

# **Seeing Optimism in times of COVID-19: An initial study on the significant predictors of optimism among emerging adults in times of pandemic crisis**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to know the factors that predicts optimism among those in the stage of emerging adulthood, a stage where a lot of transitions are happening, during a time of pandemic where a lot of uncertainties are experienced. The dimensions of emerging adulthood (Reifman, 2007) and protective factors (Ponce-Garcia, et. al., 2015) were posited as possible predictors of optimism. A total of one hundred ninety-nine Filipino young adults ( $n=199$ ) participated in the study. Among the dimensions of emerging adulthood, experimentation, self-focus, and other-focus positively correlated with optimism, while negativity and feeling-in-between negatively correlated with optimism. Among the protective factors, social support, social skill, planning behavior and goal efficacy positively correlated with optimism. Taking all these factors together, regression analysis showed that having social

support and goal-efficacy best predicts optimism among young adults. The implications of this were further discussed in line with the present situation of Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

## **The Protective Factors of Optimism among Emerging Adults in Times of COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis**

The world around us is indeed volatile and ever-changing. The events happening in the world right now, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic, brought about uncertainty and isolation, which significantly affected different aspects of our lives (WHO, 2020). This posed risk not just on physical health, but also on mental and emotional well-being. When the covid-19 pandemic situation began, there have been a reported rise in psychological distress such as depression, stress, anxiety and worry (Petzold, et. al. 2020, Wang, et. al., 2020); as well as impulsivity, anger and suicidal ideation (Hao, et. al., 2020). Other studies also showed magnified feelings of isolation and loneliness, fear of contracting the virus, anger, and restlessness, especially in cases where patients need to be quarantined and isolated from people (Xiang et al., 2020). In the Philippines, the same pattern was also observed in a study conducted during the earlier phase of the pandemic which revealed that about 25% of the respondents reported moderate-to-severe anxiety while 16.7% reported moderate-to-severe depression (Tee, et. al., 2020).

Facing Covid-19 is such a daunting task because it changes the landscape of almost every aspect of our lives. Indeed, the mental health and the overall well-being of individuals in these trying times are deeply compromised due to the stressors caused by the pandemic and the community quarantine. Hence, mitigating these consequences is important to avoid or lessen its negative toll on people's mental health. Although pandemic crisis is overwhelming and challenging, people inevitably have to deal and grapple with the situation in order to survive. One of the resources that people rely on is their ability to maintain positivity and optimism in these trying times.

### **Optimism**

Optimism is defined as the tendency of an individual to expect positive outcomes and achieve future goals despite adversities (Scheier & Carver, 1985). It is a multifaceted construct consisting of four dimensions: positive expectancies, inferential style, sense of invulnerability, and overconfidence. Positive expectancies refer to holding on to the belief of having a positive future, while inferential style pertains to attributing positive

events as global and stable. Further, the sense of invulnerability points to viewing negative events as more likely to happen to others than to self, while overconfidence refers to overestimating one's positive characteristics (Kleiman et al., 2017).

Optimism is universal and can be observed across individuals of all ages, races, education levels, and socioeconomic status (Gallagher et al., 2013). Different studies showed that optimism influences one's subjective well-being, health-related quality of life, and perceived physical health (Daukantaite & Zukauskienė, 2012; Sahai & Singh, 2017; Serrano et al., 2020). Optimism is related to positive outcomes, such as better adaptability and flexibility, which help a person's well-being especially when placed in difficult and uncontrollable situations (Higgins et al., 2010). Also, having an optimistic orientation is also considered a health asset, particularly during adolescence, because this serves as guide intervention tool in the planning of the promotion of well-being (Westberg et al., 2019). Hence, facilitating optimism is also highly encouraged because of its significant long-term benefits, most especially during uncertain and unpredictable life events. Further, optimism is also said to be related to protective factors and resilience, which are essential to bounce back from adversities and even lowers the risk of depressive symptoms (Madewell & Ponce-Garcia, 2016; Hernandez & Carrillo, 2010). It is for these reasons that it is important to point what are the factors that facilitates optimism especially in the midst of pandemic Covid-19 situation.

