SOCIAL ANXIETY AS A BARRIER TO ADAPTATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

ANSIEDADE SOCIAL COMO BARREIRA NA ADAPTAÇÃO AO ENSINO SUPERIOR

ANSIEDAD SOCIAL COMO BARRERA EN LA ADAPTACIÓN A LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR

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ABSTRACT

Late adolescence constitutes a critical stage in the transition to higher education, characterized by academic, social, and emotional demands that may increase students' psychological vulnerability. In this context, social anxiety represents one of the most frequent problems, as it directly interferes with academic participation, interpersonal interaction, and emotional well-being. This article aims to analyze a psychopedagogical case study of an 18-year-old university student identified with symptoms compatible with social anxiety and avoidant traits, based on an institutional support process. A qualitative methodology with a case study design was employed, supported by analysis of the psychopedagogical record, clinical observation, and longitudinal follow-up across several intervention sessions. The analysis of the records allowed the identification of initial manifestations of social inhibition, anticipatory fear of external judgment, intense self-criticism, cognitive rumination, and maladaptive emotional regulation strategies, such as self-external dialogue. Difficulties in the perception of family support and in interpersonal self-efficacy were also observed, which intensified during the university adaptation process. The psychopedagogical intervention was structured through strategies of gradual social exposure, cognitive restructuring, social skills training, work on self-perception and body image, and the strengthening of emotional containment skills. The results demonstrate a progressive evolution of the student, reflected in increased social initiative, reduced avoidant behaviors, a decrease in the frequency of self-external dialogue, and greater integration into academic and family contexts. It is concluded that age acts as a relevant triggering factor in the onset and maintenance of social anxiety during entry into university. Furthermore, the effectiveness of early psychopedagogical intervention is highlighted as a secondary prevention strategy, as it promotes emotional regulation, adaptation to the university environment, and academic persistence, consolidating the role of the educational institution as an active agent of comprehensive support in student mental health.

Keywords: Late Adolescence. Social Anxiety. Case Study. Psychopedagogy. Emotional Regulation.

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RESUMO

A adolescência tardia constitui uma etapa crítica na transição para o ensino superior, caracterizada por exigências acadêmicas, sociais e emocionais que podem aumentar a vulnerabilidade psicológica dos estudantes. Nesse contexto, a ansiedade social representa uma das problemáticas mais frequentes, pois interfere diretamente na participação acadêmica, na interação interpessoal e no bem-estar emocional. O presente artigo tem como objetivo analisar um estudo de caso psicopedagógico referente a um estudante universitário de 18 anos, identificado com sintomatologia compatível com ansiedade social e traços evitativos, a partir de um processo de acompanhamento institucional. Empregou-se uma metodologia qualitativa, com delineamento de estudo de caso, fundamentada na análise do prontuário psicopedagógico, na observação clínica e no acompanhamento longitudinal de diversas sessões de intervenção. A análise dos registros permitiu identificar manifestações iniciais de inibição social, medo antecipatório do julgamento externo, autocrítica intensa, ruminação cognitiva e estratégias desadaptativas de regulação emocional, como o diálogo autoexterno. Também foram observadas dificuldades na percepção de apoio familiar e na autoeficácia interpessoal, as quais se intensificaram durante o processo de adaptação universitária. A intervenção psicopedagógica foi estruturada por meio de estratégias de exposição social gradual, reestruturação cognitiva, treinamento em habilidades sociais, trabalho de autopercepção e imagem corporal, e fortalecimento de habilidades de contenção emocional. Os resultados evidenciam uma evolução progressiva do estudante, refletida no aumento da iniciativa social, na redução de comportamentos evitativos, na diminuição da frequência do diálogo autoexterno e em maior integração nos contextos acadêmico e familiar. Conclui-se que a idade atua como um fator desencadeador relevante no surgimento e na manutenção da ansiedade social durante o ingresso na universidade. Destaca-se, ainda, a eficácia do acompanhamento psicopedagógico precoce como estratégia de prevenção secundária, ao favorecer a regulação emocional, a adaptação ao ambiente universitário e a permanência acadêmica, consolidando o papel da instituição educacional como agente ativo de acompanhamento integral da saúde mental estudantil.

Palavras-chave: Adolescência Tardia. Ansiedade Social. Estudo de Caso. Psicopedagogia. Regulação Emocional.

