

The Relationship Between Self-Acceptance and Social Anxiety Among College Students and Strategies for Adjustment

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Abstract: Social interaction is an important part of college students' daily lives. College students need to communicate with classmates, teachers, roommates, friends, and other social groups. However, some students experience strong tension, worry, embarrassment, or avoidance when facing social situations. Social anxiety can affect interpersonal communication, participation in group activities, academic life, and psychological well-being. Self-acceptance is closely related to how individuals understand and evaluate themselves. A person with a higher level of self-acceptance is more likely to recognize both personal strengths and weaknesses without excessive self-denial. A person with a lower level of self-acceptance may be more sensitive to personal shortcomings and more concerned about how others evaluate them. Existing studies have found a significant negative relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety among college students. Fear of negative evaluation is also closely related to both variables and may provide an important psychological link between self-acceptance and social anxiety. Based on existing research, this paper discusses the meaning and characteristics of self-acceptance and social anxiety, explains their relationship among college students, and examines the role of fear of negative evaluation, self-esteem, interpersonal difficulties, and social support in this relationship. The paper argues that improving self-acceptance should not be understood as simply encouraging students to think positively about themselves. More useful adjustment should help students recognize themselves realistically, reduce excessive self-evaluation, face ordinary social mistakes, and gradually increase positive social experiences. Individual adjustment, peer support, classroom activities, and university psychological services can be combined to reduce social anxiety and improve students' interpersonal adaptation.

Keywords: college students; self-acceptance; social anxiety; fear of negative evaluation; psychological adjustment

1. Introduction

College is an important period for the development of interpersonal relationships. Students leave familiar family environments and begin to interact with people from different regions, educational backgrounds, personalities, and social experiences. They need to establish new friendships, cooperate with classmates, communicate with teachers, participate in group activities, and gradually prepare for future work and social life. These experiences provide opportunities for personal development, but they can also create psychological pressure.

Social anxiety is particularly relevant to this period of development. Some students feel uncomfortable when speaking in front of others, meeting unfamiliar people, expressing personal opinions, participating in group discussions, or becoming the focus of attention. They may worry that their appearance, speech, academic performance, or behavior will be judged negatively. In more serious situations, students may avoid social activities or reduce communication with others. Social anxiety is not limited to a single social situation. It may influence students' daily choices and gradually restrict their interpersonal experiences.

Self-acceptance provides another important perspective for understanding these difficulties. Self-acceptance refers to an individual's ability to recognize and accept different aspects of the self, including both positive and negative characteristics. It does not mean that individuals believe they have no weaknesses. Instead, it involves accepting the real self while maintaining a relatively stable and reasonable attitude toward personal strengths and limitations. Sun and Lu (2017) described self-acceptance as acceptance of both the positive and negative aspects of oneself and emphasized its close relationship with psychological health, self-esteem, emotions, interpersonal relationships, and life satisfaction.

The relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety has received increasing attention in research on college students. Wang (2024) investigated 880

college students and found that self-acceptance was negatively related to social anxiety, while fear of negative evaluation was positively related to social anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation also partially mediated the relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety. A similar relationship was reported by Chu (2023), who found that self-acceptance was associated with social anxiety and that fear of negative evaluation played an important role in the relationship. Chen and Lu (2026) also found a significant negative correlation between self-acceptance and social anxiety among 337 college students.

These findings suggest that social anxiety should not be understood only as a problem of poor communication skills. A student may know how to communicate with others but still avoid social situations because of excessive self-doubt and fear of being judged. If the student believes that making a mistake will make others dislike or reject them, ordinary social interactions may become psychologically threatening. Low self-acceptance can make this process stronger because the student may already have a negative view of the self before receiving any actual negative response.

The present discussion focuses on this psychological process. The main purpose is to clarify how self-acceptance is related to social anxiety among college students and to discuss practical ways of adjustment. The discussion pays particular attention to fear of negative evaluation because it provides a clear connection between how students view themselves and how they experience social situations. Other related factors, including self-esteem, interpersonal difficulties, social support, and mindfulness, are also considered when they help explain the main relationship.

The central view of this paper is that improving self-acceptance can provide an important starting point for reducing social anxiety, but self-acceptance should be developed together with actual social experiences. Students need opportunities to recognize their own characteristics, tolerate ordinary mistakes, reduce excessive concern about others' judgments, and gradually participate in

social activities. Psychological adjustment is more likely to be effective when changes in self-perception and changes in social behavior support each other.