### **Protective Factors and Optimism**

One thing worth looking at, in relation to enhancing optimism, is the set of available protective factors in life. Protective factors are defined as social and personal aspects of an individual that helps one to recover, adapt, and persist when faced with adversity (Madewell & Ponce-Garcia, 2016). If protective factors are optimized at a socio-ecological level, specifically with help of the family and community, the resilience of an individual strengthens (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2009). Social and cognitive aspects of protective factors such as social support, social skills, prioritizing and planning behaviors, and goal efficacy are important in developing resilience across different cultures (Friborg et al, 2009; Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015). Social support and social skills pertain to the social-interpersonal facets, while planning behaviors and goal

efficacy corresponds to the cognitive aspect of protective factors. *Social support* focuses on the essence of having family and peer support; while *Social Skills* emphasizes on the importance of interacting with people and making new friends. *Planning* behavior pertains to how a person lay out their plans to achieve their goals, whereas *goal efficacy* refers to the certainty of an individual when it comes to their ability in succeeding (Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015). While protective factors are related to resilience, they are distinctly different from each other. Protective factors feature both social and interpersonal strengths as well as cognitive strengths whereas resilience, in general, is more focused on the individual level cognitive factors and doesn't feature social factors (Madewell & Ponce-Garcia, 2016).

There have been studies which showed that the subscales of protective factors which involves social and cognitive aspects are associated with optimism (Higgins et al., 2010; Rezaei & Khosroshahi, 2018; Aspinwall et al., 2001). Receiving psychosocial support is associated with greater optimism, because building positive relationships provide socioemotional support for the individual to overcome inevitable difficulties that they will face (Higgins et al., 2010). Social intelligence and social information processing are reported to be related to optimism as social intelligence and social skills help create and maintain effective and positive interpersonal relationships with others (Rezaei & Khosroshahi, 2018). Moreover, the cognitive processes of people who are optimistic are found to be more flexible, which explains their ability to cope successfully to unfamiliar situations (Aspinwall, et al., 2001). Studies also revealed that fostering protective factors such as social and cognitive abilities could be efficient in overcoming mental health effects of negative life events associated during the emerging adulthood stage (Goldstein et al., 2013; Masten et al., 2004).

### **Emerging Adulthood and Optimism**

Aside from the protective factors, the stage of life is also vital when looking at different life constructs. Each developmental stage carries different tasks and responsibilities of varying degrees, which may influence one's level of optimism. Studies revealed that although optimism significantly declines during later stages of adolescence as compared to the earlier stage (Westberg et al., 2019), it seems, however, to increase in early and middle adulthood

stage (Schwaba et al., 2019). Further, resilience and subjective well-being during early adulthood stage seemed higher compared to adolescence stage (Tomyń & Weinberg, 2016).

Of particular interest among the developmental stages is the emerging adulthood stage, which is a relatively new stage proposed by Arnett (2000). In this stage, the probability of experiencing both positive and negative developmental outcomes in this life stage is high (Madewell & Ponce-Garcia, 2016). Also, the lives of young adults have drastically changed in the past century. Included among these changes are more opportunities for postsecondary and postgraduate education, and more options to delay entry to marriage and parenthood (Arnett, 2007).

To define briefly, emerging adulthood is a distinct period of transition between adolescence and adulthood and is considered as a life stage that is the product of the changing times (Arnett, 2007; Arnett 2000). This life stage is characterized by five distinguishing features: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibilities/optimism. (Arnett, 2004). *Identity exploration* pertains to the ability of an emerging adult to decide what they want to fulfill in their life through opportunities and areas in their life such as love, career, and work. *Instability or negativity* is the likelihood to encounter uncertainty and adversities due to frequent changes. On a positive note, emerging adults learn something new from the experience and make them better equipped for the future. *Self-focus* is the experience of being more independent and sufficient. They focus more on themselves and take confidence and responsibility in their own decisions. *Feeling in-between* is the sense of uncertainty felt by emerging adults due to their situation of feeling like they are not adolescents anymore, but are also not fully adults yet at the same time. *Possibilities or experimentation* is more about having opportunities which are accessible during this life stage. Recently, a dimension called *other-focus* was added, which pertains to an individual's responsibility for others, settling down, and committing to relationships.

