

**How to Cite:**

Rawat, R., Mahapatra, M., & Bhardwaj, G. (2022). Role of optimism in attitude towards self. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S6), 1929–1936.  
<https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS6.10052>

## Role of optimism in attitude towards self

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**Abstract**--Optimism has proven to be an effective coping and recovery tool in many situations. The review suggests a wide variety in the revealed predominance of psychiatric morbidity and behavioural issues in Indian adolescents. Will optimism be regulative in the self-punitive attitudes of depressed adolescents? Self-punitive attitudes involve- holding overly high standards, being self-critical at any failure to perform well, and generalizing from a single failure to a broader sense of self-worth, which is usually characteristic of depressed people. The current study aims to understand the role of optimism in the Indian urban older adolescents' attitudes towards self. A sample of one hundred and ninety-two older adolescents (50% males and 50% females) aged between fifteen to nineteen years residing in the Noida region of NCR Delhi, was taken for this study. Results revealed that optimism has a significant negative association with self-criticism and generalization. Furthermore, maximum likelihood estimates indicated that optimism significantly predicts self-criticism and generalization. Although no significant effect or association was observed on high standards, optimism may play a vital role in preventing adolescents' cognitive contaminants of depression.

**Keywords**---optimism, adolescents, depression, self-criticism, generalization, high standard.

### Introduction

With the advancement of positive psychiatry in the modern era, the four-component approach has been an effective direction for professionals. Proposed by Jeste et al. (2015), it involves the four elements of positive psychiatry that could benefit the non-clinical population. The first component is the positive

mental health outcome, which includes well-being, low level of perceived stress, successful psychosocial aging, post-traumatic growth, recovery from significant mental illnesses, and prevention of mental illness. The second is the positive psychosocial characteristics. It includes- positive psychosocial traits and environmental factors. The third component is the biology of positive psychology constructs, which includes- potential biomarkers of positive mental health, general biology of the positive psychosocial traits, and neurocircuitry of positive psychosocial characteristics. Finally, the fourth one is positive psychiatry interventions, including preventive ones.

It is observable that some positive psychosocial traits do not just hold distinctive importance as a component, but they are essential for the intervention. The future-oriented trait, especially optimism, is the requirement of the therapeutic encounter. It is a vital building block of well-being (Bhui, 2014). Having numerous significance and applications, it might altogether impact mental and physical well-being by advancing a solid way of life, versatile way of behaving, and cognitive responses (Conversano et al., 2010). The review suggests a constructive outcome of optimism on pain (Goodin and Bulls, 2013), cardiovascular illness (Rozanski, 2014), and ongoing infection treatment (Schiavon et al., 2017). Proof proposes that mental mediations that lift optimism can advance mental and actual wellbeing (Blackwell et al., 2013). Meta-scientific examinations report that optimism is a huge indicator of positive physical health outcomes (Rasmussen et al., 2009) and is related to post-traumatic recovery (Prati and Pietrantonio, 2009). Research too proposes that positive it might have helpful well-being-related results among disease survivors (Taber et al., 2016). Optimism is a belief that beneficial things will occur in the future (Vanden Bos, 2015). A portion of the early deals on optimism incorporates review research results from the Gallup surveys which uncovered the positive thinking of thirty nations for more than 10 years (since 1976). The review proposed that most people are not an optimist about their immediate future (Michalos, 1988). One more study was done on American and Soviet young people in 1990 recommending that they were stressed over the atomic conflict which impacted their optimism (Tudge et al., 1990).

There are around six frameworks of optimism. The first and the most generally acknowledged is Scheier and Carver's dispositional optimism. It's a tendency to believe that more desirable things will happen in the future (Scheier and Carver, 1985). The second is Weinstein's unrealistic optimism which depicts the goal crisscrossing between assumptions for dispositional good faith and also actuarial proof about the likelihood of life occasions happening (Weinstein, 1989). The third system explains optimism as a style of reasoning about the cause and that this process can be learned or cultivated (Seligman, 1992). The fourth framework is realistic optimism which includes keeping an uplifting perspective inside the limitations of the accessible quantifiable peculiarities in the physical and social world (Sneider, 2001). The fifth framework, which presents the relativity of positive expectancy for oneself contrasted and a comparable other, is the comparative optimism (Klein and Radcliffe, 2002). At last, the sixth one is strategic optimism by Ruthig and associates. It is a space explicit forswearing of hazards given a conviction in having control (Ruthig et al., 2007).

Optimism has proven to be an effective coping and recovery tool in many situations. Some of the early evidence shows that it is inversely correlated with dysphoria and confers resistance to depressive symptoms during stressful life changes (Carver and Gaines, 1987). The review suggests a wide variety in the revealed predominance of psychiatric morbidity and behavioral issues in Indian adolescents (Aggarwal and Berk, 2014). Will optimism be regulative in the self-punitive attitudes of depressed adolescents? Self-punitive attitudes involve holding overly high standards, being self-critical at any failure to perform well, and generalizing from a single failure to a broader sense of self-worth, which is usually characteristic of depressed people. (Carver and Ganellen, 1983). Acknowledging the importance of optimism as an essential psychological trait for growth and wellbeing, this paper attempts to understand the role of optimism in the Indian urban older adolescents' attitudes towards self. The following non-directional alternative hypotheses have been framed to achieve this aim-

- H1: There is a significant association between the optimism and high standards of the urban older adolescent students.
- H2: There is a significant association between the optimism and self-criticism of the urban older adolescent students.
- H3: There is a significant association between the optimism and generalization of the urban older adolescent students.
- H4: Optimism has a significant impact on the self-criticism and generalization of the urban older adolescent students.

