




The Impact of Dispositional Optimism and Self-determination on Wellbeing of Job Seeker Young Adults

Ayesha Fazal Karim ¹, Farah Malik ² and Sumaira Ayub ³

<p>Keywords: Dispositional optimism, Self-determination, well-being, Job seekers, young adults</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ABSTRACT</p> <p><i>The present study aimed to find out that 1) dispositional optimism and self-determination are positively related to well-being in job seekers young adults, and 2) to find out the predicting role of dispositional optimism and self-determination in determining the well-being of job seekers. The study was based on a correlational research design. A purposive sample of 192 job seekers young adults aged 19 to 27 years (M =22, SD=1.25) was taken as a sample. The sample consisted of 91 men and 101 women from four different universities in Lahore. Urdu versions of the Life orientation test-revised (Scheier et al., 1985), Self-determination scale (Deci & Ryan, 2000), Mental health continuum short-form (Keyes & Ryff, 1998) and self-constructed demographic information sheet were used for assessment. The results showed that dispositional optimism, self-determination, and well-being are positively related to young job seekers. Further, dispositional optimism and self-determination were found as positive predictors of well-being in job-seeking young adults. Further, the results also indicated that men have higher social well-being as compared to women. The limitations and suggestions are also discussed.</i></p>
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¹ University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

✉ ayesha.fazalkarim27@gmail.com

² Professor, Institute of Applied Psychology, University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

✉ farah.appsy@pu.edu.pk

³ Corresponding Author and Lecturer, Department of Applied Psychology, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan.

✉ sumaira.ayub@umt.edu.pk.

1 Introduction

Youth are more likely to investigate and try different work environments before settling down in their professional life. Furthermore, they are more intolerant to shifting jobs or even taking the risk of changing their field in the hope of a better and quick return (Malik, 2014). According to the International Labor Organization, the overall world unemployment rate is 201.1 million, of which the developed countries have 37.9 million while emerging countries have 147.0 million and developing countries have 16.1 million unemployment count. Pakistan being a developing country, has had a rise in unemployment from the past few decades. The major causes of increasing unemployment in Pakistan are overpopulation, low investment rates, and illiteracy. Due to unemployment, youth are facing dullness, depression, low self-esteem, violence, pessimism, and poor well-being (Akram et al., 2012). Unemployment has long-term effects on a person's physical as well as psychological health. If unemployment remains for a long time, it can also be accompanied by unhappiness and sorrow, and an individual may lose her/his interest in doing work (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010).

Well-being is considered when someone or something is in a 'good state'. This can be related to a society or a citizen and indicates the goodness of an individual or society. Well-being is synonymous with 'quality of life' (Veenhoven, 2007). Danna and Griffin (1999) projected a similar meaning of well-being; they thought that well-being is the more wide idea than a person's normal health related to their life. Their idea holds the background of free actions such as life satisfaction and happiness. Further, Optimism is defined as a propensity to believe satisfactory assumptions. It is considered that people with optimistic beliefs do not see the negative facets of life and they always have expectations for positive and focus on positive consequences of life or outcome (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). It is a mental state in which a person considers that he will make the situation best. It also means if the present stage is not in full control, the upcoming moment will be controlled and higher optimism is directly related to the sense of hope and bright future (Gillham et al., 2001). A person with an optimistic explanatory style keeps on chasing their respected aims and straight themselves and their positions exploiting effective adjusting policies even as a part of the element of difficulties, so they can achieve their intents (Sharot, 2011). In dispositional optimism, a person generalizes the outcome that will be positive and always focuses on positive expectations and it is a cognitive construct (Carver & Scheier, 2014). Dispositional optimism is most related to oversimplification/generalization of positivity about the future, and it is considered that dispositional optimism is a genetic affinity that is stable over the period (Peterson, 2000).

Optimism is positively related to the self-determination and motivation of individuals. Deci and Ryan (2000) defined self-determination as "the innate, natural tendency to engage in one's interests and use one's capacities, to seek and overcome optimal challenges". Individuals and surrounding features play a basic role that is required for the well-being of a person. Nirje (1972) described the structures of self-determination as making decisions, asserting oneself, self-knowledge, self-encouragement, self-management, and independence. Self-determination is a way that a person's private fortune or sequence of acts without any pressure. Choice of a person in he/she is working or is given to them to control their precarious rank, individuality, or independence. Self-determination or motivation plays an important role in the life of a job seeker. Unemployed people or job seekers must be motivated for a better future (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). Dispositional optimism seems to be a good predictor of well-being; an increase in optimism can increase a person's well-being as well as physical health (Conversano et al., 2010).

