

THE ROLE OF ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE, NONCONTINGENCY, AND UNCONTROLLABILITY ON DEPRESSION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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In line with Abramson et al's reformulated learned helplessness theory and hopelessness theory of depression (Abramson et al, 1978; 1989), the purpose of this study was to test diathesis-stress models by both prospective and experimental design in college students. In Study I, we tested the prediction with a prospective designs by determining whether the depressive attributional styles before the midterm exam predicted the severity of their depressive mood response after receiving their grade on a midterm exam. The results partially supported the reformulated theory: When students faced positive outcome, their mood was not consistent with the prediction; whereas when negative outcome was encountered, the change of mood was as predicted. Specifically, the results indicated that the internal-external attributional dimension and the global-specific attributional dimension were crucial to depressive mood. According to the findings of Study I, Study II further tested the hypothesis using an experimental design by manipulating the contingency between students' behavior and their outcome in order to understand the relationship between their attributional style and their mood. The results revealed that when facing a negative event, students with an internal-and-global attributional style would experience depressive mood, which was consistent with the theory, and the "uncontrollability" was also an important factor. The implications of the present findings and future research possibilities are postulated.

Keywords: Depression, Attributional style, Learned helplessness.