Predicting Self-Efficacy of Secondary School Principals Through Their Style of Humor

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Abstract

The present study aimed to explain style of humor as a predictor of self-efficacy among secondary school principals. The research method was descriptive-correlational and 103 principals were selected by stratified random sampling proportionate to size. Data was collected from two questionnaires; Martin's Humor Style and Tschannen-Moran and Gareis's Self-Efficacy Questionnaire. Validity of the questionnaire was estimated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient that determined evaluations of 0.80 and 0.74, for content and reliability respectively. Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Stepwise Analysis were used for data analysis. In general, results in showed no statistically significant relationship between humor and self-efficacy. However, there was a significant positive relationship between effectiveness of principals in management, educational leadership and ethical leadership with affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles and the strongest relationship was observed between promoting humor style with self-efficacy in educational leadership (r = 0.411). Another finding of this study was that self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles were able to predict 17.7 percent of variance in self-efficacy of the principals.

Keywords: Humor styles, principals, secondary school, self-efficacy

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Introduction

The situation on organizations in today's environment means that principals are presented with new challenges and this trend is increasing. Global competition and evolving community expectations pose the need for new management strategies (Rezaeian, 2009, p.5). Increasing emergence of social organizations is an obvious feature of human civilization, so that according to various time and place, specific characteristics and needs of different communities, day by day a variety of social organizations are emerging.

Obviously, any type of social organization needs a specific management structure to achieve its objectives; nevertheless, understanding the need to "manage" is not just a recent concern, mankind has realized from long time ago that to achieve a "goal", a person needs to take measures to mobilize resources and apply leadership to achieve that goal (Rezaeian, 2009, p. 8).

Many researchers believe that humor can be useful in various fields. It can be relationship and communication (Campbell, 2012; Wanzer, Frymier, & Irwin, 2010), problem solving and creativity (Arendt, 2009; Holmes & Marra, 2002), productivity (Breeze, 2004; Gostick & Christopher, 2008), and above all management and leadership (Cann, Zapata, & Davis, 2009; Lynch, 2009). Research on the impact of humor in the workplace and employee performance goes back to the 1980s. Empirical studies have shown that there is a strong and direct relationship between humor and factors that determine effectiveness and efficiency in organizations (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006; Romero & Pescosolido, 2008). As noted above, evidence shows that humor is a significant positive connection for effectiveness of an organization and employee? What about employee but the effect of this variable has not been studied in educational institutions such as schools. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the impact on efficiency of the use of humor by school principals.

According to Mesmer-Magnus and Glew (2012) there are at least four contributing factors that make it difficult to define and operationalize humor; (1) the terms "humor" and "sense of humor" are often used interchangeably; (2) humor is multi-dimensional and its dimensions are seemingly diverse; (3) humor is quantified in various ways; and (4) there are numerous humor styles, some positive and some negative.

Humor is a global and generally positive activity experienced by people of different social and cultural contexts around the world. The term humor and its expression refer to a quality of action, speech and writing that can be entertaining (Bahadori Khosroshahi & Khanjani, 2011). Humor has a significant role in life and social relationships in the past and present, from the beginning of human socialization (Seyyed Nezhad Jelodar, Ahi Jelodar, & Shayan, 2011). Joking, as a manifestation of humor, can be divided into numerous types and from different perspectives, such as good and bad jokes (Soltanoff, 1994), physical jokes, verbal jokes and visual jokes (Ziolkwski, 2002 cited by Khoshouei, 2009); jokes with aggressive function, sexual function, social function, mental function and immune function (Ziv, 1988). In this regard, Martin, Puhlike-Doris, Larsen, Gray and Weir (2003) divided humor into four categories based on style, two; positive and two negative styles.

Affiliative Humor Style: People who use this style of humor, tend to tell jokes or funny things, try to entertain and attract others by improvising funny things, and in doing so they reduce inter-personal tension and establish and maintain relationships.

Self-Enhancing Humor Style: People who use this style of humor have a general and specific view of life. Life's inconsistency is puzzling and entertaining to people so they benefit from a humorous response in the face of life's stresses and hardships. This type of joke does not cause humiliation to others, it serves to elevate to enable a person to rise above limitations.

