



## A Systematic Examination of Teachers' Optimism Based on Gender in A Diverse Educational Context

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Optimism is a factor that evaluates variations in the extent to which individuals expect the future to be mostly fortunate. Additionally, it has a relationship with indicators of enhanced physical and mental health. This study evaluated the optimism levels of male and female teachers in distinct education settings, focusing particular attention on factors including gender, residence, and schooling level. The Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) was utilised in the study as an instrument to evaluate teacher optimism. An equal number of teachers from primary and secondary schools, divided into gender-specific groups of 40, participated in this randomised sample study. Data were obtained using a questionnaire technique. MS Excel and GraphPad 8.0.1 were used to analyse the data. PAST edition 4.13 was utilised for creating the research's statistical figures within the context of the data evaluation process. The investigation's initial results demonstrated several notable patterns. First of all, male teachers were generally more optimistic than female teachers. Secondly, when it came to instructing in rural areas, male educators appeared more optimistic than female educators. Thirdly, male teachers were noticeably more optimistic in the field of their primary schooling. Lastly, there was a greater degree of optimism among male educators in the context of secondary school. This research would be a significant approach to promoting optimism in educational institutions and society by helping human development specialists understand how gender impacts optimism.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Optimism is the belief that something pleasant will come to pass and the hope that something adverse won't. The conviction or imagined belief that the triumph of good over bad is man's greatest achievement or glory is referred to as optimism. A tendency to keep an eye on the positive aspects of

circumstances or to anticipate the best. The notion is that everything is harmonious and divinely created. An optimistic perspective on society reinforces the idea that the entire universe is wonderful. One's propensity to have faith that favourable events will happen on an individual basis, corresponding with one's capacity, may be referred to as an optimistic attitude or personality trait. When confronted with an important hurdle in one's life, optimism can be characterised as a broad anticipation that positive things will take place as opposed to adverse ones. Optimism is the craziness of anticipating that circumstances will become better while they are bad after an awful period. Accept the trust of an optimist in the midst of hardship with dedication and devotion. Nevertheless, expansion can be difficult or sluggish. Optimists are often more dubious. Based on the findings of the study by Aspinwall and Taylor (1992), individuals with optimistic personalities can adapt to serious life disruptions better than those with pessimistic viewpoints. Optimism in the study of psychology refers to hopeful surroundings and fortunate prospects in general (Scheier et al., 1994).

### **Optimism and mental health**

An optimistic outlook has been correlated with circumstances that are indicative of psychological well-being and superior mental health, as one might expect. In general, research has demonstrated that those who displayed high dispositional optimism had fewer feelings of sadness, nervousness, dissatisfaction, and self-consciousness (Scheier and Carver, 1985). Furthermore, optimists show higher levels of dignity and an internal focus on control (Scheier and Carver, 1985). The most hopeful view of acts and conditions that is feasible is one where an optimistic tendency is defined as a pessimist inclination in terms of an effective coping mechanism (Carver et al., 1989). Studies on the mental health of trauma survivors have additionally shown that those who are more optimistic frequently rebound from the stress-related repercussions of trauma quicker than those who are less optimistic and anxious (Birkeland et al., 2017). Favourable results enhance optimism (Scheier and Carver, 1985). Specifically, optimism has been established as a safeguard against the negative emotional consequences of getting diagnosed with a medical condition and enduring medication. In fact, in a study of patients with breast cancer, those with a smaller amount of pessimism claimed to have better psychological conditions, yet those who had higher levels of optimism had improved interpersonal and psychological functioning (Colby and Shifren, 2013). Plomin et al. (1992) performed a fascinating investigation in which they investigated the association between optimism and multiple self-reported mental health indicators. In addition, they investigated the environmental and genetic variables that affect optimism in identical-sex pairs of twins who were brought up either together or apart. The findings demonstrated that, while pessimism alone anticipated pessimism and paranoid hostility, optimism and pessimism separately predicted despair and fulfilment in life. Also, it was determined that an individual's optimism or pessimism contributes to approximately 25 per cent of their DNA, highlighting the significance of optimism as an inherited trait that impacts mental health. Recent research findings demonstrate that optimistic people may truly adapt better both mentally and physically than their less pessimistic colleagues, which is in accordance with this observation (Scheier and Carver, 1992). Optimism and acknowledged sorrow occur simultaneously (Carver and Gaines, 1987). Further research showed an association between optimism and substantial medical care and psychological effects, such as a lowered prevalence of depression following childbirth (Carver and Gaines, 1987). Optimism is an investigation of an analytical style that implies psychological processes associated with self-esteem and accomplishment or having a positive opinion of the world (Seligman et al., 2005).

