Asian Social Studies and
Applied Research (ASSAR)
Published by ASAR Council

Volume 2 Issue 3
August, 2021
ISSN (E): 2709-9229

Sexual Intrusive Thoughts, Stalking and Implicit Self-Esteem in Early Adulthood

SALEHA NAEEM
Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore Pakistan.

SHAHNILA TARIQ (PhD)
Associate Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, School of Professional Psychology, University of Management and Technology, Lahore Pakistan.
Email: Shahnila.tariq@umt.edu.pk

BEENISH MUBEEN
Lecturer, Department of Applied Psychology, School of Professional Psychology, University of Management and Technology, Lahore Pakistan.
Email: beenish.mubeen@umt.edu.pk

Abstract

The present study aimed to explore the relationship between sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and implicit self-esteem in early adulthood. It was hypothesized 1) there will be a positive relationship between sexual intrusive thoughts and stalking and negative relationship between stalking and implicit self-esteem in early adulthood. 2) Sexual intrusive thoughts and stalking will likely to predict implicit self-esteem in early adulthood. It was correlational research design. The sample consisted of 105 adults with age range 21 to 25 years (M=23, SD=1.5). The data were collected from different departments of University of the Punjab, Lahore. The Impact of Event Scale – Revised (Christianson & Marren, 2013), Stalking Behavior Checklist (Coleman, 1997) and Self-Liking and Competence Scale (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995, 2001) were used to collect the data. Results showed significant positive relationships between sexual intrusive thoughts and stalking and negative relationship between stalking and implicit self-esteem in early adulthood. Results also showed that stalking behavior negatively predicts the implicit self-esteem, while sexual intrusive thought did not predict it. Results showed significant difference in sexual intrusive thoughts among adults living in joint and nuclear family system. The results highlighted that awareness of hardy personality should be spread among the adults who have to deal with high stress situation and stop thinking about one person and keep themselves busy totally; occupy themselves especially mentally in whatever they like.

Key Words: *Sexual Intrusive Thoughts, Stalking, Implicit Self-Esteem.*

Introduction

Human have primary physical needs in which sex is one of the basics. As our culture have a strong influence of religion so it put some norms to fulfill sexual need (Mchome, et al., 2020; Van Slyke & Szocik, 2020) suggested that there is an increasing level of media interference that enhances the urge to fulfill sex desires without having to marry a person and own a family. Our young generation has tremendous amount of ways as compared to the past years, our children now start watching dramas and movies at the age when they are barely sensible, that's the teaching they get from television, mothers are too busy in their house hold that they prefer making them sit in front of television and then they get to learn

everything without a bound of culture or religion, before appropriate age , young generation develop insight regarding sexual relationships (Leung , et al., 2019; Pound, et al., 2017). This acts as a total misconception which is opposite to the roots they had built in their early years of life (Ashley, 2020).

Sexual intrusive thoughts are obsessive thoughts of unintentionally causing unintended sexual harm to others (e.g. to children). Unwanted intrusive thought is defined as any distinct, identifiable, cognitive event that is unwanted, unintended and recurrent. It interrupts the flow of though, interferes, in task performance, is associated with negative effects and it's difficult to control (Brewer, 2021). It has been long studied that the unwanted intrusive thoughts are a distinctive aspect of obsessive disorders, a huge number of normal people report the existance of unwanted intrusive thoughts, images or desires, more common in adults (Canavan, 2020; Costanzi, et al., 2021). Undesirable distressing views are ambiguous image or desire that will perpetually disturbed individual. Fixations are distressful also a sense of self harming and individual somewhat psychologically gets stuck (Lancer, 2020; Vorholter, 2019). Many stalkers come in relationships using sufferers, yet considerable proportions often in no way to gain his or her sufferers, or even were simply just acquaintances: neighborhood friends, pals or even co-workers. Stalkers are categorized into three wide-ranging categories: Seductive associate stalkers, delusional stalkers as well as vengeful stalkers (Menzies, 2019; Broudy, 2021).

Self-esteem is frequently a term employed one's evaluation about his or her self-worth. An individual's self-esteem is usually associated with self-consciousness (Coffey, 2020; Korner, 2021; Salice, 2020). On the contrary other symptoms such as negative psychological effects, including nervousness, rage, suppression, depression in addition to implied self-doubt (Chambers, 2018; Selman, 2021; Yakushko & Blodgett, 2021).

