

## INFLUENCE OF OSTRACISM EXPERIENCE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21159589>

### Keywords

Social isolation, Ostracism, Higher education, Success, Academic Achievement, Self-esteem, Well-being, University students, Adults.

### Article History

Received: 24 April 2026

Accepted: 06 June 2026

Published: 21 June 2026

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** This present research explored the impact of social exclusion (ostracism) on the academic performance and self-esteem of university students. The key focus of this research is to determine the relation between ostracism and self-esteem, as well impact of ostracism on academic performance.

**Objectives:** This research highlights whether the Pakistani students experience ostracism and to what extent it affects their academic success and sense of self-worth.

**Method:** A convenient sample of 228 students were used including 92 males and 136 female participants. They were asked to complete the Ostracism Experience Scale, Academic Performance Scale and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale.

**Results:** Results indicated a significant relationship among study variables with no significant gender differences. Correlational analyses indicated the existence of significant relationship between ostracism and either academic performance or self-esteem. Regression analyses further showed that social isolation experience significantly predicted the academic performance or self-esteem. These results suggest that, for this sample, ostracism did not have a measurable influence on self-esteem of adults within a collectivist culture, but it does affect academic performance. Age is also a significant predictor of better academic performance. However, Self-esteem is positive predictor of academic performance.

**Conclusion:** The study highlights the complexity of psychosocial factors in academic success and underlines the need for future research to explore additional mediating and moderating variables that may clearly explain the connection between social isolation and student wellbeing.

### INTRODUCTION

Human beings are inherently social, and their development and wellbeing are strongly influenced by their interactions with others. In educational settings, students do not only acquire academic knowledge and learn but also build their social relationships that shape their sense of psychological well-being, self-esteem and self-identity.

Social exclusion or ostracism is the process of deliberately leaving individuals out from group

activities that are associated with feelings of being ignored, rejected, or isolated. In academic settings, ostracism can occur in the form of peer rejection, exclusion from group activities and limited social interaction with peers. Unlike outside aggression, social exclusion is a subtle and indirect process, making it difficult to detect directly but is equally harmful to individuals (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). These experiences result in feeling lonely, anxiety and low motivation that can affect the student's ability to focus on their studies

effectively. These experiences negatively impact the students' emotional well-being causing them to feel isolated, lonely and anxious (Williams, 2007). An individual's success is influenced by multiple factors and academic performance is one indicators of their success other than intellectual ability. Social interactions and peer support are important for better academic results and learning outcomes of students especially in collectivist cultures and Asian societies. Academic performance are the targets that are set by the student and teacher to attain (Narad and Abdullah 2016).

Coleman (1988) suggested that

social integration among students have stronger social support, resources and motivation resulting in better academic performance. It suggests that ostracism affects academic success and self-esteem of students in negative way by limiting their social connections.

Self-esteem is important factor that greatly impacts students' learning and personal development. It refers to a students' perception of their own self-worth and competence. As explained by (Rosenberg, 1965), self-esteem is developed through social experiences and interactions with others. The social rejection and exclusion results in low self-confidence and self-esteem of students leading to poor academic engagement and low achievement levels in students. Continuous exposure to exclusion or harassment leads to internalized negative evaluations, gradually resulting in lower self-confidence and identity stability (Olweus, 1993).

The current study focuses on investigating influence of social exclusion on academic performance and self-esteem among university students in Islamabad. This study is important as this relationship is not explored by earlier research on adults as well as within a collectivist culture. This study is helpful to identify underlying factors that affect students' success and to develop strategies for promotion of inclusive and supportive learning environments for the students in a collectivist society. By addressing social exclusion, educational institutions can get better students' academic outcomes but also achieve

overall psychological wellbeing and personal development.

Social exclusion has been consistently linked to decrease students' academic performance. When individuals experience exclusion, their cognitive functioning, motivation, and classroom engagement are negatively affected. Furthermore, social exclusion deters the self-regulation mechanism which is crucial for goal-directed academic behavior of studying, attention and motivation. As a result, individuals experiencing social exclusion are more likely to show less academic effort and lower achievement levels (Baumeister et al., 2005).

