

Negative Cognitive Style among Adolescents

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Abstract

This current descriptive study was conducted to compare the level of negative cognitive style among adolescents on the basis of gender and socioeconomic status to deeply understand the phenomena of negative cognitive style. Adolescents Cognitive Style Questionnaire-Short Form (ACSQ-SF) scale was used to measure negative cognitive style. The sample was selected through convenient sampling method and consisted of 370 participants with age range of 13-21years. Data analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS, 23 Version). Findings indicated that boys show more negative cognitive style as compared to girls and socio-economic status does not influence the negative cognitive style among adolescents.

Introduction

Personality is formed by three significant components included emotions, cognition and behavior. Cognition play fundamental role in personality and influences emotions and behavior. The mental process such as judgment, perception, awareness and reasoning called as cognition (Lucas-Stannard, 2003). Cognitive style is instinctive and reflects the manner in which a person thinks and involuntarily reacts to information (Riding, 2014). The style of attributing events may be considered as cognitive style which is different from person to person. Cognitive style is a type of bridge which connects personality with cognition (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1997). It can be optimistic or pessimistic. These both type of cognitive style influence mentally healthy or unhealthy personalities respectively, for example according to two studies , negative cognitive style was play a role of mediator between the depression and self-compassion (Zhou et al, 2013) and another

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study explained that greater mindfulness was related with less emotional distress, it is also associated with minimal perceived stress and cognitive bias (Ford & Shook, 2018).

Terrible experiences of life may develop the depressive schemas which can be exposed to depression later in life. "Negative cognitive triad" was formed from the maladaptive schemas, which were the consequence of stressors in life (Disner et al., 2011). Negative cognitive style does not influence only the cognitive system, beside this it also directly affect the negative feelings and behavior of people. A study showed that father acceptance-rejection was correlated with negative self-view, hostility, emotional unresponsiveness, and depression in adolescents (Malik et al., 2014). Another study explained that adolescents who ran away from residence were those who perceived their parents pessimistically (Ijaz & Mahmood, 2012).

A longitudinal research revealed the significant association between the suicidal thoughts and negative cognitions, self-injuries and behaviors. It is due to negative thought content, which involved in negative beliefs about the world, one self, and pessimistic information processing, which is the developmental procedure of depressive belief system due to bad or unpleasant experiences of life (Cha et al., 201). Another longitudinal study consisted of six years conducted on children showed that first major depressive episode was correlated by severe level of pessimistic cognitions which was correlated with stressors that is achievement. It further explained that depressive period in adolescents was significantly related with severe level of pessimistic thinking but not related with low level of pessimistic thinking. Negative cognitions were connected with low self-worth, and low self-worth was further associated with pessimistic attribution style which was related with interpersonal stressors, and interpersonal stressors were associated with depression (Smith & Garber, 2011).

Recent findings show that the prevalence rate of major depression is severe in adolescents as compared to adults. Results of factor analysis show the relationship of depression with negative thinking and attribution style, results also emphasize that depression because of negative cognition may not treated (Gotlib et al, 1993). Negative cognitive style is correlated with depression among students of universities due to their educational problems. Boys scored more in self-worth and stability while girls scored more on

internality based cognitions. Somatic illnesses, depressed feelings and interpersonal problems were also common in them (Perveen, 2015).

Hence pessimistic cognitive style is consisting on the negative thinking and feelings. These consistence pessimistic thinking and feelings may increase across adolescence period of life. Adolescence is the phase of life involved in childhood and adulthood. The age range of 10-24 years relates more deeply to development and understanding of this period of life (Sawyer & Patton, 2018). It is the most emotional phase of an individual's life in which rapid and psychological and physical developments are happened. It is a period in which dramatically affective changes occur which may be the consequence of biological changes for example secretions of hormones. A chance of stress and pessimistic thinking is increased because of emotional changes (Ma & Fang, 2019). So this period is very emotional, uncertain and is associated with psychopathologies. Major changes taking place in this phase influence the pessimistic cognitive biases among youngsters (Slavny et al., 2019).

Negative and impulsive behavior is an significant aspect of adolescence which cannot be ignored, it may be due biological changes occurred at this period. A longitudinal research on boys discuss about pubertal transitional period of adolescents which was associated with stressful life events and internal and external distress (Ge et al., 1993). Another longitudinal study showed that girls who reached puberty early in life were more vulnerable to pessimistic thinking (Ge et al., 2003).

This study was conducted to compare the level of negative cognitive style among adolescents on the basis of gender and socioeconomic status of their parents. Negative cognitive style is most significant causal factor of distress, low self-esteem, emotional instability, pessimistic attitude, depression (Silberschatz et al., 2016). (Safford, 2008 cited as) Negative life experiences not only direct to depression but often depression also increases the threat of aversive life events. So this variable is important to discuss in the context of Pakistan.

