Discussion

- This study examined the influence of students' overall QOL on three areas of perceived problem-solving and three areas of academic self-concept. Findings supported our hypotheses.

- It was clearly demonstrated that higher levels of QOL indicate higher levels of perceived problem-solving confidence and personal control, as well as an approach problem solving style (rather than an avoidance style).

- It was also demonstrated that higher levels of QOL indicate higher levels of overall perceptions of academic ability and verbal ability.

- This study adds to the literature by demonstrating the influence of QOL on perceived academic self-concept, particularly in academic and verbal realms.

Implications & Limitations

- The QOL inventory can be used as a tool to identify students at high risk for poor academic performance (during their freshman year) in order to provide proactive interventions in the form of workshops to increase university retention rates.

- By addressing issues of everyday campus life and helping students with their QOL, counselors may be able to help develop students' problem-solving abilities and academic self-concept, as well as their more specific verbal ability, which in turn should enhance their overall college experience and academic success.

- Since socioeconomic differences among participants were not examined, future studies should address this issue.

- Variables of this study were not observed under controlled, experimental conditions. Therefore, a causal relationship cannot be inferred. Another limitation is that there were more female (222) participants than male (82) participants, which may have affected our results.

- Generalizability is limited to the college population studied. Further research should analyze other diverse groups.

References


Introduction

Quality of Life

- According to Lehman (1983a), quality of life (QOL) is defined as "the sense of well-being and satisfaction experienced by people under their current condition" (p. 143).
- The significance of certain parts of life, such as work, home, and health, and the overall satisfaction in them can influence the subjective well-being and self-esteem of an individual (Frisch, 1992).
- Satisfaction in family environments is associated with academic achievement (Denton & Kamps, 1994).
- Positive QOL can contribute to improve satisfaction in many areas of life such as learning and intellectual development (St. Ongs, 2003).
- Life satisfaction has been found to be associated with perceptions of problem solving skills (Heppner, Wity, & Dixon, 2004).

Problem-Solving

- Problem-solving processes can be understood by how people react and consider the solutions to their day-to-day life problems (Heppner, 1982).
- Life satisfaction is often considered central to a person's decision-making process (Cooper, 1999; Romero & Roberto, 2003).

Self-Concept

- Self-concept is "the organized set of characteristics that the individual perceives as peculiar to himself/herself" (Ryckman, 1993, p. 106).
- Leung, J.P., and Leung, K. state self-concept is, for the most part, the single variable that has consistently been correlated with life satisfaction (1992).
- One important aspect of self-concept for college students is their perceived academic ability.
- According to the reciprocal-effect model (Gray, Marsh, & Bolvin, 2003), academic self-concept strongly influences academic achievement during the college years.

Hypotheses

- We predict that overall QOL significantly influences: (1) problem-solving confidence, (2) perceptions of academic, verbal, and math abilities.

Participants

- Self-report test data were collected from a total of 309 psychology students (222 female, 87 male) at a southern California university. Five participants did not specify gender.

Instruments and Procedure

Three different instruments were given to the participants to measure various items:

Quality of Life Inventory: developed by Michael B. Frisch, PhD. (1992).
- The QOL inventory is a self-report measure designed to assess life satisfaction and life importance in 16 areas of life.
- Sample Item: "How important is learning to your happiness?" & "How important is your work?"

Problem-Solving Inventory (PSI): developed by Paul Heppner, Ph.D. (1982).
- 35-item self-report measure designed to assess how students respond to their personal problems in three areas:

Problem-Solving Confidence: confidence in a wide range of problem-solving activities, e.g., "Many of the problems I face are too complex for me to solve."

Approach-Avoidance: extend to which one approaches or avoids particular problem-solving activities, e.g., "After I solve a problem, I do not analyze what went right and what went wrong."

Personal Control: assesses the level of self-control individuals feel in problem-solving activities, e.g., "I make snap judgments later regret them."

Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory (PACI): developed by Fleming & Whalen, 1993, the PACI measures the components of self-concept related to social and academic concerns.
- Three subscales were used for the purpose of this study: perceptions of academic, math, and verbal ability.
- Sample Item: "I am happy with my perception of my self and I do well on test.

Results

- A one-way between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance was performed on subscales from the PSI and the PACI. The independent variable was four levels of overall QOL (very low, low, average, and high).
- There was an overall significant multivariate main effect of QOL, Pillai's Trace = 0.152, F(3, 1809) = 2.702, p < .001, partial η² = 0.051.
- Univariate analyses revealed significant effects on:
- Problem-Solving Confidence, F(3, 306) = 3.342, p = .020, partial η² = 0.032
- Problem-Solving Approach-Avoidance, F(3, 306) = 5.475, p = .001, partial η² = 0.051
- Problem-Solving Control, F(3, 306) = 8.428, p < .001, partial η² = 0.076
- Perceptions of Academic Ability, F(3, 306) = 4.364, p < .005, partial η² = 0.041
- Perceptions of Verbal Ability, F(3, 306) = 3.504, p = .016, partial η² = 0.033

Effects of QOL on PSI and PACI
Discussion

- Although we had a significant effect on EI and OGO, the pattern was not in the direction that we had predicted. Of special interest were the relationships between 1) low other-group orientation to high levels of global self-esteem, and 2) low ethnic identity to high levels of global self-esteem and social acceptance. If such students show no adherence to either the new or dominate culture or their own cultural identity, then one would expect for them to show a poor sense of self-respect and self-esteem.

- Our perspective is that the loss of traditional traits, or the non-acceptance of new cultural traits, may result in these students taking on self-protective strategies to not only guard their self-esteem, but also to help them cope with the challenges of social integration at an ethically diverse university.

- It was clearly demonstrated that high levels of other-group orientation are associated with high levels of social acceptance which is in turn related to high levels of social anxiety—suggesting that even though such students feel accepted that may still remain socially anxious while coping with all the challenges of an ethnically diverse student population.

- Our findings demonstrate that the psychological constructs of multi-group and ethnic identity can incorporate important information above and beyond self-esteem variables. Our measurements of self-esteem, although simple and concrete, do not tell the whole story.

Limitations

- This study did not assess self-esteem and anxiety levels prior to attending the university. Had we done so, we could have compared students' from ethnically homogeneous and heterogeneous universities on these variables pre- and post and note changes after attending a culturally diverse college.

- The variables were not observed under controlled, experimental conditions; therefore, no causal relationship can be inferred.

References


Implications

Future studies should qualitatively explore the influences of ethnic and other-group identity on the development of self-esteem, social acceptance, and social anxiety in diverse settings. Once these influences are uncovered, there may be clearer understanding of the complex relationship between ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and various important aspects of student-self-concept.

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Effects of Ethnic Identity & Other-Group Orientation on Anxiety, Acceptance, and Self-Esteem

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85th Annual Convention Western Psychological Association Portland, Oregon April 16, 2005

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Abstract

In order to examine ethnic identity (EI) and other-group orientation (OGO) as predictors of social anxiety, social acceptance and global self-esteem among ethnically diverse college students, researchers surveyed 174 students (137 female, 37 male). Participants completed measures of EI, OGO, global self-esteem, social acceptance, and social anxiety in addition to demographic variables. A 2 x 2 MANOVA was performed on social anxiety, social acceptance, and global self-esteem for students who were either high or low in EI or OGO. Results indicate significant effects of low EI on high levels of social acceptance and global self-esteem. There were also significant effects of high OGO on high levels of social acceptance and social anxiety. However, students who exhibit low OGO showed higher levels of global self-esteem.

Introduction

Ethnic Identity & Other-Group Orientation

- When a person moves from one culture to another, or when people of different cultures integrate, many aspects of one's self-identity are modified in order to accommodate such changes.

- One's cultural identity and how individuals of different cultures merge together, involves substantial transformations to an individual's sense of self.

  Ethnic Identity is an important aspect of a person's self-identity. It derives from one's knowledge of membership in a social group combined with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership ( Tajfel, 1981).

