Relationship between Optimism and Karmic Belief of Indian Older Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Cultural beliefs like karmic faith and positive psychological attitudes like optimism are two very unique and distinct concepts having that common future-oriented element but their operations are a bit different. This paper tries to understand the relationship between optimism and karmic belief of the 350 Indian urban older adolescents. Results revealed a significant association between the two psychological aspects. Furthermore, karmic belief as a significant predictor explained about 3% of the positive variance in optimism. Findings encourage counselors and mental health practitioners in India to work creatively and indigenously for ensuring a healthy community. The new age trend of tele-counseling can also be beneficial for better mental health service delivery and exploring further application opportunities.

Keywords: Karmic Belief, Optimism, Older-Adolescents Positive psychology, Tele-counseling

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INTRODUCTION

Positive psychology is one great gift of knowledge to the Mental health community. It was after realizing the need for positive and progressive psychology (Lopez, 2009) that researchers found a healthy approach to treating mental issues. The componential elaboration of positive psychiatry for nonclinical populations presents its solid application (Jeste et al., 2015). But, the cultivation of such innovations always provides few research gaps, especially concerning culture. Because positive psychology in India is constantly developing with an empirical base, few cultural questions remain unanswered within the literature (Ghosh, 2016). As a result, some new areas can be explored by connecting cultural beliefs with positive psychological attitudes.

Cultural beliefs like karmic faith and positive psychological attitudes like optimism are two very unique and distinct systems but may share some common directionalities. The positive effect of optimism is widely known. It affects mental and physical well-being (Conversano et al., 2010). It also positively affects pain (Goodin and Bulls, 2013), cardiovascular disease (Rozanski, 2014), and chronic disease treatment (Schiavon et al., 2017). But karmic belief is a relatively new area with little literature available. One of these studies observed that the circuitous impact of congruency on natural equity attributions through deservingness was more grounded for individuals higher in karmic convictions (Taylor et al., 2022). Both concepts somehow share that future-oriented element though their operations are bit different. But, Is there any connection between the two? A better understanding can be gained by reviewing both variables first.

Optimism

The APA (Vanden Bos, 2015) characterizes optimism as the attitude that beneficial things will occur and wishes will eventually be fulfilled. Some of the early deals incorporate findings from the Gallup surveys which uncovered the

optimism of thirty nations over a decade (starting around 1976). Interestingly, the literature brings up around six frameworks of optimism. The first and the most broadly acknowledged is Scheier and Carver's dispositional optimism. It's a propensity to accept that more beneficial things will occur from here on out (Scheier and Carver, 1985). The second is Weinstein's unrealistic optimism which depicts the goal befuddle between assumptions for dispositional optimism and actuarial proof about the likelihood of life-altering situations happening (Weinstein, 1989). The third framework explains optimism as a way of thinking about reason and that this cycle can be learned or developed (Seligman, 1992). The fourth framework is realistic optimism, which includes keeping an uplifting perspective on the imperatives of the accessible quantifiable peculiarities in the physical and social world (Schneider, 2001). The fifth framework, which presents relativity of assumption for great results for oneself contrasted and a comparable other, is the comparative optimism (Klein and Radcliffe, 2002). At long last, the sixth one is strategic optimism by Ruthig and colleagues. It is a domain-specific refusal of hazard in light of faith in having control (Ruthig et al., 2007).

Karmic Belief

Karmic belief is a conviction that activities and encounters are associated causally through the law of karma. It implies great activities make beneficial things occur, and bad acts make bad things occur, either later in one's life or a future lifetime. It is a prevalent belief in a few Asian conventional religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and so on. (White et al., 2018). There is next to no logical turnout accessible for this variable, a large portion of it is connected with philosophy or religious studies. The gathered work of Carl Gustav Jung-'Psychology of Religion: West and East' refers to human existence as an attainable vehicle of the greatest flawlessness that produces karma (Jung, 1963).

The current study

Psychosocial characteristics like optimism don't simply hold particular significance as a part, yet they are fundamental for the intervention (Bhui, 2014). Scientists further suggest that researching karmic conviction might assist with making sense of an extensive variety of strict cognizance that influences mental and social peculiarities. It incorporates moral decisions, moral feelings (culpability, disgrace, and compassion), collaboration, social disparity, self-guideline, and so forth. (White et al., 2017). Above arguments stimulate the curiosity to explore some critical questions about the two variables. Thus, this paper tries to understand the relationship between optimism and karmic belief of the Indian urban older adolescents. Following non-directional alternative hypotheses are prepared for this aim-

H1: There is a significant association between optimism and karmic belief in the study sample.

H2: karmic belief is a significant predictor of optimism among the study sample.

