

Role of Self-Handicapping on Prediction of The Quality of Life in Primary Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: One way of improving the quality of life is to eliminate its barriers. Self-handicapping is a form of problematic behavior, which investigating its effect on the quality of life is of great importance. The present study aimed to examine the relationship of self-handicapping with the quality of life in primary students.

Methods: This research is a correlational that conducted on students of grades 3 to 5 in elementary schools of Zahedan. It included 365 primary students (154 boys and 211 girls) that were selected using stratified random sampling method. Research tools were questionnaires of KIDSCREEN-52 quality of life (2005) (KQoL) and self-handicapping (2001) (SH). Correlation Pearson and regression analysis were used by SPSS/16 for statistical analyses.

Results: The findings indicated that among components of quality of life, physical well-being (0.03), psychological well-being (0.03), negative mood (0.03), self-perception (0.03), autonomy (0.01), parents' relationship (0.02), social support (0.07), financial resource (0.007), and efficiency in school environment (0.02) were predictors of self-handicapping.

Conclusions: Considering negative effects of self-handicapping and its relation with academic achievement and quality of life, identifying self-handicapped students and helping them using a consultant can be useful.

1. Introduction

Quality of life is one of the fundamental concepts discussed in positivist psychology (Schalock, Brown, Cumms, Felse, Matikka, Keith, & Parmenter, 2002). According to WHO report in 2000, the main objective of advancing health was to increase life span and the main emphasis was on mortality and symptoms, while the improvement of quality of life and generally a sense of well-being were among the primary goals of WHO in 2001 (Drewnowski & Evants, 2001). Although various scientific and medical advances will not be enough for an improved quality of life, a combination of factors, including personal, family, and social well-being along

with the individual's understanding of well-being and his/her environment determine the quality of life (Schalock et al., 2002). Sammarco mentioned that quality of life is the feeling of well-being because of one's satisfaction or lack of satisfaction of important mental and family aspects. Quality of life is a multi-dimensional concept and WHO has defined it as individual's perception of life, values, goals, standards, and aspects of his/her life (Sammarco, 2001). Quality of life encompasses health, economic, social, and personal interests. Quality of life includes physical health, mental health, autonomy, and social relationships (Catajar, Ferriani, Scandellari, Sabattini, Trocino, Marchello & Stecchi, 2000). On one hand, quality of life affects individual's performance and consequently, family performance and complex aspects of interpersonal inter-

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actions. On the other hand, it is influenced by individual's performance. Part of this impact centers on children's school performance, which has complex aspects (Philips, 2006). Zuckerman and Tsai in a longitudinal study, found that self-handicapping would lead to worsening students' health and their mental well-being at school (Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005).

Regarding the negative effects of self-handicapping and its extensions to different areas of life, including education (Shokrkon, 2005) and quality of life, it is helpful to identify and help self-handicapped students. It seems that elimination of this feature will lead to remarkable progress in people's lives. Self-handicapping is defined as any act or its theme that allows a person to attribute his/her failure to external factors and success to internal factors (McCrea, Hirt, Hendrix, Milner, & Steele, 2008). In other words, self-handicapping impedes successful function of a person to protect or enhance his/her self-esteem. These barriers may interfere with the one's performance; at the same time, they allow one to attribute his or her failure to external factors (Zuckerman & Kieffer, 1998).

Self-handicapping manifests in a wide range of behaviors, including substance abuse, low effort, unattainable goals, and poor performance (Schwinger & Stiensmeier-Pelster, 2011). Recent research on self-handicapping was carried out in educational environment. Apparently, some students knowingly and deliberately do not try, i.e., postpone their study to the last minutes, spend the last night before the exam with vanity or use other self-handicapping strategies to reduce the possible negative implications of failure. Several studies have reported that self-handicapping has negative effects on academic performance and loss of intrinsic motivation (Schwinger & Stiensmeier-Pelster, 2011). A number of studies have addressed the factors of self-handicapping and identified many of them, including personal achievement goals, classroom goal structure, teachers and parents' objectives, educational efficiency, and school suspicion (Shokrkon, Hashemi Seikhshabani & Najarian, 2005).

