

Role of Personality Dimensions in Just World Beliefs

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Abstract

The aim of current study was to answer the question; are specific personality dimensions related to just world beliefs in young adult students?. Two hundred and sixty four students enrolled in various universities completed measures of personal beliefs in just world (Fatima & Khalid, 2007), the scale of belief in immanent and ultimate justice (Fatima, 2009) and the ten-item personality inventory (Gosling, Rentfrow & Swann Jr, 2003) in group setting. The age range of participants was 18 to 25 with mean age of 21.8 (SD=2.2). Stepwise regression analyses confirmed that only openness to experience is related to personal-BJW ($F(1,262) = 13.766, p < .000$). This identification of personality trait contributes to the development of theoretical framework related to just world beliefs. Limitation and recommendation are discussed.

Key Words: Just world beliefs; students; well-being; extraversion; agreeableness; conscientiousness; emotional stability; openness to experience

Introduction

Beliefs in human life contribute to determine way of life, to stand against the inequities and to restore the sense of well-being. In this regard, beliefs in just world has influential implications in human's life. These beliefs serves many adaptive functions such as individuals view their environments as stable and orderly (Lerner & Miller, 1978), create outlook of world as foreseeable and manageable (Lerner, 1980) and creates sense of security (Lerner, 1970). These beliefs also motivate individuals' to behave justly or fairly, help to interpret the events in a meaningful way, and gives assurance that they will be treated justly by others (Dalbert, 2001).

According to psychological point of view, perceptions of justice and injustice are subjective judgments (Mikula, in press) which show that judgments of justice can be result of cognitive reasoning of people (Lerner & Goldberg, 1999). The theory of just world belief holds that good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people (Lerner, 1970). These assumptions highlighted that there are certain characteristics or factors that provide basis to categorize people in good, meritorious, successful, or bad, and unsuccessful categories. Presumably, these beliefs of just world could not be experienced universally and individuals could be differ to the extent they believe in a just world due to individual or situational factors. As justice beliefs are subjective judgments,

therefore, it can be affected by personal experiences, attitudes, feelings and dispositions. Having reasoned in this way, it can be postulated that personality dimensions or disposition have significant implications in how individuals' perceive or interpret events happened in their life.

The notion of personality refers as the coherent pattern of affect, behaviour, cognition, desires which integrates over time and space (Scherer, & Brosch, 2009). Hence, conceivable that personality trait would influence personal values and attitudes (Olver & Mooradian, 2003). Using information processing perspective, Reisenzein and Weber (in press) propose that personality variables can determine the content of the cognitive and motivational structures that underlie appraisal. Because this process happens mainly through the chronic accessibility of motivational and mental structures relevant to appraisal and individual difference as well. Digman (1990) describes the human personality in five dimensions. These five dimensions are extroversion, emotional stability/neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience (Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson, 2008).

Problem Statement

The aim of present study was to explore the interplay of personality dimensions and just world beliefs by examining predictive relationship of the five personality dimensions with personal just world beliefs, immanent and ultimate beliefs.

Method

Sample

Two hundred and sixty four (264) university students participated in this study. The sample comprised 140 males and 124 females, aged ranged from 18 to 25 ($M = 21.8$; $SD = 2.2$).

Measures

The Personal Belief in a Just World Scale

The Personal Belief in a Just World Scale (Fatima & Khalid, 2007) was used to assess the individual's belief that world is just place for the self that has been originally developed by Dalbert (1999). The Alpha reliability of Urdu version of Scale was .93 and two-factor structure of the Personal and General Beliefs in a Just world Scales was also confirmed in principal component analysis with varimax rotation (Fatima & Khalid, 2007)

Scales of Belief in Immanent and Ultimate Justice

The Scale of Belief in Immanent and Ultimate Justice (Fatima, 2009) measures the belief that everything that happens is an expression of justice (Immanent Justice; five items) and belief that any injustice faced by individuals can be resolved and compensated in the future (Ultimate Justice; four items). Scale score for both Immanent and Ultimate Justice obtained by averaging the score across item and high scores shows high beliefs. Alphas for the both sub-scales U-BJW (.75) and I-BJW (.70) were found to be satisfactory.

