

Optimism, happiness, and self-esteem among university students

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The present study intended to examine the level of optimism, happiness, and self-esteem among University students. Further, the study strived to find the correlation between the variables. This study consisted sample of 60 University students with equal number of male and female participants, selected through purposive sampling technique. The life orientation test revised (LOT-R) by Scheier, Carver, and Bridges (1994) Oxford happiness questionnaire (OHQ) developed by Hills and Argyle (2002), and Self-esteem scale constructed by Rosenberg (1965) were used to measure optimism, happiness, and self-esteem respectively. For statistical analysis Mean, t-Test, and Pearson Correlation were applied by using SPSS 20.0 version. The results revealed that male and 20-24 years old students have high level of optimism, happiness, and self-esteem than female and 25-28 years old students. Significant difference was found between the mean scores of male and female students in respect to their optimism, happiness, and self-esteem, whereas insignificant difference was found between the mean scores of 20-24 years old and 25-28 years old students in respect to their optimism, happiness, and self-esteem. Further results also revealed that there is positively significant correlation between optimism, happiness, and self-esteem. Concurrently, gender is negatively significant correlated with optimism, happiness, and self-esteem, whereas age was found negatively insignificant correlated with optimism, happiness, and self-esteem respectively. On the basis of the findings of the present study we may conclude that gender has an influential impact on optimism, happiness, and self-esteem, whereas age does not.

Keywords: optimism, happiness, self-esteem, gender, and age

The term optimism was introduced by Scheier and Carver (1985) according to them optimism is the global generalized tendency to believe that one will generally experience good versus bad outcomes in life. Optimistic people expect that good things will happen and pessimists expect bad things will happen to them. Thus, a person presumes that when a goal is important he or she will act to reach the desired goal, hoping for the positive outcomes (Scheier & Carver, 1985-1993).

Happiness is commonly defined as a state of wellbeing, associated with experiencing pleasures and feeling good. It is an elusive, affective or enthusiastic state, characterized by feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction. Argyle et al. (1989) reported that happy people are those who have average level of satisfaction over a specific period. Happy people perceive the world as safer and feel more confident, they are cooperative, tolerant and make sound decisions. Happiness, as described by Martin Seligman is having three constituent parts viz pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Pleasure includes the "feel-good" part of happiness. Living a good life of family, work, friends, and hobbies refers to engagement. Meaning refers to the use of an individual's strengths and potentials to contribute to a large purpose. Myers (1992) exhibits that happiness promotes success in different areas of human functioning. Happy people are efficient, active, and productive in their work, they earn better income (Argyle, 2001). They are more positive and optimistic toward others (Seligman, 2002). Also they enjoy better physical, emotional, as well as mental health, and cope effectively with daily stressors than their counterparts (Vaillant, 2000).

Self-esteem is the individual's personal opinion about him or herself and appreciation of his/her worth. It is a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the self. It essentially means how much a person values his or herself and how important he/she thinks is in this world. It is how a person sees him/ herself and how he /she feel about his/ her accomplishments (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem is one's general feelings of self-worth (Bong & Clark, 1999). Self-esteem is a principal component of mental health; it has pervasive and powerful impact on human cognition, emotion, motivation, and behavior (Campbell & Lavelle, 1993). People with high level of self-esteem are likely to seek and receive more social support, experience low levels of stress and employ more adaptive coping strategies, which in turn promote good health (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012).

Optimism, happiness, and self-esteem are important aspects of psychological wellbeing; they have unavoidable and intense effect on student's academic performance, emotion, interest, motivation, and behavior.

Empirical evidence shows that optimism, pessimism, self-esteem, and happiness have significant effects on physical and mental well-being (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 2001). Optimism is associated to higher academic performance (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992); better professional performance (Long, 1993); has positively correlated with psychological well-being, individuals' success, academic achievement, and extraversion (Shaheen, 2015; Shepperd, Maroto, & Pbert, 1996; Norem & Chang, 2002). Optimists displayed better task performance in various domains than pessimists (Robbins, Spence, & Clark, 1991). Within this context, optimism is seen as a behavioral strategy that allows people to be happier, more successful and healthier in their lives (Lopez & Snyder, 2003). Significant relationship was also found between optimism and happiness.

Further, results indicated that positivism predicts happiness significantly (Hills & Argyle, 2001) simultaneously happiness is strongly associated with optimism (Gorsy & Panwar, 2016). On the other hand, self esteem has positively correlated with happiness, and optimism (Baumeister, Jennifer, Joachim, & Kathleen, 2003; Bastianello, Pacico, & Hutz, 2014). Low self esteem is related with serious behavioral problems like maladjustment, suicidal tendencies and also leads to various psychological problems like stress, anxiety, loneliness, depression etc. (Bhattacharjee & Deb, 2007; Manani & Sharma, 2013; Leary, 2004). Moksnes and Espnes (2012) highlighted that levels of self esteem increased with age, results also revealed that males report higher self esteem than females across all age groups. Saleem and Rafique (2012) also found gender differences in self esteem and procrastination. Males have significantly higher level of self esteem than females (Nupur & Mahapatro, 2016; Parmar, 2014; Wani et al., 2016). On the basis of above literature, the researcher selected the problem to investigate the level of optimism, happiness, and self esteem among university students with following, objectives and hypotheses.

