

Study of the Relationship between Domain-Specific Hope and Dysfunctional Attitudes in Students of Islamic Azad University of Gorgan – Iran

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Abstract

Hope is one of psychological structures with very important predictive role in many mental conditions. Dysfunctional attitudes are activated immediately after negative events of life and after activation, they stimulate a pattern of information processing with negative orientations. Dysfunctional attitude may hinder students' educational performance. The present study was formulated in order to determination of the relationship between specific-domain hope and dysfunctional attitudes in the students of Islamic Azad University of Gorgan – Iran. Two type of questionnaire were given to 333 students to evaluate their specific-domain hope and dysfunctional attitudes. Six sub-hypotheses were considered to determine the relationship between dysfunctional attitudes and six specific domain of hope, i.e. social relationships, academics, romantic relationships, family life, work, and leisure activities. The results obtained from the present study showed that there is a negative and insignificant relationship between specific-domain hope and dysfunctional attitudes ($p>0.05$). Also, it was revealed that among specific domains of hope, work domain of hope can best determine dysfunctional attitudes of students.

Keywords: Domain-specific hope, dysfunctional attitudes, educational performance, Gorgan.

1. Introduction

Dysfunctional attitudes are the ones making people vulnerable to depression. These attitudes are activated immediately after negative events of life and after activation, they stimulate a pattern of information processing with negative orientations. These negative attitudes can be considered negative factors for mental health (Beck, 1983). The relationship between dysfunctional attitudes and depression in adolescent girls (GhasemiBafghi, 2013), Islamic lifestyle (Toghyani et al. 2013), mental health and spiritual intelligence (Moallemi, 2010), and mental health (Rabiei et al. 2009) have been studied. Kumari and Blakburn (2002) concluded that dysfunctional attitudes cause depression. Furthermore, Miranda et al. (2003) found a relationship between dysfunctional attitudes and depression and anxiety.

Hope is one of psychological structures with very important predictive role in many mental conditions. Expectation of future is a core definition in hope theory (Rajabi&Sadat Hosseini, 2013). Three attributes of hope have been identified, i.e. pathway thinking, agency thinking, and goal. Pathway thinking is defined as one's perceived ability to recognize and make pathways toward goal (Snyder, 1994). Hopeful individuals consider several pathways in order to cope with potential obstacles (Snyder et al. 1991; Snyder et al. 1996; Snyder et al. 2000; Snyder, 2000; Irving et al. 1997). Positive effects of hope cannot be attributed to making such pathways; these effects are attained by the perception that such pathways can be generated (Snyder et al. 1991). Agency thinking refers to the thoughts a person has about his/her abilities to commence and continue a way toward a predefined destination (Snyder et al. 1999). These thoughts are reflected in such positive self-representations as "I am able to perform this" (Snyder et al. 1998). Agency thinking incites a person to start and keep moving along a route toward a goal. The attributes of hope (i.e. pathway thinking, agency thinking, and goal) reciprocally influence one another (Snyder et al. 1991). Perhaps the most influential theory of hope in the past two decades was proposed by Snyder et al. (2002) who described hope as one's perceived ability to attain methods for reaching goals and motivating the person by thinking so as to utilize those methods (Snyder et al. 2002; as cited in Alexander & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Dysfunctional attitude may hinder students' educational performance. Despite a great potential to make progress in his/her education, a student with dysfunctional attitudes cannot flourish and reach high level of education and prosperity. Educational development depends on several factors among which individual, social, educational, and psychological factors can be named. Determination of these factors and how much contribution they render to educational accomplishments or failures of students can help policymakers to improve positive factors and reduce the adverse effects

of negative attributes. Therefore, the present study aimed at determination of the relationship between specific-domain hope and dysfunctional attitudes in the students of Islamic Azad University of Gorgan – Iran. The following hypotheses were considered:

1.1 Main hypothesis

- There is a significant relationship between specific-domain hope and dysfunctional attitudes.

1.2 Sub-hypotheses

- There is a significant relationship between social relationships domain of hope and dysfunctional attitudes.
- There is a significant relationship between academic domain of hope and dysfunctional attitudes.
- There is a significant relationship between romantic relationships domain of hope and dysfunctional attitudes.
- There is a significant relationship between family life domain of hope and dysfunctional attitudes.
- There is a significant relationship between work domain of hope and dysfunctional attitudes.
- There is a significant relationship between leisure activities domain of hope and dysfunctional attitudes.