Attachment theory has been used to shed light on maladjusted interaction in sexual intrusive thoughts, implicit self-esteem and stalking behaviour. In all intents and purposes, the theory predicts that one's adult attachment approach is strongly predisposed by the worth of the parent–child affiliation (Bowlby, 1980). Maslow's hierarchy of need theory is also known as theory about human motivation, which emphasized the most important one as biological need. Socio-meter theory (Hitti, 2019) developed this viewpoint, suggesting that view toward one's capacities as an interpersonal screen of the degree to which an individual is esteemed or degraded by others as a relational partner in crime (Alhujailli, Karwowski & Hancock, 2020; Onyach, 2021).

According to Nijdam et al., (2018) stalking victims have a heightened prevalence of psychopathology, and the extent to which symptom levels are associated with stalking features. High levels of psychopathology were found among stalking victims. Symptom levels were comparable to those of psychiatric outpatients. Seventy-seven percent had a symptom level indicating a diagnosable psychiatric disorder. The frequency, pervasiveness, duration and cessation of stalking were associated with symptom levels, but explained only 13 percent of the variance of the level of distress. Stalking victims generally have many symptoms of psychopathology. The symptoms are largely independent of features of their stalking experience (Turner, 2020; Wheatley, et al., 2020).

Rationale of the Study

Sexual intrusive thoughts are largely experienced at the stage of early adulthood and now these thoughts are rapidly increasing among adolescent. Sexuality in adolescence can been related to potentially sexually intrusive thoughts and behaviors like stalking. Further, early adolescents are characterized with the period where adult strive for competence/freedom and it directly links with development of implicit and explicit self-esteem (Hofer & Hagemeyer, 2018). These days access to social networking sites, reduced parental

involvements and affecting adolescent's behavior. Access to content related sexuality is easily available. Stalking is a commonly reported behavior by adolescents. Further, adolescents also take romantic and dating relationships as challenge due to peer pressure and it can affect their self-esteem.

Objective of the Study

- To study the relationship between sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking behaviors and self-esteem in early adulthood.
- To predict the implicit self-esteem by sexual intrusive thoughts and stalking in early adulthood.

Hypotheses

- There will be a positive relationship between sexual intrusive thoughts and stalking and negative relationship between stalking and implicit self-esteem in early adulthood.
- Sexual intrusive thoughts and stalking will likely to predict implicit self-esteem in early adulthood.

Additional Hypotheses

1. There likely to be significant difference in sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and implicit self-esteem among adults living in joint and nuclear family system.
2. There is likely to be a significant difference in sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and implicit self-esteem among adults depending on marital status (single, committed and married).
3. There is likely to be a significant difference in sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and implicit self-esteem among adults depending on internet usage.

Method

Correlational research design was used to study the relationship between sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and explicit self-esteem in early adulthood.

Sample

The sample comprised of 105 adults of age range 21-25 years (*M*=23, *SD*=1.5). Data were collected from different departments of a public university i.e. University of the Punjab, Lahore through convenient sampling technique.

Assessment Measures

Demographic Information Sheet

It included age, gender, education, number of siblings, birth order, health status and question about internet usage.

The Impact of Event Scale - Revised (Christianson & Marren, 2013)

Sexual intrusive thoughts were measured by intrusion subscale of Impact of Event scale- Revised developed by Christianson and Marren (2013). It is self-report measure and consists of 22 items. The tool

is not diagnostic for PTSD, is an appropriate instrument to measure the subjective response to a specific traumatic event in the response sets of intrusion (intrusive thoughts, nightmares, intrusive feelings and imagery, dissociative-like re-experiencing), avoidance (numbing of responsiveness, avoidance of feelings, situations, and ideas), and hyper arousal (anger, irritability, hypervigilance, difficulty concentrating, heightened startle), as well as a total subjective stress IES-R score. The reliability of the scale was .74.

Stalking Behavior Checklist (Coleman, 1997)

Stalking behavior was measured by Stalking Behaviour Checklist developed by Coleman (1997). It is 32-item scale, consisted of two subscales i.e. i) risks the victims might face by violent behaviors from their stalker ii) stalking/harassing behaviors the victims may be experiencing from their stalker. Items were rated using scales ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (once a day or more). The reliability of the scale was .93.

