

A STUDY ON SELF- DOUBT AND OSTRACISM AMONG ADOLSCENCE

Mathu Mitha. S* and Dr. S. Jeya Bharathi

PG Department of Psychology, St. Mary's College (Autonomous), Thoothukudi.

Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India.

ABSTRACT

Self-doubt and ostracism are significant psychological concerns during adolescence, a critical developmental stage marked by social, emotional, and cognitive changes. This study examines the relationship between self-doubt and the experience of ostracism among adolescents. A cross-sectional research design was employed, with a sample of 270 adolescents from schools in Thoothukudi, selected using purposive sampling. Standardized tools, including the Self-Doubt Scale (Olesey Gauron, 2003) and the Ostracism Scale (Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007), were administered. Statistical analyses, including Pearson's correlation, were conducted using SPSS software. Results revealed a significant positive correlation between self-doubt and ostracism ($r = .512, p < .01$). These findings highlight the importance of addressing self-doubt in interventions aimed at reducing social exclusion. The study suggests implementing school-based self-esteem enhancement programs and peer support groups to foster resilience among adolescents. Future research should explore longitudinal designs to establish causal relationships between these psychological constructs.

Key Words: Self- Doubt, Ostracism, Adolsecence, self- esteem.

INTRODUCTION

Aim: This study aims to examine self-doubt and experience of ostracism in social situations among adolescents.

Self-doubt is the feeling that you don't trust your skills and judgment. It's a self-defense mechanism and can be beneficial because it makes us pause and consider our actions, but it can also get out of control and become nearly incapacitating, which can make it seem easier to keep ourselves small or avoid taking chances in life. However, allowing that to occur prevents us from being our best selves and from trying new things, which ultimately robs us of our happiness and sense of fulfillment

in life. Thus, self-doubt needs to be addressed.

Definition

“Self-doubt can be defined as a state of uncertainty about the truth of anything”. It might have to do with our ideas, verdicts, feelings, judgments, choices, self-perceptions, or any other "truth" we may have.

Self-doubt in Adolescence

Adolescence is a developmental stage marked by major physical, emotional, and social changes, and self-doubt is a normal feeling during this time. During this time, identity formation and self-awareness are common, which might cause doubts about one's value and skills. Adolescent self-doubt is caused by a number of things, such as negative childhood experiences, peer pressure, and cultural expectations.

Cognitive Appraisal Theory

The cognitive evaluation theory introduced by Richard Lazar and Susan Folkman in 1984 argues that their individual emotional response is affected by the evaluation of personal importance in relation to events or situations. This evaluation process, known as cognitive evaluation, defines how stress is recognized and controlled.

This appraisal process is important for emotional reaction formation and overcoming mechanisms. For example, a study of cognitive evaluation and relationships between people showed that people's stress factor evaluation has a great influence on emotional reactions and survival strategies. Cognitive reappraisal, a key mechanism to overcome this theory, can help people manage their doubts and change their interpretation of the situation. Instead of considering the problem as a threat, you can think of it as an opportunity to grow. While changing their perspectives and focusing on past success or inexpensive support, people can reduce their doubts and strengthen their confidence. Emotional regulatory strategies, such as positive dialogue and stress control methods, play a role in changing negative evaluations and increasing self -efficiency.

OSTRACISM

Ostracism is the act of excluding or ignoring someone, or a group of people. It can happen in many different situations, including at work, school, or at home. “Being ignored and excluded by individuals or groups threatens individual’s psychological and physical well-being”

Ostracism in Adolescence

Ostracism, defined as being ignored or excluded by others, is a significant concern during adolescence—a developmental period marked by a heightened need for social acceptance and belonging. Experiencing ostracism during these formative years can lead to adverse emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes.

Temporal Need-Threat Model

The Temporal Need-Threat Model (TNTM), proposed by Williams, delineates how individuals respond to ostracism—being ignored or excluded by others—over time. This model outlines three sequential stages: reflexive, reflective, and resignation.

