



## Self -concept and learned optimism as predictors of happiness in students

Aditya Chamuah & Dr. R Sankar

Department of Psychology Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu, India

**Abstract:** *The present research was executed to elucidate the role of self -concept and learned optimism on happiness of students. The sample consisted of 50 students studying post graduate courses in a university. They were assessed by self -concept, learned optimism scale and happiness scale. The results of correlation coefficient indicated that all of the studied variables were positively significantly correlated with happiness. Also, the regression analysis showed that self-concept and learned optimism could predict happiness significantly. The implications and limitations of the research are discussed.*

**Key Words:** *self-concept, learned optimism, happiness and students*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Students are the greatest resource of a nation. They are to be given appropriate guidance and counseling so that they can lead their lives successfully. The need to be happy is an urgent requirement for students. They need happiness to lead life successfully. The present study is an attempt in making an understanding of how self-efficacy and learned optimism contribute to the happiness in students.

#### Self-concept

One's self-concept (also called self-construction, self-identity, self-perspective or self-structure) is a collection of beliefs about oneself. Generally, self-concept embodies the answer to "Who am I?". One's self-concept is made up of self-schemas, and their past, present, and future selves.

Self-concept is distinguishable from self-awareness, which refers to the extent to which self-knowledge is defined, consistent, and currently applicable to One's attitudes and dispositions. Self-concept also differs from self-esteem: self-concept is a cognitive or descriptive component of one's self (e.g. "I am a fast runner"), while self-esteem is evaluative and opinionated (e.g. "I feel good about being a fast runner").

Self-concept is made up of one's self-schemas, and interacts with self-esteem, self-knowledge, and the social self to form the self as whole. It includes the past, present, and future selves, where future selves (or possible selves) represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, or what they are afraid of becoming. Possible selves may function as incentives for certain behavior.

### **Learned optimism**

Scheier and Carver (1985) have defined optimism “as a generalized expectancy that good as opposed to bad outcomes will generally occur when confronted with problems across important life domains.” Learned optimism is a sense of enthusiasm, confidence and control, which develops once one achieves small successes. According to Martin Seligman (1991), how an individual thinks about events in his /her life greatly affects the kinds of actions he / she take. Learned optimism is having a strong expectation that despite the inevitable setbacks and frustrations, events and experiences will eventually turn out alright.

### **Happiness**

Happiness is a positive emotional state. It involves the detailed evaluation of one’s current position in the world. It is the sum total of positive affect and general life satisfaction. It is flourishing of human beings and associated with living a life of virtue. The happiness level of a person is governed by three factors which are a set point for happiness, happiness relevant circumstantial factors, and happiness-producing activities and practices. There are two traditions on happiness. They are eudemonic and hedonic.

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:**

Review of related literature is an important pre-requisite for actual planning and carrying out of any research work. The present section represents a brief review of the researches done in the area related to the present investigation.

Mallari, Shedy Dee C etal (2003) determined salient themes of female individuals who are inside the academic setting on their concept of happiness and moral development. The idea of studying the Filipina Female Concept of Happiness came from two areas of study--Female Psychology and Positive Psychology. The researchers were intrigued by the idea that since the female brain is influenced by various amounts of hormones during different stages in their life, affecting their perceptions, emotions and behaviors and perhaps it will show differences in the concept of happiness and moral development. Content analysis of interviews and essays from 12 participants suggested that compared to emerging adults, early teens and late teens attributed their happiness more on extrinsic factors. The results showed that as Filipinas grow older, their concept of happiness became more intrinsic. The study explored the Filipina's concept of happiness and moral development.

Chorro, Estefanía Gomis etal (2017) intended to assess the level at which students prioritize happiness; and discern how the experience of happiness affects the formation of their identity and their relationship with their environment, taking into account the values deduced from their perceptions, and understanding from where these values come, as well as how they are applied in their daily life. The findings indicate that students in fifth or sixth grade value happiness as a necessary aspect of life, derived from criteria such as health, and friends and family. The concept of happiness, however, is learned at home with parents and families.

Flynn, Deborah M etal (2015) explored the relationship between happiness, and six other life domains: Academic Success, Financial Security, Familial Support, Living Environment, Self-Image and Social Relations. Participants were one hundred and ninety-two students from a small undergraduate university. The purpose of the study was to

determine which life domain had the greatest influence on student happiness. Assessment tools included the Oxford Happiness Inventory, the Multidimensional Student Life Satisfaction Scale, and a Financial Success Survey created by the inside the academic setting on their concept of happiness and moral development. The idea of studying the Filipina Female Concept of Happiness came from two areas of study—Female Psychology and Positive Psychology. The researchers were intrigued by the idea that since the female brain is influenced by various amounts of hormones during different stages in their life, affecting their perceptions, emotions and behaviors and perhaps it will show differences in the concept of happiness and moral development. Content analysis of interviews and essays from 12 participants suggested that compared to emerging adults, early teens and late teens attributed their happiness more on extrinsic factors. The results showed that as Filipinas grow older, their concept of happiness became more intrinsic. The study explored the Filipina's concept of happiness and moral development.

