

A Relationship between Peer Relationship and Helplessness Behavior in University Students

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1. Background

University students aged between 19-25 years are mostly at a more critical period than other individuals at different developmental periods since they pursue social independence by preparing for their post-college careers and financial independence and gradually receive less support from their parents and more peer support with age as post-adolescents still having the characteristics of adolescents.

Peer relationship has an impact on school adaptation and academic performance because college students consider the relationship between friends whom they spend most time with in school life very important. A positive quality of life was shown in students who receive emotional support from peers and maintain good relationship with them.

In contrast, failure in peer relationship makes students to experience a sense of isolation, and may result in difficulty in academic achievement and mental health problems. The relationship between students and faculty members and group cohesion in academic settings affect academic grades of students and social-emotional adaptation.

Consequently, these experiences are profoundly related with social adjustment or misdeeds, emotional behaviors, patience against frustration, academic orientation, a sense of helplessness and others. As results, college students having difficulty in peer relationship exhibit helplessness behaviors including the lack of interest and curiosity to learn and enthusiasm to participate in classes.

Faculty members should not overlook helplessness behaviors of students in academic environments by considering these behaviors as personal choices, and should pay continued attention on factors affecting helplessness behaviors.

2. Aims

2.1. To determine a degree of helplessness behaviors in the school environment among university students

2.2. To determine a relationship between peer relationship and helplessness behaviors in the school environment among university students.

3. Methods

This survey used the helplessness behavior questionnaire method, in which the questionnaire consists of 3 categories including 12 questions (2 related to 'class motive', 7 related to 'class process', 3 related to 'class consequence').

A self-administered questionnaire survey was conducted in March of 2014, the respondents were 809 university students in a 4-year university in M-gun, G city, Jeolla Province.

After conducting a survey, ANOVA was used to analyze the relationship between two variables.

4. Ethical considerations

We explained the research to the respondents both orally and in writing and got their consent to fill in the questionnaire when we received the answer sheets.

5. Results

No difference was found in helplessness behavior according to major, significant difference was shown in helplessness behavior according to grade and the degree of peer relationship (Table 1). Helplessness behaviors appearing in 'class process' were more frequent than those appearing in 'class motive' and 'class consequence' in the school environment (Table 2).

In particular, the degree of helplessness behaviors was higher in respondents who answered 'difficult' in peer relationship compare to those who answered 'good' and 'moderate'. Their scores were high in all subcategories of helplessness behaviors (Table 3).

[Table 1] General characteristics

N=809

Characteristics	Categories	N(%)	Helplessness behaviors		
			M±SD	t/F	p
Major	Nursing science	347 (42.9)	2.54±0.45	2.58	.077
	Childhood education	232 (28.7)	2.62±0.55		
	Dental hygienics	230 (28.4)	2.62±0.42		
Grade	A first grader	244 (30.2)	2.63±0.47	2.69	.045
	A second grader	201 (24.8)	2.51±0.49		
	A third grader	185 (22.9)	2.57±0.45		
	A fourth grader	179 (22.1)	2.62±0.48		
Degree of peer relationship	Good	406 (50.2)	2.53±0.47	7.53	.001
	Moderate	370 (45.7)	2.63±0.46		
	Difficult	33 (4.1)	2.78±0.56		

[Table 2] Helplessness behaviors

N=809

Questions	M±SD	Categories	M±SD
1. I generally have no interest or curiosity during lecture.	2.64±0.87	Class motive	2.65±0.67
2. I attend classes with expectation to learn something.	2.68±0.80		
3. I prefer to sit at the back of the classroom.	2.64±1.13	Class process	2.71±0.51
4. I do not concentrate during lecture and do something else (Having a chat, sitting absentminded, text messaging, scribbling, etc.).	2.74±0.94		
5. I tend to sleep or drowse during lecture.	2.40±0.98		
6. I often skip or be late for classes.	1.49±0.82		
7. I read textbooks or related reference books before or after classes.	3.72±0.83		
8. I remain silence to questions asked by professors.	2.99±0.83		
9. I participate in class discussion.	2.99±0.85	Class consequence	2.26±0.69
10. I spend time and exert effort in completing my assignment using a large amount of reference data and submit it on time.	2.29±0.91		
11. I think I am acquiring new knowledge during lecture, in addition to achieving academic grades.	2.33±0.85		
12. I think the lecture is helpful to me.	2.19±0.79		
All	2.59±0.47		

[Table 3] Difference of helplessness according to peer relationship

N=809

Helplessness behaviors	Peer relationship			F	p
	Good	Moderate	Difficult		
	M±SD	M±SD	M±SD		
class process	2.57±0.67	2.71±0.64	2.88±0.92	6.04	.003
class motive	2.67±0.51	2.74±0.51	2.91±0.57	4.63	.010
class consequence	2.19±0.71	2.33±0.65	2.42±0.75	5.26	.005
All	2.53±0.47	2.63±0.46	2.78±0.56	7.53	.001

6. Conclusions

The peer relationship was related to helplessness behaviors in the school environment among university students. In particular, the degree of helplessness behaviors was higher in respondents who answered 'difficult' in peer relationship compare to those who answered 'good' and 'moderate'.

To cope with helplessness behaviors associated with peer relationship among university students, various problems stemming from peer relationship need to be tackled with faculty members' continued attention to peer relationship in their students. Moreover, specialized consulting programs are crucial to assist students in improving peer relationship.

7. References

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