

PSYCHOLOGICAL ALIENATION AND FEELING OF SELF-EFFICIENCY IN YOUNG MALE AND FEMALE ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

In psychology, alienation is a condition of being separated or marginalized from other individuals or some larger segment of society. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capacity to act in ways necessary to reach specific goals.

This study was conducted to investigate the possible connectivity between psychological alienation and feelings of self-efficacy among young male and female adults. The study was conducted in April 2023, among 167 young people, aged 18-25 ($M=22.28 \pm 1.7SD$). For this purpose, we used the Scale for psychological alienation and General self-efficacy.

Results showed that there is a significant negative correlation between alienation and self-efficacy, meaning that the higher psychological alienation is, the lower self-efficacy is ($t=-0.627$; <0.001). There is a statistically significant difference between young male and female adults regarding alienation ($t=-5.592$; <0.001) e. g. males are reporting to be more alienated than females. Also, there is a statistically significant difference between young male and female adults regarding feeling of self-efficacy ($t=4.692$; <0.001) e. g. males feel less effective than females and in the scale for measuring meaninglessness ($t=-2.966$; 0.003) e. g. males feel more meaninglessness than females.

In conclusion, psychological alienation and self-efficacy are correlated and there are gender differences regarding the two measured variables, in favor of the females.

Keywords: alienation, self-efficacy, young adults, gender differences

INTRODUCTION

As time goes by, the needs, demands and aspirations of individuals, as well as society, change rapidly. Young people are particularly affected by this process. They will try to achieve their desires and ambitions in light of these changes. In this journey, they will face many disappointments and obstacles when it comes to what they are looking for. This can lead to feeling separated from their societies, from others and from themselves,

leading to a sense of not belonging and alienation. Young people can suffer from tension, anxiety, and restlessness, all of which define the concept of alienation (Banat, 2005).

Young people have a major and important role in the development of societies. The youth is classified as the leader that determines the future of every society around the world. Other groups,

such as children and the elderly, depend on them. The future of their family and country is in their hands. They have a role in preserving the culture, customs, and values of the country on which society is based, as well as active participation in development projects. The youth phase is one of the most sensitive and influential phases in an individual's life, characterized as a period of change in a person (Knowles and Berman, 2005).

At this stage, young people face many problems and changes, including those that affect their mental health and their relationships within their families and society.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ALIENATION

Alienation is a complex, yet common condition. Alienation occurs when a person withdraws or becomes isolated from their environment or from other people. People who show symptoms of alienation will often reject loved ones or society. They may also show feelings of distance and estrangement, including from their own emotions.

Psychological alienation can be defined as a feeling of isolation and loneliness of the individual, not belonging, loss of self-confidence, feeling of anxiety and tension, rejection of social values and standards, distance from family life, suffering from psychological pressures, i.e. when a person feels as if he/she belongs less and less to the world in which he/she lives (Hirsch et al., 1996). Alienation is a driving force that pushes human conscience to extremes. It is a process in which people become strangers to the world in which they live. The alienated person feels that existence is under pressure to establish independence. It is important to detect and solve alienation problem because it can lead to other serious problems such as suicide, substance abuse, alcoholism, various deviant behaviors as well as other severe emotional disorders.

Alienation is treated as both a psychological and sociological concept. The sociological concept focuses on the social processes that lead to alienation while the psychological concept focuses on subjective feelings of alienation. Psychological alienation occurs especially because of the interaction between psychological factors and social factors, i.e. due to conflicts between motives and controls (desires), between social standards

and moral values, the conflict of values, social and professional roles, as well as the cultural conflict between generations (Israel, J. 1971).

Psychological alienation is a multidimensional phenomenon. According to Seeman, there are six dimensions of alienation that can be summarized as follows:

1. The first dimension is social isolation. By this is meant the withdrawal and separation of the individual from the current of the prevailing culture in his society, feelings of loneliness, psychological emptiness, lack of security, broken social relations and distance from other people.

2. The second dimension is powerlessness: that is, the feeling that the individual cannot influence the conditions he faces, nor can he make his own decisions or decide his fate; his will and destiny are not in his hands, they are determined by forces beyond his control such as luck and fate.

3. The third dimension is self-alienation. It is about the individual's inability to communicate with himself and his feelings as well as a feeling of separation from what he wants to be. A person shows his sense of self, in reality, manifested by a feeling of emptiness and boredom.

4. The fourth dimension is meaninglessness: this is the lack of awareness and understanding of all meanings associated with aspects of life, the inability of the individual to understand and explain things that makes him unable to give real meaning to his behavior.

5. The fifth dimension is abnormality, referring to a situation in which social norms governing individual behavior are broken, or no longer effective as rules of conduct.

6. The sixth dimension is cultural alienation. The individual's rejection or feeling removed from the culture's dominant values and beliefs. The person believes that his/her values are not in line with the values of most members of the community (Seeman, 1991).

