

# Role of Optimism in Self Esteem and Self Efficacy of Older Adults

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**ABSTRACT**--Aim of the present work was to study the relationship between optimism, self-efficacy and self-esteem among older adults. Two hundred community-dwelling older adults ( $M=58.82$ ,  $SD= 3.94$ ) of NCR region in India, who have been living there for at least 10 years were selected as a sample for the study. Image factoring and confirmatory factor analysis were used to test the hypothesis of an association between the three variables and the impact of optimism on the other two variables. Results indicated that there is a significant positive association between optimism, self-efficacy and self-esteem in older adults. It was further revealed that optimism had a significant impact on both self-efficacy and self-esteem. The presented model of expectancy-belief shows that positive life orientation or expectancies significantly affects the good opinion about one's character and beliefs about how well one can execute the courses of action in potential situations ensuring overall positive health.

**Keywords**-- Optimism, Self-Efficacy, Self-Esteem, Older Adults, Expectancy-Belief

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mental illness among older adults is set to achieve a pace in the coming years bringing an intimidating challenge as well as a unique opportunity to redefine psychological studies of ageing. Researchers have proposed models that not only include principles of prevention for conditions like a depression following open-heart surgery or strokes but also employ interventions to enhance positive psychological traits like optimism, social engagement, resilience, and wisdom (Jeste, D. V., and Palmer, B. W., 2013). An intervention program for older adults covering eight themes including optimism, gratitude, savouring, happiness, curiosity, altruism and meaning of life has been found to reduce the number of depressive symptoms (Ho, H. C. Y., et al, 2014). However, focusing on benefits that accompany getting older, a constant focus of traditional researches has been on the decrement of old age. It is important to understand that the psychological aspects of older people are easier to define and operationalize. Studies are necessary for identification and removal of environmental constraints like negative ageist stereotypes and lack of knowledge for recognizing skills, potentials, and contributions of older adults (Ranzijn, R., 2002).

Optimism is defined as a positive expectancy about the future or, a positive life orientation. Evidence suggests that it has been the central aspect in predicting hedonistic wellbeing among young adults (Chang, E. C., et al, 2019) whereas for health and wellbeing in older adults, avoiding pessimism is important than being optimistic (Barnett, M. D., and Anderson, E. A., 2020). In older adult women, optimism, and pessimism attempt to differentiate the pattern of wellbeing suggesting that optimism inducing strategies may be good for wellbeing (Olson, E. A., et al, 2014). Many studies had explained that optimism has a defensive component and one of the

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studies confirms that it was significantly associated with threat avoidance in cardiac patients (Bedi, G. and Brown, S. L., 2005). Researches have also suggested that it is critical to recognize the complex influence of optimism, pessimism, and control beliefs on psychological outcomes of community-dwelling older adults with osteoarthritis (Sherman, A. M., and Cotter, K. A., 2013). Healthcare givers of Alzheimer patients can also be benefited through optimism directed training at an early age (Diaz, A., et al, 2020) which could enhance the mental health facilities for the older population.

An important concept that can be understood as a belief in one's capacity to produce a behaviour, has been a centre of study in many disciplines. It is called self-efficacy and is considered to be one of the vital aspects of wellbeing in adults. Evidence suggests that by augmenting self-efficacy beliefs in patients with a serious orthopaedic injury, recovery and rehabilitation can be improved (Waldrop, D., et al, 2001). The psychological aspect of having confidence in one's worth and abilities is also widely studied as self-esteem along with these variables. Findings of longitudinal studies at one year and five-year point of measurement have supported that higher levels of self-efficacy and physical activity were significantly related to higher levels of esteem relative to physical condition, attractive body, and strength (McAuley, E., et al, 2005). Self-efficacy-based interventions in the context of physical activity among older adults have yielded several pieces of evidence that raises importance about its clinical relevance (Allison, M. J., and Keller, C., 2004).

