The Relationship Between Motivation and Self-Esteem with Emphasis on the Mediating Role of Happiness

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Abstract: The research purpose is to investigate the relationship between different types of motivation and self-esteem with emphasis on the mediating role of happiness. Therefore, a sample of 300 college students (130 male students and 170 female students) was selected through random stratified sampling from among the Farhangian University of Sistan and Balouchestan Province. The data gathering tools included Oxford Happiness Inventory, Cooper-Smith self-esteem Questionnaire and Academic Motivation Scale and Vallerand Academic Motivation Scale. The data were analyzed using path analysis and independent t-test. Results indicated that autonomous motivation exerts direct and positive effect on the self-esteem. Whereas, controlled motivation produces direct and negative effect on the self-esteem. Moreover, both of the variables (autonomous and controlled motivations) have indirect and significant impact on the self-esteem with mediating role of happiness. The t-test indicated no support for between-group difference in terms of the type of motivation and levels of self-esteem and happiness among male and female individuals.

Key words: Autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, self-esteem, happiness, direct

INTRODUCTION

The basis of motivation is defined as the core subject that results in peoples' action, thought and achievement. Considerable and major emphasis is laid on the consistent performance which facilitates human being's maintenance of health and strenuous and painstaking efforts. Therefore, most of the theories in this realm mainly focus on the effects of social environment such as rewards, encouragements and their nature in accurately perceiving what activates and reinforces effective performance. Most of the important theories have considered motivation as a concept which varies in terms of level (Bandura, 1997; Baumeister and Vohs, 2007). They postulate that higher and accelerated motivation results in greater progress and more successful performance.

In contrast, the theory of self-determination (Deci and Ryan, 2000) hypothesizes that there are particularly different types of motivation. The basic and general notion was that, the kind and the quality of one's motivation are more important than the level of motivation and the basic distinction is found between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is based on the notion that doing a specific behavior is due to being interested in that specific behavior which is motivationally satisfying. When we are internally motivated, a positive feeling is largely derived from doing that activity. People are interested in acting, overcoming curiosity, describing the new motives and acting promptly and appropriately

(Deci and Ryan, 1985). Conversely, extrinsic motivation involves doing an activity which results in distinct consequences. The most representative example of extrinsic motivation is behaviors that are exhibited to obtain reward or avoid punishment.

The most fundamental distinction exists between controlled and autonomous motivation in the theory of self-determination. The concept of introjection and different kind of regulation (Fig. 1) have redirected the emphasis from intrinsic vs. extrinsic to autonomous vs. Controlled motivation. External or interjected rules are different forms of controlled motivation vs. integrative and identification-based forms of autonomous motivation. All different forms of controlled and autonomous motivation are different forms of motivation that are reflective of individual's tendency to act. However, they may represent themselves in different quality of consequences. Conversely, lack of motivation is inferred from an individual who doesn't have worthwhile behavior or action. They do not believe that a worthy consequence is consistently related to specific behaviors and contend that there exist behaviors which serve as tools in achieving beneficial and positive results. However, they do not develop feelings of competence in displaying such behaviors.

Figure 1 presents a feature of motivation. Intrinsic, extrinsic motivation and lack of motivation are arranged on a continuum. The self-determination increases by moving from lack of motivation to intrinsic motivation.

According to self-determination theory, gratification of competence, belonging and autonomy brings about autonomous stimulation of these needs in individual. Autonomous motivation allows them to relate to others in a way that is not controlled. Those who obtain high scores on autonomous orientation report to have higher, more honest and satisfactory interpersonal interaction with others (Hodgins *et al.*, 1996). Put it differently, gratification of basic needs and autonomous motivation causes the genuine or independent self-esteem to develop feelings of self-worth based on the identity of the individual and not on the achievements or specific results (Deci and Ryan, 1995).

Furthermore, Hodgins and Knee (2002) assert that genuine self-esteem plays a crucial role in the way that individuals perceive their experience both in intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects. They contend that genuine self-esteem is related to autonomy and is a criterion factor that allows for the experience of emotions and events in a non-defensive and non-distorted way. That is to say, individuals who have been autonomously motivated and experience their self-worth in a secure way have less need to control the meaning of information derived from experience by avoidance (evading).