Self-Liking and Competence Scale (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995, 2001)

This scale developed by Tafarodi and Swann (1995) was used to measure implicit self-esteem in early adulthood. It is a 16-item instrument designed to measure two dimensions of global self-regard: self-liking (a generalized sense of one's worth) and self-competence (a generalized sense of one's efficacy). Items are rated using Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability of the scale was .66.

Procedure

Prior to the data collection, permission of the scales was taken by their authors through e-mail. For the purpose of collecting data from the university, permission was obtained from the institution's respective administrations. After having permissions, convenient sampling technique was used to identify the potential participants. A written consent was taken from the participants after explaining them the purpose and nature of the research and ensuring them the confidentiality of their participation. It took approximately 10-20 minutes to complete the questionnaires. The questionnaires were collected from the participants. SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Science) was used for data analysis.

Results

To check the relationships between sexual intrusive thought, stalking and explicit self-esteem in early adulthood, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was run (See Table 2).

Table 1: Relationship between Sexual Intrusive Thoughts, Stalking and Implicit Self-Esteem in Early Adulthood (N=105)

Variable	2	3
1. Sexual Intrusive Thoughts	.19*	.09
2. Stalking		-.37**
3. Implicit self esteem		

Note.*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 1 showed significant positive relationships between sexual intrusive thoughts and stalking in early adulthood, while stalking behavior showed significant negative relationship with implicit self-esteem.

To see that whether sexual intrusive thoughts and Stalking are predictors of implicit self-esteem or not, Multiple Regression analysis was conducted (See Table 3).

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Implicit Self-Esteem through Sexual Intrusive Thoughts and Stalking in Early Adulthood (N=105)

Predictors	B	SE	β	t	P
Sexual intrusive thoughts	0.21	0.11	0.16	1.80	0.07
Stalking	-0.11	0.02	-0.40	-4.39	0.00
R^2	0.16				
F	16.13				

Note. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Results showed the stalking negatively predicted the implicit self-esteem in early adulthood while sexual intrusive thoughts did not predict it. To check the difference in sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and implicit self-esteem in term of family system Independent sample *t*-test was conducted (See Table 4).

Table 3: Independent Sample t-test Determining Differences in sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and implicit self-esteem between Joint and Nuclear family system (N=105)

	Joint (n=50)		Nuclear (n=54)				95% CI		
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t (103)	P	LL	UL	Cohen's d
SIT	13.9	6.1	17.6	6.4	-3.02	.00	-6.15	-1.27	0.59
Stalking	99.1	35.5	94.9	26.3	.69	.49	-7.90	16.29	0.13
ISE	48.2	8.3	46.6	8.6	.92	.36	-1.76	4.82	0.18

Note. *p < .05. **p < .01. SIT= Sexual Intrusive Thought; ISE= Implicit Self esteem.

Results showed significant differences in sexual intrusive thoughts in early adulthood depending upon their family system. It is indicated that early adults living in nuclear family system experience more sexual intrusive thoughts (*M*= 17.6, *SD*= 6.4) are compared to early adults living in joint family system (*M*= 13.9, *SD*= 6.1).

It was hypothesized that there is difference in study variables on the basis of marital status. One Way ANOVA was conducted to see the differences (See Table 5).

Table 4: One Way ANOVA for Comparing Marital Status in Sexual Intrusive Thoughts, Stalking and Implicit Self-Esteem in Early Adulthood (N=105)

	Single (n=63)		Committed (n=26)		Married (n=16)			
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F (2, 102)	p
SIT	16.77	5.31	14.50	7.84	14.68	8.38	1.44	0.24
Stalking	01.01	34.51	95.23	26.06	83.43	16.45	2.20	0.11
ISE	47.69	8.58	46.26	08.63	48.06	07.62	0.32	0.72

Results indicated that there are no significant differences on sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and implicit self-esteem in early adulthood depending on marital status. In order to find difference regarding

sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and implicit self-esteem among early adulthood across three types of internet usage, One Way ANOVA was conducted (See Table 5).

Table 5: One Way ANOVA for Comparing Internet Usage with Sexual Intrusive Thoughts, Stalking and Implicit Self-Esteem in Early Adulthood (N=105)

	Day time (n=29)		Night (n=47)		Both (n=29)			
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F(2,103)	p
SIT	15.68	4.98	14.08	6.76	19.03	6.61	5.58	0.00
Stalking	01.01	34.36	92.25	26.13	01.00	34.11	.93	0.36
ISE	46.10	10.90	48.65	06.94	46.65	07.71	.08	0.37

Results indicated that there are significant differences on sexual intrusive thoughts among different types of internet usage. Post hoc analysis using Tukey procedure indicated that the early adulthood who use internet both in day and night time, experience more sexual intrusive thoughts as compared to individual who use internet only either in day time or night time.

