

## Gender Differences on Hope and Optimism Among College Students and Professionals in Indian Context

Aanchal Choudhary<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Payel Dey Ghosh<sup>2\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The current study aims to determine whether there are any gender differences in hope and optimism among college students and professionals, as well as to investigate differences in hope and optimism among college students and professionals. Hope is the desire for a result that will in some way enhance your life. Optimism is a state of mind characterized by faith in future success and hope. Optimists frequently view challenges as opportunities for growth or brief setbacks. A sample of 200 participants was taken in which 100 were College students (50 males and 50 females) and 100 were Professionals (50 males and 50 females) between the ages of 20 and 24 and 30 and 35. The Adult Hope Scale provided by Snyder and the State Optimism Measure provided by Millstein were the tools used to collect the data. The ANOVA was used to conduct a statistical analysis of the data. The data revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in hope and optimism across genders, and no statistically significant difference in hope and optimism between college students and professionals. Both genders and the population scored highly in terms of hope and moderately well in terms of optimism.

**Keywords:** *Hope, optimism, College Students, Professional*

Hope and optimism are two guiding forces in a person's life. Hope includes positive goal directed activity. Hope includes three types of thinking- goals, pathways, and agency and these three processes are required for sustainable strength in human life (Synder et al.,1991). Hope is associated with success in different spheres of life such as academics, performance in sports, interpersonal relationships, professional field, and so on (Rand & Cheavens, 2012). Hope inspires people to maintain positive involvement in life despite limitations. College students with high hopes are more likely to graduate than those with low hopes, and those with low hopes are 25% more likely to be dismissed than their peers with high hopes (Synder et al., 2002).

On the other hand, optimism means a positive outlook or positive expectations about the future. Optimists perceive obstacles as an opportunity for growth. Even the worst day comes with the assurance that "tomorrow will probably be better." Optimistic people are upbeat about everyday events. (Elizabeth & Rachel,2022). According to research (Peterson

<sup>1</sup>Student, Department of Applied Psychology, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research, and studies.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Amity School of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University Kolkata

\*Corresponding Author

Received: April 08, 2024; Revision Received: April 27, 2024; Accepted: May 01, 2024

## Gender Differences on Hope and Optimism Among College Students and Professionals in Indian Context

&Christopher, 2000), optimism contributes to good mood, persistence, effective problem-solving, and academic and professional success.

Although hope and optimism are separate concepts, one is ineffective without the other. At first glance, the words optimism and hope appear to be interchangeable. Both are focused on objective cognitive processes that impact the result of events. There is a strong link between hope and optimism with a decrease in the effects of chronic disease (Schiavon et al., 2017). According to the theories, somebody who's an optimist with no hope believes that everything will be alright but has no plans to make it so, whereas a pessimist has a plan but is dubious of their capacity to carry it through. Maintaining a fit mind and body involves balancing hope and optimism. However, both hope and optimism are necessary for both academics as well as in professional life. Hope drives academic excellence, career opportunities, personal growth, resilience, community, support networks, and making a difference in college students (Rivera et al., 2021) This drive inspires students to step outside of their comfort zones, try new things, learn from their successes and failures, and build strong support systems. Developing hope allows students to approach college challenges with a positive attitude, which leads to personal development, academic success, and a brighter future. Intelligence, prior achievement, and standardized test scores were historically used to predict academic achievement. Students with high hopes had a higher chance of retention, while those with low hopes had a lower chance. The consequences of implementing hope skills training at both the course and institutional levels are discussed (Bryce et al., 2021).

On the other hand, Professionals are motivated by hope, which motivates them to set lofty goals, maintain resilience, pursue novel ideas, and participate in lifelong learning. Hope inspires them to form strong bonds, maintain a healthy work-life balance, and contribute to charitable causes. Hope in the workplace denotes employees' belief that they are on the right track and have faith in the company's future direction. Hope seems to be strongly associated with positive affectivity at work. This also applies to other work variables. Employers' mindfulness, for example, was found to improve their levels of hope, and mindfulness predicted staff engagement and well-being through hope. (Malinowski et al., 2015). Individuals with high hopes have more goals and are more likely to focus on others if they fail. Hope has been linked to higher levels of social competence, lower absenteeism, and lower levels of loneliness. Employee wellness and the "loneliness epidemic" in college students need optimism to improve their mindset, attitudes, and overall college experience. It involves a positive outlook on life, motivation, goal setting, and well-being. Optimism promotes positive interactions, relationships, creative thinking, resourcefulness, and optimism about the future. It also inspires students to pursue opportunities, make plans, and live life with anticipation and excitement. Transitioning to university can be challenging, as academic pressures can impact mental health. Optimism also affects the depression dimension of mental health. Staying optimistic minimises depression and promotes quality of life, which benefits mental health indirectly. (Ghalobaf, 2017)

Similarly, College students need optimism to improve their mindset, attitudes, and overall college experience. It involves a positive outlook on life, motivation, goal setting, and well-being. Optimism promotes positive interactions, relationships, creative thinking, resourcefulness, and optimism about the future. It also inspires students to pursue opportunities, make plans, and live life with anticipation and excitement.

