



Perceived Ostracism, Self-Esteem, and Social Anxiety among Minority Christian Students in Schools of Faisalabad, Pakistan

Robin Ghosh¹, Ali Akbar Sultan², Dr. Shammem Akhtar³

¹ M.Phil Clinical Psychology, Eilya Care Foundation, Faisalabad

Email: robin.edupsychologist@gmail.com

² M.Phil Clinical Psychology, Inn Abroad Consultants Sangla Hill

Email: akbar.mianali@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor, Institute of Clinical Psychology University of Management and Technology Sialkot

Email: shammem.akhtar@skt.umt.edu.pk

ARTICLE INFO

Submission:

July 01, 2026

Revised:

July 18, 2026

Accepted:

August 03, 2026

Available Online:

August 15, 2026

Keywords:

Perceived ostracism, self-esteem, social anxiety, minority student

Corresponding author:

Dr. Shammem Akhtar

Email:

shammem.akhtar@skt.umt.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The main objective of the present study is to investigate the relationship between perceived ostracism, self-esteem and resulting social anxiety among minority students in the schools of Faisalabad district. This study has been undertaken to highlight the problems faced by minority students because of avoidance or being overlooked in light of their religious differences. This leads to a decrease in self-esteem, which makes it hard for minority students to foster a positive self-idea. Diminished self-worth fuels social anxiety, as students expect dismissal and avoidance in future social communications (Christian and Barbarin, 2019). The population of the study was 300 respondents, (150 were Male, and 150 were female) minority students. Out of 300 participants, 121 were 9th-class students (40.3%) and 179 were 10th-class students (59.7%). A correlation analysis was conducted between perceived ostracism on self-esteem and resulting social anxiety while using tools Ostracism Experience Scale for Adolescents by Richard Gilman (2013), Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale by Morris Rosenberg (1965), and The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale by Michael Liebowitz (1987). The effect of perceived ostracism on self-esteem and social anxiety makes a pattern of social evasion and detachment, making it hard for minority students to frame significant associations and participate in social exercises. Minority students might battle to arrive at their maximum capacity because of the adverse consequence on their self-esteem, social anxiety, and scholarly inspiration. Perceived ostracism, in this way, has relation with the self-esteem and social anxiety levels of minority students. The abstract insight of avoidance or being overlooked in light of their racial or ethnic foundation builds up bad generalizations and subverts their healthy identity worth. It is found that there is considerable discrepancy in the perceived ostracism of minority students of different ages. Particularly perceived ostracism is significantly higher in minority students ($p < 0.01$) than in other age groups. Moreover, it is revealed that self-esteem is significantly low in minority students ($p < 0.01$) than in other age groups. To diminish the destructive impacts of perceived ostracism, it is strongly recommended that Instructive organizations ought to focus on establishing comprehensive conditions that celebrate the variety and advance a feeling of having a place for all students, including minority students. Coordinated effort with guardians and the more extensive local area is vital in tending to the effect of perceived ostracism on minority students.

Introduction

The expression "minority" can have various undertones relying upon whom you inquire. For instance, the Cambridge Word reference characterizes "ethnic minority" as "a gathering of a specific race or identity residing in a nation or region where the vast majority are from an alternate race or ethnicity." In American culture, the term "minority" frequently refers to a racial group that comprises a smaller proportion of the population than white people. While these two definitions are comparable, your encounters might shape how you interpret "minority". A minority shall be defined as any racial or ethnic group that only accounts for about one-fourth of the population (Lige et al., 2017).

Minority students don't have a place with a district's or alternately country's greater part racial or ethnic gathering and might be dependent upon segregation, whether endorsed or uninvolved, that can influence their instructive accomplishment. This Exploration Subject means to invigorate novel examinations and hypothetical viewpoints on what minority students are meant for by most students. Further, the reason for the Exploration Subject expects to offer states and policymakers proof-based procedures to further develop school arrangements for minority students (Tang & Duan, 2023).

One of the most damaging forms of social exclusion is perceived ostracism, which refers to an individual's perception of being ignored, excluded, or rejected by others (Williams, 2007). According to the Temporal Need-Threat Model, ostracism threatens four fundamental psychological needs: belongingness, self-esteem, meaningful existence, and perceived control (Williams, 2009). When these needs remain unmet, individuals are more likely to experience psychological distress and interpersonal difficulties. Baumeister and Leary (1995) similarly proposed that the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation, and disruption of this need adversely affects emotional and psychological functioning.