RESUMEN

La adolescencia tardía constituye una etapa crítica en la transición a la educación superior, caracterizada por exigencias académicas, sociales y emocionales que pueden incrementar la vulnerabilidad psicológica de los estudiantes. En este contexto, la ansiedad social representa una de las problemáticas más frecuentes, ya que interfiere de manera directa en la participación académica, la interacción interpersonal y el bienestar emocional. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo analizar un estudio de caso psicopedagógico correspondiente a un estudiante universitario de 18 años, identificado con sintomatología compatible con ansiedad social y rasgos evitativos, a partir de un proceso de acompañamiento institucional. Se empleó una metodología cualitativa con diseño de estudio de caso, sustentada en el análisis del expediente psicopedagógico, la observación clínica y el seguimiento longitudinal de varias sesiones de intervención. El análisis del registro permitió identificar manifestaciones iniciales de inhibición social, temor anticipatorio al juicio externo, autocrítica intensa, rumiación cognitiva y estrategias de regulación emocional desadaptativas, como el diálogo autoexterno. Asimismo, se observaron dificultades en la percepción de apoyo familiar y en la autoeficacia interpersonal, las cuales se intensificaron durante el proceso de adaptación universitaria. La intervención psicopedagógica se estructuró mediante estrategias de exposición social gradual, reestructuración cognitiva, entrenamiento en habilidades sociales, trabajo de autopercepción e imagen corporal, y fortalecimiento de habilidades de contención emocional. Los resultados evidencian una evolución progresiva del estudiante, reflejada en el incremento de la iniciativa social, la disminución de conductas

evitativas, una reducción en la frecuencia del diálogo autoexterno y una mayor integración en contextos académicos y familiares. Se concluye que la edad actúa como un factor detonante relevante en la aparición y mantenimiento de la ansiedad social durante el ingreso a la universidad. Asimismo, se destaca la eficacia del abordaje psicopedagógico temprano como estrategia de prevención secundaria, al favorecer la regulación emocional, la adaptación al entorno universitario y la permanencia escolar, consolidando el papel de la institución educativa como agente activo de acompañamiento integral en la salud mental estudiantil.

Palabras clave: Adolescencia Tardía. Ansiedad Social. Estudio de Caso. Psicopedagogía. Regulación Emocional.

1 INTRODUCTION

Entry into higher education is a critical transition stage in students' personal, academic, and emotional development, particularly during late adolescence. In this period, more complex academic demands, the need to establish new interpersonal relationships and intensive processes of identity construction converge, which increases psychological vulnerability when the resources for emotional regulation and coping are not sufficiently consolidated. From educational psychology, it is recognized that these conditions can have a direct impact on learning, academic participation and school permanence.

Within this framework, social anxiety is positioned as one of the most frequent emotional problems in the young university population. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR), social anxiety disorder is characterized by an intense and persistent fear of social situations in which the individual may be negatively evaluated by others, accompanied by avoidance behaviors, significant distress, and functional impairment in relevant areas of academic life. social or work. In the university context, these manifestations are usually expressed through verbal inhibition, avoidance of participation in class, difficulties in collaborative work and high self-criticism, interfering with the training process.

From a psychopedagogical perspective, social anxiety should not be understood only as a clinical diagnostic category, but as a phenomenon that affects academic performance and adaptation to the educational environment. Educational psychology has pointed out that learning is an integral process in which cognitive, emotional and social variables interact; therefore, the presence of social anxiety can limit the student's attention, motivation, self-regulation, and perceived self-efficacy, affecting their academic career. In this sense, social anxiety becomes a risk factor for poor performance, dropout and institutional isolation.

Late adolescence, approximately between 17 and 19 years of age, has been identified as a particularly sensitive period for the onset or exacerbation of social anxiety. During this stage, students face greater demands for emotional autonomy, social exposure, and constant evaluation, while neuropsychological systems linked to emotional control and behavior regulation continue to develop. Various theoretical approaches in developmental psychology and higher education agree that the lack of consolidated socio-emotional skills, combined with highly demanding educational contexts, can intensify the symptoms of social anxiety in new students.

