

OPTIMISM, HOPE AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING: A LITERATURE OVERVIEW*

İyimserlik, Umut ve Öznel İyi Oluş: Alanyazına Genel Bir Bakış

Pınar DURSUN**

ABSTRACT

The field of subjective well-being (SWB) or happiness have received increasing attention in the psychology literature. This increased interest has led researchers to examine SWB in relation to a variety of psychological, social, and cultural variables, including optimism and hope. Undoubtedly, all these variables are critical components for mental health. SWB is specifically used as a general term which consists of life satisfaction, mental health and happiness from life. Although hopefulness has been occasionally used interchangeably with optimism, many studies revealed that they are related but different concepts. Optimism is defined as a general expectancy that good things will happen in the future, on the other hand, hope refers to the general cognitive-motivational variable including one's belief in which one utilizes pathway thinking and agency thinking. In this study, we attempt to review the conceptualizations of SWB, optimism, and hope, and point out various recent studies on the relationships between SWB, hope, and optimism.

Key words: Subjective well-being, happiness, optimism, hope

ÖZ

Öznel iyi oluşun veya mutluluk konuları, psikoloji alanyazınında giderek artan bir ilgi görmektedir. Bu artan ilgi, araştırmacıları çeşitli psikolojik, sosyal ve kültürel değişkenler, iyimserlik ve umut ile ilgili olarak öznel iyi oluşu incelemeye yöneltmiştir. Kuşkusuz tüm bu değişkenler ruh sağlığı için kritik bileşenlerdir. Öznel İyi Oluş, özel olarak yaşam doyumu, ruh sağlığı ve yaşamdan gelen mutluluktan oluşan genel bir terim olarak kullanılmaktadır. Umutlu olmak, zaman zaman iyimserlikle birbirinin yerine kullanılsa da, birçok araştırma bunların birbiriyle ilişkili ancak farklı kavramlar olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. İyimserlik, gelecekte iyi şeylerin olacağına dair genel bir beklenti olarak tanımlanırken, umut, kişinin amaca yönelme yolları ve amaca güdülenme için inancını içeren genel bilişsel-motivasyonel değişkeni ifade eder. Bu çalışmada, Öznel iyi oluş, iyimserlik ve umudun kavramsallaştırmalarını gözden geçirmeye ve öznel iyi oluş, umut ve iyimserlik arasındaki ilişkilere ilişkin son zamanlarda yapılan çeşitli çalışmalara işaret etmeye çalışıyoruz.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Öznel iyi oluş, mutluluk, iyimserlik, umut

* Bu çalışma, Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Psikolojik Danışmanlık ve Rehberlik ABD'de tamamlanan "The Role of Meaning in Life, Optimism, Hope, and Coping Styles in Subjective Well-Being [Yaşamın Anlamı, İyimserlik, Umut Ve Başa Çıkma Stillerinin Öznel İyi Oluş Üzerindeki Rolü]" adlı Doktora Tezi'nden türetilmiştir.

** Dr.Öğr.Üyesi, Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Psikoloji Bölümü, pdursun@aku.edu.tr, Orcid: 0000-0002-1451-0998

INTRODUCTION

The concept of well-being has been specifically used as an umbrella term, indicating life satisfaction, positive mental health, and general happiness (Diener, 2000; Keyes et al., 2002; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Among the scholars there is no single term that refers the phenomena of Subjective Well-being (SWB). Some of the researchers use the term happiness as a synonym for SWB (e.g., Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). On the other hand, there are authors who use the term happiness in a more specific meaning - either in the sense of positive affect or in the sense of satisfaction with life (e.g. Steel et al., 2008). Even though there has been inconsistent use of terms in the field, researchers have a unique opinion on what the SWB construct includes. SWB has been generally defined as a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her own life. In the theoretical and operational definitions, cognitive evaluations include judgments of life satisfaction and affective evaluations include on-going emotional reactions to events that occur in one's life. Thus, SWB is a construct that includes experiencing higher levels of pleasant emotions, low levels of negative emotions, and high life satisfaction (Diener, 2000; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

With the increasing concerns over individuals' satisfaction and fulfillment, one line of SWB research relied on examining the relationships of life satisfaction and affectivity with some characteristics of individuals. The results of these studies revealed that most of the growth-related personality characteristics such as self-esteem, extraversion and emotional stability, locus of control, and optimism are found to be related with SWB (e.g. Costa & McCrae, 1980; Diener & Diener, 2009; Diener & Lucas, 2000; Diener, Suh, & Oishi, 1997; Emmons & Diener, 1985; Hayes & Joseph, 2003; Larson, 1989). In the literature, there is still an increasing concern over enriching the knowledge regarding the associations between SWB and some other personal characteristics. Among them, some cognitive and motivational characteristics of individuals have been examined such as optimism, hope and meaning in life; mostly refer to future oriented concepts for higher SWB (e.g., Chang & Banks, 2007; Gallagher & Lopez, 2009; Lightsey & Boyraz, 2011).

Subjective well-being refers to globally evaluations of individuals' own lives not only in terms of duration of positive affect and lack of negative affect but also including cognitive satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Diener et al., 1997). In other words, it comprises individuals' long term affect of pleasure, lack of unpleasant or negative affect and general life satisfaction rather than a "monolithic entity" (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). It describes the level of well-being of people experienced on the basis of their judgements or internal frame of reference in the long-run not based on their momentary moods (Diener et al., 1997). The interpretation or judgement of life satisfaction depends on several domains such as quality of social relationships, work conditions, academic performance, income level, and general health conditions (Diener & Ryan, 2009). Nevertheless, subjective well-being is not exact equal to mental health and psychological health. For instance, a delusional or bipolar person can feel quite happy and satisfied his life (Diener et al., 1997). But the level of subjective well-being is important for mental health and good functioning. More specifically, a person with low SWB refers to that s/he is dissatisfied with her/his life, experiences little joy and usually feels negative emotions such as anxiety or aggression.

