

Research Paper

A Study of Social Approval Motives and Self-Handicapping Behaviour Among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to identify the factors related to social approval motives which may contribute in the development of self-handicapping behaviour among adolescents. Defensiveness, Dependency, Normative Behavior, Positive Self Presentation, Social Approval, Social Conformity and Social Responsiveness were selected as predictor variable. The sample of the present study consisted 300 adolescent students (150 males and 150 females) within the age group of 13-17 years, studying in different C.B.S.E. Schools located in Meerut city, India. To measure approval motives, Approval Motive Scale by N.K.M. Tripathi and Roma Pal was used and self-handicapping scale constructed by the researchers was used to measure the level of self-handicapping behaviour among adolescents. Correlation and Multiple Regression was employed for analysis of the data. Result showed a significant negative correlation between self-handicapping behaviour and Defensiveness, Dependency, Social approval and Social Responsiveness. Normative behaviour was significantly and positively correlated with self-handicapping behaviour. However, Positive Self-Presentation and Social Conformity were not found correlated significantly with self-handicapping behaviour. Findings revealed that Defensiveness, Dependency and Social approval contributed significantly and emerged as predictors of self-handicapping behaviour among adolescents.

Keywords: *Social Approval, Self-handicapping, Adolescents, Motives*

Self-handicapping is self-defeating behavior which enables one to save face when one fails. More often we can see this behaviour when someone desires success too strongly but feels uncertain about achieving it.

Self-handicapping makes one lose eventually, as the person using it indulges in making excuses and did not use true potential. Typical examples are going out with friends rather than staying at home before an important examination. It occurs most often when a person is uncertain of success in an ego-involving endeavor and want to protect themselves from being responsible for failure. Self-handicapping can be a form of self-sabotage and preventing from achieving what one really wants to and capable of. Self-handicapping also

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occurs when people do not give their best effort or procrastinate until they lack the time to do their work appropriately.

Self-handicapping explains how some people engage in really negative and self-destructive ways. People who are scared of failure, or get embarrassed easily, or who really don't like to look silly or incapable, or who hate feeling shamed are the ones more likely to self-handicap. Most people do self-handicap when they do not feel confident to achieve success, making them to settle at a lower level what they actually could achieve if realize their true potential.

Self-handicapping refers to the underestimation of one's own performance, usually for the sake of impression management (Kolditz & Arkin, 1982). When individuals fear or expect they may fail at tasks that are important to them, they often engage in practices that may actually increase the probability of failure (or at least lower achievement) so they have an excuse, other than lack of ability, for the failure.

At times, some people intentionally impede their own performance, if they feel uncertain of their ability to succeed and fear failure. This process of self-handicapping was reviewed by Urdan and Midgley (2001) which involves strategies of externalization so that an individual can excuse failure and internalize (accept credit for) success.

According to Aronson, et al. (2007) self-handicapping behaviors are strategies used by people to create obstacles and excuses for themselves so that, if they do poorly on a task, they can avoid blaming themselves.

McCrea (2002) suggested that an individual's desire to protect the self could lead to thinking about ways to undermine one's performance to distance oneself psychologically from a possible failure and mentally prepare for creating an excuse to be used later.

Shepperd & Arkin (1989) investigated the relationship between self-handicapping and public self-consciousness, which is a chronic attentiveness to the self particularly in matters related to competence and others' evaluations. They could show that individuals high in public self-consciousness self-handicapped more than individuals low in public self-consciousness. Also supporting the impression management explanation of self-handicapping, public self-focus (i.e. creating a real or imagined audience by, for example, placing participants in front of a TV camera) has been shown to increase uncertainty and concern in the same way as increasing the threat of an impending evaluation, resulting in more self-handicapping behavior (Hirt et al., 2000).

Kaya et al. (2017) explored self-handicapping behaviour and irrational beliefs with regard to approval, interpersonal relationships and self. Research found a positive correlation between self-handicapping and irrational beliefs about approval.