2. Understanding Self-Acceptance and Social Anxiety

2.1 The Meaning of Self-Acceptance

Self-acceptance is a basic concept in the study of psychological adjustment. It concerns the way individuals understand and respond to themselves. A person does not only contain qualities that are considered positive. Academic ability, appearance, personality, emotional reactions, interpersonal skills, and past experiences may all include both satisfying and unsatisfying elements. Self-acceptance involves recognizing these characteristics without rejecting the whole self because of a particular weakness.

Sun and Lu (2017) pointed out that self-acceptance means accepting all positive and negative aspects of oneself. They also noted that self-acceptance is associated with psychological health, subjective well-being, life satisfaction, emotions, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships. This definition is useful because it avoids equating self-acceptance with self-confidence. Self-confidence often focuses on whether an individual believes they can complete a particular task. Self-acceptance concerns a broader attitude toward the self.

For college students, this distinction is important. A student may be confident in academic tasks but uncertain about social relationships. Another student may perform well socially but remain dissatisfied with appearance or academic ability. Self-acceptance does not require every aspect of the self to be considered excellent. It requires the individual to avoid turning one unsatisfactory characteristic into a general negative judgment about the whole person.

Self-acceptance also includes self-evaluation. If an individual constantly compares the real self with an ideal self, dissatisfaction may become a stable psychological experience. When the gap between

“who I am” and “who I should be” is viewed as unacceptable, the individual may become increasingly sensitive to failure and criticism. Self-acceptance can reduce this pressure by allowing the person to recognize limitations without interpreting them as evidence of personal worthlessness.

The concept therefore has practical value in understanding college students' social experiences. A student who accepts being somewhat shy may still participate in group discussions. A student who does not fully accept personal shyness may think, “I am bad at communication, so everyone will notice it,” and choose not to speak. The difference lies not simply in personality but in the student's interpretation of that personality.

2.2 The Meaning of Social Anxiety

Social anxiety refers to anxiety experienced in social or interpersonal situations. It may involve nervousness, embarrassment, fear, self-consciousness, and avoidance. Social anxiety exists on a continuum. Temporary nervousness before a presentation is common, while persistent and strong anxiety that seriously interferes with social functioning requires greater attention.

College students encounter many situations that can activate social anxiety. Giving presentations, answering questions in class, joining a new student organization, meeting unfamiliar classmates, communicating with teachers, attending social events, and expressing opinions in groups can all become sources of anxiety. Some students may also experience anxiety in online communication, particularly when they believe that their words or images are being evaluated by others.

The important feature of social anxiety is not simply the presence of nervousness. The individual's interpretation of the social situation is also important. When a student expects embarrassment, rejection, criticism, or failure, a relatively ordinary interaction can be perceived as threatening. This expectation may increase physiological tension and encourage avoidance.

Social avoidance can then reduce opportunities for positive interpersonal experiences. A student who

repeatedly avoids conversations may have fewer chances to discover that other people are not as critical as expected. The student may continue to believe that social situations are dangerous because there is little direct experience to challenge the belief.

Research involving college students supports the close relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety. Chen and Lu (2026) found that self-acceptance was significantly negatively correlated with social anxiety among college students. Wang (2024) reached a similar conclusion and further showed that fear of negative evaluation was involved in the relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety.

2.3 Characteristics of Social Anxiety Among College Students

College students' social anxiety can appear in different forms. Some students show obvious avoidance. They may refuse invitations, avoid speaking in groups, or spend long periods alone. Others remain socially active but experience strong internal anxiety. They may participate in activities while repeatedly worrying about how they are perceived.

Excessive self-monitoring is another common feature. Students may pay close attention to their voice, facial expression, posture, clothing, or choice of words. After a conversation, they may repeatedly recall what they said and wonder whether they behaved improperly. This type of repeated self-evaluation can increase psychological pressure.

Fear of negative evaluation is especially important. Wang (2024) found that self-acceptance was negatively related to fear of negative evaluation, while fear of negative evaluation was positively related to social anxiety. This suggests that students with low self-acceptance may be more likely to expect negative judgments from others, which can increase anxiety in social situations.

