Abstract

The construct of helplessness is the integrative one with wider psychosocial antecedents and consequences. The present study is geared to examine certain psychosocial factors of human helplessness. Three hundred subjects, equally pooled from industrial and nonindustrial settings, comprised the sample. In each setting, equal number of participants from three career phases (early, middle, and late) were randomly sampled. The study adopted a Cognitive Measure of Helplessness. The helplessness measure scales the extent the individual has the cognitive expectancy that behaviour and outcomes are independent. On the basis of hypothesised relationship between helplessness and personality dimensions, twelve scales from the California Psychological Inventory were chosen. The Tennessee Self Concept Scale was also included. All the measures were administered to each of the subjects individually. The personality measures (dimensions) of dominance, capacity for status, sociability, social presence, self-acceptance, and sense of well-being constitute the cluster of interpersonal adequacy (role functions) of the individual. The dimensions of responsibility and socialization denote the factor of intrapersonal structuring of values (character functions). The measures of achievement via conformance, achievement via independence, and intellectual efficiency are indicative of the intellectual efficiency and achievement potential of the person. The domain of femininity is one of the constituents of the intellectual and interest mode. The domains of the self-concept scale include identity, self satisfaction, behaviour, physical self, moral-ethical self, personal self, family self, social self, global positive self-concept, and self criticism. The correlational analysis on all these measures has indicated several interesting features. As hypothesised, the results show a negative relationship of helplessness to most of the personality dimensions. Specifically, helplessness is negatively associated with some of the constituent measures of interpersonal adequacy, intrapersonal values, and achievement potential and intellectual efficiency. Although there is positive association between helplessness and some of the self-concept domains, the finding is interpreted in terms of the conceptual distinction between personal helplessness and universal helplessness. It is asserted that universal helplessness is a modal experience in Indian context and this prevents lowering of positive self-concept of the helpless individual. Apart from the correlational analysis, the multiple regression analysis has suggested socialization and achievement via conformance as the likely predictors of helplessness. Additionally, the comparison of the personality and self-concept dimensions across industrial and nonindustrial groups has indicated a number of useful features. The analysis of differences across career phases has also generated some interesting upshots. The findings have been organized and analysed in line with the current status of the helplessness theory. Moreover, major implications and possible directions for future research have been suggested.