



## Subjective wellbeing: Significance of hope and optimism

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### Abstract

The present study was aimed at examining the predictive relationship of hope and optimism with Subjective wellbeing (Life Satisfaction). The participants comprised of 150 married women. Satisfaction with Life Scale was used to measure Life Satisfaction. Hope and Optimism were measured by using items from Psychological Capital Questionnaire. Data were analyzed through regression. Results revealed that both hope ( $\beta=.806$ ,  $p=000$ ) and optimism ( $\beta=.407$ ,  $p=000$ ) predict life satisfaction in a significant manner. Thus, positive psychological resources like hope and optimism are indeed essential for enhancing one's life satisfaction. These attributes must be endorsed by psychologists, counselors, teachers, and parents in order to develop a positive and hopeful outlook on life.

**Keywords:** subjective well-being, hope, optimism

### Introduction

With the advent of Positive Psychology, a new road was opened by Seligman to researchers. Psychology was freed from the shackles of melancholic approach. This new approach is progressive and it believes in strengths of humans. The most important concept in positive psychology is Psychological Capital. Though PsyCap originated in the organizational behavior fields, it was not confined to organizations only. Recently PsyCap has been applied in health, education, sports, etc. PsyCap is a composite construct that comprises of positive psychological strengths like hope, resilience, optimism, self-efficacy, gratitude, etc. Though the founders of the concept of PsyCap included only four components based on empirical researchers. Some other factors might fit in. PsyCap may be defined as the resources possessed by an individual that may be crucial in determining his/her level of wellbeing. PsyCap may be regarded as a buffer against stressful situations as can be seen in many studies. After researching many factors, Luthans finally came up with four components namely hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience.

Hope has been regarded as an essential virtue of humans. Philosophers, thinkers and religious scholars have endorsed the concept of hope since ages. In religious texts also, hope has been mentioned and encouraged. The Holy Qur'an has termed such people as Unbelievers (Kafir).

"...and despair not of Allah's Mercy; surely none despairs of Allah's Mercy except the unbelieving people." (Surah Yūsf 12:87). Hope has been defined as the enduring belief in the attainability of fervent wishes.

Optimism simply refers to the power of thinking positively. Early philosophers and psychologists held negative views about Optimism. They treated Optimism as an illusion. They believed that Optimism is not conducive to healthy psychological functioning. However, during the 1960s and 1970s, cognitive psychologists demonstrated that Optimism is

a positive bias which is possessed in particular by psychologically healthy people against the cold reality. This positive thinking was then portrayed as an inherent quality possessed by people as a part of their basic nature, and that people have varying degrees of Optimism. Thus Optimism was treated as an individual difference with a focus on cognitively determined expectations and causal attributions.

The concept of Subjective well being was propounded by Ed Diener in 1999. Before its emergence, well-being was assessed in terms of social and economic indicators. Diener questioned this approach by arguing that these indicators provide a misleading and incomplete picture of wellbeing. He was of the view that personal evaluation or judgment is crucial in depicting wellbeing. Subjective Wellbeing is defined as 'a broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfaction, and global judgments of life satisfaction' (Diener *et al.*, 1999: p. 277). Subjective wellbeing comprises a cognitive component and affective component. Life Satisfaction is the Cognitive component of SWB and the affective component includes both absences of negative affect and presence of positive affect.

Life satisfaction is the cognitive evaluation of one's life over time. It is not confined to evaluation at a particular moment. Diener, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) define the concept of satisfaction with life as "a cognitive process of judgment through which individuals assess the quality of their life according to their own criteria". Life satisfaction is the sign of the satisfaction that is gathered from all areas of life. Life satisfaction has been found to be positively related to many personal characteristics and protective factors.

There is a plethora of research that indicates the positive role of PsyCap or its individual components in enhancing well-being. A growing body of theoretical and empirical literature suggests that having a hopeful and optimistic approach in life contributes to optimal human development in a variety of ways. Bailey, *et al.* (2007) <sup>[1]</sup>, conducted a study to explore the

Hope and Optimism constructs and their unique variances in predicting Life Satisfaction. Adult Hope Scale (Snyder, 1991), Life-Orientation Test-Revised (Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994), Quality of Life Scale (Frisch, 1994) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, 1985) were used. Agency, Pathway Life Orientation Test Optimism and Life Orientation Test Pessimism related significantly with Quality of Life Inventory and Life Satisfaction Scale. Correlations between the Hope subscales and Life-Orientation Test-Revised Subscales were stronger with the Global measure of Life Satisfaction. Agency Subscale of Hope Scale was the best predictor of Life Satisfaction.

Leung *et al.* (2005) [3], examined optimism and Life Satisfaction in late life. A sample of 117 elderly was taken. Optimism was found to predict life satisfaction both directly and indirectly through self-esteem.

**Methods**

**Sample**

The sample for the present study comprised of 150 women with age range of 35 to 45 from Srinagar Kashmir. Purposive Sampling method was employed to approach participants. Only educated women were included.

