

The impact of self-esteem on social anxiety among adolescents in rural Mongolia (A case of eastern region of Mongolia)

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Abstract- Social anxiety is a significant psychological challenge during adolescence, often linked to self-evaluation factors. This study investigates the extent to which self-esteem predicts social anxiety levels in a regional Mongolian context. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with a sample of 1,200 adolescents ($N = 1,200$) from Khentii, Dornod, and Sukhbaatar provinces. Data were collected using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A). Statistical analyses, including Pearson correlation and simple linear regression, were performed using SPSS. The findings revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety ($r = -.154$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis indicated that the model was significant, $F(1, 1198) = 29.27$, $p < .001$, with self-esteem accounting for 2.4% of the variance in social anxiety. Self-esteem was identified as a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.154$, $t = -5.41$, $p < .001$), suggesting that lower self-evaluation is associated with higher social anxiety symptoms. The results of this study indicate that self-esteem is a significant but modest predictor of social anxiety among adolescents. Although the explained variance is modest, the high level of significance underscores the necessity of integrating self-esteem-building interventions into school-based mental health programs

Keywords: Self-esteem, Social anxiety, Adolescence, Rural Mongolia, RSES, SAS-A.

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is viewed as a critical developmental stage marking the transition from childhood to adulthood, characterized by rapid and multifaceted biological, psychological, and social changes. The World Health Organization officially defines adolescence as individuals aged 10–19 [1]. However, international educational documents often categorize this period as ages 11–18, while some psychological research extends the range from 12 to 21 years [2]. Within the context of the Mongolian educational system and school grade structures, it is appropriate to consider adolescence as the period encompassing middle and high school years, approximately between the ages of 11 and 17.

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by profound biological, cognitive, and socio-psychological changes, during which the process of identity formation occurs intensely. From the perspective of international psychological trends, self-esteem serves as a vital "protective buffer" for adolescent mental health, whereas social anxiety acts as a primary inhibitor of social development. Studying the correlation between these two constructs is essential for theoretically explaining the prevalence of psychological distress and social isolation among youth.

While the correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety has been extensively studied in Western developed nations, empirical research remains markedly scarce in countries with unique sociocultural landscapes like Mongolia, where nomadic traditions intersect with rapid modern urbanization. In particular, there is a global deficit in literature that specifically examines how sub-factors of adolescent social anxiety—such as fear of negative evaluation and avoidance of new environments—

correlate with self-esteem levels at a regional or provincial level. This significant gap in existing knowledge constitutes the primary rationale for the present study.

Dornod Province, as a regional hub of Eastern Mongolia, presents a unique demographic and socio-economic profile characterized by significant rural-to-urban migration and a distinct educational infrastructure, such as the school dormitory system. Investigating how these environmental dynamics—including peer-to-peer relationship patterns within the dormitory setting—influence adolescent self-esteem and social anxiety is of paramount importance. Identifying these developmental pathways not only provides critical insights within the Mongolian context but also serves as benchmark data for understanding adolescent socialization processes in similar transitional economies.

Furthermore, adolescence is a critical period characterized by the crystallization of gender norms, often accompanied by heightened susceptibility to various risks. According to UNICEF (2019), adolescent boys frequently internalize traditional gender stereotypes, which may lead to the suppression of emotional expression and a gravitation toward high-risk behaviors. Conversely, adolescent girls undergoing puberty face significant vulnerabilities, including interpersonal challenges and heightened social sensitivity. Given these distinct developmental pressures, analyzing a large-scale sample of 1,200 participants is essential for validating how gender-specific experiences moderate the relationship between self-evaluation and social distress.

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between self-esteem levels and social anxiety among adolescents in Eastern Mongolia and to investigate the extent to which self-esteem predicts or influences social anxiety within this unique regional context.

1.1 Literature review

Theoretical Framework: The Sociometer Theory The relationship between self-esteem and social anxiety is fundamentally explained by the Sociometer Theory Leary [3], which posits that self-esteem acts as a psychological gauge monitoring social inclusion. Within this framework, low self-esteem serves as an internal signal of potential social rejection, manifesting as heightened social anxiety. Adolescents with low self-evaluation often perceive social situations as threatening due to doubts about their relational value among peers.

