Iran J Psychiatry Behav Sci. 2017 December; 11(4):e5850. doi: 10.5812/ijpbs.5850.

Published online 2016 August 21. **Original Article**

The Relationship Between Quality of Life and Self-esteem and Attribution Styles in Primary School Students

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Received 2016 March 03; **Accepted** 2016 April 12.

Abstract

Background: Quality of life, self-esteem and attribution styles have important effects on people's individual and social functions. Through determining the interactional relations of these factors, parents and schools can plan to change each one of them and improve their children's functions.
Objectives: The current study aimed to investigate the interactional relations among students' quality of life, self-esteem and attribution styles.
Methods: The research sample included 365 primary school students (154 boys and 211 girls), who were selected through random cluster sampling. They filled in the questionnaire after each item was read by their teacher. Research tools included three questionnaires including Sieberer's quality of life, Seligman's attribution styles and Rosenberg's self-esteem questionnaires. Statistical analyses were conducted by Pearson correlation and analysis of regression.
Results: The results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship among dimensions of quality of life (except for physical well-being and peers relation and support) and self-esteem. Furthermore, there was a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and negative mood (from components of quality of life) and all components of quality of life were significant predictors of self-esteem. On the other hand, self-esteem was the greatest predictor of negative mood (0.13) and efficiency in the school environment (0.02) (from components of quality of life) (P = 0.01). The results also showed that there were significant positive correlations among optimistic attribution style, self-perception and peers relation and support (from components of quality of life).
Conclusions: Since variables of negative mood and efficiency at the school environment were effective factors on self-esteem and, optimistic attribution style was affected by peers relation and support, educational planning for each indicator can improve the quality of life of primary school students.

Keywords: Attribution Styles, Quality of Life, Self-Esteem, Students

1. Background

Quality of life is one of the most fundamental concepts discussed in the perspective of positivist psychology. Quality of life is a multi-dimensional concept. The world health organization has defined it as individual's perception of life, values, goals, standards and personal interests. Quality of life includes physical health, mental health, autonomy and social relationships (1). Schalockl et al. suggested that various scientific and medical advances alone could not lead to an improved quality of life; however, a combination of well-being factors, including personal, family and social factors, along with an individual's understanding of well-being and his/her environment determine quality of life (1).

Quality of life has an impact on individual's performance. Part of this impact centers on children's school performance. School performance has complex aspects. Leseman considers school skills as language skills, verbal communication skills, self-help, emotional and motivational skills, social skills and emotional self-regulation in social interactions, reading and mathematical skills (2). Communication skills, self-help skills, social skills, autonomy, physical health and sense of security are expressed as educational requirements (3).

Study of attribution styles in appropriate educational settings has attracted the attention of many researchers. Synder and Schulenberg examined the effect of parents' attributions on students' behavior and their school performance. They found that parents' attitudes toward teachers, the school and friends could have a great impact on

children's performance (4). The centre for school mental health considers staff and students' attitudes toward school as one of the main factors influencing students' school performance (5). Houston examined attribution patterns following educational success or failure. He suggested that students, who usually provide internal, stable and general explanations for negative events are less likely successful regarding academic achievements compared to those, who explain negative events by external, unstable and specific causes. Additionally, students who usually provide external, unstable and specific explanations for positive events are less likely successful regarding academic achievements than students, who explain positive events by internal, stable and general causes (6-8). Several studies have shown that manageable attribution styles are associated with positive- and meta-cognitive results, academic achievement and positive educational motivation. In this regard, students, who attribute academic achievement to individual efforts (internal attributions), mostly apply meta-cognitive learning strategies and deeply process learning topics (9). The latest findings of Paul, Jaynie, Mark, Robin, and Sylvie about attributions, cognitions and coping techniques indicated that internal attributions are more associated with problem-focused coping strategies and positive psychological job-related outcomes; however, pessimistic attributions are associated with emotion-focused coping strategies and negative psychological job-related outcomes (10). In Nokelainen et al.'s study, the reasons of success and failure in educational function are divided to two classes of internal attributions (ability and effort) and external attributions (task difficulty and luck). They believe that many effort-related attributions are unstable and manageable; conversely, ability-related attributions are usually sustainable and unmanageable. Therefore, students' attribution styles such as optimism, mental image of previous success and performance affect their learning (11).

