

PREDICTOR FACTORS OF DISPOSITIONAL OPTIMISM AMONG CASUAL WORKERS IN SELECTED FIRMS IN ELDORET TOWN

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ABSTRACT: *The study sought to investigate the factors that predict or account for dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town, Kenya have been working under temporary employment terms for many years. The study tested the following null hypotheses: HO₁. Age is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town, HO₂. Gender is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town, HO₃. Religious affiliation is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town, HO₄. Level of education is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town, HO₅. Skill possession is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town and HO₆. Family support is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town. The population of the study comprised all the casual workers who were working in manufacturing firms in Eldoret town, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya and the inclusion criterion was that one had to have worked on casual terms for a period of at least five years. The firms were 5 in total with a population of 401 from which a sample of 163 casual workers was drawn using stratified sampling technique. The study adopted the Ex post facto design. Study data were collected using a questionnaire which was developed based on the study hypotheses which were administered with the help of research assistants. The study data was analyzed using regression analysis, presenting results for both the t-statistic and ANOVA. All analysis was conducted using SPSS 17 version 22. The level of significance adopted by the study was $\alpha = 0.05$. The study established that age, gender, religious affiliation, level of education and family support were significant predictors of dispositional optimism as confirmed by the results of hypothesis testing. Based on the findings however, skill possession did not have a significant prediction on dispositional optimism among casual workers in the study.*

KEYWORDS: Casual workers, Dispositional optimism

INTRODUCTION

Peterson (2000) asserted that dispositional optimism can be referred to as a global expectation that more desirable things than undesirable things will happen in the future. This expectation is stable and seldom changes across situations in the lives of individuals with this characteristic (Peterson, 2000). Dispositional optimism refers to the belief that one's outcome from psychological and sociological situations will be positive rather than negative. This refers to the self-serving belief that favourable situations are likely to occur in the face of any circumstance. Optimists are more

likely than pessimists to believe that good outcomes are attainable and bad outcomes are avoidable. As a result optimists exert greater effort towards attaining desired outcomes, whereas pessimists reduce or withdraw effort and eventually fail at achieving set goals.

Originally proposed by Carver and Scheier (1987), dispositional optimism is viewed as a stable psychological quality and a positive personality trait. It refers to an individual's positive expectations for the future. Over the past 30 years, the body of research related to dispositional optimism has become increasingly rich and various groups have produced a large body of researches demonstrating correlations between dispositional optimism and subjective well-being, as well as its predictors. For instance, dispositional optimism has been found to positively correlate with self-esteem, positive emotions, and life satisfaction. Negative correlations have also been reported between dispositional optimism and negative emotions, anxiety, and depression (Chang and Sanna, 2003). These correlations have also been documented to be valid in many longitudinal studies and cross-cultural studies.

Dispositional optimism has been associated with a reduced risk, for various physical disorders, including a lower risk for various physical disorders (Ruis-Ottenheim, van der Mast, Zitman, Giltay, 2012). Single parent or (lone parent), is an individual who caters and provides the day to the day need of a child. Single parenting is a situation in which one of the two individuals i.e. mother or father involved in the conception of the child becomes solely responsible for the upbringing of the child (Manning & Kathleen, 2003). The economic pressure, the maternal commitment and the social stigma attached to it, fosters negative values for single parenting literatures however have not completely established this link to be consistent and this account for children who were raised by single parents that achieved phenomenal success the list is endless (Manning & Kathleen, 2003).

Researches on psychological resilience began with the study on the responses to traumatic events. Research conducted by developmental psychopathologists on the formation and development of psychological resilience in the face of adversity has contributed to our understanding of why individuals do not succumb to stressful phenomena (Rutter, 1987). Block defines psychological resilience as “an individual's ability to change their behaviour to adapt to changing environmental trends and recover from stressful situations”. As an individual's resource for coping with stress, psychological resilience can help effectively counter the negative effects of stress, and has therefore become a popular topic of research in positive psychology.

