

Unraveling Honesty and Social Desirability as Markers of Life Satisfaction: A Study on Lawyers.

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Abstract

In the public life, lawyer has been a conspicuous figure, a prominent person whose fidelity towards his/her profession can't be ignored. Though he/she carries conscience into his/her own life yet he/she is considered as unreliable and dishonest. So this profession is regarded as a devoid of moral superiority. With all these impressions in mind, the current study was designed to explore the level of honesty and social desirability among lawyers. Further honesty and social desirability were explored as markers of life satisfaction. A purposive sample of 150 lawyers both male and female aged 30 to 60 years was drawn from district court, Punjab & Haryana High Court, and Delhi High Court. For measuring their honesty Ashton and Lee's (2009) HEXACO PI-R inventory, for social desirability Gerbasi and Strahan's, (1972) social desirability scale were used and for life satisfaction Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin's (1985) Satisfaction with life scale were used. Descriptive, correlational and regression analyses were computed. The findings revealed the above average level of honesty, average level in social desirability & slight satisfaction with life. Further it was found that honesty was significantly positively correlated with life satisfaction. On the contrary social desirability was found negatively related with life satisfaction. Hence honesty emerged as predictor of life satisfaction. The current findings have the implications that honesty is the major resource for one's satisfaction with life

Keywords: Unraveling, Honesty, Social desirability, Markers, Life satisfaction, Lawyers

Legal profession is a high calling profession, embedded with the concept of “justice”. A “fair soul” is supposed to be inherited in this profession. As lawyer / public prosecutor/ judge has to be fair by showing his/ her preference to goodness over his/her personal desires and needs. Despite the self control over their natural needs they are also capable of controlling over their impulsiveness resulting in exhibiting courage and bravery (i.e. masculinity) which are the indicators of “wisdom”. Thus such a person is a wise man-a fair human, who is infact paradoxically the one, who is well aware that he/she can never be quite fair and also never will be. It is due to this cognitive dissonance which makes him/her fair one, because fairness is his/her life goal and moral commitment. In this way the person in the legal profession such as lawyers/ prosecutors/ judge have integrity in terms of Honesty, ethical behavior, persistence, active listening, self control or dependability (O’Net, 2015; Preiss, Mejzlikova, Ruda, Kramsky and Pitakova, 2015). There are mainly three approaches such as virtue(character based), deontological (principle based), and utilitarian (consequence based) reasoning to explain the phenomenon of honesty- where virtue based ethics are based on Aristotle’s concept of qualities of personal character which are necessary for leading a life of excellence. While deontological approach focuses upon Kant’s philosophy that there is universal rule which everybody has to follow. In other words, lying is never permissible irrespective of the consequences (Svara, 2015). In contrast utilitarian approach based on Betham(2001) and Mill’s(1993) perspectives that is an action is judged to be acceptable depending upon the consequences of its actions. In this way lawyer’s behavior is justifiable on the basis of utilitarian perspective. Therefore a person such a profession maintains the honour and dignity of the legal profession by securing an amicable spirit through compassion, confidence, and cooperation and by fair dealings with the clients. In this way as per Maslow (1970) such people have experienced the fulfillment of growth motivation i.e. needs for self esteem and self actualization thus through seeking the highest levels of personal growth and self expressions which can be seen through universal holistic thinking,

undistorted perceptions of reality, superior awareness of truth, service orientation, highly democratic and desire for the good of others. These characteristics as mentioned above are just contrary to the prevalent myth about lawyers. That “lawyers” as a class are dishonest”. They are generally described as manipulative, abusive and egoistical. Further it has been reported that bar leaders are generally obsessed with money making, a strong need for power, and an uncompromising drive to win. Such selfish lawyers experience the distress that comes with loss of conscience, intrinsic valuing and integrity resulting in a compulsion for more work, more money, and excessive alcohol or other addictive tendencies (Kriger,2005). Such so called profile may be explained on the basis of Maslow’s theory hierarchy, which emphasized that satisfaction in deficiency motivation i.e. lower needs viz needs for security, belongingness and gaining respect generally depend upon influencing other people and obtaining limited resources from the environment. Thus such people are therefore unlikely to manifest the same level of ethics and morality as others who are psychologically more mature.

Recently it has been reported that intrinsic motivation which focuses upon self directed action. which link fundamental life purpose hence higher humanistic needs leading to a state of satisfaction . Conversely extrinsic motivation is directed towards external rewards (viz. money, popularity, honors) and related to Maslow’s lower needs (Maslow, 1968) results in frustration (Sheldon and Kasser, 2001).

