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S.A. Surya Kumar
Research Scholar,
Department of Business Administration,
Turiba University,
Riga, Latvia
Dr. Prema R.K.
Associate Professor,
Acharya Bangalore B-School,
Bangalore, India
Dr. B. Arul Senthil
Assistant Professor,
Acharya Bangalore B-School,
Bangalore, India

HUMOR STYLES AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SENSE OF BELONGING AMONG BUSINESS SCHOOL STUDENTS IN INDIA

***Annotation.** The sense of humor is one of the differentiating behavioral trait which exists in human beings comparing to other species. However there are ample studies which have been done in the literature of humor. There are not much literature evidences relating the humor styles with sense of belonging among business students. Sense of belonging exists within every individual and it decides their level of commitment towards their community or team. It is a subjective feeling of an individual's significance in a group. There are certain humor styles which fosters team oriented behavior. Present study is conducted among business students in India identifying the humor styles and its impact on their sense of Belonging. A total of 125 full time MBA students from Business schools of Bangalore, India were involved in the study. The instruments used were Humor styles Questionnaire (HSQ) and Psychological Sense of Belonging (SOBI-P).The results shows that the students who can able to maintain the humour sense even in the difficult situations are more likely to experience community and peer acceptance, positive sense of belonging to the business school.*

***Key words:** Humor styles, Sense of Belonging, Business students, Positive Psychology.*

Introduction

There is an increasing need for the students to complete the higher education in a timely manner. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Centre (2015) reported that overall persistence rates are approaching 70%, which is an improvement over earlier years, when completion rates were as low as 50% (Tinto, 1975). Several factors contribute to the motivation of students in academic setting, particularly sense of belonging among students plays vital in completing the tasks in time. The study investigates the influence of humor styles which is considered to be a effective pro social element instrumenting the students sense of belonging in the academic environment. The roots of Humor studies has its origin from the 20th century with the ongoing interest of psychologists from the domains of individual differences (Nicholas A. Kuliper, 1998). Sense of humor is considered largely a stable personality trait rather than being a single dimension. There are studies which shows the relationship with sense of humor to several domains in the field of positive psychology which significantly contributes to various factors such as wellbeing, cognitive ability, aesthetic response, an habitual behavior pattern, an emotion related temperament trait, an attitude, a coping strategy or defensive mechanism. Pertinent to the current study the humor style influence among business students in response to the sense of belonging are aimed to be identified. Sense of belonging refers to an individual's experience which makes them to be an integral part in the system or environment (Hagerty et al., 1992). Notably study made in Canadian school students of grade 6 and grade 8 shows results that sense of belonging is largely affected with the physical conditions and

mental health rather less by family conditions and individual characteristics(Ma, 2003). Further exploring the variable in the domain of business students helps us to understand the psychological and pedagogical principles of personality development at the post graduate level. The grounded theories of the study includes wenger's social theory of learning forming the core learning as belonging ,the theory of ritual practice(Marshall, 2002) providing means of social interaction to create a belonging state and the the relief theory of humor which holds the relief experiences from the tension removed with the humor(Meyer, 2000).

Literature Review

There are studies which investigated the students sense of belonging at the undergraduate level the results showing significant associations between students sense of class belonging and their academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation and task value. The association between students sense of belonging and social acceptance have been proven(Freeman et al., 2007).Specific to business students there are not much literature evidences focusing towards sense of belonging. Few studies states there is a significant correlation with students sense of belonging considering the students demographics and Faculty empowerment, Faculty encouragement and Faculty interest(Whitten et al., 2017).Further studies shows that humor styles contribution to the post graduate students sense of belonging, specifically self-enhancing humor increases the sense of belonging among the students(Mohd Sukor et al., 2019). Humor is the basic element of human interaction, it creates positive emotions and amuses communication. Organizational humor has multi dimension and there is a cognitive role in perceiving the initiator's intention and behavior. Studies shows the different dimensions of humor such as affiliative humor, self-enhancing humor, aggressive humor, Mild-aggressive humor, self-defeating humor are helpful in achieving different set of outcomes. It acts as a stress reduction agent and helps in group cohesiveness. Further studies shows that humor can aid in establishing leadership and maintaining hierarchical relationships(Romero & Cruthirds, 2006).