Self-Esteem as a Predictor of Social Anxiety Extensive empirical research identifies low self-esteem as a robust predictor of social anxiety during adolescence. A meta-analysis of 77 longitudinal studies by Sowislo and Orth [4] demonstrated that low self-esteem has a significant longitudinal effect on the development of anxiety, more so than the reverse. Furthermore, global self-worth is intricately linked to social functioning, specifically influencing fear of negative evaluation and avoidance behaviors.

Developmental and Contextual Perspectives. Adolescence is marked by self-esteem fluctuations, often declining during early stages due to pubertal changes and social transitions [5]. Gender also plays a critical role, as girls typically report higher social anxiety and lower self-esteem compared to boys, often due to heightened emphasis on social approval [6]. While these correlations are well-documented in Western contexts, there is a lack of large-scale empirical data in unique settings like rural Mongolia, where dormitory systems and nomadic influences may shape distinct social experiences.

Global and Domestic Research Trends. Recent international studies further highlight the mediators of self-esteem. In Poland, research indicated that social media usage negatively impacts self-esteem, particularly among girls, through digital social comparison [7]. Similarly, Spanish researchers found that parenting styles significantly influence social anxiety indirectly through the mediation of self-esteem [8].

In the Mongolian context, Natsagdolgor established that adolescent self-evaluation is a dynamic developmental process integrating emotional self-worth and personality formation [9]. Additionally, career decision-making and psychological well-being are interconnected during this stage, where structured interventions can support developmental outcomes [10]. Collectively, these studies suggest that internal psychological traits like self-esteem are deeply intertwined with environmental influences and social behaviors.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Psychological peculiarities of adolescence

The period of human development that starts with puberty (approximately 10 to 12 years of age) and ends with physiological and neurobiological maturity, shown in neuroscientific research to extend to at least age 20, with significant brain development in the late adolescent stage of 18 to 20 yrs. Although brain development continues for many individuals into their mid to late twenties, this latter period is considered to be young adulthood. During the

adolescent period, major changes occur at varying rates in physical characteristics, sexual characteristics, and sexual interest, resulting in significant effects on body image, self-concept, and self-esteem. Major cognitive and social developments take place as well: Most young people acquire enhanced abilities to think abstractly, make rational decisions about behavior, evaluate reality hypothetically, reconsider prior experiences from altered points of view, assess data from multiple dimensions, reflect inwardly, create complex models of understanding, and project complicated future scenarios. Adolescents also increase their peer focus and involvement in peer-related activities, place greater emphasis on social acceptance, and seek more independence and autonomy from parents [11].

According to the American Psychological Association [11], early adolescence is a period of heightened neurobiological and psychosocial vulnerability. The developmental gap between the early-maturing emotional brain and the later-maturing self-regulatory brain systems often results in increased sensitivity to social evaluation. Furthermore, the phenomenon of the 'imaginary audience' leads adolescents to believe they are under constant scrutiny, which directly correlates with higher scores in social anxiety and fluctuating levels of self-esteem during the ages of 13 to 15.

2.2 Self-Esteem

According to the American Psychological Association, self-esteem involves the overall subjective evaluation of one's worth the degree to which the qualities and characteristics contained in one's self-concept are perceived to be positive. It reflects a person's physical self-image, view of their accomplishments and capabilities, and values and perceived success in living up to them, as well as the ways in which others view and respond to that person. The more positive the cumulative perception of these qualities and characteristics, the higher one's self-esteem. A reasonably high degree of self-esteem is considered an important ingredient of mental health, whereas low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness are common depressive symptoms [11].

Historically, self-esteem was conceptualized as the ratio of success to aspirations. However, modern perspectives, particularly the sociometer theory proposed by Leary [3], suggest that self-esteem serves as a psychological gauge for social inclusion. In adolescents, this internal monitoring system is highly sensitive; as noted in his 'looking-glass self' concept, individuals evaluate themselves based on perceived social appraisal. Consequently, a deficit in global self-esteem [13] becomes a significant predictor of social anxiety, as the individual feels inadequate to meet perceived social standards.

