



## OPTIMISM, PERSONALITY, AND WELL-BEING: A REVIEW ON THE IMPACT OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

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### Abstract

This review paper explores the relationship between optimism, personality, and well-being in individuals who follow a healthy lifestyle and those who do not. Along with defining optimism, personality and their importance in promoting well-being. It also reviews the existing literature on the differences in optimism and personality traits between individuals who follow a healthy lifestyle and those who do not. This research concludes that individuals who follow a healthy lifestyle tend to exhibit higher levels of optimism and certain personality traits, such as conscientiousness and openness, compared to those who do not. These findings have important implications for promoting well-being and may inform interventions aimed at improving mental health outcomes in individuals who are not following a healthy lifestyle. Further research is needed to better understand the mechanisms underlying the relationship between optimism, personality, and well-being, and to determine the most effective interventions for promoting well-being in different populations.

**Keywords:** Optimism, Personality traits, Psychological well-being, Conscientiousness, Openness

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## Optimism

Optimism and personality are important factors in promoting well-being, as they can influence how individuals perceive and respond to stressful situations. People who are optimistic tend to have a more positive outlook on life and are better able to cope with adversity, while certain personality traits, such as conscientiousness and openness, have also been linked to better mental health outcomes. In recent years, there has been growing interest in how following a healthy lifestyle, which includes regular exercise, a balanced diet, and adequate sleep, may impact optimism and personality traits, and ultimately, well-being. However, the extent to which these factors differ between individuals who follow a healthy lifestyle and those who do not remains unclear. Optimism is a psychological construct that reflects an individual's tendency to expect positive outcomes or events in their lives. Even in the face of adversity, it is characterised by a hopeful and upbeat view. People with an optimistic outlook are better able to handle stress and setbacks because they tend to concentrate on the good parts of a situation. Additionally, they frequently experience greater life happiness, higher levels of self-worth, and better physical and mental health outcomes. Optimism is not a constant quality; it can change over time and in various contexts. Genetics, life experiences, cultural norms, and other variables all have an impact on it.

Optimism has been studied extensively over the past few decades, with researchers finding numerous benefits associated with this positive mind set. From better physical health outcomes to improved coping strategies during difficult times, optimism has been shown to play a critical role in enhancing overall well-being. Numerous studies have shown that, as compared to pessimism, optimism is associated with greater physical well-being. Research has shown that individuals who follow a healthy lifestyle tend to have higher levels of optimism compared to those who do not. Optimistic individuals are more likely to engage in health-promoting behaviours, such as regular exercise, healthy eating, and getting enough sleep (Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994). By maintaining a healthy lifestyle, these individuals may also experience greater feelings of well-being and life satisfaction.

In a study, researchers found that individuals who scored high on measures of optimism were more likely to follow a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, healthy eating, and not smoking (Scheier et al., 1994). The authors suggest that optimistic individuals may be more motivated to take care of their health because they have a greater

sense of control over their lives and are better able to cope with stress. Furthermore, a study published in the journal *Health Psychology* found that optimism was a significant predictor of adherence to a healthy lifestyle among patients with coronary artery disease (Tindle et al., 2009). The results showed that individuals who were more optimistic were more likely to follow a heart-healthy diet, engage in regular physical activity, and take their medications as prescribed. In addition, a study published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies* found that optimism was positively associated with subjective well-being among individuals who followed a healthy lifestyle (Frisch et al., 2009). The authors suggest that by maintaining a healthy lifestyle, individuals may experience greater feelings of well-being, which in turn may reinforce their optimistic outlook.

In addition, positive psychological well-being has been found to be associated with reduced risk of mortality (Chida & Steptoe, 2008) and better immune functioning (Segerstrom & Sephton, 2010). These findings suggest that optimism may have a beneficial effect on physical health, and this effect may be related to the adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviours. Pressman and Cohen (2005), suggest that positive affect, which is related to optimism, can lead to the adoption of healthy behaviours such as physical activity and good nutrition. These findings highlight the importance of studying the relationship between optimism, personality, and well-being in the context of healthy lifestyle behaviours. In a meta-analysis review on optimism and physical health, (Scheier, Rasmussen, & Greenhouse, 2009). Optimism is a significant predictor of positive physical health.

