapy, and patients with serious symptoms will widely take drug treatment. Some experiments show that the effect of cognitive therapy is better than fluoxetine and self-exposure, but there is no significant difference in general mood measurement [4]. Therefore, more experiments are needed to compare the effects of different therapies.

Although social phobia does not harm organic diseases, if it is allowed to develop, it will still bring much serious harms to people’s life. Firstly, this kind of harm is not conducive to individual life and development, which makes people’s life more and more closed, and seriously separates them from society. Studies have shown that social phobia is associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder and may lead to more avoidance symptoms and greater suicidal tendencies [5]. Secondly, it will damage the group and society. Research shows that social phobia can cause internet addiction in young adults [6]. If more and more individuals suffer from different degrees of social phobia, the social work related to the group nature will be greatly affected and reduce work efficiency because internet addiction makes young people more self-centered and difficult to get along with others. In recent years, more and more young people like to label themselves “social phobia” to avoid some disliked occasions. This makes the term “social phobia” popular and gradually generalized, which makes people more aware of this symptom. At the same time, it may also make many young adults label themselves as having social phobia at will, and even become a patient with social phobia. The pros and cons need to be further studied.

The study of social phobia can make people have a deeper and clearer understanding of it, find and identify the specific symptoms of social phobia in advance, take preventive measures, and focus on how to effectively avoid people suffering from social phobia. In addition, the study of various influencing factors is conducive to people’s rational and effective use of the environment to reduce the possibility of suffering from social phobia. The research on treatment methods can optimize the existing treatment methods, make the treatment more effective and reduce the side effects of drugs.

At present, although many related studies have discussed the relationship between social phobia and different factors, and some studies have proposed different prevention and treatment methods, the research on the impact of social phobia under the interaction between different factors and the interaction between factors and environment is not clear enough, and most studies focus on one point, the systematicness and integrity of the understanding of social phobia are weak. In addition, with the progress of the times, some factors related to social phobia are also changing, such as causes, manifestations, and so on. The methods to prevent and treat social phobia should be changed and improved accordingly, rather than just staying on the traditional therapy. Therefore, this review aims to systematically summarize the theoretical and empirical research related to social

phobia, and discuss some new phenomena. It can inspire the prevention and treatment of social phobia.

2 Causes

2.1 Individual

First, past research found that many genetic characteristics can affect the degree of individual social phobia. David Xihan, a famous American psychiatry professor, held a seminar on social phobia in 2000 and believed that a chemical called serotonin caused the onset of social phobia. Neuropeptide oxytocin can effectively reduce fear and anxiety in social interaction and regulate the behavior of people. Besides, genes related to endocrine regulation, such as gastrin-releasing peptide, can inhibit fear. Although there is a lot of evidence that alleles are associated with phobia traits, no study has been able to conclude that there must be an association between them. Many research results show that gene-environment interaction can lead to the differences in social phobia. For example, the influence of genes on phobia may only appear in some specific environments or combined with different experience processes. Therefore, accurately identifying genes, and the causes of social phobia and studying the relationship between them is the direction of future research and development.

Secondly, social phobia is related to individual temperament types. Research shows that individuals show different temperament types in their early growth. Among them, children with behavioral inhibition to the unfamiliar are more likely to show social phobia in the future than those with other temperament types, that is chaotic attachment is the most unsafe type of attachment. Compared with other types of children, this kind of child is more likely to show higher social phobia in the future. Other studies have shown that individuals with different temperament types show different levels of social phobia. The social phobia of individuals with depression is significantly higher than that of individuals with mucus, bile, and blood. However, temperament type can not determine the level of social phobia. Cultivation and environmental factors are also important influencing factors, and the laws and connections need to be further studied.

Personal growth experience also affects people's social performance, which is a very complex factor. Affected by the environment and many other factors, its internal relationship is not very clear currently, but personal growth experience certainly plays a very important role in social performance. Different factors are combined to form different information processing methods for individuals. Individuals who are used to focusing on the social process with others in the communication barely have social phobia. Individuals who pay too much attention to others' views of themselves often have obvious social phobia and show avoidance of communication [7]. Individuals who pay too much attention to the eyes of others often care about their image in the hearts of others, and such people often have a negative self-image, which leads to social phobia to a greater extent [8].

2.2 Family

In a family, the relationship between parents and children and rearing style has a significant impact on the form of an individual's social ability. Children living in democratic

families tend to have high self-esteem and are more willing to express their ideas, so they can have a better experience in communicating with others. Parent-child attachment is the earliest social relationship established by children, which is very important to the development of children's sense of security and trust. According to Shao Ruyue's research, individuals who get more attention from their parents or feel greater expectations are not prone to social phobia [9]. Besides, family conditions can also lead to varying degrees of social phobia. Research shows that individuals living in rural or suburban areas show more social phobia than those living in urban areas. Individuals with low parental education showed more social phobia than individuals with high parental education [10]. In other words, the economic level of the family leads to individual social phobia to a certain extent.

2.3 Society

Culture is also one of the important causes. For example, Chinese national culture pays more attention to collectivity than western culture, which shows that people pay more attention to groups, so people pay more attention to the eyes of others, which is why Chinese parents often compare their children with other people's children. In addition, under the social background of China's rapid development, exam-oriented education occupies children's childhood and adolescence, resulting in the lack of cultivating social skills, which indirectly leads to a more common phenomenon of social phobia among young people. This common social phobia is becoming a popular life state, affecting more people with potential social phobia symptoms, which is a worrying phenomenon [11].

