

# Optimism, Coping skills, and Life Satisfaction: The Implication for Web-Based Intervention

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## ABSTRACT

Optimism is reflected in the extent to which people hold positive expectation for their future. It is related to the capacity to cope with life hardship and satisfaction. Optimism, coping skills, and life satisfaction are believed to be predictors of future success. This study examined the relationship between optimism, coping skills and life satisfaction as a basis for web-based intervention. The participants totalled to 336 adolescents from 5 public high schools in Central Jakarta. The measure used is Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS), Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (ACOPE) and Domain-Specific Hope Scale (DSHC). The relationship between optimism, coping skills, and life satisfaction was analysed with gender consideration. The result showed that there was a relationship between optimism, coping skills and life satisfaction. The implication for web-based intervention on optimism enhancement was also discussed.

**Keywords:** *Optimism, coping skills, life satisfaction, web-based intervention*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Optimism is perceived as a predisposition to future success. Carver and Scheier (2014) describe it as the tendency to expect good things will happen in the future. It is also seen as generalized tendency to believe future success even in the face of obstacles (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Several studies show that optimism related to academic (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997), career and entrepreneurial success (Crane & Crane, 2007). Rand (2009) argue that an optimistic attitude toward the academic goal has a direct influence on educational performance. Optimistic individuals face challenges with confidence and persistence. They consistently put effort to strive for improvement (Segerstrom, Carver, & Scheier, 2017).

Optimism is a significant foreshadow of positive physical and mental health (Rasmussen, Scheier, & Greenhouse, 2009). Achat, Kawachi, Spiro, DeMolles, and Sparrow (2000) also found that it is a predictor of physical and mental health functioning. In addition, Peterson (2000) argues that optimism related to the positive mood, perseverance and effective problem-solving. On the other hand, higher levels of optimism have lower intensities of depression, anxiety, substance use, and antisocial behavior (Patton et al., 2011).

Scheier and Carver (1985) argue that the difference of behavior between optimist and pessimist individuals is in the way they cope with negative life events. This statement observation is consistent with Segerstrom et al. (2017) who asserts that optimist people have the capacity to cope with stress. Optimist individuals strive to confront challenges with all their potential resources. They also have a flexible way of thinking to solve the delinquent with both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies (Segerstrom et al., 2017).

Some evidence suggests that optimism is considered a predictor of physical and psychological well-being (Carver & Scheier, 2002; Chang, Maydeu-Olivares, & D'Zurilla, 1997; Szcześniak & Soares, 2011). Consistent with such findings, Alarcon, Bowling, and Khazon (2013) found that optimism is associated with life satisfaction, happiness, general psychological well-being, and. Additionally, Bailey, Eng, Frisch, and Snyder (2007) found that optimist persons have greater satisfaction in their lives. Wong and Lim (2009) established that optimism plays a significant role in life satisfaction among adolescents in Singapore.

On the contrary, pessimism is related to mental health problems and it is perceived as a predictor of anxiety and depression (Patton et al., 2011; Peterson, 2000). Pessimist people assume that their future will be disappointing. They feel lower satisfaction with life and

tend to use health-damaging behaviours for coping (Segerstrom et al., 2017).

Higher level of optimism has been related to several psychological and physical advantages. Optimist individuals behave in a healthy and positive manner, facing the future in a promising viewpoint. In such behaviour, they are more likely to have a higher level of well-being and better-coping skills. Numerous studies have shown a number advantages of optimism in academic, social and future career. In his research, Bernat (2009) reported that optimistic individuals are more likely to find schools the best places they can be successful. For these reasons, optimism is prominently suggested in mental health promotion in adolescents.

Several studies show that optimism can be learned (Seligman, 2006). Steinberg and Gano-Overway (2003) suggest that optimism could be enhanced by modifying the way of thinking. Their argument was supported by Riskind, Sarampote, and Mercier (1996), who stated that optimism can be increased through the use of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy.

