Pandemic and Helplessness in Education: A Literature Analysis

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Abstract

The concept of learned helplessness was discovered by psychologists Martin Seligman and Steven F. Maier in 1967. They initially observed helpless behaviour in dogs that had undergone a classical conditioning experiment involving a mild electric shock immediately after hearing a sound. The dogs were then placed in a kennel with two compartments separated by a low barrier. In one compartment, the floor was electrified, and in the other, not. Dogs previously subjected to classical conditioning did not attempt to escape or avoid the shock by jumping over a small obstacle.

After this discovery, research on helplessness has been made to investigate helplessness in persons.

Consider an oft-cited example: a child who does poorly on school tests and assessments quickly believes that nothing he does will affect his educational performance. When faced with any didactic task, he may experience a sense of helplessness. Learned helplessness is a negative phenomenon because it affects the motivation of the student and of the teachers and, as a result, respectively, the school performance and the quality of the educational process.This phenomenon can seriously impact the quality of life and future personal development.

Learned helplessness has also been associated with several different psychological disorders. Depression, anxiety, phobias, shyness, and loneliness can all be exacerbated by learned helplessness.

The purpose of the research is to investigate helplessness in education processes. In particular, the investigation has been focused on the relationship between the pandemic and helplessness in teachers. First has been conducted a comprehensive review of all literature articles about helplessness in education to design a map of the correlation between education and helplessness. The research sample was constructed using google scholar articles by choosing the period after 2021. The Corpus analysis method has been used to elaborate a world cloud extracted from article titles and keywords. A meta-analysis has been made of the same scientific articles to investigate the helplessness and teachers during the pandemic. The results can serve as a future investigation of helplessness in education, focusing mostly on teachers as a vulnerable group during critical periods.

Keywords: helpelssness, education, teachers