

# A Study on The Impact of Parental Rearing Style on Social Anxiety Among Senior Elementary School Students: The Mediating Role of Loneliness

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## Abstract

The researchers wanted to analyze the link between the parenting style of parents and social anxiety of senior students. They also studied the effects of loneliness on the development of social anxiety in these students. **Methods** A handy sampling technique was employed to choose 287 fifth-grade students. A questionnaire survey was conducted in April 2025 using the simplified parenting style evaluation scale, the children's loneliness scale, and the children's social anxiety scale. The software known as SPSS27.0 was utilized for various statistical tasks, such as descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, and mediating effect tests. The positive way parents raise their children was found to have a strong negative connection with feelings of loneliness and social anxiety among senior primary school students ( $P < 0.001$ ). Positive parenting style can negatively predict social anxiety and loneliness in senior primary school students ( $P < 0.001$ ). Feeling lonely partly influences how a parent's approach to raising their child relates to social anxiety in older primary school kids.

## Keywords

Parenting style; social anxiety; loneliness; primary school students.

## 1. Introduction

Social anxiety or phobia begins in adolescence and is less common after the age of 25 [1]. In addition, cross-cultural studies have shown that this phenomenon is particularly serious in Asian countries. Among primary school students, senior students are in the critical period of transition from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage. Therefore, Chinese students (especially those who are about to enter adolescence or are in adolescence) are one of the high-risk groups for social anxiety psychological problems and are increasingly becoming the focus of social attention.

Social anxiety is an emotional experience of feeling uncomfortable, uneasy, nervous or even fearful when interacting with others [2]. In social situations, it is manifested as: when individuals interact with others, they are often accompanied by physiological symptoms, such as sweating, blushing, panic, and a series of avoidance behaviors. Social anxiety is not exclusive to adults, and more and more studies have begun to focus on children's social anxiety. Primary school students with negative emotions such as social anxiety are usually afraid of contact with strangers and afraid of becoming the focus of attention of their classmates [3]. They may even refuse to go to school. In more serious cases, they may also develop depression, related physical symptoms, and drug abuse [4]. Therefore, studying the social anxiety of senior primary school students has a strong practical significance.

Feeling lonely can be a key sign of how well a person is adjusting to society. It is an unpleasant emotional experience caused by an individual's realization that there is a gap between the social network model he or she expects to achieve and the one he or she actually achieves. Loneliness

and social anxiety are two negative psychological states that children are prone to experience in life. If these two states persist and are not intervened, they will affect children's mental health and easily lead to abnormal behavior problems. Studies have found that a person's high sense of loneliness will also lead to an increase in his or her social anxiety [5]. Because compared with non-lonely individuals, lonely individuals lack positive interpersonal self-awareness and are more inclined to think that they are not liked or accepted. Lonely individuals with this cognition are more reluctant to be exposed to social activities, they will socialize less, and their social expression will become worse, which will lead to an increase in their social anxiety. It can be said that individuals develop social anxiety to protect themselves through loneliness [6].

Parental upbringing can reflect the warmth and control level of parents towards their children, and has an important impact on the occurrence and development of their children's social anxiety [7]. Parental upbringing is a very important family environment factor, including parents' upbringing attitudes, beliefs and behaviors towards their children. It is a relatively stable behavioral style and behavioral tendency [8]. The impact of parental upbringing on children's psychological state is extensive and far-reaching. A study conducted by Shi Qingxin and colleagues revealed that children's feelings about their parents are negatively affected when they are lonely in primary school. They also found that the parents' denial and rejection are linked to the severity of their punishment [9]. The formation of children's loneliness is also affected by their parents' upbringing style [10].

Therefore, parental upbringing may affect social anxiety by causing their children's loneliness [11]. For example, when parents use a harsh punishment upbringing style, they will have a strong fear of being abandoned, which will make the loneliness feel stronger, and then self-protective reaction social anxiety will appear [12].

Previous research primarily examined how loneliness affects social anxiety among primary school students, the connection between the two, or how different parenting styles influence the loneliness of these students. So far, there has been no research on the mediating factor between parental parenting style and social anxiety in senior primary school students. To investigate how different parenting styles influence social anxiety in older primary school students and how this occurs, this paper focuses on the mediating role of loneliness. This paper intends to investigate the basic survey status of 5-6 grade primary school students in terms of the way parents raise their children can influence social anxiety in older primary school students, and analyze the reasons for this phenomenon.

## **2. Objects and Methods**

### **2.1. Research subjects**

The research subjects were from an experimental primary school in Ningde City. We focused on 287 pupils from two fifth and sixth-grade classes. The test was conducted collectively in the classroom. In order to facilitate the subjects to fill in the questionnaire, three mature scales, namely the simplified parenting style flow scale, the children's social anxiety scale and the children's loneliness scale, were combined into a paper version of the questionnaire. A complete of 287 questionnaires were handed out, and all 287 were retrieved, consisting of 281 valid responses and 6 that were not valid. The effective recovery rate of the questionnaire was 97.9%, including 140 boys and 141 girls.

