

Impact of Self-Handicapping, Defensive Pessimism on Goal Orientation Among Adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study was to examine the impact of Self-handicapping, Defensive Pessimism on Goal Orientation among Adolescents of Sialkot - Pakistan. A sample of (n=215) students was collected by using a purposive sampling technique. Three standardized questionnaires (i)Self -Handicapping Scale by (Jones, E.E & Rhodewalt, F.,1982), (ii) Defensive Pessimism Scale by (Norem, J.K., Cantor, N.,1986), and(iii) Goal Orientation Scale by (Dweck & Leggett, 1988) were utilized to measure the variables. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS, version 25. Mean and standard deviations were computed through descriptive statistics, and Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis was used to find out the relationship which suggested a correlation of ($r=.38^$ & $r=.68^*$), among variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to find out the prediction value which suggested a significant regression model with ($R^2=.421$, $F=(2,210)=76.386$, $p<0.01$) with ($\beta=.147, .57$, $p<0.01$). For testing gender differences, t-test was applied which showed no significant difference in the values of SHS ($M=74.58, 75.90$) DPS ($M=40.09, 39.57$) and GOS ($M=107.24, 107.11$), Similarly, no significant difference was found in the mean scores of the goal orientation and defensive pessimism with respect to rural and urban background as ($M=104.39, 108.88$) and ($M=39.35, 40.11$) nevertheless, significant difference found between the mean scores of self-handicapping due to urban and rural background with a mean score of ($M=73.33$ & 76.45).*

Key words: Self-Handicapping, Defensive Pessimism, Goal Orientation, Adolescents.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the current study was to identify the impact of self-handicapping and defensive pessimism on goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot –Pakistan. Self-handicapping is defined as a cognitive approach by which people avoid efforts to keep potential failure from hurting their self-esteem. Defensive pessimism is a technique used to take the edge off and manage anxiety and emotions surrounding stressful conditions by engaging in noteworthy reflection and planning around a potentially poor outcome. Whereas, goal orientation is an individual disposition toward developing or validating one's potential in an achievement setting.

1.1. Self-handicapping

Self-handicapping is the lack of effort, illness, procrastination, or emotional upset. Self-handicapping involves indulging in behavior that is known to hurt performance, such as not studying, not working hard, using a harmful substance, or getting too little sleep. Self-handicapping is a phenomenon wherein people protect their proficiency image by pro-actively arranging for adversity in specific performance. A person may avail a task so easy that success is meaningless or so difficult that success is unlikely (1978; Berglas & Jones, 1978).

Some students delay studying to their last moment or the night before exams or they reduce efforts so if their final performance is low, these situations will be seen as the cause rather than lack of potential.

1.1.1. Characteristics of Self Handicapping

The characteristics of self-handicapping behavior include engaging in procrastination, making minimal efforts, engaging in excessive risk-taking, and relying on alcohol or drug use as an excuse. (Martin & Tesser, 1996). By engaging in self-handicapping, individuals may temporarily shield their self-esteem from potential threats, but in the long run, it can hinder personal growth and achievements. (Uysal & Order, 2018). When people get favorable information that they believe is undeserved, they may self-handicap. People may make excuses in advance to safeguard a good, but unstable, self-view or self-esteem. (Curtis, C. R., 2017)

1.2. Defensive pessimism

Defensive pessimism is considered a coping strategy used by individuals who set low expectations for situations regardless of prior success. It is a prefectoral thinking (better than expected). It is a technique the individual uses to overcome anxiety, the individual feels anxious and blank of mind as they think about the upcoming situation (Norem, 2001). So, the individual starts an air castle about how things will turn around and thinks about all possible outcomes of the situation. Defensive pessimists think of all possible outcomes and then have the mind picture of things going wrong or right. (Skedel, R., 2022)

Individuals with high levels of defensive pessimism set unrealistically low expectations for an upcoming performance, even though they have had previous success, and they devote their all ability to mentally playing through or reflecting on all the possible outcomes they have a mind picture of any given situation. (Norem, K. J., 2007). A defensive pessimist is inspired by a need to manage anxiety, it is unsurprisingly also correlated with trait anxiety. (Normen, J. 1986)

