

## ABSTRACT

### OPTIMISM, ADVERSITY AND PERFORMANCE: COMPARING EXPLANATORY STYLE AND AQ

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Explanatory Style and Adversity Quotient (AQ) are two models that provide an explanation of the structure within which people make attributions about events. Although there are some differences, both models address the importance of remaining resilient in the face of adversity. This thesis explores the relationship between Explanatory Style and AQ and whether there are correlations between each of the constructs and performance in a high-adversity occupation, sales.

Explanatory Style and AQ correlated, with locus of control being the most important element linking the two models together. Control predicted performance as did attributing negative events to internal causes. The Explanatory Style model's assumption that internalizing negative events leads to helplessness and lack of control was not supported. Based on the results of this study, it appears that the AQ model may provide a more complete and consistent framework for identifying who is empowered and who is helpless.