

How to Cite:

Shahzadi, S., & Khan, W. (2022). Impact of perceived social support and optimism on life satisfaction among women: Moderating role of social status. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S3), 8189–8201. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS3.7963>

Impact of perceived social support and optimism on life satisfaction among women: Moderating role of social status

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Abstract---Research demonstrates that social status is a significant predictor of life satisfaction, both directly and via its mediating effect on life satisfaction's antecedents. Thus, the proposed study approach posits that social status mediates the association between life satisfaction and its two variables (optimism and perceived social support). Moreover, such research has mostly been conducted in Western contexts, necessitating research in India. In addition, our effort focuses on women, since they suffer a number of health-related issues that need investigation. This research used a quantitative and causal approach. This research comprised 513 questions as a sample. For data collection, an online survey was administered to working women in various sectors in the Union Territory of J&K. SEM analysis validates all seven assumptions (structural equation modelling). This work provides vital implications for many stakeholders.

Keywords---social status, life satisfaction, optimism, perceived social support, women.

Introduction

Health is linked to a sense of physical and mental well-being, contributing to a longer life expectancy. It refers to how satisfied an individual is with the overall quality of their life (Mincu & Tascu, 2014). Over the preceding years, scholars have shown increasing interest in the practical implications concerning the potential well-being outcomes such as life satisfaction (Baumeister et al., 2016). Life satisfaction is described as the subjective assessment of one's own life's quality or the degree to which one is satisfied, happy, or content with one's life (Proctor et al., 2017; Olasupo et al., 2021). However, there is no substitute for supportive connections to promote health and wellness and reduce stress (Cohen & Syme, 1985). People who have a greater sense of social support tend to have a

more hopeful outlook on life and a greater sense of well-being (Extremera & Rey, 2016; Wilson et al., 2020). From physical health to life pleasure, academics have focused on social support (Han et al., 2021). This assumption is based on Gurung et al. (1997)'s conventional social support process model and the social support buffering theory by Cohen and Wills (1985), which state that the quality of one's relationships can directly influence health. People who have a better sense of social support are more likely to be satisfied with their individual lives (Extremera & Rey, 2016; Kong et al., 2019). However, literature also suggests that a link exists between optimism and psychological well-being (Augusto-Landa et al., 2011). Diener et al. (2018) also proposed that optimism predicts well-being because optimism drives people to find significance in their lives through various cognitive processes. Multiple studies have also linked this optimism to increased life satisfaction (Karademas, 2006; Bailey et al., 2007), but many studies have shown such relationships are weak, which hints at the possibility of moderating or mediating variables.

Moreover, our understanding of the mechanisms is still lacking (Zhang et al., 2014; Margolis & Lyubomirsky, 2018). Research has shown that social status is a vital variable predicting life satisfaction directly and through its moderating role concerning different antecedents of life satisfaction (Han et al., 2021). Thus, the current research framework proposes the relationship between life satisfaction and its two predictors (optimism and perceived social support), moderated by social status. Moreover, such studies have mostly taken place in a Western context which necessitates undertaking in India. In addition, this work focuses on women as they face a lot of predicaments concerning well-being that need to be studied.

Literature Review

Optimism

Optimism is defined as the degree to which a person has a consistent inclination to express positive expectations about the outcomes of various life events (McIntosh et al., 2004; Mincu & Tascu, 2014). Optimism is a positive emotional state that protects against psychological diseases (Mincu & Tascu, 2014). Optimism offers physical and psychological benefits and adds to overall psychological well-being by enhancing a person's ability to cope with stress (Kenedy & Hughes, 2004). Optimism has been linked to a higher percentage of healthy activities (Baker, 2007).

Perceived Social Support

According to Wang (2014), "perceived social support" refers to the assistance or care that individuals receive from others and can detect or feel. This assistance or care might take the form of emotional concern, reassurance, guidance, and the provision of information or incentive (Baltaci & Karatas, 2015). Studies show that having friends and family to lean on is crucial in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. It is also important to note that social support is defined as the knowledge that allows individuals to believe they are cared for, adored, and appreciated by others (Cobb, 1976). Studies show that people with strong social support networks can

better deal with stressful life events (Callaghan & Morrissey, 1993) and overcome psychological problems (Lara et al., 1998).

Life Satisfaction

When it comes to subjective well-being, one of the most critical factors in one's overall or specific sense of happiness with life is life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985). It reflects conscious inner pleasurable experiences that inspire people to seek goals (Frischet, 2005). Life satisfaction is a criterion-based process in which people assess the quality of their lives using criteria that are specific to them (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Life satisfaction is a component of mental well-being and relates to a person's overall appraisal of their life's quality (Singh & Jha, 2008). It can also connect to a person's evaluation of their current or previous lives (Meyer et al., 2002). Individuals' emotional reactions to situations and their mental health, socioeconomic status, and judgments of their contentment with many aspects of life, such as career and educational satisfaction aspirations, are all considered in these assessments (Lyubomusky et al., 2005).