1.2.1. Components of Defensive Pessimism

Defensive pessimism is essentially based on two crucial elements (a) Negative expectation and (b) Reflectivity. Negativity involves deliberately lowering one's expectations to establish more achievable goals, and reflectivity entails thoroughly contemplating various potential outcomes before an event or performance (Norem & Illingworth, 1993). The approach developed by Norem and Illingworth is strategic because it serves two primary purposes: firstly, it safeguards one's self-esteem by setting realistic, lower expectations to shield against potential failure, and secondly, it channels anxiety about potential failure into proactive planning and thorough consideration of all possible outcomes for upcoming events (Norem & Cantor, 1986; Showers & Ruben, 1990).

In a set of experiments conducted by Norem and Cantor (1986a), it was discovered that the lower expectations of defensive pessimists did not result in those expectations becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. Surprisingly, defensive pessimists performed just as effectively as optimists, even though they had notably lower expectations. Spencer and Norem (1996) also found that engaging in reflective thinking before a forthcoming performance had a positive impact on the performance of defensive pessimists, but this effect was observed only when they were contemplating potential negative outcomes.

1.3.Goal Orientation

Goal orientation refers to an individual psychological tendency to approach and pursue goals in different ways. Goal orientation is a degree by which an individual or group works to complete specific goals (Ames, C. 1992), Being goal-oriented means that one is focused on the achievement of specific tasks to complete a planned outcome. The individual with a specific set of goals is motivated by a purpose to complete their task. (Elliot & Dweck, 2005).

1.3.1. Types of goal orientation

Researchers have identified two types of goal orientation (a) Performance goal orientation and (b) Mastery goal orientation. Performance goal orientation which is also known as ego-oriented goal orientation focuses on a person's motivation to demonstrate their abilities. (Dweck,1986). On the other hand, Mastery goal orientation also known as task-oriented goal orientation refers to the level of motivation a person has to develop and master new skills (Ames, C. 1992)

2. Literature Review

The current study aimed to identify the impact of Self-Handicapping and defensive pessimism on goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot, Pakistan. Self-handicapping involves engaging in a behavior that is known to hurt performance, such as getting too little sleep, using a harmful substance, not studying, or not working hard. A person may choose a task so easily that success is meaningless or so difficult that unlikely.

Defensive pessimism is considered a copying technique used by individuals in situations that could induce anxiety or stress. Rather than adopting an excessively optimistic stance, one intentionally establishes modest expectations and contemplates all conceivable negative outcomes in a given scenario. These negative expectations are used to alleviate an individual's anxiety about situations by motivating them to plan ways to avoid the chance of poor outcomes. (Covington,1992). Defensive Pessimism can be interpreted as a forward-looking method for handling anxiety. It empowers individuals to ready themselves for adverse circumstances and experience a greater

sense of command, ultimately diminishing the emotional turmoil connected to unpredictability and the possibility of failure (Norem, J. K., & Cantor, N., 1986).

The first hypothesis of this study focuses on the relationship between self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and goal orientation in adolescents. Recent studies suggest that there is an intricate relationship between self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and goal orientation. Self-handicapping, defined as the creation of hurdles or excuses to safeguard self-esteem in the face of probable failure, is frequently connected with ego-oriented goal orientation, in which teenagers prioritize external validation and performance (Bergey et al., 2019). Self-handicapping can be a maladaptive approach that impedes the achievement of task-oriented goals centered on personal growth and mastery (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2014). In contrast, defensive pessimism is connected with a task-oriented goal orientation emphasizing competence and learning (Bonner & Friedman, 2017). According to recent research, teenagers who use defensive pessimism may prioritize self-improvement and mastery above external validation (Sulak & Berecek, 2021).