The interest in the construct of subjective well-being (SWB) or happiness have gained increasing attention in the psychology literature. This growing interest led the researchers to examine SWB in relation to several psychological, social, and cultural variables (see, DeNeve & Cooper, 1998 for a review) including optimism, and hope. Thus in this study, we attempt to review SWB, optimism, and hope conceptually and mention a couple of recent studies regarding the associations of SWB, hope and optimism. Doubtlessly, all these variables are critical ingredients for mental health.

THE DEBATE ON SWB: HEDONISM VS. EUDAIMONIA

The studies on SWB or happiness have become a central concern since ancient age among many philosophers. Aristotle, in his two books, investigated how a person should live in a best way, nature

of happiness and how one becomes a highest good person: First book Eudemean Ethics and the more comprehensive second one, Nicomachean Ethics (cited in Kraut, 2010). He considered happiness in two components: pleasure-hedonism and good or virtuous life- eudaimonia (eu means well, daimon means divinity or spirit). According to him, Hedonism refers to how pleasure the person feels about his/her life whereas Eudaimonia refers to living a life in a harmony with one's potential or actualizes one's potential and includes virtuous activity which means having real friends, experiencing pleasure, being healthy, being honored and courage (cited in Kraut, 2010).

According to Telfer (1990) hedonic pleasure sometimes occurs in the absence of eudaimonia, but eudaimonia never occurs in the absence of hedonic pleasure (cited in Biswas-Diener, Kashdan, & King, 2009). Engaging eudaimonic activities always includes hedonic pleasure but both qualitative and quantitative characteristics of this overlap has not been certain yet (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In recent years, researchers of well-being have been widely accepted these two overlap components and within these categories, several studies have been provided (e.g., Keyes et al., 2002). *Hedonism*, a pleasant life, includes positive emotion about past, present and future. Positive emotions about past can be accounted as contentment, satisfaction and serenity; positive emotions about present can be accounted as somatic pleasures such as momentary sensory delights; positive emotions about future include optimism, hope, and faith (Duckworth et al., 2005). The pleasant life focuses on increasing positive emotions and decreasing negative emotions. This constitutes a hedonistic theory of happiness. Some philosophers such as Epicurus, Hobbes and Bentham argued that pleasure seeking motivates human and pleasure lies in the virtue of life and hedonism is considered as the philosophical basis of subjective well-being and the pursuit of pleasure, avoidance of pain and life satisfaction judgments (cited in Kashdan & Steger, 2007). That's why the terms subjective well-being and hedonistic happiness are used interchangeably.

The second component is *Eudaimonia* which Aristotle had focused much more than hedonism, refers to the broader engaged life or virtuous life activity including striving to be authentic and growth of self and depends on the objective social values rather than subjective psychological feelings (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Kashdan et al., 2008). It involves traits, strengths, talents and characters of an individual as well as having knowledge, friendships and an ethical life. Through these features, a life becomes "a good life" or "engaged life" and being happy or eudaimon is the highest end of human (Duckworth et al., 2005). This concept constitutes the basis of Psychological Well-being. Two theories are related to Eudaimonia Approach to well-being. The first one Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which proposed that eudaimonic well-being is gained by three psychological needs: relatedness, autonomy, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000 cited in Deci & Ryan, 2008). The second theory, Psychological Well-being Theory (PWB) developed by Ryff and Singer (1998) proposed that eudaimonic well-being includes six domains: autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. According to Ryff and Singer (1998) well-being is obtained through achieving a sense of mastery over the environment, creating a meaningful lasting relationship, achieving personal growth, acting autonomously, setting goals and living in a harmony with true nature. Through eudaimonic or virtuous activities, people develop lasting well-being. Even though there were number of research on eudaimonic theories of well-being, the researchers are less clear on what exactly an eudaimonic life style looks like since identifying specific activities and behaviors related to eudaimonic life style is very difficult to determine. Therefore, in many studies such as in ours, the construct of subjective well-being which includes one's own cognitive and affective evaluations are preferred rather than using psychological well-being.

BASIC THEORIES OF SWB

Telic Theories

Telic theories of SWB suggest that happiness is felt when individuals reach a goal or achieve a certain task. Happiness occurs as a result of fulfillment of a desire (Diener & Ryan, 2009). Telic theories are consisted of three theories: Liking, Needing and Wanting. Liking Theory or Hedonic Happiness

focuses on maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. The Needing Theory suggests that every human being should fulfill the hierarchy of needs as Maslow states for being happy (Durayappah, 2010). Unless basic universal needs are satisfied, the others can not be able to be satisfied easily that results in unhappiness. The last one, Wanting Theory proposes that desire of something leads more happiness than fulfillment of a desire itself and most pleasure comes from the progress toward reaching the goal (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Durayappah, 2010).