1. Reflexive Stage: Immediately after experiencing ostracism, individuals undergo a reflexive response characterized by feelings of pain and distress. This stage involves the automatic detection of social exclusion, triggering negative emotions and threatening fundamental psychological needs such as belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence.

2. Reflective Stage: Following the initial reaction, individuals enter the reflective stage, where they consciously evaluate the ostracism episode and employ coping strategies to mitigate the threat to their psychological needs. These strategies may include efforts to reconnect socially, seeking alternative social bonds, or, conversely, engaging in antisocial behaviours, if prosocial avenues are unavailable or deemed ineffective.

3. Resignation Stage: If ostracism persists and coping mechanisms fail, individuals may progress to the resignation stage. This phase is marked by feelings of helplessness, depression, and alienation, as prolonged unmet psychological needs lead to a state of resignation.

The Belongingness Hypothesis, as proposed by Baumeister and Leary (1995), posits that humans have an intrinsic need to form and maintain enduring, positive interpersonal relationships. This fundamental drive influences emotions, cognition, and behaviour, underscoring the importance of social connections for psychological well-being.

Ostracism, defined as being ignored or excluded, directly threatens this innate need for belonging. When individuals experience ostracism, they often report feelings of

depression, loneliness, anxiety, frustration, and helplessness, highlighting the profound impact of social exclusion on one's sense of belonging.

Need for the study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of how self-doubt and ostracism shape adolescent psychological well-being, particularly in the current socio-cultural landscape. Adolescence is a crucial period for identity formation, and social exclusion can deeply impact self-perception, leading to increased vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The rise of online exclusion, cancel culture, and digital peer rejection has created new forms of social isolation, affecting adolescents' mental health more profoundly than ever before. Additionally, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to increased loneliness and disrupted social connections, further exacerbating feelings of exclusion and self-doubt. By examining the relationship between self-doubt and ostracism, this research can provide insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying social rejection and its long-term consequences. The findings can contribute to educational settings by informing peer support programs, anti-bullying initiatives, and counseling strategies to foster resilience. Moreover, understanding these issues can help parents, teachers, and mental health professionals develop targeted interventions that promote emotional security, self-confidence, and positive social interactions.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Review of literature:

Wang,Q.,Tu, R.,Hu,w., Luo,X., & zhao,F. (2021) conducted a study titled “ Childhood psychology maltreatment and depression among Chinese adolescents: multiple mediating roles of perceived ostracism and core self-evaluation” The results indicated that perceived ostracism and core self-evaluation parallelly and sequentially mediated the link between psychological maltreatment and depression.^[1]

Li,s. ,Zhao,F., & Yu,G. (2019) conducted a study titled “ostracism and aggression among adolescents: Implicit theories of personality moderated the mediating effects of self-esteem” The study shows that ostracism was linked to increased aggression in adolescents, with self-esteem acting as a mediating factor in this relationship.^[2]

Ruggieri, S., Bendixen, M., Gabriel, U., & Alsaker, F. (2013) conducted a study titled “The impact of ostracism on the well-being of early adolescents” The results from a non-English-speaking sample correspond well to the few earlier findings in adolescent and adult populations by suggesting that even brief periods of ostracism with unknown others can lead to a significant decrease in well-being in these age groups.^[3]

Russ Harris (2011) conducted a study titled “The confidence gap: A guide to overcoming fear and self-doubt” The results of the study shows that the confidence gap argues that action, not waiting for confidence, is the key to overcoming fear and self-doubt.^[5]

Sebastian, C., Viding, E., Williams, K.D., & Blakemore, S.J. (2010) conducted a study titled “Social brain development and the affective consequence of ostracism in adolescence” This study suggests that the ability to regulate distress resulting from ostracism continues to develop between adolescence and adulthood. The results are discussed in the context of models of neurocognitive development.^[6]

Research Objectives

- To find out the relationship between ostracism and self-doubt among adolescents.

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant relationship between self-doubt and ostracism among adolescents.