Sabbah & Ojo (2023) researched relationship and contribution of approval seeking from peer, socio economic status and locus of control on self-handicapping behaviour in graduate students and findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between peer approval, SES, locus of control and academic self handicapping. Further it was found that all the three variables were significantly contributing to academic self handicapping behaviour.

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Objective

To study the contribution of social approval motives in the development of self-handicapping behaviour among adolescents.

Hypothesis

Social approval motives would contribute significantly in the development of self-handicapping behaviour among adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample of study consisted of 300 adolescents (150 males and 150 females) within the age group of 13-17 years studying in different C.B.S.E. Schools located in Meerut city, India.

Measures

The approval motives scale by N.K.M. Tripathi and L.B. Tripathi (1980, 88) was used to measure the approval motive of the adolescents. There were seven dimensions in this scale i.e. (i) Normative behavior (ii) Social conformity (iii) Positive self presentation (iv) Defensiveness (v) Dependency (vi) Social responsiveness and (vii) Social approval.

The Cronbach reliability of self handicapping scale was .75, the test retest reliability of Approval motive scale was .89 and split half reliability was .89.

Self -handicapping Scale based on Rhodwalt's Self -Handicapping Scale was prepared by the researcher and administrated to measure the level of self- handicapping behaviour in adolescents. Reliability of the scale was 0.75 and Factorial validity was established for the scale which was also found high.

Procedure

The test was administrated in two sessions in group situation. In the first session self handicapping scale was given to the students. When each student completed the self-handicapping scale, Approval Motive Scale was given to the students after a short break. When students were giving their responses, the investigator was present there to answer their queries.

Statistical analysis

The collected data subjected to appropriate statistical analysis. The correlation coefficient and multiple-regression were employed to analyze the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The individual raw scores on seven dimensions of social approval motives were taken as individual variable and first of all subjected to correlation analysis.

The correlation coefficients provide a measure of degree and direction of the relationship between dependent and independent variables. To determine whether the predictor variables were correlated with the criterion, Pearson r was employed and obtained correlation coefficients were presented dimension wise in table no.1

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Table No. 1: Relationship (Correlation coefficient of Self-handicapping with other variables) (N=300)

Variable	r Value	Level of significance
Defensiveness	-.229	.01
Dependency	-.158	.01
Normative behavior	.185	.01
Positive self presentation	-.107	NS
Social approval	-.237	.01
Social Conformity	-.060	NS
Social responsiveness	-.130	.05

The data as presented in table no. 1 reveals that the correlation between self-handicapping behaviour and dimensions of social approval namely defensiveness, dependency, normative behavior and social approval were -.229, .158, -.185 and -.237 respectively. All the values were significant at .01 level of confidence. The correlation between social responsiveness and self-handicapping was -.130 which was found significant at .05 level of confidence.

However, the correlation coefficient between positive self presentation, and conformity on the other hand were found to be non-significant.

To find out the amount of variance in the dependent variable accounted by the independent variables F-ratio test was employed. The calculation of the analysis of variance for the equation as a whole is reported in the following table no. 2.

Table No. 2: Analysis of variance for the regression (self handicapping)**

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression*	4445.528	3	1481.843	10.124	.000
Residual	43325.868	296	146.371		
Total	47771.397	299			

*Predictor (constant) Social approval, Defensiveness, Dependency

**Dependent variable (Self handicapping)

The ANOVA tests the acceptability of the model from a statistical perspective. The regression row displays information about the variation accounted for by the predictor variables which was found 4445.528. The residual row displays information about the variation that is not accounted for by the predictor variables which was 43325.868 as reported in the table. The above analysis indicates that F-value =10.124 was found significant at .01 level of confidence which clearly reveals that these three variables (social approval, defensiveness and dependency) cumulatively influence Self-handicapping among adolescents and the variation explained by them is not due to chance.