Social anxiety can also be connected with broader interpersonal difficulties. Xue et al. (2025) found a significant relationship between interpersonal difficulties and self-acceptance among college

students. Although interpersonal difficulties and social anxiety are not identical concepts, the finding shows that self-acceptance is relevant to students' interpersonal functioning more broadly.

3. The Relationship Between Self-Acceptance and Social Anxiety

3.1 Low Self-Acceptance and Negative Self-Evaluation

The relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety can begin with how students evaluate themselves. A student with low self-acceptance may pay more attention to personal shortcomings and interpret them in a broad way. A poor presentation may become "I am bad at communication." A rejected invitation may become "People do not like me." A minor mistake may become "I always embarrass myself."

Such interpretations can increase anxiety before the next social interaction. The student may expect another failure and begin to prepare for it mentally. Social situations then become associated with possible threats to self-worth.

This process helps explain why social anxiety cannot be reduced simply by telling students to "be confident." Confidence may temporarily increase in a particular task, but if the individual still rejects personal weaknesses, anxiety may return when another difficult situation appears. Self-acceptance provides a more stable psychological foundation because it allows students to remain relatively accepting of themselves even when their performance is imperfect.

The findings of Wang (2024) directly support this relationship. Among 880 college students, self-acceptance was significantly negatively correlated with social anxiety. Chu (2023) also found that self-acceptance was related to social anxiety and that the relationship involved fear of negative evaluation. These results indicate that self-acceptance is not an isolated personal quality. It is connected with the way students experience interpersonal situations.

3.2 Fear of Negative Evaluation as an Important Link

Fear of negative evaluation refers to the concern that others may judge the individual negatively. It can include worries about rejection, embarrassment, criticism, or being viewed as incompetent. In social situations, this fear may become a major source of anxiety.

The cognitive behavioral view of social anxiety provides a simple way to understand this process. When a student enters a social situation, the student may form a prediction about how others will respond. If the prediction is negative, anxiety increases. The student may then focus on possible mistakes and try to avoid situations that could lead to negative evaluation.

Self-acceptance may influence this process because students who accept themselves do not necessarily view negative feedback as a threat to their entire self-worth. They can think, "I made a mistake, but the mistake does not define me." A student with low self-acceptance may instead think, "If people notice my mistake, they will see that I am not good enough."

Wang (2024) found that fear of negative evaluation partially mediated the relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety. Chu (2023) also found a significant relationship between self-acceptance, fear of negative evaluation, and social anxiety among college students. Chen and Lu (2026) reported similar findings, showing that self-acceptance was negatively related to fear of negative evaluation and social anxiety, while fear of negative evaluation was positively related to social anxiety.

These results suggest that adjustment strategies should not focus only on increasing positive self-statements. Students also need to change the way they understand social evaluation. Other people's opinions are important in social life, but they do not provide a complete definition of personal value.

3.3 Self-Acceptance and Interpersonal Behavior

Self-acceptance may also influence social anxiety through behavior. Students who do not accept

themselves may be more likely to avoid social situations. Avoidance provides short-term relief because the student does not need to face the feared situation. However, repeated avoidance can reduce opportunities for successful social experiences.

For example, a student may be afraid of speaking in a seminar and decide not to participate. The student feels less anxious that day, but the experience does not provide evidence that participation could have gone well. The student may become even more worried about the next seminar. The cycle can continue.

Low self-acceptance may also make students more sensitive to interpersonal setbacks. A normal disagreement may be interpreted as personal rejection. A delayed reply to a message may be interpreted as evidence that the other person dislikes them. Such interpretations can increase anxiety and encourage further avoidance.

Research on related interpersonal variables supports this interpretation. Xue et al. (2025) found that self-acceptance was negatively related to interpersonal difficulties and that self-esteem and self-acceptance were related to aggressive behavior among college students. These findings suggest that self-acceptance is connected with how students respond to interpersonal experiences rather than merely how they think about themselves.

3.4 Self-Acceptance and Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is closely related to self-acceptance, but the two concepts should not be treated as identical. Self-esteem generally reflects the value an individual assigns to the self, whereas self-acceptance emphasizes the willingness to recognize and accept the self as a whole.

This distinction matters in social anxiety adjustment. If an intervention focuses only on raising self-esteem, students may still become uncomfortable when they encounter failure. A student who believes "I must perform well to be valuable" may experience anxiety when performance is uncertain. Self-acceptance offers a different psychological position: "I want to perform

well, but imperfect performance does not make me unacceptable.”

