

Effect of Culture and Gender on Learned Helplessness among Adolescents

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Received
04 Mar. 2014

Reviewed
22 Mar. 2014

Accepted
07 Apr. 2014

The present study examined the impact of culture and gender on learned helplessness among adolescent students. Male and Female adolescent student from different culture i.e. Tribal and non-tribal culture constituted the sample for the study (Total sample was 400), 200 males from tribal and non-tribal areas and 200 females from tribal & non-tribal areas 100 students from each category. The CASQ was used to measure learned helplessness. The result of 2x2 ANOVA reveal significant interaction effects of culture and gender on learned helplessness. The males of non-tribal and females of tribal culture show high learned helplessness than males of tribal and females of non-tribal culture. Attribution analysis of male and female adolescents with respect to culture reveal that high percentage of non-tribal females(51.62%) and males(50.50%) show internal attributions in comparison to tribal female(46.37%) and male (40.75%) adolescent. The obtained results indicate that non-tribal students show higher level of personal helplessness than the tribal students.

Keywords- Learned helplessness gender and culture.

Introduction

Learned helplessness is a reaction to conditions of uncontrollability resulting from the perception and learning that responses and outcomes are independent human activity. Helplessness imprisons people in the cell of passivity. Helplessness syndrome not only creates a condition of immobility for the individual, it brings collective impoverishment, which in turn concerns the problems relating to the growth of competence in children. It is plausible that helplessness plays a distinct role in impairment of

children's competences (Sahoo & Sia, 1988). More over socio cultural systems of developing countries present conditions that are indicative of severe resource constraints. In such situations, people are likely to experience more uncontrollability compared to developed countries. Involvement with the process of life is central to human existence social evolution is facilitated by diversity of others. It is likely people develop helplessness as a result of their observation of helplessness. The kind of helplessness experienced by Indians is mostly shared or universal helplessness (Sahoo & Kar 1992)

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24 | Effect of culture and Gender on Learned...

The Trans-cultural features of the construct were demonstrated by (Singhal & Kanungo 1994, 1996). They found that the two culture samples (Canadian & Indian) had lowered helplessness much below than the theoretical helplessness. The groups and did not differ in levels of helplessness but higher amount of variance was accounted by the personal and situational correlates in the case of Canadian sample than the India sample. It is important to recognize the mechanisms that mediate the relationship between helplessness & success Sahoo & Tripathi (1993) and Sahoo & Acharya (1996) attempted to examine sex difference in learned helplessness and found that girls reported greater learned helplessness than the boys, whereas Sahoo and Acharya found that boys show greater helplessness than the girls. They discussed their results on sex difference in learned helplessness in the context of rural and urban difference in rural India. Girls in rural areas of India encounter more negative events than do girls' urban sector.

A number of studies in the western contexts have shown children's attributions as the predictors of their later academic success and failure (Nolen-Hoeksema, Gergus & Seligman 1986). In the learned helplessness model, testing the predictor of success & failure in cultural context is necessary (Singhal & Kanungo 1994). Sahoo & Rath (1989) found that personal helplessness was positively related to non-contingency as well as to motivational & emotional deficits. Although universal helplessness was shown to have similar patterns of relationship with non-contingency, motivational deficits and emotional deficits, the degree of association was weak.

Cross culture examinations regarding academic attribution style have revealed difference causal attributions Duda (1980), reported unique results regarding attributions for achievement.

The student's response in open format revealed that they attributed to personal and behavioral performance for the achievement outcome. Hernandez (1996) examined attribution style and academic achievement in a mixed minority sample compared to a non-minority college student sample. Findings reveal that the attributional model of learned helplessness, was replicated within non – minority group. Specifically internal, stable and global attributing for negative academic events was correlated with poorer GPA. Hick (2004) observed a trend in increased problem solving deficits in response to non contingent feedback among Caucasian participants exhibited LH in comparison to native Americans.

It appears that the construct of helplessness would provide indigenous explanation of peoples adaptive style in developing world. This is also the case with Indian – socio cultural system. It has been reported in the studies the girls show lower level of self confidence may have some reason in socio cultural ground. It has also been reported that girls attribute mostly to internal factors and boys attribute to insufficient effects (Dweck, Bush, 1976) Nichoels, 1975, Licht and Shapiro 1982 which in turn concerns the problems relating to the growth of competence in children. It is plausible that helplessness plays a distinct role in impairment of children's competence (Sahoo & Sia 1988). Moreover socio cultural systems of developing countries present conditions that are indicating of several resource constraints. In such situations people are likely to experience more uncontrollability compared to developed countries.