2. Methodology

The present paper is applied in terms of objective and descriptive-survey in terms of research method. Statistical population in the present study consists of all students of Islamic Azad University of Gorgan – Iran in 2013-14. Sample size (333 students) was decided by use of Kukran's Formula. Sampling was performed randomly.

Data collection was performed by using two questionnaires: the standard tool for specific-domain hope (Specific-Domain Hope Scale; Simpson, 1999) and Dysfunctional Attitudes Questionnaire. The first questionnaire evaluates subjects' hope in six specific domains, namely social relationships, academics, romantic relationships, family life, work, and leisure activities and for each domain, there are 8 factors and the maximum value for each domain is 64. In the first section of the scale, personal information of subjects are asked and then, there are three main parts pertaining to significance of the domain for subjects, satisfaction of the subjects from the domains, and evaluation of hope in the domains, respectively. Validity of the scale was confirmed by experts. Cronbach's alpha was adopted in order to confirm reliability of the tool. Because the alpha was found to be higher than 0.7, it can be claimed that the questionnaire can be reliably used. Table 1 shows Cronbach's alpha values for each domain of hope and for the whole scale.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha for each domain of hope and for the whole Specific-Domain Hope Scale

Subscales	Number of factors	Cronbach's alpha
Social relationships	8	0.852
Romantic relationships	8	0.873
Family life	8	0.879
Academics	8	0.866
Work	8	0.788
Leisure activities	8	0.871
Specific-Domain Hope Scale	48	0.909

The second questionnaire consisted of 40 seven-point Likert scale (Absolutely disagree, very disagree, a little disagree, no idea, a little agree, very agree, absolutely agree) questions for recognition of dysfunctional attitudes. This questionnaire is a valid tool with satisfactory psychometric characteristics (GhasemiBafghi, 2013). Validity of the scale was established by experts. Cronbach's alpha was used to approve reliability of the tool. Because the alpha was higher than 0.7 (0.808), it can be claimed that the questionnaire is reliable.

Statistical analyses were performed in SPSS Software (Version 21) and graphs were drawn in Excel (Microsoft Office, 2010).

3. Results

3.1 General information of respondents

Most respondents were between 20 and 25 years old (207; 62.16%) (Fig.1a). Also, 61.26% of the respondents were bachelor degree students and the rest of them were studying in master's degree (Fig.1b). In addition, most respondents (259; 77.45%) were not married (Fig.1c) and over 80% of them were female (Fig.1d).

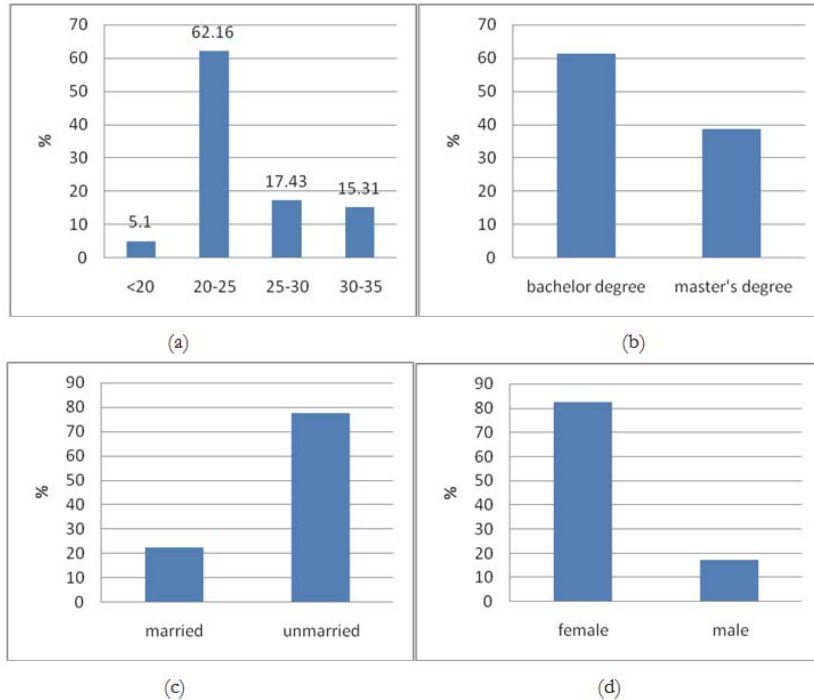


Figure 1: General information of the respondents; (a) age; (b) education; (c) marital status; (d) gender.