From a humanistic perspective, Rogers (1961) argued that self-esteem is derived from the congruence between the 'real self' and the 'ideal self.' In early adolescence, a significant discrepancy between these two constructs often leads to psychological distress. This is further complicated by the developmental crisis of 'identity versus role confusion' (Erikson, 1968), where the inability to establish a stable self-concept exacerbates social anxiety. Furthermore, the psychoanalytic view suggests that an overly critical 'superego' can diminish self-worth, making the adolescent hypersensitive to external social evaluation (Freud, 1923).

According to Rogers (1961), social anxiety is a manifestation of incongruence between the 'real self' and the 'ideal self.' When adolescents cannot achieve unconditional self-acceptance, they develop a psychological vulnerability. The threat to their self-concept leads to defensive behaviors, often manifesting as social avoidance and fear of negative evaluation. In this sense, low self-esteem is not just a symptom but a foundational cause of anxiety, as the individual feels incapable of bridging the gap between their perceived self and societal expectations.

2.3 Social Anxiety

Anxiety an emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune. The body often mobilizes itself to meet the perceived threat: Muscles become tense, breathing is faster, and the heart beats more rapidly. Anxiety may be distinguished from fear both conceptually and physiologically, although the two terms are often used interchangeably. Anxiety is considered a future-oriented, long-acting response broadly focused on a diffuse threat, whereas fear is an appropriate, present-oriented, and short-lived response to a clearly identifiable and specific threat [12].

The American Psychological Association (n.d.) defines social anxiety as an intense fear of social situations in which an individual may be scrutinized by others. In early adolescence, this anxiety often manifests through hyper-vigilance toward social cues and fear of negative evaluation (FNE). Recent clinical evidence supported by APA suggests that if left unaddressed, social anxiety significantly impairs academic performance and identity formation during the transition from childhood to adulthood [12].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES): Adolescents' global self-worth was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This 10-item scale (e.g., 'On the whole, I am satisfied with myself') utilizes a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-esteem. In the present study, the Mongolian version of the RSES demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = [0.777]$ [13].

Social anxiety scale for adolescents (SAS-A): Social anxiety was measured using the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A; La Greca & Lopez, 1998). The instrument consists of 22 items (including 4 filler items) categorized into three subscales: Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Social Avoidance and Distress Specific to New Situations (SAD-New), and General Social Avoidance and Distress (SAD-General). Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (All the time). The final analysis utilized 18 items because 4 items in the original 22-item scale are filler items (Items 4, 11, 14, and 20) which do not contribute to the final social anxiety score. Additionally, a reliability check was performed, and the 18-item version demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = $[0.933]$), making it a robust measure for this study.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure a representative sample from the Eastern region of Mongolia. The population was stratified by administrative province, specifically Dornod, Khentii, and Sukhbaatar. From each stratum, 400 participants were randomly selected from various secondary schools, resulting in a total sample size of 1,200 adolescents. This method was chosen to minimize sampling bias and to ensure that the diverse socio-environmental conditions of different provinces within the region were adequately represented.

Data collection was conducted in three stages:

1. Administrative Approval: Permission was obtained from the provincial Educational Departments.
2. Ethical Compliance: Informed consent forms were distributed to parents and guardians.
3. Administration: The surveys were administered in classroom settings with the assistance of school psychologists. Students were given approximately 20–30 minutes to complete the self-report questionnaires.

4. RESULT AND DATA ANALYSIS

A cluster sampling method was used to recruit 1,200 adolescents ($N = 1,200$) from secondary schools in Khentii, Dornod, and Sukhbaatar provinces. The mean age was 13.93 ($SD = 1.28$).

The quantitative data collected in this study were processed and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26.0). Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants. To test the research hypotheses, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between self-esteem and social anxiety. Furthermore, simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive power of self-esteem on social anxiety levels among adolescents.

