



THE IMPACT OF CBT ON SELF-ESTEEM: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED LONELINESS AMONG ONLY CHILDREN

Psychology

B. Benazir*

Research Scholar, Department Of Psychology, Government Arts College, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. *Corresponding Author

Dr. S. Rajakumari

Professor, Department Of Applied Psychology, Central University Of Tamilnadu, Thiruvavur

ABSTRACT

The psychosocial development of only children has been a subject of debate particularly when considering their self-esteem. There is an increasing evidence highlighting that, only children are benefitted from greater parental attention and resources, research suggests that only children may hinder social development and affect self-worth due to the lack of sibling interactions. For this purpose, adult only children in the age range from 18 to 35 were selected through purposive sampling method. Perceived Loneliness Scale by Praveen Kumar Jha (1997) and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem scale (1965) was used for this research. Mediation analysis was used to find out the effect of the CBT intervention. The results reveal that CBT intervention has an indirect effect on self-esteem by reducing loneliness. It also highlights that, majority of the only children suffer from high loneliness and moderate levels of self-esteem. These findings offer meaningful implications of psychological intervention among only children.

KEYWORDS

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), Only Children, Self-Esteem (SE), Perceived Loneliness (PL), Mediation Model.

INTRODUCTION:

In an increasing individualistic and urbanized world, the number of families with only one child has risen markedly, particularly in Asian countries like China and India, due to population control policies and socio-economic shifts. While being an only child does not inherently predispose individuals to psychological maladjustments, research reflects that adult only children may be at heightened risk of experiencing perceived loneliness due to over dependence, reduced sibling interaction and increased expectations within the family system (Biermann, 1975; Liu et al., 2020). This sense of social and emotional isolation, known as Perceived Loneliness, has been associated with a wide range of negative mental health outcomes including depression, anxiety and diminished quality of life (Hawkey & Cacioppo, 2010).

Perceived Loneliness refers to the subjective, distressing experience of feeling socially isolated, regardless of the actual number of social contacts one may have. It arises from a perceived discrepancy between the quality or quantity of relationships an individual desires and what they currently experience (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). Unlike objective social isolation, which can be measured by the absence of social interaction or support, perceived loneliness is a psychological and emotional state, deeply rooted in personal interpretation and cognitive appraisal of one's social environment.

Self-Esteem refers to an individual's overall sense of self-worth or personal values. It reflects how individuals evaluate themselves, how much they like and accept who they are and how they believe others perceive them. In East Asian cultures, only children may internalize high parental expectations and filial duties, leading to stress and lower self-esteem when expectations are not met (Yeh & Bedford, 2003).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Lin, X., et al. (2023) conducted research on Socio-economic status and problem behaviors in young Chinese children: A moderated mediation model of parenting styles and only children. This study tested a moderated mediation model of child number (CN) and parenting styles (PS) in the relationships between family socioeconomic status (SES) and young children's problem behaviors (PB). The results show that authoritative parenting and authoritarian parenting mediated the relationship between SES and PB; and singleton moderated the relationship between SES and PB.

Masi, C. M., et al. (2011) investigated research on A meta-analysis of interventions to reduce loneliness. Qualitative reviews have identified four primary intervention strategies: (a) improving social skills, (b) enhancing social support, (c) increasing opportunities for social contact, and (d) addressing maladaptive social cognition. Results revealed that single-group pre-post and non-randomized comparison studies yielded larger mean effect sizes relative to randomized comparison studies. Among studies that used the latter design, the most

successful interventions addressed maladaptive social cognition. This is consistent with current theories regarding loneliness and its etiology. Theoretical and methodological issues associated with designing new loneliness reduction interventions are discussed.

METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES:

- To assess the level of Self-Esteem among only children.
- To assess the level of Perceived loneliness among only children.
- To examine the mediating effect of perceived loneliness in the relationship between CBT intervention and Self-Esteem among only children.

HYPOTHESES:

- H₁: Only children will exhibit high levels of Perceived Loneliness.
- H₂: Only children will report lower levels of Self-Esteem.
- H₃: CBT intervention will have a direct and indirect effect on Self-Esteem, mediated by Perceived Loneliness among only children.