Aggressive Humor Style: This style of humor is focused on others and employs sarcasm ridicule, contempt and teasing others. It includes the use of humor to manage and manipulate other people. The implicit content of such jokes is threatening but jokes are shared regardless of the level of stress that it may cause to others.

Self-Defeating Humor Style: People who use this style, try to attract the attention of others and get accepted and approved by them by expressing funny phrases about their shortcomings and flaws, it is self-ingratiating (Martin et al., 2003).

In general, people who are more humorous express their concerns more conveniently and by supporting others through everyday problems they try to reduce the burden of their grief. Through this type of interaction with others, people experience more joy and are more effective in what they do (Behpazhooh, Jangiri, & Zahrakar, 2010). Self-efficacy is a completely voluntary behavior that affects people's behavior as they do things; and a positive attitude can be the best predictor of a person's ability to perform. On the other hand, self-efficacy can be considered as a psychological aspect of progress toward targets. Bandura, (1997) has defined self-efficacy as a person's belief in his or her ability to perform an action in a given situation; when individual performance is coordinated with or beyond individual norms it leads to self-efficacy, while weak performance, which is lower than an individual's norms, will reduce self-efficacy the meaning is unclear (Hejazi & Shokouhifar, 2008).

Fallahi and Fallahi (2014) report on an investigation that aimed to investigate the relationship between humor and self-efficacy and emotional intelligence among teachers. The results showed humor as a positive predictor for efficacy and emotional intelligence. However, the findings suggest that humor can have an indirect affect on self-efficacy through emotional intelligence. Falanga, Caroli and Sagone (2014) reports on a study that investigated styles of humor, self-efficacy and social interests in mid-teens and results showed that affiliative and self-enhancing types of humor had positive relationships with social self-

efficacy. Self-humiliation type of humor was negatively correlated with social self-efficacy. Assistive behavior in intense critical situations was positively correlated with behavior in boys with social self-efficacy and affiliative humor. In addition, generic and anonymous social trends were negatively correlated with affiliative humor, but there were differences in terms of age and gender. Rurkhamet (2013) reports on a study entitled leader's self-efficacy, affection, intelligence and humor in leadership development among heads of public companies. Results showed that a sense of humor increased a leader's self-efficacy.

Managers' sense in organizations about humor is effective on many things. For example, it can reduce the gap between managers and employees (Wells, 2008). Humor can improve the performance of employees in an organization (Avolio, Howell, & Sosik, 1999), It creates mutual consent between an employer and employees (Cooper, 2002; Decker & Rotondo, 2001). Humor is effective in creating a positive and emotional atmosphere in an organization (Kuiper, McKenzie, & Belanger, 1995). In another study, Falanga, De Caroli and Sagone (2014) found that there was a significant relationship among humor style and self-efficacy. Godshalk and Sosik (2000) showed that humor has a dynamic impact on the interaction between leaders and followers. Cooper (2008) found that a manager's humor can make employee relations in the organization and also to enhance their self-efficacy. Make employee relations what? In other studies Priest and Swain (2002) showed that effective managers take advantage of opportunities for a humorous approach in order to increase organizational performance. Tsai, Chen and Cheng (2009) found that a leader's positive attitude such as sense of humor had a direct effect on their performance of a task and helping behavior. So in general it can be concluded that a manager's sense of humor can have not only self-efficacy but also efficient of employees. In this regard, some researchers have named humor as a powerful tool for effective management among leaders (Avolio, Howell & Sosik, 1999; Decker & Rotondo, 2001; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006).

According to Collinson, (2002), Arendt (2009), and Ojha and Holmes (2010) humor plays a central role in the management and leadership. The findings of a study by Crawford and Caltabiano (2011) also show that a manager's sense of humor increased happiness and happiness increased self-efficacy. In explaining the relationship between humor and self-efficacy, some researchers such as (Marziali, McDonald, & Donahue, 2008; Schutte, 2014; Tritter, Fitzgeorge, Cramp, Valiulis, & Prapavessis, 2013; Yeung & Lu, 2014) found a positive significant relationship between these two variables.

The main objective of this research was to explain styles of humor with efficacy among secondary school principals by asking the following questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between style of humor and dimensions of a principal's self-efficacy?