Numerous studies were conducted on job seekers and joblessness. A portion of these studies have focused on joblessness and well-being. The glimpse of these studies highlights the relationship of unemployment with motivation or self-determination theory as well as well-being. In a study, Willemse (2015) investigated the effects of unemployment on psychological well-being in young people. He found that unemployed people met with negative emotions blamed themselves for their failure and had low self-esteem. The findings also suggested positive attitudes of participants toward their lives and optimism about their plans of searching for jobs. It was also found that unemployed people used coping strategies such as listening to music, sleeping, and talking with their friends and family to reduce their negative feelings caused by unemployment. In another study, Van den Broeck et al. (2013) examined work motivation related to self-determination theory and their motivation toward their well-being. Their results showed that the workers who were high on autonomy had high motivation as well as high well-being which results in high job performance. Further, Lonn and Annett (2015) investigated the relationship between well-being and dispositional optimism in Uganda and Sweden. The study concluded that well-being and optimism exist between the two countries.

Khurram et al. (2013) found the effect of unemployed rural youth and rural development and socio-psychological penalties of unemployment. They concluded that unemployment causes poor mental health, drug addiction, crime, depression, and anxiety. They also found a significant relationship between family income and the psychological influence of unemployment. Also, Parveen et al. (2016) highlighted that optimism and psychological well-being are positively related. Many studies found a positive relationship between optimism and well-being (Hanssen et al., 2015; Lonn & Annett, 2015). Many studies also find a relationship between self-determination and well-being (Gunnell et al., 2014; López Walle et al., 2011; Van den Broeck et al., 2013). However, there are just a few studies that found optimism, motivation (Yousaf et al., 2015), or self-determination and well-being in unemployed individuals, especially in job-seeking young adults (da Motta Veiga & Turban, 2014; Willemse, 2015). Literature also found a relationship between life satisfaction and optimism (Duffy et al., 2013; Ünüvar et al., 2012).

1.1 The rationale of the Study

Unemployment has become one of the largest community problems. It is stated that unemployment is the crucial method of financial health of a country. Most young adults are unemployed or underemployed. The world unemployment rate is 201.1 million with which developed countries have a 37.9 million unemployment rate, emerging countries have 147.0 million, and developing countries have a 16.1 million unemployment rate (International Labor Organization, 2017). According to World Economic Outlook, the unemployment rate in Pakistan is 6%. Pakistan is the ninth largest country where people are facing unemployment with a 4.40 percent rate in 2020 from 4.10 percent in 2019 (Trading Economics, 2021). According to the World Health Organization (1979), well-being is a thing that eliminates disease because mental health is an important contributor to subjective well-being (Campbell, 1981). Dispositional optimism seems to be a good predictor of well-being increase in optimism can increase a person's well-being and physical health (Conversano et al., 2010). Self-determination has three components "autonomy, relatedness, and competence" When these needs of a person are fulfilled a person experiences better well-being (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). The focus on unemployment issues is important because people who are looking for jobs and when they do not get jobs face dullness, depression, and violence that can lead them to poor self-image, pessimistic thinking, and poor well-being or criminality (Malik, 2014). Motivation and independence for job search and hope for the future can improve unemployed wellness and help to stand in society in a better way. It is important to study these variables with references to job-seeking behavior because after completing education a

person starts to find a job and it is a challenging period of one's life, in such situations the insight of optimism, self-determination matters a lot to increase their wellbeing. Considering the above scenario, the objectives of the present study were to find out the positive relationship between dispositional optimism and self-determination with well-being in job seekers young adults and also to find out the predicting role of dispositional optimism and self-determination in determining the well-being of job seekers.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

- Dispositional optimism and self-determination will be positively related to the well-being of job seekers young adults.
 - Dispositional optimism and self-determination will positively predict the well-being of job seekers' young adults.
1. Job-seeking women will be higher in dispositional optimism, self-determination, and well-being than Job-seeking men.

2 Methodology

A correlation research design was used.