### **Optimism and physical health**

If individuals notice someone engaging in these aggressive efforts, their trust in having the ability to positively influence their future outcomes is what motivates them. Someone with such an outlook appears confident in their ability to enhance their health outcomes, and their goal-pursuing corresponds to this basic notion. Contrary to pessimists, optimists can cope with crucial medical issues, which separates them from those who simply adapt to anxieties about specific medical risks (Friedman et al., 1992; Stanton and Snider, 1993; Carver et al., 1994). Based on study findings, this decreased emotional stress might gradually decrease physiological strain, benefiting long-term health

(Wrosch et al., 2013). Numerous indicators of physical wellness have been correlated with optimism, according to findings by the LOT-R (Scheier et al., 1994). Two possibilities were put forward by Carver and Scheier (2014). First, preserving one's well-being requires a proactive approach to promoting good health. To accomplish this, one needs to stay away from detrimental behaviours like cigarettes and adopt beneficial ones, like exercising frequently. A sample of 95,000 women enrolled in an eight-year longitudinal investigation on heart disease, which looked at their overall quality of life, persistent disease, mortality, and death at some point. In accordance with the outcomes, individuals with high dispositional optimism had a shortened overall life expectancy and were less likely to be diagnosed with or perish from cardiovascular disease (Garrott et al., 2017). Further study suggests that optimism could safeguard against aggressive indications, blood vessel obstruction, and catastrophe (Matthews et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2011). Also, optimism has been associated with enhanced immune system performance and greater quality of relaxation (Lemola et al., 2011; Hess et al., 2017).

### **Optimism and relationships**

As previously stated, optimism is a tendency to expect positive outcomes to happen when achieving ambitions. The achievement of objectives in the framework of relationships that require the active expenditure of effort to achieve success can be defended using the same argument. It has been established that optimists do perform well in an assortment of social circumstances. Typically, optimists perceive they have greater, broader networks and higher levels of peer support than pessimists (Vollmann et al., 2011; Johansson & Andersson, 2012). It has been established that possessing this kind of social support has profound implications for predicting obstruction against solitude in the future (Rius-Ottenheim et al., 2012). For instance, an investigation carried out recently found that individuals with high dispositional optimism were more inclined to use constructive methods for problem-solving during residential conflicts and experiments in the lab. In addition, within the initial year of their marriage, these same couples exhibited less of a decline in interpersonal well-being (Neff and Geers, 2013).

### **Optimism, pessimism, and coping**

This section explores disparities in coping as a further contributor to discrepancies in well-being. The distinctions in general behavioural preferences described earlier in the article are comparable to how optimists and pessimists differ in the way they cope. That is, even when circumstances are difficult, individuals who have confidence in their capacity for achievement ultimately keep trying. Perceiving individuals occasionally give up on addressing the problem entirely, divert themselves with temporary interruptions, or try to employ wishful thinking as a way to overcome suffering. Differences in coping that correspond with this representation have been identified in various studies (Nes and Segerstrom, 2006). Initial studies investigated individuals' accounts of their entire approaches to coping and contextual coping strategies. It was observed that pessimists often appeared to be avoidant copers, whereas optimists generally tended to be approach copers (Scheier et al., 2001). Consistently comparable theoretical results have been seen. Other research investigations examined strategies for coping in particular difficult circumstances.