In conclusion, current research suggested that self-handicapping and defensive pessimism are associated with divergent goal orientations in teenagers. Self-handicapping connecting with ego-oriented objectives, emphasizes performance and validation, whereas defensive pessimism is associated with task-oriented goals promoting personal progress and competence. This intricate interaction of cognitive processes and goal orientations emphasizes the need to know and address these elements to foster adaptive goal pursuit in teenagers.

The second hypothesis of the study stated that defensive pessimism will predict the goal orientation among adolescents among adolescents of Sialkot-Pakistan. Recent studies have suggested that Self-handicapping and defensive pessimism are cognitive strategies that can serve as predictors of goal orientation in individuals. Self-handicapping, the act of creating obstacles or excuses to shield one's self-esteem in anticipation of potential failure, is often associated with ego-oriented goal orientation (Bergey, B. W., Malmberg, L. E., & Wehmeyer, M. L., 2019). When individuals engage in self-handicapping, they may prioritize external validation and performance-based goals, seeking to avoid blame or embarrassment. In contrast, defensive pessimism involves setting lower expectations and envisioning worst-case scenarios as a means of motivation and preparation for potential challenges (Sulak, T. N., and Berecek, K. H., 2021).

Recent studies have suggested that defensive pessimism can predict task-oriented goal orientations, where individuals prioritize personal growth, competence, and learning (Sulak & Berecek, 2021). Defensive pessimists harness their anxiety to focus on self-improvement and mastery.

Another hypothesis of this study is that there will be a significant gender difference in self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and related goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan. Several studies have suggested that gender can indeed play a role in shaping these cognitive strategies and goal orientations. Zuckerman and Tsai (2020) found that there were significant gender differences in self-handicapping tendencies among adolescents, with girls displaying higher levels of self-handicapping behaviors compared to boys. This implies that gender can be a predictor of self-handicapping, indicating that girls may be more prone to creating obstacles or excuses to protect their self-esteem in anticipation of potential failure.

Similarly, studies by Johnson and Smith (2019) have indicated that gender differences can exist in defensive pessimism. Girls tended to use defensive pessimism as a coping strategy more frequently than boys, suggesting that gender can influence the adoption of this cognitive strategy. In summary, recent studies suggest that there may be significant gender differences in self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and related goal orientation among adolescents, highlighting the influence of gender on these cognitive strategies and goal pursuits.

The study's final hypothesis focuses on the fact that Adolescents with urban backgrounds will show more Self-handicapping, and defensive Pessimism related to goal orientation as compared to adolescents with rural backgrounds. Recent studies stated that adolescents with urban backgrounds may exhibit higher levels of self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and related goal orientation compared to their counterparts with rural backgrounds.

Urban environments typically introduce a range of stressors and increased competition for academic and social resources, which can lead to the adoption of self-handicapping strategies as a means of self-preservation (Naidoo., 2020). The urban context may foster a greater emphasis on ego-oriented goal orientations, where adolescents prioritize external validation and competition due to heightened social comparison and performance pressures.

In contrast, adolescents from rural backgrounds may experience different challenges and lower levels of social comparison. Studies such as Lacaille (2009) have indicated that these adolescents may be less inclined to engage in self-handicapping behaviors due to a potentially more supportive and less competitive environment. Additionally, rural settings may encourage a stronger focus on task-oriented goal orientations, emphasizing personal growth, competence, and learning, as individuals have access to fewer external resources and opportunities (Yang., 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1. Hypotheses:

Current study had following hypotheses to be tested.

H1. There will be a significant correlation between self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot-Pakistan.

H2. Self-handicapping and defensive pessimism will predict the goal orientation among adolescents among adolescents of Sialkot-Pakistan.

H3. There will be a significant gender difference in self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and related goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan.

H4. Adolescents with urban backgrounds will show more Self-handicapping, defensive Pessimism related to goal orientation as compared to adolescents with rural backgrounds.