In order to help adolescent increase their optimism, web-based intervention can be one alternative approach. As a digital native, adolescents are constantly related to the alphanumeric domain. Many studies proved that digital native has its own characters such as learn the best through trial and error, process information quickly, connects with graphics before text, and require relevance in their learning (Prensky, 2001). Thompson (2013) found that digital native feel that technology is necessary for learning and be based on personal interest. Many evidence reveals that computer and Internet-based psychoeducational, intervention has become prominent in mental health provision (Perle, 2011). One noticeable strategy is a web-based intervention, a approach which incorporates treatment with prevention, promotion, and educational interventions (Barak, Klein, & Proudfoot, 2009).

The study explores the relationship between optimism, coping skills and life satisfaction as a consideration for developing a web-based intervention to adolescence. The intervention has many benefits such as the ability to reach out the wide population, flexible access in terms of time, location among others (Prensky, 2001).

## 2. METHODS

The study was carried out among adolescent in Central Jakarta public high school. The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between optimism, coping skill and life satisfaction. The participant totalled 336 students of grade 10<sup>th</sup> from 5 public high schools in

Central Jakarta. The sample consisted of 107 male (31.8%) and 229 female (68.2%).

The first instrument consists of three measures, Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS), Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (ACOPE) and Domain-Specific Hope Scale (DSHC). The BMSLSS was developed by Seligson, Huebner, and Valois (2003). It also consists of 40-items with the internal consistency is a 0.75 (Seligson et al., 2003). The second instrument is ACOPE which developed by Patterson and McCubbin (1987). The purpose of this measure was to assess the types of coping behaviours used by adolescents. It comprised of 54 item examining 12 aspects of coping skills (McCubbin, Thompson, & McCubbin, 2001). The DSHC was developed by Simpson (1999) and measure individual optimism in six life areas. In this research, the instruments were adjusted into the Indonesian language of *Bahasa* using back-translation approach (Hambleton, Merenda, & Spielberger, 2004).

All the data were analysed using the SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Version 20.0). In order to measure the degree of relationship between the variables, the Pearson correlation formula was used.

## 3. RESULT

The sample consisted of 107 male (31.8%) and 229 female (68.2%), all 14 to 15 years old. Adolescents spent many hours in the digital world than their previous generation. The average hour spent on the internet was between 5-6 hours daily. Around 103 (30.6 %) of the participants spent 5-6 hour on the internet per day. The longest hour on the internet, over 11 hours was chosen by 35 participants (10.4%), 93 (27.6%) spend 3-4 hours, 53 (15.7%) used 7-8 hour, and 33 (9.8%) takes 9-10 hours. Only 19 participants (5.6%) spent their time limited time on the internet, about 1-2 hours.

Socioeconomic status is identified by a reception of Kartu Jakarta Pintar (KJP). KJP is a government support to the student from the low economic background. In this research, participants who received KJP were 89 (26.4%) versus 247 (73.5%) counterparts. It can be concluded that most of the participants is from middle and high economic background.

Socioeconomic background is relevant to the availability of internet access at home. Most of the participants have shared internet access at home (176; 52.38%) and around 74 students (22%) have their own internet access. Only 86 participants (5.65%) came from families without access to the internet.

The result showed that the mean of life satisfaction was 160.43 (SD=9.63), coping skill orientation mean

score was 174.51 (SD=23.12), while optimism mean mark was 280.28 (SD=39.85).

The statistical analysis result shows that there was a significant relationship between optimism and life satisfaction  $r = 0.569$ . Optimism also significantly related to coping skills  $r=0.350$ . The same result shows that there was a correlation between coping skill and life satisfaction  $r=0.273$ .

In addition, life satisfaction was related to social economic status  $r =0.18$ . The opposite result showed there was a negative relationship between coping skills and social economic status  $r =-.003$  as well as optimism and socioeconomic status  $r =.050$ .

