

Predictors of siege mentality among early adults: moderating role of paranoid thoughts

Mehwish Ahmed,¹ Muhammad Naveed Riaz²

Abstract

Objective: Firstly, the study aimed to determine the effect of paranoid ideation on the prediction of siege mentality among early adults. Secondly, the study examined the effect of paranoid thoughts on the prediction of siege mentality among early adults. Thirdly, the study assessed the moderating effect of paranoid thoughts in the relationship between paranoid ideation and siege mentality among early adults.

Methods: According to the criteria, the age ranged from 17 to 45 years which refers to early adults. This cross-sectional study was conducted at Sargodha, Pakistan, comprising of 300 participants. The present study was carried out from October 2017 to October 2018. Data was collected by administering General Siege Mentality Questionnaire, Green et al Thought Questionnaire and Paranoia Questionnaire. SPSS-20 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used for data analysis.

Results: A total sample of 300 adults participated in the study. The correlation analysis confirmed that the paranoid ideation had positive correlation with siege mentality ($p < 0.01$). Paranoid thoughts had positive correlation with siege mentality ($p < 0.01$). Thus the paranoid ideation and paranoid thoughts are positive predictors of siege mentality.

Conclusion: In this study, findings suggested that paranoid ideation contributed to later development of siege mentality among young adults.

Keywords: Siege mentality, Paranoid ideation, Paranoid thoughts. (JPMA 70: 1684; 2020)

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Introduction

Siege mentality among a group of people clears the assumption that the world has extremely negative intentions toward them. The group of people having siege mentality perceived that others try to hurt them and they generalise these negative intentions to the outer group members. Siege mentality is not a unique characteristic of a particular group but it is found within the numerous teams among human history.

Paranoid ideation has been conceptualised as a cognitive process used by individuals to cope with the social world.¹ Individuals explain everyday events and their own behaviour by engaging and manifesting some degree of paranoid ideation.^{2,3}

Paranoid thought indicates that you have beliefs that you are being annoyed or persecuted. It also can talk over with beliefs of general distrust relating to the motives or intent of others. The prevalence of paranoid thought in adolescence is between 25% consistent with many studies in Europe.^{4,5} About 10-15% of the population often experiences paranoid thoughts.⁶

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Department of Psychology, ¹University of Lahore, ²University of Sargodha, Pakistan.

Correspondence: Mehwish Ahmed. Email: mehwishahmad163@gmail.com

Paranoid thoughts are increasingly documented as a standard development within the general population, with individuals and many folks holding some paranoid concepts or some people holding several thoughts.^{7,8} The implication for analysis is to find out such people within the general population. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), paranoid thoughts are often informative for understanding clinical disorder. Three recent systematic reviews indicate that negative beliefs concerning the self are related to paranoia.⁹ During a study of 301 patients with mental illness over twelve months, negative beliefs concerning themselves were a predictor of the persistence of persecutory delusions.¹⁰ Similarly, a longitudinal study of sixty patients with persecutory delusions showed that negative beliefs concerning the self-prediction, the persistence of paranoia was observed over six months.¹⁰

The present study aimed to find out the effect of paranoid ideation on the prediction of siege mentality among adults, to investigate the effect of paranoid thoughts on the prediction of siege mentality among adults and to find out the moderating effect of paranoid thoughts in the relationship between paranoid ideation and siege mentality among adults. It was hypothesised that paranoid ideation is likely to positively predict siege mentality among adults, paranoid thoughts will moderate the

relationship between paranoid ideation and siege mentality, women will exhibit higher level of paranoid ideation as compared to men counterparts, women will exhibit higher level of paranoid thoughts as compared to men counterparts and women will exhibit higher level of siege mentality as compared to men counterparts.

Subjects and Methods

The descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out at University of Sargodha (UOS), Sargodha, Pakistan and comprised of graduate students. By using cross-sectional survey research, the data was collected from a population at one specific point in time (October 2017 to October 2018) and were analysed.

A purposive sample of university students ($n = 300$) was included in the present study with age range from 17 years and above¹¹ ($M = 20.9$, $SD = 2.31$). Using non-probability sampling, graduates from different departments were enrolled. At 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, the estimated sample size was 300 students. According to the recommendations of Singleton, the sample size was calculated by using sampling adequacy test which conformed that the sample of 300 was sufficient to carry out the statistical analysis for the present study.¹² The sampling adequacy test was based on the number of variables used in the current study. Both men ($n = 150$, 50%) and women ($n = 150$, 50%) were included in the study. Data was collected in University of Sargodha situated in Sargodha city. Written permission of approval was obtained from the head of departments and informed consent was taken from the participants. The participants were ensured about their privacy and confidentiality before the collection of data and scales were given to take responses of participants.

