

Hope: The Psychology of What Makes One Happy

Dr. Bani Narula^{1*}

ABSTRACT

The present paper pinpoints on a very simple and straightforward concept of hope. The aim of this paper is twofold. First, hope is explored within the theoretical framework of positive psychology, which considers hope as a character strength that contributes to wellbeing and happiness. Second, to examine relationship between hope and happiness. Sample comprised of fifty undergraduate students from D.A.V College, Chandigarh in the age range of 18-21 years. Adult Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (2002) were used to measure hope and happiness respectively. Correlation analysis was carried out and results revealed positive significant correlation between hope and happiness i.e. ($r = 0.721, p \leq 0.01$). It indicated that students high in hope are more likely to experience happiness. In today's time where there is so much of hassle, stress and anxiety among adolescents, hence, there is a need for parents, psychologists, counsellors and even teachers to inculcate character strength like hope in order to produce effects such as self belief, self esteem and happiness.

Keywords: Hope, Character Strength, Positive Psychology

A Famous Quote of Dalai Lama says: *“The very purpose of our life is happiness, which is sustained by hope. We have no guarantee about the future, but we exist in the hope of something better. Hope means keeping going, thinking, ‘I can do this.’ It brings inner strength, self-confidence, the ability to do what you do honestly, truthfully and transparently.”*

Positive psychology draws interests similar to those of humanistic psychology, but differs as positive psychology embraces an empirical approach. It focuses on issues that are existential in nature, with an empirical grounding and this is what makes positive psychology unique. However, there has been research into which character strengths promotes positive development and prevents psychopathology. Dahlsgaard, Park, and Peterson (2005) discovered that adolescents with higher levels of zest, hope, and leadership displayed lower levels of anxiety and depression in comparison to their peers with lower levels of the above stated strengths. Further, findings revealed that transcendence (eg. gratitude, meaning, and

¹ Assistant Professor, Psychology, D.A.V College, Sector-10, Chandigarh, India

*Responding Author

Received: June 22, 2017; Revision Received: July 15, 2017; Accepted: July 20, 2017

Hope: The Psychology of What Makes One Happy

hope) predict life satisfaction, concluding in the importance for adolescents to develop positive relationships and to have a sense of purpose and dreams. Positive Psychology confirms that the happiest people are those that have discovered their unique strengths (such as persistence and critical thinking) and virtues (such as hope) and use those strengths and virtues for a purpose that is greater than their own personal goals (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2006).

Hope

Hope has been identified as character strength which falls under the virtue of Transcendence and the common theme running through transcendence is that it each allows individuals to forge connections to the larger universe and thereby provide meaning to their lives (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Emmons (1999) has associated hope to “ultimate concerns”.

Hope represents a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance toward the future (Snyder & Lopez, 2005) Thinking about the future, expecting that desired events and outcomes will occur, acting in ways believed to make them more likely, and feeling confident that these will ensue given appropriate efforts sustain good cheer in the here and now and galvanize goal-directed actions. Individuals with this strength always remain hopeful about the future despite challenges. They believe that good will always triumph over evil and expect the best. Recently, Brdar & Kashdan, (2010) concluded with 4 major factors which comprises twenty four strengths of character and aligns *hope to the factor - Vitality*, which reflects a global factor of positive qualities (zest, hope, curiosity, and humor).

Defining Hope

Hope has been defined differently by different authors; each gave a different definition in their works, some of which are presented below:

According to Herth, (2000) hope is defined as a motivational and cognitive attribute that is theoretically necessary to initiate and sustain action toward goal attainment.

Peterson and Seligman, (2004) opined “hope as a cognitive, emotional and motivational stance towards the future.

As per Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, (2005) “Hope includes a belief that one knows how to reach one’s goals (pathways) and a belief that one has the motivation to use those pathways to reach one’s goals (agency).”

A Common feature in the conception of Hope

An attempt has been made to pull together a common theme from various conceptualizations of hope given above i.e. hope has the ability to not just reflects optimism and positivity in the coming times but also absorbs one in deep sanguinity in the present moment.

Theoretical Conceptualizations on Hope

Cognitive Hope Theory is particularly important for performance (Snyder, Rand & Sigmon, 2002). According to this theory, hope is comprised of two aspects i.e. 'waypower' and 'willpower.' The 'waypower' is a process that involves identifying goals, and finding ways to achieve goals despite obstacles. 'Willpower' involves a general belief in one's own ability to achieve goals (i.e., 'agency beliefs;' Snyder, et al., 1991). Hope inhibits handicapping and self-deprecatory thoughts, as well as negative emotions. Hope also promotes academic achievement, and is one of the strongest predictors of overcoming adversity (Snyder et al., 2002).