## Gender Differences on Hope and Optimism Among College Students and Professionals in Indian Context

Optimism is a mental attitude that has a significant impact on physical and mental health, as well as coping with daily social and work life. Optimists outperform pessimists in adversity and when essential life goals are jeopardised by adaptive management of personal goals and development, as well as active coping methods (Conversano et al., 2010). Positive aspirations for the future are crucial in adapting to traumatic situations and exhibiting higher levels of resilience. Lastly, optimism is identified as the most important adolescent cognitive characteristic that mitigates the impacts of life stressors. Positive professionals perform better and achieve greater success in the long run. They possess a positive outlook, resilience, adaptability, drive, goal-oriented Ness, problem-solving, creativity, leadership qualities, and strong leadership qualities. They approach work with enthusiasm and believe in their capacity for growth and advancement. Activating feelings of optimism can help people feel healthier, more committed, engaged, and less burned out. High levels of experience activators, such as optimism, resilience, and purpose, lead to lower stress, higher well-being, engagement, and productivity. An organisational culture that inspires hope can serve as a reservoir of motivational energy to withstand work pressure in a competitive environment.

The above discussion reveals that optimism and hope are important traits needed for success and psychological well-being in academics as well as in professional life. In the past few years especially after the 2020 covid pandemic, society experiences a lot of changes and challenges. There are a lot of sudden changes in the academic processes. Students need to adjust to new techniques rapidly. They also experienced a lot of uncertainties in the last few years. The same situations are experienced by professionals as well. Now in this scenario, the question arises how these changes are affecting the mental health of the professionals and students. Therefore, the current study's goal is to Identify the level of optimism and hope among college students and professionals.

### METHOD

The purpose of this research is to investigate gender differences among college students and professionals in terms of hope and optimism. A quasi-experimental design was employed in this study.

#### Variables

- **Hope:** The American Psychological Association defines hope as "the expectation that one will have positive experiences or that a potentially threatening or negative situation will not materialize or will ultimately result in a favorable state of affairs." Hope involves desiring an outcome that improves one's life and motivates individuals to take steps to make it a reality.
- **Optimism:** Optimism is a state of mind characterised by confidence and hope in one's ability to succeed and have a bright future. It involves focusing on the positive aspects of a situation and believing in the likelihood of positive outcomes.
- **College Students:** People who are enrolled in a university or college for a specific course.
- **Professionals:** People engaged in any type of job or self-employment.

#### Sample

The population for this study comprised college students and professionals between the ages of 20 and 24 and 30 and 35. A sample of 200 adults, including 100 college students (50

## Gender Differences on Hope and Optimism Among College Students and Professionals in Indian Context

males and 50 females) and 100 professionals (50 males and 50 females), was selected. The sample was chosen based on quantitative data. Inclusion criteria included individuals who were at least graduates and living in urban areas, attached to any university as students or working as professionals. The exclusion criteria included individuals below the graduation level.

### *Description of Tools*

The following tools were used in the present study:

- 1. Adult Hope Scale (Synder et al., 1991):** The Adult Hope Scale (AHS) is a psychometric instrument designed to measure an individual's level of hope. It consists of 12 items that assess two components of hope: agency (belief in one's ability to achieve desired goals) and pathways (belief in the availability of routes to reach those goals). The items are rated on a Likert-type scale. The scores range from 40 to 48 for hopeful 48 to 56 for moderately hopeful and 56 or higher for extremely hopeful.
- 2. State Optimism Measure (Millstein et al., 2019):** The State Optimism Measure is used to assess state optimism, which refers to optimism experienced in a specific situation or context. It is a modified version of the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) and consists of seven items. The mean score of items 1 to 7 is calculated, and a higher score indicates stronger state optimism.

### *Procedure*

1. The study aimed to investigate gender differences in hope and optimism among college students and professionals.
2. A total of 200 participants, including 100 college students and 100 professionals, were chosen for the study.
3. Participants were provided with a questionnaire and asked to complete the Adult Hope Scale and the State Optimism Measure.
4. The study employed statistical analysis, including t-tests, using Google Excel, Anova, and SPSS software.
5. The study ensured reliable and authentic information from participants while maintaining confidentiality and adhering to research purposes.

