

RESEARCH BRIEF

Hope and Academic Achievement among Young Filipino College Indigent Students

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Hope is the process of thinking about one's goals, along with the motivation to move toward those goals (agency), and the ways to achieve those goals (pathways) (Snyder, 1995). Furthermore, Snyder et al. (1991) looked at hope not as an emotion but rather a dynamic cognitive motivational system. Given such premise, emotions follow cognitions in the process of pursuing one's goal (Snyder, 2000a). Moreover, hope can also be measured as a cross-situational construct that positively correlates with self-esteem, perceived problem-solving capabilities, perceptions of control, optimism, positive affectivity, and positive outcome expectancies (Snyder et al., 1991).

Hope theory proposes that goals themselves do not produce behavior, but rather, people's views of themselves as being agents capable of initiating (agency) and implementing (pathways) actions to pursue valued personal goals (i.e., going to college) produce the helpless or mastery-oriented responses (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002).

Snyder (2002) identified hope as composed of two factors: (1) agency and (2) pathways. Agency is defined as a goal-directed agency that emphasizes one's capacity to reach a desired goal. Pathways, however, are referred to as cognition that one has to reach the

desired goal/s. These factors have been identified as iterative, reinforcing each other in a complementary fashion. Individuals who identified and characterized as hopeful, are high in both agency and pathways thinking.

Existing research has documented positive relationships between student hope and achievement (Covington, 2000). High-hope students, for example, have been found to set challenging school-related goals and are likely to attain those goals even when they do not experience immediate success (Snyder, Shorey et al., 2002).

Several studies on hope theory examined its role in academic and sports achievements (Curry, Snyder, David, Ruby, & Rehn, 1997); as a predictor to measure success in college (Covington, 2000; Snyder, Shorey et al., 2002); as a unique predictor of objective academic achievement beyond intelligence, personality, and academic achievement (Day, Hanson, Maltby, Proctor, & Wood, 2010); as associated with higher academic self-efficacy beliefs and better problem solving skills (Atik & Erkan, 2009) and its relationship to goals and task performance (Peterson, Gerhardt, & Rode, 2006) just to mention a few.

Extending the Hope Theory

Bernardo (2010) further extended the hope theory to include the internal and external locus of trait hope. The extension is premised on the observation that the theory does not explicitly articulate whether the agency and pathways are self-determined or whether these may involve external agents.

Bernardo found in two Philippine studies that examined the other dimensions of hope cognitions. Briones (2009) found in his interviews of chronically young adolescents that hope has strong references to their parental and sibling support and their belief in God. In the similar vein, Tolentino (2009), also in her interviews with typhoon victims, found that hope can be seen in their community and people who help them rebuild their lives apart from their own family members and God.

Bernardo (2010) posited that although hope theory does not explicitly address the specific nature of the agent of hope, a careful reading of Snyder et al. (1991)'s *Dispositional Hope Scale* indicates that the agent is the person and not any other external entity. He added the *locus-of-hope* theory as a dimension of trait hope. Locus-of-hope is defined by Bernardo (2010) as the components of trait hope that involves internal or external agents and internally or externally generated pathways. The individual acting as the agent of goal-attainment cognitions refer to the *internal locus-of-hope* while the significant others and externals forces acting as agents of goal-attainment cognitions would refer to the *external locus-of-hope*.

The paper attempts to validate the extended hope theory as proposed by Bernardo (2010). Specifically, the study wishes to validate the proposed four locus-of-hope dimensions (based on the *Dispositional Hope Scale* by Snyder et al., 1991) that was modified by Bernardo vis-a-vis indigent students' academic performance through their cumulative grade point average (CGPA).

Methods

Participants and Research Setting

The participants were 113 students from one exclusive Catholic university in Manila whose ages ranged from 16 to 20 years. The students were

academic scholars of the university who came from indigent families but were enjoying free matriculation for their entire stay in the university. Their only requirement to keep their scholarship is to retain a cumulative point average of 2.0 (85%) for the entire duration of their scholarship with no failing grade in any of their courses.

