

A Mediated Moderator of Interpersonal Curiosity on Social Support, Social Exclusion and Social Adjustment: A University-Based Perspective

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Abstract

There are a lot of people surfed in adjustment problems in the social life. In order to explore the reasons, this research studied the relationship between social support, interpersonal curiosity, social exclusion and social adjustment. This study was aimed to explore the effect of social support and interpersonal curiosity on the relationship between social exclusion and social adjustment among Chinese undergraduates. There were 667 participants (371 female and 269 male) from 3 colleges, who completed the Social Exclusion Questionnaire for Undergraduate, Social Support Questionnaire, China College Student Adjustment Scale (CCSAS), and Interpersonal Curiosity Scale (IPCS). The result showed that the social exclusion is significant negatively related to social support and social adjustment, social support is positively related to social adjustment, and interpersonal curiosity is significantly positive related to social support and social adjustment. These findings imply that social support can mediate the negatively relationship from social exclusion to social adjustment, and interpersonal curiosity can moderate the negative relationship from social exclusion to social support. In a word, it was quite important to increase interpersonal curiosity to reduce the negative relationship from social exclusion to social support, and maintain the level of social support in order to improve the undergraduates' social adjustment.

Keywords

Social Exclusion, Social Support, Social Adjustment, Interpersonal Curiosity

1. Introduction

During the growth stage, most of people have to face a challenge about how to adapt the new environment and get along well with others. But why some of them would get along well with the society, instead the others can not?

Social adjustment is the interacting effect between individual and social environment for adjusting individual to the changes of social environment. It is a social concentrated expression between psychology and daily life for individual [1]. Other studies have shown that social adjustment includes emotional adjustment, behavioral adjustment, interpersonal

adjustment and self adjustment [2-5]. So the students from university quickly adjust to their college life makes it significant for their psychological development, psychological health and personality molding.

Piaget had explained the structure of social adjustment cognition based on the principles of Genetic Epistemology [6]. He emphasized the essence of adjustment is the balance of subject and environment. And the Lazarus proposed that the change of external condition would stimulate the cognition of adjustment, and the participants would persistence control behavior and mind to achieve the goal after assessing the internal and external resource what they own [7].

According to the existing researches at home and aboard,

social exclusion can influence the excluded person in cognize, emotion, behave, interpersonal relationship and self-esteem, which it means the excluded individuals can not adjust the social life very well. Social exclusion is an impeding process of individual affiliation need because of the exclusion from some communities or other individuals. It contains excluding, refusing, isolating, ignoring [8].

Williams and Leary believe that social exclusion would cause all excluded individuals express more negative emotion and anxiety emotion. It is more likely for excluded individuals to show more aggressive behavior [9-10], and less prosaically behavior, such as collaborate and offer help [11].

Based on the Socio Meter theory of self-esteem, individuals' self-esteem lever would decline when they have to be refused [12]. Williams and Leary propose that social exclusion declined self-esteem, Gerber and Wheeler took the measure of meta-analysis to offer the evidence which can prove the excluded individuals' self-esteem lever actually declined [13]. Therefore, the social exclusion negatively related to Social adjustment.

Social support is the general or specific supportive behavior from others which can protecting the individual from adverse environment and improve social adaptation [14]. Recent researches found that excluded individuals would shows more prevention motivations and avoid social interaction [15], social exclusion would decline the desire for social communicate and influence both excluded individuals and unexcluded individuals [16]. These evidences pointed out that social exclusion has been shown to result and substantial reeducation the possibility of communicating with others and taking care of other individuals. The previous researches showed that the excluded children who would gets less supporting from others prefer considering ambiguity messages or behavior as aggressive signals, and therefore it would bring theses children less and less social supporting [17]. Besides the excluded individuals would prefer hurting the partners, innocents, and neutral, not the people who exclude them [9-10, 18-19]. It indicates that the excluded individuals would decline getting social support and impact establishing and maintaining the interpersonal relationship. Therefore, social exclusion negatively related to social

supporting.

The previous researches had pointed out social supporting positively related to social adjustment. Social support would positively related to the adjustment of school in a significant way, the individual who can get higher social support lever can solve adjusting problems in an easier way [20]. The undergraduates had the same effect about the positive relation between social support lever and social adjustment lever [21-22].