An emerging theory called Growth Mindset by Dweck (2006) put forth an important fact that growth mindset individuals don't mind failure much because they realize their performance can be improved in comparison to those who believe their success is based on innate ability and so are said to have a fixed mindset. According to Dweck (2006), students having growth mindset are aware of where does achievement comes from.

Happiness

"Don't worry be happy", carols every one. "And the prince and the princess lived happily ever after", say the fairy tales. "I only want your happiness", croons the lover. "Every man has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness", says the American Constitution. "Happiness is buying the latest must-have", shout the advertisements. No matter what the message, mankind is united in conviction that happiness is a desirable state. Indeed, all of us, consciously or unconsciously, are motivated in all we do by our need for happiness. It is an indicator for quality of life and this claim is strengthened by research which stated that people who are happy will be more satisfied with their lives, able to accept the distance between hope and reality, and have better performance. The United Nations declared 20 March the International Day of Happiness to recognize the relevance of happiness and wellbeing as universal goals. In 2014, Happy (Pharrell Williams song) became the anthem and inspired clips from around the world. (as suggested by Narula in her book Happiness Quotient, 2016).

Since the 1960s, scientific disciplines have conducted research on happiness, to determine how humans can live happier lives. The scientific pursuit of positive emotion and happiness is the pillar of positive psychology, first proposed in 1998 by Martin Seligman. Seligman (2002) referred to the meaning of happiness in form of an equation i.e. $H = S + C + V$, where H is one's enduring level of happiness, S is one's happiness set point, C is one's life's circumstances and V is a factor representing a person's voluntary activities.

Defining Happiness

Tomer (2011) referred to an understanding of enduring happiness and proposed a modified happiness formula which is somewhat different from other psychologists i.e. $H = S + UC + E$, where H is an individual's enduring happiness; S is an individual's set point, one's inherited disposition to happiness; UC is the contribution to happiness made by the relatively

Hope: The Psychology of What Makes One Happy

utilitarian or hedonic aspects of an individual's circumstances; and E is the contribution to happiness made by the eudaimonic aspect of life.

Snyder & Lopez (2005) proposed a generalised definition of happiness as “a positive emotional state that is subjectively defined by each person.”

According to White (2013), “Happiness is defined as a mental or emotional state of well being characterised by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy.”

Recently, according to Flora (2016),” Happiness encompasses living a meaningful life, utilizing gifts and time, living with thought and purpose.”

A Common feature in the conception of Happiness:

An attempt has been made to pull together a common theme from various conceptualizations of happiness given by numerous researchers i.e. *happiness is considered more than a pleasant feeling with less prevalence of negative emotions and is determined by our genes but also largely depends upon our environment as well as how do we interpret our significant others in our lives.*

Theoretical Conceptualizations on Happiness

The broaden-and-build theory of Positive Emotions proposed by (Fredrickson, 2001), underscores that Positive emotions broaden our thought action repertoires i.e. expand people's mindsets in ways that little-by-little reshape who they are. Positive emotions build personal resources and fuel psychological and physical well-being - As founded by Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) that “when people feel positive emotion, they are jolted into a different way of thinking and acting. Their thinking becomes creative and broad-minded, and their actions become adventurous and exploratory. This expanded repertoire creates more mastery over challenges, which in turn generates more positive emotion, which further broadens and builds thinking and action, and so on” (Seligman, 2002). This finding is important because it suggests hopeful people might begin to harness the beneficial effects of positive emotions to optimize their own well-being; by regularly finding positive meaning within the daily ups and downs of life.

Another most intriguing theory is *The PERMA Model* (Seligman, 2012). This model is a theory of well-being that forms the foundation upon which a happy and flourishing life is built. “PERMA” stands for Positive Emotions (P), research has identified certain skills and exercises that can boost our experience of positive emotions. Engagement (E), i.e. it involves identifying and cultivating personal strengths, virtues and talents. Positive Relationships (R), i.e. key to all relationships is balance. Meaning (M), i.e. people who belong to a community and pursue shared meaningful goals are happier than people who don't. Lastly, Achievement/Accomplishment (A) i.e. creating and working toward goals helps us anticipate and build hope for the future. Past successes make us feel more confident and optimistic about future attempts. Students became aware of their own expectations and valued the

Hope: The Psychology of What Makes One Happy

significance of positive expectations. These expectations facilitated by focusing on their strengths and using an optimism mindset.