When the psychological needs are not satisfied, the individuals are motivated controllably which is indicated by the orientation toward dependency. This can involve being vulnerable to extrinsic pressures (i.e., situations and other people) and internally controlling the requirements (i.e., the individual's must and mustn't). Individuals with high score on controlled orientation tend to see the world based on the control of self and control of others (Hodgins *et al.*, 1996) and organize their behaviors based on their vulnerability to pressure. Therefore, they react to the events as a force and the reason of their behaviors is based on what they want from themselves and others and not on their real interest or worth while and intended goals. They develop feelings of being a pawn that will result in the tendency to control others (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

In other words, when the basic needs are not satisfied and the controlled motivation is the pivot point, self-worth is questioned and instead of genuine self-worth a kind of self-esteem is built up which is dependent on the performance results as the possible result of experiencing reward from the past important others (Assor *et al.*, 2004). When the self-esteem is dependent, its increase will also depend on the individual's success in important realms. Even if the individual has high dependent self-esteem due to achieving consecutive success, it's been covered with a fine and thin layer and its supporting pillars are insecure and shaky. In this situation, an individual has a key and

serious question with regard to his/her self-worth to which s/he should reply successively and this question, itself leads to painful and unnerving experience.

Hodgins and Knee hypothesize that dependent self-esteem which is related to controlled motivation is the most principal reason for generalized defensive state toward experience which is gained from controlled motivation. Individuals who have been controllably motivated and experienced conditional self-esteem should defend themselves against all the information, thoughts and affections that do not support their self-esteem. Hodgins *et al.* (2007) carried out a study on students and reported that there is no significant difference between male and female college students in the type of self-esteem (genuine and dependent). They also concluded that there exists no significant relationship between autonomous motivation, genuine self-esteem and also controlled motivation and dependent self-esteem.

Most of the experts consider self-esteem (positive self-assessment) as the pivot point of emotional and social adjustment (Clemes *et al.*, 1992; Kazdin, 2000). Self-esteem is effective in mental functioning and seems to be related to other variables. The studies conducted in this area have demonstrated that self-esteem is positively correlated to tendency for control, hopefulness, achievement motivation, autonomy, positive emotions and need to be approved. However, it's negatively correlated to depression, loneliness, anxiety and depression.

A multitude of behavioral and social studies have been carried out in the realm of positive feelings (Diener and Lucas, 2000). One of the representations of positive feelings is the quality of life which involves satisfaction with life (Diener and Lucas, 2000), well-being (Shin and Johnson, 1978) and happiness (Andrew and Withey, 2012) which are some of the aspects of human's health. Happiness is regarded as a significant feature of the quality of life. Veenhoven (1993) considers happiness as an adjective with three criteria of time stability, situational stability and internal cause. Plato regards happiness as the balance between three elements of reasoning, emotion and appetites. Aristotle considers happiness as spiritual life (Eysenck, 1990). Argyle and Crossland (1987) have proposed a workable definition of happiness and argue that happiness incorporates three important components of frequency and rate of positive affection or joy, mean of satisfaction level during a period and not having negative feeling, depression and anxiety.

This definition has been the assessment base in Oxford happiness inventory. Francis, Zibertz and Lewise (2003) administered oxford happiness inventory on 311 college students and reported the mean of happiness

among male and female students to be 41.6 and 43.1, respectively which is not significant. Investigations show that the quality of life is related to students' academic performance (Bahmani Tamaddoni and Asgari, 2004). Moreover, there exists significant relationship between personality characteristics such as students' self-esteem, depression and happiness (Simpson *et al.*, 1996). Zaki (2007) carried out an investigation on Isfahan University students and reported that there exists significant relationship between happiness and self-esteem (r =.48). Furthermore, no significant difference was observed between male and female happiness. Moreover, Hein and Hagger (2007) have reported a relationship between autonomous motivation, school assignment and overall self-esteem. Positive influence of autonomous motivation was also reported on satisfaction with life and happiness.

With regard to the aim of the present research and regarding the model of different types of motivation and regulation by Bryan and Deci (2000) and also the theoretical and operational expansion, the mediating role of happiness in the relational model of autonomous vs. Controlled motivation and self-esteem is determined. The conceptual model has been presented in Table 2.