### **Pessimists become optimists**

When optimism can be acquired, it is an important topic, particularly when you consider the many different ways in which optimists' lives seem to be better than those of pessimists. Optimism levels in people appear to be trait-like, meaning they stay largely stable throughout time. Change is definitely feasible (Segerstrom & Nes, 2006), but it's still uncertain how much of a change can be legitimately anticipated by a human being and how permanent it will be. There remain unresolved issues surrounding the probable advantages of intervention or structured practice-induced disposition of optimism, which comes from an optimistic view that develops organically. The combination of treatments often referred to as cognitive-behaviour therapy is the most straightforward way of transforming a pessimist into an optimist. These approaches depend on the theory that detrimental cognitive errors are occasionally demonstrated by individuals. Some adverse mental habits cause unpleasant feelings and hinder individuals from achieving their goals. We would presume that the

pessimist's internal stream is filled with this kind of negativity. This particular category of interventions attempts to enhance cognitions with the goal of decreasing struggling and promoting persistence towards objectives. In such interventions, ideas about the future of an individual are certainly an essential subsection of the mental processes to target for growth (Pretzer and Walsh, 2001; Segerstrom, 2006). Seligman and colleagues carried out two additional studies in an effort to prevent depression in undergraduates who were susceptible to it (Seligman et al., 1999; Seligman et al., 2007). In order to promote positive ideas and actions and diminish automatic negative thoughts, those studies also used multidimensional cognitive-behavioural approaches. In comparison with a control condition, both studies demonstrated evidence that the treatment significantly halved the incidence of moderate depressive symptoms and that these changes were driven by changes in pessimistic style. As was pointed out before in the piece, there are many levels of abstraction at which confidence and doubt can exist. In general, an evolution away from pessimism that is domain-specific should also have an equal impact on decreasing more universal pessimism. That's probably why interventions that fail to modify that attribute may at times lead to widespread optimism. It is important to recognise, however, that substituting an existing doubt with an unresolved optimism can frequently be a stupid choice. There are instances in which making too many expectations could give rise to desperation. In a nutshell, individuals may set ambitious goals for themselves, fail to acknowledge superiority, and thus become uncertain of their own capabilities. Someone who displays this pattern has to set achievable goals and practice substituting unrealistic ones with additional goals (Carver and Scheier, 2003; Wrosch et al., 2003).

Coleman et al. (1968) researched the effect of optimism on student achievement. Carlson (2004) researched that optimism has a positive effect on daily living. A man's inner optimism helps him establish good relations with his family members. Mishra (2013) researched that 15–20-year-old students expect a better life and are more optimistic about the future than students of other age groups. Jacobsen et al. (2008) reported a notable trend where men consistently exhibited higher levels of optimism than women across various time periods and countries. Boman and Yates (2001) found that, in a different context, girls tended to demonstrate significantly higher levels of optimism compared to boys. Male students were more optimistic than female students and were less depressed than female students (Johnson and Fowler, 2011). Boys expect more income and a better life; the sociopolitical environment and their families are more likely to contribute to society and to be promoters of a better life (Snyder et al., 2001).

An environment that is both positive and productive can only be created by teachers who are optimistic. It has an impact on young children's academic achievement as well as their psychological and social development. Teachers who exhibit optimism have the power to significantly impact, encourage, and influence their students' viewpoints and mindsets. The objective of the study is to figure out if male or female teachers demonstrate higher levels of optimism in their everyday activities according to gender, residence and schooling level through the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R).