Recent studies prove that higher social curiosity character can make individual experience more positive emotion, even express more close communication for first meeting with strangers. This kind of person would satisfy with present social relationship and appear less defend reaction [23-26]. Curiosity is the intrinsic desire for new information that will stimulate interest or relieve uncertainty [27]. So they can get more social support because of interpersonal curiosity. Even the curious persons have to face the unexpected situation about being provoked by others, they pretend to positively explore the solution and establish a health interpersonal relationship with less aggressive message, instead of choosing the way of avoid or exception [28]. The high interpersonal curiosity individual would regard this stress event as a challenge but not a kind of threaten. They hope to communicate in public way instead of taking an aggressive strategy. That is why they always want to solve the problem in a new way and explore the reason hiding the event [29-30]. Socially curious individuals might be proficient in adjusting their own behavior to successfully form new relationships and maintain existing ones [31-32]. So it assumes that interpersonal curiosity can decline the impact between social exclusion and social support.

Based on the previous statements, this article proposed a new kind of theory model to explore the relationship among social exclusion, social support, social adjustment, and interpersonal curiosity. In this model, (1) social exclusion is an independent variable. And the variable of social adjustment would be treated as dependent variable. (2) Interpersonal curiosity would be regard as a moderator to moderate between social exclusion and social support. (3) Social support is a moderated mediator to mediate between social exclusion and social adjustment.

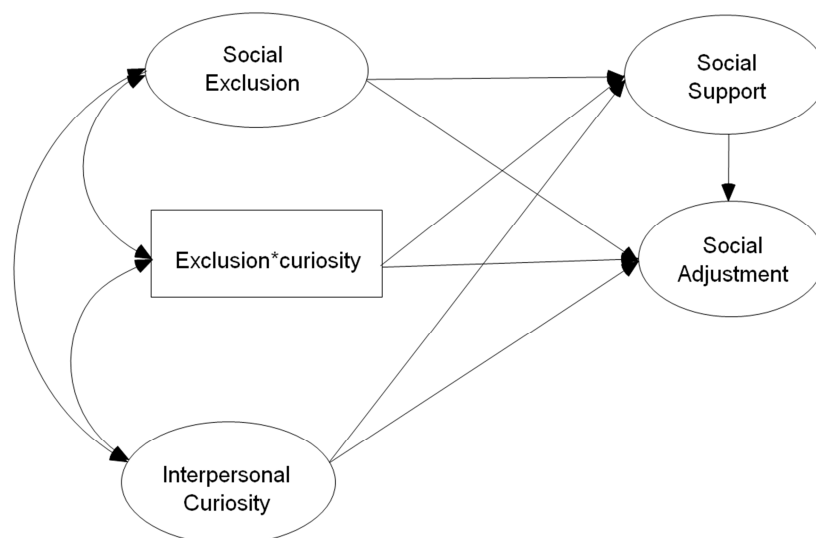


Figure 1. The model of social exclusion, social support, social adjustment, interpersonal curiosity.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The college students who are random sampling selected as participants (N=750) are from 3 different Chinese colleges named Chongqing University, Sichuan International University and Southwestern University. After issuing 750 questionnaires, 701 questionnaires were valid, so the collecting rate is 94 percent. Participants include 296 men and 371 women. Gender correlated with some variables (compared to men, women are more likes to report more social exclusion $r = -0.124$, $p < 0.01$, and reported more interpersonal curiosity $r = -0.083$, $p < 0.05$). However, in the absence of relevant psychological theorizing about the role of gender and because inclusion of gender did not qualify results discussed below, this variable will not be considered any further. The age of these participants was ranging from 18 to 25 (mean age=19.57). After rejecting invalid questionnaires, finally we get 667 participants.

2.2. Measures

The *Social Exclusion Questionnaire for Undergraduate* which is chosen by this research is designed by Huijun Wu [33]. This questionnaire includes 2 factors (direct exclusion and indirect exclusion) and 19 items. And the direct exclusion contains 10 items ($\alpha = 0.88$, these are *I am kept away from when play together, others malicious mischief me, others backbite me and influence more people, my mistake would be laughed at or criticized, others do not share feeling or experience with me, rat me out for my mistake, There is an awkward pause when I speak, others do not warn me when I might become a laughing stock, others would laugh at my failing, others look at me not friendly without reason.*); the indirect exclusion contains 9 items ($\alpha = 0.82$, these are *others do not comfort me when I feel disappointed, I can not get positive reaction even try to improve relations, others do not greet me even we have known, others slight over me when I request question, I can not receive positive reaction when I talk to others, others hardly ever attention me or know me, others would keep me at arm's length by accidentally, others do not answer me no matter what I talk about, I can not go deep into the conversation with others*). Responses were made on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The individual who gets high score means feel more excluded from others, while a low score indicate less social exclusion. In this research, the total scale $\alpha = 0.90$.