## 2.2. Research Tools

### 2.2.1. Short-form Parenting Style Assessment Scale (Revision of the Short-form Egna Minnen av Barndoms Uppfostran for Chinese, s- EMBU-C)

The short form of the Parenting Style Scale was revised by Jiang Jiang, Lu Zhengrong, Jiang Bijing and Xu Yan. The questionnaire has 42 items and uses a Likert four-point scoring method (1 = never happens ~ 4 = always happens).

The Parenting Style Scale was updated in its shorter version by Jiang Jiang, Lu Zhengrong, Jiang Bijing, and Xu Yan. (References) The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient for the scale in this research varies between 0.74 and 0.84, indicating that it has strong reliability and validity [13].

### 2.2.2. Children's Loneliness Scale (CLS)

The Children's Loneliness Scale, compiled by foreign scholars Asher et al. and revised by Liu Ping, can evaluate the feelings of loneliness and social unhappiness among students in grades 3 to 6. The scale uses a five-point scoring system (1 = always so ~ 5 = never so), is a unidimensional structure, and has a total of 16 questions, some of which are scored in reverse order. There are 16 items in the CLS scale to evaluate the loneliness of primary school students. The higher the total score, the stronger the loneliness. There are also 8 items to help the subjects relax. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of the scale used in this study is 0.90 [14].

### 2.2.3. Social Anxiety Scale for Children (SASC)

In 1988, La Greca and others put it together, and then in 1993, Ma Hong and the team made some updates. This scale has 10 questions in total. The items use a 3-level scoring system (0 = never ~ 2 = always). A higher overall score shows increased anxiety levels. If the total score is 8 or more, it suggests that social anxiety disorder might be present. This measurement consists of two parts: anxiety about negative judgment and the tendency to withdraw socially and feel distressed. It is suitable for ages 7 to 16. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of the scale used in this study is 0.76.

## 2.3. Data processing

SPSS27.0 was used to input, further organize and analyze the collected information data, conduct descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis, and use PROCESS 4.1 macro program to test the mediation effect. The test standard used in this study was:  $P < 0.001$ , which was statistically significant.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Parents' positive and negative parenting styles, children's social anxiety, and scores on the Children's Loneliness Scale

The average score of positive parenting style was ( $2.9 \pm 0.7$ ), the average score of negative parenting style was ( $1.85 \pm 0.47$ ), the average score of social anxiety was ( $1.75 \pm 0.51$ ), and the average score of loneliness was ( $3.25 \pm 0.36$ ).

### 3.2. Correlation between parenting style, children's social anxiety and loneliness

There was a negative relationship between positive parenting and negative parenting ( $r = -0.45$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). Additionally, positive parenting showed a negative correlation with feelings of loneliness ( $r = -0.29$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) as well as with social anxiety among older elementary school students ( $r = -0.31$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ), and negative parenting style was positively correlated with children's social anxiety ( $r = 0.33$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ).

### 3.3. Testing the mediating effect of loneliness

Through the correlation analysis of each variable, it was found that A solid bond was present between the parents' positive parenting approach, social anxiety and loneliness among senior primary school students, which met the conditions for the mediation effect test. To investigate how a positive parenting style affects social anxiety and loneliness in senior primary school students, researchers employed the stepwise regression method to analyze the mediation effect.; the results are shown in the following table. Regression analysis was used to examine how a positive parenting style of parents affects social anxiety in senior primary school students. Table 1 presents the findings. A positive parenting approach has a strong direct influence on social anxiety ( $\beta=-0.311$ ,  $P<0.001$ ) and loneliness ( $\beta=-0.291$ ,  $P<0.001$ ).The loneliness variable was added to the regression equation to explore the mediating effect of loneliness between parents' positive parenting style and social anxiety among senior primary school students. The analysis found that there was a significant negative correlation between parents' positive parenting style and social anxiety among senior elementary school students. Loneliness was a strong predictor of social anxiety in older elementary school students ( $\beta=-0.363$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). The positive parenting style also had a significant predictive effect on social anxiety among senior elementary school students ( $\beta=-0.18$ ,  $P<0.001$ ), indicating that loneliness played a partial mediating role in this.

