

Role of locus of control, self esteem and perceived social support in the psychological adjustment of adolescents with and without disabilities

By

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A thesis

presented to the Institute of Professional Psychology, Bahria University, Karachi

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

July 2013

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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICATION

I certify that the research work presented in this thesis is to the best of my knowledge my own. All sources used and any help received in the preparation of this dissertation have been acknowledged. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for any other degree at this or any other institution.

Signature.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research is at best a labour of love and the researcher's determination is an essential element. Yet if understood in the context of psychological research and practice, research cannot be attributed to the passion of one individual only. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the inspiring figure of my father, Professor Kausar Bashir Ahmad and the patience and support of my mother, Rehana Bashir Ahmad.

Dr Zainab F. Zadeh has been a source of inspiration in my professional life. Her cooperation and support at every step along the research process has proved invaluable. Discussions of issues arising in and around the thesis topic have been essential to the process and I would like to thank my seniors and colleagues for contributing to my thought process, especially my thesis evaluators and thesis committee members Professor Dr. Khalida Shafi, Dr. Zainab Hussain Bhutto and Dr. Shahid Iqbal. Mr. Asher Feroze Dr. Junaid Siddiqui and Mr. Mumtaz Khan provided timely guidance in statistical interpretations. It is a blessing to have colleagues in the professional arena who guide and extend a helping hand during the process of juggling work and professional studies. I appreciate the help provided by all my colleagues especially by Sonia Mairaj Malik who went out of her way to extend support.

Key inspirations stem from the international arena and enlightening discussions with relevant psychologists on different forums. In particular I feel honoured to have discussed my work directly with Professor Dr. Stephen Nowicki (Emory University, USA). Since I am using the Urdu translation of the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control

Scale in my work, his encouragement and quick response to my queries has been heartening.

Data collection was the most difficult part of this thesis work and without the cooperation of the main stakeholders; it would never have been possible to reach out to the adolescent participants. I would like to express my profound gratitude to the professionals, staff members and participants from all the participating institutions especially: Ms. Natasha Baakza (Principal, Al Murtaza School, Karachi), along with the students from Army Public School, PECHS Girls School, Dalmia School, DHA Degree College for Women, Bahria College, Jeewan Infaq School, Behbud Boy's School, Behbud Girl's School, and Arts and Science Academy and other contributors.

Adolescents with disabilities were hard to locate and acknowledgements are due to the doctors as well as the doctors and coordinators in various institutions across Karachi for their help especially Dr. Sajid Ali Mirza (HOD, Ophthalmology Department, Ziauddin Medical College), Dr. Javed Niazi (HOD, Ophthalmology Department, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre), Dr. Syed Akmal Sultan (Orthopaedic Surgeon, Indus Hospital), Dr. Muhammad Abdullah – Neurophysician, Ms. Farida Ghaffar and Mr. Faisal Yameen (Rabia Moon Hospital), Mr. Nadeem Ghayas – Vice Principal and Mr. Farooq Ahmed – specialist teacher for the deaf (Pakistan Navy Special Education Centre, Karsaz), Mr. Morris Khurshid and Sister Ruth (Dar ul Sukoon and Lemmon's Home) along with the faculty and participating students with disabilities from ABSA, J.S. Academy, National Special Education Complex, DEWA College, Pakistan Association for the Deaf and Ida Rieu School Complex.

The process of literature review and the procurement of statistics for disabilities were made difficult by the lack of research data available in Pakistan. My deepest regards for the professionals who came forth to help at this time including Mr. Muhammad Bilal (Sightsavers, Islamabad), Mr. Muhammad Akram (Danishkadah, Karachi), Jeremy Higgs, Executive Officer (Network of Organizations Working with People with Disabilities, Pakistan – NOWPDP), Dr Asir Ajmal and the staff of Government College University in Lahore, the library staff at the National Institute of Psychology in Islamabad and the University of Karachi, as well as the teachers of the Department of Special Education at the University of Karachi.

At the end I would like to thank the staff and administration of my alma mater, the Institute of Professional Psychology. Their logistical support was of great help in the work process.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the fond memory of my father Prof. Kausar Bashir Ahmad and the support of my mother Rehana Bashir Ahmad. This thesis is especially dedicated to adolescents with disabilities; their smiles, their tears and all that was left unsaid between us as well as to a brighter future for all adolescents growing up in Pakistan.

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a time period generally associated with the pressures of identity formation – a factor that increases the vulnerability to life stressors. According to the risk – resistance facets of adjustment derived from the Disability - Stress - Coping model (Wallander & Varni, 1989) and the Transactional Coping and Stress model (Thompson, Gustafson, Hamlett & Spock, 1992a, 1992b), different psychosocial elements can be held responsible for issues occurring along the adjustment – maladjustment continuum. The present study extended the existing knowledge and tested predictions based on locus of control of reinforcement, self esteem and perceived social support for the criterion of psychological adjustment. It was assumed that there would be a difference in the level of psychological adjustment for adolescents with and without disabilities and that there would be a difference in the level of psychological adjustment between adolescents with sensory and physical disabilities. Furthermore, the proposed model including three psychosocial variables was tested by assuming that locus of control, self esteem and perceived social support will predict psychological adjustment. The three predictive variables were tested separately by assuming that there would be a significant difference in the levels of internality – externality of the locus of control, the levels of self esteem and the levels of perceived social support between adolescents with and without disabilities. Finally, gender differences were observed by assuming that male adolescents with disabilities would show greater levels of psychological adjustment as compared to female adolescents with disabilities. These comparisons were drawn in the largely student based adolescent sample of the 100 disabled (40 blind, 34 deaf and 26 physically

disabled) and 100 nondisabled sample population. Participants completed the demographic information form along with four self report measures. Both hypotheses testing differences in psychological adjustment in the sample of adolescents with and without disabilities were rejected as the differences were insignificant. All explanatory variables in the proposed model for the research were found to be significant resulting in the acceptance of the hypothesis describing the theoretical model. A significant difference was observed in the levels of internality – externality of control and self esteem where adolescents with disabilities were found to have greater levels of internality as well as self esteem as compared to the sample of adolescents without disabilities. However, no difference was observed for the levels of social support as perceived by adolescents with and without disabilities. Gender differences received strong support from the results as male adolescents with disabilities were found to rank higher on levels of psychological adjustment as compared to female adolescents with disabilities. The study has implications on a theoretical level for researchers in the field within the boundaries of the risk – resistance factors as new findings emerge regarding the psychological dynamics of the Karachi based adolescent population both with and without disabilities. Additionally, there are clinical and national policy level implications for preventive strategies to be employed for the better emotional adjustment of the adolescent population.