Student Identity, engagement, motivation largely depends on the degree to which they feel belonged. Sense of belonging have been explored among the international post graduate business students and the results shows that creating a learning environment that valued student diversity demanded self-reflection and creative thinking aided transition of students in post graduate education(Matheson & Sutcliffe, 2018).Findings suggests that students tends to develop sense of belonging by week 7 of semester one but an average of 10-15% of students do not develop any sense of belonging in every institution ,further active participation in curriculum is highly correlated with the sense of belonging(Kane et al., 2014).

Hypotheses

- H1 Affiliative humour will positively influence the sense of belonging.
- H2 Self-enhancing humour will positively influence the sense of belonging.
- H3 Aggressive humour will negatively influence the sense of belonging.
- H4 Self-defeating humour will negatively influence the sense of belonging.

Methodology

In order to fill in the lack of research on humour styles behavior and its influence on business school students, the target population of this study was the business school students in Bangalore. The samples were selected using simple random sampling. This is a cross-sectional study which applied quantitative methods by distributing questionnaires to collect data. The survey packet may take about 10 minutes to complete. The questionnaires were distributed through google form. In total, 102 returned questionnaires were completely answered by the participants. The Humour Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) was used to measure the humour styles among business school students. This instrument was developed by Martin et al. (2003). It measures four humour styles such as affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating humour. The higher the score of each subscale, the greater the person identifies that particular dimension with their respective environment (Hester, 2010). The score of answer ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5). HSQ consists of 32-items with each question being self-descriptive statement of respondent's particular uses of humour. The Psychological Sense of Belonging (SOBI-P) was used to measure student's sense of belonging

to the business school. This instrument has 18-items that employed 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). It measured the psychological experience of valued involvement in a system or environment (Reilly & Fitzpatrick, 2009). The descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistic (multiple regression) were conducted to achieve the research objectives.

Results

Table 1

**One-Way ANOVA and Descriptive Statistics of Variable
(Sense of Belonging on brought up place)**

		N	Mean	SD	F-Ratio (sig)
Sense of Belonging	Urban	56	3.29	.472	0.82(0.43)
	Rural	26	3.43	.637	
	Semi Urban	26	3.40	.360	
	Total	102	3.35	.498	

One-way ANOVA results of sense of belonging concludes that students from urban place has ($\mu = 3.29$, $\sigma = .472$), students from rural place has ($\mu = 3.43$, $\sigma = .637$), students from semi urban has ($\mu = 3.40$, $\sigma = .360$) do not differ significantly ($F = 0.82$, $sig = 0.43$).

Table 2

Level of humour and sense of belonging

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Affiliative Humour	3.09	0.46	High
Self-enhancing	3.26	0.54	High
Aggressive Humour	2.96	0.57	Moderate
Self-defeating Humour	3.02	0.61	High
Sense of Belonging	3.35	0.49	High

Mean value (Low = 1.00 – 2.00; Moderate = 2.01 – 3.00; High = 3.01 – 4.00)

All the respondents of current study are studying business administration. Further descriptive analysis was conducted on the research variables. Table 2 represents the level of humour styles and the sense of belonging among postgraduate students. It was found that most of the postgraduate students have a high level of humour styles except for aggressive humour. It seems that the postgraduate students have moderate tendencies to do aggressive humour in their social interaction ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.57$).

