Belief in Just World and Achievement Motivation as Predictors of Happiness Among University Students

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Abstract

The study has been undertaken to investigate the relationship among belief in a just world (personal belief in a just world and general belief in a just world), achievement motivation, and happiness among university students. A total of 111 university students from Agra were chosen at random. Four scales were used for data collection. 1. Personal Belief in Just World scale 2. General Belief in Just World scale 3. Achievement Motivation Scale 4. Happiness Scale. Correlational design was used, and multiple regression was used to analyze the data. Results showed that personal belief in a just world and happiness are positively correlated (r = 0.413, p < 0.01), and general belief in a just world and happiness are also positively correlated (r = 0.390, p < 0.01). Achievement, motivation and happiness are not significantly correlated. Multiple regression analysis indicated that personal belief in a just world has the highest contribution in the determination of happiness with a regression coefficient of 0.13, and achievement motivation has the least contribution in the determination of happiness.

Keywords: Belief in Just World, Personal Belief in Just World, General Belief in Just World, Achievement Motivation, Happiness, Correlation and Multiple Regression.

Introduction

Belief in a just world was proposed by Lerner (1980). Justice views are characterized as comparatively consistent inclinations to believe that the world is just and fair (Furnham, 2003). Research and theory have specifically highlighted that dispositional tendencies to perceive justice in the world include specific beliefs that one receives what one deserves (personal justice for self) and a propensity to believe that others are treated fairly (general justice for others). General belief

in a just world reflects the belief that the world is a just place where everyone gets what they deserve, and the conviction that a person is treated fairly in their life is reflected in their personal belief in a just world. The relationship between achievement motivation and the belief in a just world was examined by Karadag (2020). The study included 302 undergraduate students as a convenience sample. Findings showed that general belief in a just world, personal belief in a just world, and interaction between gender all predicted academic success.

The term achievement motivation was propounded by McClelland in 1953 in his achievement motivation theory. Achievement motivation is the need for excellence and great success regardless of the potential rewards. Atkinson and his associates (1960) developed the theory that achievement motivation is based on two distinct demands. One is the drive to succeed, which is associated with the need to attain successful goals, and the other is the drive to avoid failure. Achievement motivation is affected by evaluated performance when competing with an excellent standard is crucial (McClelland et al., 1953). In higher education settings, Moussa and Ali (2021) assessed the correlation between students' happiness levels and achievement motivation. For independent samples, t-tests and simple linear regression were employed. The results of the data analysis showed that students in the United Arab Emirates' higher education have high levels of both academic achievement and happiness, and that there was a correlation between the two. The findings of the t-test indicated that college students' levels of happiness did not differ based on their gender.

The word "happy" and this expression, both of which denoted good luck and favor from fortune, first appeared in English in the early 16th century. High life satisfaction, positive effects, and low levels of negative affect are characteristics of happiness as a positive mental state (Morrow-Howell, 2010). According to Aristotle (2000), happiness is the best of the most attractive and pleasurable things to happen, and he listed the qualities that make happiness the best of all beautiful and pleasurable things to happen, including the completion of all co-virtuous actions, the well-being of verbs, and the completion of all co-virtuous actions. Mauri, Saucedo, and Beltrán (2021) examined the association between gratitude, happiness, and academic success. Findings showed a strong association between happiness and academic success.

In the present study, the relationship between these variables, i.e., belief in a just world (personal and general), achievement motivation, and happiness, was studied to understand how these variables relate to each other and how much these variables are contributing to the happiness of the university students. Thus, the main purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between belief in just world (personal belief in just world and general belief in just world), achievement motivation and happiness among university students.

Objectives of the study:

1. To study the relationship of belief in just world (personal belief in just world and general belief in just world) with happiness among university students.

2. To study the relationship of achievement motivation with happiness among university students.

3. To find out the relative contribution of belief in just world and achievement motivation in determination of happiness among university students.

Hypotheses:

1. Personal belief in just world and general belief in just world would be positively correlated with happiness among university students.

2. Achievement motivation would be positively correlated with happiness among university students.

3. Relative contribution of personal belief in just world would be much more remarkable as compared to general belief in just world and achievement motivation in determination of happiness among university students.

Method

The predictor variables for the study were belief in just world (personal and general) and Achievement motivation, criterion variable was happiness. The study was conducted on 111 university students comprising both male and female students aged between 18-23 years from Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

Tools

Belief in Just World (BJW) Scale developed by Dalbert (1999) was used to assess the personal belief in a just world, and the scale developed by Dalbert, Montada, and Schmitt (1987) to assess the general belief in a just world of the students, Achievement–Motivation Scale developed by Lang and Fries (2006) to assess achievement motivation and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire developed by Hills and Argyle (2002) to assess happiness of the participants.

Design: To study the relationship between belief in just world (personal belief in just world and general belief in just world), achievement motivation and happiness, correlational design was used.