Top-Down (Trait) vs. Bottom-Up (State) Theories

Bottom-up theory suggests that a person first accumulates several positive and negative moments throughout his/her life, then evaluates his/her subjective well-being on the basis of this accumulation (Diener & Ryan, 2009). The more positive memories especially based on external factors and demographical factors such as income and socioeconomical status, s/he collects, the more s/he interprets her/his life as more satisfied. It is the factors related to external conditions. Positive life-events enhance SWB and negative life events reduce it. Especially during life transitions people's levels of happiness are influenced (Gomez, Krings, Bangerter, & Grob, 2009). Nevertheless, Rodgers (1976) found that demographic variables such as age, gender, income, ethnic identity accounted for 2% to 15% of the variance in well-being (cited in Diener et al., 1999; Diener, 2000). Also, the same event does not lead one in the same manner and same degree. Therefore individual factors play very important role in the experiences of well-being. These inconsistencies make researchers propose a second explanation in well-being namely, Top-down theory.

Top-down theory claim that a person may interpret the same situational cues more positive and happier than other individuals which results increase in well-being (Diener & Ryan, 2009). It is the factors related to individual himself. Shortly, Bottom-up theory suggests being happy is a result of collection of happy memories derived from external factors, whereas Top-down theory suggests that being happy is a result of ability to react positively to the objective events derived from trait factors (Durayappah, 2010).

Cognitive Theories: Attention, Interpretation, Memory (AIM)

How we perceive and think about the world determines our psychological health. As Beck suggested (1967) according to attributional theory, people evaluate the situations on the basis of their mood and make some judgments and attributions (cited in Diener et al., 1997). That is, happiness is not a direct result of external circumstances rather it depends on the how one perceive and interpret these circumstances. Subjective evaluation of circumstances are vitally important in determining well-being. Similarly, it was found that individuals with higher well-being are more likely to interpret ambiguous or neutral events as more positive (Diener et al., 1997). According to AIM theory, happy people have a tendency to recall and interpret ambiguous events as good. In other words, individuals with high subjective well-being are more likely to bring out positive stimuli, evaluate events in a more positive manner, and remember past events more positively, as well as have outward attention level. Among all, especially interpreting neutral or ambiguous events as positive play as a buffer or protective role in determining subjective well-being level.

Evolutionary Theory

Recently, one of the emerging theories for the origins of well-being are evolutionary models. Two theories are most common used in explaining subjective well-being. First theory belongs to Fredrickson (1998) Broaden and Build Theory which suggests that feelings of pleasure and well-being are important for human survival (cited in Fredrickson, 2001). The role of negative emotions such as anger and anxiety protect human against threats. According to Fredrickson (1998) Broaden and Build Theory, in evolutionary sense, positive emotions and well-being are also adaptive and lead to broaden people's perspectives to explore their environment and reach important resources for obtaining goals (cited in Fredrickson, 2001). After broadening thought-action repertoires, people tend to build their social, physical, and psychological resources over time. Both positive and negative emotions have adaptive purposes and increase survival chance of human.

The second theory in explaining happiness developed by Brickman and Campbell (1971) who suggested an adaptation theory named Hedonic Treadmill Theory. According to this theory, individuals more or less return to their baseline levels of well-being after experiencing even most unexpected positive or negative life events (cited in Diener & Oishi, 2005; Gomez et al., 2009). In the long-term we are designed to back to our hedonic neutrality and good or bad life circumstances are temporary as well as our good life efforts bring only short-term solutions (Diener, Lucas, & Napa Scollon, 2006). However, most studies have suggested that even though adaptations occur over time but not always pointed back to the baseline (e.g., Gomez et al., 2009). The manner or content of events is also very important. In a major life event such as marriage, adaptation occurs on average within a couple of years, however in a widowhood or other losses, adaptation can take 8 years and it has been found that unemployed people may not be back to their baseline ever (Gomez et al., 2009). Similarly, street prostitutes, homeless people and people in mental institutes are found as unhappy for a long time. Perhaps lack of respect, lack of trusted social bonds may lead to these unhappiness feelings. People are observed that they usually do not return to their neutral point easily and tend to report low level of well-being even after several years passed.

OPTIMISM

In the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary optimism is simply defined as “an expectation of good things happen or the feeling that the future will be good or successful” (Steel, 2000, p.467). In psychology literature, optimism refers a general belief or expectancy that favorable or good things will happen in the future (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Yet, there are still debates whether optimism is a dispositional trait or form of explanatory styles toward specific situations.

BASIC THEORIES OF OPTIMISM

Learned Optimism: Explanatory Style

Peterson and Seligman (1984) have defined optimism and pessimism on the basis of attributional or explanatory style. According to these authors, optimistic and pessimistic individuals have distinct and certain attributions to the events they encountered. The optimistic individuals use more adaptive causal attributions to explain negative life events. When a person asks herself/himself “why did this negative event happen to me”, the optimistic style makes external, variable and specific attributions for their failures rather than internal, stable and global attributions. For instance, an optimistic student who has a poor grade on an exam explains this experience as a difficult exam or poor teaching of instructor (external attribution), success on previous exams (variable attribution) and doing well at other domains of life (specific attribution) (Forgeard & Seligman, 2012; Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p.180). Hence, within pessimistic outlook, individuals are more likely to believe that permanent and unchangeable things usually happen in life. Peterson and Seligman (1984) also suggest that optimistic or pessimistic style of life has developmental roots. Therefore, this learned style can also be unlearned during life-span like “learned helplessness” concept.