In conclusion, psychological alienation can be defined as a feeling of isolation and disconnection from oneself, others, and society. It can result from various factors, such as societal pressures, economic conditions, cultural norms, and personal experiences. Psychological alienation can have significant negative impacts on an individual's mental health and well-being, leading to feelings of anxiety, depression, and a sense of meaninglessness. It is important to recognize the signs of psychological alienation

and seek appropriate support and resources to address its underlying causes. In order to prevent psychological alienation, individuals and society as a whole should strive to foster a sense of connection, belonging, and community, and promote values that prioritize social support, empathy, and compassion.

SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy refers to confidence in one's ability to organize and implement cognitive, behavioral, or social skills necessary to successfully perform a future task or solve a future problem (Brunning, Colvin & Shell, 1995). For example, if a person believes that he is a brilliant scientist and can complete any science experiment, he has high science self-efficacy because he believes in his ability to perform a future experiment.

According to social-cognitive theory, human motivation and behaviors are regulated extensively by prediction. The main factor influencing behavior is perceived self-efficacy, that is, people's beliefs in their abilities to perform a certain action needed to achieve a desired outcome (Bandura, 2019).

Self-efficacy affects every area of human endeavor by determining the beliefs a person has about his or her power to influence certain situations, thereby strongly influencing the power a person has to competently face the challenges and choices it has.

People tend to engage in behaviors that they believe will get them what they want and believe they can do. We are more likely to pursue those goals we value highly than those we value less. We are more likely to pursue those courses of action that we predict will lead to the desired goals than those courses of action that seem less likely to be profitable.

High self-efficacy is associated with a range of positive outcomes, including better academic and work performance, increased resilience, and better mental and physical health. On the other hand, low self-efficacy can lead to feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and decreased motivation. Individuals with low self-efficacy may benefit from interventions that aim to increase their self-efficacy beliefs, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, social modeling, and mastery experiences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Main aim

The main aim of this study was to investigate the possible connectivity between psychological alienation and self-efficacy in young males and females in North Macedonia. Also, the study investigated if there is a gender difference related to those two variables.

Methods and subjects

The study was conducted in April 2023, among 167 young people, aged 18-25.

In the study we used the scale for psychological alienation (Rayce, 2018) and the general self-efficacy scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), as an online survey. The scale for psychological alienation has 11 questions which are answered with 5-point Likert scale. The scale is comprised of three subscales who measure feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and social isolation. General self-efficacy scale has 10 question which are answered with four answers- not at all true, hardly true, moderately true, and exactly true.

Results were processed with use of IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) statistical program.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: As feelings of psychological alienation increase, feelings of self-efficacy decrease.

Hypothesis 2: Young male adults are more psychologically alienated than young female adults.

Hypothesis 3: Young male adults are psychologically less self-efficacious than young female adults.

RESULTS

The sample comprised of 104 females and 63 males ($M=22, 28 \pm 1, 7$ SD).

- Hypothesis 1: As feelings of psychological alienation increase, feelings of self-efficacy decrease.

Results showed that there is a significant negative correlation between alienation and self-efficacy, meaning that the higher the psychological alienation is, the lower self-efficacy is ($r=-0.627$; <0.001).

This result has confirmed hypothesis 1.

- Hypothesis 2: Young male adults are more psychologically alienated than young female adults.

There is a statistically significant difference between young male and female adults regarding the feeling of alienation ($t=-5.592$; <0.001) e. g. males are reporting to be more alienated than females in the total score of the scale.

The statistical analysis of the three subscales showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the scale for measuring powerlessness ($t=-3.771$; <0.001) e. g. young males feel more powerless than young females.

There is a statistically significant difference in the scale for measuring social isolation ($t=-6.004$; <0.001) e. g. young males are feeling more socially isolated than young females.

There is statistically significant difference in the scale for measuring meaninglessness ($t=-2.966$; 0.003) e. g. young males are feeling more meaninglessness than young females.

These results confirmed hypothesis 2.

- Hypothesis 3: Young male adults are psychologically less self-efficacious than young female adults.

There is a statistically significant difference between young male and female adults regarding feeling of self-efficacy ($t=4.692$; <0.001) e. g. males feel less efficacious than females.

This result has confirmed hypothesis 3.

DISCUSSION

Alienation and self-efficacy are two important concepts in psychology that have been extensively studied over the years. Alienation is a psychological state characterized by feelings of disconnection, detachment, and estrangement from oneself, others, and the world around us. Self-efficacy, on the other hand, is the belief in one's ability to achieve goals and perform tasks successfully. While the two

concepts may seem unrelated at first glance, they are closely intertwined and can have a significant impact on our mental health and well-being (Abed & Thanoon, 2021).

