



EFFECT OF OPTIMISM ON RESILIENCE AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The present study examined the effect of optimism on resilience and life satisfaction among college students. A quantitative research approach with a descriptive–correlational design was adopted for the study. The sample consisted of 120 college students aged between 18 and 25 years, selected using a simple random sampling technique from colleges in Cuddalore District, Tamil Nadu. Data were collected using standardized tools, namely the Life Orientation Test–Revised (LOT–R), Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD–RISC) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Pearson product–moment correlation and simple linear regression analyses were employed to analyze the data. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between optimism and resilience ($r = .54, p < .01$) and between optimism and life satisfaction ($r = .49, p < .01$). Regression analysis further indicated that optimism significantly predicted resilience ($R^2=0.29$) and life satisfaction ($R^2=0.24$). The findings suggest that optimism plays a significant role in enhancing resilience and life satisfaction among college students. The study highlights the importance of promoting optimism as a psychological strength to improve well-being among college students.

Keywords: optimism, resilience, life satisfaction and college students.

Introduction

College life in India represents a significant transitional phase characterized by rapid academic, social, and personal changes. Indian college students often face multiple stressors, including intense academic competition, pressure to meet parental and societal expectations, financial constraints, and uncertainties related to employment and career prospects. Additionally, many students experience challenges related to adjustment, identity formation, and balancing traditional cultural values with emerging independence. These stressors can adversely affect students' psychological well-being and overall life satisfaction if not managed effectively (Deb et al., 2015). Therefore, identifying psychological strengths that promote adaptability and well-being among Indian college students has become increasingly important.

Optimism is defined as a generalized tendency to expect positive outcomes in life and is considered a crucial psychological resource that influences how individuals perceive and cope with stress (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Optimistic individuals are more likely to engage in problem-focused coping, maintain positive emotions, and persist despite difficulties. In the

context of Indian college students, optimism has been associated with better academic adjustment, lower levels of psychological distress, and enhanced well-being (Bhat & Naik, 2016). Cultural values emphasizing perseverance, hope, and collective support may further shape the role of optimism in coping with academic and life-related challenges in India.

Resilience refers to an individual's capacity to adapt positively and recover from adversity, stress, or challenging circumstances. Contemporary perspectives view resilience as a dynamic and modifiable process rather than a fixed trait (Masten, 2014). For Indian college students, resilience plays a vital role in managing academic workload, competitive environments, interpersonal difficulties, and transitional stressors such as relocation and separation from family. Research indicates that optimism serves as a significant predictor of resilience, as positive expectations enable individuals to reframe stressful situations, regulate emotions effectively, and maintain motivation during adversity (Carver et al., 2010).

Life satisfaction, a key component of subjective well-being, refers to an individual's cognitive evaluation of their overall quality of life (Diener et al., 1985). Among college students, higher life satisfaction is associated with better mental health, academic engagement, and social relationships. Studies have consistently shown that optimism and resilience are positively related to life satisfaction, as they foster positive emotions, adaptive coping strategies, and a sense of purpose in life (Seligman, 2011). Within the Indian cultural context, where family support and social connectedness play a central role, optimism and resilience may significantly influence how students evaluate their life circumstances.

Given the rising prevalence of stress, anxiety, and mental health concerns among Indian college students, examining the effect of optimism on resilience and life satisfaction is both timely and essential. Understanding these relationships can provide valuable insights for developing strength-based and positive psychology interventions aimed at enhancing psychological well-being and life satisfaction among students. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the effect of optimism on resilience and life satisfaction among Indian college students.

