

# Learned Helplessness of the Faculties of Higher Education

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## Abstract

Learned helplessness is a psychological condition in which, after further stress or depression, a person begins to believe that they have no control over their situation. Therefore, they gave up trying to change and accepted their fate. The purpose of the present study was to ascertain the present status of learned helplessness among the faculties of higher education of Purulia district. The present study was carried out through the **Descriptive Survey** method by administering the **Learned Helplessness Scale (Quinless & Nelson, 1988)** on a random sample of 521 sample. The result of the study reflected that on an average both the male and female faculties of higher education expressed **Low Learned Helplessness** in their life. So, it might be concluded that, the faculties of higher education may be able to take proper decisions, maintain positive attitude towards self and society, continuously facing challenges, tolerate frustration, be effortful, highly motivated, active participation in everything, high self-esteem, having punctuality and accept tasks.

**Keywords:** Learned Helplessness, Stress, Higher Education, and Mental State.

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of learned helplessness was first proposed and studied by **Seligman and Maier (1967)**. Learned Helplessness is the behaviour exhibited by a subject after enduring repeated aversive stimuli beyond their control. In humans, learned helplessness is related to the concept of self-efficacy; the individual's belief in their innate ability to achieve goals. Learned Helplessness theory is the view that clinical depression and related mental illnesses may result from a real or perceived absence of control over the outcome of a situation. There is an intimate connection between learned helplessness and the productivity of any organization and industry. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the present status of learned helplessness among higher education faculties in the Purulia district.

### 1.1 Significance of the Study

Through the proper investigation of learned helplessness of the higher education faculties, the researcher actually intended to ascertain the present status of learned helplessness of the higher education faculties in the Purulia district. This present study was significant in that it will help to realize the helplessness of higher education faculties to improve and prescribe their helplessness level, so that they may lead quality education for progressive country and also well productivity of any institution.

## 1.2 Objective of the Study

The present study was designed to realize the specific objective –

- I. To have the statistical description of the present state of **Learned Helplessness** of the faculties of higher education of Purulia district.

### 1.2.1 Research Hypothesis of the study

The present study was designed to verify the research hypothesis –

- I. The faculties of higher education have high **Learned Helplessness**.

## 2. Learned Helplessness – Construct of the Study

When a person cannot find a solution to a difficult problem – even if there is a solution – behavioural scientists call this “learned helplessness”. People who struggle with learning helplessness tend to complain a lot, feel frustrated, and unable to make positive changes in their situation. Learning helplessness occurs when a person experiencing depression begins to believe that they have no control over their situation. They then stop trying to change and accept their fate (**Maier & Seligman, 2016**).

The concept of learning expectancy was developed by psychologists **Martin Seligman and Steven F. Maier**. They began to see helpless behaviour in dogs that frequently received electric shocks after hearing the sound (**Seligman, 1972**). The dogs are then placed in a shuttle box consisting of two rooms separated by a low floor. One side of the floor is occupied, the other side is empty. Previously conditioned dogs did not attempt to escape, even to avoid electric shock by jumping over a small obstacle. The result is that learning non-addiction in animals occurs when the animal is repelled by an attack from which it cannot escape. Finally, the animal should stop trying to avoid the stimulus and act as if it were completely helpless to change the situation. Although it has the possibility of execution, it cannot prevent the study from working (**Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2016**).

## 3. Review of Allied literature

A brief review of allied literature on Learned Helplessness is reported herewith.

### 3.1 Learned Helplessness

When something is beyond a person’s control, they are said to be helpless. It is the reaction of giving up or quitting that comes with the belief that anything about a person is unimportant (**Martinek, 1996**). When some laboratory animals were exposed to inevitable shock in the past and were unable to escape or prevent it, even when given the chance, the term “learned helplessness” was first used to describe their situation (**Overmier & Seligman, 1967**). The phrase is now used to describe human failure to seek, make use of, or obtain instrumental answers that are adaptive. It appears in a sad individual who appears to have given up on the possibility of having effective voluntary control over significant environmental occurrences (**Hiroto & Seligman, 1975**). Individuals who experience learnt helplessness come to terms with the fact that horrible things will happen and they will not be able to stop them (**Gazzaniga & Heatherton, 2003**). Long-term exposure to complicated problems teaches people that events and responses are not related. The knowledge gained in this setting is inactive and weakens subsequent learning. As a result, even if there is a potential solution, they will be unable to address any concerns (**Mohanty, Pradhan & Jena, 2015**).