Research has shown connections between self-acceptance, self-esteem, and other psychological characteristics. Qiu et al. (2025) found significant positive relationships among self-acceptance, general self-efficacy, self-esteem, and body image among college students. The findings indicate that self-acceptance can coexist with other positive self-related resources.

This relationship can be useful in understanding social anxiety. Students with stable self-acceptance may be less dependent on immediate social approval. They may still care about other people’s responses, but negative feedback is less likely to become a complete judgment of the self.

4. Factors Related to the Relationship

4.1 Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation is one of the clearest factors connecting self-acceptance and social anxiety. A student may enter a social situation with the belief that other people are watching closely. The student may then predict criticism before anything negative actually happens.

This fear can create several changes in behavior. Students may rehearse sentences repeatedly, avoid eye contact, speak as little as possible, refuse invitations, or leave social situations early. Some may repeatedly check messages or social media responses after interacting with others.

Wang (2024) found that fear of negative evaluation partially mediated the relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety. Chen and Lu (2026) reported a similar pattern and found that self-acceptance and fear of negative evaluation were both associated with social anxiety. Ma (2025) also found that self-acceptance was negatively related to fear of negative evaluation and that fear of negative evaluation mediated the relationship between self-acceptance and interpersonal difficulties.

These findings indicate that reducing fear of negative evaluation may be an important part of social anxiety adjustment. Students do not need to

become completely unconcerned about other people’s opinions. A more realistic goal is to reduce the belief that negative evaluation is extremely likely or that it would have catastrophic consequences.

4.2 Body Image and Appearance Concerns

Appearance can become an important source of social anxiety, particularly when students frequently compare themselves with others. A student who is dissatisfied with appearance may assume that other people will notice and judge the same perceived weakness.

Research involving adolescents and college-related populations provides support for this relationship. Ding (2026) found that body image was related to self-acceptance and social anxiety among high school students, and that self-acceptance played a mediating role. Li (2025) also found that negative body self-perception was associated with social avoidance and distress among vocational college students, with self-acceptance playing a significant mediating role.

Although these studies do not establish that body image directly causes social anxiety among all college students, they suggest that appearance-related self-evaluation can become part of the psychological process. Students who believe that their appearance determines their social value may become more sensitive to attention from others.

This issue is especially important in an environment where photographs, short videos, and online self-presentation are common. Students may compare ordinary daily appearances with carefully selected images presented by others. Such comparison can make personal weaknesses seem larger than they are.

Improving self-acceptance can help students separate appearance from overall personal value. Appearance can be important to personal identity, but it does not need to determine whether a student deserves friendship, respect, or participation in social activities.

4.3 Social Support

Social support can influence how students experience interpersonal stress. Students who have supportive friends, classmates, or family members may receive more opportunities to experience acceptance in real relationships. Positive social experiences can gradually challenge the belief that others are constantly judging them.

Research by Zhang et al. (2024) found that self-acceptance and peer support were associated with fewer mental health problems among hearing-impaired adolescents. Although the population differs from college students, the findings still provide useful evidence for understanding the protective role of supportive relationships.

Huang (2024) also found a significant relationship between mindfulness, self-acceptance, perceived social support, and security among college students. Self-acceptance and perceived social support both played mediating roles between mindfulness and security.

For college students experiencing social anxiety, support should not mean protecting them from all social situations. Excessive protection may increase avoidance. More useful support allows students to participate while providing a relatively safe interpersonal environment. A friend who accompanies a student to a group activity, for example, may provide enough support for the student to begin participating independently.

4.4 Mindfulness

Mindfulness provides another possible way to understand and adjust self-acceptance and social anxiety. Mindfulness involves paying attention to current experiences rather than becoming completely absorbed in judgments about the past or future.

The relevance of mindfulness to self-acceptance is supported by recent research. Chen and Lu (2026) found that mindfulness was positively related to self-acceptance and negatively related to social anxiety among college students. Their findings also showed that self-acceptance and fear of negative

evaluation were involved in the relationship between mindfulness and social anxiety.

This suggests that mindfulness may help students notice anxious thoughts without immediately accepting them as facts. A student may notice the thought "Everyone thinks I am awkward" and recognize it as a thought rather than evidence. This small psychological distance can reduce the need to escape from the social situation.