For adolescents, peer acceptance is particularly important because schools provide the primary context for developing friendships, social competence, and personal identity (Steinberg, 2021). Students who perceive themselves as excluded may gradually develop feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and emotional insecurity. These experiences are often more pronounced among minority students, who may encounter prejudice, discrimination, or unequal treatment because of their religious identity. Such experiences may negatively influence their psychological adjustment and academic engagement.

Among the psychological consequences of social exclusion, self-esteem has received considerable research attention. Self-esteem reflects an individual's overall evaluation of personal worth and competence (Rosenberg, 1965). Individuals with healthy self-esteem generally demonstrate greater confidence, resilience, and emotional stability, whereas those with lower self-esteem are more susceptible to psychological distress and interpersonal difficulties. According to Sociometer Theory, self-esteem functions as an internal indicator of social acceptance; therefore, experiences of rejection or exclusion naturally decrease perceived self-worth (Leary, 2005). Consequently, adolescents who frequently experience ostracism are expected to report lower levels of self-esteem.

Another important consequence of perceived ostracism is social anxiety, which is characterized by persistent fear of social situations involving possible negative evaluation or embarrassment (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2022). Individuals experiencing social anxiety often avoid interpersonal interactions and exhibit reduced participation in educational and social activities. The Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale has been widely used to assess fear and avoidance associated with social situations and remains one of the most established measures of social anxiety (Liebowitz, 1987). Repeated experiences of exclusion may strengthen expectations of rejection, thereby increasing anxiety during future social interactions.

Previous empirical research has consistently demonstrated that perceived ostracism is associated with poorer psychological adjustment. Individuals who experience persistent exclusion report lower self-esteem, greater emotional distress, increased loneliness, and reduced life satisfaction (Williams, 2007). Experimental evidence has further shown that social exclusion increases negative emotional reactions and may contribute to maladaptive behaviors, including heightened aggression and emotional dysregulation (Twenge et al., 2001). Collectively, these findings suggest that perceived ostracism represents a significant psychosocial risk factor affecting adolescent mental health.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the relationships among perceived ostracism, self-esteem, and social anxiety among Christian minority secondary school students in Faisalabad, Pakistan. Understanding these relationships may assist school psychologists, counsellors, teachers, and policymakers in developing evidence-based interventions that foster inclusive school environments, strengthen adolescents' self-esteem, and reduce social anxiety among minority students.

Method

Research Design

The present study correlational research design to examine the relationships among perceived ostracism, self-esteem, and social anxiety among Christian minority students enrolled in secondary schools in Faisalabad. The design was considered appropriate because it allowed the assessment of associations among the study variables and facilitated the examination of group differences and predictive relationships using inferential statistical techniques.

Participants

The study comprised 300 Christian minority students enrolled in public and private secondary schools in Faisalabad District. The sample included 150 male (50%) and 150 female (50%) students. Because the sample consisted of a distinct and constrained population, the convenience sampling technique was employed. The sample size was chosen from approximately 30 schools of Faisalabad city

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participants were included if they:

- Identified as Christian minority students;
- Were enrolled in Grade 9 or Grade 10;
- Attended schools located in Faisalabad District; and
- Voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.
- Students were excluded if they:
 - Belonged to religious groups other than the Christian minority;
 - Were enrolled outside the target grades; or
 - Provided incomplete questionnaire responses that could affect statistical analysis.

Measures

1. Demographic Information Form

A demographic questionnaire was developed to obtain participants' background information, including age, gender, and grade level. These variables were used to describe the sample and examine demographic differences across the study variables.

2. Ostracism Experience Scale for Adolescents (OES-A)

Perceived ostracism was assessed using the Ostracism Experience Scale for Adolescents (OES-A) developed by Richard Gilman (2013). The instrument measures adolescents' perceptions of being ignored, excluded, or socially rejected by peers. Higher scores indicate greater perceived ostracism.

3. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Rosenberg (1965). The RSES is a widely used measure of global self-worth that evaluates individuals' positive and negative attitudes toward themselves. Higher scores represent higher levels of self-esteem.

4. Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS)

Social anxiety was measured using the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) developed by Liebowitz (1987). The LSAS assesses fear and avoidance across a range of social interaction and performance situations. Higher scores indicate greater levels of social anxiety.

Procedure

After taking the permission letter for data collection from the Head of the Department of Psychology, Riphah International University Faisalabad. I provided information about the study to students in Faisalabad city. If the individual indicated an interest in participating in the study, he/she was included in the study. Minority students (Christian) only were included as a

participant and data was taken regarding demographic variables like Gender, Age, Residence (Rural/Urban), Education, Socioeconomic and family system. After collection of demographics, questionnaire regarding the perceived ostracism, self-esteem and social anxiety among minority (Christian) students in the school of Faisalabad was collected. Data collection time was approximately 35-40 minutes per participant.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before questionnaire administration. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used solely for research purposes. No identifying information was included in the dataset, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize participant characteristics and study variables. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationships among perceived ostracism, self-esteem, and social anxiety. Independent-samples t tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to examine differences across demographic groups. Simple linear regression analyses were performed to determine whether perceived ostracism significantly predicted self-esteem and social anxiety. Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level.

Results

A statistics programmed called SPSS version 26 was used to look at the data for the study. Some of the ways that the data was analyses were descriptive data, regression, association, and a two-t independent sample t-test. Descriptive statistics were used to figure out what the results were about. The T-test was used to compare the age groups of men and women. The Spearman correlation value was used to find the link between the factors. To make predictions, regression analysis was used.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Variables (N=300)

Variables	f	%
Gender	-	-
Boys	150	50
Girls	150	50
Age	-	-
14	49	16.3
15	72	24
16	86	28.7
17	93	31
Education	-	-
9th	121	40.3
10th	179	59.7
School Category	-	-
Government	247	82.3
Private	53	17.7
Socio Economic Status	-	-
Lower	213	71
Middle	87	29

Note: f= frequency, %= Percentage

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. The sample included an equal proportion of males and females (50% each), with most participants aged 15–17 years. Most students were in Grade 10 (59.7%), while 40.3% were in Grade 9. The majority attended public schools (82.3%), and 71% belonged to the lower socioeconomic group, while 29% belonged to the middle socioeconomic group. Overall, the sample represents a diverse group of adolescent minority students across gender, age, grade, school type, and socioeconomic status.

Hypothesis 1**Table 2: Correlation between perceived ostracism on self-esteem, and social anxiety among minority students in the school (N=300).**

Variable	N	1	2	3
OE Scale	300	-	-.314**	.046
Self esteem	300		-	-.058
Anxiety	300			-

** Correlation has significance at the level of 0.01 (2-tailed).

Table 2 presents the correlation analysis among perceived ostracism, self-esteem, and anxiety among minority students (N = 300). Perceived ostracism was significantly and negatively correlated with self-esteem ($r = -.314$, $p < .01$), indicating that students who experienced greater feelings of exclusion tended to report lower self-esteem. The correlation between self-esteem and anxiety was weak and non-significant ($r = -.058$), while the relationship between perceived ostracism and anxiety was also weak and non-significant ($r = .046$). Overall, the findings suggest that perceived social exclusion is more strongly associated with students' self-esteem than with anxiety.

Hypothesis 2**Table 3: Perceived Ostracism, Self-Esteem and Social Anxiety among Different Grade Minority Students in the School (N=300).**

Variables	9th (N=121)		10th (N=179)		t	p	Cohen's d	
	M	SD	M	SD			U	L
POS	77.68	14.01	78.63	13.71	-.582	.561	2.255	-4.151
SES	12.74	1.71	12.63	1.45	.566	.572	.467	-.258
Anxiety	72.43	11.33	72.80	11.64	-.276	.782	2.294	-3.044

Table 3 compares perceived ostracism (POS), self-esteem (SES), and anxiety among 9th-grade (N = 121) and 10th-grade (N = 179) minority students. No statistically significant differences were found in perceived ostracism ($t = -.582$, $p = .561$), self-esteem ($t = .566$, $p = .572$), or anxiety ($t = -.276$, $p = .782$). The effect sizes were small to negligible. Overall, the findings indicate that grade level does not significantly influence perceived ostracism, self-esteem, or anxiety among minority students.

