

PREDICTING LEARNED HELPLESSNESS BASED ON PERSONALITY

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RESUME

El objetivo principal de esta investigación es el reconocimiento y la comparación de la influencia de los métodos de enseñanza del habla, análisis de colaboración y la enseñanza de programación de la confrontación estratégica de los factores laborales estresantes en las enfermeras. El método de investigación es experimental utilizando el multigrano pre -test y post -test. El grupo estadístico de esta investigación es todo el 200 enfermeras del hospital Militar Kermanshah 520 en 2013. Entre ellos cerca de 45 enfermeras querían participar en los períodos de readiestramiento quien seleccionados como muestra estadística aleatoria y divididos, ya que hay grupos de 15 participantes, el estrés métodos que se enfrenta a prueba Candler y Parker : 1990) se tomó de los tres grupos anteriores. Todos los tres grupos anteriores se les ha enseñado sobre la base del discurso, discusión colaborativa y el método de programación durante los 5 Sesiones. Una vez más, los grupos

anteriores examinados cada basan en la prueba de estrés confrontar al final del período y luego todos los resultados analizados mediante el uso de la prueba de análisis de covarianza. Los resultados mostraron que estos métodos de enseñanza en los resultados altamente mejora de confrontar estilos de los factores estresantes. Además, los resultados mostraron que el método del discurso y discusión de colaboración son muy mejor que la enseñanza de la programación en los estilos Estratégico enfrentadas de basado en problemas factores estresantes en las enfermeras. Pero, método de enseñanza de programación altamente influencias sobre los estilos enfrentados de prohibición y basados en las enfermeras, también basado en el método. Por lo tanto, es mejor utilizar varios métodos de enseñanza para la enseñanza de los estilos enfrentados de factores llenas de estrés.

SUMMARY

Learned helplessness as a negative motivational state can latently underlie repeated failures and create negative feelings toward the education as well as depression in students and other members of a society. The purpose of this paper is to predict learned helplessness based on students' personality traits. The research is a predictive

correlational study and the population consists of all high school 3rd grade female students in Kermanshah-Iran in 2013-14. Based on Cochran formula, the sample size was determined 360 people who were selected using multistage cluster sampling method. The samples responded personality traits and attribution style questionnaires. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient

and multiple regressions with SPSS software. The results showed that there is relation between learned helplessness and personality traits of neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, but only the trait of neuroticism can inversely predict learned helplessness.

KEYWORDS / learned helplessness, personality traits, student

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Introduction

In each country, the education system plays an important role in fostering individual talents, strengthening the foundations of social life, expanding democratic ideals, and building rapport among humans (Shariatmadari, 2003). The realization of such goals depends on the application of psychological principles and techniques in schools and educational centers to reduce the specific problems and damages caused by the educational system (Moghadam, 2005).

Far, it has been observed that students who are very similar in terms of the learning talent show obvious differences in educational attainment; these differences are also observed in their other activities. This aspect of human behavior is related to the issue of motivation in psychology (Seif, 1993). Attribution theory is one of the new theories in psychology of motivation and learned helplessness is one of the major concepts of this theory. Learned helplessness arises from the individuals' belief in failure. The belief

leads to the reduction of efforts and motivation level (Carver and Scheier, 1996). In fact, learned helplessness can be defined as a threat to one's sense of control that often causes an intense activity to retrieve the control. This feeling leads to loss of control and a decrease in activity that means an apparent lack of motivation and unwillingness to sustainability (Seligman, 1975); in other words, after a series of experiences in which the learners' responses do not change their behaviors results, they learn that their behaviors and the results of their behaviors are independent from each other (Hergenhahn and Olson, 1997). Various experiments proved that under the same conditions, individuals show different reactions. While facing a problem, some people refuse to solve it, because they believe that the problem is unsolvable, whereas some others believe that the problem is solvable, but they do not have the ability to solve it. This different interpretation led the experts to new factors called "locus of control" having affinity with Julian Rotter's internal-external locus of control. According to Rotter, people are divided into groups based on the