3.2. Characteristics of Participants

Participants of the current study comprised adolescents within the age range of 13-19 years studying in different schools and colleges in Sialkot Pakistan with different socio-economic backgrounds. Data was collected through using purposive sampling technique and a sample of

($n=215$) was taken including males ($n=106$) and females ($n=107$). The participants completed the survey questionnaire which contained questions related to self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and goal orientation.

3.3. Tools of Measurement

The study utilized three standardized questionnaires.

3.3.1. Self -Handicapping Scale -25 items (Jones, E.E., & Rhodewalt, F.1982)

The scale allows for quantitative assessment of self-handicapping tendencies, helping to identify individuals who are more prone to engaging in self-sabotaging behavior to compute a proclivity of a person to show self-handicapping behavior. The test contains 25 items, responses of which are evaluated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where (1=Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Strongly agree, 5=Strongly agree). The score is accumulated by summing all the responses with a maximum score of 125 and a minimum score of 25.

3.3.2. Defensive pessimism Scale -12 items (Norem, J.K., & Cantor, N.1986)

The scale is used to assess an individual's tendency to adopt a defensive pessimistic strategy in approaching future events or tasks. The scale consists of 12 items with each item scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale where (1=Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Strongly agree, 5=Strongly agree). The final score is calculated by summing all the responses with a maximum score of 60 and a minimum score of 12.

3.3.3. Goal Orientation Scale - 33 items (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988).

This scale is designed to measure an individual's orientation or approach toward achieving goals. It assesses the underlying motives, beliefs, and attitudes individuals hold about their goals and their achievement strivings. It is made up of 33 items. Responses are evaluated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where (1=Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Strongly agree, 5=Strongly agree). The score is accumulated through summing all the responses with a maximum score of 165 and a minimum score of 33.

3.4. Procedure

In this study, data collection was carried out through purposive sampling approach. Participants were approached, by visiting different colleges and universities and were encouraged to participate and express personal opinions. Questionnaires were distributed containing questions related to study variable. Subsequently, the gathered responses were meticulously examined using SPSS version 25 for the purpose of data analysis.

4. Results

Frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were calculated using descriptive statistics. The demographic characteristics of the respondents were taken from a survey created specifically for the purpose. The Social Science Statistical Package (SPSS) version 25 was used to

compute and analyze the sample data. Pearson Product Moments Correlation, Multiple Regression Analysis, and the T-test were used to test the hypothesis and evaluate the results.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (*n* =213)

Demography Variables	<i>f</i>	Percentage
Age		
13-16 years	158	73.8%
17-20 years	55	25.7%
Gender		
Males	103	48.1%
Females	111	51.9%
Education		
Matric	155	72.4%
Intermediate	45	21.0%
Graduate	14	6.5%
Residential Area		
Rural	82	38.3%
Urban	132	61.7%
Socio-economic Status		
Lower class	15	7.0%
Middle class	168	78.5%
Upper class	31	14.5%

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of participants suggesting that 73.8% of the respondents were between 13 to 16 years age and 25.7% were between 17 to 20 years old. Similarly, 48.1% population were males while 51.5% were females. Additionally, 72.4% population were matric students, 21.0% population were intermediate students 6.5% of the population was in the early years of Graduate studies. Moreover, 61.7% gave respondents had rural background almost 38.3% while 61.7% had urban residential status. Moreover, 7.0% population belonged to urban areas while only 7% belonged to rural areas. On socioeconomic status 78.5% of the population had the socioeconomic status of the middle class while only 14.5% had the socioeconomic status of the upper class.

Table 2

Correlation analysis for Self-Handicapping, Defensive Pessimism on Goal Orientation among Adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan. (*n*=213)

Scale	1	2	3	<i>M</i>	S.D
1. SHS	-	-	-	75.22	7.139
2. DPS		.387**	-	39.79	7.208

3. GOS	.635**	107.26	16.60
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Note: SHS=Self-Handicapping, DPS= Defensive Pessimism, GOS= Goal Orientation.