Figure 1: Distribution of Participants by Province (Aimag)

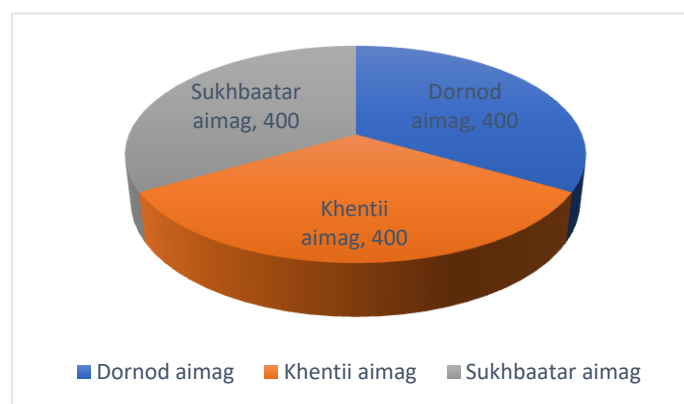


Figure 1: The sample was distributed equally across three provinces in eastern Mongolia to ensure a balanced geographical representation.

Figure 2: Gender Distribution of Participants

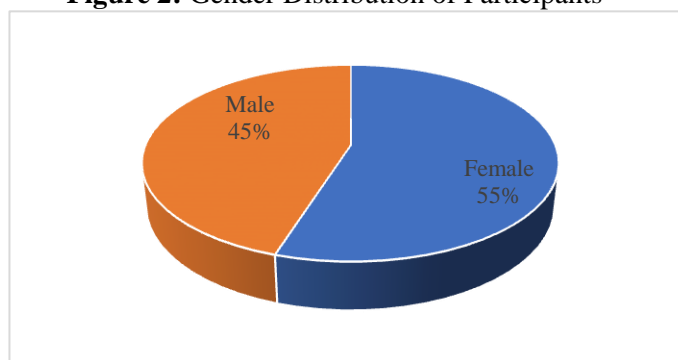


Figure 2: The gender ratio shows a slightly higher participation of females compared to males

Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of Participants by Age Group

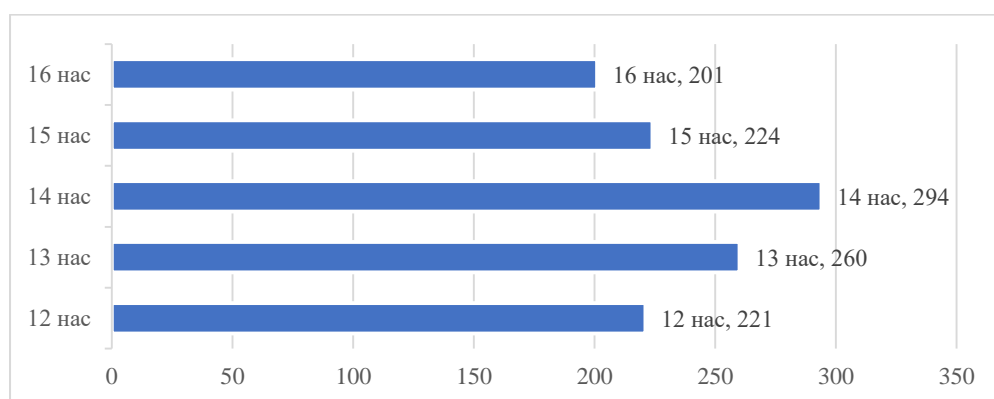


Figure 3: The participants are adolescents aged between 12 and 16 years. The largest group is 14-year-olds, while the distribution remains relatively even across all ages.