**Tools**

- **Satisfaction with life scale:** It was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin in 1985. It comprises of five items and participant is required to indicate his/her level of agreement with each statement on a seven-point scale ranging from strongly disagrees to strongly agree. Responses are summed to yield an overall score of life satisfaction. The maximum and minimum possible scores for this scale are 5 and 25 respectively. Research demonstrates acceptable psychometric properties for the SWLS; the Cronbach alpha of the SWLS was found to be 0.76 (Radhakrishnan & Chan, 1997).
- **Adult hope scale:** It was developed by Snyder *et al.* in 1995 [6]. It is a 12 item measure of respondent’s level of Hope. In particular, the scale is divided into two subscales: 1.Agency (i.e. goal-directed energy) and 2. Pathways (i.e. planning to accomplish goals). Out of 12 items, 4 make up Agency subscale and 4 Pathway subscale and the rest are fillers. Snyder, Harris, *et al.* (1991) reported coefficient alpha ranging from .74 to .84 for the total scale.
- **Life orientation test-R:** It was developed by Scheier and Carver in 1994. It comprises of 10 items. Three items are positively worded, three are negatively worded and rest are filler items. Overall optimism score is computed by

summing the scores positively worded items with the scores of negatively worded items.

**Procedure**

Initially, 200 women were approached and before giving questionnaires, the proper rapport was established. Assurance for the confidentiality of data was given to them. After getting consent from them, questionnaires were provided. Questionnaires were then scored as per the scoring instructions provided in manuals and subsequently, data were entered in Excel and exported to SPSS version 20.

**Statistical Analyses**

Data for present research was analyzed with the help of Descriptives, Bivariate correlations, and Stepwise regression analysis.

**Results**

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Life Satisfaction	150	6.00	25.00	18.46	4.89
Hope	150	5.00	20.00	14.43	4.23
Resilience	150	4.00	20.00	14.13	4.11

**Table 2:** Inter-correlation matrix of Life Satisfaction, Hope, and Optimism. Correlations

	Life Satisfaction	Hope	Optimism
Life Satisfaction	1	.806***	.801***
Hope		1	.881***
Optimism			1

\*\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

As depicted by the results of bivariate correlations in table 2, both hope and optimism are positively and significantly correlated with Life Satisfaction. Besides, optimism and hope are also positively correlated to each other. Thus, individuals with higher levels of optimism and hope will enjoy higher satisfaction with life as compared to those with low levels of hope and optimism.

**Regression Analysis**

Stepwise method for selecting the predictor variables for the regression model was considered suitable, as it is probably the most commonly used method. Table 3 exhibits the regression models considering the Life Satisfaction as the criterion variable and Hope & Optimism as predictor variables.

**Table 3:** Stepwise regression analysis

Model		Coefficients			t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients		
		B		Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.029	.846		5.947	.000
	Hope	.931	.056	.806	16.548	.000
2	(Constant)	4.153	.829		5.010	.000
	Hope	.517	.112	.448	4.602	.000
	Resilience	.485	.116	.407	4.185	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Life Satisfaction

After entering of hope and resilience in regression equation both survived and passed the criteria probability to enter. As indicated by significant beta values, both variables predicted life satisfaction significantly and positively. Hope emerged as the stronger predictor ( $\beta=.806, t=16.548, p=.000$ ) than optimism ( $\beta=.407, t=4.185, p=.000$ ). Therefore, positive and hopeful attitude towards life predicts the satisfaction with life.

### Discussion

In the current study, it was hypothesized that hope and optimism would predict Life Satisfaction. Results indeed depicted a strong predictive relationship of hope and optimism with Life Satisfaction. The findings of the current study are in accordance with earlier researchers. In 2007, Bailey, *et al.* [1] found a strong predictive relationship between hope and life satisfaction. At middle age, women face different challenges. Some researchers have coined the term midlife crises to address the problems of middle age. During this phase of life, many factors determine the extent to which a woman feels satisfied with her life. Among many factors, positive strengths are essential. The presence of these positive strengths boosts positive functioning and reduces negativity. Besides, these strengths help women at this age to appraise the situations in a positive way. The women who remain hopeful and who have optimistic view of life are the ones who are satisfied with their lives.

### Implications

Health practitioners, physicians, and even family members can to a greater extent help women in this crucial middle age by boosting their internal positive strengths. Besides supplements, women in this age require a positive outlook on life in order to live a satisfied life.

### Limitations

- The small sample size for the present study was 150 women. Future research could replicate this study with larger samples.
- This study was confined to women of middle age. Future research could include both men women from different age groups.
- This study was cross-sectional in design. Future researchers could go for longitudinal studies with these variables.
- Only hope and optimism were examined in the present study. Other positive psychological strengths like resilience, self-efficacy, gratitude, etc could be examined for their role in determining life satisfaction.

### References

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