The need for self-esteem is one of the basic psychological needs and a component of mental health of humans, which, if satisfied appropriately and realistically, will lead to positive outcomes and efficiency, such as self-esteem, feelings of competence, and ability and sense of efficiency. The importance of self-esteem is that life satisfaction is dependent on the amount of self-worth felt by the individual, such that whenever a person feels that his/her self-esteem is threatened, he/she tries to get rid of the threat by applying a variety of right and wrong behaviors (12).

A number of research studies were carried out to investigate the relationship of these factors with psychological issues. For example, Yu and Li's research, entitled "a cross-lagged model of self-esteem and life satisfaction: gender differences among Chinese university students", showed that there was a relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. They also found that self-esteem was a predictor of life satisfaction (13). Another research conducted by Kadivar (1996) indicated that students, who had a negative attribution style, had lower self-esteem compared to students with positive attribution style (14). According to Hetts, people with higher self-esteem demonstrate self-support bias when encountered with failure or threat. As a result, the nature of their attribution style is mostly positive (15).

Accordingly, quality of life includes physical health, mental health, autonomy and social relationships. Investigating the relationship between quality of life and, self-esteem and attribution styles, revealed that the effect of self-esteem and attribution styles on quality of life was significant and affected the improvement of students' performance. Regarding previous studies, there is no research on these variables' relationship. In addition, due to the significance and pervasive scope of quality of life in students' education, it seems that examining attribution style and self-esteem to predict students' quality of life and their impact on educational trajectories of students of all ages is of great importance.

2. Objectives

The current study aimed to investigate the interactional relationship among students' quality of life, self-esteem and attribution styles.

3. Materials and Methods

The method of the present study was correlational. The population included all male and female students in all primary schools of Sistan and Baluchistan during the academic year 2010 - 2011, amongst which 365 students were selected through random cluster sampling. According to gender portion, 154 boys and 211 girls were selected as subjects. The sample size was determined by Krejcie and Morgan's The The classes were the clusters of the sample.

All subjects were assessed using the following tools. They filled in the questionnaires after their teachers read each item. These questionnaires were previously translated and used in Iran.

3.1. The Quality of Life Measure for Children and Adolescents (KIDSCREEN-52)

This questionnaire 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 rated on a five-point Likert Scale (16). Ravens-Sieberer reported that the related Cronbach's alpha for this scale in all dimensions was between 0.77 and 0.89. The correlation coefficient for all dimensions was between 0.77 and 0.56 (16). In Iran, results of a study showed that Cronbach's alpha for the dimensions was between 0.66 and 0.89, and their test-retest coefficients were between 0.59 and 0.85 (17). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for each dimension was calculated, including physical well-being 0.65, psychological well-being 0.66, negative mood 0.79, self-perception 0.45, autonomy 0.54, parent relation 0.73, financial resources 0.81, peers relation and support 0.67, school environment 0.74 and social acceptance (bullying) 0.78.

3.2. Children's Attribution Style Questionnaire (CASQ)

To collect information about children's attribution styles, children's attribution style questionnaire was applied. This inventory is considered to evaluate the pessimistic and optimistic explanatory style. This test consists of three components of permanent, inclusive and personal attribution. Each component consists of two pessimistic and optimistic parts for assessing 8- to 13-year-old children and is used more than any other questionnaire to assess children's attribution style (18). Children's attribution style questionnaire has been used in a number of studies and has shown high reliability and validity (19). In the research of Nickmanesh and Kazemi, conducted on an Iran, the internal consistency of the test, using Cronbach's alpha, was equal to 0.67 (20). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha for the attribution style questionnaire was 0.67.

3.3. Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

This scale was first developed by Rosenberg for teenagers. It includes 10, four-point Likert type items, ranging from completely agree (4) to completely disagree (1, 21). The internal consistency, reported by Greenberger et al., was 0.84 and its test-retest coefficients at two-week, five-month and one-year intervals was 0.84, 0.67 and 0.62, respectively (22). In Iran, Rajabi and Bohlul, when assessing psychometric properties of the scale, reported the reliability coefficient of the scale, which was 0.84 and confirmed construct validity of the questionnaire through Exploratory Factor Analysis (23). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire was 0.65.

