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Nazarevich Victoria

Associate Professor of the
Rivne State University of Humanities
Department of The Developmental and Educational Psychology
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0111-7070>

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SCIENTIFIC METHODS OF STUDYING OSTRACISM IN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

Abstract. *Despite ostracism being a common experience among pupils and students worldwide, there is a lack of research in the field of psychology in Ukraine that is focused on developing practical and reliable methods of exploring the phenomenon of ostracism in the educational environment. At the same time, scientific methods are the only tools that allow us to explore any causality between researched phenomena and prove the reliability of any research findings. Therefore, scientific methods are a crucial element of studying any topic in the scientific field.*

Consequently, the present article focuses on scientific methods that can be used when exploring the phenomenon of ostracism in an educational environment. The discussed scientific methods can also be employed by school personnel to increase awareness and detection of ostracism in an educational environment. It was also proposed that the questionnaires on the experience of ostracism should be filled out by ostracizers, targets of ostracism, and other members of the educational environment who have neither conducted any acts of ostracizing behavior nor have experienced it.

Key words: *ostracism, scientific methods, research methods for studying ostracism in an educational environment, ostracism prevention.*

Problem's statement. Analysis of recent research and publications. Ostracism is excluding an individual or a group from establishing relationships with other individuals or groups (Blackhart et al., 2009; Leary, 2005). Social rejection and xenophobia are believed to be somewhat related to the ostracism phenomenon. Social rejection is, consequently, a concept that describes situations when a person is rejected when trying to establish social contact with others (Twenge et al., 2001), and xenophobia is defined as a strong intolerance of anything that is perceived as foreign or strange. Previously conducted research proves that ostracism significantly negatively affects all participants in the educational process (Hitlan et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2009; Jahanzeb et al., 2018). However, the rates of ostracizing behavior remain high (Eisenberger et al., 2003; Gunnar et al., 2003; Williams, 2007).

The results of the research and their discussion. Therefore, it is essential not only to explore reliable scientific methods used for studying ostracism by researchers but also to explore the methods that can be employed by school personnel. School personnel may use such methods to detect any acts of ostracizing behavior among pupils or students for later preventive and remedial actions to be undertaken. Such methods include observation, questionnaires, and interviews. Admittedly, ostracizing behavior is any action that aims to ignore, exclude, or reject other individuals. There are many potential causes of ostracizing behavior, including such personality traits of an ostracizer as hyper-competitiveness, excessively high self-esteem, a trait of hostility, a high level of the state, and trait anxiety. After analyzing the existing theoretical resources and

research on the topic of ostracism, the three main directions of detecting and exploring ostracism in the educational environment have been devised:

Preconditions for ostracizing behavior: it was revealed that ostracized individuals frequently hold the following personal characteristics

- Low level of prosocial behavior
 - High level of aggressive or violent behavior
 - High level of impulsiveness and inattentiveness
 - High level of social anxiety
1. Reasons behind tendencies for ostracizing behavior can be divided into exogenous (anything that is related to the particular social group that the ostracized individual belongs to) and endogenous factors (any personal characteristics of the ostracized individual) (Wixted, 2004). The endogenous factors may include (Masten et al., 2011):
 - The negative self-image that leads to constant doubts and disbeliefs of ostracized individuals that they can be perceived as someone who possesses positive character traits
 - Negativity bias that results in the subjective absence of any positive experiences
 - Faulty generalization of any social experiences resulting in the lack of social interactions
 - Disability to alter one's behavior in correspondence with the reactions of other members of the social environment
 2. Behavior changes that may manifest as a result of experiencing ostracism
 - Low mood when in class
 - Excessive secretiveness, shyness, and unwillingness to share any personal information (Leary, 2005)
 - Unwillingness to communicate with friends and family
 - Avoidance of any kinds of social gatherings
 - A drastic decrease in academic performance
 - Change in eating and sleeping habits
 - Mood swings
 - Avoidance of any conversation about a school/college/university

Next, the scientific methods that may be used to detect any ostracizing tendencies will be discussed.

1. Observation – a time-requiring process that enables receiving qualitative and quantitative data about the phenomenon of ostracism. In the process of observation, one must focus on:

- The behavior of the observed individual/individuals, their reactions to different situations; the social norms of the group they belong to, including the norms of welcoming or excluding someone from the group; any situations or factors that provoke and reinforce the ostracizing behavior
- Both verbal and non-verbal communication of the observed individual/individuals; the communication patterns they follow inside and outside the group; their experiences with using different sources of information
- Any acts of ostracizing behavior
- Xenophobia – fear of strangers or foreigners, people of distinct religious or political opinions (Fisher et al., 2018)

- Social rejection – the situation when a person is rejected when trying to establish social contact with others
- Victimization – the state or process of being a target of the aggressive behavior of peers. It is closely connected to ostracism and abuse.
- Bullying – the activity of repeated, aggressive behavior intended to hurt another individual physically, mentally, or emotionally. A bully may hold a higher social or power status.
- Social exclusion – is a purposeful act of excluding a member from the group based on their inability to follow group norms. Making a group more stable and increasing social unity among its members are the goals behind social exclusion.
- Rumor - a form of a statement whose veracity is not confirmed. Rumors may be used to decrease the anxiety of the individual who is starting them or actively spreading them among others.