## **RESULT**

In the present study, both the variables hope, and optimism fulfil the assumptions of normality and homogeneity. Therefore, two into-two ANOVA is used to determine the difference between male and female participants as well as college students and professionals' levels of hope and optimism. Further, two-in-two ANOVA is also calculated to determine the interaction effect of gender and occupation.

*Table 1-Displaying the mean, standard deviation, ANOVA value, and significant level of hope for male and female participants.*

Gender	Mean	SD	F	p-value
Female	62.19	17.37	.263	0.608
Male	63.22	15.66		

**Gender Differences on Hope and Optimism Among College Students and Professionals in Indian Context**

*Table 2 - Displaying the mean, standard deviation, ANOVA value, and significant degree of hope among college students and professionals.*

Occupation	Mean	SD	F	p-value
College Students	64.03	16.33	1.279	0.259
Professionals	61.45	16.67		

*Table 3- Displaying the interaction effect of gender and occupation on the level of hope.*

Gender	Occupation	Mean	SD	F	p-value
Female	Students	62.35	17.04	0.995	0.320
	Professionals	62.04	17.87		
Male	Students	65.89	15.47		
	Professionals	60.90	15.60		

*Table 4- Displaying the mean, standard deviation, ANOVA value, and significant degree of optimism for male and female participants.*

Gender	Mean	SD	F	p-value
Female	3.71	0.45	0.42	0.837
Male	3.6	0.41		

*Table 5 Displaying the mean, standard deviation, ANOVA value, and significant degree of optimism among college students and professionals.*

Occupation	Mean	SD	F	p-value
College Students	3.71	0.45	0.32	0.857
Professionals	3.6	0.41		

*Table 6- Displaying the interaction effect of gender and occupation on the level of optimism.*

Gender	Occupation	Mean	SD	F	p-value
Female	Students	3.72	0.18	0.001	0.977
	Professionals	3.70	0.27		
Male	Students	3.69	0.20		
	Professionals	3.66	0.21		

## **DISCUSSION**

Hope is an emotion associated with motivation. When we are optimistic, we are more inclined to believe that we can accomplish your goals. To hope is to urge oneself to use and enhance one's skills to achieve one's goals. Optimism, on the other hand, is a mental state characterised by hope and faith in achievement and a bright future. Optimists view obstacles as learning experiences or transitory setbacks. Even the worst day offers the promise that the next day will almost certainly be better. Sometimes we are unable to overcome an obstacle or find ourselves in a difficult situation. We can have a great plan for dealing with it, but we can't seem to follow through on it. When this occurs, it is usually due to feelings and thoughts that are obstructing our progress. This is where optimism and hope come into play. A positive and hopeful frame of mind can help us deal with difficult emotions and situations that appear impossible to overcome.

The study's goal was to discover whether there are any gender disparities in hope and optimism among college students and professionals, as well as to investigate the distinction

## **Gender Differences on Hope and Optimism Among College Students and Professionals in Indian Context**

between hope and optimism in college students and professionals. After analysing the data, two into two Anova was conducted to see the comparison between means and SD of male and female on hope and optimism and to see the comparison between the selected population of college students and Professionals on hope and optimism. The Results showed that there is no significant difference between genders on hope and optimism also there is no significant difference of hope and optimism in college students and Professionals.

The findings state that there is no significant difference between male and female in level of hope and optimism; this is supported by some previous research. (Johnson, 2018; Pacicio et al., 2013).

Additionally, both genders' mean scores of Females (62.19) and Male (63.22) were 56 or higher, indicating that the person is very hopeful. This is a good sign because hope is connected to several beneficial outcomes, such as greater happiness, better academic performance, and even a lower risk of passing away. It is crucial for getting through challenging times, but it's also crucial for accomplishing daily objectives. The average optimism scores for both genders—females (3.71) and men (3.6)—show a moderate level of optimism that is lower than 7 that means a person who is moderately optimistic has a balanced and realistic outlook on life, acknowledging both the positive and negative aspects of a situation.

The finding also states that there is no significant difference among college students and professionals in level of hope and this is supported by some previous research. One study conducted found that levels of optimism and hope did not differ significantly between college students and adults in their mid-30s. (Tresniewski et al.,2007) Similarly, a study found that there was no significant difference in levels of hope and optimism between college students and working professionals. (Feldman et al., 2015). Also, the interaction effect among genders and professionals or college students on hope and optimism doesn't show any significant difference between them.