## METHOD

### Participants

The sample of this research consisted of 80 respondents. Data was gathered from both Thakurgaon (26.0274° N, 88.4646° E) and Rajshahi (24.3746° N, 88.6004° E) districts (Bangladesh), forming the basis of our research. Through this method, an equal number of samples were selected from primary and secondary level teachers. A questionnaire was adopted to acquire data from the primary and secondary schools for the study, which involved 40 male and 40 female teachers. Particularly, 20 data from primary and secondary level teachers and 10 from each of the urban and rural settings were obtained; 40 data, equally split between the urban and rural locations, came from primary and secondary level teachers using an equivalent approach. In this study, the random sampling method was adopted for sample selection.

### Instruments

The Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) (Scheier et al., 1994). The Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) is a standard measure of optimism. The optimism scale consisted of 10 questions. Out of which 3 were positive (1, 4, 10) and 3 were negative (3, 7, 9), and 4 were filler questions. For positive questions 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neutral, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree, for negative questions 4 = strongly disagree, 3 = disagree, 2 = neutral, 1 = agree, 0 = strongly agree. Full consensus marks are awarded for filler questions 2, 5, 6 and 8 are counted if the answer is the same, like a positive question. If the answer is not the same, it does not count. The sum of all item scores is the sum of the individual's scores on the scale. There was a significant correlation between scores in the English and Bengali scales, had reliability ( $r = 0.48$ ,  $n = 805$ ),  $p = 0.01$ . The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value,  $\alpha = 0.72$ , had internal consistency of this score in the Bengali language scale (Ilyas 2003).

### Procedure

In this research, the respondents' answers were gathered using a normal data gathering process. First, a connection was built with the respondents, and they were informed of the research objective. Then, each respondent received the mentioned instruments. They received assurances regarding the privacy of their responses. The respondents were given instructions to carefully read the questionnaire items and provide accurate responses. They were also instructed to complete every question on the questionnaires and encouraged to do so by being informed that there was no right or wrong response to any of the questions. Any confusion they may have had regarding the instructions or the proper way to complete the questions was also clarified. Although there was no time limit for completing the whole task. Answer sheets were collected from the respondents once they were done answering, and thanks were given. Based on these marks, the marks were calculated.

### Statistical Analysis

For the purpose of corroborating the important and consequential findings, the gathered data were organised and calculated. Statistical procedures such as the descriptive test, parametric evaluation (if the data normality was passed-  $t$  test), and non-parametric assessment (if the data normality was not passed the test) were employed to interpret the data. MS Excel and GraphPad 8.0.1 were used to analyse the data, ensuring a trustworthy and precise statistical evaluation of the experiment's outcomes. PAST edition 4.13 was utilised for creating the research's statistical figures within the context of the data evaluation process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present the findings of our study regarding the levels of optimism among teachers across gender and different educational settings. The data is presented in Table 1 in terms of minimum and maximum, mean scores and standard deviations, 95% confidence level, along with  $p$ -value and significance level.

### Gender based differences

A preliminary analysis of the data revealed significant differences in optimism between male and female teachers: Male teachers (MT) exhibited higher levels of optimism (MT=15.80) compared to female teachers (FT=13.73) with a statistically significant difference ( $p=0.01$ ), see details in Table 1 and Fig. 1.

In village settings, male teachers (VT) also displayed greater optimism (VT(Male)=15.65) in contrast to female teachers (VT(Female)=13), with a significant  $p$ -value of 0.01, see Table 1 and Fig. 2.

Among primary school teachers, male teachers (PST) reported higher optimism (PST(Male)=15.15) compared to their female counterparts (PST(Female)=13.3), with a significance level of  $p=0.05$ , see Table 1 and Fig. 3 for further information.