Kapikiran, Sahin et al (2016) examined the role of self-esteem as a mediator in the relationships between optimism and psychological resilience on depressive symptoms in university students. A total of 494 undergraduate students, comprising of 253 female and 241 male participated in this study. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 30 ( $M = 20.85$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ). Instruments measuring optimism, psychological resilience, self-esteem and depression were administered to university students from different faculties and departments. Application of a structural equation model to the obtained data resulted in a direct relationship between optimism and psychological resilience with symptoms of depression. In addition, it was determined that self-esteem is a full mediator between psychological resilience and depressive symptoms. The mediator role of self-esteem between optimism and depressive symptoms; however, did not reach statistically significant levels. The findings are discussed within the self-esteem, optimism, and resilience in an individual's mental health context.

Phan, Huy P et al (2016) explored a conceptual model that depicted four major orientations: optimism, self-efficacy, and academic well-being. An important question for consideration, in this case, involved the testing of different untested trajectories that could explain and predict individuals' mastery-approach goal orientations. This research investigation, in particular, is of significance for its unexploratory nature, and its findings, we contend, would contribute to our understanding of individuals' academic and learning patterns. Data were collected across six separate time points, and path analytical procedures were used to test the hypothesized relationships. MPlus 7.3 produced a number of notable findings, emphasizing mediating mechanisms and interesting trajectories, for example: (1) the impact of enactive learning experience on Time 1 optimism and Time 3 self-efficacy, (2) the positive impact of Time 1 optimism on Time 2 motivation towards learning, and on Time 3 self-efficacy, (3) the direct impact of Time 1 optimism on Time 6 mastery-approach goals, mediated by Time 4 optimism and then Time 5 motivation towards learning. This evidence, overall, is substantive in terms of making theoretical contributions, as well as informing sound pedagogical practices for consideration and implementation.

Aksoy, Nil et al (2014) analyzed the relationship between university students' attitude to listening to music and their level of optimism. The study group for the research consists of 508 students who studied at Aksaray University in the 2012-13 academic

year. Simple random sampling is used. In this study, the "Attitude Scale for Listening to Music" and the "Optimism Scale", which were developed by the researcher, are used for measurement. According to the findings of the research study, there is a significant correlation at the level of 0.430 between students' attitudes to listening to music and their level of optimism. The level of optimism has a positive impact on the attitude to listening to music at the level of 0.184.

Arens, A. Katrin; Yeung et al. (2014) said that in assessing verbal academic self-concept with preadolescents, researchers have used scales for students' self-concepts in reading and in their native language interchangeably. The authors conducted 3 studies with German students to test whether reading and German (i.e., native language) self-concepts can be treated as the same or different constructs. Compared with other facets of academic self-concept, reading self-concept was more highly related to reading test scores (Study 1) and German self-concept to German grades (Study 2). In Study 3, reading and general school self-concepts demonstrated similar relations to German grades. The findings of the 3 studies, albeit indirect, supported the specificity matching principle and caution researchers against applying reading and native language self-concept scales uncritically to infer verbal self-concept.

Datta, Poulomee et al (2016) investigated the self-concept of students with vision impairment who were placed in specialist and mainstream educational settings in South Australia. Self-Concept was explored across six dimensions, namely Physical, Moral, Personal, Family, Social and Academic Self-Concepts and the Total Self-Concept. The "Tennessee Self-Concept Scale: Second Edition" was administered to 25 students with vision impairment (13 females and 12 males). Participating students' age ranged between 15 and 25 years and they were included from all levels of vision impairment. The visual acuity of the participants ranged from 6/18 or less (low vision) to 3/60 and less (blindness). Although the majority of the students with vision impairment obtained low scores on all dimensions of self-concept, namely physical, moral, personal, family, social and academic, some students obtained normal scores in relation to family and academic self-concepts. There were no significant differences between female and male students with vision impairment across the six dimensions of self-concept and thus total self-concept. These findings have implications for teachers, special educators, policy-makers and a range of professionals in the education and special education sector in enabling greater understanding of the self-concept accomplishment of the students with vision impairment. However, this study has limited scope for generalization of the study's conclusions due to the study's small population sample size.