Mindfulness should not be treated as a quick solution. Its practical value may lie in helping students observe emotions more clearly and reduce automatic reactions. It can work together with self-acceptance rather than replacing it.

5. Main Problems in Students' Self-Adjustment

5.1 Excessive Self-Monitoring

Students with social anxiety may spend too much attention monitoring themselves. They may repeatedly consider how they look, how they speak, whether their expression is natural, and whether other people are paying attention to them.

Excessive self-monitoring reduces attention available for the actual conversation. Instead of listening to the other person, the student may be thinking about personal performance. This can make communication more difficult and may increase the chance of awkwardness.

Self-acceptance can help reduce this process. When students no longer require perfect performance, they can place more attention on the interaction itself.

5.2 Treating Mistakes as Personal Failure

A common problem is the tendency to connect a specific mistake with general self-worth. A student may make a poor presentation and conclude that they are socially incompetent. Such thinking makes future social situations more threatening.

The problem is not the desire to improve. Improvement is useful. The problem appears when improvement becomes dependent on self-rejection. A student can recognize a weakness without using it as evidence that the entire self is inadequate.

This distinction is consistent with the broader concept of self-acceptance described by Sun and Lu (2017). Accepting negative characteristics does not mean refusing to change them. It means that change can occur without first rejecting the person who needs to change.

5.3 Avoidance as a Short-Term Solution

Avoidance often provides immediate relief. A student who does not attend a social event does not have to experience the anxiety associated with it. However, this relief can make avoidance more likely in the future.

Repeated avoidance also prevents students from collecting new social experiences. They may never discover that other people are less judgmental than expected. Over time, the student's negative prediction remains untested.

For this reason, social anxiety adjustment should include gradual behavioral participation. Students should not be forced into highly stressful situations immediately. Small and manageable interactions can provide opportunities for successful experiences.

5.4 Dependence on External Evaluation

Some students rely heavily on praise, approval, or social feedback to maintain a positive view of themselves. When positive feedback is absent, they may become uncertain about their value.

This pattern can increase social anxiety because every interaction becomes an opportunity for evaluation. The student may think, "If they like me, I am acceptable; if they dislike me, something is wrong with me."

Self-acceptance can reduce this dependence. The goal is not to ignore social feedback. Healthy interpersonal relationships require individuals to consider how their behavior affects others. The goal is to prevent every social response from becoming a judgment of personal worth.

6. Strategies for Improving Self-Acceptance and Reducing Social Anxiety

6.1 Building a More Realistic Understanding of the Self

The first step is to help students develop a balanced understanding of personal characteristics. Students can identify strengths, weaknesses, preferences, emotional patterns, and areas that need improvement. The purpose is not to produce a perfect self-description but to reduce extreme judgments.

A simple exercise is to separate "facts" from "judgments." For example:

"I did not speak during the discussion" is a fact.

"I am terrible at social interaction" is a judgment.

This distinction can help students recognize how quickly a specific event becomes a broad conclusion about the self.

Students can also write down situations in which they feel socially anxious and identify what they believe these situations say about them. The next step is to ask whether the conclusion is supported by actual evidence. This process can reduce exaggerated self-evaluation.

6.2 Reducing Fear of Negative Evaluation

Because fear of negative evaluation is closely related to social anxiety, it should be addressed directly. Students can begin by recognizing that evaluation is a normal part of social interaction. Not every person will like every individual, and disagreement cannot be completely avoided.

A healthier goal is to tolerate possible negative evaluation. Students can ask:

"What is the actual probability that the other person will judge me negatively?"

"If they do judge me negatively, what is the realistic consequence?"

"Will this opinion remain important after a week or a month?"

These questions can help students move away from catastrophic predictions.

Wang (2024) and Chu (2023) both provide evidence that fear of negative evaluation is an important mechanism associated with social anxiety and self-acceptance. This makes it a practical target for adjustment.

6.3 Gradual Exposure to Social Situations

Avoidance should be reduced gradually rather than suddenly. Students can create a list of social situations from relatively easy to difficult.

For example, the first step may be greeting a familiar classmate. The next may be starting a short conversation with an unfamiliar student. Later steps may include asking a question in class, participating in a small group discussion, or speaking in front of a larger group.