In educational settings, students that are excluded often show less participation and engagement in classroom activities visibly affecting their academic outcomes (Juvonen et al., 2011). Similarly, decline in sense of belongingness within educational setting is associated with low motivation and high dropout rates (Osterman, 2000). Research indicates that socially isolated students participate poorly in academic activities and have low achievement levels (Goodenow, 1993).

Social exclusion has visible and significant impact on individuals' self-esteem. Self-esteem is product of social interactions, and experiences of rejection or exclusion often led to a negative self-evaluation. Neuroscientific research further supports this relationship, showing that social exclusion activates brain regions that are associated with physical pain, highlighting its strong emotional impact (Eisenberger et al., 2003).

Moreover, repeated exposure to social exclusion has been linked to long-term decline in self-esteem, along with emotional withdrawal and decreased self-confidence. Individuals begin to internalize exclusion by viewing themselves as less competent or socially undesirable (DeWall et al., 2011). According to socio-cognitive theory, individuals who experience exclusion tend to have formed negative self-attributions, blaming themselves for rejection, which further damages their self-esteem (Downey & Feldman).

Studies also indicate that socially excluded

individuals report lower life satisfaction and poorer self-concept as compared to those who are socially included (Navarro et al., 2013). From a theoretical perspective, belongingness is a fundamental human need, and its absence leads to the diminished self-worth and psychological distress (Maslow, 1943).

Many researchers conducted research on self-esteem of student experiences correlated with the university. Recent research indicates that an increase in level of life satisfaction is linked with an increase in high level of academic success and self-esteem, self-efficacy which ultimately leads to a high performance (Suldo, Riley & Shaffer, 2006).

Other study on adolescence showed that students having average self-esteem had a high GPA as compared to those adolescence students having low life satisfaction level (Gilman & Huebner, 2006). Ergene (2011) determined that there exists significant correlation between academic performance and some other variables.

According to past research, life satisfaction best explores the components of cognitive aspects (Kaye-Tzadok et al., 2017). Reviews of past decades showed that more research is being done on school bullying in European and American countries (Li et al., 2017). Asian countries including China, have put less effort on bullying related studies and its effects. (Guo, 2019)

Academic performance is commonly understood as the evaluation of a student's abilities across various academic domains. According to James S. Coleman (1988), social capital derived from relationships interplay's role in shaping academic success. Factors such as student and teacher interaction, parental involvement, and peer relationships significantly contribute to students' performance. Furthermore, Academic performance is a multi-domain construct influenced by the context, knowledge, identity or personal factors (Elger, 2007). According to Morris Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem highlights relative and stable sense of personal value shaped by social interactions with others and environmental conditions.

This research aimed at investigating relationship among social exclusion,

academic performance and self-esteem of university students.

The individuals that are exposed to social exclusion perceive their educational settings unsafe resulting in social withdrawal, low participation in academic activities and decline in social engagement ultimately leading to lower academic performance.

Previous research highlights that social exclusion is negatively associated with both academic performance and self-esteem present in both male and female students. Individuals with ostracism experience are more emotionally distressed, have behavioral problems and less academic motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Therefore, to analyze the impact of social exclusion is essential for establishing supportive educational environments that improvise both academic success and psychological well-being of students.

#### *Significance of Study*

This study is meaningful as it explores social exclusion, a common but often overlooked social issue which not only affects students' academic performance but also their self-esteem especially among young adults as most of the previous researches were on adolescents. In academia, students are expected to perform academically well while maintaining healthy social interactions and relationships. However, when students are exposed to exclusion, their psychological well-being and academic engagement is disturbed (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

It contributes to the previous knowledge by highlighting the role of social relationships in academic success. This research enables to understand the impact of absence of positive social relations on performance.

It also emphasizes the importance of self-esteem as psychological factor that influence students' achievement. As suggested by Morris Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem explains an individual's sense of self-worth shaped through their social interactions. When students face social exclusion, their self-esteem declines leading to lower confidence, motivation and poor academic outcomes (Rosenberg, 1965).