Koparan, Ozturk, Ozkile, and Senizic (2009) showed that the students spend their main time in schools; therefore, the type of instruction, level of relationships of teacher-students as well as students-students, and sources and instruments of school are important in students' effectiveness. Also, Lent, Sheu, and Singley (2009) in a research have shown that environmental support predict academic adjustment, progress in goals and life satisfaction in future. Scott, Shannon, and Curoline (2004) also showed that the students with more life satisfaction would do their homework better. They also paid attention to their

personal abilities in doing homework more than chance and external factors.

Self-handicapping can happen in any situation that threatens one's ability. Schools are suitable places for emerging of self-handicapping. In such environments, students always are faced to tasks and situations that evaluate their abilities and intelligence (Midgley, Urdan, 2001). The researches' results showed that academic self-handicapping is a preventive and self-regulated strategy used for facing with weak performance in doing homework (Barzegar & Khezri, 2012; Gadbois & Sturgeon, 2011).

Covington has played a major role in explaining educational self-handicapping. His theory of self-worth states that students' main goal at school is to maintain a positive image of themselves and avoid getting labeled as stupid. One way to avoid getting labeled as stupid is to apply educational self-handicapping strategies. People employ a series of strategies to be seen as victims of circumstances and not their inabilities. Berglas and Jones called such strategies handicapping strategies, since application of these strategies may lead to performance attenuation, i.e. when a person avoids the responsibility of his/her performance, he applies a self-handicapping strategy (Covington, 1992: 156).

In the majority of researches that investigated the relationship of self-handicapping and quality of life, the self-handicapping was limited to some specific situations like academic one. However, the recent research investigates the relationship of self-handicapping with the quality of life.

This study was designed and conducted based on the research literature (in Iran and foreign countries). Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate whether there is a relationship between the components of quality of life and students' self-handicapping.

2. Methods

The present research is a correlational study. Statistical population of the study comprised all students of grades 3 to 5 in elementary schools of Zahedan in academic year of 2010-2011. Sample size was determined by the Morgan's table. The sample includes 365 students, 211 girls and 154 boys. The data were collected by cluster method of sampling. Two elementary girls schools and 2 elementary boys schools were selected in each district of Zahedan educational zone. Also in each school, the subjects were selected from the grades of 3, 4, and 5. The consent forms were taken from all subjects participating in the research.

Measures

All subjects were assessed using the following two tools.

Self-handicapping Scale (Midgley and Urdan): This scale has 5 items that assesses student's use of self-handicapping strategies. Each item reflects a strategy with which students justify their subsequent poor performance. Items are rated on 5-point Likert scale, from 1 to 5. Reliability and validity of the scale have been reported in several studies with different subjects. For example, Midgley and Urdan (2001) indicated that the reliability coefficient of this scale is 0.73, by using of Cronbach α coefficient. Shokrkon et al. (2003) obtained its validity and reliability and used it in Iran. They reported its Cronbach coefficient as 0.80 and for formal validity its relation with a questionnaire was significant ($P \leq 0.01$). In another research, Yousefi, Shirbeigi, and Salehi (2012) reported its reliability as 0.80, on 56 subjects.

The Quality of Life Measure for Children and Adolescents (KIDSCREEN-52): It is one of the tools designed to measure the quality of life associated with health among children and adolescents. The questionnaire examines health in 10 dimensions of physical well-being, psychological well-being, mood, self-perception, financial sources, autonomy, parent relation, peers relation and support, school environments, and bullying. Items of this scale are 5-point rated. Ravens-Sieberer (2008) reported the Cronbach α for this scale, in all dimensions, between 0.77 and 0.89. The correlation coefficient among all dimensions is obtained between 0.77 and 0.56. In Iran, Nikazin (20134) reported that the Cronbach coefficients for subscales of this questionnaire were between 0.66 and 0.89; and the

correlations by using test-retest for the 10 subscales were between 0.59 and 0.85. In the present study, Cronbach α for each dimension was calculated, including physical well-being as 0.65, psychological well-being as 0.66, negative mood as 0.79, self-perception as 0.45, autonomy as 0.54, parent relation as 0.73, financial resources as 0.81, peers relation and support as 0.67, school environment as 0.74, and social acceptance (bullying) as 0.78.

