

A STUDY OF PERSONALITY CORRELATES OF ZEIGARNIK PHENOMENON

Dr. Choudhary Sanjay Kumar Singh

Lecturer Deptt. of Psychology

Pt. Y.K.J. College, Bagahi

INTRODUCTION:

Desire to complete an assigned task is recognized as a basic motive in human beings. A task, that has a specific and predictable form, such as putting together a Jigsaw puzzle, climbing a mountain, or reading a mystery story, often arouses a drive to complete it once it is begun. The drive to finish a task becomes stronger as the end of the task is approached. This is known as goal-gradient in modern technology. If one is interrupted as he nears completion of the task he feels quite frustrated and annoyed and return to the task as soon as the interruption is over. The goal gradient principle of motivation is observed not only in short tasks but also in long term projects, such as, obtaining a University degree or writing a book, the for effort for which is resumed in spite of intermittent obstructions. The common aspect of human motivation attracted the attention of Lewin in the restaurant. He thought that any task, important or unimportant, generates tension in the person if he is asked to perform on it and the tension persists till it is completed. If the performance is interrupted the residual effect of tension continues. causing a superior recall of interrupted tasks in comparison to that of completed tasks. The drive to complete an assigned or adopted task has a persistent effect.

Kurt Lewin (1917) noted that the waiter of restaurant had a perfect memory of the bills of customers till they have paid the bill and thereafter the memory faded away. This simple incident raised big question marks as to why the waiter forgets the payable amount when the customers have made the payment and why he remembers the amount till they have not paid. Lewin assigned this peculiar findings to his student Bluma V. Zeigarnik for thorough experimental investigation leading to her Doctor degree. Lewin had theorized that payment of bills by the customers comprised completion of work assigned to the waiters, where as the unpaid bills meant uncompleted work for them. Paid and unpaid bills, in other words, were completed and uncompleted tasks respectively for the waiters. Lewin believed that assignment of any task to a person meant arousal of a tension system in him which persisted till the task was incomplete and subsided when the task reached completion.

Zeigarnik (1927), in Lewin's Berlin laboratory, gave the subjects a series of 20 simple, varied tasks, each calling a few minutes of work, Half of them were randomly interrupted and the other half were allowed to be completed.. At the end of the series the subjects were asked to recall as many as possible., of the 20 tasks. On the average 58 percent of the uncompleted tasks were recalled as against 42% of the completed tasks. Of course there were some exceptions where the subjects recalled about equal number of completed and interrupted tasks. The ratio of the recalled interrupted and recalled completed tasks (U/C) was called Zeigarnik Quotient which was preponderantly more than 1.00, even 2,3,4 or 5 with 1.55 as the median of

these ratios. The means of the individual ratios (U/C) were 1.90 in one experiment, while the ratio computed from the means of the numbers of completed and uncompleted tasks was 1.60.

In the early phase of researches on Zeigarnik effect two definite causal factors were identified the time gap between task-performance and recall as also the motivational factors. As stated earlier, an immediate recall of the performed tasks was essential to obtain Zeigarnik effect. The motivation factors was also found to be equally important in producing the effect if the subject develops a desire to reach completion and is interrupted, he may like to resume the task causing a superior recall of interrupted tasks. If, on the other hand, the S has become fearful on account of interruption treating the interruption as damaging: to his, self-esteem, he would like to forget the interruption as damaging to his self-esteem, he would like to forget the interrupted tasks, thus the U/C ratio will be lowered. Lewis and Franklin (1944) found that such college students who treated interruption as a sad comment on their ability showed even reversed Zeigarnik effect (recall of U < recall of C). This was confirmed by the studies of Glixman (1948).

PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESES

The empirical studies of the recall of completed interrupted task have two fold importance. Firstly, these studies have been instrumental in furnishing empirical evidences for and against two important theories of memory, viz, Freudian theory of repression of unpleasant experiences and Lewin's theory of tension systems. Secondly, studies of recall of interrupted tasks are important per se because these studies brought a number of factors which facilitate or obstruct the recall and resumption of the activities which remain uncompleted due to one reason or another.

