

Positive Reactions to Negatively Painted Imagery amongst Children

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ABSTRACT

The last few decades have seen massive progress in the measurement and classification of child and adolescent psychiatric malaises. Much of this has focused on diagnosis and identification of prime movers that disturb a child's quasi equilibrium. And most of this research has spewed prescriptive initiatives to redress the disorders. But isn't psychology supposed to foster happiness, by actually minimizing the disorder and its effects? On this touchstone, bulks of psychology studies have flounced primarily because the prescriptions are mainly implementable or difficult to execute in practice. However, whatever shortcoming the field of psychology erudition may have, individuals have anyways asserted their right to happiness, by themselves coining ways of responding to challenges. This study examines how teenagers beset with negatively painted imagery like obesity, autism, dwarfness, dark complexion, stammering et al. have surmounted the criticism, said and unsaid by society, and paved path for their happiness. It thus sheds more light on a human's wondrous abilities to rise above the ceilings and/ or biases the society imposes. This study thus again brings back to forefront the sheer intensity of personal motivation and ingenuity/rationalization, which all humans are endowed with.

Keywords: Motivation, Adolescent, Obesity, Autism, Achievement, Ingenuity, Transformation

INTRODUCTION

Our perceptions of what is right, what's acceptable, constantly determine our choices in life-not only about actions

we perform, but also conduit the thoughts we harbor and nurture about various facets of living. And these perceptions, we like it or not, emanate from a supposed collective of society. There are many judgmental stances of society, on what it wholly endorses, what it passably tolerates, and what it surely scorns upon. Armed with media, with content in educational material, with informal chit chat within family circles, society shapes our perceptions. A lot of this perception shaping or contouring has inherent contradictions - on one hand it speaks loftily of infinite power humans possess, and that diversity entails inclusivity, and that objectivity ought to be there in judging humans. On the other hand, it sneaks in many feudal prejudices, or rooted in "popular science" authoritarian values. So, it approaches autism in a condescending manner, grudgingly conceding autists can be genius too. It scorns upon obesity as an unacceptable affliction, severely impacting self-esteem of obese children, irrespective of degree of obesity. Public dealings hide a sniggering attitude towards off the normal physicality – dwarfs are mocked, the dark complexion in many cultures are deemed not smart, the stammering persons are condemned to be dumb. Much of redeeming efforts towards this population of society (off the norm in looks, in behavior etc.) tries to advocate regimes which can help the "afflicted" surmount the "afflictions". It assumes a somewhat "high moral ground" in evaluating people

– you’re obese, so no good for dates and relationships; you’re not fair, so unfit for hospitality or acting in movies careers, so on and so forth. One of the goals, amongst others, for this study has been scope for positive solutioneering to multiple stresses today’s teenagers or adolescent’s experience. The bases chosen is this that amongst hundreds of physical and intellectual attributes we all have, excelling on any one or two is enough – “that” can be our claim to fame. And we can carry on living with so called negative attribute, be that obesity, or dwarfness, or stammering or whatever. For this is what makes better sense in living life positively. It counters the approach society in general foists – get rid of your negative non-conforming attribute, and there is no scope for you to live happily, until you become lean and fit, until you become getting good academic grades, until you eliminate “weaknesses” and frailties. There is increasing evidence that behavior and personality cannot be fully comprehended without paying due attention to the cultural settings at play. The world of psychology research is very rich in studies on bullying, prosocial attitudes, corrective strategies, reward-action linkage, though relatively weak on retaliation coping mechanisms. Childhood obesity is an epidemic of global proportions, accompanied by an alarming increase in various metabolic disorders. Shanghai University of Sport has indicated its impact on self-esteem of adolescents.

The present study framed a null hypothesis that “Life cannot be happily lived without countering a social disapproval in being of a person”. It also tackled these hypotheses/ binary questions:

A) Is it a better option to comply with negative judgments of society, and attempt to overcome the negative affliction OR to focus on a possible positive attribute of skill?

B) The locus of control in shaping our lives, our actions should be external or internal?
C) Can happiness be defined as aggregated from responses by respondents OR is it an individual thing?