General Optimism: Dispositional Style

Scheier and Carver (1985) defines optimism simply as the general belief that good rather than bad things will happen in the future and in a more comprehensive manner, optimism is a personality trait that “reflect the extent to which people hold generalized favorable expectancies for their future”. According to Carver et al. (2010) trait or dispositional optimism is linked with expectancy-value models of motivation which includes a valuable goal-directed behavior and expectation to achieve that valuable goal. People regulate or manage their behaviors in order to reach their desirable goals. The more desirable goal they set, the more effort they make. Their expectancy levels are also important in order to reach that desired goal. If people have certain doubts about achieving that goal, they also tend to give up easily or have little reason to act. When people have expectancies for a valuable goal, they are more likely to continue to make efforts even when they encounter a problem or barrier (Brisette et al., 2002). Optimistic people are confident that their goals will be achieved. When they confront with a difficult situation, they persist at challenging tasks and believe that they can overcome

this trouble and able to find alternative solutions to success. They have greater motivation to complete their works. However, pessimistic people give up more easily and have less confidence in accomplishment of goals they set. Because, optimistic individuals cope more effectively with the adversities they encountered and remain still in the engaging goals than do pessimistics (Carver et al., 1989). Generally, pessimistic individuals are more doubtful for their goals to be accomplished and more likely to avoid and show maladaptive emotion-focused coping strategies such as wishful thinking (Carver et al., 2010). Optimistic and pessimistic individuals differ in how they face with problems, how well they handle them, and how efficiently they use of coping resources and strategies (Carver et al., 2010).

Research conducted on how stable optimism is that during life transitions optimism level can vary, however, it is a trait-like characteristic which leads a relatively stability. It is about 25% heritable (Carver et al., 2010). There is more likely to grow individuals as optimistic when a family atmosphere is characterized by warmth, secure, well-educated and economically high. In terms of stability, test-retest correlations showed a high scores ranging from .58 to .79 over periods from few weeks to three years (Scheier & Carver, 1985). However, there are remaining questions such as how large a change can be expected from a person and whether optimism can be learned through specific techniques such as via cognitive-behavioral therapies.

The Debate on Optimism: Unrealistic Optimism vs. Realistic Optimism

In optimism literature, one of the most common debates is on whether optimism is always beneficial or it leads only positive illusions for self-deception and is form of denial. Some authors distinguish that there are two forms of optimism: realistic and unrealistic optimism. However, some authors refused to use this differentiation and according to these authors, in a lighter sense, optimism may not be all beneficial for all people all the time but is mostly associated with healthy coping mechanisms. For instance, Schneider (2001) stated that not all forms of optimism are beneficial. When expectations and goals are unrealistic, then being optimistic is not beneficial for the individual. She distinguishes unrealistic optimism which has been defined as a tendency to maintain positive outlook whatever the conditions are from realistic optimism which involves enhancing, hoping, aspiring for positive experiences while we are aware of our limitations. Realistic optimism includes hoping and working for desired outcome but not only dreaming to come true. In a similar vein, according to Weinstein (1980) a tendency for being invulnerable includes not only a hopeful outlook toward life but also a judgment error which can be named as unrealistic optimism. In other words, if one thinks that his/her chance for experiencing a negative event such as an accident, having a heart attack, getting divorced or being tortured etc. is less than average or experiencing a positive event such as winning a lottery, or good job offer, marrying someone wealthy etc. is more than average, this person is unrealistically optimistic. Weinstein (1980) claimed that if an event is recognized as controllable no matter is positive or negative for a person and if a person has emotionally committed or attached to that event, then this optimistic bias or cognitive error including inadequate comparison with others has emerged. For instance, Weinstein, Marcus, and Moser (2005) found that smokers tend to have unrealistic belief that they are less likely to develop lung cancer especially because they think that they are able to control their dependency. Thus, unrealistic optimistics experience greater risky behaviors leading self-harm in the future or tend to underestimate the probability of experiencing a negative event. Congruently, Higgings, Amand, and Poole (1995) suggested that unrealistic optimism is determined by various cognitive error judgments such as egocentrism, representativeness of the other- comparison, and availability of negative instances as well as the motivational factors such as using denial or self-deceptive coping strategies in order to decrease anxiety produced from any possibility of occurrence of negative events. According to these authors, pessimism occurred only when the experienced events are uncontrollable such as in earthquakes and other disasters, when events are felt under control, individuals' optimism levels remained high and still they are more likely to see themselves invulnerable or victims of future events. Nevertheless, Aspinwall and Brunhart (1996) in their study, stated that optimism is different from denial and includes an active coping with

the stressor and better psychological well-being. Likewise, according to Scheier and Carver (1993), optimism is not a part of denial or any ego defense mechanisms, conversely, optimism includes a certain goal and goal attain process as well as more efficient or active and direct coping when encountered adverse events. This is kind of pessimistic outlook which includes disengagement or avoidance from a problem. However, Scheier and Carver (1993) also stated that optimism may also produce unproductive results such as uncontrollable optimism may lead people to sit and wait for what they desire but related data on this situation is not lacking. Congruently, Segerstrom (2005) found in her study, optimism sometimes leads to dissatisfaction and is negatively associated with physical health and immune system when stressors are perceived as difficult, complex, persistent and uncontrollable whereas positively associated when stressors are perceived as easy, temporary, controllable and brief. Thus, so far, it seems that it is not so clear whether optimism is detrimental or beneficial in all circumstances to everyone. It depends on the circumstances of the stressor, particularly there is a relation between controllability of an event and optimism level. This debate seems to continue depending upon the new findings.