2.1 Sample and Sample Strategies

The sample consisted of 192 university students who were qualified (graduate and postgraduate) and were looking for jobs. The age range of the participants was 19-27 ($M = 22$, $SD = 1.25$). The data were collected from four different universities in Lahore by employing a purposive sampling technique. Participants with any form of disability were excluded. Illiterate people and those below and above-mentioned qualifications were excluded from the sample. Further, sample characteristics are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=192)

Characteristics	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Age (years)		22 (1.25)
Gender		
Men	91 (47)	
Women	101 (53)	
Education		
BS	97 (50)	
Master	78 (41)	
MPhil/MS	17 (9)	
Number of Siblings		
0-3	73(38)	
4-7	109(57)	

8-11	10(5)
Birth Order	
First Born	60 (31)
Middle Born	88 (46)
Last Born	36 (19)
Only Child	08 (4)
Family Monthly Income in PKR	62250.0(24894.41)
Source of family income	
Father	131 (68)
Brother	13 (7)
Others	5 (3)
No one	2 (1)
Both father and brother	41 (21)
How many times have you applied for a job?	
Never	65(34)
One time	66(34)
Two time	36(19)
Many time	25(13)
How many times you were called for an interview	
Never	109(57)
One time	55(29)
Two time	18(9)
Many time	10(5)
Duration of Unemployment	
Short term (1 to 6 month)	82 (43)
Long term (6 to 12 month)	77 (40)
Very long-term (more than 12 months)	33(17)

2.2 Assessment Measures

The following assessment measures were used for data collection:

2.2.1 Life Orientations Test-Revised (Scheier & Carver, 1985)

This scale consists of 10 items with a five-point-Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (5 = *I agree a lot*, 1 = *I disagree a lot*). The scale had two subscales optimism and pessimism. Items 3, 7, and 9 that measure pessimism. And item number 1, 4, 10 measures optimism. If the scale required testing only optimism the items of the pessimism subscale will be reverse code. Items 1, 3, 4, 7, and 10 were added to obtain an overall optimism score while 2, 5, 6, and 8 items were filler items only. A higher score indicated a higher level of optimism. The reliability of this scale was .62. The translated version of the scale was used (Zaidi et al., 2013).

2.2.2 Self-determination Scale (Deci & Ryan, 2000)

This scale was used to assess the level of self-determination in job seekers. This 10-item scale consists of two subscales named perceived choice and awareness of self of one's action. Rating can be done by using a five-point Likert scale. The sum of all the items gives an overall score, the same as the subscales. A higher score indicates a higher level of self-determination. The scale has good internal consistency, with the values of alphas ranging from 0.85 to 0.93. The Urdu version of this scale (Shami & Kausar, 2008) was used in the present study.

2.2.3 Mental Health Continuum Short-Form (Keyes, 2002)

This scale was used to measure the level of mental well-being in job seekers and young adults. It consisted of 14 items and measured three types of well-being e.g., psychological, emotional, and social well-being. It consists of a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 5 (0 = *never*, 1 = *once or twice*, 2 = *about once a week*, 3 = *2 or 3 times in a week*, 4 = *almost every day*, 5 = *every day*). All the items are added to give the total score of mental wellbeing and the same is done with the items of subscales. A higher score indicates a higher level of mental well-being as well as its domains. Internal reliability of the adult version showed .74 to .89. In this study the Urdu version of the scale (Faran & Malik, 2021) was used.

3 Procedure

First, to conduct this study synopsis was approved by the Board of Studies, Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore. After this, formal permission was taken from the authors who developed scales and form who translated the scales. To collect data from different universities, permission letters were used, and permission letters were issued and signed by competent authorities. The participants were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. 200 students of BS, MSc, and MPhil/MS who were in search of jobs were taken as samples. The scales along with a self-constructed demographic sheet were administered. A consent form describing the purpose of the study was taken from the participants to express their willingness for voluntary participate. The participants were asked to read instructions carefully to fill in the questionnaire. Confidentiality of their information was ensured to them. Eight participants did not complete the questionnaires completely. At the end, the sample comprised of 192 job seekers. So, the response rate was 96%.

4 Results and Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26.0. The psychometric properties of the scales were determined using reliability analyses (see Table 2).