Joseph and Erin (2006) observed that positive influence of psychological resilience is reflected in many ways, for example, helping people recover from anticipated threat improving an individual's ability to adapt to life and promoting individual development. With the progression of research on psychological resilience, researchers have discovered psychological traits that are common among individuals with high psychological resilience, e.g. they are always very optimistic, feel that life is full of hope, and are curious about leading new lives. With regard to the protective effect of psychological resilience on mental health, studies have mostly focused on the relationship between psychological resilience and negative mental health, such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, etc., and some researchers have also begun to focus on the relationship between psychological resilience and positive mental health, such as life satisfaction. For instance, Chinese researchers

Wu et al. (2001) reported a significant positive correlation between psychological resilience and life satisfaction among the families of earthquake victims.

The Problem

Balogun (1998) reported that dispositional optimism appeared to be the strongest indicator of psychological wellbeing. Dispositional optimism is a stable psychological quality, psychological resilience is the ability to adapt to changing environments and recover from stressful situations, while subjective well-being is the overall affective and cognitive evaluation of quality of life. The situation with casual workers in many firms in Kenya is one that leaves the employees without hope, they tend to live a day at a time, hoping that the future will bring better situations, including permanent employment terms. Some of these employees have been working under casual terms for many years. What is not known are the factors that account for this resilience. Despite the contributions of the related studies, no studies have investigated the factors that predict dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town, Kenya. This literature gap formed the core concerns of the study.

Study Hypotheses

The study tested the following null hypotheses:

HO₁. Age is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town

HO₂. Gender is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town

HO₃. Religious affiliation is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town

HO₄. Level of education is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town

HO₅. Skill possession is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town

HO₆. Family support is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town

Study Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all the casual workers who were working in manufacturing firms in Eldoret town, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The inclusion criterion was that one had to have worked on casual terms for a period of at least five years. The firms were 5 in total with a population of 401 from which a sample of 163 casual workers was drawn using stratified sampling technique. The Sample size of this study was determined from the population using sample size formula 'return sample size method' for categorical data (Bertlett, Kotrilik and Higgins, (2001). The distribution by gender was skewed in favor of males (82) while females were 81.

Research Design

The study adopted the Ex post facto design which is a quasi-experimental study examining how an independent variable, present prior to the study in the participants, affects a dependent variable. A quasi-experimental study simply means participants are not randomly assigned and the independent variable is not available for manipulation by the researcher at the time of conducting the study (Creswell, 2014).

Data Collection Instrument

Being a survey, the study data were collected using a questionnaire which was developed based on the study hypotheses. It comprised two sections; section one comprised items focusing on the respondent's socio- demographics while the second part comprised items on dispositional optimism. The items in section two were likert type which were scored in order to arrive at a dispositional optimism score.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted with the help of research assistants. The instrument was filled in the presence of the research assistants after which they were collected awaiting analysis.

Data Analysis Methods

The study data was analyzed using regression analysis, presenting results for both the t-statistic and ANOVA. Descriptive methods were also applied. All analysis was conducted using SPSS 17 version 22. The level of significance adopted by the study was $\alpha = 0.05$

The regression model that was adopted in the analysis was

$$\text{Dispositional optimism} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Age}) + \beta_2(\text{Gdr}) + \beta_3(\text{RA}) + \beta_4(\text{Edu}) + \beta_5(\text{Skp}) + \beta_6(\text{FS}) + \epsilon$$

Where Gdr represents gender, RA represents religious affiliation, Edu represents level of education, Skp represents skill possession, FS represents family support while ϵ is the error term

Study Results

After carrying out data analysis, the results of the study were then presented based on the six null hypotheses as under.

Table 1: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Contributions of age, gender, religious affiliation, level of education, skill possession and family support

Variables	β	t	R	R ²	df	F
Constant	1.73					
Age	0.91	3.602				
Gender	0.313	.753				
Religious affiliation	.072	1.009	.845	.718	(6,156)	5.114**
Level of education	.054**	.41**				
Skill possession	-.068	-1.02				
Family support	.462	2.851				

** $p < 0.01N = 163$

Test of hypothesis 1

Concerning the contribution of age in the prediction of dispositional optimism, the result revealed that age does ($\beta = 0.91$, $p < 0.05$) significantly predict dispositional optimism and hence the first null hypothesis was rejected. The responses indicated that younger employees or workers tended to have higher optimism compared to older ones. The possible explanation would be that older employees are quickly approaching the final stage of Erikson's (1982) theory that is integrity versus despair. Those nearing retirement tended to have the lowest level of dispositional optimism.