Hypothesis

- It is expected that there is a positive relationship between hope and happiness.

Sample

A total of fifty students from D.A.V College, Sector 10, Chandigarh were targeted for the study. The inclusion criterion for the sample of the study was as follows:

- Female students comprised the sample
- Age ranged from 18-21years
- Students from intact families and urban middle class were included
- Undergraduate students were undertaken

Tests and Tools

1. The Adult Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) - The adult hope comprises of total 12 items; four items measure pathways thinking, four items measure agency thinking, and four items are fillers. Participants respond to each item using 8-point scale ranging from definitely false to definitely true and the scale takes only a few minutes to complete. In a study by Kermani, Khodapanahi, & Heidari (2012), Cronbach's Alpha for the Hope Scale was found to be 0.86 and test-retest reliability was found to be 0.81.

2. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ, Hills & Argyle, 2002) – The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ), has been derived from the Oxford Happiness Inventory, (OHI). The test comprised 29 items, participants respond to each item using a 6-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The OHQ demonstrates high scale reliabilities with values (168)=0.91. The inter-item correlations for the OHQ ranged from 0.04 to 0.65, mean 0.28.

RESULTS

Table 1- Mean and Standard Deviation of Hope and Happiness

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Happiness	4.4800	.58538	50
Hope	47.3250	11.07640	50

Descriptive statistics i.e. Mean and Standard Deviation were calculated for both the variables. Table 1 revealed Mean and Standard Deviation of Hope i.e. 47.32 and 11.07 respectively and Mean and Standard Deviation of Happiness i.e. 4.48 and 0.58 respectively.

Table 2- Correlation analysis

		Happiness	Hope
Happiness		1	.721**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Hope	Pearson Correlation	.721**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hope: The Psychology of What Makes One Happy

Karl Pearson correlation was performed to evaluate the relationship between hope and happiness, and table- 2 showed significant positive relationship between hope and happiness ($r= 0.721, p \leq 0.01$)

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present research was to study relationship between hope and happiness among females between the age group of 18 to 21 years. The present findings revealed that there exists a significant positive correlation between hope and happiness. It means that people those who are hopeful tend to be happier than those who are not hopeful. This notion is supported by Park & Peterson, 2009 research which highlights that love, zest, and hope are associated with happiness starting at a very young age. Also, love and hope are dependent on the infant and caregiver relationship. To put in plain words, the realistic view of hope is actually the focal point of Positive Psychology. It is a hope that is built on the foundational understanding of the reality of impermanence, the necessity of present moment living and it is the hope that sustains happiness.

Happiness is a multi-dimensional concept which consists of several fundamental parts; in the emotional part, the happy individual leads a hopeful life; from the social aspect, the happy individual has good social relations with others and can attain social support from them; finally, from a cognitive aspect, the happy person processes and interprets information with a special method so that in the end, he or she can have a feeling of happiness and optimism (Valois et al., 2004).

Number of reasons can be offered as to why hope is a relevant variable effecting mental health. In this view, happiness and subjective well-being is increasingly viewed as a primary outcome of therapeutic strategies, and hope is considered an important factor associated with happiness and well-being (Slade, 2009). Although the relationships between happiness and other concepts have been widely examined, much less research has focused on subjective happiness and its relationship with hope.

Saricam, (2015) carried out a research to examine the relationship between subjective happiness and hope. 435 university students comprised the sample. The Integrative Hope Scale and the Subjective Happiness Scale were used. The relationships between them were examined using correlation analysis and Structural Equation Model (SEM). In correlation analysis, trust and confidence, positive future orientation, and social relations and personal value sub factors of hope were found positively related to subjective happiness. Structural Equation Model showed that subjective happiness was predicted positively by various sub factors of hope i.e. trust and confidence, positive future orientation, and social relations and personal value. According to standardized beta coefficients ($P = 0.34$), the most significant predictor of subjective happiness was trust and confidence. In conclusion, this research reports that the hope relates to subjective happiness significantly.

Hope: The Psychology of What Makes One Happy

Parveen et al (2016) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between Optimism and Psychological Well being. Optimism assumes a measure of hope in one's approach to life. Psychological well-being, broadly defined as happiness, life satisfaction, and self-growth represents one of the most important aspects of efficient psychological functioning. 120 adolescents were selected from Aligarh Muslim University, 60 Hindu male & female and 60 Muslim male & female through random sampling. Pearson product moment correlation was also used for measuring the relationship between Optimism and Psychological Well-being. Result shows that there is significant positive correlation between optimism and psychological well-being.

