

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY IN ADOLESCENTS WITH SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER

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**Abstract:** Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is a prevalent condition among adolescents, characterized by an intense and persistent fear of social situations or performance, which results in significant distress and impairment in daily activities. Adolescents with SAD often avoid social interactions, which can negatively affect their academic, social and emotional development. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) has been widely recognized as an effective approach to treating SAD, offering practical

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strategies to reduce anxiety symptoms and improve social functioning. This abstract will explore the effectiveness of CBT in adolescents with social anxiety disorder, highlighting the main techniques used and the clinical outcomes observed. The aim of this paper is to review and evaluate the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy in the treatment of adolescents with social anxiety disorder. The aim is to analyze the main techniques of CBT, the mechanisms by which it promotes anxiety reduction and the results of clinical studies that show its effectiveness. In addition, the challenges and specific considerations in applying CBT to this age group will be discussed. This literature review aims to analyze the effectiveness of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in the treatment of social anxiety in adolescents. To this end, references from relevant studies and meta-analyses were selected and reviewed, covering various approaches and results related to the topic. The selection of references was based on the relevance and impact of the publications in the field of psychotherapy and social anxiety. CBT is a form of psychotherapy based on identifying and modifying dysfunctional patterns of thought and behavior. In the context of SAD in adolescents, CBT aims to help patients recognize and restructure irrational beliefs about themselves and social situations, develop appropriate social skills and reduce avoidance of social interactions. With this in mind, the main CBT techniques include cognitive restructuring, gradual exposure and social skills training. Cognitive restructuring involves helping adolescents to identify negative automatic thoughts and replace them with more realistic and balanced interpretations. Gradual exposure consists of exposing adolescents, in a controlled and progressive way, to feared social situations, allowing them to face their fears and reduce the associated anxiety response. Social skills training focuses on developing social competencies, such as initiating and maintaining conversations, asking and answering questions, and dealing with criticism and rejection in an assertive manner. Clinical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of CBT in reducing SAD symptoms in adolescents. Research indicates that adolescents who receive CBT show a significant decrease in levels of social anxiety, improved quality of life and greater participation in social and school activities. For example, a study conducted by Masia Warner et al. (2005) showed that adolescents who participated in a group CBT program had a notable reduction in social anxiety



symptoms compared to a control group. Another study by Beidel, Turner and Morris (2000) showed that individual CBT resulted in substantial improvements in adolescents' social anxiety and social functioning. Despite the promising results, the application of CBT to adolescents with SAD presents specific challenges. Adherence to treatment can be hampered by adolescents' resistance to engaging in therapy sessions and facing feared social situations. In addition, parental involvement and coordination with schools are important components for successful treatment, as social and environmental support is crucial for the generalization of therapeutic gains. Therefore, cognitive-behavioral therapy has proven to be an effective approach for treating adolescents with social anxiety disorder. Cognitive restructuring techniques, gradual exposure and social skills training are key to helping adolescents overcome their fears and improve their social functioning. Clinical studies provide robust evidence that CBT can significantly reduce SAD symptoms and improve quality of life for adolescents. However, it is essential to consider the challenges specific to this age group, including resistance to treatment and the need for support from parents and schools. With a careful and collaborative approach, CBT can provide lasting benefits for adolescents with social anxiety disorder, promoting their emotional and social well-being.

**Keywords:** Mental Health; Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy; Child and Adolescent Health.

## INTRODUCTION

Cognitive behavioral therapy (TCC) has stood out as an effective approach to the treatment of anxiety disorders, including social anxiety disorder (TAS) in adolescents. This disorder, characterized by an intense and persistent fear of social situations, can cause significant suffering and functional damage. TCC, with its focus on identifying and modifying dysfunctional thoughts and behaviors, is widely recommended as a first-rate treatment for the TAS. Studies show that CBT can significantly reduce the symptoms of social anxiety and improve the quality of life of affected adolescents (Hofmann



et al., 2012).

