Attributional Styles Among Higher Secondary Students

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ABSTRACT: The study of attributional style is an attempt to identify dimensions of control in which students feel that they have control over life events. Obtaining information about once attributional style allows the investigators to make better predictions about the nature of an individual student. The present study aims to find out the differences of attributional style of higher secondary school students. 100 students were taken from two types of schools in Chennai and Tirunelveli. A simple random sampling technique was adapted for the selection of sample in the schools. Attributional style Questionnaire by Seligman and Peterson (1984) was used to collect data. Results are statistically analyzed through Differential Analysis in this study. It is concluded that much differences are seen among dimensions of positive attributional styles.

Keywords: Attributional Style, Higher secondary students, Gender, native place, type of school, Birth order

I INTRODUCTION

Attribution is a combined process through which we pursue to understand the reasons behind other's behavior and occasionally the reasons behind our behavior too (Kelley, 1972). According to Weary, Stenley and Harvey (1989), an attribution is an inference about why an event occurred or about a person's disposition or other psychological states. Individuals make attributions about one's own natures and experiences just as they make attributions about others. Hence, attributions may be perceptions and inferences about others or about self. The attributions are about a person's explanation of causation. On the other way they gradually constitute their perspective and framework through which they view life. There are significant evidences which point towards the fact that causal explanation which the individual considers relevant with regard to various events experienced by them, has a marked effect on their action and behavior. Causal attribution processes are not only means of providing the individual with perceptions of reality about the world, but also of maintaining effective control in the world (Kelley, 1972; Stryker and Gottlieb, 1991).

The kind of explanations that people offer for events has been receiving considerable attention from psychologists. In an attempt to understand and explain the causative factors of human behavior, psychologists have found these explanations to be potentially significant. The causal explanations for events, termed attributions, help them explain many crucial areas of behavior like achievement, health, dysfunctional behaviors and also incorporation of the principles of attribution facilitates the treatment process.

Attributional styles may be classified along three basic dimensions (Abramson, Garber and Seligman, 1980; Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale, 1978).

1. **Internal-External Dimension**: Heider's assumption that the outcome of an action depends on a combination of effective personal forces (ability factor and motivational factor) and an effective environmental force. People search for a cause structure of events via reliance upon attributions to the environment (external attributions) or to something in the person involved in the event (internal attributions) (Heider, 1958). When person tend to believe that the conducive cause is localized directly in themselves, that is due to their own doing (for example, ability, attitude, effort, emotional state, skill etc.) attributional style is said to be internal. On the other hand, attributional style is found to be external when person regard

the environmental stimulus or factors (physical and social circumstances) (for example, chance, luck, task - difficulty etc.) as a cause of an event.

2. **Stable-Unstable Dimension** refers to the persistence of a cause, whether the cause of the event is chronic (stable) or temporary (unstable). Stability refers to the relative performance associated with an attribution. An assumption that cause does not change over a long period in similar situations is termed as stability. Contradictory to it, when person assumes that cause may change over a short time is termed as instability. In other words, stable factors are thought to be long lived and recurrent, whereas unstable factors are short lived and intermittent. For example, ability, aptitude, task characteristics, interest etc. are stable causes, and chance, effort, mood, luck etc. are unstable causes.

3. **Global-Specific Dimension** measures the extent to which a cause affects an individual's whole life (global) or just a few areas (specific). Weiner (1986) considered that globality refers to consistency over situation. That is, in globality person generalizes the experience to a large variety of events or situations. Therefore, global factors affect expectancy and performance in many situations. Whereas specific factors are unique to a particular context. While global causes are relevant for a wide variety of outcomes, specific causes affect only a specific set of outcomes (that may result in helplessness) only in original situation.

Each dimension is thought to have specific consequences. Internal attributions for bad events influence an individual's self-esteem in their wake, stable attributions result in motivation, and global attributions result in pervasive deficits. Somewhat different description of the dimensions of causal explanations have been proposed by Anderson (1983), Weiner (1986), and Stratton, Munton, Hanks, Heard, and Davidson (1989), among others, but all agree that causal attributions influence a wide variety of psychological outcomes.

