

SENTENCE OUTLINE

IB Subject: Psychology

Topic: The influence of peer ostracism on behavior

RESEARCH QUESTION: How does peer ostracism contribute to the emergence of violent actions against peers in adolescent individuals?

- I. Outlining variables
 - A. Brief definitions of *Ostracism*, *Social Exclusion*, and *Rejection*.
 1. For our purposes, only Ostracism and Social Exclusion will be explored.
 2. An evolutionary perspective of why people ostracize others and why individuals are sensitive to ostracism.
 - B. Violent actions of adolescent individuals.
 1. The recent increase in school shootings and what experts speculate may be the cause.
 2. For our purposes, school shootings will be violent action we focus on.
- II. The effects of Ostracism and Social Exclusion
 - A. Generally effects of Ostracism.
 1. Episodes of ostracism produce a reflexive painful response.
 2. Long-term exposure to ostracism seems to deplete coping mechanisms.
 3. Long-term ostracism result in depression, helplessness, and in some cases aggression.
 - B. Physiological Responses
 1. There is a significant increase in blood pressure and cortisol levels during episodes of ostracism.
 2. Increased activity in the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex, part of the brain that has shown activation during physical pain.
- III. Case studies of school shootings
 - A. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold

1. Shooting occurred in Littleton, CO, on April 20, 1999. Two students opened fire on classmates at Columbine high school.
2. Boys claimed to have experienced episodes of teasing and ostracism.

B. Nikolas Cruz

1. Shot and killed 17 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Injured 17 others.
2. In a prerecorded video, he talks about experiencing *loneliness*.

IV. Final Analysis

A. Do school shootings result from ostracism?

1. Ostracism has been found to increase aggression and distress in its victims. This may increase the chance of lashing out against peers in retribution.
2. It is unclear whether ostracism is a main component of the actions of school shooters, because there are so many variables present in their situations.
3. Most episodes of ostracism and social exclusion do not result in mass shootings or even minor acts of violence against those who exclude.

B. Significance

1. It is important that identification of potential school shooters is possible so that we can interfere before they harm themselves and others. Identifying factors (such as ostracism) may help with this process.
2. Ostracism is a painful thing to live with, a priority should be to eliminate it or reduce its effects regardless of whether it contributes to violent episodes such as school shootings.

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