In this context, psychopedagogical intervention acquires a fundamental role as a strategy for early detection and secondary prevention. Unlike exclusively clinical approaches, the psychopedagogical approach integrates the analysis of the student's emotional functioning with their academic performance and educational context, allowing the design of interventions aimed at strengthening emotional regulation, self-efficacy, social skills and university adaptation. This type of intervention is consistent with current models of mental health care in higher education institutions, which emphasize comprehensive and preventive accompaniment.

This article is oriented to the analysis of a psychopedagogical case study corresponding to an 18-year-old university student who presents manifestations consistent with social anxiety during his process of adaptation to higher education. Based on the analysis of the institutional psychopedagogical file and the monitoring of the intervention process, it seeks to articulate the theoretical framework of the DSM-5-TR with the contributions of educational psychology, with the purpose of evidencing the relevance of the early psychopedagogical approach in the promotion of emotional well-being, academic integration and school permanence in young university students.

2 DEVELOPMENT

The approach to social anxiety in the university context requires a comprehensive understanding that articulates the clinical criteria established in the DSM-5-TR with the contributions of educational psychology and psychopedagogy. From this perspective, social anxiety is not limited to a set of individual symptoms, but is configured as a phenomenon that directly impacts the learning process, academic participation and institutional adaptation of the student.

According to the DSM-5-TR, social anxiety is characterized by an intense and persistent fear of social situations in which the individual may be negatively evaluated, accompanied by avoidance behaviors and significant discomfort. In the university environment, these manifestations acquire particular relevance, since the student is constantly exposed to scenarios of social interaction and evaluation, such as participation in class, teamwork, the presentation of projects and daily coexistence with peers and figures of academic authority.

From educational psychology, it is recognized that learning is a process mediated by emotional and social variables. The presence of social anxiety interferes with key cognitive

functions such as attention, working memory, and self-regulation, which can translate into difficulties expressing ideas, requesting academic support, or actively engaging in classroom dynamics. In new students, these difficulties are often intensified due to a lack of familiarity with the university environment and the pressure to meet high academic and social expectations.

In the case analyzed, corresponding to an 18-year-old university student, initial manifestations of social inhibition, anticipatory fear of external judgment, intense self-criticism and cognitive rumination were identified, elements that coincide with the diagnostic criteria of social anxiety described in the DSM-5-TR. These manifestations were accompanied by avoidant behaviors, such as difficulty in initiating conversations, verbal inhibition in academic contexts, and withdrawal from family and social spaces. Likewise, a maladaptive emotional regulation strategy consisting of self-external dialogue was observed, used as a mechanism to reduce the feeling of loneliness and internal discomfort.

From a psychopedagogical reading, these behaviors not only reflect emotional discomfort, but also a low perception of interpersonal and academic self-efficacy. High self-demand and the presence of cognitive distortions such as "I must" or "I have to" contributed to reinforce a cycle of anxiety-avoidance, limiting the student's social and academic learning opportunities. This pattern was intensified by the perception of little emotional support in the family context and by constant comparisons with close figures who had greater social skills, which increased the feeling of personal inadequacy.

Late adolescence was identified as a key factor in the understanding of the case, since it corresponds to a stage in which emotional regulation and social coping skills are still developing. Developmental psychology and higher education agree that, during this period, students require accompaniment to strengthen socio-emotional competencies that allow them to adaptively face the demands of the university environment. The absence of this accompaniment can favor the chronification of social anxiety and the establishment of academic trajectories marked by withdrawal and demotivation.

In response to these needs, the psychopedagogical intervention was aimed at progressively strengthening the student's social and emotional skills, integrating strategies consistent with the principles of educational psychology. Gradual social exposure reduced anticipatory fear and expanded the repertoire of adaptive social behaviors, while cognitive restructuring facilitated the identification and modification of dysfunctional beliefs related to negative self-evaluation. The work on self-perception and body image, as well as training in

emotional containment skills, contributed to improving emotional awareness and interpersonal empathy.

From this perspective, the development of the case shows that social anxiety in university students cannot be addressed in isolation from the educational context in which it manifests itself. The integration of the clinical framework of the DSM-5-TR with the contributions of psychopedagogy allows us to understand social anxiety as a dynamic phenomenon, susceptible to intervention through preventive and formative strategies that favor university adaptation, emotional well-being and school permanence.

3 GENERAL OBJECTIVE AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

3.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To analyze, from a psychopedagogical approach, a case study of social anxiety in an 18-year-old university student, with the purpose of understanding its impact on emotional regulation, adaptation to the university environment and academic performance, based on the clinical criteria of the DSM-5-TR and the contributions of educational psychology.