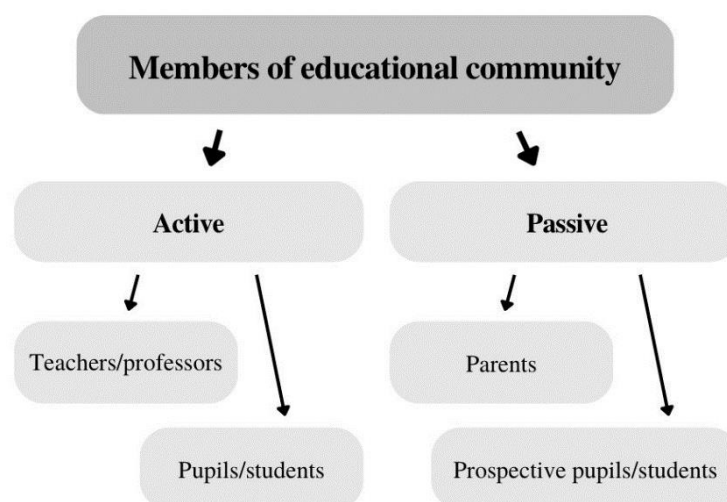
2. A questionnaire is a research instrument that is used to gather information from respondents (members of the educational environment) in a written form. The questionnaire will, therefore, hold questions about the experience of ostracism among respondents. It is vital to devise different questionnaires for ostracizers, targets of ostracism, and other members of the educational environment (so-called, neutral members).

- Ostracized individuals are those who are ostracized. Ostracized individuals demonstrate a decrease in mental health.
- Ostracizers – pupils or students that ostracize other group members. They usually demonstrate high rates of violent behavior and self-harm behavior.
- Neutral members – pupils or students who try not to be involved in any situation that they perceive as potentially conflicting

3. Interview – is a verbal form of gathering information about the phenomenon or event (ostracizing behavior). It is vital to interview not only pupils/students but other “active” and “passive” members of the educational community (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Members of the educational community



To address the existing problem of ostracism in an educational environment and prevent any ostracizing behavior in the future, teaching personnel and school mental health professionals should organize their work activities in three directions:

1. Educational: creating and running the educational program; devising more efficient assessment tools; creating more effective teaching strategies and techniques; adding educational materials on the importance of tolerance in human relationships to the educational program
2. Integrative: improving pupils' conflict management and self-regulation skills, as well as building their tolerance for others
3. Practical: creating a safe, educational environment that promotes tolerance and respect; creating opportunities for children to practice their patience and respect for others (Науменко, Святенко, 2009).

Conclusions and perspectives of further research. Observations, questionnaires, and interviews are methods of choice when studying the phenomenon of ostracism. They may be used by researchers and school personnel alike. The rapid detection of ostracizing behaviors in the educational environment makes it easier to address the problem. When conducting an observation, one must focus on the behavior of the observed individual, their verbal and non-verbal communication patterns within and outside the group, and the existence of any phenomena similar to ostracism (xenophobia, social rejection, victimization, bullying, social exclusion, rumors). It was also stated that ostracizers, targets of ostracism, and so-called neutral members should complete questionnaires.

Pupils/students, teachers/professors, and parents should be interviewed about their experience of ostracism in an educational environment. To address the problem of ostracism in the educational environment teaching personnel and school mental health professionals should organize their activities in three directions: educational, integrative, and practical.

Therefore, while ostracism in the educational environment is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century that has a significant harmful effect on the mental health of all participants of the educational process, the early detection of existing ostracizing behavior in an educational environment and further scientific researches on the topic of ostracism for its more profound understanding are the keys to solving the issue. The discussed scientific methods will become helpful for both these activities.

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МЕТОДОЛОГІЯ ВИВЧЕННЯ ОСТРАКІЗМУ В ОСВІТНЬОМУ СЕРЕДОВИЩІ

Вікторія Назаревич,

кандидат психологічних наук, доцент,
доцент кафедри вікової та педагогічної психології
Рівненського державного гуманітарного університету
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0111-7070>

DOI <https://doi.org/10.35619/praprv.v1i21.350>

Анотація. Незважаючи на те, що ostracism є поширеним явищем серед учнівської та студентської молоді в усьому світі, в Україні бракує досліджень у галузі психології, спрямованих на розробку практичних та надійних методів дослідження явища ostracism в освітньому середовищі. Водночас, наукові методи вивчення ознак ostracism є єдиним інструментарієм, який дозволяє дослідити будь-які причинно-наслідкові зв'язки між досліджуваними явищами та довести достовірність будь-яких результатів дослідження. Тому науковий аналіз суб'єктів є важливим елементом вивчення будь-якої теми в науковій сфері. Отже, ця стаття присвячена науковим методам, які можуть бути використані при дослідженні явища ostracism в освітньому середовищі.

Розглянуті підходи аналізу ostracism в освітньому середовищі і також можуть бути використані психологами закладів освіти для підвищення обізнаності та виявлення ostracism в освітньому середовищі. Також було запропоновано, форми анкетного вивчення явищ ostracism. Так емпіричний досвід вивчення розкрито в анкетах ostracism, що були заповнювали ostracismаторам, об'єктам ostracism та інші суб'єктам освітнього середовища, та тим учням які не здійснювали жодних актів ostracismуючої поведінки і не зазнали її.

Ключові слова: ostracism, наукові методи, методи дослідження ostracism в освітньому середовищі, профілактика ostracism.

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