2. Can style of humor predict the self-efficacy of a principal?

Materials and Methods

The research methodology was descriptive and correlational. The study population consisted of 141 secondary school principals in Zahedan (Iran). 103 principals were selected using Krejcie, and Morgan (1970) sample size table with stratified random sampling proportionate to the size. Characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of The Sample

Variables	G.	F	%
Gender	Male	52	50.5
	Female	51	49.5
Level of	M.B	83	80.6
Education	M.A	20	19.4
	5-10	37	35.9

Teaching	11-15	23	22.3
Experience	16-20	21	20.4
	+20	22	21.4
	1-5	35	34.0
Management	5-10	30	29.1
Experience	11-15	20	19.4
	16-20	18	17.5

Data was collected by questionnaire using the Persian version Martin's Humor Style Questionnaire (2003). Validation and construction of the Persian version of this questionnaire, carried out by Khoshouei, Oreyzi and Aghaei (2009). The questionnaire had 32 items and included the following four styles; affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating. Each style had 8 items, and subjects responded to each item on a 5 point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In order to estimate the validity of the questionnaire, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used. Figure 1 shows the results of this test.
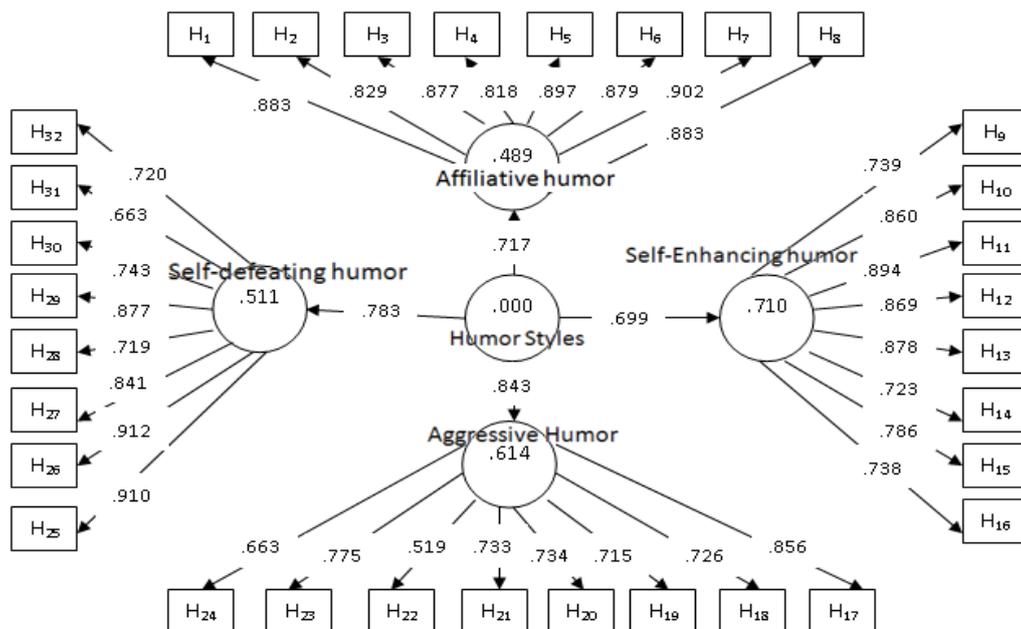

