

Determination of Specific-Domain Hope in University Students A Case Study: Students of Islamic Azad University of Gorgan – Iran

Shima Babayan^{1*}, Mahnaz Babaei², PhD

^{1*} M.A. Student in General Psychology, Department of Psychology, Gorgan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Gorgan, Iran

² Department of Social Sciences and Political Science, Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran

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ABSTRACT

Hope is one of the most important psychological structures playing pivotal role in different aspects of people's lives. Hope has been substantiated to be very effective to obtain higher academic performance and contribute to individual achievements. Therefore, the present paper was formulated in order to determine hope in six specific domains, namely social relationships, academics, romantic relationships, family life, work, and leisure activities in the students of Islamic Azad University of Gorgan, Iran. Data collection was performed by using the standard tool for specific-domain hope (Specific-Domain Hope Scale; Simpson, 1999). Validity and reliability of the tool were confirmed by experts' viewpoints and Cronbach's alpha, respectively. The results obtained from the present study showed that academics the students were mostly hopeful in the academics domain. Also, positive and significant corrections ($p < 0.05$) were detected between the specific domains of hope.

KEYWORDS: Hope, specific domains, university students, Gorgan.

1- INTRODUCTION

Hope is one of psychological structures seen in the basis of various mental disorders. Hope theory emphasizes on expectation of future and is considered as a thinking process about one or more goal(s) along with motivation to move ahead and methods of reaching the goals (Rajabi&Hosseini, 2013).

There are believed to be three attributes of hope, namely pathway thinking, agency thinking, and goal. Pathway thinking is defined as one's perceived ability to recognize and make pathways toward goal (Snyder, 1994). Hopeful individuals consider several pathways in order to cope with potential obstacles (Snyder et al. 1991; Snyder et al. 1996; Snyder et al. 2000; Snyder, 2000; Irving et al. 1997). It should be noted that positive effects of hope is not due to making such pathways but these effects are achieved by the perception that such pathways can be generated if necessary (Snyder et al. 1991). Agency thinking refers to the thoughts a person has about his/her abilities to commence and continue a way toward a predefined destination (Snyder et al. 1999). These thoughts are reflected in such positive self-representations as "I am able to perform this" (Snyder et al. 1998). Agency thinking provokes a person to start and keep moving along a route leading to a goal.

The attributes of hope (i.e. pathway thinking, agency thinking, and goal) mutually affect each other. Specification of important goals results in higher levels of motivation; this startled impetus may help to find pathways (Snyder et al. 1991).

Several studies have been performed on hope in university students and it has been found that there is a positive correlation between hope in students and their performance and efficiency. The students with lower levels of hope seek shelter in such strategies as avoiding from coping with the situation (Alexander & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Hope has been defined in different ways. Those scholars studying on hope in educational terms have emphasized on hope as a cognitive-motivational structure (Alexander & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Perhaps the most influential theory of hope in the past two decades was proposed by Snyder et al. (2002) who described hope as one's perceived ability to achieve methods for obtaining favorable goals and motivating the person by thinking in order to make use of those methods (Snyder et al. 2002; as cited in Alexander & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Educational development depends on several factors among which individual, social, educational, and psychological factors can be named. Determination of these factors and how much contribution they render to educational accomplishments or failures of students can help policymakers to improve positive factors and reduce the adverse effects of negative attributes.

Taken together, the present paper aimed to determine hope in six specific domains, namely social relationships, academics, romantic relationships, family life, work, and leisure activities.

*Corresponding Author: Shima Babayan, M.A. Student in General Psychology, Department of Psychology, Gorgan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Gorgan, Iran. E-mail: Shima.babayan2014@gmail.com

2- METHODOLOGY

The present paper is applied in terms of objective and descriptive-survey in terms of research method. Statistical population in the present study consists of all students of Islamic Azad University of Gorgan – Iran in 2013-14. Sample size (333 students) was decided by use of Kukran's Formula. Sampling was performed randomly.