With the changing times, emerging adults seem to have access to further learning and education. They are also given more opportunities to explore various career paths, which instills within them higher hopes for the

future (Arnett 2000; Arnett, 2004). In the emerging adulthood life stage, individuals undergo through various changes like shifting to different living arrangements, moving to various residential locations, and growing career experiences, among others. All these transitions induce high levels of anxiety and uncertainty (Hinton & Meyer, 2014). Furthermore, some indicators of emerging adulthood, specifically, identity exploration and negativity are negatively associated with an individual's psychosocial well-being (Baggio et al, 2016).

One criticism of emerging adulthood, however, is that it is believed to exist only in cultures that permit young adults to focus on themselves and experience a phase of exploration. In other words, the experience of emerging adulthood may vary across different countries, culture, and context (Hill et al., 2015; Facio, et al., 2007; Nelson & Chen, 2007). The socioeconomic status of an individual is also critical when it comes to having the privilege to explore and focus on one's personal growth. Since more opportunities are presented to those who are in the upper middle and higher class, it allows them to explore different interests, career paths, a more comfortable lifestyle, and even comfortable homes (Smith, 2015). Studies have also confirmed that in more developed countries, experimentation, possibilities and exploring a sense of self were experienced more in emerging adulthood among young people with high socioeconomic status compared to those with lower socioeconomic status (Hill, et al. 2015). Nevertheless, Arnett (2015) addressed this criticism by presenting a study that showed consistencies across social classes in the features and dimensions proposed in his theory. He concluded that many commonalities in the experience of emerging adulthood were still present across social classes. Hence, emerging adulthood can still be used as guides in understanding development, with emphasis that this should be seen and grounded in the lens of social, cultural, and historical context.

We, as researchers, still see emerging adulthood and its dimensions relevant in light of its possible relation with optimism. Coupled with this shift to adulthood is the current difficulties brought about by unprecedented situation of pandemic crisis. Emerging adults are faced with drastic changes and possibilities, such as transitioning from school to corporate job, finding a potential partner, exploring career opportunities, and moving to a different city or location. However, these events and privileges are even further limited

due to the pandemic crisis. People are forced to stay within the comfort of their homes to prevent contracting and spreading the virus. Emerging adults in the context of the pandemic crisis face further difficulties as exploration for opportunities are scarce and limited. Uncertainty and instability about the current situation are intensified not just by the developmental stage of emerging adulthood but also by the current pandemic context that confronts everyone. It is important to see how processes in emerging adulthood are related to optimism to see how they could successfully cope in this particular developmental stage.

### **Current Study**

This study aims to know the factors that predicts optimism among those in the stage of emerging adulthood, a stage where a lot of transitions are happening, during this time of pandemic where a lot of uncertainties are experienced. In particular, this study looks at the relation of protective factors and dimensions of emerging adulthood to optimism in times of covid-19. The present study aims to fill the gap in the literature by focusing on a specific life stage called emerging adulthood, which is believed to be a period of significant life transitions and possibilities. Further, these developmental milestones are interfered by the current pandemic crisis which further bring more uncertainty and instability. The relationship between the dimensions of emerging adulthood and protective factors in predicting optimism will be explored to provide insights on how emerging adults can better cope during the pandemic crisis.

### **Method**

#### *Participants*

The sample consisted of one hundred ninety-nine Filipino young adults with an average age of 24.6 years ( $SD = 4.31$ ), ranging from 18 to 35 years old. There were 145 (73%) female, 46 (23%) male, and 8 (4%) were nonbinary. Other demographic information about the participants includes their civil status, location, work set-up, and educational attainment. Majority of the participants are single (93%); only 13 participants are married (7%), and only one is separated (<1%). In line with the current situation brought



about by the pandemic crisis, most of the participants are working from home (36%), some are still students (30%), while others are fully reporting to work (14%), unemployed (8%), self-employed (7%), and follows a skeletal schedule (6%).