### **Research Methodology**

- **Life orientation test-revised (LOT-R):** This six-item tool measures dispositional optimism. It has an internal consistency of 0.78, and test-retest correlations of 0.79, along with an acceptable level of validity and cultural fairness. It has a five-point response scale from (0) strongly disagree to (4) strongly agree. Item three, seven, and nine have reverse scoring (Scheier et al., 1994).
- **Attitude towards self (ATS):** This ten-item tool measure measures three constructs- holding overly high standards, the tendency to be self-critical at any failure to perform well, and the tendency to generalize from a single failure to a broader sense of self-worth. Besides having an acceptable level of validity and cultural fairness, alpha reliabilities in these samples were on average .76 for the High Standards Scale, .78 for the Self Criticism Scale, and .78 for the Generalisation Scale. It has a five-point response scale from (1) I agree a lot to (5) I disagree a lot. All items have reverse scoring except for item five (Innamorati, M. et al., 2013).

### **Participant**

This non-invasive study posed no more than minimal risk, and a consent form was taken from all the interested participants before data collection (Committee on Revisions to the Common Rule for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research in the Behavioral and Social Sciences et al., 2014). Following a non-probability representation basis along with a restricted element selection technique, the study involved a purposive sampling approach (Kothari, 2004). A

sample of one hundred and ninety-two older adolescents (50% males and 50% females) residing in the Noida region of NCR Delhi, was taken for this study. Participants were aged between fifteen to nineteen years (Mean age= 17.0156, SD= 1.40111). All of them lived in an urban area with an annual family income above 4 Lakh INR per annum.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

For this study, the responses were collectively scored through Microsoft Excel 2019. IBM SPSS Statistics v26 is used for calculating descriptives and testing the normality to deploy a suitable correlational analysis. IBM SPSS AMOS v24 is used for calculating the maximum likelihood estimates to study the impact.

### **Results**

#### **Normality**

The variables optimism, high standards, self-criticism, and generalizations were not distributed normally. A Shapiro- Wilk's test ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965; Razali & Wah, 2011) showed that all the variables were not normally distributed for the study sample, with skewness of -0.328 (S.E.= 0.175) and kurtosis of 0.155 (S.E.= 0.349) for the high standard scores, skewness of -0.055 (S.E.= 0.175) and kurtosis of -0.676 (S.E.= 0.349) for the self-criticism scores, skewness of -0.015 (S.E.= 0.175) and kurtosis of -0.965 (S.E.= 0.349) for the generalization scores, and skewness of -0.382 (S.E.= 0.175) and kurtosis of 0.498 (S.E.= 0.349) for the task performance scores (Cramer, 1998; Cramer & Howitt, 2004; Doane & Seward, 2011).

#### **Correlation Analysis**

Results of Spearman's rank-order correlation revealed that optimism has a significant negative association with self-criticism ( $\rho = -0.395$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and generalization ( $\rho = -0.497$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The association was positive but not significant with high standards ( $\rho = 0.053$ ,  $p > 0.05$ , 0.01).

#### **Maximum Likelihood Estimates**

The model holding optimism as a predictor and, high standards, self-criticism, and generalization as a criterion fits well ( $\chi^2 = 76.824$ ,  $DF = 3$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Optimism had a significant ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.038$ ) negative impact on self-criticism with an unstandardized regression weight of -0.209 and a standardized regression weight of -0.366. It explained about 13.4% of the variance in self-criticism ( $R^2 = 0.134$ ). A significant ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.063$ ) negative impact on generalization was seen with an unstandardized regression weight of -0.473 and a standardized regression weight of -0.476. It explained about 22.7% of the variance on generalization ( $R^2 = 0.227$ ). No significant impact was seen on the high standards.

## Discussions

The current study aims to determine the role of optimism in urban older adolescents' attitudes towards self. Results revealed that with an increase in optimism, self-criticism and generalization decrease while the high standards remain unaffected or stable. Consequently, the first hypothesis- 'there is a significant association between the optimism and high standards of the urban older adolescent students' is rejected. Furthermore, the second hypothesis- 'there is a significant association between the optimism and self-criticism of the urban older adolescent students' and the third hypothesis- 'there is a significant association between the optimism and generalization of the urban older adolescent students' are accepted. Results also suggested that with every unit increase in optimism, there is around 13.4 percent and 22.7 percent negative impact on self-criticism and generalization, respectively. Hence our fourth hypothesis- 'Optimism has a significant impact on the self-criticism and generalization of the urban older adolescent students' is accepted.

Besides being a significant predictor of mental health, optimism is significantly associated with positive mental health domains. How adolescents view themselves and their future may help them cope effectively with their normative life-course challenges and various parental, societal, and peer influences that cause them distress (Boro et al., 2019). The current study revealed how efficiently optimism can affect self-punitive attitudes, which is a key characteristic of a depressed person. Research on Indian university students reported a significant positive correlation between optimism and psychological well-being, with no significant gender difference existing between the two (Parveen et al., 2016). Such evidence is helpful for a counselor to understand the therapeutic efficacy of optimism. Most importantly, optimism helps in the development of career goals and expectations. It motivates the students to remain engaged in such activities, despite the adversities (Patton et al., 2004). In countries like India, mental health problems are widespread among adolescents (Reddy, V. 2019), and school-based mental health services are actively desired. Evidence-based interventions and scientific literature can help counselors to identify and treat adolescents with different levels of mental health needs (Parikh et al., 2019). Including optimism training along with other activities like mentoring or educational encouragement can help cultivate positive psychological strengths and subjective well-being (Khan, 2012) to ensure India's better future.

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