



A STUDY ON MENTAL HEALTH AMONG OPTIMISTIC AND PESSIMISTIC SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN JAFFNA

Psychology

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ABSTRACT

The study was carrying out whether there are any differences in mental health among optimistic and pessimistic students. Sampling method: 150 students (75 male, 75 female) accessible and randomly method in advance level (A/L) students selected. Research tools: Revised Life Orientation Test: This test measures individual differences in optimism - pessimism (Scheier et al., 1994) various schools in Jaffna. A significant difference found between optimistic and pessimistic students. Results showed that optimism has a positive direct relationship with mental health. Result of this study shows the more pessimistic someone is, the more he has mental health.

KEYWORDS

Mental Health, Students, optimism, pessimism

Introduction

Personality is made up of the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that make a person unique. In addition to this, personality arises from within the individual and remains fairly consistent throughout life. From childhood their feelings and attitudes are developed from his/her family environment. Happiness in family environment develops positive attitude whereas unhappiness in the family environment develops negative attitude. Optimism and Pessimism are two different outlooks on life that dictate how you deal with most situations and your expectations of the world. A commonly held view is that optimism and pessimism are mutually exclusive, however it has been determined that due to the complex nature of the concepts they can actively co-exist within the one person. Optimists, interprets situations and events as being best (optimized), meaning that in some way for factors that may not be fully comprehended, the present moment is in an optimum state. The pessimists seem too down on everything, always just a little too keen to pour cold water on any exciting plans. A mentally healthy person is one who has a wholesome and balanced personality free from sophisms and inconsistencies, emotional and nervous tensions, discards and conflicts. Optimistic is being always positive about things in life whereas pessimistic is always being negative about things in life. Personality is taken as the external appearance of the individual, but in terms of philosophy the meaning of personality has been interpreted in the sense of internal self. Personality is not a fixed state but a dynamic totality which is continuously changing due to interactions with society/environment. According to Allport (1937) Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment". Prince (1984) defines that "personality is the sum-total of all the biological innate dispositions, impulses, tendencies, acquired dispositions and tendencies acquired by experience.

The problem of adjustment is inseparably bound up with the nature of human personality. Adjustment is one of the most important psychological activities of human beings. If people want satisfaction in life, then they have to adjust themselves with their environment. According to Singh (1983), adjustment is a precarious and ever changing balance between needs and desires of the individual on the one hand and the demands of the environment or society on the other.

Norem and Cantor (1986) revealed that optimists demonstrated attributional egotism in claiming significantly more control over their performance in the success condition than in the failure condition. Pessimists did not show this pattern. Scheier, Weir traub and Carver (1986) in their two separate studies revealed modest but reliable positive correlation between optimism and problem focused coping, seeking of social support and emphasizing positive aspects of the stressful life. Pessimism was associated with denial and distancing, with focusing on stressful feeling and with disengagement from the goal with which the stressor was interfering.

Lin and Peterson (1990) suggested that one pathway leading from pessimistic explanatory style to poor health is mundane; passivity in the face of disease. Holmstrom (1989) revealed that there were no quantitative differences between sexes in terms of degree of mental health. George and Tittler (1984) found that measure of openness,

defined as the ability to increase openness in a facilitative situation, was significantly predicted by mental health.

The present study is an attempt to test the following hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between mental healths of optimistic students.
2. There will be no significant difference between personality adjustments of optimistic students.
3. There will be interdependence between mental health and personality adjustment of optimistic students.
4. There will be interdependence between mental health and personality adjustment of pessimistic students.

METHOD

Sample:

The sample comprised of 150 school students. In which 75 were male and 75 female students. These students had been selected from different schools in Jaffna.

Test Materials Used:

The following tests scale were used in this study:

1. Optimistic-Pessimistic Attitude Scale by D.S.Parashar (1989)
2. Mithila Mental Health Status Inventory by Anand Kumar and G.Thakur (1985)
3. Personality Adjustment Inventory by C.P.Sharma (1972).

Above three tests are reliable and valid measures scoring procedure and norms are given in the manual of the tests.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main aim of the present study was to investigate the significance of difference between optimistic and pessimistic students in terms of mental health and personality adjustment.

Table: 1- Comparison between Optimistic and Pessimistic Students on Mental Health

Students	Mental Health Scores		t
	Mean	SD	
Optimistic (N=92)	132.76	12.9	12.7**
Pessimistic (N=92)	137.72	12.2	

**Significant at 0.01 level

Since higher score on the test is indicative of poor mental health, Table-1 reveals that the optimistic students had significantly better mental health than pessimistic students ($p < 0.01$) It means that first null hypothesis should be rejected. The causes behind it are that pessimistic individuals lack social disclosure and feeling of security and such people would naturally have mental problems. George and Tittler (1984) found that measures of openness, as the ability to increase openness in a facilitative situation, were significantly predicted by mental health.

Table: 2- Comparison between Optimistic and Pessimistic Students on Personality Adjustment

Students	Mental Health Scores		t
	Mean	SD	

Optimistic (N=92)	18.49	8.2	12.7**
Pessimistic (N=58)	23.79	8.9	

**Significant at 0.01 level

Further it was hypothesized that there will be no significant difference between personality adjustment of optimistic and pessimistic students. Table-2 indicates that optimistic students significantly differ from pessimistic students on personality adjustment at 0.01 level of significance, and the mean values show that optimistic student scored less than the pessimistic students which indicates better personality adjustment of optimistic than pessimistic students. Thus, second null hypothesis was also rejected. Pessimistic individuals are emotionally liable, fearful, anxious, unhappy, nervous and depressed. So they have some adjustment problems. Norem and Cantor (1986) also reported that optimists show better personality adjustment than pessimists.

Table: 3- Interdependence between Mental Health and Personality Adjustment among Optimistic Students

Level of Mental Health	Degree of Personality Adjustment			Total
	Adjusted	Average	Maladjusted	
Better M.H.	2	12	2	16
Average	14	38	8	60
Poor M.H.	1	15	0	16
Total	17	65	10	N=92

$\chi^2=6.34$; $df=4$

Third null hypothesis formulated was that there will be interdependence between mental health and personality adjustment optimistic students. Table-3 reveals that the chi-square value is 6.34 which are insignificant. The third null hypothesis is therefore accepted. Optimists are always ready to face all situations, they are not losing patience in adverse situations, and they are extravert. They have many social contacts and take in group activities. So mental health and personality adjustment of optimistic students are not dependent on each other.

Table: 4- Interdependence between Mental Health and Personality Adjustment among Pessimistic Students

Level of Mental Health	Degree of Personality Adjustment			Total
	Adjusted	Average	Maladjusted	
Better M.H.	4	3	1	8
Average	5	29	8	42
Poor M.H.	0	6	2	8
Total	9	38	11	N=58

$\chi^2=9.5$; $df=4$

Significant at 0.01 levels

Fourth null hypothesis shows that there will be no dependencies between mental health and personality adjustment of pessimistic students. Table-4 reveals that the chi-square value is 9.5 which are significant at 0.05 level of confidence. So, fourth null hypothesis is rejected as the mental health and personality adjustment of pessimistic students are dependent. Pessimistic person's shows introvert personality. Sometimes people reach their goals with relative ease but when their needs are frustrated, maladjustment in the person occurs and he may become mentally sick. Therefore there is a significant dependency between personality adjustment and mental health of pessimistic individuals.

CONCLUSION

It may be concluded that optimistic students have, significant better mental health and personality adjustment than the pessimistic students. But there is no significant dependence between mental health and personality adjustment of optimistic students. On the other hand, there is significant dependence between mental health and personality adjustment of pessimistic students.

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