METHODOLOGY

Study Participants

This study posed no more than minimal risk to the participants and consent was taken from every one of them (Committee on Revisions to the Common Rule for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research in the Behavioral and Social Sciences et al., 2014). The sample of 350 older adolescents (Mean age = 17.5, SD = 1.1) was selected through purposive sampling. The representation basis was non-probability, and the element selection criteria were age (16-19 years), gender (50% males & 50% females), and living in Delhi (Kothari, 2004).

Psychological Tools

Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOTR) was created by Scheier, Carver, and Bridges in 1994. This commonly used tool to measure dispositional optimism consists of a total of ten questions, of which four are fillers. It has a response scale of zero (strongly disagree) to four (strongly agree). The internal consistency for the six questions of this scale was 0.78. The test-retest coefficients were 0.68, 0.60, 0.56 and 0.79. It also has an acceptable level of validity and cultural fairness.

Belief in Karma Questionnaire (BKQ) was created by White, Norenzayan, and Schaller in 2018. This particular tool to measure karmic belief consists of a total of sixteen questions with a response scale of one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). The internal consistency is high (α= 0.93 and 0.90 in Canada and India, respectively). It also has an acceptable level of validity and cultural fairness.

Data Analysis

The responses scoring was done through MS Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics was used for calculating descriptive statistics, normality testing, and then deploying a suitable correlational analysis. Simple linear regression was used for testing the cause-and-effect relationship.

RESULTS

Normality

The scores of the variables optimism and belief in karma were not distributed normally. A Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p<0.05$) (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965; Razali & Wah, 2011) showed that all these variables were not normally distributed for the study sample, with a skewness of -0.3 (S.E.= 0.1) and kurtosis of 0.3 (S.E.= 0.2) for the optimism scores, and skewness of 0.1 (S.E.= 0.1) and kurtosis of 0.3 (S.E.= 0.2) for the belief in karma scores (Cramer, 1998; Cramer & Howitt, 2004; Doane & Seward, 2011).

Correlation Analysis

Results of Spearman's correlation revealed that the association between optimism and belief in karma was positive and significant ($\rho = 0.15$, $p<0.01$).

Simple Linear Regression Analysis

The overall model holding karmic belief as a predictor of criterion optimism fits well ($F=13.5$, $p<0.05$). Karmic belief had a positive significant impact on optimism ($t=3.6$, $p<0.05$) with the unstandardized regression weights of 0.06 and the standardized regression weights of 0.19. It explained about 3% of the variance in optimism ($R^2=0.03$).

DISCUSSIONS

This present study discovered the relationship between karmic belief and optimism in Indian older adolescents. Because the data were not distributed normally, a non-parametric method of correlation analysis was deployed. Results revealed that there is a significant and positive association between optimism and karmic belief. Hence our first hypothesis stating "There is a significant association between optimism and karmic belief of the study sample" is accepted. It suggests that with an increase in the karmic belief of older adolescents, optimism may also increase. This is further supported by the fact that karmic belief displayed a significant impact on optimism by explaining about 3% of the variance. Hence, our second hypothesis stating "karmic belief is a significant predictor of optimism among the study sample" and is also accepted. This evidence explains that with every unit of increase in karmic belief, optimism would increase about 3 percent.

Some early inquiries suggest that religious help-seeking has been an integral part of psychiatric help-seeking in India, pointing out that such approaches require research (Campion and Bhugra, 1998). The study on karmic belief explains that it may reflect a broad teleological bias to interpret life events concerning agency, purpose, and design among children (Banerjee and Bloom, 2016). This form of perceived supernatural justice can be beneficial for many cultures. It cultivates as a result of a general mental component, upheld by central inspirations for sense-production, meaning support, and mental control. It also influences causal decisions and inspires standard adherence, favorable to pro sociality among adherents (White and Norenzayan, 2019). A previous experimental study has effectively tested the connection of both our study variables in terms of whether karmic investments stimulate optimism about the desired outcome (Converse et al., 2012). Our findings add constructively to the present literature to fill some essential gaps.

This study encourages counselors and mental health practitioners in India to work creatively and indigenously for ensuring a healthy community. Testing the current model in different demographics may strengthen the research literature. Some effective future directions of such studies can be recognized in terms of a 'new age' mental health service delivery which is tele-counseling. The 2019 pandemic demanded a global tele-counseling infrastructure in Italy (De Luca & Calabrò, 2020). In Bangladesh, a large number of people using the tele-counseling helpline during the 2019 pandemic reported mental issues, anxiety, sleeplessness, interpersonal problems, financial difficulties, physical health worries, and difficulty managing quarantine (Iqbal et al., 2021). Our model along with many others can be an effective part of treatment in the new age.

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