Additionally, in contrast to optimism, pessimism is linked to an overabundance of somatic symptoms (Martínez-Correa, Reyes Del Paso, García-León, & González, 2006). According to a study (Giltay, 2004) on a people of older people of both sexes who were 65 to 85 years old, dispositional optimism was associated with a lower risk of mortality in general and cardiovascular mortality in particular. These findings were supported by a follow-up longitudinal study on males aged 64 to 84 years, in which it was found that dispositional optimism was negatively correlated with the risk of cardiovascular death (Giltay, Kamphuis, Kalmijn, Zitman & Kromhout, 2006).

Optimism seems to have an important moderating role in the association between feelings of loss of hope and suicidal ideation (Hirsch, & Conner, 2006). In relation to this, (Van der Velden, Kleber, Fournier, Grievink, Drogendijk, & Gersons, 2007) have recently studied the association between 'dispositional optimism' and depression in victims

of a natural disaster. The results of this research show that compared to optimists, pessimists nurtured little hope for the future and were more at risk for depressive and anxiety disorders, with subsequent impairment of social functioning and quality of life. The role of optimism in the quality of life has also been investigated in depressive disorders emerging in patients suffering from somatic pathologies, (such as acute coronary syndrome, for instance) in which a significant inverse correlation was found between dispositional optimism and level of satisfaction in life on one hand and depressive symptoms emerging after the cardiovascular event on the other hand (Steele, & Wade, 2004). It has been noted that even one cognitive-behavioural treatment session, aimed at boosting the sense of control and coping with incapacitating disturbances that arise after a natural disaster, may help the person's wellbeing (Basoglu, Salcioglu, Livanou, Kalender, & Acar, 2005). Given that 'pessimistic' victims are more likely to avoid difficulties and "give up" than to strive to take back control of their lives, a brief intervention of this kind that focuses on recovering an active coping strategy and regaining control may be important for them (Giltay, Kamphuis, Kalmijn, Zitman, & Kromhout, 2006).

### **Personality**

Personality refers to the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that distinguish one individual from another. It is the unique and relatively stable way in which a person responds to and interacts with their environment. Personality can be shaped by various factors, including genetics, upbringing, life experiences, and cultural influences. It can also evolve and change over time, although some core aspects of personality tend to remain relatively consistent throughout a person's life. Personality traits can be related to the adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviours. For example, individuals who score high in conscientiousness tend to be more self-disciplined, organized, and responsible, and these traits may be associated with engaging in healthier behaviours, such as regular exercise and balanced nutrition. Extraversion, which is characterized by sociability, enthusiasm, and assertiveness, may also be related to health behaviours, such as seeking social support and engaging in physical activity.

Personality is a fundamental aspect of human psychology that shapes our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours across different domains of life. In recent years, there has been growing interest in understanding how personality traits relate to well-being, which encompasses a broad range of

positive psychological states and outcomes, such as happiness, life satisfaction, and overall quality of life. Research in this area has highlighted the importance of personality in predicting various aspects of well-being, including emotional functioning, social relationships, and physical health. Furthermore, personality may also play a role in the adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviours, which are known to have a significant impact on overall well-being. Research has shown that personality traits can be associated with healthy lifestyle behaviour and outcomes. For instance, individuals who score high on conscientiousness tend to be more self-disciplined, organized, and responsible, and are more likely to engage in healthier behaviour, such as regular exercise and balanced nutrition (Bogg & Roberts, 2004; Kern & Friedman, 2008). A longitudinal study (Bogg et al., 2014) found that higher levels of conscientiousness predicted greater increases in physical activity over a 12-month period among college students. Extraversion has also been linked to health behaviours, such as seeking social support and engaging in physical activity (Rhodes & Smith, 2006). Similarly, individuals high in openness to experience may be more willing to try new foods, activities, or approaches to health and wellness (De Fruyt, Mervielde, Hoekstra, & Rolland, 2000). Neuroticism, on the other hand, may be a risk factor for negative health outcomes, such as chronic diseases, poor sleep quality, and impaired immune functioning (Suls & Bunde, 2005). Understanding these relationships between personality and healthy lifestyle behaviours can inform interventions aimed at promoting and sustaining positive health outcomes over time.