Objectives of the study

- To find the level of optimism, happiness, and self esteem among male and female university students
- To find the level of optimism, happiness, and self esteem among 20-24 years and 25-28 years old university students.
- To find out the correlation between variables.

Hypotheses of the study

- H1:* There would be significant difference found between optimism, happiness, and self esteem among male and female university students.
- H2:* There would be significant difference found between optimism, happiness, and self esteem among 20-24 years and 25-28 years old university students.
- H3:* Significant correlation would be found between optimism, happiness, and self esteem.
- H4:* Gender would be significantly correlated with optimism, happiness, and self esteem.
- H5:* Age would be significantly correlated with optimism, happiness, and self esteem.

Variables

In the present study experimental variables are, gender and age, criterion variables are optimism, happiness, and self esteem.

Method

Participants

The present study was conducted on a sample of 60 university students equally divided into two groups on the basis of gender (males & females). Further these two groups were equally subdivided into two more groups on the basis of age (20-24 years & 25-28 years), selected through purposive sampling technique.

Inclusion Criteria

- Only university students were taken in the study.
- Participants between the age group of 20-28 years old.
- Both Male and Female students were included.
- Students from social sciences were included.

Exclusion Criteria

- Students from Science and engineering course were excluded.
- Family pattern of participants was excluded.
- Socioeconomic status of participants was excluded.
- Religion of the participants was also excluded.

Instruments

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: The oxford happiness questionnaire (OHQ) developed by Hills and Argyle (2002) scale consists of 29 items , Each item has five response alternatives namely not at all true, slightly true, true, very true, and extremely true.

Self Esteem Scale: Self esteem scale constructed by Rosenberg (1965) the scale is a ten item Likert scale with items answered on a four point scale, from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. Reliability of the test was found through test-retest (.82 to .88) and Cronbach's alpha (.77 to .88) respectively. The scale ranges from 0-30, with 30 indicating the highest score possible. Scores between 15 to 25 indicates normal level of self esteem and scores below 15 indicates low self esteem.

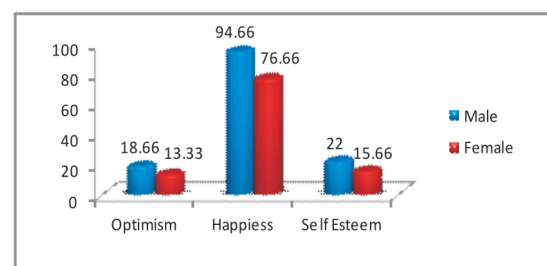
The Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R): The Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R) developed by Scheier and Carver (1985) revised by Scheier, Carver, and Bridges (1994). It consists of 10 statements (3 positively, 3 negatively and 4 filter items). Only 6 items are scored, other four filler items are not used for scoring purpose. These six items are scored as 0 = Strongly Disagree, 1= Disagree, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Agree, and 4=Strongly Agree. Cronbach's alpha (0.78) and test retest (0.68 to 0.79) method was used to measure the reliability of the test.

Procedure

The study was conducted in Annamalai University Annamalainagar Tamil Nadu on a sample of 60 students, selected through purposive sampling technique. Prior to administrating the questionnaires among students, proper rapport was established and they were informed about the purpose of meeting. During the administration process researcher helped those students who had difficulty in understanding the statements, after 20-30 minute the participants handed over the questionnaires to the researcher and were thanked for their cooperation. Therefore, the data was collected, after that obtained data was arranged in tabular form, then systematically analyzed by applying Mean, t- test, and Pearson Correlation by using SPSS 20.0 version.

Results

The main findings of the present study are shown in tables given underneath.



Graph 1: Showing gender wise mean scores of optimism, happiness and self esteem

Table 1: Gender wise mean, S.D, SEM, and t- value of optimism, happiness, and self-esteem scores of university students

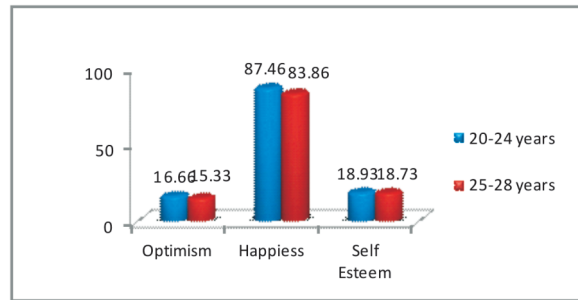
Variable	Gender	No	Mean	S.D	S.E.M	df	t-value
Optimism	Male	30	18.66	3.11	.56	58	7.24**
	Female	30	13.33	2.56	.46		
Happiness	Male	30	94.66	16.24	2.96	58	3.94**
	Female	30	76.66	19.02	3.47		
Self Esteem	Male	30	22.00	3.65	.66	58	6.54**
	Female	30	15.66	3.83	.70		