The Genera Siege Mentality Scale (GSMS) were constructed on the basis of the conception of Masada Syndrome.¹³ The GSMS has 28 items, which expresses the belief of the siege mentality. The example item includes: The whole world is against us. Each item is valued on a 5-point rating scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly disagree), which expresses the belief of the siege mentality. All the items were positively worded. The scoring system of the scale is based on minimum and maximum scores that can range from 12-56. The scale was constructed on the age range from 19-36. The scale is translated by the researcher. The Chronbach alpha for GSMS was .81. It is a valid scale for measuring the siege mentality.

Paranoid Thought Scale has two 16-item subscales measuring ideas of social reference and ideas of

persecution.¹⁴ Each item is valued on a 5-point rating scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly disagree), which expresses the paranoid thoughts. The scoring system of the scale is based on minimum and maximum scores that can range from 32-160. The scale is translated by the researcher. The scales have displayed good internal and test-retest reliability and convergent validity in a large nonclinical sample ($N = 353$) and in a clinical sample of 50 individuals with persecutory delusions. The scale total correlates highly ($r = 0.71$) with the Paranoia Scale. Higher scores indicate greater levels of paranoid thought. It is a valid scale for measuring the paranoid thoughts. It was demonstrated to have good internal consistency both in clinical ($\alpha = 0.90$) and nonclinical ($\alpha = 0.95$) samples.¹⁴

Paranoia Scale has a 20-item self-report for measuring paranoia in university students and includes items measuring both concepts of reference and persecution.¹⁵ Example items include: someone has it in for me; I sometimes feel as if I am being followed. Every item is valued on a 5-point rating scale (1 = not at all applicable to me; 5 = extremely applicable to me), which expressed the paranoid ideation. Scores can vary from 20 to 100 and higher scores representing the greater paranoid ideation. Each item is rated on a five-point rating scale and it is the most widely used dimensional degree of paranoia. In the original study, the Cronbach's alpha is 0.84 and it demonstrated good convergent and divergent validity.

The researcher personally visited the University of Sargodha for the collection of data. The questionnaires were filled by the adults and self-reported data was collected. The scales of paranoid thought, paranoia and siege mentality were applied to the students. Different statistical analysis were conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Finally, the main study was conducted to test the hypotheses related to moderation.

Results

Table-1 shows descriptive statistics, alpha reliability coefficient and normality statistics for scale use in the present study and zero-order correlation among study variable, the alpha reliability coefficient range from lowest 0.67 to 0.89. The alpha reliability coefficient for paranoid ideation and paranoid thoughts ranged from 0.86 to 0.89 which is greater than 0.70. The reliability analysis indicated that all scales were satisfactory for internal consistency, therefore, these scales are reliable to use in the study. The value of skewness and kurtosis for all scale are less than +1 and -1 which indicate that data is normally distributed.³ The results indicated that paranoid

Table-1: Descriptive statistics and alpha reliability coefficients.

Variables	Reliability α	M	Descriptive Statistics			Normality Analysis		Pearson Correlation		
			SD	Potential	Actual	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
1. Paranoid Ideation	.86	62.29	13.31	20-100	20-97	-.32	.80	-	.71***	.18***
2. Paranoid thoughts	.89	93.13	19.39	32-160	35-145	.010	-.08	-	.19***	
3. Siege mentality	.67	40.24	6.66	12-56	20-60	-.22	-.06		-	

Table-2: Moderation of paranoid thoughts between paranoid ideation and siege mentality among early adults.

Predictors	Outcome: Siege Mentality		
	Model B	95% CI	
		LL	UL
(constant)	58.31***	45.28	71.35
Paranoid ideation	.35***	.57	.14
Paranoid thoughts	.24***	.40	.09
Paranoid ideation x paranoid thoughts	.01**	.02	.01
R ²	.08		
F	6.44***		
ΔR^2		.04	
ΔF		15.58***	

*p<0.05. **p<0.01. ***p<0.001.

ideation has significant positive correlation with paranoid thoughts ($r = 0.71, p < 0.001$) and siege mentality ($r = 0.18, p < .001$). Paranoid thoughts has significant positive correlation with siege mentality ($r = 0.19, p < 0.001$).