According to the latest researches, optimism, and self-efficacy together have a significantly positive effect on the quality of life of broader aged transfemoral prosthesis users in Indonesia, suggesting that it could be important to consider the role of these two in psychological wellbeing. (Rachmat, N., et al, 2020). Self-esteem has also been found to improve the predictive impact of optimism on life satisfaction of young adult students (Agberotimi, S. F., and Oduaran, C., 2020). This evidence along with several other arguments raises some important questions about the relationship of optimism, self-efficacy and self-esteem among the lesser-studied sample of older adults.

The purpose of this research was to study the relationship between optimism, self-efficacy and self-esteem of the older adults living in two small cities of Ghaziabad district, the near capital region of India. We hypothesized firstly, that there will be a significant association between optimism and self-efficacy of the older adults and secondly, there will be a significant association between optimism and self-esteem of the older adults. Finally, we hypothesized that optimism as a predictor will have a significant impact on self-efficacy and self-esteem of the older adults.

## II. METHODS

### *Participants*

**Table 1:** Characteristics of the sample

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	73	36.5
Female	127	63.5
Religion		
Hindu	154	77

Sikh	18	9
Muslim	7	3
Buddhist	4	2
Christian	6	3
No Religion	11	5
Education		
12 <sup>th</sup> Pass	99	49.5
Graduate	68	34
Postgraduate	21	10.5
Higher Education	12	6
Employment		
Working	46	23
Non-Working	154	77

Table one presents the characteristics of the sample that was taken for this research. A total sample of permanently residing (for ten years) two hundred community-dwelling older adults were purposively selected from the Vaishali and Indrapuram region of Delhi NCR, India. The participants aged between fifty to sixty-seven (M=58.82, SD= 3.94).

### Measures

- Life Orientation Test (LOTR): Tool was developed by Scheier, Carver and Bridges (1994) to assess individual differences in generalized optimism versus pessimism. The scale has an acceptable level of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha for the entire six items of the scale was 0.78) and the test-retest correlations were 0.68, 0.60, 0.56 and 0.79. The response scale for this tool is from zero (strongly disagree) to four (strongly agree).
- General Self Efficacy (GSE): Tool was developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) to assess the general sense of self-efficacy. Cronbach's alphas for the tool ranged from .76 to .90, with the majority in the high .80s. The response scale for this tool is from one (not at all true) to four (exactly true).
- Self Esteem (SE): Tool was developed by Rosenberg (1965) to measure self-esteem. The scale has a test-retest reliability of 0.85 and 0.88 along with an excellent internal consistency (Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility is 0.92). The response scale for this tool is from zero (strongly agree) to three (strongly disagree). Item two, five, six, eight, nine are reverse scored.

## III. RESULTS

**Table 2:** Association between general self-efficacy, self-esteem and optimism

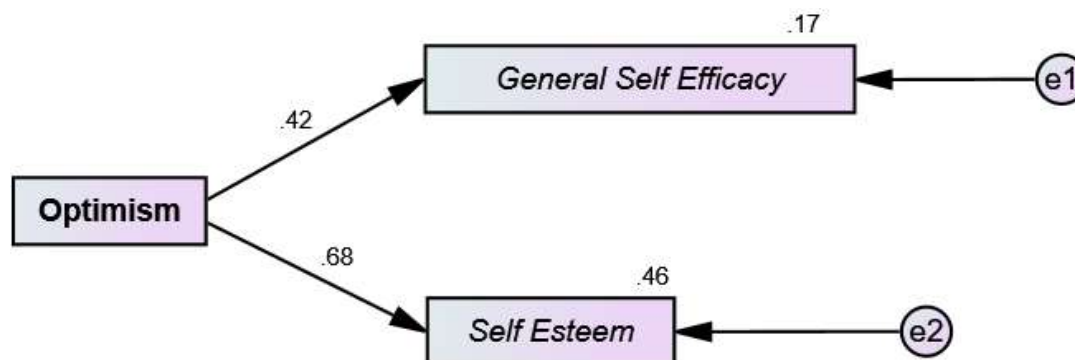
	self-efficacy	self-esteem	optimism
self-efficacy	-	0.560**	0.416**
self-esteem	0.560**	-	0.677**
optimism	0.416**	0.677**	-