HOPE

According to Webster's International Dictionary, hope is defined as "(1) trust or reliance (2) desire accompanied with expectation of obtaining what is desired or belief that is obtainable" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hope>). Hope is one's belief in the ability to pursue goals, in a more comprehensive way described as "goal-directed thinking in which the person utilizes pathway thinking (the perceived capacity to find routes to desired goals) and agency thinking (the requisite motivations to use these routes)" (Snyder, 2002; Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p.189). In this goal-directed definition, even though goals are changeable such as short-term or long-term, they should be valuable and attainable for the individuals.

Hope Theory: Will and Ways

Hope theory has been developed by Snyder during mid 1980s. He developed the construct of hope and introduces this construct as a theory into psychology literature (Snyder, 2002; Snyder, Feldman, Taylor, Schroeder, & Adams, 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p.190-191). In the first writings, hope consists of two components, nowadays, over time, Snyder's view has changed and hope becomes a more dispositional cognitive and motivational construct accompanied by trait-like emotional sets or moods which consists of three processes (1) goals, (2) pathway thinking (ways) (3) agency thinking (will) (2000, p.8; 2002). On the basis of new hope theory, hopeful thinking requires three interrelated components, a goal, pathway(s), and agency thoughts (Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p.190-191). Goal is a cognitive component which provides the targets of mental action sequences. The goals should be valuable and clear enough to motivate individuals to pursue and 100% reachable goals do not create hope for individuals. Pathway thinking (waypower) refers to a sense of being able to generate successful plans to meet goals. It is a kind of mental plans or maps due to reach settled goals. Beyond the primary route, a high-hope individual is able to produce an alternative ways to reach the targeted-goals. Agency thinking (willpower) which refers to a sense of successful determination in meeting goals is the motivational component of hope theory or the perceived capacity to use one's pathways to reach desired goals. It is form of mental energy including positive self-talks in order to motivate to remain in the pursuit of personally valuable goals such as "I can do it", "I am not giving up" (Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p.190).

In terms of hope model, there is a goal-directed thought sequence. Specifically, hopeful thinking-pathway and agency thinking can be gained and acquired through modeling during childhood regardless of hereditary contributions. Pathway thinking is learned prior to agency thinking. The characteristics of experiences in childhood compromise the tone of emotional sets, for instance, traumatic memories in the course of childhood mostly decrease the degree of hopefulness in later life (Carr, 2011, p.99). If positive experiences such as secure attachment and warm parenting are more dominant during childhood, high-hopers' emotional repertoires include much more positive emotions

such as friendliness, happiness and confidence toward self and life. Also, in terms a goal sequence, high-hope individuals are more likely to produce wider and more goals. In the forming of goals, an individual decides an attainable goal depends on the pathways and agency conditions- motivational state. When person evaluates the demands and costs of the goal s/he set, then the process gets started. Both positive emotional sets that trigger agency thinking and the capability of finding alternative routes-pathway thinking generally lead a person to pursue the desired goals even facing with an adversity. Low-hope person in general perceives that s/he is not able to move forward when encountered a stressor and is more likely to quit as a result of the discouragement power of negative emotions. For a high-hope person, a stressor becomes a challenge and s/he does not tend to derail or give up easily and continues his/her journey. Having completed a goal pursuit process, attainment thoughts with positive emotions encourage a person for next goal attainment journeys. For low-hope individuals, these disruptions usually lead to the ruminations and self-criticisms rather than improvement of future efforts. In summary, the hope theory involves an interrelated system of goal-directed thinking including pathway and agency thinking styles accompanied with certain emotional repertoires stemmed from childhood memories and experiences that is responsive to feedbacks at various points in the sequence of goal-attainment.

The Debate on Hope: False Hope

Is it always good to have hopeful thinking? Can it be maladaptive to have high hope? Is hope a part of positive illusion? These and similar questions have compromised recent criticisms toward Snyder's hope theory. Nevertheless Snyder (2002) argues that there is no such a thing called as "false hope". According to Snyder (2002) false hope criticisms have evoked because of chosen unsuitable or poorly goals and incorrect or insufficient strategies. Those goals can be either too big to reach or there is a bad planning to attain the realistic goals. Interestingly, studies display that low-hope individuals set unrealistically big goals for certain areas and set too easy goals in some areas in their lives. This unbalanced goal setting process leads them to fail as soon as they begin with. On the other hand, high-hope individuals are more flexible in setting goals and re-energized when confronting an adversity (Snyder et al., 2000). In terms of selection of appropriate routes or paths for a task, high-hope individuals are more clear and creative in finding alternative ways. False hope can be defined as having a desired goal and motivation level but not knowing how to and what to do in order to reach that goal. As a result of this disappointment, low-hope individuals are more likely to develop maladaptive responses and dysphoric feelings. In conclusion, as Snyder (2000; 2002) suggested that the criticisms of false hope can be explained in terms of incorrect goal sequences.

The Differences between Optimism

Both concepts have been extensively studied in the last decades within the framework of positive psychology which give emphasis on human growth and strengths as well as well-being. Even though hope and optimism is used interchangeably in daily practices, various studies have proved that they are correlated but distinct constructs (e.g., Gallagher & Lopez, 2009; Ho et al., 2011; Magaletta & Oliver, 1999; Wong, & Lim, 2009). Both theories have pointed goal pursuit processes in dispositional and cognitive-motivational terms (Carver & Scheier, 2002; Gallagher & Lopez, 2009). However, there are different points of views.