For statistical analyses, in addition to descriptive indicators such as mean and standard deviation, correlation of Pearson and regression analysis were used through SPSS 16.

3. Results

In the current study, 211 girls (57%) and 154 boys (42%) participated. The frequencies of participants' ages were 31% (9 years old), 66% (10 years old), and 22% (11 years old). Thirty-one percent were in grade 3, 36% in grade 4, and 33% in grade 5.

Hypothesis: Is there a relationship between the components of quality of life and students' self-handicapping?

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 16, to answer this question that whether there is a relationship between the components of quality of life and students' self-handicapping. Correlation of Pearson and regression analysis were used to predict the self-handicapping. The descriptive data of the research variables are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of self-handicapping and components of quality of life.

| Variable | Median | Mean | SD |
|------------------------------|--------|-------|------|
| Self-handicapping | 15 | 7.11 | 2.60 |
| Physical well-being | 15 | 24.44 | 3.89 |
| Psychological well-being | 18 | 29.23 | 4.88 |
| Mood | 21 | 31.15 | 7.88 |
| Self-perception | 15 | 19.18 | 3.93 |
| Autonomy | 15 | 21.86 | 4.83 |
| Parent relation | 18 | 30.26 | 5.44 |
| Financial resources | 9 | 13.57 | 3.99 |
| Peers relation and support | 18 | 26.42 | 5.63 |
| School environment | 18 | 32.61 | 4.44 |
| Bullying (social acceptance) | 9 | 14.44 | 4.21 |

Table 2. Correlation between then components of quality of life and self-handicapping.

| Variable | Physical well-being | Psychological well-being | Mood | Self-perception | Autonomy |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------|-----------------|----------|
| Self-handicapping | **-.019 | **-.019 | **-.017 | **-.019 | *-.012 |
| P value | .001 | .001 | .001 | .000 | 0.02 |

| Variable | Parent relation | Financial resources | Peers relation and support | School environment | Bullying (Social acceptance) |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Self-handicapping | **-.016 | **-.019 | **-.008 | **-.017 | *-.005 |
| P value | .000 | .001 | .000 | .000 | 0.03 |

*P≤0.05 **P≤0.01

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Based on the results, the mean value of self-handicapping is 7.11, showing that the mean scores of students is lower than the mean value of the inventory. Among the components of the quality of life, school performance has the highest mean value, while financial resources with 13.57 has the lowest mean value compared to other variables.

The results of Pearson correlation, depicted in Table 2, indicate that the relationship between self-handicapping and quality of life (except for social support and bullying) among elementary students is significantly negative. Results of the regression analysis to predict the quality of life based on self-handicapping are shown in Table 3. The Durbin-Watson Test indicates the suitability of the regression between 1.5 and 2.5.

The Enter regression results, in Table 3, indicate that self-handicapping has predicted each dimension of quality of life between 0.01 and 0.03 (except for financial resources, peers relation and support and bullying). Correlat

tion values (R) and β are also similar because there is only one predictor variable.

Results of R² in Tabl 3 show that self-handicapping is predicted by the following components of quality of life: physical well - being (0.03), psychological well-being (0.03), negative mood (0.03), self-perception (0.03), autonomy (0.01), parents' relationship (0.02), social support (0.07), financial resource (0.007), and efficiency in school environment (0.02).