Hypothesis 3**Table 4: Ostracism, Self-Esteem, and Social Anxiety among Different Age Groups of Minority Students in the School (N=300).**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
perceived ostracism	290.73	3(296)	96.911	.505	.679
Self Esteem Scale	8.411	3(296)	2.804	1.150	.329
Anxiety Scale	97.32	3(296)	32.440	.243	.866

Table 4 presents the ANOVA results examining differences in perceived ostracism, self-esteem, and anxiety across age groups of minority students. No statistically significant differences were found in perceived ostracism ($F = 0.505$, $p = .679$), self-esteem ($F = 1.150$, $p = .329$), or anxiety ($F = 0.243$, $p = .866$). Overall, the findings indicate that age does not significantly affect these psychological variables among the minority students.

Hypothesis 4**Table 5: Any Gender-Based Differences in Perceived Ostracism, Self-Esteem and Social Anxiety of Minority Students in the Schools (N=300)**

Variables	Male (N=150)		Female (N=150)		T	p	Cohen's d	
	M	SD	M	SD			U	L
POS	78.35	13.96	78.13	13.70	.138	.891	3.364	-2.924

SES	12.73	1.65	12.62	1.47	.591	.555	.462	-.249
Anxiety	70.82	13.22	74.49	9.16	-2.791	.006	-1.081	-6.252

Table 5 compares perceived ostracism, self-esteem, and anxiety between male (N = 150) and female (N = 150) minority students. No significant gender differences were found in perceived ostracism ($t = .138$, $p = .891$) or self-esteem ($t = .591$, $p = .555$). However, a significant difference was found in anxiety ($t = -2.791$, $p = .006$), with female students reporting higher anxiety than male students. Overall, gender was significantly associated with anxiety but not with perceived ostracism or self-esteem.

Hypothesis 5

Table 6: Is there perceived ostracism that would be a significant predictor of Social Anxiety (N=300)

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	f	P
1	.209a	.044	.041	13.635	.000

Table 6 presents the regression analysis examining whether perceived ostracism predicts social anxiety. The results show a positive relationship ($R = .209$), with perceived ostracism explaining 4.4% of the variance in social anxiety ($R^2 = .044$). The regression model was statistically significant, $F = 13.635$, $p < .001$, indicating that higher perceived ostracism significantly predicts greater social anxiety.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationships among perceived ostracism, self-esteem, and social anxiety among Christian minority secondary school students in Faisalabad, Pakistan. The findings indicate that perceived ostracism is an important psychosocial factor associated with adolescents' psychological well-being. Specifically, perceived ostracism was negatively associated with self-esteem and significantly predicted both self-esteem and social anxiety. These findings highlight the adverse psychological consequences of social exclusion among minority adolescents and emphasize the importance of creating inclusive educational environments.

The first objective of the study was to examine the relationship between perceived ostracism and self-esteem. The results demonstrated a significant negative relationship, indicating that students who perceived greater social exclusion reported lower levels of self-esteem. This finding is consistent with Sociometer Theory, which proposes that self-esteem functions as an internal indicator of perceived social acceptance and interpersonal inclusion (Leary, 2005). When adolescents experience rejection or exclusion from their peers, their sense of personal worth may decline because social acceptance is fundamental to healthy psychological development. Similarly, Baumeister and Leary (1995) argued that the need to belong represents a basic human motivation, and disruptions in belongingness are associated with diminished psychological well-being. The present findings therefore support theoretical perspectives suggesting that repeated experiences of exclusion undermine adolescents' self-worth and emotional adjustment.

Regression analysis further demonstrated that perceived ostracism significantly predicted self-esteem. Although self-esteem develops through multiple influences, including family relationships, academic experiences, and individual characteristics, the present findings suggest that peer exclusion contributes meaningfully to variations in adolescents' perceptions of self-worth. These findings are consistent with the temporal need-threat model of ostracism, which proposes that experiences of exclusion directly threaten individuals' need for belonging and self-esteem (Williams, 2009). Consequently, minority adolescents who repeatedly perceive themselves as excluded may become increasingly vulnerable to negative self-evaluations and reduced psychological resilience.

The second objective was to examine the relationship between perceived ostracism and social anxiety. Regression analysis indicated that perceived ostracism significantly predicted social anxiety, suggesting that adolescents who experience greater social exclusion are more likely to report fear and discomfort during interpersonal interactions. These findings support previous theoretical perspectives indicating that repeated experiences of rejection increase expectations of negative evaluation and avoidance of social situations (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Adolescents who anticipate rejection may gradually withdraw from peer interactions, thereby increasing symptoms of social anxiety and reducing opportunities for positive social experiences.