According to Snyder (2002) in Scheier and Carver's dispositional optimism theory, optimism is defined as generalized outcome expectancies from future. It leads to persistence through goals. Snyder (2002) stated that optimism sounds as more agency-like thought and motivational concept regardless of the routes to the goals; instead, hope theory consists of both equally pathways and agency thoughts. Besides motivating a person through desired tasks, hope at the same time facilitates the appropriate pathway or routes on how a person reaches that task. On the contrary, according to Carver and Scheier (2002), the main divergence is about the role of personal agency. In optimism theory, these authors argue that there is no role for agency, because optimism theory has been stemmed from expectancy-value theory of motivation, people attain their goals if they desire so and they are already confident

things will go well. They do not go into process of agency thinking. Therefore, even there might be some instances for need of personal agency in reaching an outcome for the individuals but this is not the usual case. To conclude, even though there has been a debate on two theories, the studies clearly proved that they are related but divergent constructs.

RECENT STUDIES ON THE ASSOCIATION OF OPTIMISM, HOPE AND SWB

The relationships among optimism, hope and subjective well-being have been investigated in a wide range of contexts such as in medical context especially on cancer, AIDS, by-pass surgery patients, and pregnancy as well as in school context such as new beginner students to college.

Wong and Lim (2009) investigated the relationship among hope, optimism, depression, life satisfaction as well as unique contribution of hope and optimism on life satisfaction and depression scores of 334 adolescents. The results yielded that optimism and hope were significantly correlated with each other and both total scores of optimism and hope significantly predicted depressive feelings and life satisfaction. Specifically, only agency subscale of hope scale, optimism subscale and pessimism subscale significantly predicted depression and life satisfaction. It was concluded that hope and optimism were similar construct and share more similarities rather than distinctions and have predictive characteristics on depression and life satisfaction.

Gallagher and Lopez (2009) conducted a study in order to find out structures of optimism and hope as well as their unique contributions on mental health and eudaimonic, hedonistic and social well-being of 591 university students. Findings showed that hope and optimism were related but distinct latent constructs. Hope and optimism contributed differently to the forms of well-being. Optimism was more strongly related to hedonic and social well-being whereas hope was more strongly associated with eudaimonic well-being. These results were interpreted as hope and optimism can address different components of mental health.

Ho et al. (2011) carried out a study to examine the roles of optimism and hope on posttraumatic growth in. The sample composed of 50 oral cavity cancer patients. In terms of socio-demographical factors, patients with higher income and married displayed significant posttraumatic growth. Also, married patients showed higher hope scores than counterparts. As the researchers predicted, there were significant positive correlations among hope, optimism and posttraumatic growth scores. Both optimism and hope scores predicted posttraumatic growth, specifically, they together contributed to a 25% of the variances of posttraumatic growth. However, hope was a significant unique indicator of posttraumatic growth, accounting as 16% of the variance, optimism only accounted for 1%. Pathway subscale of hope is significantly correlated with posttraumatic growth. This study also confirms that optimism and hope are distinct constructs. And pathway component of hope which is related to finding alternative routes and producing positive strategies toward a goal is more important in terms of posttraumatic growth in patients with life-threatening illnesses.

In a similar vein, Carver et al. (2005) examined the role of optimism as a personality characteristic on psychosocial well-being of long-term survivors of breast cancer during treatment. A sample of 183 women with breast cancer were measured both during the year of surgery and after 5-13 years as follow-up. As a result, as the authors expected, optimism predicted better well-being in long-run. The level of well-being remained almost same at initial assessment and follow-up. Likewise, initial optimism and being married or having a partner predicted follow-up well-being.

Shorey et al. (2007) conducted a study with 378 students in order to examine the relationships among personal growth initiative, hope, optimism, psychological distress and psychological well-being. The findings revealed that personal growth initiative is a distinct construct from hope scale. By using structural equation modeling, the proposed model with latent variables of personal growth initiative, hope, optimism, psychological distress and psychological well-being had good fit indices. When direct effects were investigated, only hope significantly predicted optimism, psychological distress and psychological well-being. In terms of the role of personal growth initiative, the authors suggested that there is a need for further studies.

Barnum et al. (1998) examined the relationships among demographical features, burn history, school information, hope, social support and psychological adjustment including affectivity and behavioral problems as well as self-worth levels of 15 survivors of burn injuries and their 14 matched controls. No significant differences were found between the samples in terms of affectivity, self-worth and school performance. The only group differences were found in terms of behavioral problems. Burn injury survivors had lower scores on externalizing and internalizing behaviors. Other analyses showed that only hope and social support predicted self-worth and psychological adjustment such as externalizing behaviors and affectivity. Specifically, only hope contributed significantly to the prediction of externalizing behavioral problems. Higher hope scores predicted lower externalizing scores. These results confirmed that burn injury survivors mostly psychologically adjusted after their injury experiences. Being hopeful and socially supported seemed very important in increasing self-worth and adjustment process after experiencing a negative event.

Ben-zur (2003) investigated the role of optimism, perceived mastery and parental factors in subjective well-being (SWB) with a sample of 95 university students and 175 adolescents. It was found that, in both samples, dispositional optimism, and perceived mastery were significantly and positively correlated with positive affect and life satisfaction whereas significantly and negatively correlated with negative affect and life satisfaction. As hierarchical regression analysis demonstrated that mastery and optimism contributed significantly to the model in the prediction of subjective well-being of adolescents and university students. None of the demographic factors except for gender were found to predict subjective well-being.

