

Could it be that your success is different than mine?

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ABSTRACT

Personal motivations for success in the workplace are impacted by a number of factors. In addition to the known precursors of internal and external motivation, the individualized perceptions of success and failure in the development of a person's unique set of motivators is imperative.

There is ample research on gender differences in education (Luzzo & Hutcheson, 1996; Valentine, 1999). For example, stereotypically, women are more nurturing and relational, whereas males are more independent and competitive (Sev'er & Ungar, 1991). There are many factors which influence personal perceptions of success and failure for men and women which have not been addressed until recently (Underwood, 2003). For instance, one such factor is the spiritual environment which impacts espoused and practiced value systems. What is missing is an assessment of how individualized traits such as gender, age, academic status, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and major differ in areas of religiosity, success, and impediments. Assessing the differences between them provides value to educators and organizational leaders.

Christian educators are keenly aware of student individualized traits. Such differences can promote success or identify barriers. Further, students' recognition of such traits will inherently serve to enhance understanding and learning. From a

managerial perspective, an employee's motivation for career success is strongly impacted by their personal value and belief system. Organizations which are aware of individual religiosity traits, success acuity, and obstacle perception can then understand their workforce's personal value system more clearly. Such clarity provides leaders valuable information beneficial to management and human resource practices.

The current study examines various differences between groups on six constructs—high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer / comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles. A discussion of how Christian educators might better promote trait differences among students will follow.

BACKGROUND

The current study continued development of an existing research agenda. The data used to develop the research premise was collected in several venues. Initially, by secular professionals this line of research was reviewed at the ASBBS Conference in Las Vegas, NV in February 2003. Discussion following the presentation resulted in further research collaboration. Specifically, further research was developed to determine if difference in traits along the lines of religiosity, success, and perceived obstacles could be determined. This research was focus used students at one of the largest parochial (Christian) universities in the United States, Azusa Pacific University (APU). Students attending APU in the undergraduate and graduate program within the School of Business volunteered as participants for the research.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Educators are responsible for increasing the intellect and development of our students in and out of the classroom. Faculty perceptions, however, can negatively impact communication with students. A female professor might, for example, see traits differently than her male counterpart. What occasionally hinders mentors in student development and intellect is bias—the result of interactions with others. Perceptions of what is deemed desirable impacts what behavior is encourage and discourage among students. This can be done through various venues--career guidance, the classroom, advising, and others.

A previous study on this subject identified specific traits of success and failure and grouped them using multidimensional scaling, resulting in what many refer to as a "perceptual map" (Underwood, 2003). This comparative study analyzed the differences between traits of success and failure based on two ethnic groups, Anglo and Latino. This group of female business owners identified traits of success and failure which were then used as a composite for the further studies

(Table 1). Following up on the multidimensional scaling study this study seeks to take pursue several new dimensions.

Within any sub-culture, there exists a continuum of belief systems that impact lives. It is also a common understanding that “religiousness”, regardless of that religion, impacts what one values and how one demonstrate those values in the choices made. This research study seeks to identify such differences in an effort to understand gender, age, academic status, religious affiliation, and major in the areas of religiosity (three domains), success acuity, and obstacle perceptions. By understanding what these perceptions are, academicians can more adequately address the thought process of students. Therefore, the current study furthers the research agenda by adding religiosity and individual trait differences to the body of literature previously developed (Underwood, 2003).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The value of the study adds to the body of knowledge, but more significantly, assists the development of student understanding. There is very little literature pertaining to success and failure in general (Underwood, 1995). And, more importantly, there is little literature on the specific topic pertaining to gender differences in perceptions of success. The purpose of the study is move beyond the focus of gender.

Within different cultural norms, down to the nuclear family, there are behaviors that are praised and admonished. Within families, there also exists a subculture consisting of the following: extended family, friends, and social networks / communities. These subcultures are impacted by many external issues-- socioeconomic status, resources, ethnicity, as well as religion (Hawkins, Best & Coney, 2001). As religion is weaved into culture, its ensuing mandates, priorities and expectations follow throughout daily life. These priorities, which help distinguish between right and wrong, desirable and abnormal, formulate how individuals interpret the world. Bias can, therefore, become an established obstruction. As educators, this could influence students to be more like us, to think as we do, and to accept the priorities we transfer in our communication.