Social desirability is an another important substantive trait of personality which refers to an individual’s tendency to respond in a more socially desirable manner in certain situations (Richman, Weisband, Kiesler, & Drasgow, 1999). There are two dimensions of social desirability viz (1) self deception and (2) impression management. Self deception refers to an unconscious tendency to see oneself in a favorable light (both by promoting one’s positive qualities & disavowing negative qualities) whereas impression management is a conscious self – presentation tailored to external audience. Previous studies have revealed that lawyers have

higher tendency toward social desirability (Vujtech, Holas, and Zerman, 2002; Plato, 2014; O*net2015 and Preiss, Mejzlikova, Rudda, Kramsky and Pitakova, 2015). After understanding the constructs of honesty and social desirability among lawyers, their satisfaction with life was also studied.

Life satisfaction is an overall assessment of feelings and attitude about one's life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive. There are two perspectives of life satisfaction viz hedonic and eudiamonic. Hedoninic viewpoint refers to getting pleasure through gratification of senses e.g. fragrance of perfume and eudiamonic viewpoint refers to getting pleasure through the actualization of one's potential. There are mainly two factors such as subjective/ psychological/ intrinsic (viz autonomy, intimacy, a sense of altruism) and objective/ external (i.e. wealth, affluence, power and recognition) which affect the level of gratification with life among lawyers. In this way a wealth of studies have highlighted that intrinsic factor dominant external factors in seeking well-being / life satisfaction among lawyers (Lyubomirsky, 2001; Sheldon and Krieger,2007; Pink,2009 & Krieger,2011). There is a huge of empirical evidence which supported that lawyers are satisfied with their life (Wallace, 2009; Monahan and Swanson, 2009; Hasnain, Naz and Bano, 2010; Gamage,2013; Monahan and Swanson,2019).

Hence the role of honesty/ social desirability in determining the satisfaction with life among lawyers, a huge literature was consulted. There are plethora of studies have reported the positive correlation between honesty and life satisfaction among lawyers (Sheldon & Kasser,1996; krieger,2001; Sibley,2011; Visser and Pozzebon, 2013; Aghababaei & Arzi,2014; Aghababaei & Blachino,2015; Dangli & Nagle, 2015; Pollock, Noser, Holden, & Zeigler-Hill, V 2016).

Further there are a few number of studies which have revealed that social desirability is positively correlated with life satisfaction (Kozma and Stones, 1987; McCrae, 2002; Brajša-Žganec, Ivanović, & Kaliterna Lipovčan; 2011; Holder, 2012; Caputo, 2017). Thus there appears to be a scant literature exploring honesty and social desirability among Indian lawyers as

indicators of their life satisfaction, hence the following problem was selected for the current research work.

Problem

To assess and explore the relationship of honesty and social desirability with life satisfaction among lawyers.

Objectives

1. To assess honesty, social desirability and life satisfaction among lawyers.
2. To find out the correlation of honesty and social desirability with life satisfaction among lawyers
3. To investigate the predicting power of honesty and social desirability with regard to life satisfaction among lawyers.

Method

Sample

A purposive sample of 150 lawyers both male and female aged 30 to 60 years practicing in Trial courts, district court of Rohtak city, Punjab & Haryana High Court, and Delhi High Court with minimum 5 years of practice was selected for current research work.

Tools

1. HEXACO PI-R inventory(Ashton and Lee,2009)

It consists of 60 statements related to six factors of personality namely honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness (HEXACO). Out of six factors only one i.e. Honesty-Humility domain was considered for current research work, to be responded on a five point scale anchored by 1 = strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. The possible range of scores on this scale is 1 to 5. The test-retest reliability (over a period of 13 weeks) for honest-humility was found to be .66.

2. Social desirability (Gerbasi and Strahan,1972)

It consists of 10 items, to be responded in yes or no. Range of scores i.e. 0-10. Cronbach alpha is 0.70.

3. Life satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin 1985)

It consists of 5 items. Responding on 7 point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Range of scores 5-35. Test-retest reliability is 0.82 & Cronbach alpha is 0.87

Results and Discussion

The objective of the current study was to explore the honesty (personality trait), social desirability and life satisfaction among lawyers. Thus the obtained raw scores on honesty, social desirability and life satisfaction were analyzed by using descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS 20 and are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the scores obtained on honesty, social desirability and life satisfaction among lawyers

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range of Scores
Honesty	3.57	.511	1-5
Social Desirability	5.52	1.64	0-10
Life Satisfaction	21.68	7.61	5-35

From Table 1 it is quite apparent that lawyers have an average tendency of honesty thereby indicating the respect and faith of their clients towards them. Honesty among lawyers may be explained on the basis of utilitarian perspective as that action is judged to be acceptable depending on the consequences of actions. As the principle of publicity also emphasizes that a lie is morally justifiable only if it can be defended before a community of reasonable person (Bok, 1999). In other words it may be stated that the law governs conduct, not motives. It is the lawyer who unearths the real motive for the conduct of his/ her client. As lawyers believe in the policy of concealment which is no doubt though regarded as a 'deceit' for a common man yet it (deceit)

is one of the conditions of success in obtaining substantial justice for a client, hence it is regarded as a virtue rather than as fault in the legal profession. In this way there is an honorable consistency which has two standards of right or wrong i.e. one for legal profession and another for private life. Therefore it may be inferred that lawyers are capable of being their own custodians of morals. Further their honesty can be explained on the basis of principles of veracity which nodoubt emphasizes upon centrality of honesty and truthfulness but it doesn't necessarily means that all lies should be definitely ruled out. However, it does mean that, dishonesty to be morally justified as usually did by lawyers (della Porta & Vannucci, 2012). Further deception used by law enforcement is sometimes considered legitimate (Rutledge, 2007), however which is not necessarily ethical. Therefore the commitment to honesty in such a profession can deteriorate.