Table 2 shows the correlation analysis for finding the relationships between self-handicapping (SHS), defensive pessimism (DPS), and goal orientation (GOS) among adolescents in Sialkot, Pakistan To test the hypothesis, Pearson's correlation analysis was employed. Results revealed the correlation of ($r=.38^{**}$ with $M=39.79$, $SD= 7.208$) between SHS and DPS whereas, ($r= .635^{**}$ with $M=107.26$, $SD=16.60$), with goal orientation.

Table 3
Multiple Regression for Self-handicapping, defensive pessimism and goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot, Pakistan. ($n=213$).

Variable	B	SE	β	t	Sig
Constant	28.43	9.352		3.04	.003
SHS	.344	.135	.147	2.546	.012
DPS	1.326	.134	.574	9.92	.000
R	.649 ^a				
R ²	.421				
ΔR^2	.416				
F	76.386				

Note: SHS=Self-Handicapping, DPS= Defensive Pessimism, GOS= Goal Orientation, β = Beta, SE= Standard Error, t= T-value, C.I=Confidence Interval, ΔR^2 =Adjusted R square.

The study's second hypothesis stated that self-handicapping and defensive pessimism will predict goal orientation among adolescents in Sialkot, Pakistan. For testing the hypothesis multiple regression test was employed and the results showed a significant regression model for self-handicapping and defensive pessimism predicting goal orientation ($R^2=.421$, $F= (2,210) =76.386$, $p<0.01$) with ($\beta =.147$, $.57$, $p<0.01$). So, the hypothesis was accepted concluding that self-handicapping and defensive pessimism significantly predict goal orientation among adolescents in Sialkot, Pakistan. However, further information is needed to determine the significance of the relationship between defensive pessimism (DPS) and goal orientation (GOS).

Table 4
T-test for gender difference in self-handicapping, Defensive Pessimism, and related Goal Orientation among adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan. ($n=213$)

Scale	M	SD	F	Sig	t	C.I

SHS	Male	74.58	6.71	.056	.813	-1.360	[-3.24934, .59620]
	Female	75.90	7.46			-1.365	[-3.24264, .58951]
DPS	Male	40.09	7.477	.171	.680	.529	[-1.42894, 2.47766]
	Female	39.57	6.984			.528	[-1.43355, 2.48227]
GOS	Male	107.24	16.23	2.326	.129	.054	[-4.39583, 4.64490]
	Female	107.11	17.17				[-4.38748, 4.63656]

Note: SHS=Self-handicapping, DPS=Defensive Pessimism, GOS=Goal Orientation, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation, CI= Confidence Interval.

Table 4 shows the results of the independent sample t-test. The hypothesis was stated to examine the gender differences between self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and related goal orientation among adolescents in Sialkot, Pakistan. Analysis through an Independent sample t-test suggested no significant difference among males and females on the scores of SHS, DPS, and GOS as on SHS ($M=74.58, 75.90$) DPS ($M=40.09, 39.57$) and GOS ($M=107.24, 107.11$) so, the hypothesis was rejected so it can be suggested that gender plays no role in determining any of the difference in the levels of self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and related goal orientation among adolescents.

Table 5

Independent sample t-test for differences in self-handicapping, defensive pessimism and related goal orientation due to the urban and rural background of adolescents in Sialkot Pakistan ($n=213$)

Scale		M	SD	F	Sig	t	C.I
SHS	urban	73.33	8.33	9.44	.002	-3.16	[-5.06, -1.17]
	Rural	76.45	6.00			-2.93	[-5.22, -1.01]
DPS	urban	39.35	7.97	4.53	.034	-.741	[-2.76, 1.253]
	Rural	40.11	6.71			-.711	[-2.85, 1.343]
GOS	urban	104.39	17.88	.599	.440	-1.919	[-9.10, .1219]
	Rural	108.88				-1.861	[-9.10, .2762]

Note: SHS=Self-Handicapping, DPS= Defensive Pessimism, GOS=Goal Orientation, M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation, CI= Confidence Interval.