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In accordance to set hypotheses and probe questions, this study aimed to validate/ invalidate as per rigor, and a suitable methodology was evolved. First of all, two groups, A and B were formed of randomly picked 30 respondents each, “A” comprising of negatively assessed individuals as the Experimental group, and “B” formed of positively assessed individuals to serve as the Control group. Both groups had a mix of genders, more or less equal. Both groups were further segmented into two age groups, 8 to 12 years, and 12+ to 17 years. Both groups had a natural and random mix of achiever and non-achievers, without influencing composition.

The technique of depth interview was preferred, as guided by an open ended questionnaire. The task was not only to calibrate responses, but also discover what really goes in mind of the respondent vis-à-vis his or her condition. A span of 3 months went in gathering the responses. A further 3 week period was invested in analysis and composition of this article.

Data Collection

List of negative assessed attributes as per society had children displaying any or multiple of these include obesity, stammering, dark complexion, dwarfness, autism etc. Not having any of these attributes was deemed positively assessed respondents. The list of achievements were reckoned to be any or multiple of these included

- i. Top 10 percentile academic grades
- ii. Playing a musical instrument in school programs

- iii. Being a solo dancer/ singer/ DJ in school programs
 - iv. Winning awards in declamation or dramatic contests
 - v. Winning prizes in painting or sculpture contests
 - vi. Recognition as ace quizzing contestant
 - vii. Being published in online or offline for a
 - viii. Recognized as a master chef in family/ party circles.
- Not having any of these was rated as non-achievers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was an interesting study, getting to know deep psyche of 60 respondents. Many findings, a few intuitively pre-guessed and a few counter to intuition came up.

The raw data was as follows:

Group A:

	8 – 12 y	12+ – 17 y
Male	7	8
Female	6	9

Group B:

	8 – 12 y	12+ – 17 y
Male	6	9
Female	8	7

The achievers (A) or non-achievers (NA) split raw data finding was as follows:

Group A:

	8 – 12 y	12+ – 17 y
Male	7 = 5 A, 2 NA	8 = 5 A, 3 NA
Female	6 = 4 A, 2 NA	9 = 7 A, 2 NA

Group B:

	8 – 12 y	12+ – 17 y
Male	6 = 3 A, 3 NA	9 = 4 A, 5 NA
Female	8 = 3 A, 5 NA	7 = 4 A, 3 NA

This analysis showed that:

Group A had overall achievers 70% while Group B had 46.6%. This shows that society has a bias towards positively assessed children, whereas in truth, the negatively assessed outshine. This could be because the negatively suppressed

retaliate to prove they carry positive worth.

In the 8 – 12y segment, again Group A had 69.2% achievers as contrasted with 42.8% in Group B. In the 12+ - 17y segment, Group A had 70.5% against a 50% in Group B.

These two findings indicate what point 1 above proved.

Males in Group A had 66.6% achievers as compared to 46.6% of Group B males.

Females in Group A were 73.3% achievers as contrasted with 46.6% females of Group B. This again is consistent with point 1 above.

Females in Group A outshone males in Group A. However, male versus female achievers were similarly proportioned in Group B.

The individual segments fared as follows in achievement matrix (as A's) within each segment/ cell:

Group A:

	8 – 12 y	12+ – 17 y
Male	71.4%	62.5%
Female	66.7%	77.8%

Group B:

	8 – 12 y	12+ – 17 y
Male	50%	44.4%
Female	37.5%	57.1%

Despite retaliation and resilience shown by many, all segments had some non-achiever percent. This was tragic, as education is supposed to allow every individual to flower as a unique person, excelling in whichever area he/ she prefers. One may not be excellent in all domains of human pursuit, but can surely do well in at least one area. If that's not happening, the overall education system is somewhere failing. At least one of various intelligences can be sharper than that of others.

The core findings in fact lay beyond the number crunching. It showed that children probably have better survival or coping skills than the elders who sermonize to them no end. Elders have

just one model of success or achievement – to not have a negative attribute, and to excel on everything (what an unrealistic expectation). Under weight of such stance by elders, and by popular media, many children stay tormented and guilty of possessing negative attributes.