Attribution theory and Locus of Control (LOC) lend further insight into the topic matter. Attribution theory, as studied in the field of psychology, pertains to perceptions of the relationship between actions and outcomes. Within this theory, there are two specific types of forces within personality. These forces are referred to as internal and external locus of control. Locus of control, as defined by Rotter’s theory, developed in 1966, is the attainment of outcomes in life. These outcomes are seen as internally or externally based. Outcomes that are perceived as being internal in origin (internal LOC) are seen as an outcome in which the self is responsible. High internal LOC people perceive they have responsibility for their actions and interactions with others, and some control over their destinies

(Fishbach & Weiner; 1986). If an individual perceives their success as being a result of hard work, intelligence, or education, then this is defined as an internal locus of control. Conversely, there is the external locus of control. This occurs when individuals see outcomes as being a result of extrinsic forces or agents. External LOC attributes results to being at the right place at the right time, and often a consequence of luck (Rothberg, 1981). Unfortunately, Frieze, Whitley, Hanusa & McHugh (1982) found that women are more likely to attribute their own success to luck rather than to ability as compared to men, and therefore, a more external LOC.

There is ample research to support gender bias in the literature related to success and locus of control. For instance, Deaux and Emswiller (1974) concluded that success by a woman is more often attributed to more external or temporary factors such as fate, luck or other's contributing effort. They go onto state that women fail to think that their successes could be linked to their own doing. In a study by Feldman-Summers and Kiesler (1974), men's success was attributed to more internal and stable factors, such as a greater ability. These findings are further supported by Robinson and Skarie (1986) who studied the relationship of fear of success and locus of control within women. They found that women with a high internal locus of control are more proactive in structuring their work environments, so that fewer job role stresses are present to impede them from succeeding.

Women have routinely perceived barriers to their career development (Luzzo & Hutcheson, 1996). Keys (1985) referred to this perception of a "barrier" as a woman's sub-conscious awareness of limitations which follow them and their engagement with the world. Several researchers have indicated that this could possibly result in lower expectations of organizational advancement and success aspirations (Gutierrez, 1990; Keys, 1985; Luzzo & Hutcheson, 1996). In lay terms, this barrier is often referred to as the "glass ceiling". Gutierrez (1990) refers to the metaphor as the limited upward mobility of women. This paradigm suggests that women are still seen by society, including their regional subculture and beyond, as not possessing the value or worth of men. Despite having mirrored education and experience to their male counterparts, women are expected to integrate into the current structure of the workplace, and having done so successfully, there are definite limitations on their upward mobility within the organization. Women continue to be perceived as "caretaker/mother" and not as "leader" in the workplace (Gutierrez, 1990; Underwood, 1995). Part of this perception was evidenced in the first study in this agenda. Women see success in a dichotomy of caring for others and leading others (Underwood, 1995). The incongruence leads women to choose one or the other in an effort to reduce the mental ambiguity they face (Underwood, 1995).

As a result of such barriers, women chose then to change their "dreams" so as to minimize rejection, disappointment, and retain a balanced lifestyle. These women have chosen to augment their personal and ideal vocational goals (i.e.,

selecting less prestigious careers or choosing less satisfying vocational alternatives) in an effort to manage their other responsibilities and roles in life such as mother and wife (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1983; Luzzo & Hutcheson, 1996; Valentine, 1999). What is worth noting is that although these women perceive such barriers, research shows that women at the completion of a 4-year degree program exhibit higher levels of career maturity than their male counterparts (Luzzo, 1996). The research concludes that there is a shift in internal LOC to external LOC for women in that these barriers serve as an adaptive purpose by acting as a motivating force for more careful career planning and exploration. Women might make more thoughtful and purposeful choices about their careers in an attempt to manage the glass ceiling as well as accommodate the traditional roles society expects of them.

