https://doi.org/10.37723/jumdc.v13i4.736

J. Univ. Med. Dent. Coll.2022;Vol.13(4): 473-477
ISSN (Print) 2221-7827, ISSN (Online) 2310-5542
https://www.jumdc.com

Original Article

Open Access

Self-esteem, optimism, and their associated factors among Optometry students at the University of Lahore

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE: Self-esteem and optimism are important for students' success. Our objectives were **(a)** to determine self-esteem and life-orientation (optimism) levels among Optometry students in the Department of Optometry & Vision Sciences at the University of Lahore (UoL) **(b)** to investigate associations between sociodemographic factors, self-esteem, and optimism.

METHODOLOGY: This cross-sectional study was conducted during November 2021 to December 2021 at the Department of Optometry and Vision Sciences, UoL. A total of 168 Optometry students were recruited by convenience sampling. Self-esteem was estimated using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Questionnaire. Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) questionnaire was used to measure optimism. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the UoL. Chi-square was used to determine associations between sociodemographic variables, self-esteem, and optimism.

RESULTS: Mean self-esteem score was 18.48±3.86 (range:8-30). About 20% of students had low self-esteem. The mean life orientation score was 14.15±2.8 (range:5-24). About 43% of students had low optimism. Significant associations were found between self-esteem, reason of admission in the Optometry program with p-value=0.001, family income (p=0.037), choice of the Optometry program (p=0.036), and reason of admission in the Optometry program (p=0.032).

CONCLUSION: Low self-esteem and low optimism have been observed among a significant percentage of Optometry students at the UoL. Reason of admission in the Optometry program and family income were significantly associated factors. Students' own decision to choose a study program may increase their self-esteem and optimism. Financial assistance for students from the low socioeconomic background may be a positive approach to boost their self-esteem and optimism. Teachers, parents, and counselors should support the students to increase their self-esteem and optimism.

KEYWORDS: Self-Esteem, Optimism, Life Orientation, Confidence, Optometry, University Students.

INTRODUCTION

Self-esteem is defined as a judgment about one's own abilities and the evaluation to approve or disapprove of one's own opinions. It is satisfaction or dissatisfaction with our own self [1,2]. Higher self-esteem is associated with an individual's well-being, growth, academic achievement, and resilience [1,3-6]. Moreover, students with higher self-esteem are more confident, independent, and less likely to engage in substance abuse. Contrary to this, some issues in students with low self-esteem are becoming submissive, feeling inferior, and avoiding challenges [6].

Life orientation is how a person's views are related to others and society. It is the emotional and social growth of a person, his expectations from society, and how he expresses himself in everyday life. The term life orientation can be interchanged with optimism. Optimism is the attitude to expect positive consequences, and it is associated with better psychological

How to cite this: *Roomi MA, Farooq A, Bilal A, Khaliq S, Iqbal H, Ashraf MI. Self-esteem, optimism and their associated factors among Optometry students at the University of Lahore. Journal of University Medical & Dental College. 2022;13(4):473-477.*

outcomes. A positive correlation has been observed between better self-esteem and higher life-orientation scores [7,8]. Self-esteem and optimism are especially important during youthfulness when young adults experience various life challenges and compare them with their peers [9].

Several factors can affect students' self-esteem and optimism levels. These factors include sociodemographics, gender, the financial situation of the family and the parent's education level, etc[7]. Moreover, it has been reported that student-centered teaching methods have a positive impact on the optimism and self-esteem of health profession students [10,11].

Health professionals need higher self-esteem and optimism as these parameters affect their decision-making during healthcare services [12]. However, there is a dearth of data on self-esteem, optimism, and their association with various lifestyle factors among students in Pakistan. Therefore, we planned this study to determine self-esteem and life orientation (optimism) levels among Optometry students of the University of Lahore. Our second objective was to investigate the association between various sociodemographic factors, self-esteem and life orientation (optimism) among the study participants.

