

Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship of Adaptive and Maladaptive Sense of Humor with Perceived Stress among Undergraduate Medical Students

Running Head: SENSE OF HUMOR, GENDER and STRESS

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Abstract

The present study proposed moderating role of gender in the relationship of adaptive and maladaptive sense of humor with perceived stress in a convenient sample of ($N = 220$, 116 boys and 104 girls) undergraduate medical students of University of Sargodha, Sargodha. Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (James, Thorson, & Powell, 1991) and Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983) were used to operationalize the constructs of the present study. Significant gender difference were found in all the constructs, as boys were higher in adaptive sense of humor whereas girls were higher in maladaptive sense of humor and perceived stress. In multiple regression analysis, adaptive sense of humor negatively whereas maladaptive sense of humor positively predicted perceived stress after controlling for gender. Hierarchical regression analysis suggested that gender moderated the relationship of both adaptive and maladaptive sense of humor with perceived stress. Findings have been discussed in our indigenous cultural settings.

Keywords: perceived stress, adaptive sense of humor, maladaptive sense of humor, gender

Introduction

The transition of students from high school to medical university or medical college is a major experience in their lives. It accords them many opportunities of psychological development and learning experiences. However, this transition also causes a number of stressful circumstances in their lives (Tao, 2000) may be it depend on their gender due to traditional stereotypical association of men and women boundaries. Gender is a staple physiological veracity, which has been argued. It is conjoint believed that men and women are equal but dissimilar, and these departures are complementary. Gender is important in understanding the significance of manhood and womanhood. This will purify the execution of verdicts more proficient and egalitarian, two points which are essential for the demonstrable.

The Trans Theoretical model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) advises that stress is dynamite when someone confronts an event that pertains to his or her wellbeing. Literature has also reported gender difference in the perception of stress. Ng and Jeffrey (2003) ascertained a consequential difference in the perception of stress attributed to gender where female experienced more stress than males.

Humor is a notoriously arduous topic to study, as humor is one of those phenomena, like beauty, is “in the eye of the beholder.” What I may find funny you may not, so it is arduous to empirically study humor because of a lack of acquiescent among individuals over what is humorous. As some people think that humor is an absolutely positive trait but recently it has been categorized into two dimensions: adaptive and maladaptive (Katy & Liu, 2012). Adaptive humor is benign to psychological well-being

and it may reduce the effects of stressor. Contrarily, maladaptive humor is the proclivity to negatively evaluate or manipulate others which may spawn stress ((Ishaq, Adil, Rasheed & Khan, 2016)). Adaptive humor includes affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor (Martin, 2007) and maladaptive humor is conventionally injurious to well-being ((Ishaq, Adil, Rasheed & Khan, 2016)).

On a psychological level, adaptive humor is valuable in stimulating relationships, incrementing self-esteem and assuaging stress and apprehensiveness (Astedt-Kurki & Isola, 2001) and maladaptive sense of humor may compromise one's self-esteem (Thorson, Powell, Ivan, & William, 1997) resulting in stress and anxiety (Ishaq, Adil, Rasheed & Khan, 2016).

Yet it is not arduous to study the question as to which sex engenders better humor. There are conjectural reasons to suppose that one's gender might influence the ability to engender humor. As literature highlighted that men and women are different in responding to both adaptive and maladaptive styles of humor (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Men have higher likelihood of making jokes (Wong, 2010) and women are expected to use criticism humor. Women have more restrictions and have limited exposure of external world than men. Due to these reasons, women showed more psychological distress as measured by their perceived stress than men ratings (Matud, 2004).

Many previous studies have fortified the subjective view that people who are high on adaptive humor are less prone to being stressful owing to the mitigating nature of humor (Kuiper & Martin, 1998) and people who are high on maladaptive humor are liable to have lower calibers of self-esteem which may make them perceive

circumstantial demands more stressful (Ishaq, Adil, Rasheed & Khan, 2016).

Furthermore, adaptive humor appears to be a defense mechanism alongside the deleterious effects of stress (Abel, 1998; Martin & Dobbin, 1998). Kuiper, Sandra, and Kristine (1995) initiate the findings that those with a high adaptive sense of humor transmuted their perspective when coping with negative life events by viewing these events more positively than those with a low sense of humor or mal-adaptive sense of humor.