To test the first two hypotheses, image factoring technique was used and the results were presented in the form of Pearson's correlation matrix. Table two represents the coefficient of correlation between self-efficacy, self-esteem and optimism. According to the matrix, the association between optimism and general self-efficacy was significantly positive ( $r=0.416$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The association between optimism and self-esteem was found to be significantly positive as well ( $r=0.677$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 3:** Impact of optimism on general self-efficacy and self-esteem

Criterion	Predictor: optimism					
	B	S.E.	P	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\chi^2$
self-efficacy	0.566	0.088	***	0.416	0.173	37.813 ( $p<0.01$ )
self-esteem	1.097	0.085	***	0.677	0.458	

To test the third hypothesis, the confirmatory factor analysis technique was used and the results were presented in the form of a structural equation model. Table three represents the standardized and unstandardized regression weights along with the squared multiple correlations. The analysis indicated that optimism as a predictor has about seventeen per cent impact on general self-efficacy ( $R^2 = 0.173$ ) and, about forty-six per cent impact on the self-esteem ( $R^2 = 0.458$ ). Figure one represents the path diagram of optimism as the exogenous variable and, general self-efficacy and self-esteem as the endogenous variables.



**Figure 1:** Path diagram with standardized regression weights and squared multiple correlations of optimism as a predictor and, self-efficacy and self-esteem as criterions

#### IV. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates a relationship between optimism, self-efficacy and, self-esteem among older adults. Results of the data analysis indicated that optimism and self-efficacy were significantly associated ( $p<0.01$ ) which supported the first hypothesis. This means that higher the optimism among elderly, significantly higher will be the self-efficacy. These findings were parallel to the results of a previous study done with American patients who have been through serious orthopaedic injury (mean age 73.13), having a coefficient of correlation between the two variables as 0.27,  $p<0.01$  (Waldrop, D., et al, 2001). The analysis further indicated that optimism and self-esteem were significantly associated ( $p<0.01$ ) supporting the second hypothesis. This means that higher the optimism among elderly, significantly higher will be the self-esteem. These findings were also parallel to the results of a previous study done with community-dwelling American older adults (mean age 73.25), having a

coefficient of correlation between the two variables as 0.42,  $p < 0.01$  (Sherman, A. M., and Cotter, K. A., 2013). Finally, the analysis showed that there was a significant impact of optimism on self-efficacy and self-esteem ( $p < 0.01$ ) among the older adults which supported the third hypothesis. This means that a higher optimistic attitude in the elderly will further improve their self-efficacy and self-esteem beliefs.

Belief about how well one can execute the courses of action in potential situations has been found to lower the health risk in all behaviours which leads to better health in older adults (Grembowski, D., et al, 1993). Such beliefs are important in pain management, cardiac rehabilitation programs and, adherence to the regimens prescribed by health-care workers (O'Leary, A., 1984). Having a good opinion about one's character is also an important aspect of healthy ageing as it affects the physical and psychological wellbeing (Ilyasi, Z., et al, 2020). Such a belief is also significant to body image concerns. It helps older adults develop a positive body image which contributes to psycho-social strengths and enhances the quality of life (Baker, L. and Gringart, E., 2009). Both self-efficacy and self-esteem are vital aspects of elderly's better-living conditions and it is important to note that both of these beliefs are significantly associated with a positive expectation about the future. These expectancies significantly affect those beliefs ensuring overall positive health. The presented model of 'expectancy-belief' could be very essential in developing therapeutic goals in counselling for older adults in north Indian culture. It could help in formulating an all-round rehabilitation program for the treatment at multiple levels and could contribute to the vision of ensuring that successful psychosocial ageing becomes the norm rather than the exception (Jeste, D. V., and Palmer, B. W., 2013).

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