3.4. Statistical Analysis

Data was described by mean and standard deviations. We used Pearson correlation and the analysis of regression for predicting the components of quality of life by self-esteem and attribution styles in primary school students. Also we used the SPSS software, version 16 for analysis of data.

4. Results

The results, in Table 1, indicated that the mean value of attribution style was -1.8, showing that the mean scores of students in the pessimistic attribution style, 9.01, was more than their scores in the optimistic attribution style, 7.2. Mean of students' self-esteem (31.2) was higher than the median of the inventory, which is far below the desirable level (40). Among the components of quality of life, school performance with 32.6 had the highest mean value and, financial resources with 13.57 had the lowest mean value compared to other variables.

Results, in Table 2, indicate that except for peers relation and social support, there was a positive significant relationship between all components of quality of life (physical well-being, psychological well-being, self-perception, autonomy, parent relation, financial resources, school environment and bullying/social acceptance) and self-esteem, and a negative significant relationship with negative mood. Besides, there was a positive significant relationship between optimistic attribution style and the two components of quality of life (self-perception and peers relation and support).

The regression results for predicting the components of quality of life in Table 3 indicate that self-esteem was the greatest predictor of negative mood, which was able to predict 0.13 of the negative mood variations (a component of quality of life). β value demonstrate that each unit change in the negative mood will make a difference in students' self-esteem up to a level of 0.36. This prediction was significant at a level of 0.01 ($P \leq 0/01$, df = 1,363, F = 54.97). Moreover, self-esteem was the greatest predictor of school performance that was able to predict 0.05 of school performance variations (a component of quality of life). β value indicated that each unit change in school performance made a difference in students' self-esteem up to the level of 0.24. This prediction was significant at 0.01 ($P \leq 0/01$, df = 1,363, F = 22.25).

The regression results for predicting components of quality of life in Table 4 show that only peers relation and support with 0.01 were predicted by attribution style. β value indicated that each unit change in peers relation and

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Attribution Style, Self-Esteem and Components of Quality of Life

Variable	Median Score of the Questionnaire	Mean	Standard Deviation
Style Attribution Difference	0	-1.80	2.54
Self-esteem	25	31.20	4.76
Physical well-being	15	24.44	3.89
Psychological well-being	18	29.23	4.88
Negative 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 Components of Quality of Life, Self-Esteem and Attribution Style

Variable	Optimistic attribution style	P Value	Self-Esteem	P Value
Physical well-being	0.02	0.2	0.08	0.06
Psychological well-being	0.08	0.06	0.19	0.000
Negative mood	-0.03	0.23	-0.36	0.000
Self-perception	0.09	0.03	0.11	0.01
Autonomy	0.02	0.30	0.10	0.03
Parent relation	0.07	0.07	0.22	0.005
Financial resources	0.06	0.1	0.13	0.000
Peers relation and support	0.12	0.008	0.06	0.11
School environment	0.004	0.4	0.24	0.000
Bullying, social acceptance	-0.01	0.3	-0.22	0.000

support made a difference in students' optimistic attribution style, up to the level of 0.12. This prediction was significant at 0.01 ($P \leq 0/02$, df = 1,363, F = 5.85).

5. Discussion

Results revealed that there was a positive significant relationship between components of quality of life (except for physical well-being and peers relation and support) and self-esteem and a negative significant relationship between self-esteem and negative mood. All components were significant predictors for self-esteem. On the other hand, self-esteem mostly predicted the dimensions of negative mood (0.13) and school performance (0.02). In addition, results indicated that optimistic attribution style was positively associated with self-perception and peers support, and optimistic attribution style was the greatest predictor for the peers relation and support. Based on the present findings, it could be inferred that, probably due to inappropriate atmosphere and culture at home and school, students with higher self-esteem, experienced more stress, depression and negative mood compared to others. On the other hand, feeling of efficiency at school and relations with teachers could increase self-esteem. Also the results showed that quality of life was a multivariable that is affected by a wide range variables. However, self-esteem was a strong variable for the component of negative mood, amongst the components of quality of life.

