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## A STUDY OF OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM ON EMOTIONAL MATURITY, DEPRESSION AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG ADOLESCENT

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### A B S T R A C T

*The present study has tried to explore the differences between Optimist and Pessimist adolescents on Emotional Maturity, Depression and Coping Strategies. The data was collected on 144(86 optimists and 58 pessimist) adolescents. Subjects were selected from K.V. Schools of Dehradun using quota random sampling technique. The data was collected using Optimistic-Pessimistic attitude Scale (Dr.D.S. Prashar 1998) Emotional Maturity Scale (Dr. Yashvir Singh and Dr. Mahesh Bhargava 1990) Depression Scale (Dr. Shamim Karim and Dr. Rama Tiwari 1986) and Ways of Coping Questionnaire (Folkman and Lazarus 1985) was administered. The result of the present study revealed a significant difference between Optimists and Pessimists on Emotional Maturity and its dimensions. On Depression Optimists and Pessimists did not differ on Sleep Disturbance and the feeling of Sadness. Optimists were found to possess a tendency of using Planful Problem Solving and Positive Reappraisal more as compared to Pessimists when in a stressful situation.*

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and mental human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. This transition involves biological (i.e. pubertal), social, and psychological changes, shown in their personality traits. Adolescent period is associated with notable changes in mood sometimes known as mood swings. Cognitive, emotional and attitudinal changes which are characteristic of adolescence, often take place during this period, and this can be a cause of conflict, stress and depression on one hand and positive personality development on the other. Because the adolescents are experiencing various strong cognitive and physical changes, for the first time in their lives they may start to view their friends, their peer group, as more important and influential than their parents/guardians.

Optimism is general tendency to expect always a

good outcome. Optimist is the person one who is disposed for the best. An optimistic thinking style in the present time increases our resilience power, maintain hope for the best and improve our chance for the success. On the other hand, pessimism leads to make us more anxious, depressed and hopeless. Optimistic person have an ability to maintain balance in difficult situation such as in anxiety and depression. Pessimist tends to see bad events as inevitable, as some permanent reflection of the environment on themselves. Optimist on the other hand, tends to see bad situation s as temporary and specific something they can address. They can take responsibility for their own poor behavior. They will not however blame themselves as a whole. Pessimist is more realistic about their flows. (Martin Seligman 1991).

Pessimism is the general tendency to expect al-

ways bed outcomes. A pessimist is the person one who always looking to the dark side of the thing. Pessimism, from the Latin *pessimus* (worst), is the decision to evaluate, perceive and view life in a generally negative light. Value judgment may vary dramatically between individuals, even when judgments of fact are undisputed. The most common example of this phenomenon is the “Is the glass half empty or half full?” situation. Emotional maturity can be understood in term of ability of self-control which in turn is a result of thinking and learning (Singh and Bhargava 1980). Morgan and King Weisz and Schopler (1986) stated the view that adequate theory of emotional maturity must take account of the full scope of the individuality powers and ability to enjoy the use of his powers. It arouses through healthy perception of the surroundings and hence enables them to maintain a healthy equilibrium. Emotional maturity is important for healthy emotional development, it is a kind of processes that make himself more mature in emotional condition. A person who is not able to keep his emotions under control he suffer with self pity. He might still be stunned and childish. Emotional maturity is a process in which the personality is continuously striving for greater sense of emotional health both physically and psychologically.

Depression is a serious, but treatable illness. It affects people of all ages, but it is common among older people. However it is not a normal part of aging (Alexopoulos 2001). Coping (psychology) is the process of managing taxing circumstances, expending effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems, and seeking to master, minimize, reduce or tolerate stress or conflict. Coping strategies refer to the specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events. In coping with stress, people tend to use one of the three main coping strategies: either appraisal focused, problem focused, or emotion focused coping.

Over the years, considerable research has been focused on how people cope with their encounters with stressful life events. When faced with a novel and potentially difficult situation, or in a state of depression, people with generally positive expectation

about the likelihood of future successes are more likely to persists in their goal directed efforts (i.e., the optimist ) than those who have more negative expectations (i.e., the pessimists). Thus the optimist and the pessimist exhibit distinct types of coping in stressful situations (Scheier and Carver, 1985). Optimism has been conceptualized as a temporary state and trait like factor outcomes of one’s life. It has been suggested that optimism is beneficial for psychological as well as physical well being. Various studies shows that optimist as compared to pessimists adjust more favorably to a variety of stressors ( Aspinwall and Taylor, 1992).