performance of their locus of control: 1- the individuals who attribute their successes and failures to the circumstances include external locus of control and 2- the individuals whose understanding of the ability concept is low and attribute the successes to unstable and external factors, but the failures to stable and internal causes (Bell-Gredler, 1986). Later, Abramson et al. (1999) entered attribution styles into the helplessness theory (Shultz, 2005). Depression is one of the main consequences of learned helplessness. Studies have shown that depressed people severely feel helpless. These patients use more unhealthy attributional style compared to normal individuals; as a result, whatever they see of themselves is failure and lack of success. In fact, there is a vicious cycle among helplessness, hopelessness, lack of effort, and consequently failure that the cycle again leads to failure in the next stage and finally makes the sense of mastery, hope, and self-satisfaction weak and weaker. Such people believe in being unlucky due to using ineffective attribution styles (Abramson et al., 1999). However, in some cases the passivity which is observed in helplessness may be an

adaptive response (Seligman, Peterson, and Abramson, 1993; quoted from Dutton et al., 2009). In fact, personality represents those individual characteristics which include fixed thinking, emotional, and behavioral patterns (John and Pervin, 2001). Allport defines personality as the dynamic organization of human psychophysical systems that determine his specific adaptation to the environment. What Allport means by dynamic organization is that personality is constantly changing. Actually, it can be said that personality is a relatively stable pattern of traits, attitudes, or characteristics that to some extent give durability to behaviors of an individual. To understand others, it is needed to understand their patterns or in other words, the ways through which they personally make the world. Therefore, an individual's interpretation of events is important not the events themselves (Feist, 2002). Allport believes that the main issue regarding any personality theory is how it deals with the concept of motivation (Schultz, 2005). The five-factor model of personality (Costa and McCrae, 1992) indicates the dominant conceptual model of personality structure. In this model, the big five personality factors include neuroticism, extraversion, "openness to experience", agreeableness, and conscientiousness that they are described in the following:

Neuroticism: negative emotions such as fear, sadness, excitement, feelings of guilt, and permanent feelings of being overwhelmed form the basis of this index. Since destructive emotions affect an individual's adaptation to environment, irrational beliefs are more likely to be observed in people who have a high score on this index; also, they are less likely to be able to control impulses; as a result, they show a poor compromise with others in stressful situations (Fathi A., 2011).

Extraversion: extroverted people (extroverts) are social. They include traits as loving people, preferring large groups and meetings, and being daring, active and talkative (Garousi F., 2001). They are sensation-seeking and constantly vibrant (Costa and McCrae, 1992).

Openness to experience: people who have a high score on this index are curious, creative, inventive, imaginative, non-traditional (Costa and McCrae, 1992). In fact, being openness to experience shows the breadth, depth and complexity of an individual's mind and life experiences (John and Pervin, 2001).

Agreeableness: an agreeable person is basically altruist and sympathetic. He is eager to help others and believes that others have the same relationship with him. In contrast, a disagreeable person is self-centered and suspects the intention of others. Such a person is more competitive rather than cooperative. Neither of the two poles of this index has a superior social status. In fact, it cannot be

said which group (agreeable or disagreeable) has better mental health. Low scores on this index are related to narcissistic, antisocial and paranoid personality disorders while the dependent personality disorder gets high scores on this index (Costa and McCrae, 1990). People with dependent personality disorder are deeply offended by criticism and disapproval of others (Sperry, 2003).

Conscientiousness: these people are conscientious, rational, and aware. They have high confidence in their competence. They carefully follow ethical rules and are strict in implementing social obligations (Garousi F., 2001).

According to what mentioned, the research hypotheses are as follows:

- 1- There is relation between personality traits and learned helplessness.
- 2- Learned helplessness can be predicted based on personality traits.