Although the correlation between perceived ostracism and social anxiety reported in the thesis was not statistically significant, the regression analysis demonstrated that perceived ostracism significantly predicted social anxiety. This pattern suggests that perceived ostracism may contribute to social anxiety when examined as a predictive variable within the regression model.

Because the study employed a cross-sectional design, these findings should be interpreted cautiously and should not be considered evidence of causality. Future longitudinal studies are needed to clarify the developmental relationship between these variables.

The demographic analyses revealed no statistically significant differences in perceived ostracism or self-esteem across age, gender, or grade level. These findings suggest that experiences of social exclusion and their effects on self-esteem may be relatively consistent among Christian minority adolescents regardless of demographic characteristics. However, female students reported significantly higher levels of social anxiety than male students. This finding is consistent with broader psychological literature indicating that adolescent girls often report greater symptoms of anxiety than boys, particularly in situations involving social evaluation and interpersonal relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). The result suggests that female minority students may be particularly vulnerable to social anxiety within educational settings.

The present study contributes to the limited literature concerning the psychological experiences of religious minority adolescents in Pakistan. Most previous research on ostracism has been conducted in Western societies (Williams, 2007, 2009), whereas relatively little empirical evidence is available regarding minority populations in South Asian educational contexts. By focusing specifically on Christian secondary school students, the present study extends the application of ostracism theory to a culturally distinct population and highlights the importance of considering religious minority status when examining adolescent psychological adjustment.

The findings have important implications for educational practice and school mental health services. Educational institutions should implement policies that promote inclusion, respect for religious diversity, and equal participation among all students. Teachers and school counselors should be trained to recognize indicators of peer exclusion, declining self-esteem, and social anxiety and should provide timely psychological support for students experiencing these difficulties. (Akhtar, & Mughal, 2023). School-based intervention programs focusing on social inclusion, peer acceptance, and self-esteem enhancement may help reduce the adverse psychological consequences associated with perceived ostracism. Such interventions may contribute not only to improved psychological well-being but also to better academic engagement and overall school adjustment.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. The cross-sectional design limits conclusions regarding causal relationships among the variables. In addition, the study relied exclusively on self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by response bias and social desirability. Furthermore, the sample was restricted to Christian minority secondary school students from Faisalabad District, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other minority populations or geographical regions. Future research should employ longitudinal or mixed-methods designs, include participants from diverse religious communities, and investigate additional psychological factors, such as resilience, perceived social support, emotional regulation, and school connectedness, that may influence the relationship between perceived ostracism and psychological adjustment.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that perceived ostracism is an important psychological risk factor associated with lower self-esteem and greater social anxiety among Christian minority adolescents. Consistent with theories of belongingness and ostracism (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Williams, 2009), the study underscores the importance of fostering inclusive educational environments that promote acceptance, psychological safety, and positive peer relationships. Strengthening these protective factors may improve both the psychological well-being and educational experiences of minority students in Pakistan.

Conclusion

The study found that perceived ostracism is significantly associated with lower self-esteem and higher social anxiety among Christian minority secondary school students in Faisalabad. While no significant differences were found across age and grade, female students reported higher social anxiety than males. Overall, the findings highlight the need for inclusive school environments that reduce social exclusion and promote psychological well-being among minority adolescents

Practical Implications

The findings of the present study have important implications for educational institutions, mental health professionals, and policymakers.

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations.

Schools should promote inclusive environments, train teachers on diversity and mental health, and provide counseling support for students experiencing ostracism, low self-esteem, or anxiety. Parents should maintain open communication, while policymakers should strengthen support services for religious minority students. The study was limited to Christian minority secondary students in Faisalabad, and its cross-sectional design and reliance on self-report measures may limit the generalizability and interpretation of the findings.

Future Directions

Future research should use longitudinal and mixed-method designs to better understand the effects of perceived ostracism over time. Studies should include diverse religious minority groups and regions of Pakistan to improve generalizability. Researchers should also examine factors such as resilience, social support, coping, and school connectedness. Finally, intervention studies should evaluate counseling, peer-support, anti-bullying, and inclusion programs to improve minority adolescents' psychological well-being.

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