Abstract

One recurrent theme in Dostoyewsky’s novels is the self-defeating behavior shown by the characters when they are close to obtaining their goals. In this paper, the author examines concrete examples chosen from the best known novels of Dostoyewsky to demonstrate the existence of this phenomenon that has been interpreted according to the psychoanalytic theory of the Oedipus Complex, but also in rapport with cultural factors favoring competitiveness and success and their conflict with the needs for affection and approval. The factors related to the acquisition of autonomy during development are also considered. The theory of the “ego-states” developed by Watkins can also help to understand the conflicts between segments of the personality that may lead to self-sabotage. Several experimental studies have revealed that the self-sabotage appears when success is imminent and that the phenomenon exists in children and adults of both sexes. The role of the parents of children who fear success has also been studied in reference to their tendency to interfere with the tasks assigned to their children. Finally, different modalities of therapy for the fear of success and self-sabotage are considered and all of them should have as a common objective the identification of unconscious factors such as transference, as well as the cognitive-affective and behavioral factors that precede the self-sabotage with the aim of preventing it and modifying inappropriate attitudes toward success and failure.

Keywords

Dostoyewsky, self-sabotage, self-defeating behavior, fear of success.