Academicians should seek to understand how their view of life impacts student choices. The implications for students are important since it can help young adults find their direction in life. Additionally, it is valuable to explore the perceptions students have of professional and personal success based on their upbringing and faith values. Each familial unit, contributing to a corresponding subculture, influences youth to develop into what they perceive as successful. In a more modern and less religious-based environment, this could mean that women have the exact same career opportunities as males, and that their parents and subculture support the success of that woman. Conversely, in a more traditional, and religious-based environment, a woman's success may be seen as being: the caregiver for the family, the nurturer for the children, and the "helpmate" to the head of the house (that being the male). In such a situation, how could a young girl learn management and leadership strategies while they only see such demonstrated by their father? This would likely preclude them from a self-view of attainment of positions which require such skills. The reasoning for this is that their stereotype has been evidenced only by a male figure; thus leading to the maternal female's role as an indication of desirable success factors.

The discovery of faith-based perceptions of success and obstacles could provide additional insight to student life choices. Additionally, using Allport's religiousness scale as part of the design, the discovery of internal and external religious belief systems can provide additional insight. Allport (1967) uses religion as a framework in which people personally practice religion. Over 70 published studies have used Allport's Religious Orientation Scale (ROS). The ROS separates the perception of religion into two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is when one's internalized beliefs move them (spiritually) to modify and/or make decisions that are congruent with their belief system. Extrinsic motivation is more utilitarian in that it moves people to use their religion for external purposes, such as making decisions that are in their perception of best interest, instead of seeking God's will in their decision making processes.

In an effort to explore some of these constructs, several research questions were formulated for analysis:

1. Is there a difference in gender among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?
2. Is there a difference in age among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?
3. Is there a difference in academic status among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?
4. Is there a difference in major (business vs. non-business) among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?
5. Is there a difference in ethnicity among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?
6. Is there a difference in denomination among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?

METHODOLOGY

A total of 86 students participated within the School of Business and Management at Azusa Pacific University from a potential population of approximately 600 students. The study took place over the course of 12 months. Four sample groups were studied: 1) female members of APU's "31" (Proverbs 31-based leadership development group) (n = 16); 2) Female and male International Business Institute Students and male members of an organization known as "Above Reproach" (n = 38); and 4) Graduate student taking part in a spiritual development program entitled SoulQuest (n = 26). In addition, each participant was provided a survey that measured six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, perceptions of obstacles. Demographic information was also collected to help determine differences in the constructs.

A factor analysis was performed on the religiosity scale (questions 1 – 19) which produced four constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, and prayer for comfort. Two other assessments were used to establish perceptions of success and perceived obstacles. Demographic information was recoded into similar groups. T-tests were performed to determine the difference between those groups. A Cronbach's Alpha was done to determine reliability for

the measures. The instrument reliability ranged from moderate ($\alpha = .72$) to high ($\alpha = .96$).

RESULTS

Using the research questions established, the following results were identified:

Research Question 1

Is there a difference in gender among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?

This research question was supported in three areas. There were significant differences between the groups on high religiosity ($t = 2.99$, $P = .004$), low religiosity ($t = -2.49$, $P = .015$), and perceived obstacles ($t = 2.45$, $P = .017$). For high religiosity, females ($M = 3.51$) scored significantly above males ($M = 3.18$). In other words, women viewed their religiousness as significantly more important than the male group sampled.

Further analysis indicates that females scored highest on five questions related to high religiosity:

- I enjoy reading about my religion
- My whole approach to life is based on my religion.
- My religion is important because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.
- I have often had a strong sense of God's presence.
- I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs.

In addition, men scored highest on low religiosity questions such as:

- Sometimes I have to ignore my religious beliefs because of what people might think of me.
- I pray mainly because I have been taught to pray.
- It doesn't much matter what I believe as long as I am good.