Table 2
Psychometric Properties of the Study Measures (N=192)

Variables	<i>k</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Life orientation test R	6	.49	16.42	3.22	4-22
Self-determination	10	.66	36.68	6.73	18-50
Awareness of self	5	.65	18.31	4.43	7-25
Perceived choice	5	.56	18.36	4.05	5-25
Mental Health Continuum Scale	14	.87	46.79	13.49	7-70
Emotional wellbeing	3	.78	10.49	3.60	0-15
Social wellbeing	5	.74	14.56	5.85	0-25
Psychological wellbeing	6	.79	21.74	6.40	3-30

Note. *k*=numbers of items; α = Cronbach’s alpha.

Table 2 showed that Life Orientation Test-R showed a reliability of .49, while self-determination had .66, and the mental health continuum scale’s overall reliability was .87. So, all the scales were reliable enough to carry out further analyses.

Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to assess the relationships between study variables in job seekers young adults (see Table 3).

Table 3
Relationship Between Study Variables

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Dispositional optimism	.47***	.31***	.44***	.38***	.28***	.27***	.41***
2. Self-determination		.81***	.77***	.39***	.29***	.26***	.42***
3. Awareness of self			.26***	.32***	.20**	.22**	.34***
4. Perceived choice				.31***	.26***	.19**	.32***
5. Well-being					.72***	.85***	.89***
6. Emotional well-being						.53***	.61***
7. Social well-being							.58***
8. Psychological well-being							

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The results in Table 3 revealed that in job seekers young adults, dispositional optimism showed a significant positive relationship with overall well-being and all its domains i.e., emotional, social, and psychological well-being. Further, dispositional optimism was found to be positively related to overall self-determination and its subscales. The results showed that self-determination has a significant positive relationship with overall well-being and all of its domains i.e., emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing.

Multiple hierarchal regression analyses were used to see the prediction of well-being and its dimensions by dispositional optimism and self-determination in job seekers young adults (see Table 4).

Table 4
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Well-Being and its Subscales

Predictors	Well-being		Emotional		Social		Psychological	
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	ΔR^2	β
Step 1 (Control variables)	.05		.03		.05		.04	
Gender		.11**		.04		.17*		.06
Family monthly income (Rs.)		.01		.08		-.02		-.04
Duration of unemployment		-.17*		-.12*		-.11*		-.18*
Step 2	.14		.07		.07		.14	
Dispositional optimism		.38***		.26***		.27***		.40***
Step 3	.05		.03		.02		.06	
Self-determination		.26**		.19*		.16*		.29***
Total R ²	.24		.13		.14		.24	
<i>F</i> (5,186)	11.22***		5.04***		5.75***		12.81***	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 4 showed that the overall model of well-being explained 24% variance with $F(5, 186) = 11.22, p < .001$. The results showed that dispositional positively predicted the well-being of job seekers ($\beta = .38, p < .001$) young adults. Further, self-determination also positively predicted ($\beta = 0.20, p < .01$) their well-being. The same prediction was found in other models of subscales well-being. Results also indicated that the duration of unemployment negatively predicted well-being and its other domains.

Further gender differences were also studied in terms of study variables (see Table 5).

Table 5
Gender differences in Dispositional Optimism, Self-Determination, and Well-Being in Job Seekers Young Adults

Variables	Men (<i>n</i> =91)		Women (<i>n</i> =101)		<i>t</i> (190)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Dispositional optimism	14.27	2.38	14.33	3.00	.13	.89	-
Self-determination	36.88	6.83	36.49	6.66	-.39	.69	-
Awareness of self	18.47	4.37	18.17	4.50	-.47	.63	-
Perceived choice	18.41	4.20	18.33	3.92	-.14	.89	-
Well-being	3.48	1.04	3.21	.87	-1.90	.06	-
Emotional wellbeing	3.59	1.27	3.41	1.14	-1.06	.29	-
Social wellbeing	3.13	1.18	2.71	1.13	-2.51	.01	.36
Psychological wellbeing	3.71	1.12	3.54	1.01	-1.11	.27	-

* $p < .05$

Table 5 indicated non-significant gender differences in terms of study variables. However, results showed gender differences in the social well-being subscale of well-being, indicating that men ($M=3.13$, $SD=1.18$) have higher social well-being than women ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.13$). The results did not show gender differences in emotional well-being and psychological well-being and subscales of self-determination.