Optimism and pessimism defined as generalized positive and negative outcome expectancies, respectively, are believed to represent important predictors of adjustment .specifically, this investigator have argued that optimism is associated with and leads to incurring negative outcomes (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Consistent with this view, numerous studies have found that optimism associated with greater positive psychological outcomes, whereas pessimism is associated with greater negative psychological outcomes(for reviews , see Andersson,1996; Scheier & Carver, 1992), whereas pessimism has been found to be associated with greater depressive symptoms (Chang et al., 1996).

#### Method

#### Aim and Objective

The present study has tried to explore differences between optimist and pessimist adolescents on Emotional Maturity, Depression and Coping strategies and their dimensions.

**Hypothesis** To achieve the main objective of the study following hypothesis are framed;

1. Optimist adolescents will be significantly higher on Emotional Maturity and its dimensions than Pessimist adolescents.
2. Pessimist adolescents will be significantly higher on Depression and its dimensions than Optimist adolescents.
3. Optimist adolescents will be significantly higher on Coping Strategies and its dimensions than Pessimist adolescents.

#### Tools used

##### \* Optimistic-Pessimistic attitude Scale (Op/Pm)

- Constructed and standardized by Dr.D.S. Prashar (1998) was used to know the Optimistic Pessimistic

attitude of the subjects.

**\* Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS)** - Constructed and standardized by Dr. Yashvir Singh and Dr. Mahesh Bhargava (1990) was used to know Emotional Maturity of the subjects. it measures Emotional Maturity on five dimensions namely, Emotional Unstability, Emotional Regression, Social Maladjustment, Personality Disintegration and Lack of Independence.

**\* Depression Scale (DEP)** - Constructed and standardized by Dr. Shamim Karim and Dr. Rama Tiwari (1986) was used to check the depression level of subjects. It measures Depression on twelve dimensions namely, Apathy, Sleep Disturbance, Pessimism, Fatigability, Irritability, Social Withdrawal & Self Centeredness, Dejected or Sadness, Self Dislike, Self Acquisition, Self Harm, Social Reoccupation, Indecisiveness.

**\* Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WAYSS)** - constructed and standardized by Folkman and Lazarus (1985) was used to measure the coping strategies of the subjects. Different Coping Strategies measured by the scale are Confrontive Coping, Distancing, Self-Control, Seeking Social Support, Accepting Responsibility, Escape Avoidance, Planful Problem Solving, and Positive Reappraisal.

#### Sample

The sample consisted of 144 adolescents (86 optimists and 58 pessimists). Subjects were selected from K.V. Schools of Dehradun using quota random sampling technique. All the subject were matched on their socio economic status and educational level. The age range of subjects was 13-17 yrs.

#### Procedure

The respondents were contacted individually and data was collected through structured questionnaire. After establishing good rapport with the subjects all the four questionnaires were administered. Individual scores were obtained with the help of respective manuals and processed further using computerized statistical techniques namely; Means, SDs and t test.

#### Results

The present study has tried to explore the differences among optimist and pessimist adolescents on Emotional Maturity, Depression and Coping Strategies. Table 1 showed the Mean SD and 't' values of

Optimist and Pessimist on Emotional Maturity and its dimensions. It represents that on Total Emotional Maturity and their dimensions namely; Emotional Unstability, Emotional Regression, Social Maladjustment, Personality Disintegration, and Lack of Independence Pessimists scored significantly higher mean values than optimists.

Table 2 represents Mean, SD and 't' values among optimist and pessimist adolescents on Total Depression and its dimensions. Optimist adolescent scored higher mean values on Total Depression and its dimensions namely, Apathy, Pessimism, Fatigability, Irritability, Social Withdrawal and Self Centeredness, Self Dislike, Self Harm, Social Reoccupation and Indecisiveness, 't' values on these dimensions were also found to be significant, whereas insignificant t values were found between Optimist and Pessimist on Sleep Disturbance, Dejected or Sadness, and Self Acquisition. Table 3 shows the Mean, SD and 't' values among optimist and pessimist adolescents on Coping Strategies and its dimensions. On Total Coping Strategies and its dimensions namely, Planful Problem Solving and Positive Reappraisal Optimists obtained higher mean values than Pessimists and 't' values on these dimensions were also observed to be significant whereas on other dimensions namely, Confrontive Coping, Distancing, Self Control, Seeking Social Support, Accepting Responsibility and Escape Avoidance t values emerged to be insignificant between Optimists and Pessimists..