Adaptive humor has been labeled as constructing a cognitive-affective change or reorganizing the situation as less threatening with the discharge of emotions associated with perceived stress (Dixon, 1980). Contrarily, people utilizing maladaptive humor restructure the situation as more belligerent leading to incremented levels of perceived stress (Ishaq, Adil, Rasheed & Khan, 2016). In consonance with the aforementioned literature and empirical support, the present study postulates:

Hypothesis 1: Gender will likely to moderate the relationship of adaptive, mal adaptive sense of and perceived stress

Method

Sample

The convenient sample of the present study (N = 220) comprised of undergraduate medico. The sample comprised female students (N = 104) and male students (N = 116). Age range from 18 to 26 years (M = 20.58, SD = 1.88).

Instruments

Multidimensional Sense of Humor (MSHS)

Multi-Dimensional Sense of Humore (MSHS) was developed by Thorson and Powell in 1991. It is 5 point likert scale (0=strongly disaccord, 4= vigorously concur) and contains 24 verbalizations. The scale contains two major styles of humor, which are adaptive and maladaptive humor. Coefficient alpha for the internal consistency of the scale was quite impressive ($\alpha = .92$; James, Thorson, & Powell, 1991).

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was developed by Cohen, Kamrack and Mermelstein (1983) and this scale was utilized for quantifying the perceived stress. The scale comprises of 10 items about present levels of experienced stress. Subjects' replications are quantified on a 5 point liker scale (0 = never, 4 = very often). Item number 4, 5, 7, and 8 are positively verbally expressed items and they require to be coded reversely. Alpha coefficient of reliability of PSS was 0.85 (Cohen et al., 1983)

Results

Table 1

Moderating role of gender in relationship between adaptive, maladaptive sense of humor and perceived stress ($N = 220$)

Predictors	ΔR^2	Beta
Step-I	.52***	
Gender		.72***
Step-II	.68***	

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Gender		.44***
Adaptive Sense of Humor		.40***
Mal-adaptive Sense of Humor		-.47***
Step-III	.78***	
Gender		.51*
Adaptive Sense of Humor		.25***
Mal-adaptive Sense of Humor		-.36***
Adaptive Sense of Humor X Gender		.26***
Mal-adaptive Sense of Humor X Gender		-.13***

*** $p < .001$

Table depicts gender is as a significant moderating variable between adaptive, mal-adaptive sense of humor and perceived stress. Hierarchical regression analysis was used for determining its moderating role. Regression analysis was performed in three steps and all three models of this analysis are significant.

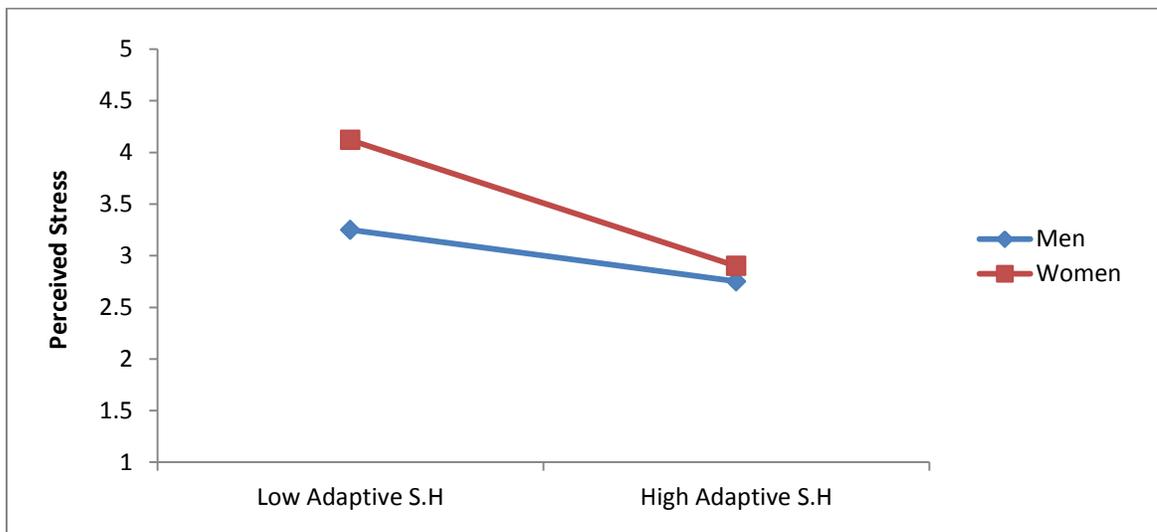


Figure 1 is showing the moderating role of gender in relation with adaptive sense of humor and perceived stress.