While observing Table 1 it has been noted that lawyers have an average tendency in a trait of social desirability. In other words they have moderate degree of desirable self presentation and a sense of social conformity neither too much unconsciously nor consciously bother about impression management in the society rather govern by their own custodians of morality. The present findings supported the previous findings of Vujtech et al. (2002); Plato, (2014); O*Net(2015). On the conversely Preiss et al. (2015) have reported that lawyers have more tendency toward social desirability than general population).

Further Table 1 reveals that lawyers are slightly satisfied with their lives. As satisfaction with life is based mainly on one's intrinsic pursuits and basic need satisfaction, hence current findings have highlighted that human needs/ intrinsic values/ motivations don't appear to be fully embodied by legal professionals in their later life which may be due to insecurity, and ignoring of deeper purposes while focusing more on extrinsic goals and desires for good pay, high grades, or prestige etc. Such external parameters on the surface level appear to be indicators of life satisfaction with life, but in reality this satisfaction is restricted to their own self and their

work, however less impetus is given to the growth of self, relationships and community which are actually the latent parameters of one's satisfaction with life. The high value of SD (i.e. 7.61) indicates the heterogeneity within the group as far as gratification with life is concerned. However earlier a number of studies have reported that lawyers are quite satisfied with their job (Wallace, 2009; Monahan and Swanson, 2009; Hasnain, Naz and Bano, 2010; Gamage, 2013; Monahan and Swanson, 2019) despite of their long working hours, conflicting role demands and stressors.

Further in order to achieve 2nd objective i.e. correlation between honesty and social desirability with life satisfaction among lawyers correlation analysis was computed and has been shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlation of honesty and social desirability with life satisfaction among lawyers (by using Pearson r)

Variable	Honesty	Life satisfaction
Honesty	1.00	.268**
Social desirability		-1.73*
Life satisfaction		1.00

**p<.01

*P<.05

The perusal of Table 2 shows that honesty is highly positively significantly correlated with life satisfaction ($r = .268^{**}$, $p < .01$) which indicates that lawyers life satisfaction is highly associated with their moral values. It is based on their own framework of right or wrong. The current findings are consistent with previous findings of Sheldon & Kasser (1996); Krieger (2001); Sibley (2011); Visser and Pozzebon (2013); Aghababaei & Arzi (2014); Aghababaei & Blachino (2015); Dangli & Nagle (2015) Pollock et al. (2016). Conversely the significant negative

correlation between social desirability and life satisfaction, thereby indicates that more the social desirability, less the life satisfaction. These findings show that fake self presentation is actually linked to dissatisfaction with life. In other words satisfaction is contingent upon what one actually does rather than what society demands Thus the present findings are opposed to previous findings which emphasizes that social desirability is positively correlated with life satisfaction (Kozma et al; 1987; McCrae, 2002; Zgance, 2011; Holder, 2012; Caputo, 2017).

In order to execute the 3rd objective of the study i.e. “To investigate the predicting power of honesty and social desirability with regard to life satisfaction among lawyers”. Regression analysis was computed & has been shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Honesty and social desirability as predictors of life satisfaction among lawyers (stepwise multiple regression)

Dependent variable	Independent variable	R	R²	Adjusted R	Std. error of estimate	B	F
Life Satisfaction	Honesty	.268	.072	.65	7.35	.268	11.41*

*p<.01

Excluded variable: social desirability

Dependent variable: Life satisfaction

The significant value of F in Table 3 reveals that honesty appears to be most potent predictor of life satisfaction among lawyers. The value of R² i.e. .072 indicates that 7.2% variance in life satisfaction may be predicted by honesty, while beta value i.e. (.268) relates to 26.8% increment in life satisfaction as correspondingly per unit increase in honesty level. Whereas social

desirability failed to predict life satisfaction. The current findings indicate that one's intrinsic moral values in terms of sense of honesty and ethical behavior especially actually lead to satisfaction with life among lawyer.

Conclusion

The present findings highlighted that lawyers are on an average honest persons; their deceptions are morally justified as they believe in policy of concealment. They are found to be socially desirable to some extent and slightly satisfied with their life which is primarily based on their "fair soul" which matters much then their tendency to respond in socially desirable manner. It is rightly striated that honesty is the real gem which shines the life.

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