



## Level of optimism and its related issues among students of master of social work of Mysore University

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### Abstract

The perception of students towards success and failure especially in academics and life in general, play a vital role in students' attitude and behavior. The level of optimism will definitely drive the students to achieve higher heights. In this context, researchers tried to measure the level of optimism and its related issues of Master of Social Work (MSW) students of University of Mysore. Data have been collected from 287 MSW students, both first and second year, by using Optimism : Attribution of Success and Failure Inventory – Students (ASUFA – S) developed by Pareek and Purohit (2010). It has been found that the level of optimism significantly differ between first year students and second year students and different graduation background.

**Keywords :** Master of Social Work (MSW), Optimism, Pessimism, Self-confidence.

### 1. Introduction

Optimism is a quality of health human being, which decides the state of mental and physical well-being of persons. It is the fuel which motivates a person to think positively and move on in right direction. Optimism is about thinking positive. An optimistic person always looks at the brighter side of life. An optimistic mindset is subjective one. It is affected by various facts such as culture, education, and socio-economic background.

Various studies have been made to understand the concept of optimism. It is necessary to understand the optimism level of Master of Social Work (MSW) students. Their understanding of life and academic performance are closely associated. The students' optimism and their academic performance both are interrelated. Students' self esteem, optimism and hope have impact on their study. Haynes *et al.*, (2006) have mentioned that students who report feeling less successful are

actually performing less well than students who rate themselves at the top end of the perceived success scale.

The term 'Optimism' has not been defined properly. Perry and Griggs (1991) have defined optimism as a mental state that is very often associated with positive emotions, a positive outlook, love, care, joy, happiness, laughter and looking on the up side of thing.

Optimism is an energy, either spiritual or academic, which increases the potentiality of people. Pritchett (2007) has mentioned that optimism proves to be a major asset across such diverse fields as business, politics, academics, leadership, athletics and health. He, further, has opined that optimism is the psychological trump card that helps students to win.

It is very clear by the definition given above that optimism affects all aspects of life of individuals. Ruthig *et al.*, (2007) have stated that the

students who are Optimistically Biased (OB) had significantly better well-being than their non-optimistically biased counterparts. They, further, mentioned that OB achievement expectations paired with perceptions of academic control may enhance performance and well-being.

Klassen (2008) has opined that for the majority of students, possessing optimistic self-efficacy beliefs is a positive attribute, because it means the students believe they can achieve what they want to do, and can accomplish challenging tasks with the necessary effort and persistence.

Studies have shown that optimistic students will perform better than pessimistic students. Hwan *et al.*, (2006) have pointed out that optimistic students are more likely to have positive emotional reactions and expectations. They expect to have positive outcomes even when things are difficult, they tend to take an attitude of confidence and persistence.

Optimistic students are likely to address the problem effectively. Their selection of coping strategies is more likely far better than pessimistic students. Krypel and Henderson (2010) have mentioned that optimistic students are capable of handling the challenges of higher education, whereas pessimistic students are less likely to do so.

The level of optimism varies from person to person. Because, one may attribute various reasons for his/her success or failure in life. It is interdependent and intertwined concept. Academic performance is positively associated with optimism of the students. Hoy and Tarter (2006) have rightly highlighted that academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and faculty trust are tightly woven together and seem to reinforce each other as they positively constrain student performance. In this context, authors have taken this study.

## 2. Methodology

The purpose of the study was to understand the level of optimism and its related issues of MSW students of University of Mysore. A total of 287 students out of 420 MSW students (both odd and even semesters) studying in eight different colleges in Mysore city were selected.

The objectives of the study are :

1. To study the level of optimism among MSW students.
2. To study the students' perception about the factors which contribute to their failure.

## 3. Instrument

A demographic questionnaire was used to collect the information with regard to college/centre name, class/grade, degree, gender and age of the students. Attribution of Success and Failure Inventory – Students (Pareek and Purohit, 2010) was used to assess the students' attribution thinking. This inventory contains 32 items, 16 items for success and 16 for failure which designed to measure the locus of control and optimism-pessimism along with other issues such as : Self-directedness, Group-directedness, Conformity, Fatalism, Optimism, Pessimism, Hope, and Self-confidence.

The researchers pre-tested the inventory. Researchers also sought the prior permission from the concerned college authority and department heads to collect the data from students. Students were informed about the purpose and objectives of the study and the details with regard to the method of filling up of inventory.

## 4. Results

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the level of Optimism of MSW students of University of Mysore. To accomplish the purpose of the study, the authors had collected the requisite data from 287 students out of 420 (both first and second year) students who were studying MSW in eight colleges of University of Mysore during the year 2011-12.

To evaluate the level of Optimism, the authors considered the Optimism : Attribution of Success and Failure inventory-Students (ASUFA-S developed by Pareek and Purohit (2010).

The data were tabulated accordingly with the specifications made by the ASUFA-S. To fulfill the objectives of the study, the following statistical hypotheses were constructed and tested subsequently.

## 5. Hypotheses

**H1:** There is no significant difference in levels of Optimism and related issues among first year and second year students of MSW course.

**H2 :** There is no significant difference in levels of Optimism and related issues among the students of different degrees at their graduation level.

**H3 :** There is no significant difference in levels of Optimism and related issues among male and female students.

**H4 :** There is no significant difference in levels of Optimism and related issues among the students of different age groups.

To test H1, t-test was used and tabulated in table-1.