## Measures

### *Emerging Adulthood*

The Inventory of the Dimensions of Emerging Adulthood (IDEA; Reifman, 2007) was used to assess the identification of young adults with transition-to-adulthood themes. This measure is a 31-item questionnaire that has six subscales: *Identity Exploration* which focuses on the emerging adults' propensity to try out new things, *Experimentation* or possibilities which pertains to the opportunities that are thought to be available for emerging adults, *Negativity* which refers to the negative experiences of emerging adults brought about by various changes and transitions, *Other-focused* which emphasized the emerging adults' relationships formed in this life stage and being committed to others, *Self-focused* which deals with the emerging adults' greater independence and personal freedom, and *Feeling In-between* which tells about the likelihood of emerging adults to feel they are no longer adolescents but not yet fully adults. The participants are asked to indicate the extent to whether they agree or not agree with a statement ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The internal consistency reliability of IDEA in the present study ( $N = 199$ ) for each subscale are as follows: Experimentation ( $\alpha = .79$ ), Negativity ( $\alpha = .81$ ), Self-Focused ( $\alpha = .81$ ), Identity Exploration ( $\alpha = .84$ ), Other-Focused ( $\alpha = .67$ ), and Feeling In-Between ( $\alpha = .67$ ).

### *Protective Factors*

The Scale of Protective Factors (SPF-24; Ponce-Garcia et al., 2015) was used to assess specific social-interpersonal and cognitive-individual protective factors related to resilience. This scale includes four subscales. *Social support* focuses on the essence of having family and peer support, while *Social Skills* emphasizes on the importance of interacting with people and making new friends. *Planning behavior* pertains to how a person lay out their plans to achieve their goals, whereas *Goal Efficacy* refers to the certainty of an

individual when it comes to their ability in succeeding. The SPF-24 is made up of 24 items assessing overall resilience and 6 items for each subscale. The participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each item through a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*disagree completely*) to 7 (*completely agree*). In the present study, the internal consistency reliability for the SPF-24 ( $N = 199$ ) is  $\alpha = 0.91$  and the subscales are as follows: Social Support ( $\alpha = .85$ ), Social Skills ( $\alpha = .92$ ), Planning and Prioritizing Behavior ( $\alpha = .87$ ), and Goal Efficacy ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

### *Optimism*

The optimism of the participants was measured using the revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R; Scheier, et al., 1994) which is a 10-item questionnaire used to assess the optimism of individuals. The scale has four filler items not included in the scoring. The participants are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or not with each of the items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The internal consistency reliability of the LOT-R in the present study ( $N = 199$ ) is  $\alpha = 0.73$ .

## **Procedure**

The participants were recruited online through convenience and snowball sampling wherein they are highly encouraged to refer people they know who falls within the age-range of 18 to 35 years old. A link to the online questionnaires through Google Forms was given to the participants. An informed consent was presented before the demographic questions and the actual questionnaires. The participants were asked to tick the checkbox if they still wish to continue participating in the study. The participants then completed a battery of online questionnaires which lasted for about 10-15 minutes. A thank you and a debriefing script about the study was posted at the end of the questionnaire.

## **Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using JAMOVI software through a two-step procedure. First, the relationship among the variables was examined using

correlation analysis to assess if there were significant relationships between optimism, protective factor subscales, and emerging adulthood indicators. After establishing significant relationships among the variables, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to examine the unique contributions of protective factors and emerging adulthood indicators in understanding optimism.

## Results

The descriptive statistics of the study is summarized in Table 1. The participant's mean score on optimism is 3.12 ( $SD = 0.73$ ), which is moderate. Among the emerging adulthood indicators, the participants scored the highest on Identity Exploration with a mean score of 3.32 ( $SD = 0.57$ ), and lowest on Other-focused with a mean score of 2.67 ( $SD = .73$ ). All means of the emerging adulthood dimensions are also above the median. The results suggest that the emerging adulthood factors are evident and are being experienced by the participants. Moreover, high scores on identity explorations imply that the participants experience events that encourages them to find out who they are. On the other hand, lower scores on the Other-focused subscale suggest that the participants are still less likely to settle down or commit to others in this life stage. As for the protective factors, the Planning Behavior subscale was the highest mean score among the participants which is 5.42 ( $SD = 1.08$ ), while social support got the lowest mean score of 4.55 ( $SD = 1.22$ ). The results imply that emerging adults are more likely to employ strategies such as planning things out, organizing, and managing their time well, and setting priorities before. Getting lower scores in social support may mean that emerging adults have lower propensity to get support from their family and friends.