Discussion

The primary purpose of the present research was to investigate the relationship between sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and implicit self-esteem early adulthood. It was hypothesized in the current study that there would be positive correlation between sexual intrusive thoughts.

Firstly, the result showed that sexual intrusive thought are positively related to stalking and stalking was negative related with implicit self-esteem. This finding is in harmony with previous work (Chan & Sheridan, 2019). Continuous sexual thoughts, desires and activities become a cause of anxiety, depression and poor interpersonal relation to s because these obsessed thoughts are not in individuals' control, therefore they to anxiety (Lew-Starowicz, 2020; Stevens, et al., 2021).

Results suggested positive relationship between Sexual intrusive thoughts and stalking and negative relationship between stalking behavior and implicit self-esteem in early adulthood. The findings are consistent with the study conducted by Eromo and Levy, (2017). showing relationship between sexual intrusive thoughts, stalking and implicit self-esteem among early adulthood. According to Weitbrecht & Whitton, (2020) some personalities are mostly attracted in unintentional sex, rather than planned with a committed partner. According to the collected information from prior study, mostly males involved in sexual activity to just increase their sexual familiarity, peer prominence and attractiveness. Self-theorists have projected that the self-esteem system functions involuntarily to appraise the likelihood of approval versus omission by the rest of people. Our findings illuminate that the organization and system also accumulate this information in the form of positive and negative coalition to the self-connected with sexual intrusive thoughts and stalking and these connection of ideas can be tailored via a recognition-conditioning route. Romantic pursuit is a natural part of human behavior, but when pressed to an extreme degree, it becomes a form of aggression. Because it can occur so insidiously, stalking is a crime. A stalker may pursue his victim out of a delusional belief in their common romantic destiny, because they used to be together and he wants her back, out of a sadistic desire. Risk factors for violence in a stalking scenario include a prior intimate relationship, the stalker's feeling of being rejected or humiliated and generic risk factors for violence such as low educational level and substance abuse. Partakers who started the study with stumpy explicit self-esteem and afterward accomplished the preparation of the duty to reveals oneself appreciably lower levels of violence in contrast to their colleagues in the control condition. Sexual

sorrow and sex disappointment are highly correlated in women with reduced sexual aspiration (Efrati & Dannon, 2018; Constantin & Boyett, 2021). According to Beltra, (2020) some individual s involve in sexual activity because they love their spouse and others do the same to get appreciation from others. Frequency of sex is also affected by level of self-esteem. The result of present study revealed that in early adulthood sexual obsessions may lead to stalking when adults face rejection, which directly effect on their self-esteem (Buduris, 2017). Brassard, et al., (2015). found that sexual attachment will lead to low implicit self-esteem.

Therefore, as it was proposed that stalking is a behavior which is connected with harassment and violence and victim personally or may be supervising them In our culture, people who lived together, have the right to interfere and but if a person who wants to maintain his confidentiality, faces higher level of this harassment. The person who stalks does it quite confidently because of the culture supporting his back. Consequently, it can be said that the same person has a low level of self-esteem which condemns s him to do so, which indirectly fulfill his desire to accomplish intrusive thoughts sexually (Loinaz, Sanchez & Vilella, 2021).

It is also suggested that sexual intrusive thoughts are associated with nuclear family system. The masses being brought up in nuclear family system are more prone to get intrusive thoughts regarding sex because these mostly come when Secondly, it was hypothesized whether adult living in joint and nuclear family system; difference was not found in timings of internet usage with relation to study variables.

Conclusion

It was concluded that, sexual intrusive thoughts increase stalking behavior and implicit self-esteem. However, stalking is related to reduce implicit self-esteem.

Limitations & Suggestions

- Due to limited time, the sample size of this research was limited, so results cannot be generalized.
- Longitudinal study can be conducted to explore the relationship of study variables across different life spans.
- Qualitative research can be carried out to get in-depth information about the types of thoughts the participant experiences.
- Sample age range can be increased to get more elaborative findings about each age group.

Implication

Awareness of hardy personality should be spread among the adults who have to deal with high stress situation and stop thinking about one person and keep yourself busy totally; occupy yourself especially mentally in whatever they like.

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