Study of Relationship between Optimism, Pessimism and Coping Strategies with Mental Health among University Students of Lorestan

Simin Gholam Rezaei¹, Sayed Sina Safari Mousavi¹*, Fatemeh Safari², Hamzeh Bahrami¹, Seyed Masoud Dehghan Menshadi¹

¹University of Lorestan, Khorramabad, Iran
²University Azad of Hamedan, Hamedan, Iran
Email: *sinas900@gmail.com

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Abstract

The present study is conducted to determine the relationship between optimism, pessimism and coping strategies and mental health and ability to predict these concepts in students mental health in the academic year 2014 in Lorestan University. 367 subjects sampling via stratified random were selected among students of Lorestan University. Tools for data collection in this study are mental health questionnaire (GHQ-28), Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) and a questionnaire dealing with stressful situations (CISS). The method of study is correlational and data are analyzed using the stepwise regression. Data analysis shows that there are significant relationships among optimism, pessimism, and mental health (p < 0.01). There is positive and significant relationship between problem-oriented coping strategies and subject’s mental health. Also there is a significant negative relationship between coping strategies and mental health (p < 0.01). The results of study show that optimism, pessimism, coping strategies and problem-oriented coping, differently explain variance related to mental health and its subscales significantly (p < 0.01). Generally speaking, optimistic people have more mental health because of following health lifestyles and behavior and confirming problem-oriented coping strategies. Those who follow have higher capacity of solving the problem, because they involve with the problem directly, so they have higher level of mental health.

Keywords

Optimism, Pessimism, Coping Strategies, Mental Health

1. Introduction

World Health Organization (WHO) states that, health is a state of well-being that a person is in a state of complete physical, mental and social set. Mental health as a significant part of general health concept is the talent of creating harmonic relationship with others, the ability to participate in dynamic social environment and the talent of accepting effective changes. For achieving such precise goal, prevention of mental health problems, especially affective disorders, anxiety, depression, and evaluate the performance is essential [1]. Having mental health problems reduces people’s ability in their tasks and motivations so they spend a significant portion of their intellect to solve those problems. As a result, these people haven’t the ability and desire to do the assigned tasks [2].

Studies conducted by the World Health Organization show that 20 percent of Iranian people suffer from mental disorders and a case study conducted in Iran showed that 21 percent of people over 15 years old suffer from mental disorders. Studies have shown that factors such as coping strategies, problem-focused [3], optimism, sports [4], social capital, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy [5] have impact on the people mental health.

However, any change in human life, both pleasant and unpleasant is requiring kind of compatibility. Procedures of coping with these changes and tensions resulting from these changes in different people and in different situations are different. Health Psychology gives great importance for the role of coping strategies on the physical and mental health. Coping strategy is a set of cognitive, behavioral and emotional effort which accomplish to interpret a stressful situation that includes: 1) Problem Oriented Strategies: Requires information about the situation and the consequences of its probable stress and delete and reform the stress-inducing situations; 2) Coping strategies: Requires finding ways to control the excitement and try for promising when deal with it; 3) Avoidance strategy: Requires deny or minimize stressful situations, dodge and play by ear [6].

One of the variables that seem to be related with mental health is optimism. Optimism is a cognitive construct that linked with motivation. The core of optimism is hope and positive expectation for the future, Regardless of whether or not the result will occur [7]. Optimism refers to two close concepts: the first concept is the tendency to hope and the second concept tendency to believe that we live in the best of all possible worlds [8]. Optimism has an important role in compatibility with major life events. Public consider optimism as (taking the glass half full) or tend to expect a happy ending for any trouble or as having a positive expect for outcomes and results. The opposite of optimism is pessimism that means an emphasis on the most catastrophic cause of the defeat and pessimism is a habit of mind that has disastrous consequences and for any defeat gets stronger. When optimistic people face with a challenge, they have stable state (even if progress is difficult or slow), but pessimistic are uncertain and unstable. Optimists believe that the adversity managed the successful way. But pessimists expect their misery. This difference in attitude towards adversity can affect the way of coping with stress. Generally optimistic people are more willing to use problem oriented strategies than pessimistic people [9]. Optimistic take advantage from the strategy that can be controlled by changing aspects of stressful factors, seeking information and planning. While pessimistic are used to strategies of play it by ear, withdrawal, denial and evasion or drug abuse [10]. According to the Scheier and Carver (1985) optimistic people believe that things are going in the right direction, but pessimists always expecting everything to go adversely and cause bad results [11]. Pessimistic experience high stress, regardless of ability to control the stressful situation and reduce stress, connected with the use of active and problem oriented and increased stress related to the use of avoidance and coping strategies [12].

Regard this issue; Ghazanfari Poor (2012) stated that there is a significant relationship between coping strategies and public health. This means that if individual use more Problem-oriented coping strategies, will has higher mental health [3]. Mousavi (2005) the relationship between optimism and strategies to cope with psychological adaptation in adolescents and showed that optimistic individuals use more Problem-oriented coping strategies [9]. The findings of Scheier et al. (1986) showed a positive correlation between optimism and problem-oriented coping strategy [13]. Iwanaga et al. (2004) investigated the relationship between optimism and pessimism and Concluded that optimistic people show less stress and high stress has positive correlation with pessimism. Carver and Scheier (2014) stated that there is a significant relationship between optimism and mental health [7]. Respect to the influence of environment on the behavioral characteristics of students due to new environments, issues and problems in this new environment, including passing the exams, establishing of new relations of with which they are confronted, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between optimism, pessimism and coping strategies and mental health in students of Lorestan University.

Research hypotheses: