

NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTION STYLE AS PREDICTOR OF DEPRESSION AMONG HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

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Abstract

Pessimistic or negative attributional style is a negative cognitive style. It has been found as related to depression. Individuals living in shelter homes lacked proper housing. Therefore, they face numerous psychological problems. Depression is most prevalent among those psychological problems. The current study intended to investigate the impact of attributional style on depression along with demographic variations. In the present study, two instruments; the Attributional Style Questionnaire and, the Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale were administered on the conveniently selected sample of 200 homeless individuals. The results revealed that negative attributional style has a significant relationship with depression and it caused 4.8% variation in depression. Stability accounted for greater variation compared to total negative attributional style or globality. Stability accounted for 7.5% variation in depression whereas globality accounted for just 2.1% variation. The study revealed significant gender base differences in attributional style and depression. Females scored significantly higher on negative attribution style, stability, globality, and depression compared to males.

Keywords: *Negative Attributional Style, Depression, Gender Differences, Stability, Globality.*

Introduction

A homeless person lacks proper living and is forced to live in shelter homes, transitional centers, bus or train stations, streets, and even under bridges. The condition is associated with numerous health issues both physical as well as

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psychological. Increased levels of depression and anxiety are the most commonly occurring psychological problems among homeless individuals (Robinson, 2017). Due to its enormous social impact globally, the phenomenon is subjected to investigation by psychologists, econometricians, and social scientists (Alowaimer, 2018). According to Alowaimer homelessness is related to physical as well as psychological problems. Homeless individuals frequently face poverty, they are prone to suffer from hunger and unhygienic food consumption. Homeless individuals have a higher risk of cancer and hepatitis. They may be vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/Aids. On the other hand, psychological problems such as depression and anxiety are also common in homeless individuals. Gleeson et al. (2018) reported a higher prevalence of depression, non-suicidal self-injurious behaviors, and anxiety among homeless individuals.

Attribution is the causal analysis of behaviors. The causation is assessed along four dimensions that are inner vs outer causation, controllable vs uncontrollable causal explanation, stable vs unstable causal explanation, and global vs specific explanation (Pan et al., 2018). Robinson (2017) defined attributional style in terms of the cognitive construct used by an individual for the explanation of negative or positive events. Attributional style is divided into optimistic vs pessimistic attribution style. The former is based on specific, external, and unstable causal explanations whereas the latter is based on global, internal, and stable causal explanations.

Liu et al. (2017) explained the three categories of attributional style as followed. According to Liu and his colleagues, attributional style is divided into two main categories as optimistic or positive attributional style and pessimistic or negative attributional style. Each of these categories is further divided into three of following categories. (a) internal: it is assigning the causality to internal causes that are related to oneself or externality that are related to outer world; (b) non-variability: it refers to reason that are thought to have caused certain outcomes. It is further divided into permanent vs temporary reasons; (c) global: this category explains the consequences in terms of generalization of the outcomes. It is further divided in to globality that is expanding outcomes to generalize to different scenarios vs specificity that is attributing outcomes to limited and single situation.

According to Yoshimura (2014) depression is characterized by emotional instability, dysfunctional cognitions, and maladjusted behaviors. Depression is characterized by a state that has a multi-dimensional impact ranging from one's actions to feelings and even thinking. A depressed individual has no interest in everyday life and it is manifested by feelings of loneliness, sadness, worthlessness, and guilt (Jonker et al., 2019).

A negative or pessimistic attributional style has a positive association with depression. Since the attributions are based on internal, global, and stable causality compared to the optimistic attributional style. On the other hand, an optimistic

attributional style is related to lower levels of depression (Liu et al., 2017). According to Marchetti et al. (2021) the negative attribution style is marked by pessimism, self-blame, and self-referential cognition, which is considered as leading cause of depression.

Sami and Naveeda (2021) pointed out the relationship between negative attribution and depression. According to them, the negative attributional style is based on unauthentic or irrational beliefs. These unauthentic or irrational beliefs causes depression. Current study examined the interplay of the negative attributional style and depression.

Method Objectives

The objectives of the present study are given below

1. To explore the interrelationship of negative attribution style, its subtypes and depression among homeless individuals.
2. To explore the gender-based differences in attributional style and depression among homeless individuals.

Hypothesis

The hypotheses of the current study are given below

1. Negative attributional style and its subtypes will positively predict depression among homeless individuals.
2. Females will score higher on depression and attribution style among homeless individuals.

Definitions of Variables Attributional Style

Attributional style refers to a certain thinking pattern about specific events and occasions. Attribution style is measured on two dimensions negative and positive attributional style (Escrig & Pena-Garijo, 2020). It is operationalized on Attribution Style Questionnaire (ASQ). It is further analyzed on two distinct domains, stability and globality on subscales of Attribution Style Questionnaire.

Depression

Depression is characterized by loss of interest in daily life activities accompanied by sense of worthlessness, irritability, and emptiness (Higuera, 2020). Depression is operationalized on scores obtained on Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale.

Research Design

The current study is descriptive in nature whereas quantitative design and survey method is used.

Sample

The sample of the current study consisted of 300 homeless individuals both males and females. The data were collected from Abbottabad, Haripur and Mansehra districts through convenient sampling techniques.

Research Instruments

For the current research two questionnaires Attributional Style

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Questionnaire (ASQ) and Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale were used to collect data.

Attribution Style Questionnaire (ASQ)

It is the most commonly used assessment instrument. It is a 7-point Likert scale with a score ranges from 0 to 7. It consists of 12 items. Each situation is further divided into two statements which consist of two subscales (i.e., stability and globality).

Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale

Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (ZSRDS) consisted of 20 items originally developed by Zung (1965). The scale is phrased on both negatively stated items and positively stated items. Each item is scored on 1 to 4 with 1 indicating little of the time, 2 indicating sometime, 3 indicating a good part of the time, and 4 indicating most of the time.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical considerations were taken into account during the study. The participants were informed about privacy and confidentiality of the data. Institutional approval was sought prior to data collection by using a reference letter.

Procedure of the study

The researcher briefed the participants about the purpose of the research and nature of the data collection. After obtaining their informed consent, each of the participants were handed over the questionnaire. The participants were approached individually to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the data. Each participant was encouraged to clarify any misconception or ambiguity they might have faced during the research. The participants were assured that the data obtained will only be used for research purposes and they were thanked for their valuable contribution in the field.

Results

The results were calculated for the data obtained both inferential and descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS. The results are as under.

Table 1

Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Negative Attributional Style as Predictor of Depression among Homeless (N=300)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>ASQ</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>048</i>	<i>041</i>	<i>219</i>	<i>14.97</i>	<i>01</i>

Note. ASQ = Attributional Style Questionnaire

Table 1 indicated that negative attributional style accounted for 4.8% variation in depression.

Table 2

Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Stability Attributional Style as Predictor of Depression among Homeless (N=300)

Variables	R	R ²	B	B	F	SE
ASQ-S	.274	.075	.094	.274	24.26	.02

Note. ASQ-S = Attributional Style Questionnaire Stability

Table 1 indicated that stability attributional style accounted for 7.5% variation in depression.

Table 3

Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Stability Attributional Style as Predictor of Depression among Homeless (N=300)

Variables	R	R ²	B	B	F	SE
ASQ-G	.146	.021	.056	.146	6.94	.02

Note. ASQ-G = Attributional Style Questionnaire Globality

Table 1 indicated that negative attributional style accounted for 2.1% variation in depression.

Table 4

Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values of Gender Differences in Attributional Style Questionnaire and Zung Self-rating Depression Scale (N=300)

Variables	Male (n=13)		Female (n=167)		t(298)	F	Cohen's d
	D	M	D	M			
ZSRDS	5.73	94	50.34	77	6.95	.000	0.79
ASQ	5.65	0.10	125.12	8.21	7.06	.000	2.02
ASQ-S	4.31	1.12	59.26	3.02	6.57	.000	2.06
ASQ-G	2.84	.88	66.14	6.52	4.34	.000	1.71

Note. ZSRDS = Zung Self-rating Depression Scale; ASQ = Attribution Style Questionnaire; ASQ-S = Attribution Style Questionnaire-Stability; ASQ-G = Attribution Style Questionnaire-Globality.

Table indicated that there are significant gender differences in depression, negative attributional style, stability and globality among homeless individuals.

Discussion

The present research explored the effect of negative attribution style on depression among the homeless. The study also explored the effect of two subcategories of attributional style that are stability and globality on depression. The study also focused on exploring the gender differences in attributional style and depression. The study was based on correlational research design and two instruments were used to assess the variables of the study namely attribution style questionnaire and Zung self-rating depression scale.

It was hypothesized that negative attributional style would positively predict depression among homeless individuals. The results revealed that the negative attribution style brought a 4.8% change in the depression ($F(1, 298) = 14.97, p <$

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.001). The negative attributional style is associated with depression among homeless individuals (Richaud, 2020). Tairi (2020) found that negative attributional style and depression are interrelated phenomena. Even when the association between the two was studied across all age groups, the results revealed a significant relationship between negative attributional style and depression.

The results revealed that the stability domain of negative attributional style significantly caused a 7.5% variation in depression. The results are in line with the previous research. As Tairi (2020) found out stability is significantly related to depression levels. Zimmermann and Papa (2020) reported that the causal explanation for depression could be traced to the stability and globality of the attributional styles' domains.

The results in table 3 revealed that globality is also a significant predictor of depression ($F(1, 298) = 6.94, p < .001$) and caused a 2.1% variation in depression. According to Zimmermann and Papa (2020), depression can be explained in terms of globality. Similar results were earlier reported by Ballard et al. (2015).

The results in the table 4 demonstrated that females significantly differed from the males by having higher levels of negative attributional style. Perveen et al. (2016) conducted a study and found that females reported higher levels of negative attributional style compared to males.

The results in table 4 also revealed significant gender-based differences in depression among homeless individuals. The results revealed that females reported higher levels of depression compared to males ($t(298) = 6.95, p < .001$). Previous literature also indicated that females tend to have higher levels of depression. Such as Quinn et al. (2018) reported that females scored higher on depression compared to males. Similarly, Masumoto et al. (2016) found that males are less likely to be depressed compared to females who are living in shelter homes.

Conclusion

The research was conducted to find out the relationship between negative attributional style and depression among homeless individuals. Results revealed that negative attribution style and its subdomains globality and stability significantly predicted depression among homeless individuals. Gender differences were noted concerning negative attribution style and depression among homeless individuals. The females scored significantly higher as compared to males on negative attribution style, stability, globality and depression.



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