Perceived Social Status

Anderson et al. (2015, p. 575) define social status as "the respect, admiration, and voluntary deference individuals are provided by others," implying that others hold highly-status individuals in high regard willingly comply with high-status individuals' demands and desires. As a reminder, social rank can operate on a variety of scales. On the other hand, it can describe a person's overall status in society (Anderson et al., 2012). The phrase "socioeconomic status" is frequently used by researchers to describe this aspect of status (Adler et al., 1994). People's position among their peers and their amount of respect and adoration can also be referred to on a more local level (Anderson et al., 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Perceived Social Support and Life Satisfaction

Recent research has discovered that social status significantly impacts life satisfaction (Anderson et al., 2012). This is hardly surprising, given that psychologists have previously claimed that social status is a fundamental human motivation (Anderson et al., 2015). Furthermore, past research has shown that social status impacts various other well-being outcomes (Fujishiro, Xu, & Gong, 2010; Smith, 2004). Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis can be derived.

H1: Perceived social support is positively related to life satisfaction.

Optimism and Life Satisfaction

Optimists tend to have optimistic future views and expect positive outcomes (Peters et al., 2016). According to Alarcon et al. (2013) and Carver and Scheier (2014), optimism is a significant measure of subjective well-being (SWB). It has been discovered that optimism is a substantial predictor of personal well-being (e.g. Chang & Sanna 2001; Diener et al., 2003; Eid & Diener 2004; Makikangas &

Kinnunen 2003) in previous and contemporary studies. Emotional regulation and problem-focused coping are more common in optimists, and both are associated with higher levels of well-being (Karademas, 2006). Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis can be derived.

H2: Optimism is positively related to life satisfaction.

Moderating Role of Perceived Social Support

Previous research has demonstrated that social status is a predictor of subjective well-being. People may explain these outcomes with high social status having more control over their social surroundings and feeling more a part of it and accepted (Anderson et al., 2012). Fors Connolly and Johansson Sevä (2018) discovered that social status had a greater predictive usefulness for physical health than more standard and well-researched socioeconomic categories (Cundiff & Matthews, 2017). It has also been observed that some of the predictors (e.g, optimism) have a weak association in some studies and when different variables moderate such relationships, the predictive ability of antecedents of life satisfaction is enhanced. As a result, we believe that social status may moderate the association between life satisfaction and its two predictors (optimism and perceived social support). The following hypothesis may be inferred based on the preceding discussion.

H3: Social status moderates the relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction.

H4: Social status moderates the relationship between optimism and life satisfaction.

Life Satisfaction in relation to occupation

Literature suggests that occupation is important in relation to various psychological factors among women. Therefore, in this study we assumed the following:

H5: Life satisfaction in women varies with occupation.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative and causal design was adopted in this investigation. A total of 511 questions were used in this investigation. For data collection, an online survey was used to target working women from various sectors in the Kashmir portion of the Union Territory of J&K.

Measures

This work used six items to assess perceived social support adapted from Zimet et al. (1988). Six items of optimism were adopted from the work of Pedrosa et al. (2015). Five items of life satisfaction were adopted from the work of Diener et al.

(1985). Social status was measured with five items adapted from the work of Adler et al. (2000).

Objectives

- To study the influence of social support on life satisfaction among women.
- To study the influence of optimism on life satisfaction among women.
- To study the moderating role of social status between life satisfaction and, social support and optimism among women.
- To study the relationship of women's life satisfaction with occupation.

Factor Analysis

Because the questionnaire underwent minor language changes to reflect the local context, SPSS 21.0's "exploratory factor analysis" (EFA) was employed to analyse the factor structure (Hair et al., 2006). To assess reliability, Cronbach's alpha (Table 1) was utilised, and it was determined to be greater than the indicated value of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2006). In terms of sample adequacy, both "Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)" and "Bartlett's test of Sphericity" scores were above recommended values (0.879 and 15123.9, respectively). 81.3% per cent of the variance is explained by the four components. The data set of 22 items had a loading larger than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2006).

Data Analysis

Respondent Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1 in terms of age, income, occupation, marital status, and education.