There is a negative correlation between psychological alienation and self-efficacy, which means that as psychological alienation increases, self-efficacy tends to decrease (Alghamdi, 2019). When individuals experience psychological alienation, they may feel disconnected from others and society, leading to a sense of hopelessness, helplessness, and low self-esteem. As a result, their belief in their ability to achieve their goals and perform well in various areas of life may decrease, which can further exacerbate their feelings of psychological alienation. Also, alienation and self-efficacy are related through their impact on motivation. When individuals feel alienated, they may experience a sense of helplessness and a lack of control over their lives. This can lead to decreased motivation and engagement in activities. On the other hand, individuals who have high levels of self-efficacy tend to be more motivated and proactive in pursuing their goals, even in the face of challenges and obstacles. In this sense, self-efficacy can act as a protective factor against the negative effects of alienation (Bandura, 2012).

Another way in which alienation and self-efficacy are related is through their impact on social connections. When individuals feel alienated, they may withdraw from social interactions and feel a sense of disconnection from others. This can lead to a cycle of isolation and further alienation, which can have negative effects on mental health. By contrast, individuals with high levels of self-efficacy tend to have more positive social connections and may be more likely to seek out social support when faced with challenges. They are also more likely to take on challenges, persist in the face of obstacles, and achieve their goals. This can lead to a greater sense of competence, confidence, and satisfaction with life, which can serve as a protective factor against psychological alienation. This can help to mitigate the negative effects of alienation and promote a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Therefore, interventions aimed at increasing self-efficacy may be beneficial in reducing psychological alienation. For example, providing individuals with opportunities to experience success, offering social support and positive feedback, and helping individuals develop coping

strategies for dealing with obstacles can all help to increase self-efficacy and reduce psychological alienation. Also, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of therapy that focuses on helping individuals develop more positive and realistic beliefs about their abilities and their ability to cope with challenges. CBT has been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, which are often associated with feelings of alienation. Conversely, interventions that address psychological alienation, such as social support and community-building programs, may also help to improve self-efficacy by promoting a sense of belonging and connection.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, alienation and self-efficacy are two important concepts in psychology that are closely related and can have a significant impact on our mental health and well-being. Their relation is complex and multifaceted. Alienation is characterized by feelings of disconnection and detachment, while self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to achieve goals and perform tasks successfully. High levels of self-efficacy can act as a protective factor against the negative effects of alienation, promoting positive social connections and motivation. On the other hand, alienation can lead to decreased motivation and social withdrawal, perpetuating the cycle of disconnection and detachment. Interventions aimed at increasing self-efficacy, such as CBT, can be effective in reducing feelings of alienation and promoting a sense of belonging and connectedness. Therefore, understanding the relationship between alienation and self-efficacy can help inform the development of interventions aimed at improving mental health and well-being.

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Резиме**ПСИХОЛОШКОТО ОТУЃУВАЊЕ И ЧУВСТВОТО НА САМОЕФИКАСНОСТ
КАЈ МЛАДИ ВОЗРАСНИ ОД МАШКИ И ЖЕНСКИ ПОЛ**

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Во психологијата отуѓеноста е состојба да се биде одвоен или маргинализиран од други поединци или некој поголем сегмент од општеството. Самоефикасноста е верба на поединецот во својот капацитет да дејствува на начини неопходни за постигнување конкретни цели.

Оваа студија беше спроведена за да се истражи можната поврзаност меѓу психолошкото отуѓување и чувството на самоефикасност кај младите возрасни од машки и од женски пол. Студијата е спроведена во април 2023 година меѓу 167 млади луѓе на возраст од 18 до 25 години ($M = 22,28 \pm 1,7$ SD). За таа цел користевме Скала за психолошко отуѓување и Општа скала за самоефикасност.

Резултатите покажаа дека постои значајна негативна корелација меѓу отуѓеноста и самоефикасноста, во смисла на тоа дека, колку е поголемо психолошкото отуѓување, толку е помала самоефикасноста ($t = -0,627; < 0,001$) кај оваа група испитаници. Постои статистички значајна разлика меѓу младите возрасни од машки и од женски пол во однос на отуѓувањето ($t = -5,592; < 0,001$), т. е. мажите се изјаснија дека се чувствуваат повеќе отуѓени од жените. Постои статистички значајна разлика меѓу младите возрасни од машки и од женски пол во однос на чувството на самоефикасност ($t = 4,692; < 0,001$), т. е. мажите се чувствуваат помалку ефикасни од жените, како и во чувството на бесцелност ($t = -2,966; 0,003$), т. е. мажите се чувствуваат повеќе бесцелно од жените.

Како заклучок, психолошкото отуѓување и самоефикасноста се во корелација и постојат полови разлики во однос на двете измерени варијабли во корист на жените.

Клучни зборови: отуѓување, самоефикасност, млади возрасни, полови разлики