

Levels of cognitive distortion among secondary school students: A demographic quantitative analysis.

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Abstract:

The purpose of the study was to determine the level of cognitive distortion among secondary school students. Efforts were made to find out the difference among the students based on demographic factors like gender (boys and girls), locality (rural and urban). Sample of 120 students were selected through simple random sampling from different high schools of North Kashmir. Cognitive distortion scale developed by Sisodia and Sharma (2012) was used for data collection. Results revealed that boys had higher level of cognitive distortion than girls. Results also show that there is a significant difference between rural and urban secondary school students on cognitive distortion.

Key Words: cognitive distortion, gender, locality. Secondary school students

INTRODUCTION:

“Cognition” is a term that refers to the mental processes involved in learning and comprehension. Making a judgment, learning new ideas, using language, recognizing and interpreting environmental cues, solving puzzles and applying memory are all examples of cognition (Bayne et al., 2019). In general, cognition, which is directed by particular brain circuits and braced by a number of neurotransmitter systems, is what drives our thoughts and actions (Lazarus, 1982).

A cognitive distortion is a concept derived from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and it refers to the negative, unfavourable or illogical ways of thinking about oneself and the world. It usually develops over time in response to adverse events and is your mind convincing patterns that believe negative things about yourself and your world that are not necessarily true (J. Grohol, 15 C.E.). It is also a way in which your mind bends the facts to keep you locked in a negative state of mind. Our mind can play tricks on us and influence our thoughts, actions, and emotions (Gilbert, 1998). These faulty beliefs are known as cognitive distortions, which sometimes cause us to engage too frequently and heavily with our negative thoughts. In some people, they can lead to mental health issues like anxiety and depression (Kendall et al., 1990). Being aware of cognitive distortion is not enough to stop the pattern. These distortions are difficult to overcome which results in a large number of disorders. To change the patterns and attempt to have a more objective and optimistic view of the world, people may need to receive cognitive behavioural therapy (Hollon & Beck, 2013). With the help of cognitive and behavioural exercises, a qualified can help you maintain your mental faculties in order to recognise and correct any cognitive distortions (Rachman & Shafran, 1999). Being conscious of our cognitive distortions and paying attention to how we are framing things to ourselves is a key part of overcoming them. Good mental habits are as important as good physical habits. If we frame things in a healthy, positive way, we almost certainly will experience less anxiety and isolation (Nikmanesh & Zandvakili, 2015). This does not mean that we ignore problems, challenges, or feelings, just that we approach them with a can-do attitude instead of letting our thoughts and feelings amplify our anxiety. Some of the most common cognitive distortions are Overgeneralizing, Black and White, Mind reading, Blaming/Denying, Fortune-telling, Comparison, Labeling, Disqualifying the positive, Magical thinking, Double standard, and Fallacy of fairness (J. M. Grohol, 2009).

Studies reveal that mental makeup plays a central role in character, progress and achievements of an individual. There is a general agreement among several ideologies relating to a person's cognitive make-up that if there is any kind of disturbance in one's cognitive make-up, the whole life is adversely impacted. If a person experiences conflict in their thinking and reasoning, an imbalance in their ideas and

decisions, and is therefore unable to make wise and fruitful judgements, it is likely that these decisions will be negatively skewed, which will disrupt their life (Elder Jr & Clipp, 1989). The present research will help to know how and to what extent cognitive distortions affect the academic and personal life of an individual. Further the research will help to tackle mental dilemmas of individuals. In young students, cognitive distortions can result in emotional and behavioural problems. Risk children, such as those living in remote, backward locations, are more likely to exhibit cognitive distortions, which can harm and ruin their potential by seriously impairing both their personal and academic lives (Yüksel & Bahadır-Yilmaz, 2019).

A child's life can be significantly impacted by childhood adversity, such as the cognitive distortion issue, particularly if it is on-going and severe (Evans & Kim, 2013). There is a substantial body of evidence indicating that victims of cognitive distortions are at a higher risk of maladjustment than their peers who do not have such complications. This can result in a range of poor academic performance, low self-esteem, maladaptive school behaviour, emotional bursts, and social alienation issues (Werner, 2013). There are also solid empirical evidences which depict that there are strong links between cognitive distortions and conduct disorders (Green et al., 1999), eating disorders (Johnson et al., 2002), substance abuse (Dube et al., 2003), anxiety (Allen et al., 2008), and depression (Mitchell et al., 2015). These unfavourable propensities and proclivities can therefore have a significant impact on a person's academic performance, job choices, and personal beliefs.