### Research Objectives and Hypothesis

The goal of this study is to investigate ways in which social exclusion (ostracism) influences the academic performance as well self-esteem of university students. Specifically, the research aims at examining the relation existing between ostracism experience and levels of self-esteem, determine the level to which social exclusion impacts the academic performance of university students and to assess the potential impact of social exclusion on both academic and psychological variables such as self-esteem in the young adult population. On the basis of these objectives, it was assumed that social exclusion experience will correlate negatively with self-esteem, the students with higher levels of ostracism experience will have significantly lower academic performance scores and the social exclusion will be a significant predictor of self-esteem and academic performance among university students.

### Method

#### Research Design

The research used quantitative correlational research design. By using survey-based method, the study helped to identify patterns and associations between experience of social exclusion and its potential outcomes on the academic performance and a sense of self-esteem among students.

#### Sample

The study consists of sample of approximately 228 university students including around N=92 male participants and around N=136 female participants, with young adults' participants having an age range of 18 to 40 years. Convenience sampling, a type of non-probability sampling technique was used for selection of participants for efficient data collection from readily available population within the university environment.

#### Instruments

##### *Ostracism Experience Scale (OES)*

Ostracism Experience Scale developed by Gilman, Williams, Smith, & Brown in 2013. It is 8-item scale that is used to assess the frequency of exclusion social isolation experience. It utilizes a 7-point Likert scale (from Hardly ever to Almost

always), in which high scores indicate high frequency of perceived ostracism. Initial validation studies demonstrated strong construct validity, also it has high levels of internal consistency. Across various studies involving diverse adult populations, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient typically ranges between 0.88 and 0.93, indicating excellent reliability and homogeneity among the scale items.

*Academic Performance* was measured using the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of participants.

*Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)*. A widely recognized 10-item measure of global self-worth developed by Rosenberg (1979). It utilizes a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree), with higher scores typically indicating a higher level of self-esteem among individuals. The RSE demonstrates a Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of .92, indicating excellent internal consistency. Test-retest reliability indicates correlations of .85 and .88, indicating excellent stability. It also demonstrates concurrent, predictive and construct validity using known groups.

#### Procedure

After the informed consent was obtained, the participants were provided with questionnaire form containing the three instruments along with a brief demographic sheet including the age, gender, qualification, field of study as well as the marital status. The goal of this study was to explore social experiences and student outcomes in terms of academic performance and self-esteem, ensuring participants their responses will remain confidential, and data will only be used for research purposes. Data collection was done through both in person and through online platforms to reach the target sample size. After data collection was completed, the data was analyzed using statistical software to test proposed hypotheses.

Results

Table 1

Characteristics of the Respondents

	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	228	100	23.00	4.34
Gender				
Male	92	40.4		
Female	136	59.6		
Marital Status				
Married	38	16.7		
Single	157	68.9		
Engaged	31	13.6		
Divorced	1	.4		
Other	1	.4		
Education Level				
Intermediate	69	30.3		
Bs/ MSc	128	56.1		
MS/ MPhil	23	10.1		
PhD	8	3.5		
Field of Study				
Medicine	11	4.8		
Natural Sciences	16	7.0		
Social Sci./ Humanities	87	38.2		
Engineering	39	39.0		
Other	11	11.0		
CGPA	228	89.9	3.28	0.462

Note: N = 228, SD = Standard Deviation, Frequency = n, cgpa = cumulative grade point average



**Table 2**

*Psychometric properties for Scales used*

Scale	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's Alpha $\alpha$
Ostracism Experience Scale	21.59	10.13	.285	.914
Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale	24.54	7.092	11.32	.670

Note. N = 228, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

The above table indicates that the ostracism experience scale (OES) has a higher internal consistency i.e., .914 which is excellent internal consistency as compared to satisfactory internal

consistency i.e., .70. The internal consistency for Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES) however is less than satisfactory for this sample i.e., .670 as compared to .70.