**Beykan and Bato (2014)** looked into how instructors perceived the glass-ceiling syndrome in relation to sociodemographic factors and learnt helplessness. The findings showed that learnt helplessness and child possession have an impact on teachers' perceptions of the "glass ceiling" phenomenon. Women finally

lose up on their attempts to advance in their careers or, in the worst-case scenario, quit their professions because they are disappointed when they put in a lot of effort but do not get promoted.

The way the individual change process plays out when significant, second-order adjustments are needed was examined by **George and Jones (2001)**. They created a process model that examined the psychology of the person going through a change process as well as the causes of change resistance. Learnt helplessness has been identified by researchers as a potential cause of change resistance. When **Silvet (2013)** examined learnt helplessness in relation to organisational change, she discovered that employees who thought that external factors were to blame for the change experienced less learnt helplessness than those who believed that management was to blame. Learnt helplessness has a negative correlation with job involvement and job happiness, according to **Balakrishnan (1990)**. **Sahoo (1991)** also found a negative correlation between personal learned helplessness and job satisfaction.

#### **4. Methods**

The present study was carried out through **Descriptive Survey Method**. The details regarding sample, tool, procedure of data collection and statistical technique are placed herewith.

##### **4.1 Research Design**

The research design of the present study is presented hereunder.

##### **4.1.1 Variables**

**Learned Helplessness** of the faculties of higher education was the only variable in the present study.

##### **4.2 Sample**

Faculties of different Departments of Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University and its affiliated General Degree Colleges of Purulia were the sources of sample.

##### **4.2.1 Sample Size**

Total 160 female faculties and 361 male faculties have participated in the study.

**Table-4.2.1: Gender-Wise Distribution of Sample**

<b>Gender</b>		<b>Total</b>
<b>Female Faculties</b>	<b>Male Faculties</b>	
160	361	521

##### **4.2.2 Sampling Technique**

In the present study "**Stratified Random Sampling Technique**" was adopted

##### **4.3 Tool of Research**

The following research tool was used in the present study for data collection. The tool was selected by applying yardsticks of relevance, appropriateness, reliability, validity and suitability. Brief description of the tool is given hereunder.

##### **4.3.1 Learned Helplessness Scale (Quinless & Nelson, 1988)**

Learned Helplessness scale is a 20-items scale with each item a four-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (highly disagreed) to 4 (highly agreed) is attached. Respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement on this 4-point Likert type scale.

The mean score of the scale is normalized and the normalization procedure is as follows:

**Normalized mean = (Mean of the Total Score/Total Number of Items of the scale).**

The range of Normalized means score of the Learned Helplessness Scale may be interpreted as –

<b>1.00 to 1.75</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Very Low Helplessness</b>
<b>1.76 to 2.50</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Low Helplessness</b>
<b>2.51 to 3.25</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>High Helplessness</b>
<b>3.26 to 4.00</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Very high Helplessness</b>

#### 4.4 Procedure for Data Collection

The heads of each institution were contacted for his/her permission to allow collecting the data. The relevant data were collected by administering the above-mentioned tool on the subjects under the study in accordance with the directions provided in the manual of the tool.

#### 4.5 Statistical Techniques

The descriptive statistics were computed with the help of SPSS-20 software. To ascertain the objective (i.e. *To have a description of the present state of Learned Helplessness of the faculties of Higher Education*) the descriptive statistics such as minimum, maximum, range, mean and standard deviation were calculated.

### 5. Result

In the present study **Descriptive Survey Method** was adopted to discover the experience of **Learned Helplessness** of the faculties of higher education. The results of the study are presented herewith.