Zsakai, Annamaria et al (2017) said that in adolescence, the complexity of human ontogenesis embraces biological growth and maturation as well as mental, affective, and cognitive progress, and adaptation to the requirements of society. To accept our morphological constellation as part of our gender may prove a problem even to a child of average rate of maturation. The main purposes of the present study were to compare selected body shape factors of early adolescents belonging to different physical self-concept subgroups, and to identify those somatic factors that have the

strongest influence on the physical self-concept. A randomly selected subsample of the 2nd Hungarian National Growth Study formed the sample of the analysis. Besides the anthropometric investigations, the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale was administered to altogether 2,140 adolescents (aged 11-14). The multinomial logistic regression was used to reveal the relationship between absolute body dimensions, relative body dimensions, nutritional status, body mass components, body shape, and physical self-concept. The better the physical self-concept, the less the fatness was found in both sexes. In early adolescents, having negative physical self-concept endomorphs was significantly larger than in their age-peers with good self-concept. The presumed fact that obesity is not popular in adolescence has been confirmed by this study. However, the underweight nutritional status was attractive in the girls. These results informed us about the considerable influence of the pubertal-not-normal nutritional status on the discrepancy between the ideal and actual self-concepts.

### **3. OBJECTIVES:**

- To study the relationship between self-concept, learned optimism and happiness among students.
- To assess the role of self- concept and learned optimism on happiness among students.

#### ***Hypotheses***

- There is positive and significant relationship between self-concept, learned optimism and happiness among students.
- There is positive and significant contribution of self-concept on happiness among students.
- There is positive and significant contribution of learned optimism on happiness among students.

### **4. METHODS:**

#### ***Sample***

Participants: Sample of the study consisted of 50 students; their age range was 20 to 25. There are 25 males and 25 females. They were selected by snowball sampling technique from a University.

#### ***Tools***

##### **4.1. Self-Concept Scale**

Self- concept scale developed by Dr. Rastogi was used. This scale has set of 51 statements related to one's behavior .Five possible modes of responses are provided, such as : Strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Higher the scores, higher is the self-concept.

##### **4.2 Learned Optimism Scale**

Learned optimism scale developed by Pethe, Chaudhari, Dhar and Upinder Dhar was used. This scale has set of 22 statements related to one's behavior .Five possible modes of responses are provided, such as : Strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Higher the scores, higher is the learned optimism.

##### **4.3 Happiness Scale**

Happiness scale developed by Rastogi and Moorjani was used. This scale has set of 62 statements related to one's behavior Five possible modes of responses are provided, such as :

Strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Higher the scores, higher is the happiness.

**Procedure** The students were approached and asked to complete the questionnaires of self- concept, learned optimism and happiness. All the respondents were also told that their anonymity will be preserved and their responses will be confidential. After that questionnaires were collected from the respondents and scored manually.

**5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1 Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients among independents variables with dependent variable (n=50)**

Variables	M(SD)	Happiness
Self - concept	252.06 (1.61)	0.067
Learned optimism	104.36 (2.97)	-0.187
Happiness	298.94 (6.85)	

As shown in table 3, the mean and standard deviation of Self concept, learned optimism, happiness were 252.06(SD=1.61), 104.36(SD=2.97) and 298.94 (SD=6.85) respectively. The table shows the low correlation coefficients of Self concept, learned optimism with happiness. All correlation were positive statistical not significant.

**Table 2 Effects of Self -concept and Learned optimism on happiness**

Variable	MR	RS	F R	B	t	P
Intercept	.223	.050	1.235 P>0.01	215.433	1.411	0.165
Self -concept				0.543	0.863	0.392
Learned optimism				-0.511	-1.499	0.140

A multiple regression was run to predict happiness from Self- concept and learned optimism. The results showed that the prediction model was fitted and the variables statistically, not significantly predicted, F=1.235, p>0.001, R<sup>2</sup>=0.050. Furthermore, the unstandardized coefficients(Bs) showed that Self- concept and learned optimism not significantly predicted happiness. Also, the general form of the equation to predict happiness from Self -concept and learned optimism is predicted happiness=251.433+(0.543 x hope)+ (0.511 x learned optimism).

**6. CONCLUSION:**

Consequently, it is concluded that self-concept and learned optimism are positively and significantly correlated with happiness. It is also concluded that self-concept and learned optimism are having significant variance on happiness of students. It means that the people having greater level of self-concept most probably experience better happiness and vice versa. Because, people who have high level of hope are expected to tackle bad circumstances more conveniently as compare to low level of self-concept. So that it may inferred that people are having high level of self-concept and high level of learned optimism may also have excellent level of happiness.

**Suggestion**

The findings of study show a glimpse of the impact of student’s self-concept and learned optimism on happiness. However, more researches are needed to study the moderating factors

of happiness among different professions, culture as well as age groups. The findings of students could be compared with those found in other area of the world to decode similarities and differences.

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