The *Social Support Questionnaire* this research chooses is designed by Shuiyuan Xiao [34]. There are 10 items and 3 factors which contains subjective support, objective support, and support availability. The factor of subjective support contains 3 items, for instance, *do colleagues care about you, I never 2 when fall in problem 3 just some of them always do 4 most of them always do*; the factor of objective support contains 4 items, for example, *whom do you live with during recent 1 year; 1 alone 2 strangers 3 friends or colleagues 4*

family member; and the factor of support availability contains 3 items, for instance, *what would you do when you have problem, 1 solve alone 2 hardly ever ask help 3 sometimes ask help 4 always seek help for friends or family*. The point is ranging from 1 to 4. And the total scale $\alpha = 0.92$, and the mean inter-item correlations were ranging from 0.89 to 0.94. The high lever scores means get more social support from others, and the low scores mean get less social support.

This research chooses China College Student Adjustment Scale (CCSAS) which is designed by Xiaoyi Fang to explore social adjustment [35]. This scale contains 60 items (for instance, *I always interest in new things, I never feel alone, I am satisfied with college life, and many friends always talk with me*) and 7 factors includes interpersonal relationship adjustment, learning adjustment, adjust to school, adjust to choose career, emotional adjustment, self adaptation, and satisfaction. Responses were made on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The but there are 19 inverted items, for example, *I do not know how to praise others, I do not know how to manage time, and I do not know how to deal with conflict*. The individual gets high score would show high adaptability for society. The low scores mean pool adaptability. In this research, the total scale $\alpha = 0.93$, and the mean inter-item correlations are ranging from 0.65 to 0.81.

The Interpersonal Curiosity Scale (IPCS) this research chooses is designed by Jordan. A. Litman [36]. The scale contains 15 items and 3 factors include curious about emotion, snooping, spying and prying.. Responses were made on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The curiosity about emotion contains 5 items (for example, *observe facial expressions to figure out feelings, and try to understand people's feelings*). The spying and prying contains 5 items (for example, *think about interviewing others as a career, and feel comfortable about asking about private life*). The snooping contains 5 items (for example, *look at things in people's room, and going into houses to see how people live*). The individual gets high points would show high interpersonal curiosity lever in the daily life, and the low scores mean less curiosity. The total scale $\alpha = 0.82$, and the mean inter-item correlations were ranging from 0.46 to 0.57.

Under the unified instruction, all participants were assessed collectively by taking class as a unit, the uniform instruction was used in the test without recording name, and the questionnaires were took back on the spot. The whole testing process is instructed by the psychology graduate students, and the process would cost about 20 minutes. After rejecting the valid participants, the dates would be processing and analysis by SPSS17.0 and AMOS17.0. And all scores are transformed into z scores.

3. Result

Since the questionnaires were tested by class and self reported, the results may produce common method bias. In order to eliminate the bias, this research takes many measures

to control the bias. In the process of control, the participants should be instructed to follow the rules of anonymity and confidentiality. In the statistical control, it is aimed to analysis date by Harman single factor testing. Be specifically, all factors of non-rotating principal component analysis (PCA) need to be tested by exploratory factor analysis (EFA). If there is only one factor shows high explanatory power, So it can indicate there exist common method bias [37-39]; if there are many factors show their eigenvalues are above 1, there must be existing common method bias [40]. According to the results from this research, there are 29 factors shows their eigenvalues are above 1, and the first factor can explain 13.12 percent variance. Based on that, the common method bias of this research can be neglected.

In order to analysis the main variable correlation, this study takes the analysis of Pearson Correlation to develop the significant correlation among them. And the results are reported in table 1. It indicates that there are significant correlations among main variables. Be specifically, social exclusion is significant negatively related to social support ($r = -0.252$, $p < 0.01$) and social exclusion is significant negatively related to social adjustment ($r = -0.36$, $p < 0.01$), social support is positively related to social adjustment ($r = 0.439$, $p < 0.01$). Interpersonal curiosity is significantly positive related to social support ($r = 0.115$, $p < 0.01$) and social adjustment ($r = 0.12$, $p < 0.01$).