Data collection was performed by using the standard tool for specific-domain hope (Specific-Domain Hope Scale; Sympson, 1999). The questionnaire evaluates subjects' hope in six specific domains, namely social relationships, academics, romantic relationships, family life, work, and leisure activities and for each domain, there are 8 factors and the maximum value for each domain is 64. In the first section of the scale, personal information of subjects are asked and then, there are three main parts pertaining to significance of the domain for subjects, satisfaction of the subjects from the domains, and evaluation of hope in the domains, respectively. Validity of the scale was confirmed by experts. Cronbach's alpha was adopted in order to confirm reliability of the tool. Because the alpha was found to be higher than 0.7, it can be claimed that the questionnaire can be reliably used. Table 1 shows Cronbach's alpha values for each domain of hope and for the whole scale.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha for each domain of hope and for the whole Specific-Domain Hope Scale

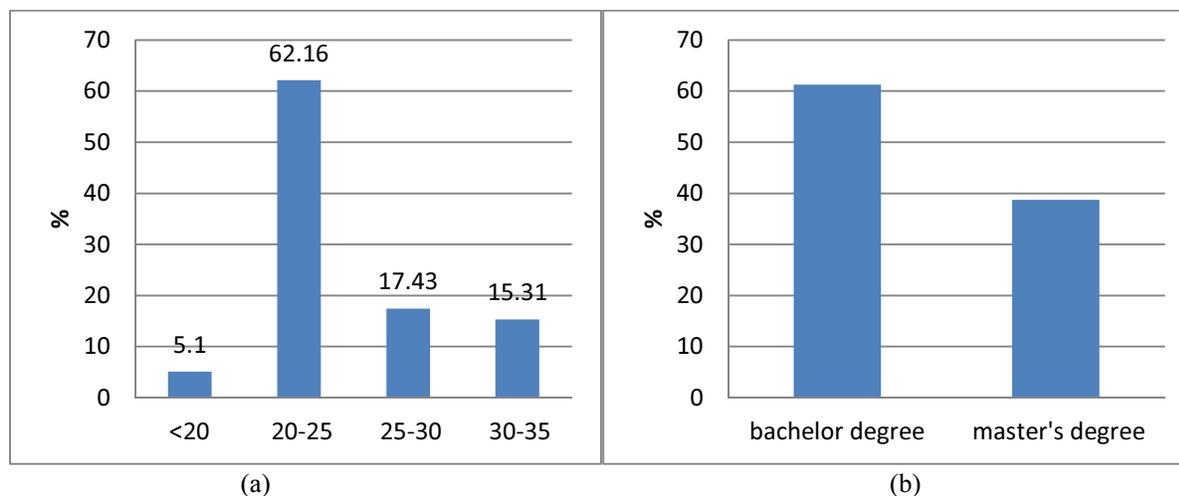
Subscales	Number of factors	Cronbach's alpha
Social relationships	8	0.852
Romantic relationships	8	0.873
Family life	8	0.879
Academics	8	0.866
Work	8	0.788
Leisure activities	8	0.871
Specific-Domain Hope Scale	48	0.909

Statistical analyses were performed in SPSS Software (Version 21) and graphs were drawn in Excel (Microsoft Office, 2010).

3- RESULTS

3-1- General information of respondents

Most respondents were between 20 and 25 years old (207; 62.16%) (Fig.1a). Also, 61.26% of the respondents were bachelor degree students and the rest of them were studying in master's degree (Fig.1b). In addition, most respondents (259; 77.45%) were not married (Fig.1c) and over 80% of them were female (Fig.1d).



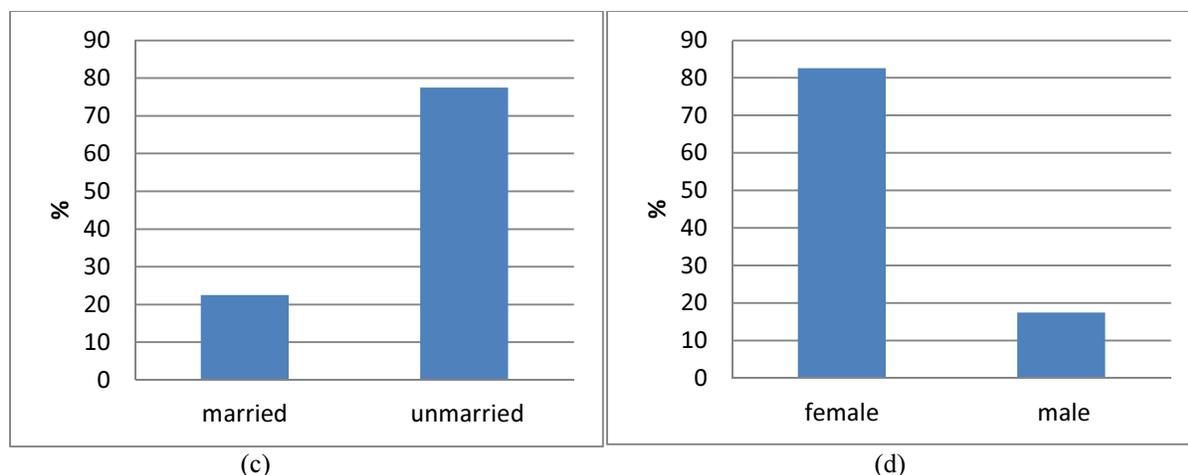


Figure 1: General information of the respondents; (a) age; (b) education; (c) marital status; (d) gender.