In a study (Hampson et al., 2013), it was found that individuals high in conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to experience were more likely to make sustained changes in exercise behaviours over a 6-month period, compared to those low in these traits. Similarly, individuals high in conscientiousness and extraversion were more likely to maintain changes in dietary behaviours over time. A longitudinal study (Turiano et al., 2013) found that higher levels of conscientiousness were associated with lower risk of developing chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, and stroke, over a 4-year period among middle-aged and older adults. Another study (Friedman et al., 2015) found that individuals high in conscientiousness and openness to experience had better physical functioning and mobility over a 12-year period, even after controlling for baseline health status and demographic factors. These findings suggest that personality traits can play an important role in shaping healthy lifestyle

behaviours and outcomes, and may be useful targets for interventions aimed at promoting and sustaining positive health behaviours over time. However, further research is needed to better understand the mechanisms underlying these relationships and to develop effective personality-targeted interventions for promoting long-term health and well-being.

We admit that the majority of the literature evaluated in the current study and the interviews with older persons tended to focus on the trait of conscientiousness because studies have shown that one's level of conscientiousness rises with age (Roberts, 2006). A high level of conscientiousness is linked to healthier behaviours and outcomes in terms of your health, according to studies (Welch, 2009). Contrarily, it's crucial to remember that risky behaviours like drug and alcohol addiction do not appear to become better with time or with advancing age (Roberts, 2004). This demonstrates once again the tendency of conscientious people to take preventative measures in order to obtain health protection results. Aside from age, social environment, and personal experience, psychological interventions such as behavioural cognitive therapy, mindfulness, and mental contrasting were found to be effective in increasing people's level of conscientiousness by enhancing their commitment to goals and improving effective goal selection and goal striving, thus cultivating behavioural changes (Kristén & Ring, 2019).

There are numerous studies that have examined the relationship between following a proper healthy lifestyle and overall well-being. For instance, a study (Aune et al., 2018) conducted a meta-analysis of cohort studies on the effects of healthy lifestyle factors on mortality rates. The study found that individuals who followed a healthy lifestyle, which included engaging in regular physical activity, consuming a healthy diet, avoiding smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, and limiting alcohol consumption, had significantly lower mortality rates than those who did not follow these healthy lifestyle factors. Similarly, a study (Loprinzi & Lee, 2015) found that individuals who adhered to healthy lifestyle behaviours, including regular physical activity, healthy diet, and not smoking, had better self-reported mental health outcomes than those who did not engage in these behaviours. Furthermore, another study (Khaw et al., 2018) found that following a healthy lifestyle, which included a healthy diet, regular physical activity, and moderate alcohol consumption, was associated with a lower risk of developing chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. In addition, a study (Gao et al., 2018) found that individuals who followed a

healthy lifestyle, which included engaging in regular physical activity, eating a healthy diet, and avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol consumption, had better sleep quality than those who did not follow these lifestyle behaviours. Moreover, a study (Kandola et al., 2019) found that engaging in regular physical activity was associated with a lower risk of developing depression and anxiety.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this review suggests that both optimism and personality traits are closely related to an individual's physical and mental well-being. People who follow a proper healthy lifestyle, which includes regular exercise, balanced diet, and adequate sleep, tend to exhibit higher levels of optimism and positive personality traits such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. On the other hand, individuals who do not follow a healthy lifestyle may be more prone to negative personality traits such as neuroticism, which can have a detrimental impact on their overall well-being.

The literature makes it clear that optimism and personality are important in fostering both physical and mental wellness. Therefore, it is crucial to concentrate on fostering positive personality traits and encouraging an upbeat view, especially among people who don't lead healthy lifestyles. Therapies including cognitive-behavioural therapy, mindfulness-based therapies, and positive psychology interventions can help with this.

Overall, the results point to the need for more study to fully comprehend the intricate interactions between optimism, personality, and health outcomes. Future research may also examine the efficacy of different strategies for enhancing optimism and positive personality qualities in people who don't lead healthy lifestyles, with the ultimate aim of enhancing their overall wellbeing.

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