Figure 4: Distribution of Participants by School

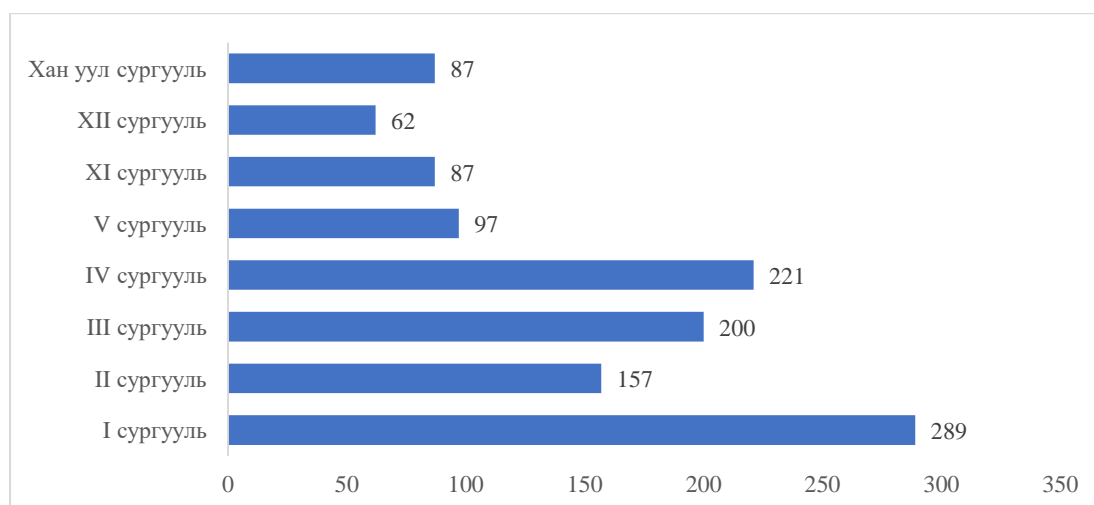


Figure 4: Participants were drawn from 8 different schools. The majority of the sample comes from School No. 1, representing nearly a quarter of the total data.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.777	.778	10

The RSES was employed to measure the global self-worth of participants using a 10-item Likert scale. In the current study, the internal consistency of the RSES was found to be good, with a Cronbach's alpha (α) of .777. This indicates that the items are reliable and consistent in measuring the construct of self-esteem within this specific sample.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics for the Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (SAS-A)

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.933	.933	18

To assess fear of negative evaluation and social avoidance, the SAS-A was utilized. Although the instrument typically consists of 22 items, the reliability analysis for this study was performed on 18 items. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency, yielding a Cronbach's alpha (α) of .933. This high coefficient confirms that the scale is a highly reliable tool for measuring social anxiety among the adolescent participants.

Figure 5: Frequency Distribution of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) Scores

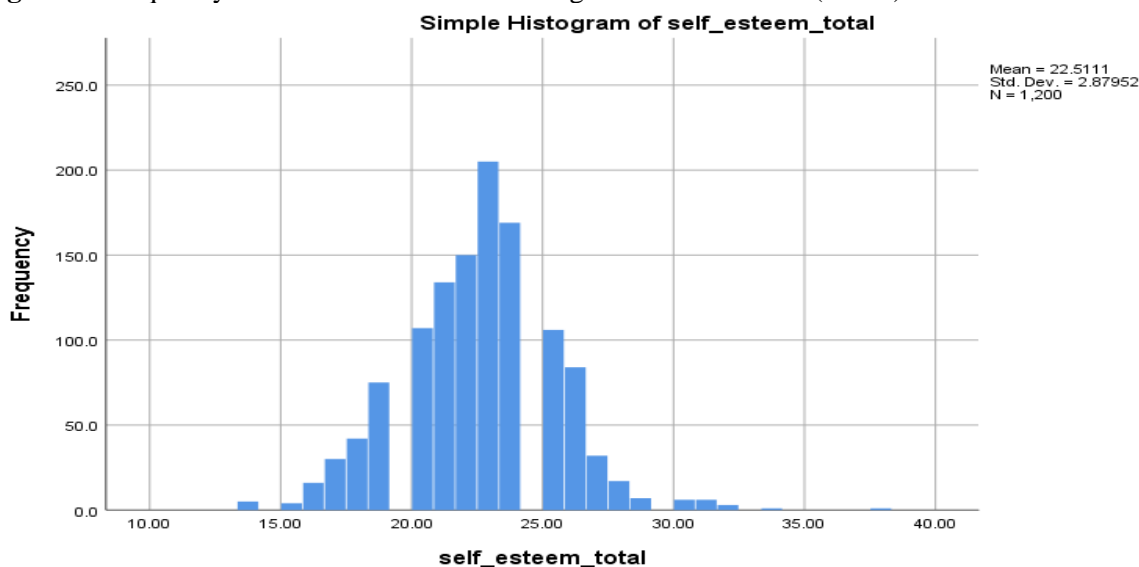


Figure5: The distribution of self-esteem total scores was examined using a histogram (Figure X). The results revealed a normal distribution with a mean score of 22.51 (SD = 2.88). As shown in the frequency plot, the majority of the 1,200 participants clustered near the center of the distribution, confirming the suitability of the data for further inferential statistical analysis.