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between self-handicapping and quality of life. The results indicated a negative and significant relationship between self-handicapping and quality of life (except for social support and bullying). In addition, all components of quality of life (except for bullying) were negative and significant predictors of self-handicapping. Results also revealed that some components, including financial resources and psychological well-being were the greatest predictors of

Table 3. Results of enter regression analysis to predict the quality of life based on self-handicapping.

| Variable | R | Adjusted R Square | F | std. β | t | Durbin-watson | P Value |
|------------------------------|------|-------------------|---------|--------|----------|---------------|---------|
| Physical well-being | 0.19 | 0.03 | **13.81 | -0.19 | **-.3.72 | 1.77 | 0.001 |
| Psychological well-being | 0.19 | 0.03 | **14.39 | -0.19 | **-.3.79 | 1.69 | 0.000 |
| Mood | 0.18 | 0.03 | **11.72 | -0.18 | **-.3.42 | 1.46 | 0.000 |
| Self-perception | 0.19 | 0.03 | **13.62 | -0.25 | **-.3.69 | 1.95 | 0.000 |
| Autonomy | 0.12 | 0.01 | *5 | -0.12 | *-.2.24 | 1.81 | 0.001 |
| Parent relation | 0.12 | 0.02 | **10.36 | -0.17 | **-.3.22 | 1.85 | 0.000 |
| Financial resources | 0.08 | 0.00 | 2.60 | -0.08 | -1.61 | 1.94 | 0.06 |
| Peers relation and support | 0.08 | 0.00 | 2.18 | -0.08 | -1.48 | 1.84 | 0.07 |
| School environment | 0.17 | 0.03 | **11.49 | -0.17 | **-.3.39 | 1.85 | 0.001 |
| Bullying (social acceptance) | 0.05 | 0.00 | 0.85 | -0.05 | -0.92 | 1.71 | 0.1 |

* P ≤0.05 ** P ≤ 0.01 1-Predictor variable: self-handicapping 2-Criterion variable: Quality of life.

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students' self-handicapping. There is no exactly similar research in this field of study; however results of some of studies are support from this research implicitly. For example, results of the current research are consistent with the studies of Drewnowski and Evants (2001), which emphasized on the quality of life as the primary goal; Phillips (2006) that indicated quality of life is influenced by individual's performance; Zuckerman and Tsai's (2005), which reported that self-handicapping would worsen students' health and mental well-being; Rezaei, Ohadi, Pasha Sharifi, and Karimi's (2007), which stated that the quality of life reduces students' destructive behaviors; citation of Coudevylle, Gernigon, and Ginis, (2011), that long-term use of self-support strategies may reduce psychological well-being; Barzegar and Khezri's (2012) as well as Gadbois and Sturgeon's (2011) view that self-handicapping is used for weak performance in doing homework; and some other similar studies such as Elliot and Church (2003); Martin, Marsh and Debus (2003). However, there was no exact research about the relation of self-handicapping and quality of life.

It seems that improvement of the children's quality of life and mental health are interconnected with school performance. Creation of open communications with children, expression of emotions to them and their persuasion to speak and express their opinions on one hand, and attention to children's ideas and beliefs and counseling and endowing some freedom and independence on the other hand, could increase children's physical health, mental health, academic achievements, creation of appropriate social communications, and even environmental perception of life. There are two attitudes to evaluate quality of life: objective and subjective. The subjective approach involves assessing a person's perception of important parts of the quality of life, including family, friends, personal health, family and friends' health, expenditures, and living standards. The second approach includes some factors such as security, socioeconomic status, environment, health, government and political regime, moral and civic norms, education, culture, recreation, social environment, family life, human services, transportation, infrastructure, and employment.

In an international study, Mcfarlin found that family environment, socioeconomic status, mother's cognitive ability, job satisfaction, field of study at university, and primary priorities for family formation are associated with school performance and if teachers be sensitive to the role of parents in school performance, they can use it to improve students' performance and provide a better quality of life for them. Better quality of life reduces students' destructive behaviors (Rezaei et al., 2007). Goodman et

al. investigated the stressful events in the family on cognitive and learning inhibition of students and concluded that family conflicts and violent interactions among family members are the best predictors of children's memory performance. Moreover, the incompatibility of parents is among the major causes of such emotional instability. Family conflicts, parental separation, or single parent, and addiction in the family, greatly reduce the emotional security at home and is closely associated with the students' educational problems and their academic failure (Coudevylle et al., 2011).

