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## **The Mediation Role of Emotion Control in Explaining the Causal Relationship between Parent and Peer Attachment with Social Anxiety in Adolescents**

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### **Extended Abstract**

#### **Aim**

Social anxiety disorder is one of the most common anxiety disorders in adolescence, disrupting normal activities and threatening future outcomes through its pervasive consequences and complications (Knapp et al., 2015). This disorder is often characterized by avoidance behaviors (Blay et al., 2021). Due to the intense fear of being criticized, socially anxious individuals tend to control their negative emotions in threatening social situations by using inflexible emotion regulation strategies, such as rumination and emotional inhibition (Golombek et al., 2020). Since emotional dysregulation plays a transdiagnostic role in adolescent psychological disorders, it is crucial to identify developmental factors that contribute to the onset of social anxiety symptoms alongside the development of emotion regulation strategies (Brenning et al., 2022; Herd et al., 2020). According to the literature, insecure attachment styles significantly predict social anxiety symptoms (Yu et al., 2020), undermining developmental achievements due to dysfunctions in the neural structures responsible for emotion regulation (Gardner et al., 2020; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2019). Furthermore, the increasing importance of peer relationships during adolescence and the expansion of attachment bonds from parents to peers means that negative social experiences and lack of peer support can greatly elevate the risk of social anxiety (Chiu et al., 2021; Weymouth et al., 2019). The development and persistence of psychological disorders are driven by the continuous interaction of underlying environmental factors with cognitive and emotional exacerbators (Besharat et al., 2019). Identifying these pathways can improve prevention and treatment programs. Given the scarcity of research on the relationship between peer attachment and social anxiety, as well as the limited studies on this disorder in adolescents, this study aimed to investigate the mediating role of emotion control in the relationship between attachment to parents and peers and social anxiety in adolescents.

#### **Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive and correlational research design. The statistical population included all secondary high school students in Tehran during the second half of the 2020-2021 academic year. From this population of 236,000 students, 568 participants (265 boys and 303 girls) were selected through multi-stage cluster sampling. The participants completed the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), the Emotion Control Questionnaire (ECQ2) (Roger & Najarian, 1989), and the Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN) (Connor et al., 2000). Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling with AMOS 24 software.

#### **Findings**

The fit indices for the structural model indicated an acceptable alignment between the collected data and the proposed model. Path analysis revealed a negative and significant total path coefficient

between attachment to parents ( $\beta = -0.376, P < 0.001$ ) and peers ( $\beta = -0.211, P < 0.001$ ) and adolescents' social anxiety. Additionally, emotion control significantly and negatively mediated the relationship between attachment to parents ( $\beta = -0.218, P < 0.001$ ) and peers ( $\beta = -0.095, P < 0.001$ ) and social anxiety in adolescents.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study highlight the critical role of emotion control in adolescents' social anxiety. Both parents and peers serve as key attachment figures during adolescence, influencing the development of social anxiety, despite these attachments emerging at different developmental stages. While the neural immaturity of emotion regulation partly contributes to social anxiety during adolescence, insecure attachment to parents and insecure perception about peers is a significant etiological factor, perpetuating social anxiety symptoms through impaired emotional regulation. Previous studies emphasize the protective roles of social support and emotional competence in adolescent psychological well-being (Li et al., 2021; Lindsey, 2021). This study adds to the existing knowledge by underscoring how alienation from parents and peers and maladaptive emotion regulation strategies contribute to social anxiety in adolescents. These findings could inform future research and help psychologists develop prevention and treatment programs tailored to the needs of this population.

**Keywords:** Emotion Control, Parent Attachment, Peer Attachment, Social Anxiety.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This article is based on the first author's doctoral dissertation and has been approved by the Ethics Committee in Research at Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch (approval code: IR.IAU.TNB.REC.1400.046). Informed consent and confidentiality of participants' information were strictly adhered to in this study.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this research.

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