Therefore the main variables need to be further analyzed in the next process.

Table 1. The correlation among the main variables.

	M	SD	Social Exclusion	Social Support	Social Adjustment	Interpersonal Curiosity
Social Exclusion	-.17	1.61	1	-.252**	-.360**	.006
Social Support	.05	2.16	-.252**	1	.439**	.115**
Social Adjustment	.21	5.19	-.360**	.439**	1	.120**
Interpersonal Curiosity	-.09	2.24	.006	.115**	.120**	1

** . In. 01 level (bilateral).

In order to validating the mediating effect of social support, this study takes structural equation model as a measure to develop the mediating effect. The social exclusion would be treated as independent variable. The social adjustment is dependent variable. And the social support is mediated variable to mediate. The result is reported in figure 2. According to model fitting reported, the $\chi^2/df = 1.96$, RMSEA = 0.038, the GFI = 0.977, AGFI = 0.962, CFI = 0.985,

IFI = 0.985. In the mediation model, it indicates that social exclusion is significantly negatively related to social support ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$), social exclusion is significantly negatively related to social adjustment ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$), the social support is significantly positive related to social adjustment ($\beta = 0.56$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, this study can announce that social support as a factor is mediating the negatively effect of social exclusion on social adjustment.

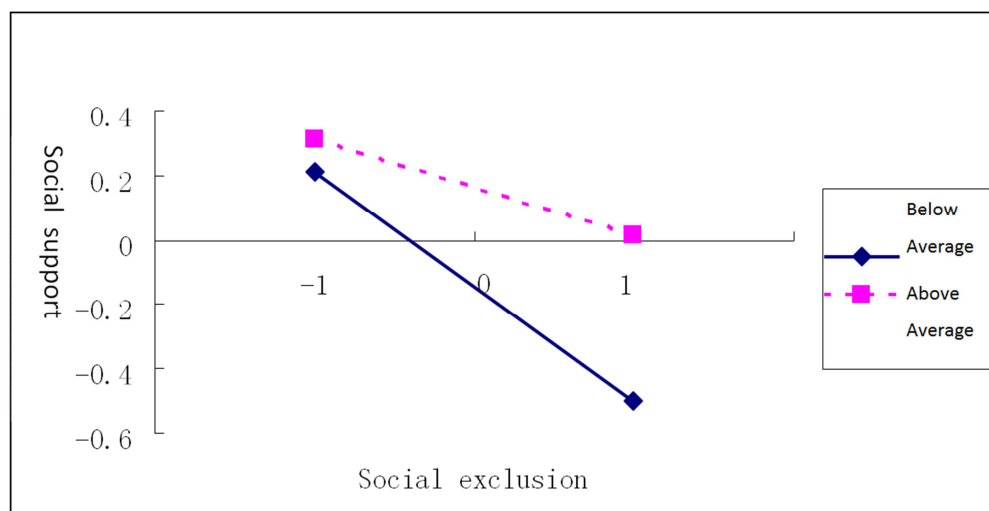


Figure 2. The moderating effect of interpersonal curiosity.

The moderated mediation model means a model contains both mediator and moderator. In this model, independent variable can influence dependent variable by mediator variable, and the process of mediating would be moderated by moderator [41-44]. In this study, social exclusion is independent variable, social support is mediation variable, social adjustment is dependent variable, interpersonal curiosity is moderation variable.

Then this research determines to take simple slope testing to analysis the moderating effect of interpersonal curiosity. This study divides the participants into 2 groups which are above and below average based on the plus-SD group and minus-group. The results indicate that the interpersonal curiosity can moderate the social exclusion to social support. The influence between exclusion and support can be reflected in the slope. Which shows that every single change of

exclusion SD can make support SD change. Based on the figure 3, when the individual's interpersonal lever is below average ($Z_{curiosity} \leq -1$), social support would reduce if social exclusion increase. ($\beta = -0.243$, $t = 3.6$, $p < 0.001$). if the social exclusion increase 1 SD, social support would decline 0.243 SD. when the individual's interpersonal lever is above average ($Z_{curiosity} \geq 1$), social support would reduce SD if social exclusion increase SD ($\beta = -0.0245$, $t = 7.9$, $p < 0.001$). If the social exclusion increase 1 SD, social support would reduce 0.0245 SD. On the contrary to low lever of interpersonal curiosity, high lever of interpersonal curiosity would impact the declination between social exclusion and social support. Which it means, the impact between social exclusion and social support would be influenced by the intensity of interpersonal curiosity.