Test of hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis was HO₂. Gender is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town. On the basis of the regression analysis results $\beta = 0.313$, $p < 0.05$ the null hypothesis was rejected implying that gender predicts dispositional optimism. The study established that female employees were more contented with their current status while males were looking forward to better situations in their work.

Test of hypothesis 3

Concerning the contribution of religious affiliation in the prediction of dispositional optimism, the result ($\beta = 0.072$, $p < 0.05$) revealed that that factor significantly predict dispositional optimism and hence the null hypothesis HO₃. Religious affiliation is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town was rejected. Believers had hope and expectation that there would come a time when things would improve, including their terms of employment.

Test of hypothesis 4

Level of education was a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town as indicated by the result $\beta = 0.054$ **, $p < 0.05$ on the basis of which the fourth null hypothesis was rejected. Educated employees had a higher dispositional optimism compared to those who had little or no education.

Test of hypothesis 5

Skill possession did not have a significant prediction on dispositional optimism among casual workers in the study area as indicated by the result ($\beta = -0.068$, $p > 0.05$). Employees who had skills and those who did not have them did not differ significantly on dispositional optimism. This result confirms the formulated hypothesis 5 and consequently it was accepted.

Test of hypothesis 6

The sixth null hypothesis was H_{O6} . Family support is not a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town. Family support factor was found to significantly predict dispositional optimism ($\beta = 0.462$, $p < 0.05$) such that those employees who received social support from family tended to have high dispositional optimism among the study casual workers.

Overall Result

The joint contribution of age, gender, religious affiliation, level of education, skill possession and family support in the prediction of disposition optimism was significant as indicated by the ANOVA result [$F(6,156) = 5.114$, $p < 0.01$]. The regression result table indicated that the study variables contributed 71.8% variance to the total variance observed in the dispositional optimism among the study casual workers.

Final Prediction Model

Based on the coefficients in the regression analysis table, the following final model was constructed:

$$\text{Dispositional optimism} = 1.73 + 0.91(\text{Age}) + 0.313(\text{Gdr}) + 0.072(\text{RA}) + 0.054(\text{Edu}) - 0.068(\text{Skp}) + 0.462(\text{FS}) + \epsilon$$

CONCLUSION

Dispositional optimism refers to the self-serving belief that favorable situations are likely to occur in the face of any circumstance. Optimists are more likely than pessimists to believe that good outcomes are attainable and bad outcomes are avoidable. There are many factors that are likely to predict the said phenomenon. The study established that age is a significant predictor positional optimism as confirmed by the responses that indicated that younger employees or workers tended to have higher optimism compared to older ones. Younger employees tend to believe that there is a full range of opportunities that lie ahead in life.

The study also established that gender is a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town.

Concerning the contribution of religious affiliation in the prediction of dispositional optimism, the study concluded that religion as a factor significantly predicts dispositional optimism. This tends to confirm the observation made by the human resource departments that employees who are

religious and or believers had better of life and suffered less from anxiety related illnesses. Level of education was concluded to be a significant predictor of dispositional optimism among casual workers in selected firms in Eldoret town.

Based on the findings however, skill possession did not have a significant prediction on dispositional optimism among casual workers in the study. Family support factor was found to significantly predict dispositional optimism such that those employees who received social support from family tended to have high dispositional optimism among the study casual workers. There is therefore need for family members of casual workers to invest in social support for their kin until the circumstances change or their situations improve.

The way forward

The companies that employ casual workers should invest in employee assistance programs to enhance the wellbeing of their employees, be they permanent or casual. Concerning the age of the employees, the study recommends that employees should be absorbed as permanent employees within the legally accepted period so as not to negatively affect their dispositional optimism. Other studies should be carried out to closely and in an in-depth manner investigate the causal relationship between dispositional optimism and each of the studied factors.

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