II. RELATED LITERATURE

Attribution theory was first proposed by Fritz Heider and later expanded upon by Bernard Weiner, among others. These psychological theorists have provided the foundational concepts for attribution theory and have established the importance of the attributional process to education because of the strong influence attributions have on students' feelings of success and failure and on their emotions, and future motivation and emotional state.

Sweeney, Anderson and Bailey (1986) reported that for negative events, attributions to internal, stable, and global causes had reliable and 48 significant association with depression. The relation between attribution factors of ability and luck was also significant but it was stronger for negative events.

Anshel & Brinthaupt (2006) examined relationships among components of attributional style and trait anxiety for 428 boys and girls, (grades 4-6). Results showed a small but significant relationship between negative attributional style and trait anxiety. In addition, girls reported higher trait anxiety than boys, and attributional style and trait anxiety were strongly correlated for girls, but not for boys. Compared to younger students, older students reported more internal attributions for negative events and higher overall scores on negative attributions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The topic, **"Attributional Styles among higher secondary students"** was chosen for the study.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Attributional style (AS) is an individual differences variable that refers to the habitual ways in which people explain their positive and negative life experiences (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978).

Objectives of the study

To find out whether there is any significant difference in the Attributional Styles of higher secondary students based on gender, native place, type of school and birth order.

Hypotheses of the study

The following hypotheses have been framed out to carry out the study.

There is no significant difference in the Attributional Styles of higher secondary students based on gender, native place, type of school and birth order.

III MATERIAL AND METHOD

Tools Used in the study

Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ) was used to measure student's attributional style. It was developed by Peterson et al., (1982), and revised by Peterson and Seligman (1984). The ASQ is a self-report measure of patterns of explanatory style which is the tendency to select certain explanations for good and bad events. The ASQ consists of 12 hypothetical events, out of which 6 are good and 6 are bad events. Additionally, half of events are interpersonal/ affiliative while other half are achievement related. Few changes in the original scale items were made by   Siddiq, H. (1997) due to the unsuitability of these items in the Indian cultural environment. Each event is followed by four questions that are always in the same order. In case of first question, respondents have to imagine the event and give one major cause of it. On the following 3 questions rating on 7-point scale has to be done, one number is circled which is in correspondence to the causal belief of the respondents. The second question is related to whether the outcome was due to something about the respondent or something about the other people or circumstances (Locus). The third question is related to dimension of stability i.e. will the cause again be present. The fourth question is about globality-whether the cause influences just the particular situation or other areas of life. The three attributional dimensions rating scales associated with each event description are scored in the direction of increasing internality, stability and globality.

Sample of the Study

A simple random sampling technique was adapted for the selection of sample. 100 students who are in XII standard were chosen as the sample.

Collection of the data

The investigator met the students in the class and distributed the questionnaire by giving relevant instructions. Imaginative statements in these questionnaire brought good rapport during the collection of data.

Statistical technique used

In the present study Descriptive Analysis and inferential Analysis were used to check the differences in Attributional Style among higher secondary students.

IV ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

The collected data were subjected to statistical analysis by using SPSS package. The mean, standard deviation and 't 'tests were computed for the entire sample.

V RESULTS

Table No.1 Significance of difference in the mean score of dimensions of Attributional Styles between male and female higher secondary students

Attributional style and their dimensions	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t - value	LOS
Internal – External (Negative)	male	32	26.03	4.796	-.854	.395
	female	68	27.06	5.950	-.923	.359
Stable – Unstable (negative)	male	32	22.41	6.829	.305	.761
	female	68	22.00	5.905	.289	.773
Global –Specific (Negative)	male	32	21.25	6.242	-.095	.924
	female	68	21.37	5.512	-.091	.928
Hopelessness	male	32	43.66	9.882	.134	.894
	female	68	43.37	10.164	.135	.893
Composite Negative	male	32	69.69	11.855	-.279	.781
	female	68	70.43	12.608	-.285	.777
Internal – External (Positive)	male	32	31.25	5.809	1.750	.083
	female	68	28.93	6.363	1.809	.075
Stable – Unstable (Positive)	male	32	30.84	6.441	3.157	.002**
	female	68	26.12	7.220	3.290	.002**
Global –Specific (Positive)	male	32	26.97	6.818	1.508	.135
	female	68	24.76	6.816	1.508	.137
Hopefulness	male	32	57.81	10.849	2.671	.009**
	female	68	50.88	12.639	2.823	.006**
Composite Positive	male	32	89.06	15.012	2.592	.011*
	female	68	79.81	17.357	2.732	.008**