Descriptive statistics for the primary variables are presented in Figure 1. The study involved a total of 1,200 adolescents from the Eastern region of Mongolia. The mean score for self-esteem was 22.51 (SD = 2.88), and the mean score for total social anxiety was 40.54 (SD = 12.04).

The results indicated a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety, $r(1198) = -.154, p < .001$. This inverse relationship suggests that individuals with higher levels of self-esteem tend to experience lower levels of social anxiety. A simple linear regression was calculated to predict social anxiety based on self-esteem. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1, 1198) = 29.27, p < .001$), with an R^2 of .024. Self-esteem was found to be a significant negative predictor of social anxiety ($\beta = -.154, t = -5.41, p < .001$).

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix for Age, Self-Esteem, and Social Anxiety (N=1,200)

Correlations				
		Age	self_esteem_total	Total_SA
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.040	-.093**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.169	.001
	N	1200	1200	1200
self_esteem_total	Pearson Correlation	.040	1	-.154**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.169		.000
	N	1200	1200	1200
Total_SA	Pearson Correlation	-.093**	-.154**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	
	N	1200	1200	1200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

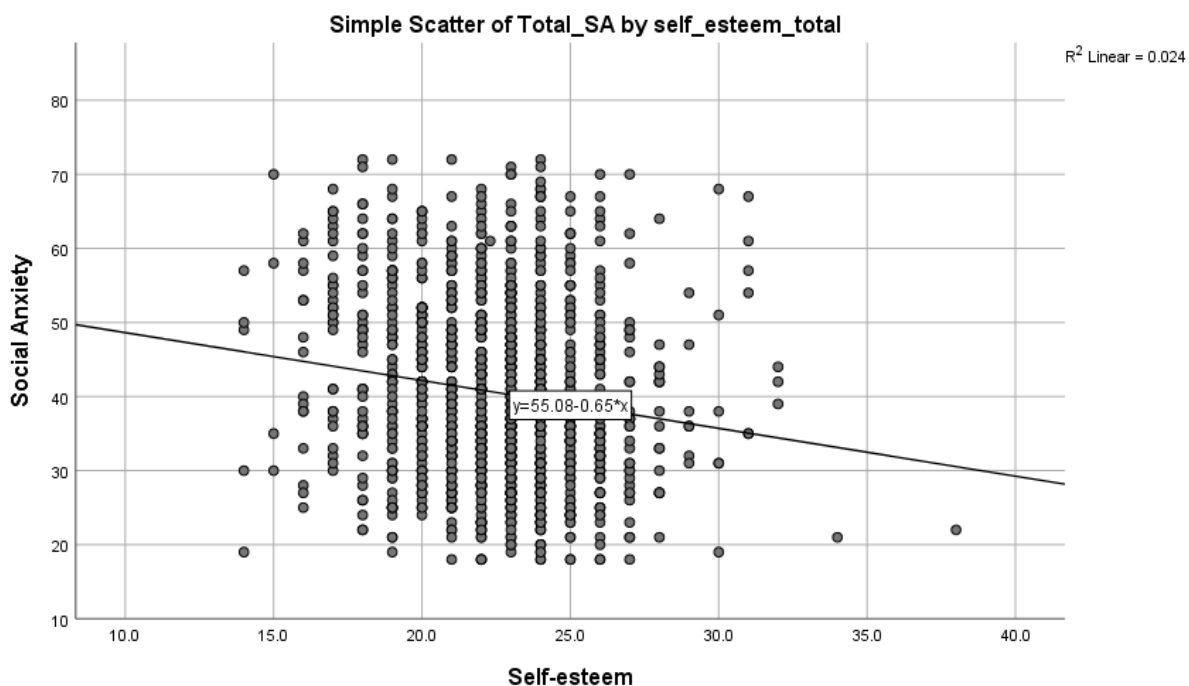
The results of the Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant negative association between self-esteem and social anxiety, $r(1198) = -.154, p < .001$. This suggests that adolescents with higher levels of self-evaluation report lower levels of social anxiety. Additionally, a weak but significant negative correlation was found between age and social anxiety, $r(1198) = -.093, p = .001$, indicating that social anxiety levels slightly decrease as adolescents grow older.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Self-Esteem as a Predictor of Social Anxiety

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.154 ^a	.024	.023	11.904
a. Predictors: (Constant), self_esteem_total				
b. Dependent Variable: Total_SA				