The present study employed a correlation method. A sample of 300 college students (130 male students and 170 female students) was selected through random stratified sampling from among the Farhangian University of Sistan and Balouchestan Province. The data gathering tools included Oxford Happiness Inventory, Cooper-Smith self-esteem Questionnaire and Academic Motivation Scale and Vallerand Academic Motivation Scale.

Academic motivation scale by Vallerand *et al.* (1992) measures the students' academic achievement and has high school and university applicable versions. This measure is a pencil-and-study scale based on Ryan and Deci self-determination theory which encompasses 7 subscales ranging from the lowest to highest including lack of motivation, extrinsic regulation, intrinsic regulation, identification regulation and three forms of internal motivation for understanding, doing an activity and experiencing the stimulus. The Cronbach alpha of the questionnaire is reported to be between .62 and .86. The test-retest reliability was measured to be between .71 and 83. Furthermore in Iran, Bagheri (2000) has assessed the internal reliability of the scale to be between 70 and .85. Moreover, the test-retest reliability was measured to be 66 to .83.

Cooper-Smith Self-Esteem Questionnaire (1967) is a 58-items questionnaire which is scored on zero and one rating and responded by yes or no answers. Individuals who obtain higher scores of 25.4 are known to have higher self-esteem. The internal reliability of the

questionnaire in Hejazi's (2004) study was reported to be 87. Furthermore, this reliability was equal to .98 in other studies (Biyabangard, 1997).

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire by Argyle, Martin and Crossland (1989) has 20 items and 5 scales including life satisfaction, positive mood, health, comp etency and self-esteem. Responses are based on a 3-point rating scale. Hills and Argyle (2002) reported acceptable validity for the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire by providing data on correlations with other self-report scales of personality traits, human strengths and subjective well-being. The scale possesses a high scale alpha reliability of 89-.90 in English, American, Australian and Canadian population. The personality variables correlate very strongly with this scale. In terms of construct validity, the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire appears to be the preferred measure in terms of its construct validity. Alipour and Nourbala (19980 have reported the Cronbach alpha, bisection reliability and test-retest reliability to be .98, .92 and .79, respectively.

RESULTS

Path analysis was used to assess the linear relationship between the variables. What's more, independent t-test was used to compare male and female students in motivation variables, self-esteem and happiness.

The basis of casual models is correlational matrix. Variables' correlational matrix in the hypothesized model has been presented in Table 1.

As observed in Table 2, there exists significant relationship between self-esteem, happiness and autonomous motivation. Moreover, significant negative relationship is observed between self-esteem, happiness and controlled motivation.

In order to assess the hypothesized model of the research, parameters are evaluated using maximum likelihood. The evaluated parameters include direct, indirect and total effect coefficient. Diagram 3 % the direct effect path coefficient of the primary model and diagram 3 % its t-value.

As observed, the path coefficient between autonomous motivation and self-esteem is significantly positive (a =.18, t = 3.17). Moreover, the path coefficient between the autonomous motivation and happiness is significantly positive (a = .15, t = 6.33). However, the path coefficient indicates the significant and negative relationship between controlled motivation and self-esteem (a = -.55, t = -2.71). Furthermore, the path coefficient reveals that there is significant and negative

relationship between happiness and self-esteem (a =.29, t = 4.99).

One of the features of path analysis is evaluating the indirect and total effects of the variables on each other, which are presented in Table 2.

As observed in Table 2, the indirect effect of autonomous and controlled motivation on self-esteem is significant at P 0.05. Moreover, the total effect of autonomous and controlled motivation on self-esteem and happiness are significant at P = 0.01.

Independent t-test was employed to compare male and female students in types of motivation (autonomous and controlled). The results are presented in Table 3.

As observed in Table 3, there exists no significant different between male and female students in terms of the types of motivation. However, male students rated higher on both types of motivation. However, this difference is not statistically significant.

Independent t-test was employed to compare male and female students in self-esteem. The results are presented in Table 4.

As observed in Table 4, female students scored higher on self-esteem. However, this difference is not statistically significant.

