



# Learned Helplessness among Temporary and Permanent Job Workers

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the prevalence of Learned Helplessness among Temporary and Permanent employees. A survey design was employed, collecting data from 60 employees (30 Temporary, 30 Permanent) across various industries. The Learned Helplessness Scale (LHS) was used in this study. Confirming the expectations, results revealed no significant differences in Learned Helplessness among Temporary and Permanent employees. Duration of exchange and job security did not affect relationships. These findings suggest that learned helplessness doesn't vary significantly between Temporary and Permanent employees and highlighting the need for further research into the psychological experiences of Temporary and Permanent workers. This emphasizing the importance of exploring alternative factors influencing Learned Helplessness in the workplace.

**IndexTerms - Learned Helplessness, Temporary Employees, Permanent Employees, Psychological Health, Employment Status.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary workforce is undergoing a transformation with an increasing number of temporary or contract employees, which has raised questions regarding their psychological health (Kalleberg, 2009; Virtanen et al., 2011). Learned helplessness (LH), which involves a perception of no control over outcomes (Seligman, 1975), can result in demotivation, decreased job satisfaction, and poor mental health (Abramson et al., 1978). Temporary employees, with uncertain employment and unsettled destinies, may be particularly vulnerable to LH (Benach et al., 2014). This study will compare learned helplessness levels among permanent and temporary employees in an effort to have a better understanding of the psychological dynamics in various forms of employment arrangements.

## Objectives

- To assess the level of Learned Helplessness among Permanent employees.
- To assess the level of Learned Helplessness among Temporary employees.
- To find out the significant difference in the mean score of Learned Helplessness based on employment status.

## Hypotheses

- There are no differences between the level of Learned Helplessness among Permanent employees.
- There are no differences between the level of Learned Helplessness among Temporary employees.
- There is no significant difference in the mean score of Learned Helplessness based on employment status.

## II. NEED OF THE STUDY.

The study of learned helplessness among temporary and permanent workers is crucial due to the growing temporary workforce and its potential negative impact on mental health. A number of researches on learned helplessness were examined. It was evident that most of the studies carried out in Learned Helplessness were in the combination of different variables and population. The chosen population i.e. Employee with distinct differences in their status of work were explored only in few studies. The research listed below provides insights and relevant information regarding learned helplessness in organizational contexts.

Carlson, D. S., & Kacmar, K. M. (1994) carried out "Learned helplessness as a predictor of employee outcomes" it shows the employees' inability to comprehend the connection between performance and effort could be one factor in their failure. Those who fit this description are regarded as the employee with learned helplessness.

Lennerlöf, L. (2020) examined "Learned helplessness at work" The result from the study shows that after the impacts of learned helplessness on motivation, cognition, and emotion, low self-esteem was comprised.

QOURRICH,et.al (2024) conducted the study on "The effect of learned helplessness on the psychological health of healthcare workers" was investigated using a cross-sectional survey approach. 141 Moroccan healthcare professionals served as

samples. The feelings of Learned Helplessness scale and the Psychological Health measurement scale were employed. The findings from this study showed a negative correlation between feelings of Learned Helplessness and psychological well-being at work. On the other hand, among healthcare professionals, psychological distress indicates a strong positive link with helplessness.

Rizvi, Y. S., & Sikand, R. (2020) conducted the study on “Learned helplessness at the workplace and its impact on work involvement” which revealed that identifying the Learned Helplessness issue is crucial for managers and supervisors since workers' work involvement level suffers when they feel helpless. Human resources (HR) professionals should concentrate on creating strategies that shift employees' negative thought patterns to constructive ones and assist in transforming learned helplessness into learned optimism.

Saxena, S., & Shah, H. (2008) conducted the study “Effect of organizational culture on creating learned helplessness attributions in R&D professionals” In the first stage, fifteen in person, unstructured interviews were conducted. A comprehensive survey was carried out using a standardised questionnaire for the primary course of study following the systematic evaluation of primary data. The OCTAPACE and LH scales, created by Pareek (1997) and Pestonjee and Reddy (1988), respectively, were employed. The study's central hypothesis is that one of the main factors contributing to the development of Learned Helplessness attributions is organisational culture.