#### 5.1 Descriptive Presentation

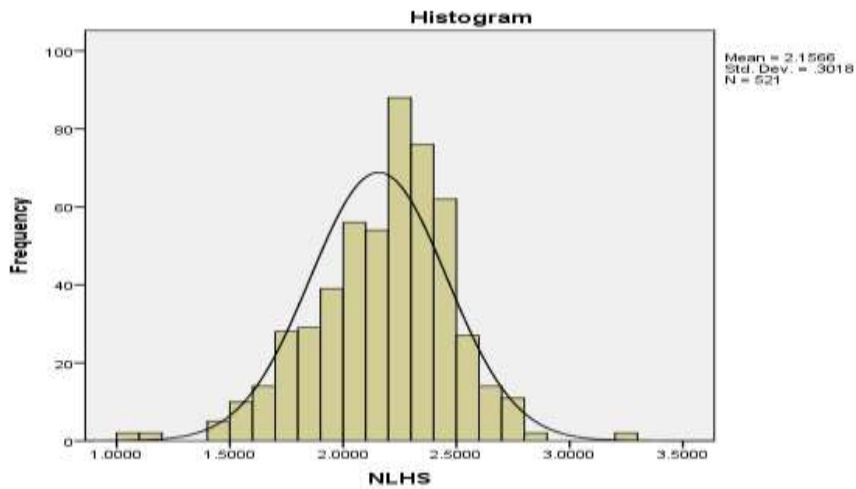
To prove the hypothesis-(I) (i.e., *The faculties of higher education have high Learned Helplessness.*) the results of the descriptive presentation of **Learned Helplessness** of the teachers are presented herewith.

**Table-5.1: Descriptive Statistics of Learned Helplessness Scale Score of Faculties of Higher Education**

<b>Learned Helplessness</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Learned Helplessness</b>	521	2.15	1.05	3.20	2.16	0.30	<b>Low</b>

Table-5.1 presents the descriptive statistics of “Learned Helplessness Scale” Scores obtained by the faculties of higher education (considering both male and female as a whole) in the present study. In Learned Helplessness, the “minimum” of the scores was 1.05 and the “maximum” of the scores was 3.20 and the range was 2.15; the “mean” and “standard deviation” of the said distribution were 2.16 and 0.30 respectively.

Figure-5.1(a) depicts the histogram with normal curve of Learned Helplessness Scale Scores of the faculties of higher education considering male and female as a whole. By visually examining we come to know that the said distribution was about to normal (**Fein, Gilmour, Machin and Hendry, 2022**).



**Figure-5.1(a): Histogram with normal curve of Learned Helplessness Scale Scores of the faculties of higher education considering male and female as a whole**

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

Here discussion and conclusion of the present study are reported herewith.

### 6.1 Discussion on Descriptive Presentation

To prove the hypothesis (i.e., The faculties of higher education have high **Learned Helplessness**.) the following discussion is placed.

It was observed from table-5.1 that on an average the faculties of higher education expressed their low learned helplessness in their life.

**Hence, the hypothesis was rejected.**

Some common behaviours associated with learned helplessness includes avoiding decisions, bad attitude, giving up quickly, lack of determination, lack of motivation, poor self-esteem, procrastination, and reluctance to try. In the present study the higher education faculties experienced low learned helplessness. So, they may be able to take proper decisions, maintain positive attitude towards self and society, continuously facing challenges, tolerate frustration, be effortful, highly motivated, active participation in everything, high self-esteem, having punctuality and accept tasks.

In the present study samples were drawn from Government Aided General Degree Colleges and University. Here, no change can occur as per the wish of management. As it is managed by the Government directives. So, no unpredicted cause can contaminate their work environment. This fact may be justified for the low level Learned Helplessness of the faculties of higher education.

### 6.2 Conclusion

In accordance with the results and subsequent discussions of **Descriptive Presentation** of the present study it might be concluded that the faculties of higher education of Purulia district experienced low learned helplessness in their life. So, they might be able to take proper decisions, maintain positive attitude towards self and society, continuously facing challenges, tolerate frustration, be effortful, highly motivated, active participation in everything, high self-esteem, having punctuality and accept tasks.

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