Variables

- Independent Variable - Self-doubt
- Dependent Variable - Ostracism

Sampling Method

The study's sample consisted of 270 adolescents. The participants belonged to the schools of Thoothukudi. This study relied entirely on primary data. A purposive sampling method was used to obtain the sample. The majority of data was collected in person by handing out questionnaires to Thoothukudi school students on voluntary participation basis.

Measures

- Self-doubt scale by Olesya Gouron(2003)- 24items
- Ostracism scale by Gonsalkore and Williams(2007)- 10 items

Procedure

The adolescents were the participants of the research and the responses were collected from them directly. After obtaining the school institution's consent to take part in the study they were requested to fill in their response to a set of questionnaires, which included demographic data. This self-reported measure the variables: Self-doubt and Ostracism. The participants were instructed to read the items carefully and respond to each questions by selecting the option that comes first ti their mind without over thinking it. They were also informed that their responses will be kept confidential. The participants approximately took 15 to 20 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the study variables

Variables	Mean	SD
Self-doubt	26.61	7.913
Ostracism	71.55	15.108

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the measured variables scores. The mean, standard deviation and the obtained by the participants in the study were revealed.

Table 2 Relationship between Self-doubt and ostracism among adolescents

Variables	'r' value
Self-doubt	
Ostracism	.512**

**p<0.01

The result presented in table 2 shows that the relationship between Self-doubt and Ostracism among adolescents. This table shows there is a positive and significant relationship between Self-doubt and Ostracism with an r value of 512**, which is significant at the level of **p<0.01. This reveals the acceptance of alternative hypothesis (H1) that, “there will be a significant relationship between self-doubt and Ostracism among adolescent”.

Discussion

From the Table 1, the descriptives of the study variables shows that the mean of self-doubt and ostracism are 26.61, 71.55 respectively and the values of standard deviation are 7.913, 15.108 respectively.

The correlation analysis in Table 2, there is a significant positive relationship between self-doubt and ostracism among adolescents ($r=.512$, $p<0.01$), supporting (H1) that ostracism is more prevalent among adolescents with higher levels of self-doubt. These findings are consistent with previous research that suggests self-doubt can increase sensitivity to social exclusion and rejection^[4] and adolescents who struggle with self-doubt may interpret confusing social interactions as exclusionary, which reinforces feelings of isolation.

CONCLUSION

Summary

The study aimed to examine self-doubt and experience of ostracism in social situation among adolescents. A cross-sectional research design was used in this study. The independent variable is Self-doubt and the dependent variable is Ostracism. A total of two seventy school going adolescents were selected from schools in the Thoothukudi District. The study utilised the following tools: The self-doubt scale by Olesya Gouron(2003), the ostracism scale by Gonsalkore and Williams(2007), and the demographic data were collected using a personal data sheet. The study includes hypotheses: there will be a significant relationship between self-doubt and ostracism among adolescents (H1), The statistical techniques used for data analysis were Pearson's correlation to find the relationship between self-doubt and ostracism, among adolescents. The data were analysed using the statistical package for social science for windows version 23.0 (SPSS).

Findings:

The following findings were drawn from the study

- There is a significant positive relationship between self-doubt and ostracism among adolescents.

Limitations:

- This study was conducted in one district, which limits its generalizability to other settings.

- The sample size of $n=270$ is small compared to the population of school students in Thoothukudi.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

- Schools should implement self-esteem enhancement programs and peer support groups to help adolescents cope with self-doubt and reduce ostracism.
- Longitudinal studies should be conducted to establish a casual relationship between self-doubt and ostracism.

Implications:

- Educators and counsellors can use these findings to develop school-based mental health programs targeting self-doubt and ostracism.
- Mental health professionals can focus on cognitive behavioural interventions to help adolescents develop positive self-beliefs.

Conclusion:

The study concluded that ostracism and self-doubt are strongly related variables and that significant role of self-doubt in shaping experiences of ostracism in adolescents of Thoothukudi district.

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