Research Methodology

The research is a predictive correlational study. Personality traits and learned helplessness are respectively the predictor and criterion variables. The research population consists of all high school 3rd grade female students in Kermanshah-Iran in 2013-14 that the number of population is 4072 according to the statistical report of Kermanshah Education Department. Using Cochran formula, the sample size was determined 360 people who were selected using multistage cluster sampling method. The samples responded personality traits and attributional style questionnaires. After the assessment, 356 questionnaires were statistically analyzed and the rest were excluded due to a defect in the response.

The research tools

1- NEO- Personality Inventory- Revised (NEO-PI-R): this questionnaire developed by Costa and McCrae is a 240-item psychological personality inventory which measures the big five personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. The shorten version of this questionnaire includes 60 items which are scored based on five-point Likert scale from completely disagree to completely agree. Accordingly, each item can obtain a score of 0-4. Every 12 items of this questionnaire researches one of big five personality traits. Overall, each respondent can obtain a score of 0-48 regarding each big personality trait (each scale of the questionnaire).

2- Attribution Style Questionnaire: this questionnaire is a self-report instrument developed by Semmel, Von Baeyer, Abramson, Metalsky, and Seligman (1982) to measure individuals' explanations and attributions regarding pleasant or unpleasant events. The questionnaire can be implemented as an individual or group inventory and contains 12

hypothetical events of which 6 are good and 6 are bad. There are 4 questions regarding each case that the questions are always developed in a particular direction. The first question is about the main reason for a desired event. Although the answer of this question is not scored, the respondent needs it to answer the next three questions as follows:

- 1- Is the cause of the event internal or external?
- 2- Is the cause of the event stable or unstable?
- 3- Is the cause of the event general or specific?

Then, the scores of each dimension are calculated.

The statistical method

Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to measure descriptive statistics indices, but at the level of inferential statistics, the assumptions of the Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis were used after being assessed by stepwise method.

Research findings

In the following, the data obtained based on studied variables are presented:

The data of table 1 describe the personality traits and learned helplessness of sample group. According to table 1, the mean values of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are reported equal to 24.28, 28.66, 28.56, 29.73, and 33.37, respectively as well as their standard deviation values are equal to 7.60, 4.96, 4.88, 6.10, and 7.01, respectively. The mean and standard deviation values of learned helplessness are reported equal to 1.36 and 1.97, respectively.

Testing the first hypothesis of the research

The results of Pearson correlation coefficient test show that there is a significant relation between learned helplessness and personality traits of neuroticism ($r=0.220$ $P<0.01$), agreeableness ($r=0.140$ $P<0.01$), and conscientiousness ($r=0.144$ $P<0.01$). However, the relation between learned helplessness and neuroticism is an inverse relationship while the relation between learned helplessness and personality traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness is direct. On the other hand, the results showed that there is no significant relation between learned helplessness and the personality traits of extraversion ($r=0.097$ $P<0.096$) and openness to experience ($r=0.066$ $P<0.21$).

Table 3: the list of variables used in regression analysis of helplessness based on the female students' personality traits

Testing the second hypothesis of the research

According to the results, it is possible to predict the learned helplessness of high school 3rd grade female students in Kermanshah-Iran by their personality traits. In the first step, the personality trait of

neuroticism is examined by stepwise regression analysis and then the stepwise regression was stopped and it was prevented from entering the other variables.

Testing the third hypothesis of the research

The results of adjusted squared multiple correlation coefficient show that the neuroticism personality trait explains 0.046 of total helplessness variance of 3rd grade female students in Kermanshah high schools.

The results of regression analysis test show that the personality trait of neuroticism can significantly predict the helplessness of 3rd grade female students in Kermanshah high schools ($F= 18.018, P<0.01$).

According to table 6 and the standardized beta weights, one standard deviation change in personality trait of neuroticism causes - 0.220 standard deviation change in helplessness of female students.

Discussion and Conclusion

Regarding the first hypothesis, the results of Pearson correlation coefficient showed that there is relation between learned helplessness and the personality traits of neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. However, the relation between learned helplessness and neuroticism is an inverse relationship while the relation between learned helplessness and personality traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness is direct.