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The figure 1 showed gender strengthens the negative relationship between adaptive sense of humor and perceived stress. Men and women with high levels of adaptive sense of humor show minute difference towards vulnerable to the stress. Women students those are low on adaptive sense of humor are more vulnerable to the stress as compared to men students.

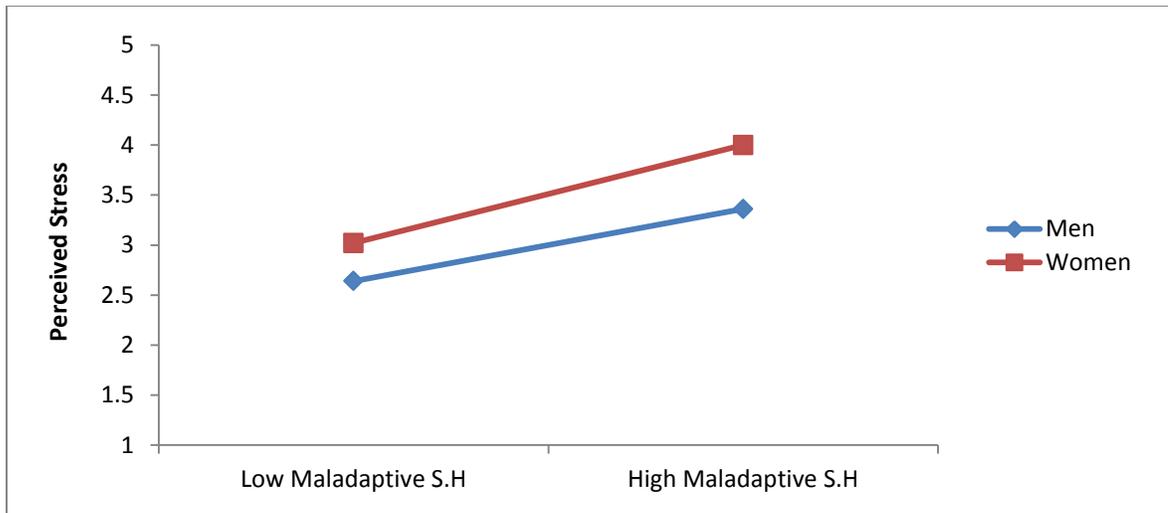


Figure 2 is showing the moderating role of gender in relation of maladaptive sense of humor and perceived stress.

The figure 2 showed genders strengthens the Positive relationship between mal-adaptive sense of humor and perceived stress. Women with high levels of mal-adaptive sense of humor make them more vulnerable to the stress as compared to men students.

Discussion

The present study is among the pioneering work on the moderating role of gender in relationship between adaptive, maladaptive sense of humor and perceived stress. It was quite surprising to ascertain that studies fixating on the relationship between these variables were quite scarce albeit the theoretically plausible link between them. The study clearly support the hypothesized gender moderate the relationship between adaptive, maladaptive sense of humor and perceived stress (see Table 1). Our findings elucidated that males medical students are high on adaptive sense of humor and are less prone of stress whereas females' students on maladaptive sense of humor and are more vulnerable of stress due to this destructive type of humor.

Humor has been accompanying to numerous coping strategies such as distancing oneself from the stressor (Kuiper & Martin, 1998b), truculent struggles toward confronting and dealing with the stress (Kuiper & Martin, 1998b), and reducing the quandaries which are leading towards stress (McCrae & Costa, 1986). The result goes into the favor that male student are high on adaptive sense of humor because men relish the jests (Wong, 2010). Contrarily, female students are high on maladaptive sense of humor and perceived stress because they are more conscious to fixate on negative events as compared to male (Ishaq, Adil, Rasheed & Khan, 2016). Individual with adaptive sense of humor more accurately and authentically appraise the stress in their lives than those with maladaptive sense of humor (Kuiper & Martin 1998b; Martin, 2003). It appears that females are high on maladaptive sense of humor may either aggrandize the appraisal of stress in their lives or perhaps are more predisposed to psychological

experience greater stress as compared to males students who are high on adaptive sense of humor.

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