METHODOLOGY:

Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the level of cognitive distortion among boys and girls of secondary schools.
2. To find out the level of cognitive distortion among rural and urban secondary school students.

Hypotheses:

Following hypotheses were formulated: -

1. There is no significant difference between cognitive distortion among boys and girls of secondary schools.
2. There is no significant difference between cognitive distortion among rural and urban secondary school students.

Sampling:

The present study was conducted on the sample of 120 (67 boys and 53 girls) high school students. Random sampling method was used for data collection.

Tool used:

Cognitive distortion scale (CDS-SDSD) developed by Sisodia and Sharma (2012) was used for data collection.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Table 1

Showing Mean, S.D and t-value of cognitive distortion scores of boys and girls secondary school students.

Gender	N	Mean	S. D	t-test
Boys	67	75.37	15.736	2.76*
Girls	53	70.13	18.157	

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 indicates that there is a significant difference between boys and girls' cognitive distortion among secondary school students. The mean scores of boys and girls were found 75.37 and 70.13 respectively. Boy's cognitive distortion level is higher than the girl's. Similarly, S.D scores are 15.73 and 18.15 respectively and t-value is found 2.76, which is significant at 0.05 level and null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2

Showing Mean, S.D and t-value of Cognitive distortion scores of rural and urban secondary school students.

Locality	N	Mean	S.D	t-test
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Rural	75	67.03	16.150	1.91*
Urban	45	73.68	18.457	

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 2 results indicate that there is a significant difference between rural and urban secondary school students. The mean scores of rural and urban students were found 67.03 and 73.68 respectively. It shows that urban students' cognitive distortion level is high than the rural secondary students. Similarly, S.D scores are 18.45 and 16.15 respectively and t-value is found 1.91, which is significant at 0.05 levels and null hypothesis is rejected.

FINDINGS:

The following findings are arrived from the statistical analysis

- Boy's students have high cognitive distortion level than the girl's of secondary schools.
- Urban students have high cognitive distortion level than the rural secondary school students.

DISCUSSION:

Research studies reveal that cognitive distortion can hamper not only the academic progress of the students but it could potentially influence whole of their lives. Boys tend have more cognitive distortion as compared to girls mainly due to more social pressure and responsibilities. Boys are provoked more easily and could lose their temper more rapidly as compared to girls; as a result they often get exposed to cognitive distortions. Apart from that people residing in urban areas tend to have more cognitive distortion as compared to people residing in rural areas. The people living in cities face more competition as compared to rural people. The investigators have also found that there are a number of studies that match with the results of the present study like a study conducted by (Sowa & Lustman, 1984) found that there is a significant difference in cognitive distortion on the basis of gender. The study revealed that males are more prone to cognitive distortion as compared to female. Yet another study highlighted that people residing in urban areas are more prone to cognitive distortion as compared to those who live in rural areas (Abel & Sewell, 1999).

CONCLUSION:

The present study found that there is significant difference between boys and girls among secondary school students i.e., boy's cognitive distortion level is high than girls. It is also found that there is a significant difference between rural and urban secondary school students on cognitive distortion i.e. urban students possess high level of cognitive distortion than rural secondary school students.

IMPLICATIONS:

The present study is helpful in understanding the negative cognitive distortions of individuals with respect to gender-based differences and depressive symptomology. These findings can help educationists to know about the variables that negatively affect the mental health of the students. The study will help to guidance and counselling practitioners to provide proper guidance services to students on how to deal with problematic situations and psychological problems which can hit their studies and thereby their personal and social life very badly.

The study will be of great help to teachers to identify mentally disturbed children in classroom, and give them best suited remedy. Further the study will help parents to tackle academic and personal issues of adolescents connected to their cognitive disturbances. Present study will help in taking measure for improving psychological health of secondary school students.

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