

Optimism – Pessimism among Adolescents – A Gender Based Study

Shruti Singh¹, Sunita Mishra²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Human Development & Family Studies, School for Home Sciences Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University), Lucknow – 226025, Uttar Pradesh, India

²Dean & Head, Department of Human Development & Family Studies, School for Home Sciences Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University), Lucknow – 226025, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract: *Life of a person is a beautiful gift awarded to him by the almighty God. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of growth, development and learning. Although variation in pace may be encountered at different stages, this process continues to influence human being at every stage of life, right from conception till birth, infancy, childhood and extending throughout adulthood till old age. However, adolescence is a period when this growth, development as well as learning are believed to be at pinnacle due to transition from childhood to adulthood. During adolescent phase, there are rapid physiological, psychological, emotional, social changes as well as demands for new social roles take place. Thus the period of adolescence is a period of dramatic challenge, during which an individual is in the process of establishing attitudes for effective participation in a society. Humans are constantly thinking, feeling or doing something or the other. These three main components are what humans are occupied with all the time. People create their own lives with their ideas and actions, which can lead to great success and achievement or to frustration and disappointment. We all want success in our lives and we can have it with the right attitude. This gender based study has been done with an objective to compare the attitude toward life among adolescents across gender. 140 girls & 80 boys from (three purposively selected schools) Lucknow city were selected randomly by using random number table and Optimistic- Pessimistic Attitude Scale (D. S. Parashar, 1998) was employed to elicit their optimistic – pessimistic attitude. The study concluded that at 5% level of significance, there was no significant difference of optimism & pessimism among adolescents across gender. Similar study can be replicated to explore the impact of socio demographic and socio-economic variables on the attitude of adolescents. The findings would also facilitate psychologists and counselors develop individualized programme for those, who are in a dire need of it.*

Keywords: Attitude, Optimism, Pessimism, Gender, Adolescents

1. Introduction

Life is easier to take than you'd think; all that is necessary is to accept the impossible, do without the indispensable, and bear the intolerable. - Norris, 1982

The epoch of adolescence is characterized by significant advancement and transitions in attitude formation, personality characteristics and adjustment patterns, making this phase radically stressful and chaotic. But how well the adolescents cope up and overcome these taxing experiences depend largely on their perception of the world or their attitude towards life that can be positive or negative or in other words we can say, can be optimistic or pessimistic respectively. Optimism and Pessimism are two different outlooks on life that dictate how you deal with most situations and your expectations of the world. Optimism is defined as having hopefulness and confidence about the future or successful outcome of something. It is a tendency to take a favourable or hopeful view. Pessimism, on the other hand is a state of mind in which one anticipates negative outcomes. There are some advantages to optimism like it seems to make people feel better about life. But there are also advantages for pessimism in that thinking the worst helps some pessimists cope better with the world.

According to Stone (1965), there is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a great difference. This little difference is the attitude and the big difference is whether it is positive or negative. Somewhere between our emotions and our thought processing lie our attitudes - our

emotional perceptions about ourselves, others and life itself. In the opinion of Jung (1921) attitude is a readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way.

Attitudes have three components. The central component is a relatively enduring feeling about some object. Besides feeling, an attitude usually has a cognitive component – the person holds some belief about the object. The third component of attitude is an action component – a tendency to act in accordance with the feeling and opinion. For one reason or other people do not or cannot always act the way they feel, but the tendency is there.

Attitudes in humans are generally expressed as positive and negative and that are often denoted by terms optimism and pessimism respectively. Optimism is defined as having "hopefulness and confidence about the future or successful outcome of something". It is a tendency to take a favourable or hopeful view. Being optimistic, in the typical sense of the word, ultimately means one expects the best possible outcome from any given situation. Pessimism on the other hand is defined as —a tendency to stress the negative or unfavourable or to take the gloomiest possible view. Attitude is a way of life. We have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we embrace for that day. The only difference between a good day and a bad day is our attitude. We cannot change our past, or we cannot change the way certain people think. We cannot change what's inevitable. However, the only thing we can possibly change to deal with situations better is our attitude. Attitude determines

outcome. A correct and a willful attitude is the key to success in life.

2. Objective

The aim of the study was to assess & compare the attitude toward life among adolescents across gender.

Null Hypothesis (Ho): There is no significant difference in the optimistic-pessimistic attitude of adolescents across gender.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): There is significant difference in the optimistic-pessimistic attitude of adolescents across gender.

3. Methodology

A systematic methodology is an important step to any research because it directly influences the validity of the research findings. This precisely describes the methodology tools and instrument adopted in conducting the research.

Locale & samples of study: Three schools from Lucknow city were selected purposively and then 220 adolescents (140 girls & 80 boys) aged 13 – 18 years were selected randomly by using random number table.

Research tool: Attitude of the respondents was assessed by employing Optimism-Pessimism Attitude Scale by D.S Parashar.