METHODOLOGY

We conducted this cross-sectional study from November 2021 to December 2021 at the Department of Optometry and Vision Sciences, University of Lahore. A total 168 first year and final year undergraduate Optometry students were recruited by convenience sampling method.

Data collection proforma was designed using other similar studies [4,5,7]. This contained information related to the biodata and sociodemographic variables of the study participants. Moreover, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Questionnaire was used to estimate the students' self-esteem [13]. This scale consists of statements dealing with common thoughts, feelings and estimates that a person holds about himself. This questionnaire consists of a total of 10 questions. A 4-point likert scale was used to rate each question. This scale ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Questions 1, 3, 4, 7, and 10 were scored as follows: strongly agree (3 scores), agree (2 scores), disagree (1 score), and strongly disagree (0 score). However, questions 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9 were scored in a reverse manner. Total scores range from 0 to 30, and a higher score reflects higher self-esteem. The students having > 15 scores were considered having normal self-esteem and the ones with <15 scores were considered having low self-esteem.

Optimism among the study participants was measured using Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) questionnaire [14]. The LOT-R is a 10-item questionnaire that assesses individual differences in optimism and pessimism among the study participants. A 5-point likert scale was used to rate each question. This scale ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Questions 1, 4 and 10 measure optimism and were scored as follows: strongly agree (4 scores), agree (3 scores), neutral (2 scores), disagree (1 score), and strongly disagree (0 score). Questions 3, 7, and 9 measured pessimism and were scored in a reverse manner. Questions 2, 5, 6, and 8 were fillers and were not scored. Total scores range from 0 to 24 and a high score reflects high optimism. However, a low score reflects high pessimism. The students having 0-13 scores were considered having low optimism (high pessimism), and the ones with 14-18 scores were considered as having moderate optimism. A score of 19-24 was considered as high optimism (low pessimism).

The Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences at the University of Lahore provided us Ethical approval (REC-UOL/91-04/2022) to conduct this research. The potential participants were approached and informed about the nature and scope of the study. The interested participants were requested to sign consent forms before the data collection. Confidentiality of the hard and soft copies of the data was ensured. The data was analyzed using SPSS-20. The categorical variables were described using frequencies, and percentages and continuous variables were summarized using mean±SD. Chi-square was applied to determine associations between various sociodemographic variables, self-esteem, and optimism. $p<0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

Total of 168 participants were included in the study. Mean age of the participants was 21±2.28 (range 17-27) years. The frequency of females were 107(63.7%). Almost half 90(53.6%) of the participants were from the first year and the other half 78(46.4%) were from the final year of the Bachelors in Vision Sciences (Optometry) program. The residential background of 103 (61.3%) students was urban and the rest of the students 65(38.7%) belonged to the rural background. About 1/3rd 57(33.9%) of the students were day scholars, and 2/3rd 111(66.1%) of them were hostilities. About 104(62%) of the students reported that they have chosen the optometry program as their primary choice. For the rest of the students, 64(38.1%) chose the optometry program as their second choice as they primarily wanted to get admission to some other program. Almost 41(25%) of the participants had less than three siblings and the rest of them had ≥ 3 siblings. About 34(20%) of the students had a family income <50,000 PKR per month. Almost half 82(48.8%) of the students had d family income between 51,000 to 100,000 PKR per month. For the rest of them, family income was > 100,000 PKR per month. Parents' education, birth order, and students marks in their recent exams are given in (Table-I).

The mean life orientation score of the participants was 14.15±2.8, with a minimum score 5 and a maximum being 24. About 43% (n=72) of the students had low optimism. Moderate and high optimism was found in 84 (50%) and 12 (7.1%) of the students, respectively. Mean self-esteem score of the students was 18.48±3.86. Minimum self-esteem score was 8 and maximum was 30. About 20% (n=33) of the students had low self-esteem and the rest of them had normal self-esteem (Table-II).