Note: ** indicates 0.01 Level of Significance   - * indicates 0.05 level of Significance

From Table 1, it is observed that there is no significant difference between male and female students on 7 out of 10 dimensions of attributional style. The significant difference is found in Stable vs unstable dimension, Hopefulness and Composite Score of positive attributional style. Male students as compared to female students score significantly higher on stable vs unstable (30.84), hopefulness (57.81) and composite scores (89.06) of positive attributional styles.

Table No.2 Significance of difference in the mean score of dimensions of Attributional Styles between rural and urban higher secondary students

Attributional style and their dimensions	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t - value	LOS
Internal – External (Negative)	rural	55	26.67	6.461	0.112	.911
	urban	45	26.80	4.404	0.117	.907
Stable – Unstable (negative)	rural	55	22.65	5.680	0.937	.351
	urban	45	21.49	6.758	0.921	.360
Global –Specific (Negative)	rural	55	20.05	5.762	2.530	.013*
	urban	45	22.89	5.335	2.549	.012*
Hopelessness	rural	55	42.71	10.003	0.827	.410
	urban	45	44.38	10.089	0.826	.411
Composite Negative	rural	55	69.38	12.394	0.724	.471
	urban	45	71.18	12.289	0.724	.471
Internal – External (Positive)	rural	55	28.82	7.103	1.515	.133
	urban	45	30.71	4.916	1.570	.120
Stable – Unstable (Positive)	rural	55	25.75	7.865	2.967	.004**
	urban	45	29.93	5.821	3.056	.003**
Global –Specific (Positive)	rural	55	23.67	7.354	3.012	.003**
	urban	45	27.67	5.527	3.098	.003**
Hopefulness	rural	55	49.42	13.770	3.438	.001**
	urban	45	57.60	8.920	3.583	.001**
Composite Positive	rural	55	78.24	19.292	3.047	.003**
	urban	45	88.31	12.083	3.184	.002**

Note: ** indicates 0.01 Level of Significance   - * indicates 0.05 level of Significance

From Table 2, it is observed that there is no significant difference between students coming from rural and urban on 5 out of 10 dimensions of attributional style. The significant difference is found in Global Vs Specific negative attributional style and Stable vs unstable dimension, Global vs Specific dimension, Hopefulness and Composite Score of positive attributional style. Students coming from urban as compared to rural students score significantly higher on stable vs unstable (29.93), Global vs Specific (27.67) hopefulness (57.60), composite scores (88.31) of positive attributional styles and Global Vs Specific (22.89) of negative attributional style.

Table No.3 Significance of difference in the mean score of dimensions of Attributional Styles between government aided and private higher secondary students

Attributional style and their dimensions	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t - value	LOS
Internal – External (Negative)	govt aided	53	26.45	6.491	-.523	.602
	private	47	27.04	4.443	-.535	.594
Stable – Unstable (negative)	govt aided	53	22.53	5.412	.682	.497
	private	47	21.68	6.985	.672	.503
Global –Specific (Negative)	govt aided	53	21.42	5.604	.157	.876
	private	47	21.23	5.917	.157	.876
Hopelessness	govt aided	53	43.94	10.172	.510	.611
	private	47	42.91	9.939	.511	.611
Composite Negative	govt aided	53	70.40	13.092	.177	.860
	private	47	69.96	11.517	.178	.859
Internal – External (Positive)	govt aided	53	28.08	6.725	2.798	.006**
	private	47	31.47	5.187	2.841	.005**
Stable – Unstable (Positive)	govt aided	53	24.77	7.124	4.555	.001**
	private	47	30.85	6.090	4.598	.001**
Global –Specific (Positive)	govt aided	53	25.17	6.919	0.463	.645
	private	47	25.81	6.851	0.463	.644
Hopefulness	govt aided	53	49.94	13.271	2.778	.007**
	private	47	56.66	10.544	2.816	.006**
Composite Positive	govt aided	53	78.02	18.737	3.069	.003**
	private	47	88.13	13.378	3.130	.002**

