

UNDERSTANDING FEAR OF POSITIVE EVALUATION IN SOCIAL ANXIETY: ASSOCIATIONS WITH PERFECTIONISM, SELF-ESTEEM AND PERCEIVED PARENTAL ATTITUDES

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BACKGROUND AND AIM: Recent research suggests that fear of positive evaluation (FPE), in addition to fear of negative evaluation (FNE), plays a significant role in social anxiety. This study examined the relationships among FPE, FNE, and social anxiety, and investigated whether perfectionism, self-esteem, and perceived parental attitudes were associated with and predictive of FPE in a non-clinical sample.

METHODS: The sample consisted of 161 volunteer undergraduate and associate degree students in Istanbul (2023–2024). Participants completed the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS), Fear of Positive Evaluation Scale (FPES), Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale–Brief Form (FNES-BF), Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and the Perceived Parental Attitudes Scale (EMBU). Pearson correlation analyses examined associations among variables. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to identify predictors of FPE (dependent variable). Mediation analysis tested whether FNE mediated the relationship between FPE (independent variable) and social anxiety (dependent

variable). Ethical approval was obtained (Approval No: 2024-03-13).

RESULTS: The mean LSAS score was 42.35 (SD = 26.95). FPE was strongly correlated with social anxiety and showed a stronger association than FNE. Maladaptive perfectionism and low self-esteem significantly predicted higher FPE, whereas adaptive perfectionism negatively predicted FPE. Rejection and overprotective parental attitudes were positively associated with FPE, while emotional warmth showed a negative association. Mediation analysis indicated that FNE mediated the relationship between FPE and social anxiety.

CONCLUSIONS: Consistent with emerging literature suggesting that fear of positive evaluation represents a distinct but related construct within social anxiety, our findings highlight its clinical relevance. Addressing fear of positive evaluation, alongside fear of negative evaluation, may enhance assessment and intervention strategies in social anxiety.

Keywords: Fear of positive evaluation, parental attitudes, perfectionism, self-esteem, social anxiety