Table 1

Summary of data analysis on optimism according to teachers' gender, residence and schooling level

Respondent	Min.	Max.	Mean $\pm$ SD	CL (95%)	p-value	Significance
MT	10	24	15.80 $\pm$ 3.08	14.81-16.79	0.0014	**
FT	7	19	13.73 $\pm$ 2.47	12.93-14.52	0.3022	ns
VT	7	20	14.32 $\pm$ 2.78	13.43-15.21		
CT	10	24	15.20 $\pm$ 3.10	14.20-16.19	0.0011	**
VT(Male)	11	20	15.65 $\pm$ 2.39	14.53-16.76		
VT(Female)	7	17	13.00 $\pm$ 2.55	11.80-14.19	0.1284	ns
CT(Male)	10	24	15.95 $\pm$ 3.70	14.21-17.68		
CT(Female)	10	19	14.45 $\pm$ 2.21	13.41-15.48	0.1008	ns
PST	7	20	14.22 $\pm$ 2.99	13.26-15.18		
SST	10	24	15.30 $\pm$ 2.86	14.38-16.21	0.0498	*
PST(Male)	10	20	15.15 $\pm$ 2.79	13.84-16.45		
PST(Female)	7	19	13.30 $\pm$ 2.97	11.90-14.69	0.0093	**
SST(Male)	10	24	16.45 $\pm$ 3.28	14.91-17.98		
SST(Female)	10	17	14.15 $\pm$ 1.81	13.30-14.99		

Note. MT, Male Teacher; FT, Female Teacher; VT, Village Teacher; CT, City Teacher; VT(Male), Village Male Teacher; VT(Female), Village Female Teacher; CT(Male), City Male Teacher; CT(Female), City Female Teacher; PST, Primary School Level Teacher; SST, Secondary School level Teacher; PST(Male), Primary School Level Male Teacher; PST(Female), Primary School Level Female Teacher; SST(Male), Secondary School level Male Teacher; SST(Female), Secondary School level Female Teacher; ns, not significant; CL, Confidence Limit; SD, Standard Deviation