The student should remain in each situation long enough to recognize that anxiety can decline without escape. The purpose is not to perform perfectly. The purpose is to obtain new experience. Successful experiences can also improve self-acceptance. When students discover that they can experience anxiety and still complete an interaction, they gain a more realistic understanding of themselves.

6.4 Developing Tolerance for Imperfection

Social interaction is not a performance competition. People forget words, misunderstand questions, speak too quickly, interrupt others, and make awkward comments. These events are part of ordinary communication.

Students with social anxiety may believe that mistakes must be prevented completely. This expectation is unrealistic and creates unnecessary pressure.

A useful adjustment strategy is to practice making small, harmless mistakes without immediately trying to repair them. For example, a student may accept a brief pause before answering a question rather than rushing to fill the silence.

The aim is to develop the belief that imperfection can be tolerated. This is closely connected with self-acceptance because accepting oneself requires

accepting the possibility of not always performing well.

6.5 Strengthening Positive Social Experiences

Students should have opportunities to experience relationships in which they can communicate without excessive judgment. Peer activities, interest groups, cooperative learning, and student organizations can provide such opportunities.

The quality of the social environment matters. If students repeatedly encounter ridicule or exclusion, simply asking them to become more self-accepting may not solve the problem. The surrounding environment should also provide basic respect and inclusion.

Research on social support and self-acceptance suggests that supportive interpersonal relationships can contribute to psychological adjustment (Huang, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). This means that social anxiety adjustment should not place all responsibility on the individual student.

6.6 Using Mindfulness to Manage Immediate Anxiety

Mindfulness exercises can be used when students notice anxiety before or during social interaction. A simple exercise is to focus attention on breathing for several moments and notice physical sensations without trying to eliminate them immediately.

Students can also observe anxious thoughts without arguing with every thought. If the thought "They are all looking at me" appears, the student can simply notice that the thought has appeared and return attention to the conversation.

Chen and Lu (2026) found that mindfulness was positively related to self-acceptance and negatively related to social anxiety among college students. Their findings provide support for combining mindfulness with self-acceptance adjustment.

6.7 Using Group Counseling

Group counseling can provide direct opportunities to practice social interaction in a supportive environment. Students can discuss common social

concerns, identify negative beliefs, practice communication, and receive feedback.

Existing intervention studies provide useful support for this approach. Wang (2024) reported that group counseling designed to reduce fear of negative evaluation significantly reduced fear of negative evaluation and social anxiety among college students. Chu (2023) also found that a self-acceptance-focused group counseling program improved self-acceptance and reduced social anxiety, with effects maintained during follow-up. These findings suggest that counseling does not need to focus only on explaining social anxiety. Students can benefit from actually practicing new ways of responding to themselves and others.

6.8 Improving Psychological Services in Universities

University psychological services can provide different levels of support. Students with mild social anxiety may benefit from psychological education, group activities, or self-help materials. Students with stronger and persistent anxiety may need individual counseling.

Psychological services should also avoid creating the impression that social anxiety is a personal failure. Students may already feel ashamed of their difficulties. If seeking help is presented as evidence of weakness, they may avoid professional support. A more appropriate approach is to make psychological support easy to access and connected with ordinary student development. Workshops on communication, emotional regulation, self-acceptance, and interpersonal relationships can provide low-pressure entry points.

7. Practical Adjustment Framework for College Students

Self-acceptance and social anxiety are related through several psychological and behavioral processes. Based on the evidence discussed above, a practical adjustment framework can be organized around four connected tasks: understanding the

self, changing evaluation, increasing interaction, and maintaining support.

The first task is understanding the self. Students need to recognize both strengths and weaknesses without making extreme judgments. This creates the basis for self-acceptance. The purpose is not to convince students that everything about themselves is good. It is to help them develop a stable and realistic view of who they are.

The second task is changing the meaning of social evaluation. Students need to understand that other people's opinions are limited and changeable. Negative feedback can be useful when it points to behavior that needs improvement, but it should not automatically become a judgment of personal value. The third task is increasing actual interaction. Psychological change becomes more stable when students have new experiences. Gradual participation can provide evidence that social situations are often less threatening than expected. It can also show students that anxiety does not prevent successful communication.

The fourth task is maintaining support. Friends, classmates, teachers, counselors, and family members can all contribute to adjustment. Support should encourage participation rather than reinforce avoidance. A supportive friend can accompany a student into a difficult situation while still allowing the student to act independently.