Inspired by Lewin's idea of tension system Zeigarnik (1927) conducted a series of experiments. She gave a number of tasks to her subjects to perform. The subjects were allowed to complete half of the tasks and were interrupted on the remaining half. Zeigarnik found that the subject could recall greater number of unfinished tasks than finished ones. She argued that, this is why the unfinished tasks which injure the feelings of the subject arouse a tension system and this tension system leads them toward the completion of the task for its release or discharge. A "quasi-need" is established which presses itself towards the fulfillment of the task and so the uncompleted task is recalled better.

In fact the experimental study of memory and forgetting dates back to the ingenious studies of Ebbinghaus (1885) who made the first breach in the so called higher mental functions, higher than believed to be beyond the reach of experimental attack. As an association he framed nonsense syllables, a vowel in between two consonants, having no place in the dictionary, supposing them to be of zero association value for all learners. He developed associations by repeating the experience reaching it to complete mastery and then proceeded to measure the retention after different intervals of time by the saving method. The nonsense syllables as learning materials, the 'exact method' for learning the materials to complete mastery and the saving method for measuring the amount of retention shall ever blow the triumphant trumpet of their glorious ancestry in the great creative genius of Hermann Ebbinghaus. In this studies, learning turned out to be completely a product of repetition of experience and memory as the product of length of retention interval. Memory was declared as completely photographic and

forgetting the product of the period of disuse of the memory traces. The very first experimental attack on learning, memory and forgetting by Ebbing us yielded a highly accurate quantitative, atomistic, mechanistic and accociationistic picture which still enjoys the status of reference point for any experimental study in this area.

METHODOLOGY (RESEARCH DESIGN)

In fact the present research project started with the assumption that the Zeigarnik effect is a universal phenomenon under condition where the subject are made task-oriented or completion-minded with the hel of specially designed instruction or by arranging special type of work situation inducing competition and rivalry among the task-performers. If the task is made challenging, verbally or situationally, to the subjects, they are sure to recall larger number of interrupted tasks than the completed tasks. It is, therefore, not relevant for the present study to verify if the interrupted-completed recall ratio is more than 1.00. The present study proposes to examine-the effect of four independent variables social class economic class, sex and anxiety on I/C ratio. The dependent variable shall be the I/C ratio or the ratio between the recalled interrupted and recalled completed tasks by the subjects. There could have been some more dependent variables resulting form the interruption and completion of the task under performance, such as some autonomic reactions at the time of interruption of task, etc. The measurement of such dependent variable falls outside the purview of this research project.

SAM PLE:

In view of the above stated requirements of the sample it was decided to draw random sample of students from the institutions located within the corporation area of Darbhanga city. Rural or suburban dwellers were kept out of the sample in an other ox manner because the difference in the area of residence of the subjects might itself become a potent variable influencing the 1/C ratio or the Zeigarnik Quotient (ZQ) which is not permitted by the scope of the study. In order to obtain age group of 16-22 years in the subjects it was decided to select students from the undergraduate classes of different colleges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study intended to measure the difference in the recall of completed and interrupted tasks as a function of four independent variables, the social class difference, age difference, difference in the level of anxiety and the difference in the level of achievement motivation of the sampled groups. Social class difference was an inseparable social variable of all Indian people. Only two social classes, forward, and Harijan (Schedule casts) were measured in this study. The second independent variable in this study was age difference, a biological variable. Two age groups were involved in the study, school boys of 14 years or less and college boys of 1 years or more. The school boys belonged 9th and 10th classes and the college boys came from Part II and Part III classes. The age difference invariably brought difference in the educational level of the subjects which was ignored because the difference in education was not likely to have any effect on the performance and recall of cancelled letters, an extremely simple task.