The linear regression analysis was performed to evaluate the predictive impact of self-esteem on social anxiety among Mongolian adolescents (N=1,200). As shown in Table 4, the model is statistically significant, $F(1, 1198) = 29.27, p < .001$. The R Square value of .024 indicates that self-esteem explains 2.4% of the variance in social anxiety. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = -.154, t = -5.41, p < .001$) demonstrates a significant inverse relationship, confirming that higher levels of self-esteem consistently contribute to a reduction in social anxiety scores. Although the effect size is modest, the high statistical significance suggests that self-evaluation is a critical internal factor influencing social distress in this developmental stage.

Figure 6: Correlation Between Adolescent Self-Evaluation and Social Interaction Factors



A scatter plot was generated to visually inspect the relationship between participants' self-esteem and their levels of social anxiety. The distribution of data points indicates the spread across both dimensions. This visual representation serves as a preliminary step before conducting formal inferential statistics, such as a correlation or regression analysis, to determine the strength and direction of the association between these two variables.

Table 5: ANOVA Results for the Regression Model

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4147.633	1	4147.633	29.268	.000 ^b
	Residual	169772.366	1198	141.713		
	Total	173919.999	1199			
a. Dependent Variable: Total_SA						
b. Predictors: (Constant), self_esteem_total						

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to evaluate the predictive power of self-esteem on social anxiety. The results indicated that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 1198) = 29.27, p < .001$, with an R^2 of .024. Self-esteem was found to be a significant negative predictor of social anxiety ($\beta = -.154, t = -5.41, p < .001$). These findings suggest that higher levels of self-esteem are associated with a reduction in social anxiety symptoms among the adolescent participants.

Table 6: Coefficients for Self-Esteem as a Predictor of Social Anxiety

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	55.081	2.710		20.329	.000
	self_esteem_total	-.646	.119	-.154	-5.410	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Total_SA						

In conclusion, the empirical data confirms that self-esteem plays a critical role in the social development of adolescents in Eastern Mongolia. Although the explained variance is modest, the high level of statistical significance ($p < .001$) underscores that self-evaluation is a reliable predictor of social anxiety. These findings suggest that psychological interventions aimed at boosting self-esteem could effectively reduce social anxiety symptoms in this demographic.

While this study focuses on the relationship between self-esteem and social anxiety, other research in the Mongolian context has demonstrated the effectiveness of structured psychological programs, such as CBT-based anger management, in addressing emotional regulation among adolescents [14].

The significant negative correlation between self-esteem and social anxiety observed in this study ($r = -.154, p < .001$) is consistent with the global literature, yet displays unique characteristics. For instance, our findings align with the longitudinal meta-analysis by [15], which established self-esteem as a cross-cultural predictor of anxiety across various developmental stages. However, the effect size in the Eastern Mongolian context ($R^2 = .024$) appears more modest compared to findings in Western urban populations, such as those reported by [4], where individual self-worth often accounts for a larger portion of social distress. This suggests that while the internal 'sociometer' (Leary, 2012) operates universally, its relative weight may be moderated by cultural factors. In Asian and transitional societies, social anxiety might be more heavily influenced by collective expectations and external social hierarchies rather than purely individual self-perception, a phenomenon also observed in studies conducted in South Korea and Japan (Heine et al., 1999). By identifying this consistent but modest relationship, our study provides a critical regional perspective that strengthens the universal applicability of the Sociometer Theory while highlighting the need for culturally nuanced intervention models.

Due to the cross-sectional design of this study, we must be cautious in inferring causality. While our regression model demonstrates that self-esteem is a statistically significant factor associated with social anxiety, these results do not definitively prove that low self-esteem precedes or causes social anxiety. It is equally possible that high social anxiety negatively impacts an individual's self-esteem over time. Future longitudinal studies are necessary to clarify the temporal precedence and causal pathways of this relationship.

5. CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to explore the predictive relationship between self-esteem and social anxiety among adolescents in Eastern Mongolia. The findings confirm that self-esteem is a statistically significant negative predictor of social anxiety ($r = -.154, p < .001$), supporting the initial hypothesis.