Note: ** indicates 0.01 Level of Significance

From Table 3, it is observed that there is no significant difference between students studying in Government aided and Private schools on 6 out of 10 dimensions of attributional style. The significant difference is found in Internal Vs External dimension, Stable vs unstable dimension, Hopefulness and Composite Score of positive attributional style. Private school students as compared to students of Government aided school score significantly higher on Internal Vs External dimension (31.47), stable vs unstable (30.85), hopefulness (56.66) and composite scores (88.13) of positive attributional styles.

Table No.4 Significance of difference in the mean score of dimensions of Attributional Styles of higher secondary students based on order of birth

Attributional style and their dimensions	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t - value	LOS
Internal – External (Negative)	first	56	26.20	6.308	1.075	.285
	second & more	44	27.41	4.531	1.118	.266
Stable – Unstable (negative)	first	56	23.38	5.876	2.321	.022*
	second & more	44	20.55	6.267	2.303	.024*
Global –Specific (Negative)	first	56	20.61	5.355	1.432	.155
	second & more	44	22.25	6.100	1.410	.162
Hopelessness	first	56	43.98	9.465	.586	.559
	second & more	44	42.80	10.772	.577	.566
Composite Negative	first	56	70.18	12.522	-.010	.992
	second & more	44	70.20	12.195	-.010	.992
Internal – External (Positive)	first	56	28.50	6.575	2.148	.034*
	second & more	44	31.16	5.549	2.192	.031*
Stable – Unstable (Positive)	first	56	26.21	7.698	2.234	.028*
	second & more	44	29.43	6.381	2.285	.025*
Global –Specific (Positive)	first	56	24.20	7.159	2.132	.036*
	second & more	44	27.09	6.164	2.170	.032*
Hopefulness	first	56	50.41	13.379	2.496	.014*
	second & more	44	56.52	10.378	2.573	.012*
Composite Positive	first	56	78.91	18.274	2.616	.010*

	second & more	44	87.68	14.282	2.694	.008**

Note: ** indicates 0.01 Level of Significance   - * indicates 0.05 level of Significance

From Table 4, it is observed that there is no significant difference between students born first and other order of born on 4 out of 10 dimensions of attributional style. The significant difference is found in Stable Vs Unstable negative attributional style and Stable vs unstable dimension, Global vs Specific dimension, Hopefulness and Composite Score of positive attributional style. Students born other than first as compared to first born score significantly higher on positive attributional styles, Internal vs External (31.16) stable vs unstable (29.43), Global vs Specific (27.09), hopefulness (56.52), composite scores (87.68) whereas, students born first as compared to other order of birth score significantly higher in the Global Vs Specific dimension (23.38) of negative attributional style.

Major Findings of the study

After analysis of tabulated data, the investigator found out the following major findings

1) Male students are more stable and hopeful in their positive attributes than their counterpart, female higher secondary students.
2) Students who are from the native of urban expose stable, global and hopeful in their positive attributes whereas rural background students are not as so.
3) Students studying in private schools are more internal, stable and hopeful in their positive attributions than government aided school.
4) Students who are First born in the family are more unstable in the negative attributes than the other order of birth.
5) Students who are other than first born are more internal, stable, global, and hopeful in their positive attributes

Suggestion for the further study

The researcher conducted his work with higher secondary students, it can also be executed with college students. This study can be organized with problematic children to check the negative impact on their achievement.

Conclusion

The study on Attributional style helped to predict the thought process of higher secondary students. Attributions are an integral part of our daily lives and highly impactful in terms of how students learn, are motivated to learn and develop their ability to self-direct their learning. Male students get many opportunities to face lot of positive and negative situations so their hopefulness toward positive attributes are higher. Students are studying in the rural background should get lot of prospects to become stable and hopeful in all situations.

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