Statistically significant associations were found between self-esteem, reason of admission in the Optometry program, and family income (Table-III). No significant association was observed between self-esteem and other sociodemographic variables of the study participants. Statistically significant associations were also found between life orientation (optimism), choice of the Optometry program, and reason of admission in Optometry program (Table-IV). No significant association was observed between life orientation and other sociodemographic variables of the study participants.

Table-I: Characteristics of the study participants.

Variables	Groups	n(%)
Age (years) Mean ± SD		21±2.28
Gender	Male	61 (36.3)
	Female	107 (63.7)
Program Year	1st year	90 (53.6)
	Final Year	78 (46.4)
Residential background	Urban	103 (61.3)
	Rural	65 (38.7)
Father's Education	Under matric	41 (24.4)
	Intermediate/bachelors	94 (56)
	Masters and above	33 (19.6)
Mother's Education	Under matric	70 (41.7)
	Intermediate/bachelors	69 (41.1)
	Masters and above	29 (17.3)
Residence	Day scholars	57 (33.9)
	Hostelites	111 (66.1)
Program's choice	Primary choice	104 (61.9)
	Secondary choice	64 (38.1)
Reason of admission	Your own choice	123 (73.2)
	Parents' choice	33 (19.6)
	Peer's Choice	12 (7.1)
Marks in recent Exam	50-65%	15 (8.9)
	66-75%	46 (27.4)
	≥75%	107 (63.7)
Siblings	Less than 3	41 (24.4)
	≥ 3	127 (75.6)
Birth Order	Youngest	41 (24.4)
	Middle	75 (44.6)
	Eldest	52 (31)
Family Income	< 50,000 PKR	34 (20.2)
	51,000-100,000 PKR	82 (48.8)
	> 100,000 PKR	52 (31)

Table-II: Self-esteem and life orientation (optimism) among the participants.

Variables	(Mean ± SD)	n(%)
Life orientation scores	14.15±2.8	-
Self-esteem scores	18.48±3.86	-
Self-esteem categories	Low self-esteem	33 (19.6)
	Normal self-esteem	135 (80.4)
Life orientation categories	Low optimism	72 (42.9)
	Moderate optimism	84 (50)
	High optimism	12 (7.1)

Table-III: Association between self-esteem and some other variables among the participants.

Variables		Self-esteem		χ^2	p-value
		Low self-esteem n (%)	Normal self esteem n (%)		
Reason of admission	Your own choice	18(14.6%)	105 (85.4%)	13.78	0.001*
	Parents' choice	8(24.2%)	25(75.6%)		
	Peer's Choice	7(58.3%)	5(41.7%)		
Family Income	<50,000 PKR	12(35.3%)	22(64.7%)	6.62	0.037*
	51,000-100,000 PKR	13(15.9%)	69(84.1%)		
	> 100,000 PKR	8(15.4%)	44(84.6%)		

***p-value < 0.05 is significant**

Table-IV: Association between life orientation (optimism) and some other variables among the participants

Variables	Categories	Life Orientation			χ^2	p-value
		Low optimism n (%)	Moderate Optimism n (%)	High optimism n (%)		
Program's choice	Primary choice	37 (35.6)	60 (57.7)	7 (6.7)	6.67	0.036*
	Secondary choice	35 (54.7)	24 (37.5)	5 (7.8)		
	Your own choice	45 (36.6)	66 (53.7)	12(9.8)		
Reason of admission	Parents' choice	21 (63.7)	12 (36.4)	0 (0)	10.54	0.032*
	Peer's Choice	6 (50)	6 (50)	0 (0)		

***p-value < 0.05 is significant**

DISCUSSION

Our main objective was to investigate the level of self-esteem and life orientation (optimism) among Optometry students at the University of Lahore. We have found that about 20% of the participants, i.e., one out of five students, had low self-esteem. Similar results have been observed in

another study conducted on medical students in Tribhuvan University, Nepal. In this study, normal self-esteem was observed in 74.4% of the students, and low self-esteem was present in 18.9% [15]. According to two other similar studies, 18% and 19.4% of medical students were found to have low self-esteem [16,17]. The mean self-esteem score in our study was about 18.48±3.86, which is lower than the mean self-esteem score (22.48±4.12) found in another study among social science students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria [7].