Pre- testing of the research instrument: Optimism Pessimism Attitude Scale by D.S Parashar was standardized scale for Indian context, so no pre-testing was required before employing them in the present study.

Variables:

1. Attitude - Optimistic attitude is concerned with taking a favourable or hopeful view and expecting the best possible outcome from any given situation. Pessimistic attitude on the other hand refers to the tendency to stress the negative or unfavourable and to take the gloomiest possible view.

- Very Optimistic
- Optimistic
- Neutral
- Pessimistic
- Very Pessimistic

2. Gender - It suggested whether an individual is a male or a female.

- Male
- Female

Collection of data: Hindi version of the scales was used as per the convenience of the respondents. Each subject was given questionnaire individually for limited time and was asked to fill it under the strict supervision of the researcher.

Statistical analysis of data: The collected data was classified and tabulated in accordance with the objectives to drive the meaningful and relevant inferences. The data was analyzed by using statistical techniques like frequency, percentage, and mean and t test.

4. Result and Discussion

The existing level of optimistic-pessimistic attitude of respondents across gender is presented in terms of frequency and percentage. Assessment and comparison across gender in terms of mean scores and standard deviation.

Table 1.1: Distribution patterns of the respondents on optimistic-pessimistic attitude across gender

Type of attitude	Score Range (0-40)		Adolescents (N = 220)					
	Boys	Girls	Boys (n1 = 80)		Girls (n2 = 140)		Total	
			N	%	N	%	N	%
Very Optimistic	33-40	31-40	21	26.25%	41	29.28%	62	28.18%
Optimistic	28-32	26-30	36	45.00%	39	27.85%	75	34.09%
Neutral	23-27	21-25	10	12.50%	39	27.85%	49	22.27%
Pessimistic	18-22	16-20	8	10.00%	15	10.71%	23	10.45%
Very Pessimistic	0-17	0-15	5	6.25%	6	4.28%	11	5.00%
Total			80	36.36%	140	63.63%	220	100%

A cursory look at the above table reveal that high percentage of boys was found optimistic and similarly good percentage of girls came under very optimistic category. Only 15% adolescent had pessimistic attitude towards their lives but 22.27% adolescents found to have neutral/average attitude, they were neither optimistic nor pessimistic. Gender was not the determinant of attitude among adolescents.

Table 1.2: Comparison of optimistic-pessimistic attitude among the respondents across gender

Component of Attitude	Adolescents (N = 220)				t Calculated
	Male (n1 = 80)		Female (n2 = 140)		
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
Optimism - Pessimism	2.25	1.142	2.33	1.134	.785

Table value for t = 1.96, Level of Significance = 5%

The above table shows that null hypothesis was accepted hence there was no significant difference of attitude among adolescent boys & girls. In contrast to this Jacobsen (2008) reported that men were more optimistic than women over time and across countries and Boman (2001) found that compared to the boys, girls tend to exhibit significantly higher levels of optimism and lower levels of self-referent subjective probabilities.

5. Conclusion

Males and females respondents were predominantly optimistic and very optimistic respectively. Fortunately very few of them reported pessimistic & very pessimistic. Thus gender of the respondents did not seem to influence optimistic-pessimistic attitude of the respondents.

6. Implications of the Study

- The findings would enable the families and teachers to identify their adolescents in a real sense, including their strengths and weaknesses. This may in turn force them to create an atmosphere by which they can help an adolescent to overcome his weaknesses and thus, develop into an ideal adult.
- The results would also help human development personnel understand the role of gender in determining the attitude of adolescents and accordingly formulate strategies for creating conducive environment in families to positively influence them.
- The findings would also facilitate psychologists and counselors develop individualized programme for those, who are in a dire need of it.

7. Scope for Future Studies

- Comparative studies across different socio economic and demographic variables and their effect on attitude can be done.
- Similar study can be replicated on differently able adolescents as well as on orphan children.

References

- [1] **Boman, P. 2001.** Optimism, Hostility and Adjustment in First Year of High School. *Educational Research Journal*. **29(2)**: 777-807.
- [2] **Jacobson, B. 2008.** Are Men More Optimistic? *New American Economic Review*. **93(1)**:193 – 215.
- [3] **Jung, C.G. 1921.** Psychological Types, Collected Works. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pp: 180-203.
- [4] **Norris, K. 1982.** Quotations on Attitude towards Life. <http://www.motivatingquotes.com/attitude.htm> cited on 24/3/12.
- [5] **Stone. 1965.** Hearing Impairment. Exceptional Children. Kauffman, James M. Prentice-Hall. Inc. p-297.

Author Profile

Shruti Singh (B.Sc. Gold Medallist, ICAR – JRF, UGC-NET) is a Research Scholar (PhD) at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University), Lucknow, India. She did B.Sc. (H.Sc.), Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture & Technology, Kanpur, India and M.Sc. (Human Development & Family Studies) from Govind Ballabh Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Uttarakhand