Also, qualities that sustain happiness are optimism - believing that our behaviour will eventually matter, social connection - the breadth and depth of our relationships, the way we perceive stresses - as challenges instead of threats and meaning - the connection between our actions and our values, Lyubomirsky, (2008).

CONCLUSION

An important fact to catch is that positive behaviors that are implemented in young age have a greater impact on the person's life. In nutshell, hope is a protective factor for human adaptation, and for psychotherapeutic change, being consistently identified as a key factor in psychological counselling by client, family members and therapists in various settings. People high in trust and confidence, positive future orientation, and social relations and personal value are more likely to be happy than those high in lack of perspective.

Suggestions for future research

- Further research can be conducted on to build a training program or module emphasising on culmination of character strengths besides hope like kindness and humor, gratitude and persistence so that it is more prominent to adolescents.
- It is suggested to future studies to include different variables such as well-being, life satisfaction and coping skills.
- Further investigation may be needed to focus on gender differences and across different age groups as this would enable to explore the concept in a more meaningful manner.

Acknowledgments

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

Conflict of Interests: The author declared no conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

- Brdar, I., & Kashdan, T. (2010). Character strengths and well-being in Croatia: An empirical investigation of structure and correlates. *Journal of Research in Personality, 44*(1), 151-154.

Hope: The Psychology of What Makes One Happy

- Dahlsgaard, K., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M.E.P. (2005). Shared virtue: The convergence of valued human strengths across culture and history. *Review of General Psychology*, 9(3), 203-213.
- Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House Digital, Inc.
- Emmons, R.A. (1999). *Psychology of ultimate concerns*, New York: Guilford
- Flora, C. (2016.). *It's not about you: the real antidote to negative thinking is the wondrous immensity of the external world*. *Psychology Today*, 48-56.
- Fredrickson, B., L., & Joiner, T. (2002). Positive emotions trigger upward spirals toward emotional well-being. *Psychological Science*, 13, 172-175.
- Fredrickson, B.L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-built theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226.
- Herth, K.A. (2000). "Enhancing hope in people with a first recurrence of cancer". *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 32: 1431-1441.
- Hills, P., & Argyle, M. (2002). The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: A Compact Scale for the Measurement of Psychological Well-Being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 33, 1073-1082.
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Narula, B. (2016). *Happiness Quotient: Building Gratitude and Forgiveness*. The Readers Paradise. New Delhi, 6-7.
- Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2009b). Strengths of character in schools. In R. Gilman, E. S. Huebner, & M. J. Furlong (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology in schools*. New York: Routledge, 65-76.
- Parveen, F., Maqbool, S., & Khan, M. (2016). *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*. Volume 3, Issue 4, No.66, DIP: 18.01.154/20160304
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. New York: Oxford University Press and Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Peterson, C., Park, N., & Seligman, M.E.P. (2006). Greater strengths of character and recovery from illness: *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(1), 17-26.
- Saricam, H. (2015). Subjective happiness and hope. *Universitas Psychologica*, 14(2), 685-694.
- Seligman, M.E.P. (2002). *Authentic Happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfilment*. New York: Free Press.
- Seligman, M.E.P. (2012). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Slade, M. (2009). *Personal Recovery and Mental Illness. A Guide for Mental Health Professionals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Snyder, C. R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R. (1991). 'The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual differences measure of hope', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 60, no. 4, pp. 570-585.
- Snyder, C.R., & Lopez, S.J. (2005). *Handbook of positive psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 257-278

Hope: The Psychology of What Makes One Happy

- Snyder, C.R., Rand, K.L. & Sigmon, D.R. (2002). 'Hope Theory: A Member of the Positive Psychology Family' in *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, ed. C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Snyder, C.R., Rand, K.L., & Sigmon, D.R. (2005). Hope theory: A member of the positive psychology family.
- Valois, R. F., Zuling, K. J., Huebner, E. S., & Drane, J. W. (2004). Physical activity behaviours and perceived life satisfaction among public high school adolescents. *Journal of school health*, 74(2).
- White M. P., Alcock I., Wheeler B. W., Depledge M. H. (2013). Would you be happier living in a greener urban area? A fixed-effects analysis of panel data. *Psychological Science*, 24, 920–928

How to cite this article: Narula B (2017). Hope: The Psychology of What Makes One Happy. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Vol. 4, (4), DIP:18.01.017/20170404, DOI:10.25215/0404.017