The negative correlation observed suggests that as adolescents' self-evaluation improves, their experience of social anxiety tends to diminish. This is consistent with the Socio-meter Theory (Leary, 2000), which posits that self-esteem functions as an internal gauge of social acceptance. Adolescents with higher self-esteem likely perceive themselves as socially competent, which reduces the fear of negative evaluation—a core component of social anxiety.

These results align with previous international research (e.g., Sowislo & Orth, 2013), which identified self-esteem as a prospective predictor of social anxiety. However, the effect size in this study ($R^2 = .024$) is relatively modest compared to some Western studies. This discrepancy might be attributed to cultural factors specific to the Mongolian context. In collectivistic or transitional societies, social anxiety might be more heavily influenced by external factors such as family expectations or community reputation rather than solely by individual self-perception.

The fact that self-esteem accounts for only 2.4% of the variance in social anxiety indicates that social anxiety is a multi-faceted construct. Other variables, such as the social interaction factors represented by Age ($r = -.093$), also play a role. This suggests that psychological interventions should not only focus on individual self-worth but also address broader social and environmental stressors that adolescents face in regional provinces.

A limitation of this study is its cross-sectional design, which prevents the establishment of definitive causality. While the regression model is significant ($F = 29.27, p < .001$), future longitudinal research is needed to determine if low self-esteem precedes the onset of social anxiety symptoms over time. Additionally, exploring mediating variables such as peer support or academic achievement could provide a more comprehensive model of adolescent mental health in Mongolia. While this study identifies self-esteem as a significant predictor of social anxiety, it is important to acknowledge that adolescent distress is influenced by a complex interplay of various factors. Environmental stressors common in the Mongolian context, such as academic pressure, parental expectations, and the social dynamics within school dormitories, may further moderate this relationship. Additionally, the increasing role of social media comparison, as noted in recent global research, remains a critical variable. Future studies should adopt a more integrative approach, including these social and contextual variables alongside individual psychological traits, to develop more comprehensive intervention strategies.

In conclusion, this research empirically validates that self-esteem is a significant but modest predictor of social anxiety levels among adolescents in Eastern Mongolia. Although self-esteem accounts for 2.4% of the variance, its consistent statistical significance highlights its role in mitigating social anxiety symptoms. Therefore, psychological interventions focusing on self-worth are valuable; however, they should consider self-esteem alongside other socio-environmental variables to more effectively address the complexity of social anxiety in this population.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, which demonstrate a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and social anxiety among adolescents in Eastern Mongolia, the following recommendations are proposed:

1) For Educational Institutions and Schools

Implementation of Self-Esteem Programs: Schools should integrate psychological empowerment programs into their curriculum. Activities that focus on building self-confidence and positive self-evaluation can serve as a protective buffer against social anxiety.

- **School Counseling Enhancement:** School psychologists should prioritize identifying students with low self-esteem scores, as they are at a higher risk of developing social anxiety. Early intervention through individual or group counseling is recommended.
- **Creating Supportive Social Environments:** Since social interaction variables are closely linked to self-evaluation, schools should foster a collaborative rather than a purely competitive environment to reduce social evaluative threats.

2) For Parents and Guardians

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Parents should be encouraged to practice positive reinforcement techniques that support the adolescent's sense of autonomy and self-worth, which in turn helps mitigate social fears.


- Awareness Workshops: Educational programs for parents in rural provinces (Khentii, Dornod, Sukhbaatar) could be organized to help them understand the correlation between family dynamics, self-esteem, and social withdrawal.
- 3) For Policy Makers and Mental Health Professionals
- Regional Mental Health Services: There is a need for specialized adolescent mental health services in the Eastern provinces. Policies should support the training of regional psychologists in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) techniques specifically tailored for social anxiety and self-esteem.
 - Standardized Assessment: The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and Social Anxiety Scale (SAS-A) proved to be highly reliable in this study. It is recommended that these tools be used for periodic mental health screenings in secondary schools across Mongolia.
- 4) For Future Research
- Longitudinal Studies: Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to observe how the relationship between self-esteem and social anxiety evolves as students transition from middle school to high school.
 - Inclusion of Qualitative Data: Combining quantitative data with qualitative interviews could provide deeper insights into the specific cultural factors in Mongolia that influence adolescent self-perception.

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION


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