- Other-Group Orientation assesses one's preference for contact with other ethnic groups.

Global Self-Esteem

- Global Self-Esteem (or personal self-esteem) refers to how one feels about the self, regardless of racial or ethnic group membership.

- **Empirical findings establish that if it is not one's membership to a minority group that accounts for their level of self-esteem, but rather there sense of belonging and feelings toward their cultural group (Martínez & Dukes, 1991; Porter & Washington, 1993).**

  Social Acceptance

  - Social Acceptance (or social self-esteem) refers to an individual's perception of how others feel or think about him or her. The extent to which an individual feels as though they are accepted by other groups and the feelings they have towards other groups has an important effect on one's multi-group and cultural identity.

Social Anxiety

- Social Anxiety assesses the level of stress or uneasiness one feels towards others. The need for ethnic minority students to simultaneously maintain their old culture and adapt to the newer one can cause stress and anxiety (Greene, 1990).

Method

- Self-report and test data were collected from a total of 174 junior-level psychology students (137 female, 37 male) at a southern California university.

Instruments

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)

A 23-item self-report measure designed to assess students' level of group identity (Phinney, 1992)

Subscales Used: - Ethnic Identity

- Other group Orientation

Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory (PASCI)

A 45-item self-report measure designed to measure the components of self-concept related to social and academic concerns.

Subscales Used: - Global Self-Esteem

- Social Acceptance

- Social Anxiety

Results

- A 2 x 2 between-subjects MANOVA was performed on measures of self-esteem (personal and social) and anxiety.

  Independent variables were strength of Ethnic Identity (low and high) and Other-Group Orientation (low and high).

- Main effect of EI:

  - Students with low EI have higher levels of global self-esteem ($M=8.567$) than students with high EI ($M=6.631$).
  - Students with low EI have higher levels of social acceptance ($M=20.734$) than students with high EI ($M=18.323$).

- Main effect of OGO:

  - Students with low OGO have higher levels of global self-esteem ($M=8.515$) than students with high OGO ($M=6.677$).
  - Students with high OGO have higher levels of social acceptance ($M=21.016$) than students with low OGO ($M=18.041$).
  - Students with high OGO have higher social anxiety ($M=23.475$) than students with low OGO ($M=20.026$).
Discussion

- Our results indicate self-perceived problem-solving ability is related to self-esteem and social anxiety. Students with high levels of problem-solving confidence (perceived effective problem-solving) were identified as having higher levels of global self-esteem as well as lower levels of social anxiety. Personal control was found to be negatively related to social anxiety. Students with lower levels of personal control had higher levels of social anxiety.

- No relationship was found between approach-avoidance and global self-esteem or social anxiety.

- The post hoc analysis of ethnicity did not produce any significant main effects, which is possibly due to the diversity of the campus from which the sample was drawn.

Implications

- Since ineffective problem-solving ability was found to be associated with low global self-esteem and negative affect (i.e., high anxiety), implementation of supportive student counseling that enhances problem-solving ability and confidence may be helpful in improving levels of global self-esteem, academic success, and general well being.

- The PSI may be utilized to identify at-risk students and subsequently provide appropriate workshops, for example, that are congruent to their needs.

Limitations

- The variables were not observed under controlled, experimental conditions; therefore, a causal relationship cannot be inferred.

- The PSI only assesses perception of students' problem-solving ability, not their actual ability in problem-solving (Heppner & Peterson, 1982; Heppner & Baker, 1997; Heppner, Witty, & Dixon 2004).