3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

To identify the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations associated with social anxiety present in the student, according to the diagnostic criteria established in the DSM-5-TR.

To analyze the relationship between social anxiety, emotional regulation, and the college adjustment process during late adolescence, from the perspective of educational psychology.

Describe the psychopedagogical intervention process implemented and assess its contribution to the strengthening of the student's socio-emotional skills, social interaction and academic integration.

4 OBJECT OF STUDY

The object of study of this research is the **process of psychoeducational adaptation of an 18-year-old university student**, specifically the **interaction between social anxiety, emotional regulation and academic performance** during the late adolescent stage, in the context of higher education.

This process is analyzed from a psychopedagogical case study, considering the emotional, cognitive and behavioral manifestations associated with social anxiety, according to the clinical criteria described in the DSM-5-TR, as well as its incidence on academic participation, interpersonal interaction and institutional integration of the student.

Likewise, the object of study contemplates the analysis of the **impact of an institutional psychopedagogical intervention**, aimed at strengthening socio-emotional skills, cognitive restructuring and gradual social exposure, as a secondary prevention strategy to favor emotional regulation and university adaptation. In this way, the study addresses social anxiety not only as an individual clinical condition, but as a phenomenon that directly affects the educational process and that can be intervened from a comprehensive psychopedagogical approach within higher education institutions.

5 METHODOLOGY

This research was developed under a **qualitative approach**, with a **psychopedagogical case study design**, which allows a deep and contextualized analysis of complex phenomena related to emotional regulation and university adaptation. This approach is pertinent when seeking to understand subjective and relational processes that cannot be adequately addressed through quantitative methodologies.

The study focused on an **18-year-old university student**, identified with manifestations compatible with social anxiety during his process of adaptation to higher education. In order to guarantee the ethical principles of confidentiality and protection of personal data, names, registration, career and any information that would allow the identification of the participant were deliberately omitted, keeping only age as a relevant analytical variable.

5.1 TYPE OF STUDY

This was a **unique case study**, of a descriptive-analytical nature, aimed at exploring the interaction between social anxiety, emotional regulation and academic performance in a university context. This design allowed us to examine the evolution of the case over several sessions of psychopedagogical intervention, considering both the initial manifestations and the changes observed during the accompaniment process.

5.2 TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS

Information collection was carried out using various qualitative techniques, including:

- **Review of the institutional psychopedagogical file**, which contained detailed records of the sessions, clinical reports, agreements and progress observations.
- **Systematic clinical observation**, focusing on the student's verbal and non-verbal behavior, body posture, social interaction, and emotional expression during sessions.
- **Application of projective techniques of socio-emotional evaluation**, aimed at exploring aspects related to sociability, self-confidence, relational organization and self-perception in social contexts.
- **Qualitative analysis of the discourse**, based on the student's reports, with emphasis on patterns of self-criticism, cognitive rumination and dysfunctional beliefs.

5.3 PROCEDURE

The methodological procedure was developed over several consecutive psychopedagogical sessions during the academic semester. In an initial phase, indicators of social anxiety and university adaptation difficulties were identified. Subsequently, a structured psychopedagogical intervention was implemented, based on strategies of gradual social exposure, cognitive restructuring, training in social skills, self-perception and body image work, and strengthening of emotional containment skills.

The follow-up of the case made it possible to record longitudinally the changes in the student's social behavior, emotional regulation and academic integration, facilitating the analysis of the evolution of the process and the assessment of the effectiveness of the intervention.

5.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of psychopedagogical and psychological practice, guaranteeing confidentiality, respect for the dignity of the participant and the responsible use of information for exclusively academic and research purposes. The registration of signatures and consents was kept in institutional formats independent of this article.

6 DEVELOPMENTAL PHASES

In order to operationalize the methodology of the case study and account for the psychopedagogical intervention process implemented, the accompaniment was structured in **progressive and sequential phases**, designed to respond to the emotional, social and academic needs of the student during their adaptation to higher education. Each phase was based on the clinical criteria of the DSM-5-TR and the principles of educational psychology, allowing for a gradual, systematic and contextualized intervention. The description of the phases reflects the actual course of the process, as well as the evolution observed in the student's emotional regulation, social interaction, and academic integration.