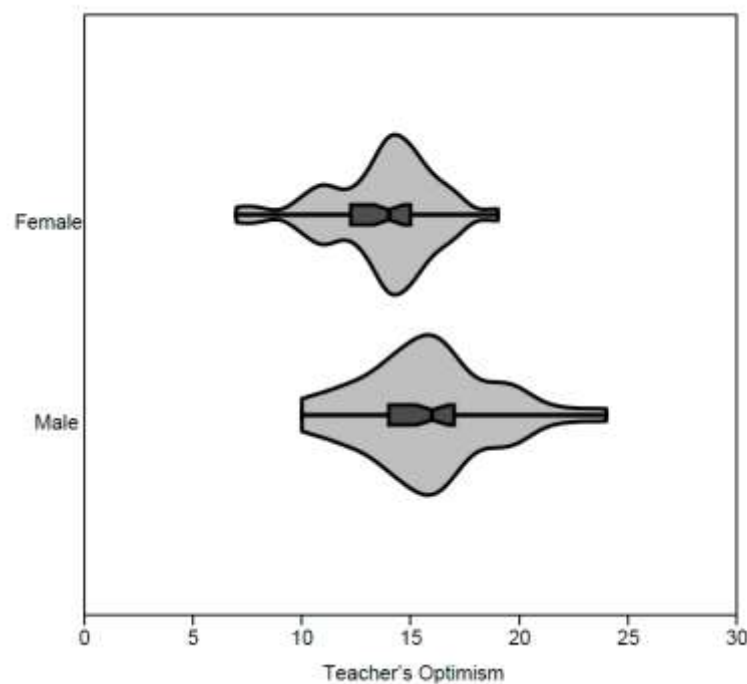
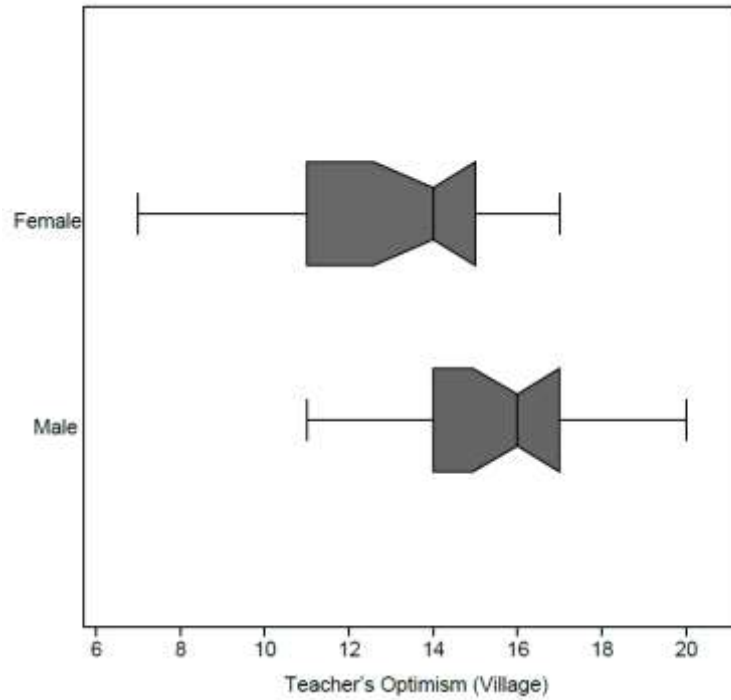
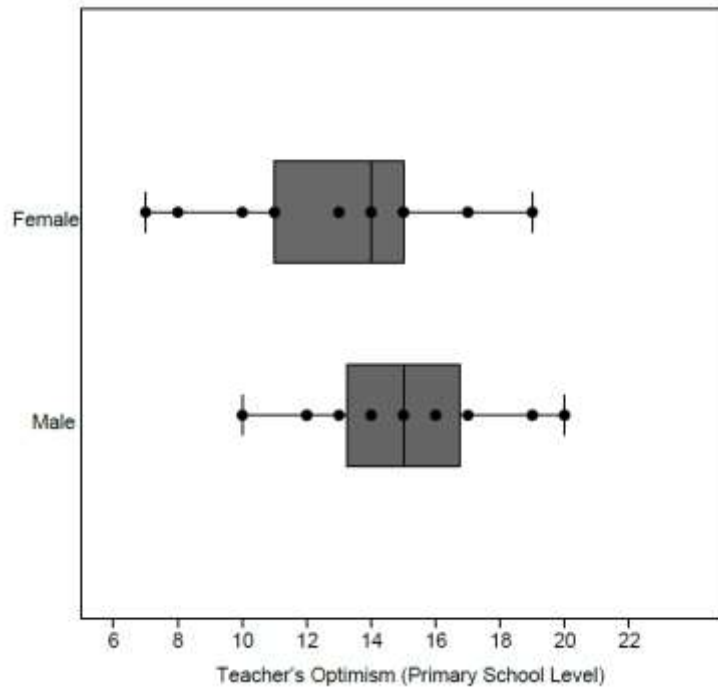


Fig. 1 Male teachers seem more optimistic than female teachers, following a gender-based analysis of teachers' levels of optimism