5 Discussion

The finding of the present study suggested that self-determination has a positive relationship with well-being in job seekers young adults, this finding goes in line with the previous studies which confirm the hypothesis and results. Gunnell et al. (2014) investigated that self-determination positively related to well-being in adults. Their results showed that the content of self-determination theory and fulfillment of psychological needs increase the well-being of young adults. Another study conducted by Véronneau et al. (2005) focuses on intrinsic needs satisfaction in the light of self-determination theory (autonomy, relatedness, and competence) and well-being. Their results showed that when intrinsic needs satisfaction increased, then the level of well-being started to increase.

The finding of the present study also suggested that dispositional optimism has a positive relationships with self-determination in job seekers. This finding goes in line with a previous study conducted by McBride (2012) investigated the relationship between hope, optimism, motivational cognitive and academic achievement, and well-being in youth. His results found that motivation, hope, and optimism have a significant relationship, and these are good predictors of students' academic achievement and general well-being. Another study was conducted by Pedro and Ribeiro (2012) on optimism and functional autonomy (a component of self-determination theory). Their results revealed optimism as an important feature for autonomy and it showed a positive relation with functional autonomy confirming the hypothesis of the present study. Parveen et al. (2016) found optimism as a good predictor of psychological well-being in adolescents and they also pointed out that optimism helps to increase their psychological well-being. Further, the valuable effect of positive thinking on physical and mental well-being is very much archived. In the light of the above structure, optimistic desires by explanation prompt well-being through proceeding with motivation and maintaining objective accomplishment.

The results suggested that optimism and self-determination are good predictors of well-being in job seekers' young adults. Paulisová et al. (2014) suggested that self-determination was a good predictor of well-being. Self-determination helps to increase the emotional well-being of students. The valuable effect of positive thinking on physical and mental well-being is very much archived. In the light of the above structure, optimistic desires by explanation prompt well-being through proceeding with motivation and maintaining objective accomplishment. Felton and Jowett (2017) conducted a longitudinal study on self-determination theory on attachment, need satisfaction, and well-being in athletes. The results showed that need satisfaction in context with self-determination theory was a good predictor of several well-being. Results showed that need satisfaction helps to increase the well-being of athletes.

The results also highlighted that the duration of unemployment is negatively related to psychological well-being in job seekers. The findings showed that as unemployment increases the psychological well-being of a person will be decreased. McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) researched unemployment psychological wellbeing and physical well-being. Their results suggested that participants showed low psychological and physical well-being with the increased time of joblessness. The current finding also highlighted that short-term unemployed job seekers were

more self-determined than long and very long-term unemployed job seekers. Redek et al. (2013) conducted a study on unemployment and self-concept and found that the duration of unemployment is negatively related to self-concept in job seekers.

The results highlighted that job seekers and young adults have good attitudes toward self-determination. Koen et al. (2016) researched how autonomy can increase the motivation for job hunting attitudes of job seekers. The results revealed that people with high autonomy have high motivation for their job search behavior, and people with high autonomy try to find a job with more intensity. And less autonomy can decrease their job search behavior. Optimistic thinking motivates job seekers to find a new and better job. Like everything throughout everyday life, an employment search will have its high ups and down points. Occupation hopefuls about careers can't predict to what extent it will take to anchor new work. The pursuit of employment may take any longer than anticipated, so to keep up confidence and optimism amid the quest for new employment, have an arrangement set up, increase their motivation, and ensure that you set sensible objectives and goals.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded that dispositional optimism, self-determination, and well-being are positively related indicating that job seekers who have a high level of dispositional optimism and self-determination, also have a high level of well-being. It can be concluded that dispositional optimism and self-determination were good predictors of well-being in job seekers.

The population of the study consisted of only those students who were qualified and were freshly looking for jobs. In future studies, under-qualified individuals can also be considered so that a comparative study can be conducted. In the present study those participants were excluded who were having jobs but were looking for a high-ranked job. So, in future research, the same variables should be studied in that population.

The findings can be helpful for counselors in the sense that they could guide unemployed and job seekers to cope with their unemployment effectively by keeping themselves more optimistic and motivated to promote their well-being. Unemployment is the biggest issue in this era of economic and political instability in Pakistan. The stakeholders should work together to create opportunities for the unemployed youth.

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