Phase 1. Detection, framing and initial assessment

The initial phase of the process was aimed at detecting indicators of social anxiety and difficulties in university adaptation during late adolescence. In the first sessions, a profile characterized by marked social inhibition, anticipatory fear of external judgment, intense self-criticism, cognitive rumination and maladaptive emotional regulation strategies, such as self-external dialogue, was identified. Likewise, difficulties in initiating and sustaining social interactions were observed, as well as a withdrawn body posture and poor eye contact.

During this phase, the psychopedagogical framework of the process was carried out, establishing initial therapeutic objectives and generating a space of trust that favored emotional expression. The institutional file was reviewed and projective socio-emotional evaluation techniques were applied, which confirmed the presence of low sociability, interpersonal insecurity, need for approval, and fear of rejection. These findings were consistent with the criteria of social anxiety described in the DSM-5-TR and allowed to delimit the subsequent lines of intervention, tests for psychometrics. In order to identify the student's perceived level of security in various social behaviors, a social skills confidence scale was applied during the initial phase of the evaluation process, the results of which are presented in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1

Social skills confidence scale applied in the initial assessment phase

Note. A self-assessment instrument used to identify a student's perceived level of confidence in different social behaviors, such as initiating conversations, maintaining interactions, and expressing disagreements. The results allowed us to detect low social self-confidence in the initial phase of the psychopedagogical intervention process. Prepared by the author based on the institutional file.

As part of the initial detection and evaluation process, the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale was applied in its brief version, in order to assess the levels of anxiety and avoidance in social and performance situations; the results obtained are shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2

Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (short version) applied at the beginning of the process

Note. Instrument used to assess levels of anxiety and avoidance in various social and performance situations. The application made it possible to identify indicators compatible with social anxiety, according to the criteria of the DSM-5 and DSM-5-TR, guiding the design of the psychopedagogical intervention. Prepared by the author based on clinical records.

Phase 2. Psychoeducation and emotional awareness

Once the clinical and educational manifestations of the case were identified, a psychoeducation phase was developed aimed at helping the student understand the relationship between emotions, thoughts and social behaviors. In this stage, we worked on the identification of emotional triggers, the normalization of discomfort associated with social

interaction, and the recognition of dysfunctional cognitive patterns, particularly those related to excessive self-demand and the perception of personal inefficacy.

The psychoeducation process allowed the student to recognize the initial adaptive function of some behaviors, such as self-external dialogue, while exploring their limitations for the development of social skills. This phase favored the increase of introspection and the willingness to change, laying the foundations for the implementation of active strategies of psychopedagogical intervention.

Phase 3. Intervention in self-perception, body image and emotional regulation

With the aim of strengthening self-confidence and body awareness, strategies focused on self-perception and emotional regulation were implemented. Among the techniques used were exercises in front of the mirror, work with personal photography and color psychology, aimed at reducing the avoidance of one's own image and promoting a more empathetic relationship with oneself.

This phase allowed us to observe a progressive decrease in the discomfort associated with self-observation, as well as an improvement in body posture and tone of voice. At the same time, work was done on the recognition and validation of emotions, favoring greater emotional stability and reducing the frequency of self-external dialogue as a regulation strategy. To explore the student's self-perception, body image, and relationship with himself, a graphic projective technique was used during the intervention phase in emotional regulation, which is represented in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3