**Table - 1**

Factors	't'	Sig. (2-tailed)*
Self-directedness Quotient	-.313	.754
Group-directedness Quotient	.416	.678
Conformity Quotient	-.108	.914
Fatalism Quotient	-.075	.940
Optimism Quotient	-1.143	.254
Pessimism Quotient	2.021	.044
Hope Quotient	-.820	.413
Self-confidence Quotient	.109	.913

\*df is 285.

From the above tables infer the following :

- Since the  $P = 0.044$  for Pessimistic quotient, the test was significant at 0.05 level i.e. there exists significant mean difference in Pessimistic quotient among first year and second year students of MSW course.
- The  $P$  value for other 7 issues to Optimism were greater than 0.05, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.

To test H2, one way ANOVA was used and the result is given as follows.

- Since,  $F = 2.467$  with  $P = 0.045$  for Pessimistic quotient, hence, the test was significant at 0.05 level i.e. there exists significant mean difference in Pessimistic quotient among the students who came to MSW course with different degree background.

- The  $F$  value of Self-directedness quotient was .488 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- The  $F$  value of Group-directedness quotient was 1.374 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- The  $F$  value of Conformity quotient was 2.044 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- The  $F$  value of Fatalism quotient was .455 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- The  $F$  value of Optimism quotient was 1.287 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- The  $F$  value of Hope quotient was .581 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.

- The F value of Self-confidence quotient was .903 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- From the post-hoc test conducted for the ANOVA, the mean difference in Compliance quotient for BA and B Com; B Com and BBM; B Com and other graduation of the students were found to be statistically significant at 0.05 levels.
- From the post test conducted for the ANOVA, the mean difference in Optimism quotient for B Sc and other graduation background of the students was found to be statistically significant at 0.05 levels.
- From the post-hoc test conducted for the ANOVA, the mean difference in Pessimism quotient for B Sc and BA graduation background of the students; B Sc and B Com graduation background of the students; B Sc and other graduation background of the students were found to be statistically significant at 0.05 levels. To test H3, t-test was used and tabulated in table - 2.

Table - 2

Factors	't'	Sig. (2-tailed)*
Self-directedness Quotient	-1.915	.057
Group-directedness Quotient	1.347	.179
Conformity Quotient	.440	.661
Fatalism Quotient	.091	.927
Optimism Quotient	.380	.704
Pessimism Quotient	-1.206	.229
Hope Quotient	-.097	.923
Self-confidence Quotient	-.487	.627

\*df is 285.

From the above table infer the following :

- The P values all the 8 issues related to Optimism were greater than 0.05, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.

To test H2, one way ANOVA was used and the result is given as follows.

- Since  $P = .048$  for optimism quotient, the test was significant at 0.05 level i.e. there exists significant mean difference in Pessimistic quotient among the students who have joined MSW course with different age groups.
- The F value of Self-directedness quotient was .613 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- The F value of Group-directedness quotient is .790 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- The F value of Confident quotient is .709 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- The F value of Fatalism quotient is 1.519 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- The F value of Pessimism quotient is 1.158 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- The F value of Hope quotient is 1.431 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.

- The F value of Self-confidence quotient is .818 which is greater than 0.05, hence, the test was not significant at 0.05 level.
- From the post-hoc test conducted for the ANVOA, the mean difference in Fatalism quotient for the age groups of 22 and 24 years was found to be statistically significant.
- From the post-hoc test conducted for the ANVOA, the mean difference in Optimism quotient for the age groups of 21 and 24 years; 21 and above 24 years; 22 and above 24 years; 24 and above 24 years were found to be statistically significant.
- From the post-hoc test conducted for the ANOVA, the mean difference in Pessimistic quotient for the age groups of 20 and above 24 years was found to be statistically significant.
- From the post-hoc test conducted for the ANOVA, the mean difference in Hope quotient for the age groups of 21 and above 24 years; 22 and above 24 years found to be statistically significant.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

The statistical result indicates that the level of optimism among the students of first year and second year students differs. The reason could be the first year students join the course with high level of hope and MSW course provides the opportunity for every student to get exposed to different dimensions of social issues. This may excite the students. But, once the students enter the second year they might have realized that their capacity or interest may not suit the present organizational demands. This, of course, may force the students to feel frustrated which will ultimately lead to pessimism. The age factor and the level of optimism and its related aspects negatively correlate. The younger age groups have higher level of optimism but where as higher age group shows increase in pessimism.

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The other important aspects with regard to the pessimism of MSW students, the degree background of the students may also contribute to the pessimistic approach of students. The level of pessimism quotient of students those who have come from science background like B.Sc differ from the other graduate courses like BA, B.Com and other graduation courses. The students those who come from science background might have gained skills like soft skills and communication skills where the students from arts background might have not exposed to these kinds of trainings.

There is not much difference between male and female in any aspects like Self Defectiveness Quotient (SDQ), Group Defectiveness Quotient (GDQ), Compliance Quotient (CQ), Fatalism Quotient (FQ), Optimism Quotient (OQ), Pessimism Quotient (PQ), Self confidence Quotient (SCQ), and Hope Quotient (HQ). The mean value of male students, in every aspect, slightly higher than female students.

Students, whether from Social Work students or other, need to get ready to face the future professional and personal challenges. Their level of confidence is the determining factor in impressing the people around them. They should focus their aim at excelling in all aspects of life. This study aimed at to study the optimism level of MSW students of University of Mysore. This study provides the insight into the mind of MSW students and their perception towards success and failure in life.

It is suggested that the MSW students need to concentrate their attention on acquiring skills which will enhance their confidence and optimism level so that they will be adopted by organisations. Because, organisations do prefer the students who have high level self confidence and high level of optimism. Pessimistic approach towards life and other aspects will definitely lead to distraction only.

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