Table 1. *Summary of the Descriptive Statistics per Factor.*

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Optimism (min: 1 to max: 5)	3.12	0.73
Emerging Adulthood (min: 1 to max: 4)		
Experimentation	3.21	0.58
Negativity	3.22	0.54
Self-Focus	3.22	0.58
Identity Exploration	3.32	0.57
Other-Focused	2.67	0.73
Feeling-In-Between	3.28	0.61
Protective Factors (min: 1 to max: 7)		
Social Support	4.55	1.22
Social Skill	4.74	1.33
Goal Efficacy	5.28	1.24
Planning Behavior	5.42	1.08

*Note.*  $N = 199$

A correlation analysis was then conducted to identify significant associations between optimism, protective factor subscales, and emerging adulthood indicators. The results showed that dimensions of emerging adulthood such as experimentation, self-focus, and other-focus positively correlated with optimism, while negativity and feeling in-between negatively correlated with optimism. In terms of protective factors, social support, social skills, planning behavior, and goal efficacy all positively correlated with optimism. Table 2 shows a summary of the correlation analyses.

Table 2. Summary of the Correlation Analysis between Optimism, Protective Factors, and Emerging Adulthood.

	Optimism	Experimentation	Negativity	Self-Focused Exploration	Identity Exploration	Other Focus	Feeling In-Between	Social Support	Social Skill	Planning Behavior	Goal Efficacy
Optimism	—										
Experimentation	0.19**	—									
Negativity	-0.27***	0.21**	—								
Self-Focused Exploration	0.19**	0.65***	0.17*	—							
Identity Exploration	0.04	0.56***	0.32***	0.71***	—						
Other Focus	0.16*	0.11	0.08	0.20**	0.22**	—					
Feeling In-Between	-0.18*	0.26***	0.46***	0.37***	0.48***	0.06	—				
Social Support	0.40***	0.20**	-0.21**	0.18*	0.08	0.12	-0.05	—			
Social Skill	0.19**	0.12	-0.17*	0.01	-0.07	0.02	-0.12	0.21**	—		
Planning Behavior	0.29***	0.08	-0.10	0.11	0.08	0.14	-0.03	0.24***	0.30***	—	
Goal Efficacy	0.53***	0.11	-0.37***	0.14*	0.06	0.11	-0.17*	0.30***	0.32***	0.56***	—

Note. N = 199; \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Assumption checks for were first conducted to see if regression analysis is appropriate for the data. The scatterplots show that the relationship between the IVs and the DV is linear. Multicollinearity was not a concern in the data as revealed by the analysis of collinearity statistics (Experimentation, Tolerance = .52, VIF = 1.92; Negativity, Tolerance = .65, VIF = 1.52; Self-Focus, Tolerance = .38, VIF = 2.62; Identity Exploration, Tolerance = .41, VIF = 2.47; Other-Focus, Tolerance = .92, VIF = 1.09; Feeling-in-between, Tolerance = .64, VIF = 1.56; Social Support, Tolerance = .83, VIF = 1.21; Social Skill, Tolerance = .83, VIF = 1.21; Planning Behavior, Tolerance = .65, VIF = 1.53; Goal Efficacy, Tolerance = .57, VIF = 1.76). The data also met the assumption that the values if the residuals are independent (Durbin-Watson = 1.97). The plot of standardized residuals vs standardized predicted values showed no obvious signs of funneling, which suggests that the assumption of homoscedasticity has been met. The normal P-P plot of standardized residuals assume that the data contained approximately normally distributed errors. Finally, the Cook's Distance values are all under 1 which implies that individual cases are not influencing the model.

Since all the assumptions for regression analysis are met, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate whether protective factors and emerging adulthood indicators predict optimism. A two-stage hierarchical multiple regression was conducted with optimism as the dependent variable. The emerging adulthood indicators were entered in the first block (i.e. Experimentation, Negativity, Self-focused, Identity Exploration, Other-Focused, and Feeling In-Between) followed by protective factor subscales (i.e. Social Support, Social Skill, Planning Behavior, and Goal Efficacy) in the second block. The first model showed significant result,  $F(6, 192) = 7.66, p < .001$ . The regression analysis revealed that of the emerging adulthood dimensions, experimentation ( $b = .22, p < .001$ ), self-focus ( $b = .26, p < .05$ ), other-focus ( $b = .15, p < .05$ ), and negativity ( $b = -.35, p < .001$ ) best predicted optimism. This explains 19.3% variance in optimism. When the protective factors were entered, the second model was again significant  $F(10, 188) = 12.08, p < .001$ , explaining 39.1% variance in optimism. However, the second model showed that of all the presented factors, it was the social support ( $b = .13, p < .001$ ) and goal efficacy ( $b = .24, p < .001$ ) which best predict optimism. Table 3 summarizes the hierarchical regression analysis for each subscale.