**Table 3**

*Correlation among Study Variables*

Variables	Age	Ostracism Experience	Academic Performance	Self-Esteem
Age	–	.120	.180**	.107
Ostracism Experience		–	-.143*	.114
Academic Performance			–	.157*
Self-esteem				–

Note: N = 228, Two-Tailed Significance (Correlation significant at  $p < 0.01^{**}$  and  $p < 0.05^*$ )

The above table demonstrates that the relationship among ostracism, academic performance and self-esteem using Pearson's correlation coefficients. The results indicate that academic performance has significant and positive correlation with age suggesting that older students tend to have slightly higher GPAs. Results indicate that the ostracism experience was negatively correlated with academic performance ( $r = -.14, p$

$< .05$ ) suggesting more ostracism experience is related to lower academic performance. Academic performance showed significant positive correlation with self-esteem ( $r = .157^*, p < .01$ ), suggesting that the higher academic performance of participants was associated with higher self-esteem levels. However, no other correlations reached statistical significance.

Table 4

*Predicting Academic Performance from Self-esteem, Ostracism experience and Age*

Predictors	B	SE	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
				.063	5.047	
Constant	3.23	.203				<.001
Age	.15	.007	.153			.020
Ostracism Experience	-.005	.003	-.110			.094
Self-esteem	.016	.008	.128			.052

Note: N= 228,  $p < .001$ , Dependent Variable = Academic Performance

Multiple regression model was used for predicting the academic performance from age, ostracism experience, and self-esteem which revealed a significant result  $F(3, 224) = 5.05, p = .002$ , explaining about 6.3% of the variance. Age was significant positive predictor of academic performance ( $\beta = .15, p = .020$ ) while the ostracism

experience ( $\beta = -.11, p = .094$ ) was non-significant predictor indicating that greater ostracism experience leads to poor academic performance. However, self-esteem indicated a weak positive trend with high self-esteem is linked to better academic performance.

**Discussion**

The study explored relationship between the ostracism experience, academic performance and self-esteem among university students. The findings suggested that ostracism experience did not significantly predict self-esteem, while it results in poor academic performance. The sample consisted mainly of young adults with a mean age of 23 years with a dominant population of females in this sample single and enrolled in bachelor-level programs across diverse academic fields. The average CGPA of students was relatively high, indicating a satisfactory level of academic standing. Psychometric analysis of sample showed excellent reliability for the Ostracism Experience Scale while the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale had slightly lower value of reliability that may have altered the statistical findings for self-esteem.

esteem due to peer support and emotional fulfillment. Age is highly correlated with better academic performance due to more experience and maturity with increasing age. The results for regression analysis confirmed that ostracism explained variance in academic performance suggesting that various other factors like social support, emotional intelligence and personality traits have more effect on academic performance and self-esteem.

Correlation analysis indicated that ostracism experience was negatively related to the academic performance and academic performance & self-esteem of students are highly correlated, which supports the existing literature. There was positive correlation between academic performance and self-esteem which suggests that most of high-achieving students may have high self-

Culture plays prominent role in shaping social interactions. As collectivistic societies often are associated with strong family or peer support that buffers effects of social exclusion.

Additionally, with the increase of digital communication, the traditional measures of ostracism are altered and have become more complexed so it can alter how exclusion is experienced. Overall, this investigation contributes to literature by showing that ostracism may not be source of poor academic outcomes and self-esteem universally, and it can depend on cultural, circumstantial and individual difference factors.

### Limitations of the Study

Several shortcomings in this research include the cross-sectional design. This study heavily focused on self-report measures with a limited sample scope and also unequal gender distribution resulting in lower reliability of the self-esteem scale. Some of the important psychological variables such as depression, anxiety, resilience and coping strategies were not part of this study, and different forms of ostracism were also not distinguished which could have given a better result. However, cultural influences were also not directly measured despite their potential importance which could have better explained the relationship among study variables.

### Suggestions and Recommendations

From these research findings, future research should adopt a longitudinal research design including a larger and more diverse sample for comprehensive research. Investigation of additional psychological variables as mediators or moderators should also be considered. Researchers can also explore different forms of ostracism and employ a qualitative method for deeper insights and improved measurement of reliability through utilization of culturally sensitive scales. Finally, future studies should explore the cultural and societal impacts on social exclusion experience to better understand how collectivistic environments shape coping mechanisms in individuals and their motivation to perform better in different life aspects.

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