Self-esteem is an essential element of a happy life. It improves the mental well-being of the students. High self-esteem has many positive impacts on students learning and performance inside and outside the class. Students with higher self-esteem are generally more positive, less worried, more self-sufficient, more sociable, more confident, happier and better in academics. Instead, students having lower self-esteem are more prone to avoid challenging tasks [6]. Self-esteem is also a motivator for academic engagement. Findings of a study have suggested three important factors in improving academic engagement. These factors are perceived social support, academic self-efficacy, and self-esteem [18].

Statistically significant associations were found between self-esteem, reason of admission in the optometry program, and their family income. This means that the Optometry students who got admission in the Optometry program by their own choice had higher self-esteem than the ones whose parents chose this program of study for them. This is not surprising that gaining admission in universities is a big challenge that students are facing these days. So, we can say that by obtaining admission in the program of their own choice, students begin their career with a positive temperament and their lives become more meaningful. This leads to better self-esteem. Various factors, including age, sex, socioeconomic status, family environment, academic stress, and level of study, can influence students' self-esteem [15]. However, no significant association was observed between self-esteem and other sociodemographic variables in our study participants.

In our study the students with low optimism or high pessimism level were 43%. Moderate and high optimism levels were present in 50% and 7.1% of the students, respectively. Moreover, we found a statistically significant association between life orientation (optimism), choice of the Optometry program, and reason of admission in the Optometry program. Obtaining admission in a university program by one's own choices gives a sense of achievement to the student. This leads to a way of making significant contribution in life [7]. No significant association was observed between life orientation and other sociodemographic variables of the study participants.

As we have conducted this study in the students of Optometry at one institute only, these findings may not be generalized to the students of other institutes, other programs, and the Pakistani population in general. So, in order to increase the generalizability of the findings, multicenter studies on self-esteem may be required. Cause-and-effect relation between the dependent and independent variables may also be limited by the cross-sectional nature of this study. Therefore, longitudinal studies may be conducted in future. Response bias may also have been contributed by the participants desire to give socially desirable answers during data collection.

The findings of our study are an estimate of the levels of self-esteem and optimism in our future nation builders. These finding can inform student related policies and the institutions can make appropriate strategies to support the students having poor self-esteem. Teachers should work on improving the self-esteem and optimism level of their students because there is a link between self-esteem, optimism, academic engagement and academic achievement. Moreover, student-centered teaching strategies with more focus on student engagement and discussion have shown a positive impact on increasing self-esteem of the students [10,11]. Therefore, teachers, parents and counselors should actively guide the students and use such strategies, which increase their self-esteem and optimism level [19,20].

CONCLUSION

The Optometry students at the University of Lahore were found to have low self-esteem (20%) and low optimism (43%). Reason of admission in the Optometry program and family income were significantly associated factors. Students' own decision to choose a study program may increase their self-esteem and optimism. Financial assistance for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds may also be a positive approach to boost their self-esteem and optimism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: None.
CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None.
GRANT SUPPORT & FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE: None.

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Author's Contribution:

Mudassar Ali Roomi: Substantial contributions to the conception and design of the work.
Ansa Farooq: Drafting the work and revising it critically for important intellectual content.
Ahmad Bilal: Contributed to data acquisition and interpretation.
Shagufta Khaliq: Data collection, study design, manuscript writing, final manuscript approval.
Hafsa Iqbal: Interpretation of data for the work.
Muhammad Imran Ashraf: Contributed to data interpretation and final approval.

Submitted for publication: 21-04-2022
Accepted after revision: 27-08-2022