Table 5 shows the result of the independent sample t-test stating that Adolescents with urban backgrounds will show more self-handicapping, defensive Pessimism, and related goal orientation as compared to adolescents with rural backgrounds. The result showed no significant difference in the mean scores of the variable of goal orientation and defensive pessimism as ($M=104.39, 108.88$) and ($m=39.35, 40.11$) for urban and rural background whereas, there was a significant difference found between the mean scores of self-handicapping due to urban and rural background as the ($p<0.01$) with a mean score of ($M=73.33, 76.45$).

5. Discussion

The goal of the current study was to identify the impact of self-handicapping and defensive pessimism on goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan, with the following objectives: (i) To identify the relationship between self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan. (ii) To explore self-handicapping and defensive pessimism, predicting goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan. (iii) To assess gender differences in self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan, and (iv) To find out the difference between rural and urban backgrounds on the levels of self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan.

To investigate the first objective Pearson's correlation analysis was employed which suggested that the variables are associated with each other. Several studies have demonstrated that self-handicapping is significantly correlated with both defensive pessimism and goal orientation among adolescents. Rogers and Smith (2022) found that adolescents who engage in self-handicapping behaviors tend to exhibit higher levels of defensive pessimism, indicating that they may employ self-handicapping as a protective mechanism when facing tasks that trigger anxiety or self-doubt. This study has also shown consistent results with the previous literature stating that adolescents do engage in self-handicapping and defensive pessimism when they find any difficulty related to their goals.

The more complex the nature of the goal be more a person will be inclined towards getting defensive or pessimist, as it is human nature that people strive for easy and achievable goals, and being young and less practical makes adolescents more prone to feeling distressed and anxious about the future. Under such conditions they may engage in adopting strategies that can lessen the level of associated stress, so they use self-handicapping, and defensive pessimism as a strategy. So, the findings collectively highlight the complex interplay between self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and goal orientation, shedding light on how adolescents navigate the intricacies of achievement and self-protection.

The study's second hypothesis focused on identifying self-handicapping and defensive pessimism as predictors of goal orientation among adolescents. According to various studies, it is known that self-handicapping and defensive pessimism are cognitive strategies that can serve as predictors of

goal orientation among people. Akkermans, S. E. A., Randler, C., and Van der Wolf, K. (2019) stated that Self-handicapping involves individuals creating obstacles or excuses as a preemptive defense mechanism to protect their self-esteem in the event of potential failure (Urdan, T., and Midgley, C., 2003). This strategy can be detrimental, often aligning with an ego-oriented goal orientation where adolescents prioritize external validation and are more concerned with avoiding blame or embarrassment (Sulak, T. N., and Berecek, K. H., 2021). Conversely, defensive pessimism is a technique in which individuals establish lower expectations and imagine worst-case situations, utilizing fear as a motivating drive to proactively prepare for probable problems (Norem, J. K., and Chang, E. C. 2016) This attitude is frequently coupled with a task-oriented goal orientation since teenagers who use defensive pessimism prioritize personal progress, competence, and learning (Elliot & Church, 1997).

Adolescents who are self-handicapped may gravitate towards ego-oriented objectives motivated by external validation, whereas those who are defensive and pessimistic may adopt a task-oriented attitude focused on self-improvement. Recognizing these cognitive processes can assist educators and counselors in understanding and guiding teenagers as they build adaptive goal orientations that promote both personal growth and external accomplishment. The empirical research corroborates our findings, as evidenced by the regression analysis, which demonstrated a compelling model fit for the hypothesis at hand. The calculated R-values prominently signify Self Handicapping and Defensive Mechanisms as robust predictors of Goal Orientation within the cohort of adolescents.

This phenomenon holds particular significance in the context of adolescence, a transitional life stage characterized by a myriad of diverse activities and burgeoning responsibilities, which may serve to inundate individuals with multifarious obligations. In societies such as Pakistan, young individuals frequently find themselves reliant on their parents and familial networks to fulfill various needs, encompassing financial, career, and societal responsibilities. This pronounced dependence can, in turn, attenuate their fervor for making deliberate career choices or setting ambitious life goals. Within this milieu, individuals are more apt to employ various strategic maneuvers to counterbalance the adverse repercussions associated with the intricate process of goal establishment and its subsequent attainment. Consequently, they may be inclined toward adopting self-handicapping tactics and embrace a defensive pessimism outlook, whereby they portray realizing their objectives as formidable and arduous endeavors.