Independent t-test was employed to compare male and female students in happiness. The results are presented in Table 5.

As observed in Table 4, female students scored higher on self-esteem. However, this difference is not statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

As results of the path analysis (diagrams 3 and 4) indicate, autonomous motivation exerts direct and significant effect on self-esteem (a = 0/18, t = 3/17). This finding is in line with the research results carried out by Hodgins, Koestner and Duncan (1996), Hodgins and Knee (2002), Hodgins, Brown and Carver (2007), Clemes (1992), Kazdin (2000). According to the theory of self-determination, when the basic psychological needs in realms of autonomy, competence and belonging are satisfied, individuals are autonomously motivated. Therefore, they select behaviors which agree with their interests, values and goals. These components are combined and reactions, results and other events are experienced as information sources rather than the source of threats (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Deci and Ryan (2000) contend that, the level of autonomous motivation is related to individuals' genuine motivation. Genuine self-esteem is relatively steady and unchanging and individuals with genuine self-esteem do not get involved

in a multitude of fame-rising activities (esteeming). Therefore, the process of positive self-assessment and self-worth support occurs repeatedly in them.

As observed in fig 3 and 4, it can be pointed out that, controlled motivation exerts direct and negative effect on self-esteem (a = -0.55, t = -2.71). This result is congruent with studies carried out by Hodgins, Koestner and Duncan (1996), Hodgins and Knee (2002), Hodgins, Brown and Carver (2007), Assor, Roth and Deci (2004) and the conceptual framework of Deci and Ryan (2000). When the basic needs are not satisfied and the controlled motivation is the pivot point, self-worth is questioned and self-esteem is decreased (Assor *et al.*, 2004). Hodgins and Knee (2002) assert that there is significant relationship between controlled motivation and self-esteem.

Results also (Fig. 3 and 4) indicate the positive relationship between autonomy and happiness (a = 0.15, t = 6.33). Moreover, the controlled motivation and self-esteem are negatively and significantly correlated to one another (a = -0.31, t = -5.84). This finding is congruent with the findings of a study done by Hein and Hagger (2007). They reported the significant effect of autonomous motivation on satisfaction with life and happiness. Autonomous and controlled motivations are arranged on a continuum (Fig 1). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is reverse relationship between controlled motivation and happiness. Moreover, results indicated that there is significant relationship between happiness and self-esteem (a = 0/29, t = 4/99). This result is also in harmony with the previous findings. Simpson, Schumaker, Dorahy and Shrestha (1996) reported the positive relationship between happiness and self-esteem and the negative relationship between depression and self-esteem.

Investigation of the moderating effect of happiness indicates the indirect positive (10) effect of autonomous motivation on self-esteem through happiness (Table 2) which is statistically significant. Moreover, results also indicate the statistically significant indirect and negative (09) effects of controlled motivation on self-esteem through happiness. Therefore, our primary conceptual model (figure 2) is confirmed.

Analysis of the data indicates the difference between the types of motivation among male and female students. Means of autonomous motivation among boys and girls are 73.91 and 71.75, respectively. Moreover, the means of controlled motivation among boys and girls are 63 and 62.97, respectively. However, this difference is not statistically significant.

Comparison of male and female students on self-esteem indicates that girls (37.12) score higher than boys

(36.38). However, this difference is not significant and the results are in line with the findings of Hodgins, Brown, and Carver (2007). In the research done on the students' self-esteem, no significant difference was observed between boys' and girls' self-esteem.

Finally, the results also indicate that there exists no significant relationship between girls' (49.10) and boys' (49.90) happiness. This result is congruent with the research results carried out by Francis, Zibertz and Lewise (2003) and Zaki (2007).

Regarding the results of the present research, the positive effect of controlled motivation on self-esteem and the negative direct effect of controlled self-esteem, it's recommended that universities and schools emphasize on intrinsic motivation and enjoyment of learning instead on extrinsic motivations such as reward. Moreover with regard to the indirect effect of autonomous and controlled motivation on self-esteem through the variable of happiness, it's recommended to enhance students' happiness and build up self-esteem through increasing feelings of hopefulness and positive affects (i.e., Joy and satisfaction with life) and decreasing negative feelings such as depression and anxiety.

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