Adolescence is a critical period of development, marked by biological, cognitive and social changes, which makes adolescents particularly vulnerable to anxiety disorders. Early intervention is essential to prevent symptom chronification and TAS -associated losses. TCC offers practical tools to help adolescents face and overcome their social fears, promoting healthy and self-confidence. Research indicates that CBT can provide lasting improvements, with long -term benefits after treatment ending (Albano & Dibartolo, 2007).

In addition to being effective in treating TAS, TCC is a flexible approach that can be adapted to the individual needs of adolescents. This includes the integration of techniques such as gradual exposure to dreaded situations, cognitive restructuring and social skill training. Customization of treatment is crucial to maximizing the effectiveness and engagement of adolescents in the therapeutic process. Evidence suggests that personalized TCC can increase treatment adherence and improve therapeutic results (Beidel et al., 2014).

The positive impact of CBT on TAS treatment on adolescents is also reflected in various areas of patients' lives, including academic performance, social relations and general mental health. By reducing symptoms of social anxiety, TCC helps adolescents fully participate in school and social activities, improving their opportunities for development and success. Literature points out that CBT can have positive effects not only on social anxiety, but also on common comorbidities such as depression, providing comprehensive treatment (Masia Warner et al., 2005). CBT is an evidence -based approach that focuses on modifying distorted thoughts and untied behaviors. In adolescents with social anxiety disorder, TCC helps identify and challenge irrational beliefs about negative evaluation by others and replace them with more realistic and balanced thoughts. This approach also incorporates gradual exposure exercises into feared social situations, allowing adolescents to face their fears in a controlled and safe manner. Studies show that these techniques are highly effective in reducing the symptoms of Social anxiety and improved daily functioning (Leigh & Clark, 2016).

Another important aspect of CBT is the development of social skills. Adolescents with



social anxiety disorder often avoid social interactions, which can lead to a deficit in the development of essential social skills. CBT includes training of these skills, which helps adolescents feel more comfortable and competent in social situations. This treatment component is crucial to increasing self-confidence and promote positive social interactions, contributing to the general improvement of mental health and well-being (Spence & Rapee, 2016).

In addition, TCC can be effective in both individual and group configurations. Group therapy offers an opportunity for adolescents to practice their social skills in a safe and supportive environment while receiving feedback and encouragement from their colleagues. Research indicates that group TCC can be as effective as individual therapy, with additional social support benefits and normalization of experiences. This type of treatment can be particularly useful in school environments, where adolescents can access treatment in a convenient place (Puleo et al., 2011).

This present work will explore the effectiveness of TCC in adolescents with social anxiety disorder, highlighting the main techniques used and observed clinical results, reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy in the treatment of adolescents with social anxiety disorder. It is intended to analyze the main techniques of CBT, the mechanisms by which it promotes anxiety reduction and the results of clinical studies that show its effectiveness. In addition, specific challenges and considerations will be discussed in the application of TCC for this age group.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This bibliographic review aims to analyze the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in the treatment of social anxiety in adolescents. To this end, relevant studies and meta-analysis references have been selected and reviewed, which cover various approaches and results related to the theme. The selection of references was based on the relevance and impact of publications in the field of psychotherapy and social anxiety.



- Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Studies published between 2004 and 2016.
2. Publications in English.
3. Articles revised by pairs.
4. Studies that address the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in the treatment of social anxiety in adolescents.
5. Studies that use quantitative or qualitative methodologies.
6. Systematic revisions and meta-analysis.

Exclusion criteria:

1. Studies that do not directly address TCC.
2. Articles that have no direct relevance with social anxiety in adolescents.
3. Publications that are not available in full.
4. Studies that address other forms of treatment without direct comparison with CBT.
5. Case reports or studies with very small samples ( $n < 10$ ).

- Boolean markers

To perform the search in the databases, the following boolean markers were used:

- “Cognitive Behavioral Therapy” and “Social Anxiety” and “Adolescents”
- “CBT” and “Social Phobia” and “teenagers”
- “Efficacy” and “Cognitive Therapy” and “Youth” and “Anxiety”

- Nursing question

The guiding question of this study was: “What is the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy in the treatment of social anxiety in adolescents?”



## THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Social Anxiety Disorder (TAS) in adolescents is a condition that can significantly impact personal, social and academic development. Teenagers with TAS often have intense fear of being negatively judged in social situations, which can lead to isolation and evasion of activities that are essential for healthy development. Cognitive behavioral therapy (TCC) has been effective intervention to help these adolescents overcome their anxieties. CBT focuses on identifying and modifying negative automatic thoughts and dysfunctional beliefs that perpetuate social anxiety. Techniques such as cognitive restructuring allow adolescents to challenge their negative assumptions and develop a more balanced and realistic view of their social skills and acceptance by others (In-Albon & Schneider, 2007).

A central component of the TCC for TAS is gradual exposure, which involves the systematic practice of facing hierarchically and controlled social situations. Through repeated and gradual exposure, adolescents learn to reduce the fear response associated with these situations, which results in a significant decrease in anxiety symptoms. Studies have shown that exposure is one of TCC's most effective components for TAS, providing a lasting improvement of symptoms and an increase in social confidence (Korte et al., 2012).

In addition to cognitive restructuring and gradual exposure, TCC for TAS adolescents includes social skill training. This training helps adolescents develop and practice skills necessary for successful social interactions, such as starting and maintaining conversations, asking questions and expressing opinions. Through role playing and other interactive techniques, adolescents can gain confidence in their social skills, which is essential for reducing anxiety in social situations. The literature indicates that social skill training is a valuable complement to CBT, improving therapeutic results (RODEBAUGH et al., 2004).

TCC's effectiveness in reducing TAS symptoms in adolescents also extends to improvements



in areas of comorbidity, such as depression and other forms of anxiety. Adolescents with TAS often have depressive symptoms due to social isolation and low self-esteem. CBT addresses these symptoms with an integrative approach that aims not only at social anxiety, but also negative thoughts and behaviors associated with depression. Research shows that CBT can lead to a significant reduction in symptoms of depression, as well as social anxiety, providing comprehensive treatment (Herbert et al., 2009).

Additionally, TCC -based technological interventions, such as online therapy programs, have become increasingly popular and affordable. These interventions offer a viable and effective alternative to adolescents who may not have easy access to face -to -face therapists or who prefer anonymous online therapy. Studies suggest that online TCC can be as effective as face -to -face therapy in reducing TAS symptoms, with the additional benefit of being more accessible and flexible. TCC Online allows adolescents to participate in treatment at their own pace and the comfort of their homes, increasing adherence to treatment and positive results (Andrews et al., 2010).

## CONCLUSION

It is concluded that cognitive behavioral therapy (TCC) proves to be a highly effective intervention for the treatment of social anxiety disorder (TAS) in adolescents, providing a structured and evidence-based approach that addresses both anxiety and comorbidities symptoms addresses associated, such as depression. TCC uses specific techniques such as cognitive restructuring, gradual exposure and social skill training to help adolescents identify and modify negative thoughts and untied behaviors. These techniques not only reduce the symptoms of social anxiety, but also promote self -confidence and social competence, allowing adolescents to participate more fully in their daily and social activities.

TCC's effectiveness is supported by numerous studies that show significant and lasting improvements in the symptoms of TAS in adolescents. Gradual exposure is particularly effective,





allowing adolescents to face their fears in a controlled and systematic manner, resulting in a decrease in the fear response associated with social situations. Social skills training, in turn, enables adolescents with the tools necessary for successful social interactions, increasing their trust and reducing social avoidance.

In addition to traditional interventions, TCC has also benefited from technological advances with online therapy programs showing effectiveness comparable to face -to -face therapy. These technological interventions offer an affordable and flexible alternative for adolescents facing barriers to access to treatment, expanding the reach and viability of TCC.

In short, CBT represents a comprehensive and adaptable approach to the treatment of TAS in adolescents, providing a solid basis for improving mental health and well-being. The continuation of research and development of new CBT modalities, including technological interventions, is crucial to further expanding the access and effectiveness of this vital therapy. With proper treatment, teens with TAS can achieve significant recovery, improving their quality of life and future perspectives.

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