The current study also hypothesized that there will be a significant gender difference in self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, and related goal orientation among adolescents of Sialkot Pakistan. To test the hypothesis an independent sample t-test was utilized. Astonishingly, findings proffered no substantive divergence between males and females concerning their proclivity for self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, or their proclivity towards certain goal orientations. Consequently, the initially posited hypothesis stands repudiated.

One plausible explanation lies in the societal fabric of Pakistan, where young individuals, irrespective of gender, predominantly rely on parental figures for their sustenance and support. This prevalent reliance translates into a shared experience among both genders, rendering them largely exempt from onerous responsibilities during their formative years. Moreover, a dearth of pronounced orientation toward specific future-oriented goals characterizes the early stages of their development.

This observation is further underscored by the pervasive practice in South Asian nations, including Pakistan, where elders wield significant authority in making life decisions encompassing personal, social, and occupational domains. In this context, gender distinctions do not appear to be the driving force behind any complexities in goal formation or goal-related orientations.

A review of extant literature concurs with our findings, as numerous studies have yielded no substantial disparities between males and females in their propensity for self-handicapping tendencies. These tendencies involve the contriving of impediments or justifications to safeguard one's self-esteem, as documented in studies by Ferris et al. (2007) and Hirt et al. (1992).

Similarly, the realm of defensive pessimism, characterized by the setting of conservative expectations and the envisioning of worst-case scenarios as sources of motivation and preparedness, exhibits no appreciable gender dichotomy, as evidenced by research by Norem and Illingworth (1993). Furthermore, investigations into goal orientation among adolescent populations reveal that gender exerts minimal influence on task-oriented and ego-oriented goal orientations. This is evident in the works of Midgley (2000) and Bonner, S., and Friedman, R. (2017). In essence, while subtle individual deviations may surface within gender cohorts, the amassed data underscores that gender per se exerts negligible predictive prowess concerning the levels of self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, or the associated contours of goal orientations among adolescents. Instead, these cognitive processes and goal orientations are more aptly shaped by individual personality traits, motivational factors, and contextual environmental variables. (Sultana, N., Mahdzan, N. S., and Awang, Z., 2021)

The last hypothesis of the study stated that adolescents with urban backgrounds will show more Self-handicapping, and defensive Pessimism related to goal orientation as compared to adolescents with rural backgrounds. The results showed no difference in defensive pessimism and related goal orientation due to urban and rural background but some difference in self-handicapping. Research suggests that the influence of urban and rural backgrounds on defensive pessimism, related goal orientation, and self-handicapping in adolescents is nuanced. (Yang, X., Wang, Y., and Zhang, J., 2019).

Defensive pessimism and goal orientation have been connected to individual characteristics, personality traits, and situational circumstances rather than urban or rural origins in studies (Norem & Illingworth, 1993; Elliot & Church, 1997). Both urban and rural teenagers can have task-oriented or ego-oriented goal orientations and use defensive pessimism to motivate themselves and prepare for obstacles.

In contrast, research reveals that self-handicapping inclinations may differ depending on urban or rural upbringing. Some research suggests that teenagers from rural settings are more likely to engage in self-harming behaviors due to variables such as restricted access to educational resources and heightened social comparison within smaller communities (Lacaille, 2009; Schmitt, 2009). With their various options and resources, urban contexts may provide more support for adaptive goal orientations, but they may also provide distinct pressures that alter self-handicapping inclinations. In conclusion, whereas urban and rural origins may not be the major predictors of defensive pessimism and related goal orientation among teenagers, they might have an impact on self-handicapping behaviors, with rural contexts possibly providing unique obstacles.

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