The two psychological variables introduced in this study were the anxiety and achievement motivation of the Ss. High and low anxiety groups as well as the high and low need achievement groups were selected with the help of standardized scales described in the preceding chapter. Each of the 320 subjects falling in the 16 subgroups of 20 Ss each as per the 2x2x2x2 factorial design, was given 20 cancellation charts, half of which was to be completed and half to be interrupted in randomized order. The ratio between the recalled interrupted and recalled completed tasks was to serve as score of the individual subject. Each ratio was multiplied by 10 to convert the individual score into an integral value in order to make the data handling relatively convenient.

TABLE: 01

MEAN I/C X 10 (ALL 16 GROUPS, N =20)

FORWARDS			HARIJANS		
		-14 Yrs	17 Yrs. +	-14 Yrs.	17 Yrs +
ANXIETY	HA	7.20	8.09	8.05	8.79
	LA	10.72	15.45	10.77	17.59
	H nAch	13.80	15.30	11.1	16.63
	L nAch	9.22	8.85	8.21	10.16

As per the demand of the factorial design of the study (2x2x2x2x), the primary statistical tool for, arrangement, organization, classification and analysis of the data could best be the technique of ANOVA. However, for a systematic presentation of the statistical results the I/C x 10 mean scores, the SDs of all the 16 group means and also the SE of **all** Means were computed and presented in Table -01 respectively. A bird's eye view of these three tables gave a general picture of the relative size of the Zeigarnik Quotients in the from of the means of i/c ratio multiplied by 10, the dispersion of the individual scores around the means of the groups and also the reliability estimates of all the 17 groups, each group comprising of 20 Ss. All these three tables were given a factorial design shape. The two social classes, the two age groups, **the** two personality variables and the two levels of each personality variable could be seen well in these three tables.

Tables-4.05 indicated that the low anxiety and high need achievement groups produced relatively larger Zeiganik ratios in comparison to the high anxiety and low achievement groups Table-4.05 further indicated that the high need achievement groups made a larger Zeigarnik ratio than the **low** anxiety groups. The table further indicated that the high anxiety groups produced the poorest Zeigarnik effect

and that the low need achievement groups products Zeigarnik effect a bit larger than the high anxiety groups Further details of these three tables were to be taken up later.

REFERENCES

Ach, No. (1905) Ueber die willen statigkeit and das Denken:

In Historical Introduction to Modern Psychology. Murphy, G. (1949) Routledge and kegan Paul Ltd., London.

Alper. T.G. (1948)Memory for completed and incompleted tasks as a function of personality: Correlation between experimental and personality data Journal of personalit, 17, 104-134

Atkinson, J.W. & Raphelson, A.C. (1956). Individual differences Individual differences in motivation and behavior in particular situations Journal of personality 24,349-369

Auld, f. (1952). Influence of social class on personality test responses.

Psychological Bulletin (49)

Aaimi, F.B. (1996) An experimental study of retroaction in yoiung, middle aged and old subject. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, B.R.A. Bihar University, Muzaffarpur, Bihar.

Baddely, A.D. (1963) A Zeigarnik- like effect in the recall of anagram solutions Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 15. 63-64

Boguslavsky, G.W. (1951) Interrupted tasks and Learning Psychological Review 58, 248-255.

Boguslavsky, G.W. & Guthrie E.R. (1941) The recall of completed and interrupted activities : an investigation of Zeigarnik's experiment Psychological Bulletin 38, 575-76.

Brown, J.F. (1933) Uber Die Dymamischen.. Und Afekt Psychologie XIV Psychologic Forsch. 19, 2-26.

Drucker, A.J. and Remmers, H.h. (1952) Environmental determinants of bhasis difficulty problems. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology (47)

Dutta, S., and Kanungo, R.N. (1967) Retention of affective materials: a further verification of the intensity hypothesis. J.Pers. Social Psy. 5, 476-481.