Projective representation of self-image and body perception
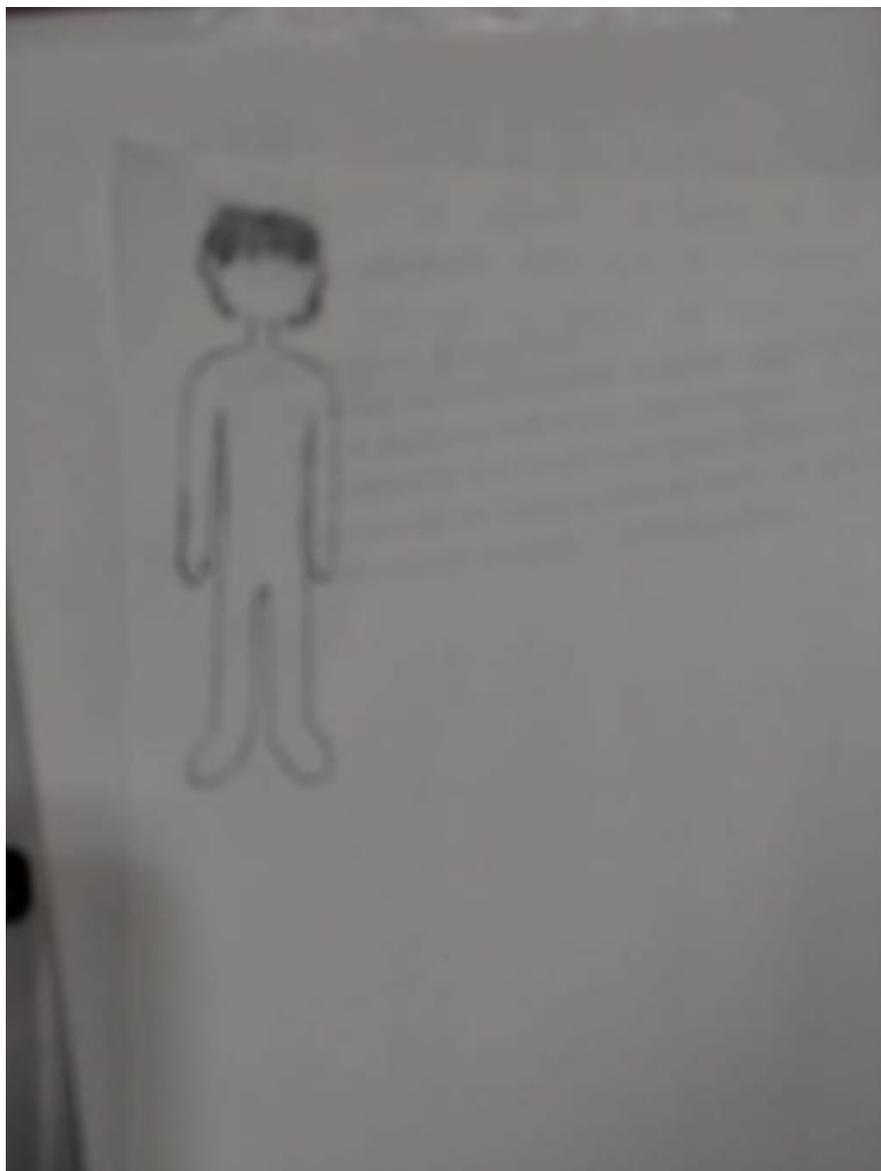
Note. Projective technique used to explore self-perception, body image, and the student's relationship with himself. The figure shows elements of emotional distancing and low integration of personal image, which were addressed during the psychopedagogical intervention. The authors.

As a complement to the graphic projective technique, the student was asked to write a self-description in order to deepen their self-concept and introspective processes; this material is presented in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4

Written production associated with the projective technique of self-description
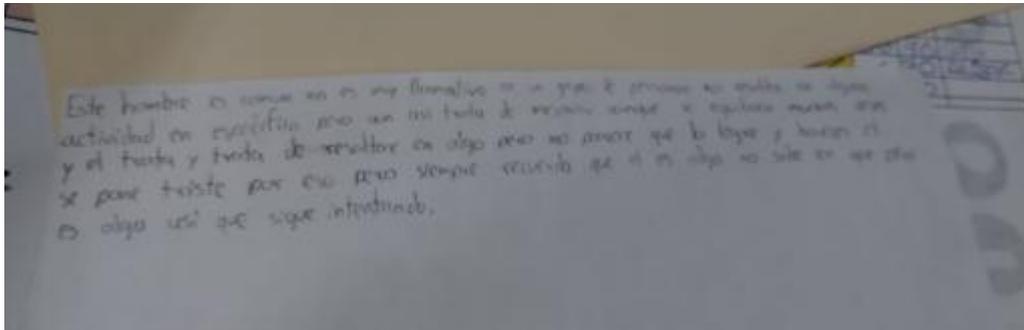
Note. Text prepared by the student as a complement to the projective technique, in which elements of self-concept, introspection and personal assessment are reflected. The qualitative analysis of this material allowed us to identify traits of self-demand, emotional sensitivity and internal resources relevant to the intervention. Prepared by the author based on clinical records.