Table 3

Regression Model Fit Statistics

Model	R	R square	F Value	P Value	Durbin-Watson
1	.498 ^a	.248	33.06	.000	
2	.626 ^b	.392	31.89	.000	
3	.661 ^c	.437	25.31	.006	
4	.678 ^d	.459	20.57	.048	2.21

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self-defeating Humour(SDH)

b. Predictors: (Constant), Self- defeating Humour(SDH), Affiliative Humour(AH)

c. Predictors: (Constant), Self- defeating Humour(SDH), Affiliative Humour(AH), Self-enhancing Humour(SEH)

d. Predictors: (Constant), Self- defeating Humour(SDH), Affiliative Humour(AH), Self-enhancing Humour(SEH), Aggressive Humour(AGH)

e. Dependant Variable Sense of Belonging (SB) $p^* < 0.05$

Table 3 presents to what extent the regression model fits the dimensions of humour styles. The F-ratio in all models shows that the study predictors significantly predict the measured variables. Thus, it can be concluded that the studied model fit the data well.

Table 4

Prediction of different humour styles on sense of belonging					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Self-defeating Humour	0.40	0.07	0.49	5.75	.000
Affiliative Humour	0.41	0.08	0.38	4.83	.000
Self-enhancing Humour	0.22	0.07	0.24	2.79	.006
Aggressive Humour	0.14	0.07	0.16	2.00	.048

Dependent Variable: Sense of Belonging * P < 0.05. ** P < 0.001

Table 5

Prediction of overall humour styles on sense of belonging				
R	R Square	F	P VALUE	DURBIN-WATSON
.678	.459	20.57	.000	2.21

Result from regression analysis in Table 4 & 5 shows that, humour styles were significantly influenced the sense of belonging ($R^2 = 0.459$, $F(20.57)$, $P < 0.01$). For overall, the humour styles predict 45.9% of the sense of belonging among postgraduate students. It was found that all four dimensions of humour style has a significant influence on the sense of belonging. In which, aggressive humour will have lesser beta value than other three dimensions ($\beta = 0.16$, $Sig = (0.048)$), it denotes that post graduates students are using less aggressive humour than other Styles.

Discussion and Recommendation

The findings of current study revealed that business school students have high tendencies to feel they belong to the business school or being part of the business school. It was found that the students perceived high level of support from lecturers and staffs and tend to join the activities organized by the business school. It supports the Maslow's hierarchy of need theory which argued that the sense of belonging is the natural need for all groups of people. The current study showed the low tendency of business school students to do aggressive humour. Perhaps the students are aware that the aggressive humour may have negative impact on the social relationship as the behavior less appreciated by other students in the business school.

The current study found that humour styles behavior have significant influence on the student's sense of belonging to the business school students. The finding confirms the previous research by Alkan (2014) which found that the use of humour as a coping strategy has strengthened the sense of membership and acceptance towards university, which in turn predicted the intention to drop out from the university. It means that humour can affect the student's bonding to the business school in the way that it provides the opportunity for students to being part of the business school.

Upon further analysis, it was found that the all four dimensions of humour style has a significant positive influence on the sense of belonging. Thus, accepting the hypothesis H1 & H2 of the study which stated that Affiliative humour and the self-enhancing humour will enhance the student's sense of belonging to the business school. The finding suggests that the students who can able to maintain the humour sense even in the difficult situations are more likely to experience community and peer acceptance, positive sense of belonging to the business school. The finding also in support with previous study by Hester (2010) which found that affiliative humour and self-enhancing humour has a positive relationship with group cohesiveness, sense of belonging and positive emotion.

The result of the study supports the significant relationship between aggressive humour and sense of belonging, Self-defeating humour and sense of belonging. It was found that the aggressive humour and self-defeating humour would help to improve the sense of belonging among business school students, this results is contrary to previous studies. Thus rejecting the hypothesis H3 & H4 of the study.

For overall, the result of current study suggests that the all types of humour style would increase the student's engagement to the school and the tendency to feel they belong to the business school. It would be interesting to see how the different humour styles has a relationship with sense of belonging among various B-school students. Hence, the researchers recommend to replicate the study in order to compare the students of different B-schools in India.

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