In terms of sexual category, there was a relationship between optimism and gender  $r = 0.178$ . The contradictory result showed in the relationship between coping skills and life satisfaction in relation to gender ( $r =.094$ ;  $r =.037$ )

Table 1. Correlation between variables

No	Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1	Optimism	-				
2	Coping skills	.350**	-			
3	Life satisfaction	.569**	.273**	-		
4	SES	.050	-.003	.180**	-	
5	Gender	.178**	.094	.037	0.05	-

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The descriptive analysis showed that the mean of optimism was 280.28 (SD=39.85). The result on correlational statistic indicated that optimism is significantly related to gender with  $r = 0.178$ . This finding means that optimism is influenced by gender. Therefore, the development of optimism intervention should recognize gender as one of the key considerations. The same result found by Puskar, Sereika, Lamb, Tusaie-Mumford, and Mcguinness (1999). They found differences of optimism score between male and female. The result was contradicted by several studies. For instance, Huebner, Drane, and Valois (2000) found that optimism was not predicted by gender differences.

Although gender is significantly related to optimism, it showed contrary result with coping skills and life satisfaction. it was similar to a study conducted by Huebner et al. (2000). The study showed that gender

differences are not related to life satisfaction. In summary, the results suggest that gender can be considered when developing an optimism promotion intervention for an adolescent.

It was also revealed that there was no correlation between optimism and social economic status which means that the financial condition of the family does not significantly influence adolescence’s optimism toward the future. On the contrary, social economic status was significantly related to life satisfaction. The result supported by Raboteg-Šarić, Brajša-Žganec, and Šakić (2009). They argue that life satisfaction is significantly predicted by socioeconomic status. It was also found that financial condition is negatively correlated with coping skills. The Pearson correlation result showed that optimism was positively correlated with coping skills with  $r = 0.35$ . The finding was similar to the study carried out by Kim (2007) that reported positive correlations between optimism and active coping skill, mediated by health-promoting behaviours. The same finding revealed by Bryant and Cvengros (2004). By using structural equation modelling, they noted that optimism had a stronger influence on the use of positive reappraisal as a coping strategy. Other researches pointed toward the relationship between optimism and coping skills showed a significant correlation (Puskar et al., 1999).

In addition, this study also established that optimism is positively associated with life satisfaction  $r = .569$ ;  $p<0.05$ . The finding is similar to Wong and Lim (2009) who established that among Singaporean optimism is related positively with life satisfaction. Furthermore, Chang et al. (1997) describe that optimism is predicting individual differences in relation to life satisfaction.

With consideration of the amount of hour spent on the internet and its availability, web-based intervention might have a promising effect on the adolescents. The average time spent on the internet was 5-6 hours, meaning it has become part of their lifestyle. The other supporting result for web-based intervention was the availability of internet access. Most adolescents have internet access at home, shares or exclusively for them. Only 86 students (5.65%) do not have internet access at home. Thus, web-based intervention might have fewer barriers when implemented among adolescents in Central Jakarta.

Web-based intervention is more widely accepted in mental health prevention, promotion, and treatment. Some studies showed that web-based intervention appears to be effective in mental health promotion. This study considered developing a web-based intervention for optimism promotion.

Some evidence showed that web-based intervention is an alternative to developing psychological capital.

Luthans, Avey, and Patera (2008) examine 2-hour web-based training intervention using a pre-test, post-test experimental design. Their study showed that web-based intervention influence psychological capital. Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) also acknowledge the effect of the web-based intervention on positive psychology. They found that web-based intervention has significantly influenced signature strength. Moreover, Powell et al. (2013) found that web-based cognitive behavioural intervention showed a promising result in well-being.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that web-based intervention appears adequately suitable for an adolescent in Central Jakarta. It was recommended that promotion of positive mental health, including optimism can be facilitated through web-based intervention.

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