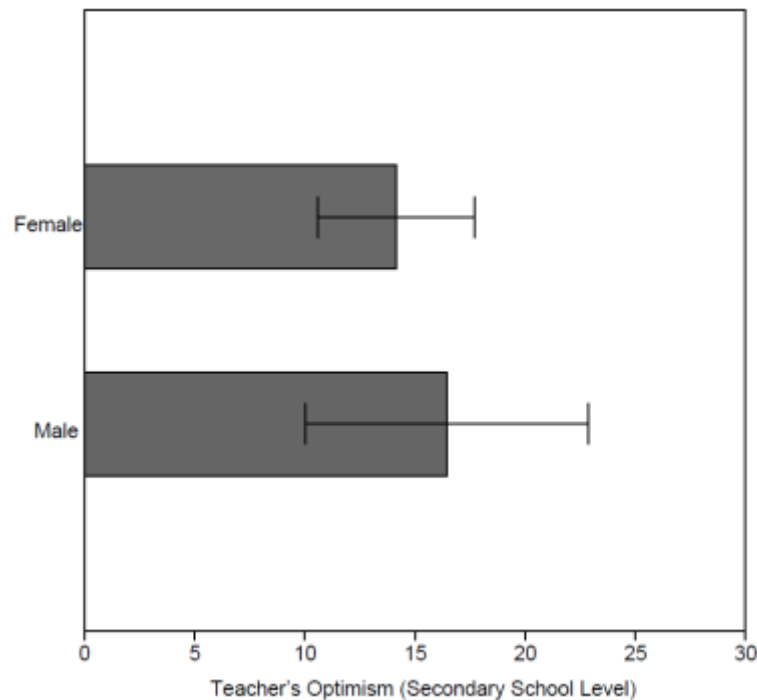


**Fig. 2** Due to an array of sociocultural conditions, views on male teachers in village contexts are more optimistic than female teachers fluctuate



**Fig. 3** As the situation pertains to education in primary schools, male teachers demonstrate greater optimism than female teachers

Similar patterns emerged in the secondary school context, with male teachers (SST) reporting higher optimism (SST(Male)=16.45) than female teachers (SST(Female)=14.15), and a significant  $p$ -value of 0.01, see more information in Table 1 and Fig. 4.



**Fig. 4** Across all phases of secondary schooling, male teachers remain more optimistic than their female teachers

#### Residence-based differences

Contrary to the gender-based disparities, our data indicated no significant differences in optimism between teachers in villages and cities (CT=15.20>VT=14.32;  $p = 0.30$ ), as detailed in Table 1. Within city settings, our data revealed that both male (CT(Male)=15.95) and female (CT(Female)=14.45) teachers demonstrated similar levels of optimism ( $p=0.12$ ), see Table 1 for more details.

#### Schooling level-based differences

Notably, no significant differences were observed between primary school teachers (PST=14.22) and secondary school teachers (SST=15.30), with a  $p$ -value of 0.10 (see details information in Table 1). This suggests that the two groups perform similarly as teachers.

#### Discussion

The purpose of this study is to figure out whether there are any relationships between the optimism of teachers and factors like gender, place of residence, and level of schooling. The Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) is the instrument used for this research. The analysis of optimism levels among teachers in different contexts and across gender groups has yielded interesting insights. There are significant variations in optimism between male and female teachers, as well as among teachers in various schooling levels and locations. These disparities can be attributed to a combination of sociocultural, environmental, and individual factors. The findings indicate that male teachers, in general, tend to exhibit higher levels of optimism than their female counterparts. This difference can be partly explained by societal expectations and norms that influence the expression of optimism in men and women. In many cultures, men are encouraged to display positivity and confidence, while women may be socialised to adopt a more cautious or humble demeanour. This societal influence on gender roles plays a substantial role in shaping teachers' perspectives and their expressions of optimism. In contrast to the findings presented in this study, Jacobsen et al. (2008) reported a notable trend where men consistently exhibited higher levels of optimism than women across various time periods and countries. Another study done by Mishra (2013) revealed that females displayed a significantly higher level of optimism than male respondents. Furthermore, Boman and Yates (2001) found that, in a different context, girls tended to demonstrate significantly higher levels of optimism