Tayfur, O. (2012) investigated “The antecedents and consequences of learned helplessness in work life”. This review paper demonstrates how organisational structure, norms, procedures, and decision-making and initiative can all diminish employees' sense of control and increase their susceptibility to helplessness. The main organisational consequences of helplessness were identified as withdrawal, absenteeism, passiveness, turnover intention, and performance decrease. The basic premise of the study is that the organizational culture is one of the fundamental causes of creating learned helplessness attributions.

The existing literature highlights the significant impact of learned helplessness in workplace settings, emphasizing its detrimental effects on psychological well-being, work motivation, and organizational outcomes. Qourrichi et al. (2024) found that learned helplessness negatively correlates with psychological health among healthcare professionals, leading to distress. Lennerlöf (2020) and Rizvi & Sikand (2020) demonstrated how helplessness at work affects self-esteem, motivation, and work involvement, stressing the need for HR interventions. Carlson & Kacmar (1994) linked learned helplessness to employees' inability to connect effort with performance, while Tayfur (2012) and Saxena & Shah (2008) highlighted how organizational culture and structures foster helplessness, leading to withdrawal, absenteeism, and decreased performance.

However, while these studies extensively examine learned helplessness in various organizational contexts, a gap remains in understanding its prevalence and impact among temporary versus permanent employees. Given the differences in job security, benefits, and workplace expectations, temporary employees may experience learned helplessness differently than permanent staff. This study aims to investigate and compare the levels of learned helplessness in these two employment categories, providing insights for organizations to develop targeted interventions that mitigate helplessness and enhance employee engagement.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study used a quantitative survey research design with a descriptive and comparative approach. Simple random sampling was employed to select a sample of 60 staff members (temporary and permanent) of 30 each. Participants were over 20 years of age with a work experience of six months or more. The data were collected through a Google Form using the 24-item Learned Helplessness Scale of Pestonjee and Reddy (1988) with a reliability of 0.75. Statistical test, such as mean, standard deviation, and t-test, was utilized to test differences in Learned Helplessness by employment status.

The details are as follows;

#### 3.1 Theoretical framework

The data for the study were obtained through a survey method with a structured Google Form. The data source was direct responses from a sample of 60 employees consisting of 30 temporary and 30 permanent, who were randomly selected by simple random sampling. The participants provided voluntary responses for the survey comprising demographic questions and the Learned Helplessness Scale created by Pestonjee and Reddy (1988). This scale of 24 items was used to measure the degree of learned helplessness among the respondents. There is sufficient reliability and validity with this scale.

#### 3.2 Population and Sample

The sample of the study is comprised of adult workers within different industries and is demarcated as temporary or permanent workers. All the participants were over the age of 20 and had more than six months of job experience in their respective positions. This requirement ensured the participants had enough exposure to their work environment to experience potential psychological consequences of learned helplessness. The research especially excluded volunteers, unpaid employees, self-employed persons, and those who had less than six months of employment experience to ensure the appropriateness and uniformity of the information gathered.

##### 3.2.1 Inclusion Criteria

- Adults aged above 20.
- Employed either permanently or temporarily.
- Minimum of six months of work experience.

##### 3.2.2 Exclusion Criteria

- Volunteers or unpaid workers.
- Self-employed individuals.
- Employees with less than six months of work experience.

### 3.3 Data and Sources of Data

Using items from Pestonjee and Reddy's (1988) Learned Helplessness scale, Learned Helplessness was assessed. The 24-item learned helplessness scale was used. The construct validity and overall reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the scale with all items were 0.75. Scores range from 0 to 90 overall. Higher scores correspond to more Learned Helplessness. The data for the study were obtained through a survey method with a structured Google Form. The data source was direct responses from a sample of 60 employees consisting of 30 temporary and 30 permanent, who were randomly selected by simple random sampling. The participants provided voluntary responses for the survey comprising demographic questions and the Learned Helplessness Scale. This scale of 24 items was used to measure the degree of learned helplessness among the respondents.