3.2 Main hypothesis

The results obtained from the present study showed that there is a negative and insignificant relationship between specific-domain hope and dysfunctional attitudes ($p=0.553$; $r=-0.033$). In other words, although higher specific-domain hope resulted in lower dysfunctional attitudes in students, this reduction was not significant ($p>0.05$).

3.3 Sub-hypotheses

Negative and insignificant relationships were found between dysfunctional attitudes and social relationships domain of hope ($p=0.795$; $r=-0.014$), academic domain of hope ($p=0.537$; $r=-0.034$), romantic relationships domain of hope ($p=0.878$; $r=-0.008$), family life domain of hope ($p=0.898$; $r=-0.007$), work domain of hope ($p=0.907$; $r=-0.006$), and leisure activities domain of hope ($p=0.326$; $r=-0.054$). In other words, despite the fact that higher rates of hope in social relationships, academics, romantic relationships, family life, work, and leisure activities resulted in lower levels of dysfunctional attitudes in students, this reduction was not significant ($p>0.05$).

Table 2: Pearson's correlation coefficients for sub-hypotheses

	social relationships			academics			romantic relationships			family life			work			leisure activities		
	r	sig	N	r	sig	N	r	sig	N	r	sig	N	r	sig	N	r	sig	N
Dysfunctional attitudes	-0.014	0.795	333	-0.034	0.537	333	-0.008	0.878	333	-0.007	0.898	333	-0.006	0.907	333	-0.054	0.326	333

3.4 Quality of the relationship between specific-domain hope and dysfunctional attitudes

The results obtained from stepwise regression showed that among specific domains of hope, work domain of hope can best determine dysfunctional attitudes of students. The β obtained from the analysis indicates that each unit of change in work domain of hope causes 0.145 change in dysfunctional attitudes of students. In other words, work domain of hope has the highest statistical relationship with dysfunctional attitude in students.

Table 3: Stepwise regression of dysfunctional attitudes by work domain of hope

Change statistics predictor	R	R square	F	Sig	Beta
Work domain of hope	0.145	0.021	7.105	0.008	0.145

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was formulated in order to study the relationship between specific domain hope and dysfunctional attitudes in Islamic Azad University of Gorgan – Iran. Two type of questionnaire were given to 333 students to evaluate their specific-domain hope and dysfunctional attitudes. Six sub-hypotheses were considered to determine the relationship between dysfunctional attitudes and six specific domain of hope, i.e. social relationships, academics, romantic relationships, family life, work, and leisure activities.

According to the results obtained from the present study there is a negative and insignificant relationship between specific-domain hope and dysfunctional attitudes ($p>0.05$). Hopeful students can enjoy the ability of avoiding dysfunctional attitudes. But those students who have dysfunctional attitudes believe that you cannot feel fortunate unless you are good-looking, smart, rich, and creative. They believe that if a person disagrees with him/her, that person probably doesn't love him/her. In addition, those who are hopeful in their academic careers are able to find the best way to prosper in their education. They don't lose their self-confidence when facing a challenge in the class; instead, they effectively use their past experiences in order to figure out the problem. Research has shown that increased level of hope in university students can lead to improved academic performance (Rajabi& Sadat Hosseini, 2013; Ebrahimi et al. 2011; Rand et al. 2011).

Previous studies have shown that dysfunctional attitudes not only result in lower levels of hope but also account for some other problems like depression (Rabiei et al. 2009; Kumari and Blakburn, 2002; Miranda et al. 2003). The results obtained from the present study is consistent with those acquired by Conn et al. (2003); they found a positive relationship between hopelessness and dysfunctional attitudes. Moreover, Toghiani et al. (2013) reported that there is a positive relationship between meaningfulness of life and such factors as hope, happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health. Life meaningfulness can yield higher happiness and life satisfaction. Therefore, with higher rates of hope and consequently, higher level of life meaningfulness, it will be easier to avoid not only such disorders as depression but also dysfunctional attitudes.

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