The emphasis of self-handicapping is on self-regulation and satisfaction. However, hard-working and use of other forms of self-regulation increase learning ability. Students perform a number of activities to attribute possible failures to external events or environment rather than their ability or effort. Self-support causes self-handicapping, which may create an environment for students to positively increase their motivation. Eronen et al. reported that long-term use of self-support strategies may increase dissatisfaction and reduce psychological well-being of the students (Coudevylle et al., 2011). Research on the effects of qualitative evaluation on students' learning, in terms of cognitive, social, and emotional performance indicates that the dominant evaluation system has several effects (Brookhart & Durkin, 2003). Khoshkholgh and Sharifi (2009) reported that the qualitative evaluation is successful in the realization of some goals while it is unsuccessful in realization of some others. The results indicated that the plan was quite successful in promoting psychological well-being of the teaching-learning environment; however, it is quite unsuccessful in improving students' attitude toward learning, increasing their mental retention, paying attention to high-level cognitive goals, deepening learning, increasing learning opportunities through participation of parents in teaching-learning, reducing parents' sensitivity toward grades, creating opportunities for students and teachers to correct deficiencies of learning process, using feedback process to improve learning, and applying different types of descriptive measurements (Khoshkholq and Pashashryfy, 2006).

Greaven, Santor, and Zuroff (2000) conducted a research entitled "Adolescent Self-handicapping, Depressive Affect, and Maternal Parenting Styles". In their research, adolescents and their mothers completed a series of adolescents self-handicapping questionnaires and parenting variables among mothers, including parenting methods (excessive care and support) and parental stress due to situational variables, interactions of children's dysfunction and behavioral features. Results revealed that self-handicapping was positively correlated with age in

girls. There was a strong relationship between self-handicapping and restlessness in boys and girls. Moreover, the results indicated that maternal care modulates the relationship between self-handicapping and restlessness in boys. Zuckerman and Tsai examined the relationship among self-handicapping, psychological well-being, and compatibility demonstrating that self-handicapping predicts denial, self-blame, blaming others, depression, and somatic complaints. Moreover, using self-handicapping strategy not only contributes to the uncertainty about personal abilities but may also lead to anomalies and poor psychological well-being (Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005).

Deppe and Harackiewicz (1996) reported that stopping self-handicapping may reduce the pressure of a task on the individual and make that person do the activities better. Research has shown that self-handicapping is negatively related to performance, self-regulated learning, and stable and internal motivations. Moreover, long-term self-handicapping leads to worsening psychological well-being, negative mood, and substance abuse.

Low self-efficiency and self-esteem are characteristics of self-handicapping. Those who do not trust on themselves are always afraid of failure in their tasks; therefore, they seek some ways for justification of their failures that one of them is self-handicapping (Shokrkon et al., 2005). Self-handicapping may help the self-esteem in short-term; but it has a high cost in the long-term for the users. Self-handicapping leads to less psychological well-being, less self-efficiency, less mental motivation, more signs of negative mode and more drug abuse (Byrgany, Maktabi, Shahni Yaylaq, Mofrad Nejad, 2011).

Self-handicapping is one of the most problematic forms of behavior that is associated with adverse outcomes. Research has shown that self-handicapping and performance interact with and reinforce each other. In other words, struggling with self-handicapping results in poor performance, which in turn facilitates more involvement in self-handicapping. Regarding the negative effects of self-handicapping and its impacts on various dimensions of life, including education and quality of life, it is helpful to identify and help self-handicapped students in order to provide some solutions and make them familiar with such features. Moreover, focusing on students' progress and considering rewards for their improvement in learning and curiosity (so that all students receive rewards according to their progress), and decreasing students' sense of competition while emphasizing on their competence can improve students' academic performance.

Accordingly, it is proposed that education programs should concentrate on the teaching of life skills and on the strategies with which students justify their subsequent poor performance. Also the schools have to compensate for the lack of education in some families.

Limitation: this research is conducted only on the students of primary schools. Therefore, one must be cautious in generalization of the results.

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