This research proposed a moderated mediating model to

develop the significant among main variables. And the model fitting indicates that $\chi^2/df = 4.037$, RMSEA = 0.068, GFI = 0.936, AGFI = 0.903, CFI = 0.955, IFI = 0.955. Therefore, structure equation model fits well.

So all dates are put on the model for verification, and the result is reported in figure 3. It shows that social exclusion is significant to social support ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$); social exclusion is significant to social adjustment ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$); social support is significant to social adjustment ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$); interpersonal curiosity is significant to social support ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$); interpersonal curiosity is significant to social adjustment ($\beta = 0.13$, $p < 0.001$); the interaction between social support and interpersonal curiosity is significant to social support ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$); the interaction between social support and interpersonal curiosity is significant to social adjustment ($\beta = 0.009$, $p < 0.001$).

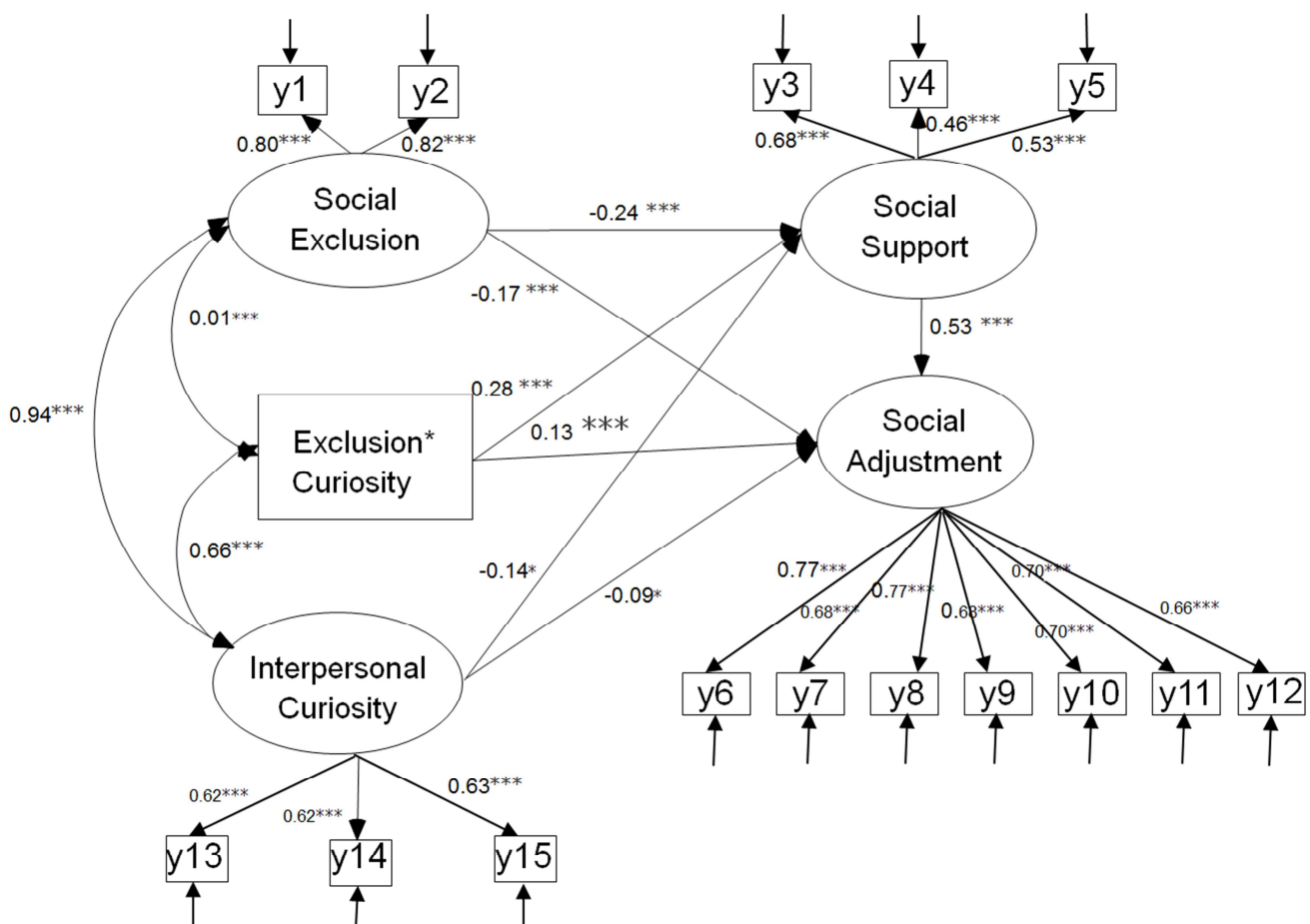


Figure 3. Path diagram of social exclusion, social support, social adjustment, interpersonal curiosity.

y1: direct exclusion; y2: indirect exclusion; y3: subjective exclusion; y4: objective exclusion; y5: support availability; y6: interpersonal relationship adjustment; y7: learning adjustment; y8: adjust to school; y9: adjust to choose career; y10: emotional adjustment; y11: self adaptation; y12: satisfaction; y13: curious about emotion; y14: spying and prying; y15: snooping

4. Discussions

According to the previous studies, this research takes structure equation model as a measure to develop the influence structure about social exclusion, social support, social adjustment, interpersonal curiosity. And it indicates that

social support can mediate between social exclusion and social adjustment, which shows consistent with former hypothesis.

Based on the correlation analysis, this research can find the social exclusion is correlated with social support and social adjustment. It proves the previous study, even though

exclusion may increase the behavior of anti-social and decrease behavior of pro-social towards the community and other persons [45-46]. But excluded people may engage in actions to regain or get new social connections [47-49]. The excluded individuals would express greater motivation to communicate with new sources of affiliations as compared to non-excluded individuals [50].