References


Influence of Perceived Problem-Solving Ability on Self-Esteem

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Introduction

Appraisal of Problem-Solving Strategies

- Appraisal of problem-solving (PS) strategies includes the examination of a person's perception of their PS behaviors and attitudes, how they perceive themselves generally reacting to personal problems (i.e., feeling depressed, getting along with friends, choosing a major, or selecting a vocation), in their daily lives.
- It is critical to assess these constructs to better enable the student population to handle their everyday life stresses/encounters and function well in the school environment.
- Three dimensions underlying the perceived PS process of college students have been identified by Heppner (1982):
  - Confidence - confidence in a wide range of PS activities
  - Approach-Avoidance - extent to which one approaches or avoids particular PS activities
  - Personal Control - the level of self control individuals feel in PS activities

Global Self-Esteem

- Self-esteem has its early roots in the preschool years, in which it develops from children's self evaluations of how good they are at accomplishing the tasks they attempt to master (Erikson, 1963).
- Self-liking is a judgment of self-worth based on an internalized sense of positive regard from others. Self competence is an evaluation of one's ability to successfully bring about desired outcomes.
- Both self-liking and self-competence are expressed as components of global self-esteem (GSE) or the overall positive-negative attitude toward the self.

Influence of Perception on Self-Esteem

- Observations of the self suggest that the psychological self encompasses individual attributes which refer to "part of me", such as one's body, abilities, and reputation (James 1890, 1950).
- PS confidence has been found to be positively associated with personal agency, curiosity, positive affectivity, healthy coping activities, and negatively associated with anxiety, anger, depression, and eating disorders (Heppner, Witty, & Dixon, 2004).
- It has been suggested that the experience of consistent successes over time or repeated setbacks can have the effect of shifting the general level of self-esteem (Crocker, & Wolfe, 2001; James, 1890, 1950; McCrea, & Hirt, 2001).
- Beck's cognitive model of depression stresses the effect of negative thoughts of the self, finding that negative evaluations result in a lowered level of self-esteem (Blustein, Flett, & Johnston, 1992).

Purpose

There is a dearth of research that examines the influence that perceptions of PS competence have on abilities of social functioning. Given that PS competence has primarily been examined in specific areas, it is essential that the influence of PS competence is examined in one's overall environment. Therefore, the purpose of this investigation is to establish the predictability of self-perceived PS ability on levels of GSE and social anxiety in a high-stress college environment.

Method

One hundred forty (88 females, 43 males, 9 unidentified) undergraduate students from a 4-year university in an urban area of Southern California enrolled upper-division psychology course were administered self-report questionnaires.

Demographics

- 14% Asian
- 15% Native
- 13% Black
- 3% Mixed
- 15% Latino
- 5% Other
- 33% White

Results

- A 2 X 2 X 2 between-subjects MANOVA was performed on social anxiety and GSE. The independent variables were 2 levels (high & low) of each of the 3 dimensions of the PSI.
- A significant main effect of PS confidence, Pillai's Trace = .052, F (3,131) = 3.572, p = .031, partial η² = .052.
- Simple effects analyses revealed a significant main effect of PS confidence on GSE (1,132) = 7.608, p = .009, partial η² = .056.
- Students with a low perception of PS confidence exhibit significantly lower GSE (M = 5.176) than students with high perceptions of confidence (M = 9.672).
- A significant main effect of personal control, Pillai's Trace = .054, F (3,131) = 3.702, p = .027, partial η² = .054.
- Simple effects analyses revealed a significant main effect of personal control was also found on social anxiety (1,132) = 7.608, p = .009, partial η² = .051.
- Students with low perceptions of personal control exhibit higher levels of social anxiety (M = 25.645) than students with higher perceptions of control (M = 19.857).

Instruments

- Problem-Solving Inventory (PSI)
  - 35 item self-report questionnaire that analyzes the behaviors and attitudes of individuals in regards to how they perceive their overall PS ability.
  - Low scores identify individuals who perceive themselves as ineffective problem solvers and higher scores indicate evaluation of oneself as an ineffective problem solver.
  - Three areas of their perception of the PS process are analyzed in the PSI: Confidence, Approach-Avoidance, Personal Control

- Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory (PASI)
  - 45 item self-report questionnaire that consists of seven subscales, six of which focus on self-concept and one which concentrates on social anxiety related to social and academic concerns.
  - In the present study only the self-concept/self-regard and social anxiety subscales were utilized.
  - Higher scores on the subscales indicate higher levels on that dimension.