

Predicting Social Anxiety Among Adolescents Based on Peer Rejection and Friendship Quality: The Mediating Role of Negative Self-Evaluation

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E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction paragraph containing “At the same time, the presence of a close, supportive friendship may operate as a developmentally important interpersonal resource,” the manuscript should explain more explicitly why friendship quality is expected to predict social anxiety independently of peer rejection. One important strength of the current design is that peer-group status and dyadic friendship quality represent different levels of the adolescent social ecology. The authors should articulate that an adolescent may simultaneously experience rejection within the broader peer group while maintaining a supportive close friendship. This distinction would provide a stronger theoretical justification for entering both predictors simultaneously in the mediation model.

The peer rejection procedure requires substantial clarification. The Methods currently state that participants were asked to nominate classmates with whom they “least preferred to spend free time, work collaboratively, or interact socially.” The authors should specify whether nominations were unlimited or restricted to a fixed number, whether students could nominate only participating classmates or all classmates, how absent or nonconsenting students were handled, and precisely how the

standardized rejection score was calculated. It should also be clarified whether the three nomination prompts were summed before classroom standardization and whether reliability or stability across nomination criteria was assessed. Sociometric methodology is highly sensitive to these procedural decisions.

The Friendship Quality Questionnaire description states that “negatively worded conflict-related items were reverse-scored when calculating the overall positive friendship-quality index.” This scoring approach requires explicit methodological justification because the original instrument contains theoretically distinct positive and negative friendship dimensions, and simply reversing conflict-related items may not always yield a psychometrically defensible unidimensional total score. The authors should identify the exact scoring protocol used, specify which items were reversed, report whether a total-score structure was empirically supported in this sample, and ideally provide confirmatory factor analytic evidence before using a global friendship-quality score in the mediation model.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The manuscript introduces negative self-evaluation as the central mediator in the paragraph beginning “A central psychological mechanism that may connect peer rejection and friendship quality with social anxiety is negative self-evaluation.” However, the construct requires stronger conceptual specification. The authors should clarify how negative self-evaluation differs from low self-esteem, self-criticism, shame, negative self-schema, and low self-concept clarity, particularly because much of the supporting literature cited in the Introduction concerns self-esteem rather than the exact mediator measured here. The theoretical argument would be more convincing if the manuscript explicitly explained that negative self-evaluation is a broader maladaptive appraisal of the self and then justified why it should be proximally related to fear of negative social evaluation.

In the Methods paragraph stating that “A total of 391 students initially agreed to participate and received the study measures” and that “data from 368 adolescents were retained for the final analyses,” the manuscript should provide a transparent participant-flow explanation. Specifically, the authors should report the exact number excluded for excessive missing data, patterned or careless responding, incomplete principal measures, and any other exclusion criterion. A response rate should also be reported relative to the number of eligible students invited to participate. Without this information, readers cannot adequately assess selection bias, attrition, or the representativeness of the analytic sample.

The sampling description in the Study Design and Participants section states that “Participants were recruited from eight secondary schools using a multistage cluster sampling procedure.” This procedure needs considerably greater methodological detail. The manuscript should report how the eight schools were selected, how many school districts were represented, whether selection was random at the school level, how classrooms were sampled within schools, and whether school size or socioeconomic composition was considered. Because students were nested within classrooms and schools, this design also raises statistical dependence concerns that are currently not addressed in the analysis.

The manuscript reports a final sample of 368 adolescents but provides no a priori sample-size or statistical-power justification. Given that mediation analysis was the primary inferential objective, the Methods section should report how the required sample was determined, preferably through an a priori power analysis or Monte Carlo simulation for indirect effects. The authors should specify the assumed effect sizes, alpha level, desired statistical power, number of predictors or paths, and resulting minimum sample size. Merely having a seemingly adequate sample does not establish that the study was sufficiently powered to detect the hypothesized indirect effects.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.