While the ANOVA table is a useful test of the model's ability to explain any variation in the criterion variable, it does not directly address the strength of that relationship. For this purpose multiple regression analysis was taken, as it explains the strength of the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables. To find out the contribution of all 7 predictor variables in the development of Self-handicapping, multiple regression was employed on

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the data collected on different tests administered on 150 female and 150 male adolescents. The results are reported in table no. 3

Table No. 3: Determinants of Self-handicapping (Criterion variable Self-handicapping)

Independent variables	Beta	Simple r	t- value
Social approval	-.168	-.151	-2.806**
Defensiveness	-.150	-.144	-2.501*
Dependency	-.120	-.124	-2.152*
Regression = .305 Std error of estimate = 12.098 R ² = 0.093 Adjusted r = .084			

**significant at 0.01 level

* Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3 presents the standardized regression coefficients (Beta) for the three predictor variables. The standardized regression coefficient (Beta) allows the researcher to examine the effects of each predictor variable on criterion variable. It is evident from the table that Social approval has greater impact on Self-handicapping in comparison to Defensiveness and Dependency i.e. (beta = -.150, and -.120).

Significant correlation values of Social approval, Defensiveness and Dependency indicate that a moderate relationship is likely to exist in the population from which the sample was selected and it is not arisen by chance.

The table also reflects a test of statistical significance of individual regression coefficient through the calculation of a t- value for each co-efficient (-2.806, 2.501 and -2.152). The table shows that all the values were found significant beyond chance.

These are consistent with the previous analysis using the F-ratio and suggest that the coefficients for Social approval, Dependency and Defensiveness are highly unlikely to be Zero in the population.

It is evident from the table no. 3 that from all 7 predictor variables only three variables (Social approval, Dependency and Defensiveness) were found to be significantly contributing in the development of Self-handicapping. As seen in the table the multiple regression value of these four variables is .305 which indicates a relationship of average strength. Reported R² in the table is .093 which indicates that the combined contribution of these three variables in the development of Self-handicapping is 9 percent.

Out of seven variables Dependency, Defensiveness, and social approval were found significantly contributing to self-handicapping. This means that the hypotheses made in this regard were proved true.

The findings of the present study were also supported by our day to day observation and previous research findings. Individuals who were high in autonomy and low in control engaged themselves in less defensive coping strategies (denial) and exhibited less self-handicapping compared to all other individuals (Knee and Zuckerman, 1996).

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Self-handicapping is both a private and a public phenomenon. When it is used to protect self-esteem, it satisfies the self-protective motive and when it is used to protect an individual's social esteem, it satisfies a self-presentational or impression management motive. All the factors of social approval motive can be positively related to self-handicapping when it comes to self-presentation or impression management but this is not the case. In the present study social approval was negatively correlated with the Self-handicapping. It may be because self-reported measure of Self-handicapping was related to individual's self-esteem and to protect his self-esteem individual can go against normative behavior. In order to protect self, individual uses such strategies which are not socially approved like drug or alcohol use. As the prime aim of the individual is to protect self so he/she does not conform socially rather finds his own unique way to protect himself. As they were found low in dependency it indicates that they do not require pleasing anyone. An individual who is high on self-handicapping may not follow social norms or seek social approval, if it is related with his own self-protection and not with impression management where he needs to be in line with the social norms and needs to seek social approval.

Further low defensiveness was seen among adolescents who were high in self-handicapping behaviour which could be because they do not have to rationalize things to protect their self-image in the eyes of others instead they have to deal with their own feelings about them. The present study identified predictors of self-handicapping and gave us insight and understanding about the concept.

The present research is contributing in understanding the true nature of self-handicapping behaviour and relation of social approval motives with this behaviour among adolescents. The study has its limitation as far as age group and geographical area covered is concerned, even though it could be helpful in understanding and managing self-handicapping behaviour among adolescents which could help them in realizing their true potential.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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