Under perceived obstacles females scored highest in the following areas when asked "this trait is an obstacle to my success":

- Disorganization
- Whining
- Accepts defeat

- Pessimism
- Hesitates to take risks
- Fear of trying
- Lack of a goal
- Takes things personally
- Lack of enthusiasm

Research Question 2

Is there a difference in age among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?

Again, this research question was supported. Age was defined for group one as 18 – 22 because that is the range for most undergraduate college students. Group two was defined as 23 and over. However, the range in age was 23 to the mid-40's. Prayer for comfort was the only significant result ($t = -3.12$, $P = .003$) which indicated that those 23 or higher felt prayer for comfort was significantly more beneficial than those age 22 and lower.

Further analysis indicates that the 23 and older group scored highest on two questions:

- Prayers are for peace and happiness
- I pray mainly to gain relief and protection

Research Question 3

Is there a difference in academic status among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?

Academic status was defined as undergraduate or graduate. This research question was not supported. No significant results were determined.

Research Question 4

Is there a difference in major (business vs. non-business) among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?

For the purpose of this research, majors were groups into business or non-business. No significant results were determined.

Research Question 5

Is there a difference in ethnicity among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, perceptions of obstacles?

Ethnicity was grouped into two areas—Caucasian or Minority. This research question was supported in the area of low religiosity ($t = -3.34$, $P = .002$). Minorities ($M = 1.92$) scored significantly higher on the construct of lower connection to religion than Caucasians ($M = 1.45$). Further analysis indicates Minorities scored high on the following questions and, thus, indicating a low interest in religion:

- Although I'm religious, I don't let it affect my daily life.
- I pray mainly because I have been taught to pray.
- It doesn't much matter what I believe as long as I am good.

Research Question 4

Is there a difference in denomination (non-denominational vs. denomination declared) among the following six constructs: high religiosity, low religiosity, religion for social purposes, prayer for comfort, perceptions of success, and perceptions of obstacles?

This research question was not supported. No significant results were determined.

CONCLUSION

The findings partially support the research agenda presented. There were constructs that arose from the survey items. And further, significant relationships within several of the constructs exist. Additionally, there were gender differences on the constructs.

The results could support the Attribution theory and LOC research. Males, who have a higher internal LOC, are more likely to see themselves as personally responsible for their successes. To follow, there is not as much of a "need" for the faith dynamic in their lives as they don't have the overarching perception that they need something outside of themselves to succeed. To explain this further, the review of the female group will be explored.

Women, according to the research, attribute positiveness with an association outside of their own doing. External factors, be they temporal or constant have at least implied responsibility for females' perceptions of their own success. Therefore, it would follow that women perceive the need for positive influences

(outside of their own abilities) which will help support them in the attainment of success. The use of faith for this need seems to be a rational solution to their plight. For the integration of faith into their daily lives not only provides the simple comforts experienced by those who practice, but additionally provides an external force which can be used as a motivational tool as well as a spiritual support when a strong internal LOC foundation has not been developed.

The implications for educators are many. Our male and female students perceive success differently. We, based on our gender, then also see success differently than our students. There are gender differences in the obstacles of success. Female students see obstacles to their success as more important to address than their male counterparts. This could be in part to the glass ceiling, and these female students intuition that they will have more to overcome than the fellow male students. From a teaching perspective, it lends insight as to what these women might be looking for in addressing concerns of the workplace, or in better preparing for the challenges they perceive they will be experiencing upon their entry into the workforce.

We are challenged with the responsibility of nurturing students in a way that provides opportunities for them in light of their regional subculture's perception of what is considered a worthy attainment. Resisting the natural inclination to move our opinions and bias onto our students is easy. Within education, it is our responsibility to expand the windows of opportunities of our students, in an effort to provide them with more avenues of fulfillment and success to therefore support and raise their regional subculture's existence.

Several questions that remain pertain to the existing research and the current study's findings. Areas yet to be addressed include the relationship between internal and external religiousness factors as they pertain to gender and specific religious affiliation. Also, exploring perceptions of success as they relate to different faiths would provide additional insight into the relevance of the current study's findings.

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