As indicated in the literature that cultural factors provide indigenous explanation in development of learned helplessness among adolescents and sex difference in learned helplessness may also be related to cultural diversity. Therefore the study examining the role of culture and gen-

der in learned helplessness has been conducted.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are following:

1.To examine effect of culture (culture has been specifically considered in the context of tribal and non tribal locale) on learned helplessness feeling.

2.To examine effect of gender on learned helplessness feeling.

3.Whether or not there is joint effect of culture and gender on learned helplessness.

4.To find out explanatory style of adolescents with respect to culture and gender.

Hypotheses

In the light of objectives, some such hypotheses have been Formulated.

1.The tribal and non tribal adolescents would differ significantly in their feeling of learned helplessness.

2.The male and female students would significantly differ in their feeling of learned helplessness.

3.There would be joint effect of culture and gender on learned helplessness.

Sample

400 adolescents (100 male and100 female from each culture (tribal locale and non –tribal locale) Constituted sample for the study. The selection of the sample was based on stratified random sampling technique.

Tool

The CASQ Sahoo (1984) was used to assess the learned helplessness among adolescents.

Design

The dependent variable is learned helplessness the independent variables of the study are culture and gender. Culture has been considered in two levels (tribal and non tribal) , and gender has also been considered in two levels (male and female).Thus the design for the study is 2x2 factorial design.

The data was analyzed statistically by computing 2x2 ANOVA.

The results are presented in table 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1: summary of 2x2 ANOVA

Source	Sum of Square	df	Mean square	F ratio	P value
Culture	8.41	1	8.41	1.02	NS
Gender	5.76	1	5.76	.70	NS
Culture x Gender	62.41	1	62.41	7.58	P<.01
Error	3258.6	396	8.22		

Table – 2

Mean values of learned helplessness with respect to culture and gender.

Gender	Tribal	Non tribal
Male	9.47	10.50
Female	10.55	10.00

Table 3

Showing percentage of adolescent student’s responses on LH & its components, with respect to Gender and Tribal & Non tribal locale.

Variable	Tribal		Non - Tribal	
	Male (N=100)	Female (N=100)	Male (N=100)	Female (N=100)
Total LH	39.45%	43.75%	43.95%	44.66%
Internality	40.75%	46.37%	50.50%	51.62%
Globality	36.37%	44.50%	39.25%	37.62%
Stability	40.87%	40.37%	42.00%	35.87%

It is observed from the table that the ‘f’ ratio for interaction effect was found to be significant (7.58, P<.01).] it means that culture and gender jointly effect learned helplessness. it is

observed from the mean table that male student of tribal locale show less learned helplessness feeling in comparison to male and females of non tribal locale as well as females of tribal locale. Table 3 reveals that higher percentage of non tribal students exhibit personal helplessness in comparison to tribal students. Higher percentage of tribal students show universal helplessness. Female adolescents exhibit more learned helplessness than the male adolescents. The findings of the study suggest that culture and gender play an important role in development of learned helplessness among adolescents. As has been observed that male and female adolescents of nontribal culture have show higher level of learned helplessness than the males of tribal locale. The culture may be responsible for development of learned helplessness, as adolescents of non tribal culture face competitions in various sectors. The pessimistic expectations of nontribal adolescents regarding their uncertain future career may be one of the causes of development of helplessness. The female adolescents of both the culture have shown higher level of learned helplessness, it may be discussed in context of socio cultural background wherein the girls have to face many

negative events in day to day life.

Seligman suggested that depressed people tended to use a more pessimistic explanatory style when thinking about stressful events than did non-depressed people, who tended to be more optimistic in nature. Learned helpless children see failure as permanent (ability not effort), pervasive (in everything they do) and very personal (Gordon & Gordon, 2006).

Most researchers believe that people who experience learned helplessness struggle with three problems: motivational, cognitive and emotional which destroys the child's desire to learn (Gordon and Gordon, 2006; Madden, 2007). Gordon and Gordon (2006) however contended that explanatory style develops in childhood and by third grade, the child had already developed optimistic or pessimistic perceptions about the world from parents, teachers and other adults at home and in the community. This conclusion suggests a comparison between girls and boys of their attributions of failure relate to internal and to external causes in general. The pattern of findings suggests that girls attribute their failures more to lack of ability than do boys.

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