The results of the present research were consistent with Hetts' study, which indicated that people with a higher self-esteem showed self-support bias when faced with failure or threat (15); however, these findings were in-

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis to Predict the Components of Quality of Life[a]

Variable	R	R^2	Adjusted R Square	Beta	t	F (df)	P Value	Durbin-Watson
Psychological well-being	0.18	0.03	0.03	0.18	3.66	13.45 (363,1)	0.000	1.16
Negative mood	0.36	0.13	0.12	0.36-	7.41	54/97 (363,1)	0.000	1.52
Self-perception	0.10	0.01	0.009	0.10	2.09	4/40 (363,1)	0/05	1.90
Parent relation	0.22	0.05	0.04	0.22	4.40	19/40 (363,1)	0.000	1.77
Financial resources	0.13	0.01	0.01	0.13	2.60	6/78 (363,1)	0.000	1.80
Peers relation and support	0.24	0.05	0.05	0.24	4.21	22/25 (363,1)	0.000	1.88
Bullying, social acceptance	0.22	0.05	0.04	-0.22	-4.38	19/19 (363,1)	0.000	1.67

[a] Predictors variable, Self-esteem and attribution style; criterion variable, components of quality of life.

Table 4. Results of Regression Analysis of Optimistic Attribution Style and Components of Quality of Life (n = 365)[a]

Variable	R	R^2	Adjusted R Square	F	β	T	P Value	Durbin-Watson
Optimistic attribution style	0.12	0.01	0.01	5.85	0.12	2.42	0.01	1.81

[a] Predictor variable, optimistic attribution style; criterion variables, quality of life.

consistent with Yu and Li, who showed that there was a relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. This can be due to various cultural and civility environments, in which these studies were carried out (13).

The results also showed that school students dominantly had a pessimistic attribution style. Also among the components of quality of life, only "self-perception" and "peers relation and support" had a positive significant relationship with attribution style. Among these, only peers relation and support, with 0.02, could predict students' attribution style. The results implied that attribution style was not associated with many components of quality of life. However, peers relation and support could be, to some extent, influenced by children's attribution style. These findings are consistent with the results of Synder and Schulenberg, regarding the effect of attributions and attitude to teachers, parents, school and friends (4). However, it is inconsistent with the findings of Paul et al. and Ruthig et al. suggesting that students' attribution styles affect their learning (10, 24).

Attribution style, as a habit model in explaining environmental events, can guide individuals' temper. Students, who usually provide internal, stable and general explanations for negative events and students, who usually provide external, unstable and specific explanations for positive events are less likely motivated for learning (7). Several studies have shown that manageable style attributions are associated with positive cognitive and metacognitive results, academic achievement and positive educational motivation. In this regard, students who attribute academic achievement to individual efforts (internal attributions) mostly apply meta-cognitive learning strategies and deeply process learning topics (9).

A research carried out by Kadivar showed that students with negative attribution styles had lower self-esteem compared to students with positive attribution styles (14). However, there are not exact similar studies in Iran and this research has clarified some new relationships among several variables of psychology.

5.1. Conclusion

There was a positive significant relationship between the main components of quality of life and self-esteem and a negative significant relationship between self-esteem and negative mood. Self-esteem predicted the dimensions of negative mood and school performance. Also an optimistic attribution style was the greatest predictor for peers relation and support.

Therefore, the results of the present study revealed the importance of training for improvement of self-esteem and change in students' pessimistic attribution styles. Also, the results can increase teachers' awareness of students' explanation of events, their success and failure.

Acknowledgments

We truly thank the students, who participated and helped us accomplish this study. Also, we appreciate the research deputy of Sistan and Baluchestan University for their financial support.

Footnotes

Authors' Contribution: Conception and design, Yahya Kazemi and Zahra Nikmanesh; analysis and interpretation of data, Masome Khosravi; All Authors participated in drafting of the article and approved the final manuscript.

Declaration of Interest: None declared.

Funding/Support: The article was financially supported by University of Sistan and Baluchestan.

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