

# A study on the relationship between college students' social anxiety and adult attachment style

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## Abstract

*This paper mainly analyzes the relationship between adult attachment and social anxiety of college students. In order to make the research data more authentic and accurate, this paper mainly investigates the influence of adult attachment on social anxiety of college students by taking the class test and filling in the network questionnaire. As a result, it can be found that adult attachment of college students has a significant correlation with social anxiety in two dimensions of attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety, and the dimension of attachment anxiety has a moderate significant correlation with social anxiety.*

## Keywords

*College students; Social anxiety; Adult attachment; relationship.*

## 1. Definition of social anxiety

Social anxiety refers to emotional and behavioral reactions such as discomfort, fear, nervousness, worry, and avoidance experienced when interacting with others. Social anxiety is more common in adolescence, between the ages of 13 to 24, the average age is about 20 years old, serious social anxiety will develop into social anxiety disorder, great damage to the social function of patients. Attachment refers to a mental representation of others and self developed during infancy in the process of interacting with parental behavior. Attachment theory holds that the development of adult interpersonal relationship is related to early attachment, and the attachment experience in childhood will form a unique psychological working model within individuals in the process of growth, that is, the internal working model, which will affect the interpersonal relationship, cognition, emotion and behavior in adulthood. According to the self-model and other-model in the internal working mode of attachment, attachment styles are divided into four types (see Figure 1) : secure, infatuated, indifferent, and fearful. The last three are insecure attachment types. Studies on the relationship between adult attachment and psychopathology in foreign countries show that adult attachment type is an important factor affecting social anxiety.[1]

College students, as a group with high incidence of social anxiety, have also attracted the attention of many scholars. At present, domestic researches on the influencing factors of college students' social anxiety mostly focus on personality, parenting style, coping style,

social skills, self-efficacy and other aspects, while there is little research on social anxiety and adult attachment relationship. In this study, college students were taken as subjects to explore the relationship between attachment style and social anxiety, as well as the influence of different attachment types on cognition, emotion and behavior of social anxiety, in order to provide a new exploration direction for the study of social anxiety in college students.

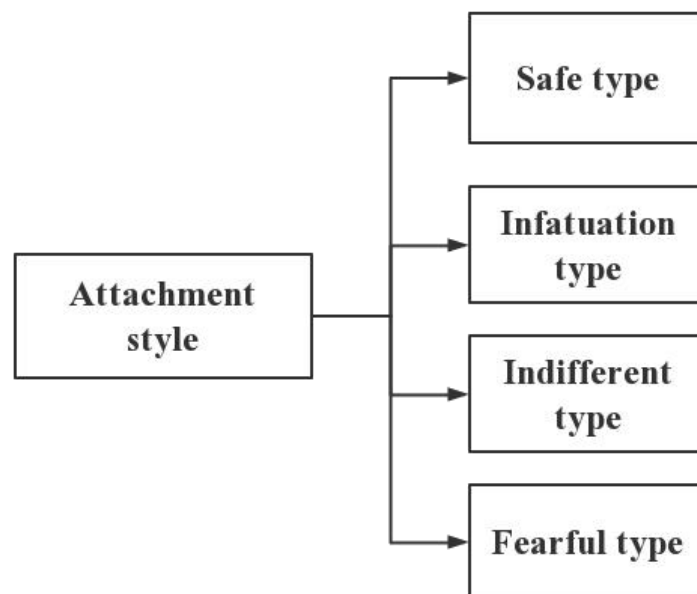


Figure 1 Four types of attachment styles

## 2. Objects and methods

### 2.1. Research object

The students in our school were randomly sampled and 100 questionnaires were distributed, among which 48 were male students (48%) and 52 were female students (52%). There were 30 freshmen (30%), 30 sophomores (30%), 25 juniors (25%), and 15 seniors (15%).

### 2.2. Methods

This questionnaire consisted of 36 items, including two dimensions, including attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. 7-point integral method was adopted. High level of avoidance and high level of anxiety indicated insecure attachment type.[2]

### 2.3. Status of adult attachment of college students

In the dimension of adult attachment avoidance, the score of liberal arts students was higher than that of science students ( $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, there were significant differences in grade distribution ( $p < 0.05$ ). In order to confirm which two school years had significant differences, LSD post hoc test was used, and the results were shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Adult attachment status of college students

Comparative grade	F value
Freshman year and sophomore year	153

Sophomore and junior years	139
Junior and senior years	152
Senior and freshman	165

#### 2.4. Status of college students' social anxiety

The dimensions of social anxiety avoidance and distress of college students in rural areas are higher than those in urban areas (note:  $*p < 0.05$ ), but there is no significant difference in other dimensions. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Social anxiety of college students

	Avoidance dimension of social anxiety	Social anxiety distress dimension
Adult attachment avoidance dimensions	0.134	0.171
Dimensions of adult attachment anxiety	0.429	0.797

### 3. Current situation of college students' social anxiety

According to the research results, there is no significant difference in the dimensions of anxiety avoidance and distress between boys and girls. In the previous research conducted by Guo Xiaowei et al., there are significant differences in the dimensions of social avoidance and distress between genders. [3]The results may be skewed by the incongruity of the male to female ratio of the subjects. Socially, boys are more open than girls, but girls are more sensitive, and the generation of social anxiety depends on the development of personality, so there is no difference in gender social anxiety. According to the results, there was no significant difference between social avoidance and distress at grade level. Freshmen and other students are exposed to new social circles. Freshmen need to interact with new classmates and roommates at the beginning of their freshman year; sophomore and junior year may have new social activities due to the choice of courses and activity groups; senior year faces job hunting and needs to deal with different people and meet new social contacts. All these will make college students face social anxiety. It can be seen from the results that the dimensions of social anxiety avoidance and distress of college students are significantly different in the place of living. In both the avoidance dimension and the distress dimension, college students from rural areas scored higher than those from urban areas. This shows that due to the limitations of living environment, college students from rural areas will be more shy and introverted than those from urban areas when it comes to communicating with others, and the change of living environment will make them more confused and flustered than those living in cities. Therefore, the results of this study are in line with the actual situation of the present society. The results showed that there was no difference in the two dimensions of social anxiety, avoidance and distress. According to the data, the level of social avoidance of liberal arts and science students is similar, which indicates that there is no difference between liberal arts and science students in the enthusiasm of communication, and there is no

difference between liberal arts and science students in the problems caused by communication with others.

#### **4. Correlation analysis of adult attachment and social anxiety in college students**

Through correlation analysis, it is concluded that adult attachment and social anxiety are significantly positively correlated, that is, the level of adult attachment increases with the level of social anxiety. This result is consistent with Wu's previous research. At the same time, the attachment anxiety of college students has a significantly lower correlation with the avoidance dimension of social anxiety. The correlation coefficient between attachment anxiety and social anxiety distress was 0.797, indicating a significant moderate correlation. This indicates that the deeper a person's attachment to others, the more likely it is to deepen fear, indifference, concentration and other emotions to a certain extent, and thus to feel anxious or want to avoid others due to the anxiety or rejection of the outside world.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In summary, the author finds that attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety are significantly correlated with social anxiety, and attachment anxiety is moderately correlated with social anxiety. Therefore, improving attachment anxiety of college students can alleviate social anxiety of students to a certain extent.

#### **References**

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