**Table 3. Summary Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables predicting Optimism**

Predictor	B	SE	p	β	R	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>
Block 1					0.44	0.19	0.19
Experimentation	0.22	0.11	< 0.05	0.18			
Negativity	-0.35	0.10	< .001	- 0.26			
Self-Focused	0.26	0.13	< 0.05	0.21			
Identity Exploration	-0.11	0.13	0.42	- 0.08			
Other-Focused	0.15	0.07	0.03	0.15			
Feeling-In-Between	-0.18	0.10	0.06	- 0.15			
Block 2					0.63	0.39	0.20
Experimentation	0.14	0.10	0.16	0.11			
Negativity	-0.09	0.09	0.32	- 0.07			
Self-Focused	0.17	0.12	0.15	0.13			
Identity Exploration	-0.14	0.11	0.24	- 0.11			
Other-Focused	0.09	0.06	0.12	0.09			
Feeling-In-Between	-0.12	0.09	0.15	- 0.10			
Social Support	0.13	0.04	< .001	0.22			
Social Skill	-0.01	0.03	0.70	- 0.02			
Planning Behavior	-0.02	0.05	0.71	- 0.03			
Goal Efficacy	0.24	0.04	< .001	0.42			

## Discussion

The results in the first model revealed that some of the emerging adulthood dimensions help in fostering optimism among young adults. Experimentation, self-focus, and other-focus are positively related to optimism, while negativity or instability is negatively related to optimism. Looking at the emerging adulthood dimensions alone, these aspects are the ones which may help the emerging adults to keep their positivity in life even in times of pandemic crisis.

With regards to experimentation, results indicate that as long as they see opportunities that are accessible, they will be able to keep a positive outlook. Experimentation pertains to the individual's attempt to explore, expand, and discover. Although Covid-19 is restrictive in many ways, one should be given that option that they can still discover and uncover some of their talents. There are still ways by which one can explore possibilities and experiment with their different skills and abilities. For instance, although the lockdown and quarantine made people stay mostly at home, this has also been a venue for them to try out some of their interests such as baking,

cooking, and gardening. As more and more are migrating online, this has been also been an opportunity for them to learn and try out new things such as digital art, creating “memes”, and online buying and selling. The results of this study show that opening oneself to discovering and exploring new things, no matter how seemingly small, may lead to optimism during times of pandemic.

With regards to self-focus dimension, having a sense of independence, responsibility and a sense of being able to make a decision on their own increase optimism. Giving attention to one’s strengths and nurturing these could more likely elicit positivity among emerging adults. Although pandemic crisis is restricting physically, there are many ways by which one can assert freedom, sufficiency, and independence. Emerging adults have been vocal in social media in voicing out their concerns. Some have actively been taking part in volunteering to help in times of crisis. Asserting one’s independence and sufficiency can be manifested in different ways. The pandemic crisis may have limited one’s physical movement, but it does not necessarily impede one’s ability to think and decide. Although Covid-19 situation may feel constricting, one should give emerging adults that semblance of freedom to express themselves and make decisions for themselves.

Other-focus dimension of emerging adulthood was also seen significantly related to optimism. This refers to seeing oneself in relation to others, whether that be in taking responsibility for others or committing to a relationship or career. This is similar to the study of Higgins et al. (2010) which reinforces that investing in positive relationships cultivates optimism and allows individual to better adjust and adapt when faced with adversities. Putting it in the context of pandemic, to have that aspect of focusing on others may give a sense of meaning, purpose, and connection, which can be helpful especially when most are isolated and away from each other. Hence, to focus on others during times of pandemic-crisis may increase one’s hope that good things may still come out of this crisis. Interestingly, among the emerging adulthood dimensions, other-focus got the lowest score, albeit above the median. This tells that there should be more drive and intentionality to enhance connection with others as well as commitment to one’s given vocation



or career, as this will help one maintain positive outlook and confidence in times of adversity.