The Ten-Item Personality Inventory

Ten-Item Personality Inventory (Gosling, Rentfrow & Swann Jr, 2003) was used to measure the five dimension of personality. Each item consists of two descriptors. The Cronbach alphas were .68, .40, .50, .73, and .45 for the Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Openness to Experience scales respectively. The test-retest correlations for the TIPI were (mean $r = .72$).

Results

Demographic characteristics of participants are given in table 1. More females (53%) than males (47%) living in nuclear family system (66.7%) participated in study.

Table.1
Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Males	140	53
Females	124	47
Family System		
Joint	88	33.3
Nuclear	176	66.7
Age		
18 -20	85	32.2
21 – 23	110	41.7
24 – 25	69	26.1
Mean \pm SD	21.8 \pm 2.2	

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to evaluate whether scores on five personality dimensions including extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience were necessary to predict the dependent variable ‘personal BJW’, immanent and ultimate just world beliefs. Only the dimension of Openness to Experience’ was found to be significantly related to personal-BJW ($F(1,262) = 13.766, p < .000$). The correlation coefficient was .22, indicating approximately .05% of the variance of the P-BJW scores. However, R^2 was only .05%, indicating this dimension of personality only explained a small amount of the variance of P-BJW scores. As such, it is possible that other dimensions might be related to the dependent variable. Further regression analyses indicated that none of the personality dimension interacted with Immanent and ultimate just world beliefs.

Table 2
Regression analysis with personality dimensions as predictor of P-BJW

<i>Personality dimensions</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>Durbin-Watson</i>
Openness to Experience	.055	.015	.223	.050	1.981

Table 3
Excluded Variables

<i>Model</i>		<i>Beta In</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>sig</i>	<i>Partial correlation</i>	Collinearity Statistics
1	Extraversion	.019(a)	.306	.760	.019	.968
	Agreeableness	.091(a)	1.509	.133	.093	.984
	Conscientiousness	.041(a)	.655	.513	.041	.948
	Emotional Stability	.056(a)	.933	.351	.058	.998

a Predictors in the Model: (Constant), O

b Dependent Variable: BJW

Discussion

The aim of present study was to investigate the role of personality dimensions in the development of just world beliefs. Obtained findings are contrast with previous researches, which shows mixed results using the five factor model of personality in relation to BJW. For instance, Wolfradt, Uwe and Dalbert (2003) found negative correlation between BJW and openness to new experience whereas participants holding self-directed scored higher in openness. Nudelman (2013) conducted meta-analyses using twelve studies to determine probable relationships between the five-factor model and the belief in a just world. Results shown that general and personal forms of BJW were negatively associated with neuroticism, and positively associated with extraversion and agreeableness. With regard to studies on personal BJW as a personality trait shows it correlates positively with extraversion (Lipkus, et al., 1996) and negatively with neuroticism (Dzuka & Dalbert, 2002).

From the findings of current studies, which shows openness to experience found to be only dimension that predict P-BJW, it can be speculate that there are certainly situational and individual factors that influence people's perceptions of justice. Culture is one of the crucial drivers of these beliefs as these beliefs have been shown to be stable over time period and within particular cultures (Dalbert, 2001; Furnham, 2003). Researchers suggest to examine values and attitudes at both individual and cultural level as these orientations including big five dimensions of personality decisively affected by social context (Asendorpf 1996; Schwartz, 2006; Wegener & Liebig 1993). Hence, individual's beliefs can be greatly influenced by cultural factors which can also be confounding variable in results on current and previous studies. It can also be inferred that this study has been conducted on young adults and university population who are generally ready to experience unfamiliar events, open minded and prefer for variety, therefore, dimension of openness to experience found to be only predictive factor. In conclusion, openness to experience found to be linked with just world beliefs and this identification of personality trait contributes to the development of theoretical framework related to just world beliefs.

This study was conducted on university students that may limit generalizability. It is possible that people from other age group or life domains belief or react differently. Second limitation is usage of

limited number of variables and brief questionnaire of personality traits. Therefore, further exploration should expand to individual and situational factors as well as future research could improve upon this study by using longitudinal design.

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