3-2- Specific domains of hope

Table 1 depicts the mean values and standard deviations obtained for each specific domains of hope. As it can be seen, the highest value was found to be in academic hope and the lowest value was for hope in family life. In other words, students are very hopeful in terms of their education while their hope in their family relationship is not as much as other domains.

Table 2: Mean values and standard deviations of specific domains of hope

Domain	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Social relationships	51.8438	7.57331	333
Romantic relationships	52.9730	8.04969	333
Family life	50.7958	6.74316	333
Academics	53.7508	7.74914	333
Work	52.4144	7.32688	333
Leisure activities	51.4565	7.96389	333

3-3- Correlation of specific domains of hope

Table 2 shows the results obtained from Pearson’s Correlation Coefficients. As it can be seen from the following table, there are positive and significant correlations between all domains of hope. That is, increase in each domain of hope results in increase in other domains. Therefore, there is no antagonistic relationship between hope domain and hopeful people in each domain may have higher values for other domains, as well.

Table 3: Pearson’s Correlation Coefficients for specific domains of hope

		Social relationships	Romantic relationships	Family life	Academics	Work	Leisure activities
Social relationships	Pearson Correlation	1	.254**	.157**	.221**	.244**	.363**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.004	.000	.000	.000
	N	333	333	333	333	333	333
Romantic relationships	Pearson Correlation	.254**	1	.136*	.214**	.227**	.230**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.013	.000	.000	.000
	N	333	333	333	333	333	333
Family life	Pearson Correlation	.157**	.136*	1	.208**	.175**	.142**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.013		.000	.001	.010
	N	333	333	333	333	333	333
Academics	Pearson Correlation	.221**	.214**	.208**	1	.177**	.209**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.001	.000
	N	333	333	333	333	333	333
Work	Pearson Correlation	.244**	.227**	.175**	.177**	1	.204**
	Sig. (2-tailed)						

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.001	.000
	N	333	333	333	333	333
Leisure activities	Pearson Correlation	.363**	.230**	.142**	.209**	.204**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.010	.000	.000
	N	333	333	333	333	333
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

4- DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results obtained from the present study showed that there are significant correlations between specific domains of hope ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$, Table 3). The people who have high values of hope in their social relationships can think of various ways to find new friends. These people actively pursue their relationships with their friends and also, they can find different ways to meet new people. Furthermore, these people can easily join the groups they are interested in. These people feel that they are successful in their relationships with their friends. They can make use of their past social experiences to find good friends in future.

Those who have high level of hope in their romantic relationships are able to find the best way to meet their favorite person. They are completely successful in their romantic relationships and they believe their romantic relationships help them to have a more efficient future. In addition, those who are hopeful in their academic careers are able to find the best way to prosper in their education. They don't lose their self-confidence when facing a challenge in the class; instead, they effectively use their past experiences in order to figure out the problem. Research has shown that increased level of hope in university students can lead to improved academic performance (Rajabi& Sadat-Hosseini, 2013; Ebrahimi et al. 2011; Rand et al. 2011). This can be attributed to improvement in psychological structures.

Moreover, hopeful people in their family life can enjoy doing different activities with their families and they try to keep their family relationships. They are satisfied with their family life and even when they come up with some disagreements with their family members, they can readily find solutions to overcome the challenge. These people have no problem to express their feeling and talk about them with their families. Hopeful people in their work can think of several ways to find new jobs. They are very energetic in their workplace and can learn a lot of things from their jobs even if the job is not very important. They can easily have a good relationship with their boss. Also, those who have high levels of hope in their leisure activities can consider several ways to fill their spare time and can make use of their leisure activities very productively.

It can be concluded that when talking about hope, it is not enough to consider only one domain of it. Because life has several domains, hope should be defined in different parts, as well. Inspired from the scale proposed by Simpson (1999), the present paper evaluated hope in university students in six domains of social relationships, academics, romantic relationships, family life, work, and leisure activities and found academics as the highest domain of hope in the students. However, students need to improve all domains of hope in order to achieve prosperity not only in their academic life but also in their whole life.

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