**Table 1.** Regression analysis between variables

variable	Social anxiety among senior elementary school students		Loneliness		Social anxiety among senior elementary school students	
	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
Positive parenting style	-0.311	-5.464***	0.291	5.072**	-0.18	-3.074
Loneliness			-0.291	-5.072**	-0.363	-6.2***
R Square	0.097		0.084		0.126	
Adjusted R-squared	0.093		0.081		0.12	
F	29.856***		25.722**		20.103***	

Note:\*\*\* $P<0.001$

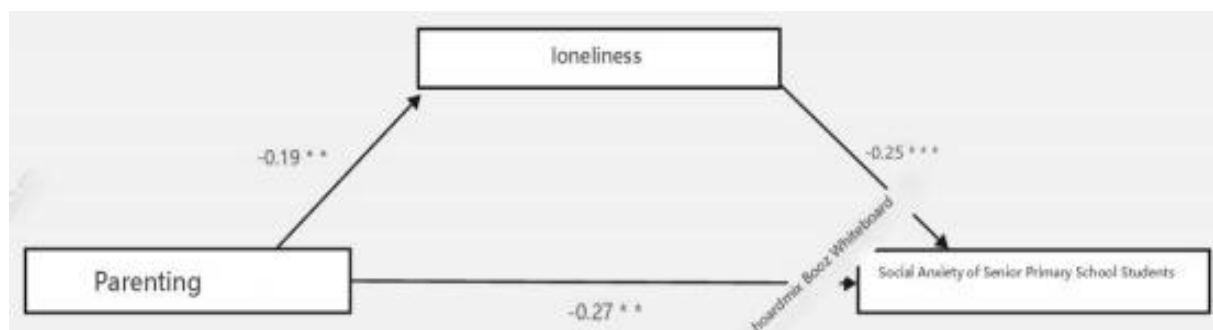
**Table 2.** Analysis of the mediating effect of loneliness on the relationship between positive parenting style and social anxiety among senior elementary school students

project	Effect size	with	LLCI	STREETS	Effect size
cTotal effect	-0.23	0.04	-0.32	-0.15	
c'direct effect	-0.27	0.04	-0.36	-0.19	-17.39%
ab mediating effect	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.08	117.39%

To examine if loneliness influences how a positive parenting style affects social anxiety in senior primary school students, we utilized the PROCESS 4.1 tool along with the Bootstrap method to evaluate the mediation effect. The findings from the mediation test presented in Table 1 reveal

a direct impact of positive parenting on the social anxiety of these students, measured at  $-0.27$ . Additionally, the mediation effect of loneliness is considerable, with a value of  $0.04$ , Bootse at  $0.02$ , and a 95% confidence interval of  $[0.01,0.08]$ , which does not include zero. This indicates a significant mediation effect, accounting for 117.39% of the total effect, indicating that loneliness plays a partial mediating role in it.

Among them, because the mediation effect and the direct effect have different signs, it means that there is a masking effect that causes the total effect to be masked. The mediation effect diagram is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Mediation effect Legend: \*\*\* $P < 0.001$

#### 4. Discussion

This study verified the mediating role of loneliness between parental rearing style and social anxiety among senior elementary school students through empirical investigation and mediation effect analysis, and showed that a more positive approach to parenting leads to lower levels of social anxiety in older elementary school students. This finding aligns well with prior studies on this age group.

This study explored the mechanism of parental parenting style on social anxiety of senior primary school students and found that loneliness played an important role in it. The findings indicated that loneliness partially mediated how a positive parenting style negatively influenced the social anxiety of students in their last years of primary school. Specifically, positive parenting style can predict social anxiety of senior primary school students through direct channels and can also have an impact through loneliness, in which loneliness plays a "bridge" role. This shows that the mechanism of the impact of positive parenting style on social anxiety of senior primary school students is complex, not only has a direct impact, but also can have an indirect impact through mediating variables. In daily life, parents' positive parenting style has a significant effect. When parents communicate with their children in an equal manner, such as listening carefully to their children sharing campus fun and giving encouragement, they can directly enhance their children's social confidence and relieve social anxiety. If children encounter negative situations in life, parents guide them to solve problems, which can reduce their loneliness and indirectly improve their social anxiety. This shows that positive parenting is not only a direct source of children's social security, but also can create a healthy social psychology for children by reducing loneliness and help them integrate into collective life.

However, there are still some limitations: the subjects in this study are from a primary school in a specific province, and the sample of subjects is unique. In subsequent studies, empirical analysis can be carried out for primary schools in different regions, provinces and types to enhance the representativeness of the sample and the universality of the conclusions drawn, and to expand its ecological validity.

Secondly, given that this research uses a cross-sectional approach, it examines the connection between the variables at a specific moment in time only. In the future, longitudinal tracking

data results can be added to more accurately explain the correlation mechanism between the variables. Finally, there are many factors that affect the social anxiety of senior primary school students. This research focuses solely on how different parenting styles affect feelings of loneliness and social anxiety in students who are in their final years of primary school. Other influencing factors such as self-control and inferiority complex have not been discussed in this study and need further research.

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