### 3.4 Statistical tools

The major statistical tools employed in the study included the mean, standard deviation, and the independent sample t-test. The tools were used to compare the levels of learned helplessness for temporary and permanent workers and to ascertain if any differences witnessed were statistically significant.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Results of Descriptive Statics of Study Variables

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statics

Group	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Skewness	Kurtosis
Permanent Employees	30	80.47	79.5	60	0.36	-0.44
Temporary Employees	30	76.13	77.5	77	-0.58	-0.19

Table 4.1 The table shows descriptive statistics for Learned Helplessness of permanent and temporary workers. Permanent workers have a mean score of 80.47, just above the mean score of 76.13 for temporary workers, suggesting that permanent workers on average report experiencing a marginally greater level of Learned Helplessness. The standard deviation is 18.29 for permanent employees and 14.54 for temporary employees, which suggests that permanent employees' answers are more dispersed than those of their temporary employees. The median and mode provide indications of the most frequent and central tendency scores of the data. The median when it comes to permanent employees is 79.5, where half of the participants scored below and above it, which is very close to the mean and indicates a relatively symmetrical distribution. The mode is 60, which is the highest frequent score amongst permanent staff, and much lower than the median and mean, indicating there must be some low scores pulling the mode down.

For temporary staff, the median is 77.5 and also near to the mean (76.13), which is indicative of fairly even distribution. The mode is 77, indicating that this score was the most common among temporary workers and is very close to both the mean and median, which would indicate a more even and centralized distribution of learned helplessness scores in this category. The skewness of permanent and temporary employees is positive and negative. Kurtosis of both is platykurtic distribution. Overall, the data indicate moderate levels of Learned Helplessness in both groups, with variation in their experience.

Table 4.2: Level of Learned Helplessness among Temporary & Permanent Workers

Employment status	Number of samples	High	Moderate	Low
Permanent Employees	30	5	19	6
Temporary Employees	30	12	16	2

Table 4.2 The table shows the level of learned helplessness distribution—high, moderate, and low—between permanent and temporary employees. Among 30 permanent employees, 5 had a high level of learned helplessness, 19 had a moderate level, and 6 had a low level. Compared to that, out of 30 temporary workers, a higher number—12—exhibited high levels of learned helplessness, 16 had a medium level, and 2 only belonged to the low category. This suggests that whereas both groups, to a large extent, are in the moderate category, casual workers have a greater tendency toward high levels of learned helplessness than permanent workers, and possibly are more psychologically impacted by issues such as job insecurity or lack of control within the workplace. Hence the stated hypothesis “There is no difference in the level of Learned Helplessness among temporary workers” is rejected. To sum up there is a difference in the level of Learned Helplessness among temporary workers is accepted.

Table 4.3: Comparison among Permanent employees and Temporary employees

Group	t - value
Permanent employees' & Temporary employees	1.016

Table 4.3: We can deduct from the preceding table that there is no significant difference between mean of the two groups ( $t=1.016$ ). The findings indicate that there is no significant difference between the groups. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. The sample size may be too limited to detect the significant difference. Employment position may not be the sole factor contributing to Learned Helplessness; other factors could also play a role in this phenomenon. According to Tayfur (2012) and Saxena & Shah (2008) the organizational culture and structures impact Learned helplessness.

## V. CONCLUSION

The results of the study on Learned Helplessness among Permanent and Temporary employees indicate that there is no significant difference between the mean of the two groups which indicates that "There is no difference in Learned Helplessness among Permanent employees and Temporary employees". The result shows that moderate level of Learned helplessness was experienced by both the Temporary and Permanent workers. In order to overcome that various strategies can be employed. One among that was given by Abramson et al. (1978) to either stop the onset of helplessness or at the at least lessen its impact. One strategy is to change the estimated probability of the relevant event's occurrence. In this strategy, practitioners are suggested to reduce estimated likelihood for aversive outcomes and increase estimated likelihood for desired outcomes. Abramson et al. (1978) propose several strategies to either prevent the onset of helplessness or at least minimize its impact. One such strategy involves altering the perceived probability of a relevant event occurring. In this approach, practitioners are advised to lower the estimated likelihood of negative outcomes and increase the perceived likelihood of positive outcomes.

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