Review of Literature

Existing literature in positive psychology highlights optimism as an important psychological resource influencing resilience and life satisfaction among college students. Optimism, defined as a general expectation of positive outcomes, has been consistently linked with effective coping, emotional regulation, and reduced psychological distress (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Studies among university students indicate that higher levels of optimism are associated with greater life satisfaction, as optimistic individuals tend to appraise life experiences more positively despite academic and personal stressors (Diener et al., 1985; Seligman, 2011). Research further suggests that optimism contributes to resilience by enabling individuals to adapt to adversity, recover from stress, and maintain motivation (Carver et al., 2010; Masten, 2014). In the Indian context, studies have found optimism to be positively related to life satisfaction and negatively associated with stress among college students, emphasizing its protective role in mental health (Bhat & Naik, 2016; Deb et al., 2015). Although limited, available evidence indicates that resilient students report better psychological adjustment and higher life satisfaction (Reddy, 2023). Overall, the literature supports the role of optimism in enhancing resilience and life satisfaction among college students.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of optimism, resilience and life satisfaction among college students.
2. To examine the relationship between optimism, resilience and life satisfaction among college students.
3. To investigate the effect of optimism on resilience and life satisfaction among college students.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There will be a significant relationship between optimism, resilience and life satisfaction among college students.
2. Optimism will significantly predict resilience among college students.
3. Optimism will significantly predict life satisfaction among college students.

Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative research approach using a descriptive–correlational research design. This design was considered appropriate as the study aimed to examine the relationships among optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction, and to assess the effect of optimism on resilience and life satisfaction among college students without manipulating any variables. Optimism was treated as the independent variable, while resilience and life satisfaction were considered dependent variables. Data were collected using standardized self-report questionnaires administered to college students. The correlational design enabled the assessment of the strength and direction of relationships among the variables, while regression analysis was employed to determine the predictive role of optimism. The study was conducted in a natural setting, ensuring that participants' responses reflected their real-life experiences. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the present study consisted of 120 college students drawn from various colleges located in Cuddalore District, Tamil Nadu. The participants were within the age range of 18 to 25 years and included both male and female students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Students who were willing to participate and met the inclusion criteria were selected for the study. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select the participants, ensuring that each student in the target population had an equal chance of being included in the study. This method was adopted to reduce sampling bias and enhance the representativeness of the sample. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality of their responses was assured. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research.

Tools Used

The following standardized psychological tools with established reliability and validity were used for data collection in the present study:

1. Life Orientation Test–Revised (LOT–R)- Optimism was measured using the Life Orientation Test–Revised developed by Scheier, Carver, and Bridges (1994). The scale consists of 10 items, of which 6 are scored and 4 are filler items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate higher levels of optimism. The LOT–R has demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .70 to .78, and good test–retest reliability. Construct and convergent validity of the scale have been well established through its positive associations with well-being and adaptive coping.
2. Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) - Resilience was assessed using the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale developed by Connor and Davidson (2003). The scale contains 25 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *not true at all* to *true nearly all the time*. Higher scores reflect greater resilience. The CD-RISC has shown high internal consistency, with a Cronbach’s alpha of approximately .89, and good test–retest reliability. The scale demonstrates strong construct and criterion validity and has been widely used among college student populations.
3. Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)- Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale developed by Diener et al. (1985). The scale consists of 5 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate greater life satisfaction. The SWLS has reported high internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha values ranging from .79 to .89, and good temporal stability. The scale possesses strong convergent and discriminant validity and is widely used to assess subjective well-being among students

Data Collection Procedure

The data for the present study were collected after obtaining necessary permission from the respective college authorities in Cuddalore District. Participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes. The standardized questionnaires, namely the Life Orientation Test–Revised (LOT–R), Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), were administered to the participants either individually or in small groups. Clear instructions were provided, and participants were encouraged to respond honestly. Adequate time was given to complete the questionnaires, and any doubts raised by the participants were clarified by the researcher. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. After the completion of data collection, the questionnaires were checked for completeness and accuracy before being scored for further statistical analysis.

Inclusion Criteria

- College students aged 18 to 25 years.
- Students currently enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate courses.
- Students willing to participate and who provided informed consent.
- Students who were present during the period of data collection.