Results and Discussion

The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Table 1 represents the coefficient correlation between belief in a just world, achievement motivation, and happiness. It is evident from the table that personal belief in a just world and happiness are positively correlated ($r = 0.413$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, an increase in personal belief in a just world leads to an increase in happiness. General belief in a just world and happiness are also positively correlated ($r = 0.390$, $p < 0.01$). Achievement motivation and happiness are not significantly correlated.

Table 1

Correlation between predictors (Belief in just world and Achievement motivation) and criterion variable (Happiness)

Variables	Mean	SD	Personal belief in just world	General belief in just world	Achievement Motivation	Happiness
Personal belief in just world	27.29	5.58	1			
General belief in just world	23.86	4.59	0.512	1		
Achievement	29.07	4.17	0.315	0.202	1	

Motivation						
Happiness	113.23	16.332	**0.413****	**0.390****	**0.049**	1

**p<0.01

Table 2 presents the value of Adjusted R square, 0.201 which indicates that 20% variance in happiness is explained by the combined predictor variables.

Table 2

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple R	0.472
R Square	0.223
Adjusted R Square	0.201
Standard Error	14.597
Observation	111

Table 3

Analysis of Variance

ANOVA	df	SS	MS	F
Regression	3	6542.548	2180.849	10.236**
Residual	107	22797.362	213.059	

**p<0.01

Multiple regression analysis shows that personal belief in just the world has highest contribution in determination of happiness being coefficient of determination of 0.13.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Coefficients

Variables	b	SE	Beta	t	r	Coefficient of Determination
Personal belief in just world	0.932	0.300	0.318	3.106**	0.413**	0.131
General belief in just world	0.880	0.353	0.247	2.491**	0.390**	0.096
Achievement Motivation	-0.397	0.352	-0.101	1.126	0.049	-0.004
Constant	78.337	11.286				

**p<0.01

The obtained multiple regression equation states that one unit increase in personal belief in a just world (X_1) led to an increase in happiness scores by their respective coefficient (0.932), one unit increase in general belief in a just world (X_2) led to an increase in happiness scores by their respective coefficient (0.880), but one unit increase in achievement motivation (X_3) led to a decrease in happiness scores by their respective coefficient (-0.397). The value of the constant is 78.337.

Regression Equation:

$Y = a + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3$

$= 78.337 + 0.932 * 27.29 + 0.880 * 23.86 + 29.07 * (-0.397)$

$= 78.337 + 25.43 + 20.99 - 11.54$

$= 113.22$

Findings and Discussion

The first hypothesis, which stated that "personal belief in a just world and general belief in a just world would be positively correlated with happiness among university students," is accepted. Sari

et al.'s (2021) study, "Belief in a Just World and Life Satisfaction in Undergraduate Students: Cross-Cultural Study in Indonesia and China," supports the findings. According to the correlation test, there was a significant relationship between life satisfaction, general belief in a just world, and personal belief in a just world for Indonesian subjects.

Students who strongly believed that the world is fair (both for themselves and in general) reported higher levels of happiness. This finding aligns with the idea that maintaining a belief in a just world might provide individuals with a sense of order, predictability, and control, which can enhance psychological well-being and happiness.

The second hypothesis stated that "Achievement motivation would be positively correlated with happiness among university students" is rejected. The finding is supported by Yusuf (2019), who investigated the distinctions between remedial students' subjective happiness, hope, and achievement motivation. 500 remedial students in all took part in the study. According to the findings, remedial students' subjective satisfaction, hope, achievement motivation, and CGPA did not differ statistically significantly.

This finding could be because of factors other than achievement motivation, such as stress, academic pressure, or personal relationships, might have a stronger impact on happiness. The relationship between achievement motivation and happiness might not be linear. For example, too much focus on achievement could lead to stress and burnout, reducing happiness.

The third hypothesis stated that "the relative contribution of personal belief in a just world would be much more remarkable as compared to general belief in a just world and achievement motivation among university students" is accepted. The finding is supported by Ahmad et al. (2023), who sought to find out how students felt about their lives, their well-being, and their belief in a just world. The results of the study demonstrated that students' personal belief in a just world was a strong predictor of their well-being and life satisfaction. Students' general belief in a just world or a just world for others did not predict their degree of life satisfaction or overall well-being.

The reasons for this finding are personal belief in the just world is tied closely to an individual's personal experiences and emotional well-being. If students believe their efforts will lead to fair outcomes in their own lives, they are more likely to stay motivated, persevere, and achieve their goals. General belief in just world is more abstract and may not directly influence how individuals view or approach their specific situations. Personal beliefs, however, are more relevant when making decisions or evaluating personal success.

Conclusion

The study provides valuable insights into the psychological factors that contribute to student well-being. By addressing these psychological dimensions, universities can contribute to the holistic development of students. This research paves the way for further exploration into other potential predictors and interventions to support student happiness in diverse contexts.

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