This framework also shows why a single intervention may not be enough. If a student improves self-acceptance but continues to avoid all social situations, the new self-understanding may not be strengthened through experience. If a student participates in many social activities but continues to believe that every mistake proves personal inadequacy, anxiety may remain high. Effective adjustment requires changes in both internal evaluation and observable behavior.

8. Discussion

Existing research provides relatively consistent evidence for a negative relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety. Studies focusing directly on college students have repeatedly

reported this pattern. Wang (2024) found that self-acceptance was negatively related to social anxiety and that fear of negative evaluation partly explained the relationship. Chu (2023) reported similar findings and further demonstrated that self-acceptance-focused group counseling could improve self-acceptance and reduce social anxiety. Chen and Lu (2026) again identified a significant negative relationship between self-acceptance and social anxiety and found that both fear of negative evaluation and self-acceptance were involved in the effects of mindfulness on social anxiety.

These studies support a relatively simple interpretation. Students who accept themselves more readily may be less likely to interpret ordinary social situations as threats to personal worth. They may still experience nervousness, but the nervousness is less likely to become strong avoidance. Students with low self-acceptance may be more vulnerable to negative self-evaluation, which increases concern about how others see them. Fear of negative evaluation appears to be particularly important. It connects internal self-evaluation with social experience. When students are afraid that others will judge them, they may monitor themselves excessively and avoid interaction. Low self-acceptance can strengthen this fear because social rejection may be interpreted as confirmation of existing negative beliefs about the self.

This interpretation also helps explain why self-acceptance should not be confused with passive self-satisfaction. A student can accept personal weaknesses and still work to improve them. In fact, self-acceptance may make improvement easier because the student does not need to protect a perfect self-image. The student can admit "I am not good at this yet" without concluding "I am a failure."

Another important point is that social anxiety is not only an individual psychological issue. Social environments influence students' experiences. Peer rejection, ridicule, excessive comparison, and poor interpersonal support may increase anxiety. Zhang et al. (2024) found that peer support was relevant to

psychological health in adolescents, while Huang (2024) identified perceived social support as an important variable related to self-acceptance and security among college students. These findings suggest that universities should create interpersonal environments in which students can make mistakes without being humiliated.

The available literature also has some limitations. Many of the studies provided in the source materials use cross-sectional questionnaires. Such studies can identify relationships between variables, but they cannot fully establish causal direction. Intervention studies provide stronger evidence for adjustment strategies, but their sample sizes are often relatively small. For example, Wang (2024) used 22 college students in the intervention study, while Chu (2023) included 24 participants in the group intervention. These findings are useful for practical discussion, but they should not be generalized to every college student without caution.

Another limitation concerns population differences. Some studies focus on high school students, vocational students, adolescents, or specific groups rather than ordinary college students. These studies can provide useful psychological explanations, but the social experiences of different populations are not identical. The conclusions are more appropriate as supporting evidence than as direct substitutes for college-student research.

Even with these limitations, the overall direction of the evidence is relatively clear. Self-acceptance is relevant to social anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation is an important psychological factor. Interventions that combine self-acceptance, cognitive adjustment, gradual social participation, mindfulness, and supportive relationships have reasonable theoretical and practical value.

9. Conclusion

Self-acceptance is closely related to social anxiety among college students. Students with lower self-acceptance may be more likely to focus on personal weaknesses, depend heavily on external evaluation, fear negative judgments, and avoid social situations. These processes can increase social anxiety and

reduce opportunities for positive interpersonal experiences.

Fear of negative evaluation provides an important link between self-acceptance and social anxiety. When students believe that social mistakes will lead to rejection or prove that they are inadequate, ordinary communication becomes psychologically threatening. Helping students accept themselves can weaken this pattern by separating specific mistakes from overall personal value.

Adjustment should not be limited to encouraging students to think positively. More useful strategies include realistic self-understanding, reduction of excessive fear of evaluation, gradual participation in social activities, tolerance of ordinary mistakes,

supportive peer relationships, mindfulness practice, group counseling, and accessible university psychological services.

The most important change is not the complete disappearance of social anxiety. A more realistic goal is for students to remain involved in social life even when some anxiety is present. When students can accept themselves, tolerate imperfection, and continue communicating despite temporary discomfort, social anxiety is less likely to control their choices. This can support healthier interpersonal relationships and a more stable psychological adjustment during college.

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