CONCLUSION

The concept of well-being has rooted in ancient times and many philosophers such as Aristoteles, and Epicureanism school tended to define well-being or happiness into their own views. Aristoteles emphasized Eudamonia, a virtuous life, whereas Epicureanists pointed on hedonistic activities in explaining well-being. Nowadays, well-being is specifically used as a general term which consists of life satisfaction, mental health and happiness from life (Keyes et al., 2002; Myers & Diener, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Even though happiness is used as interchangeably for subjective well-being (SWB), SWB is composed of two primary components: first one is cognitive component which refers to a general life satisfaction and second one is emotional component: presence of positive affect and absence of negative affect. In the explanation of subjective well-being, there are many theories such as Telic, Top-down vs. Bottom-up, Evolutionary and Cognitive Theories. Since 30 years, the progress on subjective well-being tells us bottom or external factors are less important than internal factors such as cognitions, adaptation skills, coping mechanisms, personality traits such as extraversion and optimism, and goals as well as societal values which culture offers.

Optimism which is a belief or general expectancy that favorable things will happen in the future is associated with broad range of positive consequences such as better physical and psychological health (Carver et al., 2010; Segerstrom, 2007). Optimists think and feel positively about future. In understanding optimism, two main conceptualizations have emerged over the past decades: explanatory style (Peterson & Seligman, 1984) and dispositional style (Scheier & Carver, 1985). On the basis of explanatory style, optimistic individuals are more likely to interpret the negative events in a more positively and constructive manner whereas pessimistic individuals are more likely to interpret the negative events in a fatalistic manner with a framework of helpless, global, and stable (Forgeard & Seligman, 2012). According to dispositional style, optimism is a kind of personality trait based on expectancy-value models of motivation which includes a valuable goal-directed behavior and expectation to achieve that valuable goal (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Optimistic individuals are more likely to set attainable goals and have less difficulty in order to reach these goals by using effective coping skills (Scheier & Carver, 1993). Studies indicated that being optimistic whatever the style is has many beneficial outcomes. Lastly, hope is defined as the perceived ability of determine pathways or routes to attain the goals and motivate oneself by using agency thinking via determined pathways (Snyder, 2002). As stated in the definition, hope theory which involves an interrelated system of goal-

directed thinking includes three processes: goal, pathway and agency. Goal is a mental target to be achieved, pathway is a cognitive route to reach this goal, and agency thinking is a mental energy which involves motivated self-talks. In goal sequence of the hope theory, agency-pathway thought is gained or learned during childhood through modeling of parents. High-hope individuals have generally positive emotional repertoires and cope better when they face with an adversity in attaining the goal they desire. In hope literature, there are debates on the existence of false hope and the relationship between optimism and hope. Hope correlates positively with achievements in sport, academics, better physical and mental health.

Taken together, there are positive correlations among optimism, hope and subjective well-being. Researchers also concluded that dispositional optimism and hopefulness are very important ingredients for achieving SWB. However, considering the scarcity of evidence regarding the overall associations of optimism, hope and cognitive and affective domains of SWB need further explorations particularly studies conducted in different cultures with different sample characteristics.

REFERENCES

- Aspinwall, L. G. & Brunhart, S.M. (1996). Distinguishing optimism from denial: Optimistic beliefs predict attention to health threats. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 993-1003.
- Barnum, D. D., Snyder, C. R., Rapoff, M. A., Mani, M. M., Thompson, R. (1998). Hope and social support in the psychological adjustment of children who have survived burn injuries and their matched controls. *Children's Health Care*, 27(1), 15-30.
- Ben-Zur, H. (2003). Happy adolescents: The link between subjective well-being, internal resources, and parental factors. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 32(2), 67-79. doi:10.1023/A:1021864432505.
- Biswas-Diener, R., Kashdan, T.B., & King, L.A.(2009). Two traditions of happiness research, not two distinct types of happiness. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(3), 208-211.
- Brissette, I., Scheier, M.F., & Carver, C.S. (2002). The role of optimism in social network development, coping, and psychological adjustment during a life transition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(1), 102-111.
- Carr, A. (2011). *Positive Psychology: The science of happiness and human strength* (2nd ed.). New York & London: Routledge
- Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Segerstrom, S. C. (2010). Optimism. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30, 879-889.
- Carver, C. S., Smith, R. S., Antoni, M. H., Petronis, V. M., Weiss, S. & Derhagopian, R. P. (2005). Optimistic personality and psychosocial well-being among long-term survivors of breast cancer. *Health Psychology*, 24(5), 508-516.
- Chang, E. C., & Banks, K. H. (2007). The color and texture of hope: Some preliminary findings and implications for hope theory and counseling among diverse racial/ethnic groups. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 13(2), 94-103. doi: 10.1037/1099-9809.13.2.94
- Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1980). Influence of extraversion and neuroticism on subjective well-being: happy and unhappy people. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38(4), 668-678. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.38.4.668
- Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: An introduction. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9, 1-11.
- DeNeve, K. M., & Cooper, H. (1998). The happy personality: A meta-analysis of 137 personality traits and subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124(2), 197-229.
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 34-43.
- Diener, E., & Diener, M. (2009). Cross-cultural correlates of life satisfaction and self-esteem. In *Culture and Well-being* (pp. 71-91). Springer Netherlands.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49 (1), 71-75. doi: 10.1207/s15327752jpa490113
- Diener, E., & Lucas, R. E. (2000). Subjective emotional well-being. In M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland (Eds.), *Handbook of Emotions* (2nd ed), pp. 191–213). New York: Guilford.
- Diener, E., Lucas, R.E., & Napa Scollon, C. (2006). Beyond the hedonic treadmill: Revising the adaptation theory of well-being. *American Psychologist*, 61(4), 305-314.
- Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. E. (2003). Personality, Culture, and Subjective well-being: Emotional and cognitive evaluations of life. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, 403-425. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.54.101601.145056