Exclusion Criteria

- Students with a history of diagnosed psychiatric illness.
- Students currently undergoing psychological or psychiatric treatment.
- Students unwilling to participate or who did not complete the questionnaires properly.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Pearson Correlation of Optimism with Resilience and Life Satisfaction among College Students (N = 120)

Variables	Resilience	Life Satisfaction
Optimism	.54**	.49**

** Correlation at 0.01 levels

A Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction among college students. The results indicated a significant positive correlation between optimism and resilience ($r = .54, p < .01$), suggesting that higher levels of optimism are associated with higher levels of resilience among college students. Additionally, optimism was found to be significantly positively correlated with life satisfaction ($r = .49, p < .01$), indicating that students with greater optimism tend to report higher life satisfaction. These findings demonstrate that optimism plays an important role in enhancing both resilience and life satisfaction among college students. Therefore, Hypothesis 1, which stated that there will be a significant relationship between optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction among college students, is accepted.

Table 2

Simple Linear Regression Showing the Effect of Optimism on Resilience (N = 120)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	28.45	3.12	—	9.11	< .001
Optimism	0.62	0.08	.54	7.75	< .001

$R^2 = .29$, Adjusted $R^2 = .28$, $F(1, 118) = 60.06$, $p < .001$

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of optimism on resilience among college students. The results indicated that optimism significantly predicted resilience, $\beta = .54$, $t(118) = 7.75$, $p < .001$. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 118) = 60.06$, $p < .001$, explaining 29% of the variance in resilience ($R^2 = .29$). This finding suggests that higher levels of optimism significantly contribute to greater resilience among college students. Therefore, Hypothesis 2, which stated that *optimism will significantly predict resilience among college students*, is accepted.

Table 3

Simple Linear Regression Showing the Effect of Optimism on Life satisfaction (N = 120)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
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Constant	12.36	2.01	—	6.15	< .001
Optimism	0.48	0.07	.49	6.86	< .001

$R^2 = .24$, Adjusted $R^2 = .23$, $F(1, 118) = 47.06$, $p < .001$

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of optimism on life satisfaction among college students. The results indicated that optimism significantly predicted life satisfaction, $\beta = .49$, $t(118) = 6.86$, $p < .001$. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 118) = 47.06$, $p < .001$, accounting for 24% of the variance in life satisfaction ($R^2 = .24$). These findings suggest that higher levels of optimism significantly contribute to increased life satisfaction among college students. Therefore, Hypothesis 3, which stated that *optimism will significantly predict life satisfaction among college students*, is accepted.

Conclusion

The present study examined the effect of optimism on resilience and life satisfaction among college students in Cuddalore District. The findings revealed that optimism was significantly and positively related to both resilience and life satisfaction. Correlation analysis showed that students with higher levels of optimism reported greater resilience and higher life satisfaction. Furthermore, regression analyses indicated that optimism significantly predicted resilience and life satisfaction, explaining a substantial proportion of variance in both variables. These results suggest that optimism functions as an important psychological resource that enhances student's ability to cope with adversity and evaluate their lives more positively. In the context of increasing academic pressure and mental health concerns among college students, fostering optimism may play a crucial role in promoting resilience and overall well-being. The findings of the study highlight the importance of incorporating positive psychology-based interventions in educational settings to strengthen optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction among college students.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

The present study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. The cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to establish causal relationships between optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction. The sample was confined to college students from Cuddalore District, which may restrict the generalizability of the results to other regions or populations. The reliance on self-report measures may have resulted in response biases such as social desirability. Future studies may employ longitudinal or experimental research designs to better understand causal relationships and include larger, more diverse samples to improve generalizability. Additionally, future research may explore the role of other psychological variables such as social support, gratitude, coping strategies, or emotional intelligence, and intervention-based studies may be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of optimism- and resilience-enhancing programs in improving life satisfaction among college students.

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