Table-2 shows moderating role of paranoid thoughts between paranoid ideation and siege mentality. Finding confirmed paranoid thoughts moderated between paranoid ideation and siege mentality relationship among sample of university students. The finding indicated that paranoid ideation tendencies ($B = 0.35, p < 0.001$), paranoid thoughts ($B = 0.24, p < 0.001$) and

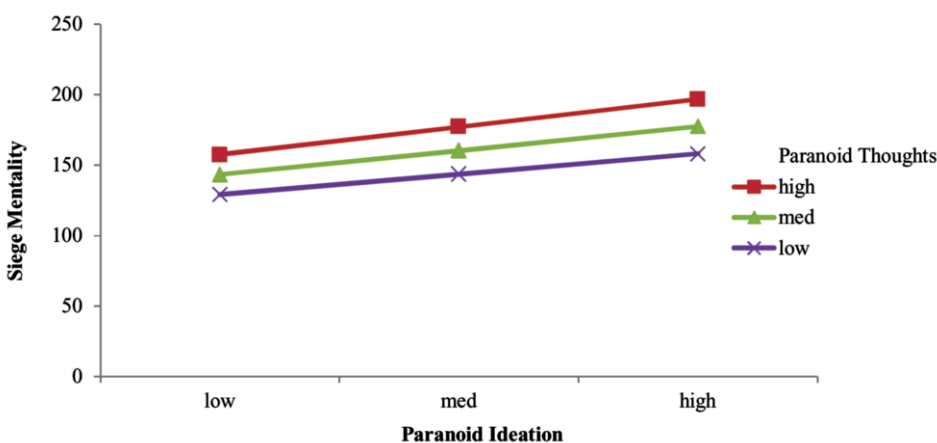


Figure: Moderation of paranoid thoughts between paranoid ideation and siege mentality among early adults.

paranoid ideation x paranoid thoughts ($B=0.01, p < .01$) has a significant effect on siege mentality ($B=$ Unstandardised Regression Coefficient).

Figure shows the moderating effect of paranoid thoughts between paranoid ideation and siege mentality among university students. Modgraph shows that for individuals with high/low level of paranoid thoughts, there is positive relationship between paranoid ideation and siege mentality, which indicated that increase in level of paranoid ideation increases the symptoms of siege mentality among early adults.

Discussion

The findings indicated that paranoid ideation were likely to positively predict siege mentality among early adults. The previous literature found that paranoia leads toward siege mentality. Paranoia is reported to have numerous negative consequences like anger, frustration, vengeance, sadism, fear, anxiety and a central system of psychosis. The ultimate outcome of paranoid ideation leads towards siege mentality, which is a fixed thinking pattern that everyone is one's enemy and is against oneself.

The findings indicated that Paranoid thoughts were likely to positively predict siege mentality among adults. Similar results were found in a study that paranoid thoughts are positively correlated with siege mentality. Paranoid thinking is beliefs about the potential of threat on which occurs as a hierarchy of distress. At the lowermost of the hierarchy might be societal evaluator like terror of negative evaluation in social phobia and at the top might be clinically applicable persecutory delusions.

The findings indicated that paranoid thoughts moderate the relationship between paranoid ideation and siege mentality. Persecutory delusions involve the delusion holder believing that harm is occurring, or is going to occur to them and that the

persecutor has the intention to cause the harm.^{16,17} Recent research into the processes underlying persecutory delusions has concentrated on differences in how those with the delusions make sense of the world around them, compared to those who have no delusions.¹⁸ The findings indicated that women exhibit higher level of paranoid ideation as compared to male counterparts. It was supported by the literature that females exhibit higher levels of paranoid ideation due to them occupying positions characterized by powerlessness and facing real threats of victimization.¹⁹ In addition, this study explained that females have the tendency to believe in external control at a higher rate than males, potentially making females more susceptible to mistrust and the effects of socioeconomic status on paranoia.

The findings indicated that men exhibit higher level of siege mentality, as supported by the literature that 10-15% of the general population experience regular paranoid thoughts, with 1-3% estimated to experience persecutory delusions comparable to clinical cases in young adults and early adults.¹

The investigation that finds out the predictors of siege mentality in nonclinical populations could highlight any changes in perceived style. While individuals are handling the paranoid ideation without any the support of services that will only be wondered upon in isolation whereas firmer decisions might be drawn from a relative study.⁸ This study has investigated and provided evidence that paranoid ideation is a common phenomenon and it is not constricted to clinical population. The outcomes of this study highlighted this background, which will assist to improve the likelihood of a personal susceptible feeling. The study furthermore explored the ways that during which the participants' lives were suffering from paranoia and the way they were handling the understanding. The conclusion that these people were behaving well within the public, supported a move toward liberating paranoia from a suggestion with diagnostic classes. This outcome is more sustained given the information on the general sample that suggested that paranoid thoughts could be a common expertise in a very nonclinical sample of students that lead towards siege mentality.

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Conflict of Interest: None.

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