Phase 4. Gradual social exposure and social skills training

Subsequently, the intervention focused on gradual and controlled social exposure, with the purpose of expanding the student's repertoire of social skills and reducing avoidant behaviors. Specific and progressive goals were established, such as starting short conversations, greeting colleagues, maintaining eye contact and asking questions based on observation of the environment.

Significant progress was made during this phase, including spontaneous interactions with peers, the establishment of new friendships, and greater participation in academic contexts. Likewise, emotional containment skills were worked on, teaching the student strategies to emotionally accompany others, which strengthened their interpersonal empathy and their perception of social competence. In order to evaluate relational organization, perception of interpersonal proximity, and social initiative, a projective technique with figures was applied during the phase of gradual social exposure, which is illustrated in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5

Projective technique with figures for the evaluation of sociability and relational organization

Note. A technique used to explore the student's perception of interpersonal proximity, social initiative, and participation in group contexts. The arrangement of the figures initially showed a tendency to isolation and, later, allowed us to work on social integration and gradual exposure. The authors based on the intervention session.

Phase 5. Generalization of skills and approach to the family context

As the process progressed, the generalization of the skills acquired to other significant contexts, particularly the family, was promoted. Tasks aimed at increasing emotional proximity were assigned, such as sitting with the family during daily activities and generating brief spaces for interaction with parental figures.

This phase made it possible to identify both progress and resistance in the family environment, as well as to strengthen the student's ability to tolerate the initial emotional discomfort without resorting to avoidant behaviors. An increase in empathy towards the emotional states of others and a greater willingness to maintain gradual approaches were observed, even when these generated anxiety.

Phase 6. Monitoring, consolidation of progress and partial closure of the process

The final phase of the process was aimed at monitoring the progress made and consolidating the socio-emotional skills developed. There was a sustained improvement in social initiative, emotional regulation, and academic and family integration. The student showed greater awareness of their difficulties, as well as an active commitment to their personal development process.

Due to the vacation period, a partial closure of the psychopedagogical accompaniment was carried out, establishing agreements for the maintenance of progress and the continuity of the process at the beginning of the next semester. This phase reinforced the idea that

emotional discomfort is part of the process of change and that psychopedagogical intervention is an effective resource to promote university adaptation and emotional well-being in young students.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The longitudinal analysis of the case study allowed us to identify progressive changes in emotional regulation, social interaction and academic adaptation of the 18-year-old university student throughout the psychopedagogical intervention process. The results are derived from systematic clinical observation, analysis of the psychopedagogical file and monitoring of the agreements and progress recorded during the sessions.

6.1 RESULTS

In the initial phase, the student presented a profile characterized by high social anxiety, verbal inhibition, withdrawn body posture, limited eye contact, and a marked tendency to self-criticism and cognitive rumination. Likewise, maladaptive emotional regulation strategies were identified, such as frequent self-external dialogue, as well as a low perception of interpersonal and academic self-efficacy. These manifestations coincided with the criteria described in the DSM-5-TR for social anxiety, particularly in relation to anticipatory fear of external judgment and avoidance of social situations.

As the intervention progressed, gradual but consistent changes were observed. The student was able to initiate brief social interactions, establish new relationships with peers, and increase their participation in academic and everyday contexts. At the same time, there was a progressive decrease in the frequency of self-external dialogue, as well as an improvement in body self-perception and tolerance to self-observation.

In later stages, the advances were extended to the family context, showing a greater willingness for emotional proximity and direct interaction, even when these situations generated initial discomfort. Likewise, an increase in the student's ability to resolve school conflicts, request academic support and show empathy towards the emotional states of others was identified.

In general terms, the results indicate a significant improvement in emotional regulation, social initiative and academic integration, suggesting that the psychopedagogical intervention had a positive impact on the university adaptation process.

6.2 DISCUSSION

The results obtained confirm what has been indicated by the specialized literature in educational and clinical psychology, which highlights that late adolescence constitutes a period of high vulnerability for the development of social anxiety, particularly during the entrance to higher education. The symptomatology observed in the case analyzed coincides with the criteria of the DSM-5-TR, evidencing how social anxiety can directly interfere with the student's academic performance and social participation.

From educational psychology, the findings reinforce the notion that university learning and adaptation depend on the interaction between cognitive, emotional, and social variables. The improvement observed in academic participation and interpersonal interaction after the psychopedagogical intervention suggests that the strengthening of socio-emotional skills favors self-efficacy and reduces avoidant behaviors.