In this study, negative cognitive style was compared between gender and socioeconomic status to deeply understand the negative cognitive style as it is most fundamental aspect of the personality.

Method: Objectives and Research Design

This study was conducted to examine negative cognitive style by comparison between gender and socio-economic status.

Research Design

The study followed descriptive research method, it compare the level of negative cognitive style between boys and girl, and for three socio-economic groups including (Rs25000 &below) (Rs26000 to 100000), and (Rs100000& above). For this purpose t-test and one way ANOVA was used to analyze variables.

Adolescent Cognitive Style Questionnaire–Short Form (Adapted version; Arshad, 2021)

ACSQ-SF was used to evaluate cognitive style of participants. It has 9 hypothetical negative events with three domains of the life including, interpersonal, achievement, and appearance. Each domain was measured through 3 items (hypothetical events) and each item further contained five parts. Responses of items contained seven options rated as (1-highly positive to 7 as highly negative) and the score range was 60-420. The test re-test reliability of scale was calculated as .93 and .96.

Sample

Sample for this study comprised of 370 participants. It was collected from schools and colleges from the cities of Quetta and Abbottabad at convenient. Sample consisted of girls ($n= 170$) and boys ($n= 200$). The required age range for adolescents was 13-21 years and further divided into three age groups comprised as participants with 13-15 age range were included in group 1, participants with the age between 16 -18 were included in group 2 and participants with the age between 19-21 were included in group 3.

Procedure

First of all, permission was taken from the respective higher authorities (principles) of the schools and colleges. Informed consent forms were filled by all participants to assure that they are participating at their own will. Then demographic forms were filled by all of them. Items of scale were orally explained to them to avoid any confusion. Participants were permitted

to ask any queries related to items. All the collected data was entered into IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version-23)

Results of the Study

Demographics analysis was conducted to compare the level of negative cognitive style and within two groups including gender and socioeconomic status. Gender groups consisted of boys and girls, while socioeconomic groups were formed on the basis of monthly income described in an article by Durr-E-Nayab (2011). Income consisted of high (Rs 100000 & above), middle (Rs 26000 to Rs100000) and low (Rs 25000 & below) status.

Table 1

Mean Difference and Standard Deviation of Scores Adolescents Cognitive Style Questionnaire –Short Form for Gender Groups; (N=370)

Scales	Gender Groups				<i>t</i> (df=368)	<i>P</i>	95% CI		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Boys (<i>n</i> =200)		Girls (<i>n</i> =170)				LL	UL	
	M	SD	M	SD					
ACSQ-SF	166.65	39.163	150.403	37.45	4.287	.000	8.796	23.704	0.424

Note. ACSQ-SF= Adolescents Cognitive Style Questionnaire –Short Form

Table 1 shows mean difference and standard deviation of adolescents' scores on Adolescents Cognitive Style Questionnaire –Short Form. Results indicate that boys seem to show significantly ($p \leq .001$) more negative cognitive style as compared to girls.

Table 2
Mean Difference and Standard Deviation of Adolescents' Scores on Adolescents Cognitive Style Questionnaire –Short Form for Income Groups; (N=370)

Scale	Income Groups						F	P
	Rs25000 &below		Rs26000 to 100000		Rs100000& above			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
ACSQ-SF	162.60	38.065	156.79	337.221	162.14	38.510	.784	.504

Note. ACSQ-SF= Adolescents Cognitive Style Questionnaire –Short Form

Table 2 shows mean difference and standard deviation of adolescents' score on Adolescents Cognitive Style Questionnaire. Results indicate non-significant mean difference on negative cognitive style for the three age groups.

Discussion, Implication and Limitation

Aim of the study was to explore the influence of gender and socio-economic status on the negative cognitive style. Results explained that boys showed more negative cognitive style as compared to girls. This may not consistent with earlier literature which report girls indicated more psychological distress than boys, literature also explained the findings as depression was more common in girls than boys (Lewis G, 2018). This finding may have resulted from the fact that girls may not have given correct information due to social acceptance. Results also showed non-significant mean difference on negative cognitive style for the three income high (Rs 100000 & above), middle (Rs 26000 to Rs100000) and low (Rs 25000 & below) groups. It indicated that socio-economic status of individuals does not influence their thinking pattern or cognitive process.

Thus current study is useful to understand the negative cognitive style along with the influence of gender and socioeconomic status on it. In psycho educational fields, significance of negative cognitive style is quite evident.

Considering the educational field, our findings give base to aware the teachers and parents about negative cognitive style. In clinical settings, current study may also guide psychologists to consider the role of negative cognitive style which may be the cause for symptoms of mental problems.

The current research has few limitations. First, self-reporting based scales were used in the study so social desirability is not controlled. Secondly, many other problems may relate with the negative cognitive style among adolescents but current research cannot explore all the possible correlates.

So the findings of current study have indicated that boys show more negative cognitive style as compared to girls and socio-economic status does not influence the negative cognitive style among adolescents.

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