Lastly, only negativity or instability is negatively related to optimism. The instability and uncertainty brought about by this developmental stage can pull the optimism down, as this dimension paints a picture of emerging adults who grapple with different transitions and changes in their age. Previous studies also supported that increased negativity brought poorer psychosocial well-being and optimism among young adults (Baggio et al., 2016; Westberg et al., 2019; Kleiman et al., 2017; Sahai & Singh, 2017). Emerging adults may experience negativity whenever they feel unsettled about the drastic changes they undergo. Since all these transitions are happening all at once (e.g. shifting careers, moving from college to work life, committing with partners, etc.), an emerging adult might feel overwhelmed in balancing all these responsibilities. Furthermore, the feeling of being unsettled can be activated even more during the pandemic crisis due to several restrictions that emerging adults face. Some of these impediments are nationwide work and school suspensions, community quarantine, fear of contracting the virus, and travel restrictions which prohibits several activities. Such events could deteriorate one's subjective well-being and optimism. With instability present, there has to be a sense of security somehow that they can hold on to so that they could maintain a positive outlook in life. This is where the results on the protective factors could help.

In the second model, the protective factors were then entered. Among the factors presented, results revealed that social support and goal efficacy were the strongest predictors of optimism. The results of the current study suggest that having a support system, such as family, friends, and loved ones help in fostering optimism. This is because healthy relationships encourage an individual in many aspects of their lives, like providing comfort in times of trouble, and giving assurance during self-doubt. It gives a feeling of togetherness. It gives assurance and comfort there will be someone who will be there for you. Having social support connects you with other people, which gives a semblance that you are not alone in these times of adversity and uncertainty. The healthy relationships give a semblance of security that you have people to go to and depend on when life gets rough and tough. To

foster optimism, this study suggests that building and investing on relationships are important. The findings from the present study is similar to what is found in the existing literature (Friborg et al, 2009; Higgins et al., 2010; Rezaei & Khosroshahi, 2018) which states that building positive relationships provide socioemotional support which can serve as buffer to overcome inevitable challenges.

Aside from social support, goal efficacy also helps in increasing optimism. Goal efficacy gives confidence that one can accomplish tasks and succeed. Having a goal gives one a purpose and a reason to look forward to the future, and this comes particularly helpful in times of pandemic crisis when the future looks bleak and seemingly hopeless. Moreover, having goal efficacy elicits a feeling of being in control of one's life because of the belief that they can make something happen. This allows them to highlight their strengths and increase their confidence on their capacities. This gives a sense of direction as they look forward to fulfilling their plans. Thus, it is helpful to strengthen one's resolve to believe in oneself and in one's capacity in achieving the pre-set goals. One of the ways to do this is to set small goals that is realistic and relatively easier to accomplish. Next is to break down the goals into smaller steps and achievable outcomes. This allows one to see that he or she is capable of finishing a goal. It allows one to acknowledge victories no matter how trivial or small, and thereby be able to still celebrate even in times of adversities. Increasing goal efficacy is helpful in building one's self-confidence as it strengthens one's resolve to move, strive and grow even more. As this study suggests, to empower goal efficacy is to help one to be more optimistic in times of darkness.

In sum, the present study offered a developmental perspective by exploring the relevance of the emerging adulthood life stage and protective factors in predicting optimism. This study gives a snapshot of what emerging adults needs to strengthen in times of pandemic crisis. Although emerging adulthood is daunting with a lot of uncertainties and transitions, some dimensions of this stage may help in fostering optimism during times of pandemic crisis. In particular, one should hold on to discovering different possibilities and capacities, asserting freedom and independence, and taking care of others. Further, some protective factors that may help in increasing optimism is social support and goal efficacy. It is strongly recommended for

emerging adults to build and invest on healthy relationships with others. There is value in strengthening relationships among co-workers, peers, and family members. Further, focusing on one's goals and believing on one's capacities to achieve those goals are helpful in maintaining an optimistic outlook during this pandemic. These protective factors are valuable coping resources that can increase an individual's optimism in unprecedented situations, like the pandemic crisis, that are likely to affect one's well-being. This study recommends that even in the midst of the pandemic crisis, one should strive to strengthen his or her social support by connecting to others and reaching out to others. Further, this study also recommends that one should find ways to empower oneself in accordance to one's set goals and purpose.

#### WORKS CITED

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