compared to boys. The divergent findings can be attributed to variations in demographic location, differences in personality traits among participants, and the nuanced selection of research variables across studies. Since previous research has not examined this particular aspect of teachers' optimism, our study is unique among investigations into this area, and the conclusions we draw are the first in this field. Moreover, the teaching environment, particularly in rural areas, seems to contribute to higher optimism levels among male teachers. They are often viewed as reputable figures and role models, which can boost their sense of optimism. Additionally, male teachers in rural areas may have fewer family obligations, allowing them to be more devoted to their work. These findings underscore the importance of acknowledging the impact of cultural norms and work environments on teachers' attitudes and well-being. As the first study to examine optimism in teachers in the setting of rural communities with a gender focus, our research findings hold an important spot. The fact that our research findings are unique since no other study's findings directly match ours, demonstrating the special contribution of our study within the specific field we explored, especially when it comes to teachers' optimism. On the other hand, the study did not find significant differences in optimism between primary and secondary school teachers. This could be due to similarities in qualifications, training, and educational backgrounds, as well as standardised curricula and teaching methods. However, it is essential to consider that external factors such as parental involvement and community support can influence teacher performance, making it necessary to explore these variables more comprehensively. The lack of significant differences between male and female teachers in a specific city suggests that gender-neutral education and training initiatives, equal recruitment procedures, and employment laws play a crucial role in promoting teacher performance equality. These findings highlight the importance of promoting gender equality in educational settings and creating an environment where both male and female teachers have equal opportunities for professional growth and support. It's important to note that neither of these studies focused on individuals in a teaching role, and the level of optimism observed in their respective populations may not necessarily align with the current research findings. This study is the first attempt to investigate teachers' optimism, an issue that has unexpectedly not received much attention up to this point. Our goal is to gain an understanding of the complex relationships between teachers' optimism and the significant impact that it has on students, particularly with regard to persistence and helping them overcome obstacles in order to create a bright future. By conducting this study, we not only provide significant fresh insights into the relatively unexplored area of teachers' optimism, but we also establish a foundation for additional avenues of research. This study offers an achievable route for further inquiry and understanding and acts as an inspiration for researchers interested in exploring the crucial role that teachers' optimism plays in impacting students' educational experiences and achievements.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Conclusions

The study's conclusions highlight the significant impact of optimism on people's strategies for dealing with obstacles, resolving conflicts, and establishing profound relationships. An increasing amount of research indicates that optimistic people are more adaptable than pessimistic people when faced with challenges in life. This adaptability was present in both the intrapersonal and interpersonal spheres and leads to an overall enhancement in well-being. Notably, the study revealed differences in optimism based on gender, demonstrating that men prefer to view things highly optimistically, whereas females generally show optimism. The fact that varying genders showed different levels of optimism awareness reinforces the view that a person's gender could impact their level of optimism. Surprisingly, this research also identified differences in optimism levels amongst different groups, such as male and female teachers in various educational environments. Only optimistic teachers were able to promote a positive and productive teaching atmosphere. It affects the academic performance of young children as well as their psychological and social maturation. Teachers who exhibit optimism could radically affect, inspire, and influence their students' perspectives and attitudes. These insights offered students as well as educators an advantageous foundation to gain greater self-awareness and recognise both their benefits and drawbacks. This self-awareness may lead to the development of

favourable conditions that help people overcome their flaws and progress towards optimism. These findings have consequences for human development specialists as well, as they offer a basis for understanding the connection between optimism and gender. Teachers and others in society can use these findings to put efforts into place that have a beneficial effect on optimism in schools and society in general. Moreover, the study offered important information for psychiatrists and psychologists in personalising specific interventions, especially for individuals who might profit from focused assistance corresponding to their unique optimism profiles.

### Limitations and Future Directions

Since the study emphasises the benefits of optimism in accomplishing goals and building relationships, there are a few important limitations to be aware of. Initial response bias may be introduced if self-reported optimism metrics are relied upon. It is not possible to determine causes because of the cross-sectional design. The simplifying of gender-focused studies raises issues because it ignores the complex relationship between optimism and individual, societal, and cultural elements that go beyond a binary viewpoint. The generalizability of the findings may be restricted by particular cultural or demographic circumstances; therefore, applying them to diverse populations should be done with caution. Stressing particular occupational groups, such as teachers, may oversimplify optimism and ignore the complex influences of individual variances and profession-specific pressures. Though useful, these observations draw attention to the need for more in-depth research on the intricate factors that influence optimism in a range of situations and demographics. However, if another investigation were to be conducted while taking into consideration these differing gender-based patterns of optimism and potentially exploring the influence of one's role as a teacher, we could anticipate achieving more accurate and nuanced outcomes.

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