Table 1
Respondent Profile

Variable	Group	Frequency
Marital Status	Married	287
	Not Married	215
	Separated/Divorced	9
Age Groups (Years)	18-34	283
	35-49	204
	50 years & above	25
Education	Graduate	194
	Post Graduate	264
	Others	53
Occupation	Private	344
	Government	167
Annual Income (In Rupees)	1-3 lac	133
	3-5 lac	282
	More than 5 lac	96

Measurement Model

The measurement model (Figure 2) was derived after CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) in AMOS 22.0. The results show that the values for model fit are adequate: CMIN/DF= 4.2; CFI = 0.960, GFI= 0.879, NFI =0.948 and RMSEA=0.079 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Reliability and Validity

The instrument's reliability was assessed using C.R. (composite reliability) scores greater than 0.60 (Table 2). To test for convergent validity, AVE (average variance extracted) scores above 0.50 (Table 2) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and standard loadings above 0.50 were utilised (Table 2). Because the correlation coefficient is less than the AVE square root scores, the analysis confirmed discriminant validity (Table 2) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

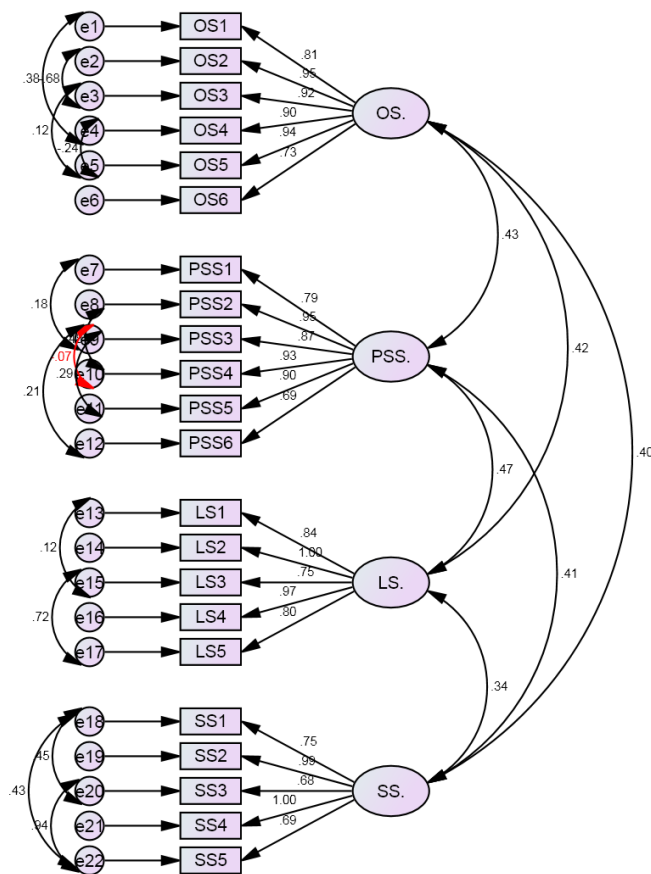


Figure 1. Measurement Model
Source: Author's Own

Table 2
Reliability and Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	Maxx(H)	LS.	OS.	PSS.	SS.
LS.	0.944	0.772	0.219	0.995	0.879			
OS.	0.953	0.772	0.186	0.995	0.424	0.879		
PSS.	0.943	0.736	0.219	0.996	0.468	0.431	0.858	
SS.	0.918	0.696	0.171	0.998	0.336	0.401	0.413	0.834

Source: Author's Own

Note1: The values (highlighted) in the diagonal of the above matrix are the square root of the AVE.

Note: L.S.- Life Satisfaction; OS-Optimism; PSS-Perceived Social Support; SS-Social Status

Structural Model

The link between predictor and outcome variables was investigated using the structural model. The following numbers indicate a good fit for the model:

CMIN/df=4.7, GFI=.898, CFI=.962, RMSEA=.077, NFI=.953.

Table 3 shows the results of the path analysis. In addition, Table 4 shows the findings of the moderation analysis.

Table 3
Structural Model Estimates

Hypo-These s	From	To	Standar d (β)	Un-Standar d (β)	Erro r	t-value	P	Result
H1	Perceive d Social Support	Life Satisfactio n	0.36	.400	.048	8.318	** *	Supporte d
H2	Optimis m	Life Satisfactio n	0.29	.275	.039	6.967	** *	Supporte d

Note: Source: Author's Own
P=.001

Table 4
Moderation Results

Dependent Variable	Direction	Predictor	Estimate	C.R.	P	Result
ZLS	<---	ZOS	.21	8.2	***	Supported
ZLS	<---	ZINT1	.48	9.9	.01	Supported
ZLS	<---	ZPSS	.31	5.3	***	Supported
ZLS	<---	ZINT2	.28	7.9	.03	Supported

Source: Author's Own P=.001

Note: ZLS- Standardised Life Satisfaction; ZOS: Standardised Optimism; ZPSS: Standardised Perceived Social Support- ZINT1- Standardised Interaction between Standardised Optimism and Social Status; ZINT2- Standardised Interaction between Standardised Perceived Social Support and Social Status.