The inverse relation between learned helplessness and neuroticism can be explained in this way that learned helplessness as a state of negative self-perception and a submission to conditions can show the person's realism and proper understanding of situation in some circumstances. For example, in an essay about women who are the victims of domestic violence, it is said, "the passivity observed among victims of domestic violence is an average example of learned helplessness, but this passivity can be an adaptive tool, whose function is to minimize the risk of violence for themselves and their children" (Seligman, Peterson, and Abramson, 1993; quoted from Dutton et al., 2009). Therefore, it can be concluded that sometimes individuals who obtain lower scores on neuroticism scale can get higher scores in learned helplessness test. In addition, as Schultz describes in his personality theory, unlike normal people who are dynamic and flexible and have real self-concept, neurotic people are rigid, static, and stubborn. They strive to act in accordance with their imaginary and ideal self-concept which is doomed to failure, because they never can reach that unrealistic self-concept (Schultz, 2005). Also, the individuals who get

high scores on neuroticism index may have unrealistic ideas and expectations (Fathi A., 2011). Thus, the inverse relation between learned helplessness and neuroticism can be explained in this way that people who have high scores on neuroticism index may get lower scores on learned helplessness due to improper understanding of situations and their abilities.

The direct relation between agreeableness and learned helplessness can be explained in this way: since the higher score in agreeableness shows dependent personality disorder (Costa and McCrae, 1990) as well as people with dependent personality disorder are deeply offended by criticism and disapproval of others (Sperry, 2003), it can be concluded that people with high scores in agreeableness measure their success or failure based on others' approval while in many cases, that is the person himself who can understand the positive aspects of his performance based on the conditions. Thus, relying on external criteria to analyze one's achievements and waiting for others' approval can be grounds for feelings of failure and disability in facing problems and as a result, the feelings of helplessness.

Regarding the direct relation between the personality trait of conscientiousness and learned helplessness, it can be concluded that people with high scores on this index have high expectations of their performance due to their high confidence in their competence and being careful in following ethical rules and strict in implementing social obligations (Garousi F., 2001; Costa and McCrae, 1992). Therefore, they admire themselves later and less and blame themselves sooner and more than the others. In other words, they believe in internal standards while analyzing the failures; as a result, they get a negative self-perception and a sense of helplessness. Finally, it is recommended that school counselors and psychologists examine students' personality traits and provide necessary information and guidelines for teachers, students, and parents to prevent learned helplessness.

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Table 1: the description of female students' personality traits and learned helplessness

The personality trait	\bar{X}	S
Neuroticism	24.28	7.60
Extraversion	28.66	4.96
Openness to experience	28.56	4.88
Agreeableness	29.73	6.10
Conscientiousness	33.37	7.01
Learned helplessness	1.36	1.97

Table 2: the relation between personality traits and learned helplessness of female students

The personality trait	Learned helplessness	
	r	p
Neuroticism	-0.220	0.0001**
Extraversion	0.097	0.096
Openness to experience	0.066	0.211
Agreeableness	0.140	0.008**
Conscientiousness	0.144	0.007**

**P<0.01, n=356

Table 3: The inserted predictor variable

Model	The inserted predictor variable	The criterion variable	Method
1	The personality trait of neuroticism	Helplessness	Stepwise

Table 4: the summary of helplessness regression model based on the female students' personality traits

Model	Variable	R	R ²	AR ²	SE
1	The personality trait of neuroticism	0.220	0.048	0.046	1.926

Table 5: the summary of regression analysis of helplessness predictor variables based on the female students' personality traits

Model	The source of changes	S.S	df	M.S	F	P
	Regression	66.860	1	66.860		
1	Remainder	1313.563	354	3.711	18.018	0.0001**
	Total	1380.422	355			

**P<0.01

Table 6: the regression coefficients for predicting helplessness based on the female students' personality traits

Model	The coefficient	B	SE	Beta	t	P
	Constant	2.749	0.342		8.031	0.0001**
1	Neuroticism	0.013	0.013	-0.220	-4.245	0.0001**

**P<0.01