#### Discussion

##### Optimist/Pessimist and Emotional Maturity

The obtained t value on total Emotional Maturity (Table 1) was found to be significant at .01 levels. It shows that Optimists and Pessimists differ from each other on total Emotional Maturity level. Observation of mean values revealed that Pessimists obtained higher mean scores on total Emotional Maturity. On all its dimensions namely; Emotional Unstability, Emotional Regression, Social Maladjustment, Personality Disintegration and Lack of Independence Pessimists obtained significantly higher mean scores than Optimists. It means that the level of Emotional Immaturity is significantly more among Pessimists as compared to Optimists. It can be said that Pessimists possessed

low level of Emotional Maturity or it can be said that Optimists have high level of Emotional Maturity than Pessimists. Pessimists were found to have significantly higher level of Emotional Unstability, Emotional Regression, Social Maladjustment, Personality Disintegration and Lack of Independence as compared to Optimists. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis was accepted claiming that Optimists are more Emotionally Mature than Pessimists. The obtained findings stands in line with the earlier findings of Joshi, Gupta and Tomar, (2009) who also reported that Optimists are more emotionally matured than Pessimists. Aspinwall and Taylor (1992) also found that Optimistic group has high level of maturity and low level of depression than Pessimistic group.

#### Optimist/Pessimist and Depression

On total Depression and its dimensions namely, Apathy, Pessimism, Fatigability, Irritability, Social Withdrawal, Self Dislike, Self-Acquisition, Self Harm, Social Reoccupation, Indecisiveness the calculated t value (Table-2) was found to be significant at .01 levels. It showed that Optimists and Pessimists differ from each other on the level of Depression. Pessimists were found to have higher level of Depression as compared to Optimists. The level of Apathy, Pessimism, tendency of Fatigability, Irritability, Social Withdrawal, Self Dislike, Self-Acquisition, Self Harm, Social Reoccupation and Indecisiveness was higher among Pessimist adolescents as compared to Optimists. It can be said that Optimists possessed low level of Depression and lower tendency of Apathy, Pessimism, Fatigability, Irritability, Social Withdrawal, Self Dislike, Self-Acquisition, Self Harm, Social Reoccupation, and Indecisiveness. Optimists and Pessimists showed no significant difference on Sleep Disturbance and the feeling of Dejected or Sadness. On the basis of obtained findings the proposed hypothesis was partially accepted claiming that Optimist adolescents possess low level of Depression and its dimensions except Sleep Disturbance and the feeling of Sadness.

Findings support the earlier findings of Joshi, Gupta and Tomar (2006), who also found that Optimist are less vulnerable to depression as compared to Pessimist. Viven S. Husen et al (2006) also reported that Optimistic students were likely to perceive less academic stress or depression while greater academic stress was experienced by the Pessimistic students.

demographic stress or depression while greater academic stress was experienced by the Pessimistic students. Gillhan Jane. E Revich (2001) also reported that Optimism builds resilience to depression. And Optimist group are less affected by the depression than pessimists.

#### Optimist/Pessimist and Coping Strategies

Significant t value for total Coping Strategies and its dimensions namely Planful Problem Solving and Positive Reappraisal (Table 3) indicated that Optimists and Pessimists differ from each other on this variable. Mean values revealed that Optimists obtained higher mean scores than Pessimists on these dimensions of Coping Strategies denoting that Optimists possess a tendency of using Planful Problem Solving and Positive Reappraisal more as compared to Pessimists. On other dimensions namely, Confrontive Coping, Distancing, Self Control, Seeking Social Support, Accepting Responsibility and Escape Avoidance Optimists also obtained higher mean values but it was not found to be significant. It denoted that tendency of using Confrontive Coping, Distancing, Self Control, Seeking Social Support, Accepting Responsibility and Escape Avoidance Coping Strategies are similar among Optimist and Pessimists. It can be said that Optimists when in stressful situations use Planful Problem Solving and Positive Reappraisal more to cope up as compared to Pessimists. The obtained findings stands in line with the earlier findings of Scheier and Carver (1985) who reported that optimism helped students to cope more effectively with stress. Students who are reported themselves as Optimists at the start of semester were less likely to bother by stress related symptoms by the end of semester than those who are reported themselves to be less Optimistic initially. Cruess, Stacy Antoni, Michale et al (2001) also found the differences on coping strategies among Optimists and Pessimists and revealed that Optimists Coping Strategies are effective than Pessimists. Finally it can be concluded that Optimist adolescents are more emotionally mature and experience significantly lesser degree of Depression than Pessimist adolescents. Optimists and Pessimists did not differ on Sleep Disturbance and the feeling of Sadness. Optimists were found to possess a tendency of using Planful Problem Solving and Positive Reappraisal more as compared to Pessimists when in a stressful situation.