Figure 1. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) of Humor Styles

The Persian version questionnaire of Tschannen- Moran and Gareis's Principals' efficacy (2004) also were used. Validation and construction of the Persian version of this questionnaire, carried out by Ghadampour, Mottaghi Niā and Garāvand (2015). These had 18 items and three dimensions of efficiency in management, ethical leadership and educational leadership and each dimension had 6 items. Subjects responded to each item on a scale of five points from very poor (1) to very strong. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to estimate validity of the questionnaire. Figure 2 shows the results of this test.
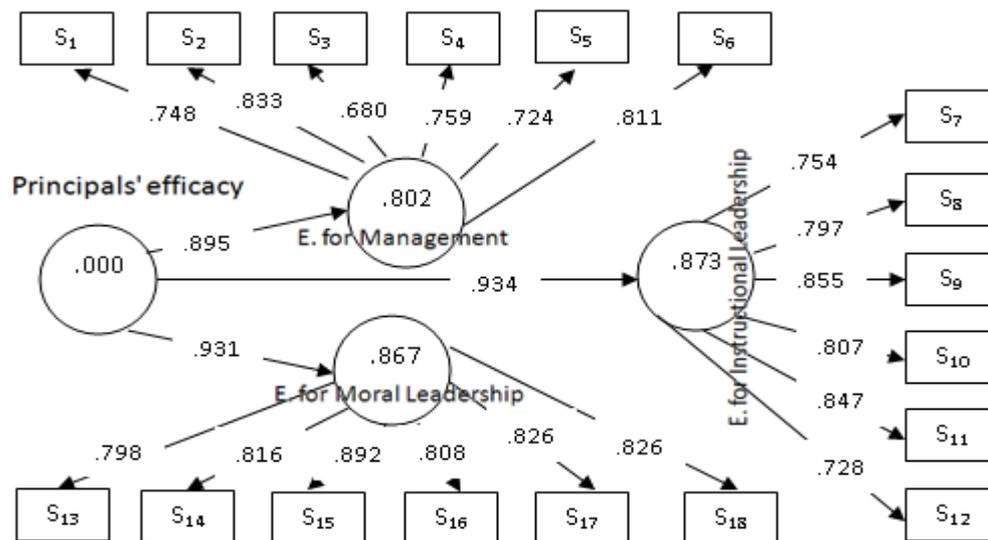

Figure 2. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) of School Principals' Efficacy

Data analysis included calculating frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation, correlation and stepwise regression analysis by $SPSS_{20}$ and Partial Least Squares (PLS).

Findings

Is There A Significant Relationship Between Humor Style And Dimensions Of A Principal's Self-Efficacy?

Table 2

The Correlation Between Humor Style and Self-Efficacy Dimensions

		Efficacy for Management	Efficacy for Instructional Leadership	Efficacy for Moral Leadership	Principals' efficacy (Total)
Affiliative humor	r	-.252*	-.255*	-.205	.258*
Self-Enhancing humor	r	.253**	.411**	.320**	.360**
Aggressive Humor	r	-.091	-.006	-.024	-.042
Self-defeating humor	r	.087	.180	.143	.151
Humor Styles (Total)	r	.053	.184	.138	.139

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results of the above table show that in general there was no statistically significant relationship between humor style and self-efficacy. However, there was a significant positive correlation between effectiveness of principals in areas of management, instructional leadership and moral leadership with the affiliative and self-enhancing styles of humor and the most relationship was observed between self-enhancing humor style with the self-efficacy in instructional leadership (r = 0.411). While there was no significant relationship observed between the dimensions of a principal's self-efficacy with aggressive and self-defeating styles of humor.

Is Humor Style Able To Predict The Self-Efficacy Of A Principal?

To answer this question, stepwise regression was used. The results of this test are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Regression Results to Predict Self-Efficacy of The Components of Humor

	R	**R^2**	**Adj.R^2**	**Std. E**	**B**	**β**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	.360[a]	.130	.121	10.70680	.833	.360	15.035	
2	.421[b]	.177	.161	10.46141	.776	.335	5.794	.018
					-.761	-.220		

1a. Self-Enhancing humor
2b. Self-Enhancing humor + Affiliative humor

Stepwise regression was used to investigate the contribution of style of humor in explaining the changes related to a principal's self-efficacy. Results show that in the first step, self-enhancing humor style and in the second step, affiliative humor style entered the equation. As can be seen in the table above, in the first step, self-enhancing humor style explained only 13% of self-efficacy variance, and in the second step, self-enhancing humor style, along with affiliative humor style, predicted 17.7% of variance of a principal's self-efficacy.

Results

Interpretation of the findings revealed that people's belief in their self-efficacy affected many aspects of their life like goal setting, decision making, hard- working and confronting difficult situations. Teachers' and school principals' self-efficacy is the most powerful variable in student's educational achievement. Sense of humor has a relationship with some abilities like the quality of social interaction. This sense may be used as a technique in management and coping with stress to create a positive view in struggling with problems. The findings showed that the variable self-efficacy was related to the sense of humor and both had significant relationship with the participants' gender. The findings of the current study were supported by Francis, 2006 (cited in Raggi, Leonardi, Mantegazza, Casale,

& Fioravanti, 2010) who found that people with high self-efficacy made better social relations with others.