3 Impacts

3.1 Individual

Research shows that individuals with high social phobia are more likely to make wrong judgments in social situations, enhance their social phobia and form a vicious circle [12]. Besides, Individuals with high social fear have greater cognitive bias and more negative self-evaluation [13]. The harm of social phobia to individuals is huge. It endangers the mental and psychological health of young people. Long-term negative social communication will not only lead to low self-esteem but also social dysfunction, which will bring great harm to young people's daily life, like study, work, and other aspects. In serious cases, they will have depression, self-mutilation, suicide behaviors or antisocial behaviors, Aggressive behavior, and other behaviors endangering others.

3.2 Family

Family is one of the most important parts of people's life. Patients with social phobia often can not handle the relationship between family members well, and even often lead to contradictions among family members. A harmonious and warm family atmosphere is very necessary for individual growth and can bring spiritual comfort to people. The cold and contradictory family atmosphere will bring people negative emotions and aggravate the symptoms of social phobia to a certain extent.

3.3 Society

From the social level, the study found that social phobia has a great impact on the way of human social interaction. Individuals with high social phobia tend to use mobile phones to communicate and avoid face-to-face communication. On the contrary, individuals with low social phobia communicate face-to-face more frequently [14].

The phenomenon of social phobia is common among young people, which leads most young people to rely on network tools to “survive independently”, which is not conducive to the common development of the collective and will separate the collective and form a wrong positioning of their social role. Lack of cooperation consciousness and communication ability in collective work hinders the development of society.

4 Prevention and Therapies

4.1 Prevention

For young people with potential social phobia, there are several preventive measures can be taken. To prevent the formation of social phobia, from the individual level, young people should consciously find their shortcomings, try hard to get out of their comfort zone, and seize every opportunity to exercise themselves in life. Face up to situations that don't want to face and actively seek help to make changes.

For family, parents should actively pay attention to their children's psychological and behavioral status. Parents are the best teachers for their children. Therefore, they should set an example, infiltrate interpersonal education into their children in daily life, and encourage their children to face difficulties and actively find solutions to problems. Guide children to balance and adjust the relationship between social media and real life.

For society, from the school level, while teaching students professional knowledge, schools should pay attention to the all-around development of students, pay attention to students' mental health and hold practical activities, so that students have the opportunity to cultivate interpersonal skills in the activities. From the social level, the society should create a proper social atmosphere for young people, and control the cultural atmosphere and network environment on social media to prevent a negative impact on young people.

4.2 Therapies

For some people with severe social phobia, more effective therapies are needed. There are many therapies for social phobia, mainly divided into the following categories.

4.2.1 Psychology Methods

Rational emotional therapy is a model created by American psychologist Ellis in the 1950s. Its treatment form requires people to analyze and treat problems calmly and rationally in the situation that makes people have negative emotions, and change their original incorrect cognition and evaluation, to eliminate the emotional and behavioral barriers to events. This therapy has achieved great success in the treatment of social anxiety and has been widely used. It is a relatively mature treatment. In Samantaray

Narendra Nath's research, He studied the therapeutic effect of cognitive-behavioral therapy on social anxiety disorder during COVID-19 isolation. The study showed that the social phobia of the treated group was significantly less than that of the untreated group. It shows that cognitive therapy is still widely used and has a good therapeutic effect [15].

Systematic desensitization method, also known as the interactive inhibition method, is a corrective therapy for phobia. This method requires that in a calm state, guide the visitors to slowly recall the situation that makes them feel afraid, continuously expose to this situation within an acceptable range, and use repeated stimuli to reduce the visitors' fear of this situation, or even no longer feel fear at all. According to Osenwegwor's research, systematic desensitization has a significant therapeutic effect on reducing young people's test anxiety, and there is no gender difference [16].

In addition, there are many late psychotherapies gradually applied. For example, studies have shown that cognitive bias correction programs can effectively reduce social anxiety [13].

4.2.2 Traditional Chinese Medicine Therapy

Relatively research shows traditional Chinese medicine believes that phobia is not only an emotion but also a symptom. Different symptoms reflect the lesions of different organs in the human body. Therefore, it can be treated as long as the corresponding lesion parts can be found. And Traditional Chinese medicine combined with acupuncture and moxibustion can effectively treat neurosis.

4.2.3 Drug Therapy

Drug therapy is mostly used for generalized social phobia. Such patients may have phobia on many unstable social occasions, and there is no rule to follow. The main drugs used are SSRIs and SNRIs. The representative drugs of SSRIs include fluoxetine, sertraline, paroxetine, fluvoxamine, and escitalopram. The representative drug of SNRIs is venlafaxine. This drug can effectively treat phobia, but it may cause nausea, fatigue, insomnia, and other adverse symptoms. Some other drugs, such as anticonvulsants, are also used to treat social phobia, but some drugs have more serious adverse reactions, which may lead to physiological dependence and addiction. For patients with social phobia and depression, Paroxetine Combined with low-dose sulpiride is helpful to reduce disease symptoms [17]. These drugs are used in the treatment of patients with more serious phobia. Other experiments have proved that the combination of psychotherapy and drugs has better effects [18]. Further research is needed on psychotherapy, the types of drugs, and how to use them together.

5 Conclusion

The growing prevalence of social phobia is becoming one of the problems that hinder people's daily lives. From an individual perspective, people with mild social phobia have little impact on their lives. However, from a group perspective, the harm caused by social phobia is enormous. Therefore, researchers need to pay more attention to social phobia to improve treatment approaches. Many studies have investigated the relationship

between a single factor and social phobia, while there are few studies on social phobia caused by the interaction of multiple factors and the environment. It indicates that the social phobia generated by the interaction of multiple factors and environment may be the future research direction in this field.

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