Yet, a majority of suppressed children vent out by discovering a track on which they could excel. They didn't accept the correlate the elders project – that a negative attribute necessarily implies non-achievement and thus unhappiness. Most of them focused their energies NOT in surmounting the negative assessment, but in positively investing their energy in alternate tracks.

This also revealed that there's a correlate between achievement and happiness. However, achievement isn't governed by classical feudal thoughts of society at large.

The most insightful aspect was the defiance the achievers with negative attributes showed. Yes, some of them attempted to overcome their negativity – trying to be thinner, learning fluency in speaking, trying beauty regimens to get fairer (sad), wearing elevator shoes, what not. But this didn't work in many cases, so some of them resigned to "fate". But these young children, at times supported by their mentor/ teacher/ one of the parent, diverted attention to excelling in another area. And this happened. All of us are not meant to be good on all 100 attributes. A fish cannot climb a tree, but does it need to?

Can't face pockmarked with smallpox actors be popular, by virtue of their thespian abilities? Can't such actors become good choreographers or song writers? This was a very humbling and ennobling finding. That human spirit, once powered, can build achievements, where none were deemed possible.

The null hypothesis stood negated.

It was amply proven on Question 1, that alternate routes were more happiness giving.

Question 2, though not fully examined, revealed children with their own thoughts on achievement were happier.

Question 3 was scrutinized in depth interviews, and the responses showed, the individual has to decide what a happy or satisfying configuration is for him/ her. Imposing social norms and definitions is not a human thing at all.

As an intervention, psychology field has numerous methodical tools for psychological research – all very valuable. The greatest benefit of these is generating rich, complex and vivid, yet controllable configurations. To elicit psychophysiological and emotional responses, various settings have been plugged. Simulations to rid subjects of anxiety were experimented (Biedermann et al., 2017) and showed calming effects, which individuals may assimilate for personal performance. Heights as a deterrent can be overcome (Brandt et al) demonstrated a subject can surmount impediments of any kind, by analogy. Diemer et al., 2015 proved the linkage between perceptions and emotional reactions. This is core to psychology as perceptions formed by society deeply impress upon minds of respondents. Society disapproves of obesity, and established emotional mechanisms operative when eating disorder patients face. A study by Nilsson et al., 2016 linked complete involvement with an experience or idea and it's stirring in mind thereupon. Besides Pavlov's classical conditioning theories, Riva and team went deep in comprehensively studying behavior impugners arising from established value system.

Limitations of instruments like questionnaires were exposed (Slater et al), and so depth interview was resorted to this study. Anxiety sources were mapped by Spielberg amongst many others (Spielberger, 2010). Anderson (2013) demonstrated the attention seeking situations. Lots of research describes the importance of motivation in enhancing the participation of obese children in exercise

activities. Recognizing the different influences that are important determinants of exercise behavior in children has to be reckoned. The environment actors play a significant role in advising parents and others of the need to offer positive, constructive, and immediate feedback without being evaluative, critical, or demanding. But does this happen in real life? Duress amongst humans by invading their persona space, and dismantling their value or belief system has intimidatory facets was shown by Bailey et al. Many researches or talks propound unimplementable plans (Cardinali et al., 2011). Since mere actions alone wasn't enough. Gabriel and team gave analogous evidence of gender differences, which reveal different coping pathways (Gabriel et al., 1999).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let it be briefly reiterated as to major points in the hope that society and institutions bring forth a change in their outlook towards humans, esp. the vulnerable young children. There's no single formula for success or happiness. So a median on any attribute might say that movies have relatively tall actors with good physique and nice looks. But that's not to deny the negatively attributed (dwarfs or not good looking) their possible fame in movies, provided they build up any other proposition to deserve good screen presence. Though movie careers were not part of this study, the parallel is easy to relate to. We mustn't load children with biased evaluation on the basis of their morphological or ethnic attributes. In no case should we treat departure from median value as an abnormality, which could only be corrected by minimizing the deviation. Rather, we must allow every child to prospect areas of interest on which he/ she can excel. That's the best advised way to live life. It's hoped the message in this study, though simplistic, is carried forward. And as many as possible parallel

studies are done in various cultures across the world, which would vet or negate the findings shared here. This is what science is, and ought to be. Objective, yet useful for humans.

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