They had better understanding of their psychological traits, controlled their negative feelings more easily, made better social contacts and enjoyed their life moreThe impact of humor on different aspects of professional life has been presented in different perspectives based on the results of the research, for example, Bateman (2006) believed that sense of humor can support various behaviors of leaders; or there is a positive relationship between sense of humor and transformational leadership. Humor can manage conflicts (Hoffman, 2007); Sense of humor can solve problems about stress and reduce anxiety and it supports personal competency (Okhuizen-Stier, 2008); there is a strong correlation between humor uses for social goals and self-efficiencies to strategies in teaching (Evans-Palmers, 2009); Sense of humor can heal and treat minds of people. The relationship between humor and the effectiveness of consulting people is a role of the transformational leader. Humor can create the attributes of leaders (Blevens, 2010); and if leaders understand sense of humor by individuals, humor uses will be managed suitably (Teehan, 2006).

Mottaghinia (2011) reports on a study entitled The Relationship between Collective and Personal self-efficacy Among Teachers, and findings indicated that the collective efficiency of teachers served to improve their personal efficiency among individuals and reveals the necessity of collaborative activities among teaching staff. Lu et al. found that the strong culture of self-efficacy facilitated learners' achievements and promoted their success, to some extent. In today's organizations, most leaders want to be happy and the happiness and well-being of their employees is very important, but they are partly afraid of laughing because of expediency, perhaps this fear stems from awareness among principals of the benefits and positive effects of humor in an organization. But principals can have be fundamentally serious in nature as well as a great sense of humor, have a fundamentally serious nature. They can be

determined and serious simultaneously from the results of work, behavior, values, and be cheerful and happy as well and make further use of the valuable asset of humor.

These results show that in general, there was no significant relationship between the elements of humor and self-efficacy. There was only a relationship between the sub-components of self-efficacy (management, educational leadership and ethical leadership) with positive humor styles (affiliative, promoting) and that these results were consistent with the research findings of Falanga (2014), who investigated humor styles, self-efficacy and social tendencies in mid-teens, and concluded that affiliative and promoting humor were positively related with self-efficacy, and humiliating humor was negatively correlated with self-efficacy. But these results were not consistent with those of Rurkhamet (2013) demonstrating that humor increased self-efficacy. The results of this research were consistent with a part of the results of Fallahi et al. (2014) in which an examination of the relationship between humor and self-efficacy and emotional intelligence among teachers showed that humor could be a positive predictor for self-efficacy.

Limitations

This research has quantitative research limitations. For example, data collection does not have much credibility through its reported data. The lack of flexibility and the impossibility of making modifications to research tools after they are implemented is another limitation of this type of study. The results obtained from the correlation test can either hide or ignore the underlying causes of the reality and so on.

Conclusion

Self-efficacy determines to what extent a person spends energy on an activity and to what extent they are able to overcome obstacles (Pajaras & Schunk, 2001; cited by Zeinalipoor, Zarei, & Zandi-nia, 2009). Therefore, a person with a high level of self-efficacy has confidence about successfully fulfilling certain behaviors and expectations of results (Bandura & Schuk 2005). Eftekhari (2009) reports on study that concludes that humor was effective in improving organizational communication, increasing job satisfaction and motivation, as well as reducing stress and conflict in the workplace. Smith and Khojasteh (2014) reports on a study concluding that humor can be regarded as a tool in an organization that when properly utilized, can be effective in facilitating a better working environment.

Lyttle (2007) discusses humor in management and concludes that humor has benefits such as provision of pain relief, team collaboration, employee motivation; generation of ideas and provides relief from feelings of pain and despair. Despite these positive benefits, it should be emphasized that humor has some negative aspects such as distraction from a task and could violate codes of conduct in the workplace. In complex management situations, the use of humor in a sensitive situation with both good and bad effects.

Based on these findings, the following are suggested: holding workshops and seminars in connection with the use of positive humor and its effect on the self-efficacy of principals. Among the components of humor, promoting components had the largest share in predicting self-efficacy, so it is recommended that the required fields for positive jokes be provided. Training management skills combined with making people aware of their abilities and holding workshops can be used to increase feelings of self-efficacy among principals.

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