** Significant at the 0.01 level

Table 2: Age wise mean, S.D, SEM, and t- value of optimism, happiness, and self-esteem scores of university students

Variable	Age	No	Mean	S.D	S.E.M	df	t-value
Optimism	20-24	30	16.66	3.99	.72	58	1.33 NS
	25-28	30	15.33	3.75	.68		
Happiness	20-24	30	87.46	18.67	3.40	58	.703 NS
	25-28	30	83.86	20.92	3.82		
Self Esteem	20-24	30	18.93	4.93	.90	58	.157 NS
	25-28	30	18.73	4.94	.90		

** Significant at the 0.01 level



Graph 2: Showing age wise mean scores of optimism, happiness and self esteem

Table 3: Correlation between gender, optimism, happiness, and self-esteem

	Gender	Optimism	Happiness	Self Esteem
Gender	1	-.689**	-.460**	-.652**
Optimism	-.689**	1	.532**	.566**
Happiness	-.460**	.532**	1	.436**
Self Esteem	-.652**	.566**	.436**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4: Correlation between age, optimism, happiness, and self-esteem

	Age	Optimism	Happiness	Self esteem
Age	1	-.172	-.092	-.021
Optimism	-.172	1	.532**	.566**
Happiness	-.092	.532**	1	.436**
Self Esteem	-.021	.566**	.436**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Discussion

This study clearly demonstrated that male and 20-24 years old students have high level of optimism, happiness, and self esteem than female and 25-28 years old students. The obtained mean scores of male students in optimism, happiness, and self esteem are more than female students. The mean, S.D, and SEM of male students was found [(optimism, M = 18.66, S.D = 3.11, SEM = .56), (happiness, M= 94.66, S.D = 16.24, SEM = 2.96) and (self esteem, M = 22.00, S.D = 3.65, SEM = .66)]. Respectively the mean, S.D, and SEM of female students was found [(optimism, M = 13.33, S.D = 2.56, SEM = .46), (happiness, M= 76.66, S.D = 19.02, SEM = 3.47) and (self esteem, M = 15.66, S.D = 3.83, SEM = .70)]. The obtained t-value's of optimism, happiness, and self esteem of the same group was found (4.24), (3.94) and (6.54) respectively with df 58, all these values are more than tabulation value at 0.01 level of significance, hence first hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it can be said that there is significant difference between optimism, happiness, and self esteem among male and female university students. Studies by Wani et al. (2016); Nupur and Mahapatr (2016); Parmar (2014); Nupur and Agarwal (2013); Saleem and Rafique (2012); Bcahman et al. (2012) and Moksnes and Espnes (2012); and Sherina et al. (2008) also found same results.

Results confirmed that there is insignificant difference found between optimism, happiness, and self esteem among 20-24 years and 25-28 years old university students, as obtained t-value's of all three variables [(optimism = 1.33), (happiness = .703) and (self esteem =.157)] are found insignificant at 0.05 level in t-table. Therefore, second hypothesis is rejected. The mean, S.D, and SEM of optimism, happiness, and self esteem scores of 20-24 years old students was found [(optimism, M = 16.66, S.D = 3.99, SEM = .72), (happiness, M= 87.46, S.D = 18.67, SEM = 3.40) and (self esteem, M = 18.93, S.D = 4.93, SEM = .90)]. The mean, S.D, and SEM of 25-28 years old university students was found [(optimism, M = 15.33, S.D = 3.75, SEM = .68), (happiness, M= 83.86, S.D = 20.92, SEM = 3.82) and (self esteem, M = 18.73, S.D = 4.94, SEM = .90)] respectively.

Further findings divulge that there is positive significant correlation between optimism, happiness, and self esteem as the obtained values .532, .566, and .436 were found significant at 0.01 level. Simultaneously, gender was also significantly negative correlated with optimism, happiness, and self esteem, the obtained values of these three variables -.689, -.460, and -.625 were also found significant at 0.01 level. Therefore, third and fourth hypotheses are accepted. These findings are consistent with the results proposed by Baumeister, Jennifer, Joachim, and Kathleen (2003) Bastianello, Pacico, and Hutz (2014); Hills and Argyle (2001); and Gorsy and Panwar (2016). Whereas age was found insignificantly correlated with optimism, happiness, and self esteem as the obtained values (-.172, -.092, & -.021) were found less than tabulation value at 0.05 level respectively. Moreover, the fifth hypothesis is rejected. Hence, it can be stated that age is negatively insignificantly correlated with optimism, happiness, and self esteem.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that there is significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students in respect to their optimism, happiness, and self esteem respectively. Whereas insignificant difference was found between the mean scores of 20-24 years old and 25-28 years old

students in respect to their optimism, happiness, and self esteem. Results also affirmed that there is positive significant correlation between optimism, happiness, and self esteem. Further, gender shows negative significant correlation with optimism, happiness, and self esteem. Whereas age was found negatively insignificant correlated with optimism, happiness, and self esteem respectively.

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