Additionally, both Population's mean scores of College Students and Professionals (61.45) were 56 or higher, indicating that the person is very hopeful. This is a good sign because hope is connected to several beneficial outcomes, such as greater happiness, better academic performance, and even a lower risk of passing away. It's crucial for getting through challenging times, but it's also crucial for accomplishing daily objectives.

The average optimism scores for both genders—females (3.71) and men (3.6)—show a moderate level of optimism that is lower than 7 as Individuals who are moderately optimistic have a hopeful and positive outlook on life while also being aware of the challenges and obstacles that may arise. They believe that through hard work, perseverance, and determination, they can overcome these obstacles.

Individual differences in hope and optimism, however, can vary greatly regardless of age or professional status. Hope and optimism are subjective feelings that are impacted by a variety of factors such as personality traits, life events, and situational context. As a result, some college students or professionals may be more hopeful and optimistic than others.

## REFERENCES

- Bryce, C. I., Fraser, A. M. J., Fabes, R. A., & Alexander, B. L. (2021). The role of hope in college retention. *Learning and Individual Differences, 89*(102033), 102033. doi:10.1016/j.lindif.2021.102033
- Conversano, C., Rotondo, A., Lensi, E., Della Vista, O., Arpone, F., & Reda, M. A. (2010). Optimism and its impact on mental and physical well-being. *Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health: CP & EMH, 6*(1), 25–29. doi:10.2174/1745017901006010025
- Elizabeth, S., & Rachel, G. (2005). *What Is Optimism? How Optimism Affects Your Physical and Mental Health*.
- Feldman, D. B., & Kubota, M. (2015). Hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and academic achievement: Distinguishing constructs and levels of specificity in predicting college grade-point average. *Learning and Individual Differences, 37*, 210–216. doi:10.1016/j.lindif.2014.11.022
- Ghalibaf., M. J. (2017). Influence of optimism on mental health of college students. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 22*(5), 60–62. doi:10.9790/0837-2205106062
- Johnson, A. C. (2018). *An examination of optimism between gender, race, and school classification of millennial students – an exploratory study*. Georgia Southern University.
- Malinowski, P., & Lim, H. J. (2015). Mindfulness at work: Positive affect, hope, and optimism mediate the relationship between dispositional mindfulness, work engagement, and well-being. *Mindfulness, 6*(6), 1250–1262. doi:10.1007/s12671-015-0388-5
- Millstein, R. A., Chung, W.-J., Hoepfner, B. B., Boehm, J. K., Legler, S. R., Mastromauro, C. A., & Huffman, J. C. (2019). Development of the state optimism measure. *General Hospital Psychiatry, 58*, 83–93. doi:10.1016/j.genhosppsych.2019.04.002
- Pacico, J. C., Bastianello, M. R., Zanon, C., & Hutz, C. S. (2013). Adaptation and validation of the dispositional hope scale for adolescents. *Psicologia, 26*(3), 488–492. doi:10.1590/s0102-79722013000300008
- Peterson, C. (2000). The future of optimism. *The American Psychologist, 55*(1), 44–55. doi:10.1037/0003-066x.55.1.44
- Rand, K.L., & Cheavens, J.S. (2012). *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*. Lopez SJ, Snyder CR, editors. London, UK: OUP
- Rivera, M., Shapoval, V., & Medeiros, M. (2021). The relationship between career adaptability, hope, resilience, and life satisfaction for hospitality students in times of Covid-19. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 29*(100344), 100344. doi:10.1016/j.jhlste.2021.100344
- Schiavon, C. C., Marchetti, E., Gurgel, L. G., Busnello, F. M., & Reppold, C. T. (2017). Optimism and hope in chronic disease: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.02022
- Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L. M., & Sigmon, S. T. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual differences measure of hope. ways: Development and validation of an individual differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*, 570–585.
- Snyder, C. R., Irving, L. M., & Anderson, J. R. (1991). *Handbook of social and clinical psychology: The health perspective*. Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press.

## Gender Differences on Hope and Optimism Among College Students and Professionals in Indian Context

- Snyder, C. R., Shorey, H. S., Cheavens, J., Pulvers, K. M., Adams, V. H., & Wiklund, C. (2002). Hope and academic success in college. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94(4), 820–826. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.94.4.820
- Trzesniewski, K. H., Donnellan, M. B., & Dweck, C. S. (2007). *A mindset approach to hope and optimism* (R. M. Arkin, K. C. Oleson, & P. J. Carroll, Eds.). New York: Psychology Press.

### ***Acknowledgment***

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Choudhary, A. & Ghosh, P.D. (2024). Gender Differences on Hope and Optimism Among College Students and Professionals in Indian Context. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(2), 581-588. DIP:18.01.058.20241202, DOI:10.25215/1202.058