SAMPLE:

The sample comprises of 60 adult only children within the age range from 18 to 35 years. The data was collected from in and around Coimbatore. Purposive sampling method was used to collect the samples for this research.

METHODS:

Participants were randomly assigned to two groups, CBT Intervention Group (n=30) and Control Group (n=30). This research employed a quasi-experimental, Pre-test/ Post-test control group design with a mediation analysis framework.

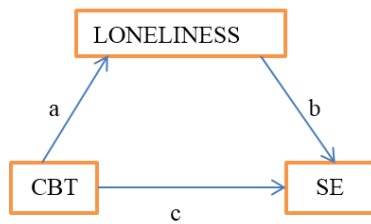
TOOLS:

1. Perceived Loneliness Scale (PLS): The Perceived Loneliness Scale is a widely used measure for loneliness developed by Dr. Praveen Kumar Jha. It is a uni-dimensional self-report research tool in a five point Likert format. The test-retest reliability of this scale was found to be .84 and .82 respectively. It also holds content, predictive and concurrent validity. Hence, the PLS is a reliable and valid tool for assessing loneliness.

2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES): This scale was developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965, used to measure the global self-worth by assessing both positive and negative feelings about the self. It is a self-report scale with 10 items on a 4-point Likert scale. It has good internal consistency typically ranging from .77 to .88, and is widely validated across different cultures, age groups and populations.

STATISTICAL TESTS:

The PROCESS Macro Model 4 was used to test the mediation model, with CBT as the independent variable, perceived loneliness as the mediator and self-esteem as the outcome variable. Descriptive statistics were used.

MEDIATION MODEL:

(CBT- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy)
(SE- Self-Esteem)

Path a: Effect of CBT on Loneliness

Path b: Effect of Loneliness on Self-Esteem

Path c: Direct effect of CBT on SE

Path a*b: Indirect effect

Path c': Total effect of CBT on SE

RESULT:

Table I: The frequency distribution of the sample for the Level of Perceived loneliness of only children.

N (60)	Perceived loneliness (%)
Low	0
Moderate	27 (45%)
High	33 (55%)

Table II: The frequency distribution of the sample for the self-esteem among only children.

N (60)	Self-Esteem (%)
Low	0
Moderate	38 (63.3%)
High	22 (36.6%)

Table III: Mediating role of Perceived Loneliness in relationship between CBT and Self-Esteem among only children.

Path	Effect	SE	t	P
a	-.58	.12	-4.83	<.001
b	-.49	.14	-3.50	.001
c	.12	.10	1.20	.235
a*b	.28	.08	3.50	.001
c'	.40	.09	4.44	<.001

The mediation analysis revealed that the effect of CBT on self-esteem was significantly mediated by Perceived Loneliness. The direct effect of CBT on Self-Esteem was not significant. The effect of CBT on loneliness and the effect of loneliness on self-esteem were statistically significant. The indirect effect was significant, which highlights that CBT enhances self-esteem in only children primarily by reducing loneliness. Hence, the hypotheses (H3: CBT intervention will have a direct and indirect effect on Self-Esteem, mediated by Perceived Loneliness among only children) was partially accepted.

DISCUSSION:

This research highlights the importance of CBT intervention for only children, which lower the loneliness thereby increasing the Self-Esteem, collectively contributes to their improved psychological health and well-being. CBT and social interventions will reduce loneliness, which positively enhances the Self-Esteem (Falbo & Polit, 1986 and Tian et al. 2012).

On a theoretical basis, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (Beck, 1967) suggests that restructuring maladaptive thoughts through CBT leads to emotional improvement, often through enhanced self-concept and reduced loneliness.

CONCLUSION:

- Only children have higher levels of perceived loneliness (Table-I).
- Only children showed moderate levels of self-esteem (Table-II).
- Self-Esteem of only children can be enhanced through CBT via reducing the effects of loneliness among them (Table-III).

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