- Diener, E., & Ryan, K. (2009). Subjective well-being: A general overview. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 39(4), 391-406.
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(2), 276-302.
- Diener, E., Suh, E., & Oishi, S. (1997). Recent findings on subjective well-being. *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 24, 25-41.
- Duckworth, A. L., Steen, T. A., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2005). Positive psychology in clinical practice. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 1, 629-651.
- Durayappah, A. (2010). The 3P model: A general theory of subjective well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 1-36.
- Emmons, R. A., & Diener, E. (1985). Personality correlates of subjective well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 11(1), 89-97.
- Forgeard, M. J. C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2012). Seeing the glass half full: A review of the causes and consequences of optimism. *Pratiques Psychologiques*, 18(2), 107-120. doi: 10.1016/j.prps.2012.02.002
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218-226.
- Gallagher, M. W., & Lopez, S. J. (2009). Positive expectancies and mental health: Identifying the unique contributions of hope and optimism. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(6), 548-556. doi: 10.1080/17439760903157166
- Gomez, V., Krings, F., Bangerter, A., & Grob, A. (2009). The influence of personality and life events of subjective well-being from a life span perspective. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 43, 345-354.
- Hayes, N., & Joseph, S. (2003). Big 5 correlates of three measures of subjective well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 34(4), 723-727. doi: 10.1016/S0191-8869(02)00057-0
- Ho, S., Rajandram, R. K., Chan, N., Samman, NN., & McGrath, C. (2011). The roles of hope and optimism on posttraumatic growth in oral cavity cancer patients. *Oral Oncology*, 47, 121-124.
- Kashdan, T.B., & Steger, M.F. (2007). Curiosity and pathways to well-being and meaning in life: Traits, states, and everyday behaviors. *Motivation and Emotion*, 31, 159-173. doi: 10.1007/s11031-007-9068-7
- Kashdan, T. B., Biswas-Diener, R., & King, L. A. (2008). Reconsidering happiness: the costs of distinguishing between hedonics and eudamonia. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 3(4), 219-233.
- Keyes, C., Shmothkin, D., & Ryff, C. (2002). Optimizing well-being: The empirical encounter of two traditions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 1007-1022.
- Kraut, R. (2010). Aristotle's ethics. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved June 21 2012, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>
- Larson, R. (1989). Is feeling "in control" related to happiness in daily life?. *Psychological Reports*, 64(3), 775-784.
- Lightsey, O. R. Jr., & Boyraz, G. (2011). Do positive thinking and meaning mediate the positive affect-life satisfaction relationship? *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 43(3), 203-213. doi: 10.1037/a0023150
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111-131.

- Magaletta, P.R. & Oliver, J.M. (1999). The hope construct, will, and ways: Their relations with self-efficacy, optimism, and general well-being. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 55*(5), 539-551.
- Peterson, C. & Seligman, M. E. P. (1984). Causal explanations as a risk factor for depression: Theory and evidence. *Psychological Review, 91*, 347-374.
- Ryff, C. D. & Singer, B. (1998). Human health: New directions for the next millennium. *Psychological Inquiry, 9*(1), 69-85.
- Scheier, M.F., & Carver, C.S. (1985). Optimism, coping and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology, 4*(3), 219-247. doi: 10.1037/0278-6133.4.3.219
- Scheier, M.F. & Carver, C.S. (1993). On the power of positive thinking: the benefits of being optimistic. *Current Directions of Psychological Science, 2*(1), 26-30.
- Schneider, S.L. (2001). In search of realistic optimism: Meaning, knowledge, and warm fuzziness. *American Psychologist, 56*(3), 250-263.
- Seegerstrom, S. C. (2005). Optimism and immunity: Do positive thoughts always lead to positive effects? *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity, 19*(3), 195-200.
- Seegerstrom, S. C. (2007). Optimism and resources: Effects on each other and on health over 10 years. *Journal of Research in Personality, 41*, 772-786.
- Shorey, H. S., Little, T. D., Snyder, C. R., Kluck, B., & Robitschek, C. (2007). Hope and personal growth initiative: A comparison of positive, future-oriented constructs. *Personality and Individual Differences, 43*, 1917-1926. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2007.06.011
- Snyder, C.R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological Inquiry: An International Journal for the Advancement of Psychological Theory, 13*(4), 249-275. doi: 10.1207/S15327965PLI1304_01
- Snyder, C.R., Harris, C., Anderson, J. R., Holleran, S. A., Irving, L., Sigmon, S.T. et al. (1991). The will and the ways: development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60*, 570-585. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.60.4.570
- Snyder, C.R., & Lopez, S. J. (2007). *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strengths*. US: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Steel, M. (2000). *Oxford Wordpower Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Steel, P., Schmidt, J., & Shultz, J. (2008). Refining the relationship between personality and subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin, 134*(1), 138 -161.
- Solberg Nes, L., & Seegerstrom, S. C. (2006). Dispositional optimism and coping: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 10*(3), 235-251.
- Weinstein, N. D. (1980). Unrealistic optimism about future life events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39*(5), 806-820.
- Weinstein, N. D., Marcus, S. E. ,& Moser, R. P. (2005). Smokers' unrealistic optimism about their risk. *Tobacco Control, 14*, 55-59.
- Wong, S. S., & Lim, T. (2009). Hope versus optimism in Singaporean adolescents: Contributions to depression and life satisfaction. *Personality and Individual Differences, 46*, 648-652. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2009.01.009