Likewise, the decrease in self-external dialogue and the increase in emotional self-awareness can be interpreted as indicators of better emotional self-regulation, which coincides with studies that point out the importance of adaptive coping strategies in the prevention of the chronification of social anxiety. The generalization of advances towards the family context reinforces the idea that psychopedagogical interventions must transcend the clinical space to impact the student's significant environments.

Overall, the results and their discussion allow us to affirm that early psychopedagogical intervention constitutes an effective secondary prevention strategy, as it favors healthier university adaptation processes and reduces the risk of social isolation and academic dropout, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Evolution of psychoeducational indicators throughout the intervention process

Indicator evaluated	Initial phase	Intermediate phase	Final phase
Observable social anxiety	High	Moderate	Low
Social Interaction Initiative	Null	Occasional	Frequent
Auto-External Dialogue Frequency	High	Media	Low
Body self-perception	Negative	Ambivalent	More accepting
Academic participation	Limited	Partial	Active
Family integration	Avoidant	Gradual	Greater proximity

Note. Qualitative evaluation based on clinical observation and analysis of the psychopedagogical file.

Estimated percentage change in adaptation indicators:

Based on the comparative pre-post intervention analysis, an approximate improvement of **60–70%** in the indicators of social interaction and emotional regulation was estimated, considering the reduction of avoidant behaviors, the increase in social initiative and the generalization of skills to academic and family contexts.

The percentage is derived from a **structured qualitative assessment**, based on **multiple indicators**, not a single variable. The indicators observed were:

Indicators evaluated

1. **Social Interaction**
   o Onset: near-total avoidance, slurred speech, isolation.
   o End: spontaneous conversations, new friendships, greater initiative.

2. **Emotional regulation**
   o Onset: elevated anxiety, rumination, frequent self-external dialogue.
   o End: better emotional identification, decreased talking alone, increased tolerance for discomfort.

3. **Avoidant behaviors**
   o Onset: avoidance of eye contact, closed body posture, withdrawal.
   o End: gradual exposure, more open posture, social participation.

4. **Generalization of skills**
   o Onset: difficulties in academic and family contexts.
   o Final: application of skills with peers, teachers and family.

According to Table 2, its progress can be observed.

Table 2

Levels of Change of Interaction

0–20 %	Minimal change
21–40 %	Low Shifting
41–60 %	Moderate change
61–80 %	**Significant change**
81–100 %	Very high change

In this case:

Student **did NOT go from 0 to 100**

But **it did clearly advance more than halfway** in most indicators

That is why it is **reasonably** in the **60–70% range**, which corresponds to a **significant**, but **realistic and defensible** change.

7 CONCLUSION

The analysis of the case study showed that social anxiety during late adolescence is a relevant factor that significantly interferes in the process of adaptation to higher education, affecting emotional regulation, social interaction, and academic performance of the student. The initial manifestations of social inhibition, intense self-criticism, cognitive rumination and avoidant behaviors observed in the case analyzed coincide with the clinical criteria described in the DSM-5-TR, as well as with the contributions of educational psychology that point to the influence of emotional variables on learning.

The results of the psychopedagogical intervention process showed progressive and clinically significant changes in university adaptation indicators, particularly in social initiative, emotional regulation, and the generalization of skills to academic and family contexts. The decrease in avoidant behaviors and maladaptive emotional regulation strategies, such as self-external dialogue, as well as the strengthening of self-perception and interpersonal self-efficacy, reflect the effectiveness of early psychopedagogical accompaniment as a secondary prevention strategy.

From a psychopedagogical perspective, the study confirms the importance of intervening in a comprehensive way in the emotional and social processes of the student, recognizing that social anxiety not only represents an individual clinical condition, but a phenomenon that directly impacts the educational process. The structured, gradual and

contextualized intervention favored university adaptation and reduced the risk of social isolation and academic dropout, consolidating the role of the higher education institution as an active agent in the promotion of student mental health.

Finally, the study provides evidence on the relevance of implementing psychopedagogical programs for early detection and emotional support in new students, particularly during late adolescence. Although the findings are limited to a case study, they offer valuable elements for the design of future research and institutional strategies aimed at strengthening emotional well-being, school permanence and the integral development of the university population.

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