Table 1: Comparison of Optimist and Pessimist Adolescents on Emotional Maturity and its Dimensions.

Variable / Dimension	Optimist (n=86)		Pessimist (n=58)		't' value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Emotional Unstability	20.4	4.83	25.31	7.42	4.58**
Emotional Regression	19.26	5.86	22.92	6.17	2.11*
Social Maladjustment	19.57	4.88	23.46	8.19	3.75**
Personality Disintegration	18.82	4.22	23.46	7.60	6.10**
Lack of Independence	14.96	4.59	23.46	3.93	5.66**
Emotional Maturity (Total)	105.03	<b>19.12</b>	117.42	<b>29.06</b>	7.69**

\* significant at 0.05 level; \*\* significant at 0.01 level

Table 2: Comparison of Optimist and Pessimist Adolescents on Depression and its Dimensions.

Variable / Dimension	Optimist (n=86)		Pessimist (n=58)		't' value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Apathy	7.85	10.59	12.14	4.52	22.03**
Sleep Disturbance	8.33	4.62	10.5	4.57	1.91NS
Pessimism	5.58	3.85	12.46	3.03	5.88**
Fatigability	5.79	3.66	11.85	4.90	5.66**
Irritability	6.93	4.71	13.62	3.39	4.82**
Social Withdrawal & Self enteredness	7.7	4.61	12.07	4.75	4.80**
Dejected or Sadness	9.94	4.38	12.46	4.45	1.93NS
Self Dislike	6.69	4.25	13.85	4.92	5.51**
Self Acquisition	8.07	4.72	10.85	5.19	1.98*
Self Harm	6.05	3.99	11.69	5.37	4.59**
Social Reoccupation	6.22	4.11	13.62	5.82	6.21**
Indecisiveness	6.75	4.01	13.23	3.79	5.43**
Social Withdrawal & Self Centeredness	7.7	4.61	12.07	4.75	4.80**
Dejected or Sadness	9.94	4.38	12.46	4.45	1.93
Self Dislike	6.69	4.25	13.85	4.92	5.51**
Self Acquisition	8.07	4.72	10.85	5.19	1.98*
Self Harm	6.05	3.99	11.69	5.37	4.59**
Social Reoccupation	6.22	4.11	13.62	5.82	6.21**
Indecisiveness	6.75	4.01	13.23	3.79	5.43**
Depression (Total)	116.06	<b>35.30</b>	147.00	<b>36.64</b>	9.13**

\* significant at 0.05 level; \*\* significant at 0.01 level

Table3: Comparison of Optimist and Pessimist Adolescents on Coping Strategies and its Dimensions.

Variable / Dimension	Optimist (n=86)		Pessimist (n=58)		‘t’ value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Confrontive Coping	9.23	3.10	9.76	2.73	1.63NS
Distancing	9.93	3.32	9.92	4.51	0.01NS
Self- Control	11.12	3.54	10.54	4.28	1.52NS
Seeking Social Support	9.39	3.48	9.23	2.28	0.16NS
Accepting Responsibility	7.69	3.90	7.28	2.76	0.83NS
Escape Avoidance	11.06	3.82	11.42	4.76	1.62NS
Planful Problem Solving	13.37	4.34	10.57	3.50	4.23**
Positive Reappraisal	14.83	4.83	11.07	4.81	4.05**
<b>Coping Strategies (Total)</b>	<b>82.64</b>	<b>16.35</b>	<b>74.75</b>	<b>19.22</b>	<b>16.46**</b>

\* significant at 0.05 level; \*\* significant at 0.01 level

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