The interpersonal curiosity can moderate between social support and social exclusion. The results prove previous hypothesis. The interpersonal an moderate the whole influence structure for social adjustment. And the interpersonal curiosity shows the positive correlation with social support. As we know, interpersonal curiosity is primarily a motive to acquire information, and is not derivative of other motives or needs [51]. So it indicates that being curious about people's feelings is more likely to motivate social interaction, perhaps because obtaining information about the emotions of others requires direct interaction, individuals with poor social relations, as indicated by low levels of social support and low levels of agreeableness, may be less motivated and may have fewer opportunities to acquire social information [52]. Accordingly, inhibit social interactions and socialization are influenced by interpersonal curiosity lever.

Based on the result of slope testing, interpersonal curiosity in high lever can moderate the social exclusion to social support in a significant way. In other word, interpersonal curiosity is a significant moderator between social exclusion and social support. Furthermore, the result of SEM shows that interpersonal curiosity can influence social adjustment by moderating the social exclusion to social support. Especially, interpersonal curiosity can just moderate the first half path of social exclusion--- social support--- social adjustment. So it is useful to train individual's curiosity for gaining better adaptive capacity.

5. Further Directions

On the one hand, this research shows theoretical meaning for concerned studies: Testifying the mediating effect of social support for social exclusion to social adjustment and proposing the moderating effect of interpersonal curiosity for social exclusion to social support. It can enrich theoretical research in the field of social adjustment. On the other hand, this study reveals practical meaning for helping maladjustment individuals. Maladjustment individuals can improve adaptive capacity by developing interpersonal curiosity capacity. Such as Britta Renner proposed that people who are interpersonally curious seem to be more likely to be socially competent, sociable, and able to build networks of relationships that provide support in the face of stressful life events [52]. This proposition has been proved in this research. However, this article not designed to specifically examine the relationship between personally trait and interpersonal curiosity. For instance, individual differences in processing new social information might influence curiosity intensity and social behavior reaction. Besides, the participants are all

undergraduates from school, the sample representativeness still need to be improved. These results need to be studied in the future researches.

6. Conclusion

Through the above discussion, this study concludes that social exclusion is significant negatively related to social support and social adjustment, and social support is positively related to social adjustment. Social support can mediate between social exclusion and social adjustment, interpersonal curiosity can influence social adjustment by moderating the social exclusion to social support.

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