ANOVA

In this research, a one-way ANOVA is used to analyze the mean difference between life satisfaction in relation to occupation. Results from Table 5 & 6 show that life satisfaction amongst women does vary with occupation.

Table 4
ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14.109	3	4.703	3.674	.012
Within Groups	651.572	509	1.280		
Total	665.681	512			

Conclusion and Discussions

SEM (structural equation modelling) analysis proves all four hypotheses formulated earlier. Perceived Social Support has a favourable impact on life satisfaction ($\beta=0.36$; $R^2=0.21$), which is statistically significant and thus proves H1. The subjective perception and assessment of support from family, friends, and others, including emotional experience and the construction of attitudes, known as perceived social support, was studied concerning life satisfaction. This finding is in line with the results of several earlier investigations (Cao & Ling, 2017; Chu et al., 2021). Other studies (Tomaka et al., 2006) have also reported similar findings. Different researches have proven that different types of social support are helpful for health. Social support\ increases quality of life and feeling of quality of life in battling with many disorders (Sek, 2004). It decreases the stress (Knoll & Schwarzer, 2004) and enables proper and satisfying role performance (Isacco, Garfield, Rogers, 2010). As a result, Perceived Social Support (friends, family and someone special) plays an essential role in determining life satisfaction. Therefore, the more social support one experience, the higher one's life happiness is. According to the classic buffering hypothesis, social support also reduces the detrimental effects of stress (Lakey & Orehek, 2011). Results also show optimism favours life satisfaction ($\beta =0.36$; $R^2=0.21$),

thus proving H2. This suggests that having a positive life outlook is also required for happiness. This finding is also in line with several earlier studies conducted (Piper, 2019; Unuvar et al., 2012). Optimists often form optimistic predictions for future events and anticipate pleasant results (Peters et al., 2016). Therefore, optimism is seen as a significant indication of subjective well-being (SWB) (Carver & Scheier, 2014). In contrast, pessimists anticipate bad occurrences in the future. Therefore, pessimism has often been associated with stress and negative emotions such as worry, anxiety, and rage, in addition to other mental health issues (Carver & Scheier, 1998). In addition, H3 and H4 have also been supported as social status moderates the relationship between life satisfaction and two antecedents (optimism and perceived social status). Hans et al. (2021) also found the moderating role of social class involving life satisfaction as the outcome variable. H5 is also supported as one-way ANOVA show that life satisfaction amongst women varies with occupation.

Implications

This research has significant theoretical and practical implications. To begin, this study offers a new theoretical framework for researchers to investigate life satisfaction and its predictors and involve a moderating variable. Considering the likely underlying mechanisms, these findings may provide us with more practical knowledge on improving life satisfaction among women. This study can provide preventive measures and intervention training programmes to help women achieve a positive outlook on life and enhance their social relationships. It may also be considered for use in psychological treatments for those who have experienced negative outcomes as a result of poor outlook of life or poor social relationships. Social support and optimism may be helpful in establishing intervention programmes focused on improving life satisfaction for women who feel excluded. Positive reinforcement, for example, should be included in these programmes. For women who are unhappy with their lives, self-evaluation and self-strengthening may be used in counselling sessions. Women who are unhappy can benefit from therapies to improve their social relationships with their families and friends. Our findings are critical in the well-being of women in light of the research described above.

Finally, we presented a moderated model to explain the relationship between perceived social support, optimism and life satisfaction and discovered that social class moderates this relationship. This means when one's personal social standing is poor, the association between perceived social support, optimism and their predictor, i.e. life satisfaction, is more robust. These findings corroborate the concept of a moderating model, indicating that perceived social support, as a powerful external influence, might enhance the life satisfaction among women associated with enhanced optimism and experiencing better social support. When compared to their high psychological, social status counterparts, people in lower social classes are thought to have fewer psychological resources (i.e., reserve capacity), such as low levels of self, lower perception of control, and fewer positive personal attributes to cope with health problems (Matthews et al., 2010). When people experience lower life satisfaction levels, perceived social support and optimism may play a crucial role in enhancing life satisfaction among women due to a lack of suitable resources. By elucidating the links between predictors of life

satisfaction and social class, this work presented an empirical investigation of life satisfaction and discovered the underlying mechanism of the relationship among the concerned factors. This study found that social support and optimism might boost life satisfaction when interacting with a better perception of their social class.

Future Research

The sample is exclusively women, but future studies may include men. The sample size of future studies could potentially be increased. In addition, the study might be broadened to include other sections of India, big cities and rural areas. Other variables like hope, social support, and demographic factors should be examined in future studies for mediating and moderating impacts. Because the current study was a cross-sectional survey that ignored the causal relationships between the study variables, longitudinal and qualitative studies may be able to explain the potential cause-and-effect relationships between variables and improve understanding of the relationship between variables.

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