Instrument

Bernardo's (2010) *Locus-of-Hope Scale* was guided by extending Snyder et al.'s (1991) *Dispositional Hope Scale*. The original eight hope items in Snyder et al.'s hope scale were used as the internal locus-of-hope subscale. One item was modified to omit an American expression that was not familiar to some of the Filipino respondents, and another item was modified to explicitly express the personal focus.

Eight new items were included for each of the three external locus-of-hope subscales: (1) external-family, (2) external-peers, and (3) external spiritual. Consistent with the original scales, four items referred to agency and four to pathways. The additional items were closely patterned after the original items from Snyder et al. (1991) but the reference to the specific locus-of-hope dimension was made explicit in each new item.

By and large, the Locus-of-Hope Scale is comprised of 40 items: eight items for each of the specific locus-of-hope subscales—(1) internal, (2) external-family, (3) external-peers, (4) external-spiritual—and eight filler items. All the items were arranged in random order. Participants responded using a four-point scale (1 = *definitely false*, 2 = *mostly false*, 3 = *mostly true*, and 4 = *definitely true*).

Procedure and Analysis

The list of the scholars who were invited to participate in the current study was obtained from the Office of Admission and Scholarship of the university. We requested the director of the unit if we can administer the instrument to the academic scholars. Upon the approval of the director and receipt of the list, we emailed 150 scholars to inform them about the study and to invite them to participate in the study. A total of 113 students who agreed were sent a letter of consent and the electronic copy of the 40-item Locus-of-Hope instrument. Respondents completed the tasks online and submitted the accomplished instrument

through email to one of the researchers. Retrieved questionnaires were collected, data were tallied, and the appropriate analyses of the data were done.

Results

The current study examines the academic achievement of indigent students as predicted by their locus-of- hope. Examining Table 1, the figures show that there is no significant difference as regards the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of both male and female students across the college of their affiliation.

Table 1
Mean Scores on Various Measures Across All Colleges (N=113)

	N	Mean
Male	43	3.140
Female	66	3.184
BAGCED	15	3.205
CCS	12	3.021
CLA	25	3.187
COS	11	3.367
GCOE	18	3.015
RVRCOB	13	3.163
SOE	15	3.254

(BAGCED- College of Education, CCS- College of Computer Studies, CLA- College of Liberal Arts, COS- College of Science, GCOE- College of Engineering, RVRCOB-College of Business and SOE-School of Economics)

Table 1 presents the mean scores for the key variables in the study broken down by gender and

college of affiliation of the student participants. It can be seen that there are no significant gender differences as regards the CGPA of the students. This was further supported by the one-way analysis of variance that suggests that there is no difference in the CGPA between male and female students [F(1,101)=.001, p=.973], and between samples from different colleges [F(6, 101)=1.128, p=.352]. Similarly, the same can be observed as regards the CGPA across colleges. The reason perhaps would be because these students are all full-time scholars of the university and are expected to retain a grade point average for them to be able to keep their scholarships.

Table 2 describes the correlation between the participants—age, gender, year level, number of siblings, CGPA, and the four dimensions of hope.

The results show that the participants’ CGPA positively correlated with their internal locus-of-hope and external locus-of-hope (both Spiritual and Parents) as sources of hope. It seems that students’ hope is influenced by their desire to achieve their academic goals, their belief in God, and their parents’ support.

The results of the current study have shown that students’ motivations to excel academically were largely driven by their internal hope. The data agrees with Cheavens’ (2000) study wherein high hope individuals have a generalized expectancy of success such that any blockage of goals is viewed as temporary because new paths to achieve goals are often easily developed. It also further confirms the findings of Snyder, Shorey, et al. (2002) where they also find high hope individuals having the skills to cope more

Table 2
Descriptive Results, Scale Reliability, and Correlations of the Variable

Variables	M	SD	Actual Range	α	CGPA	1	2	3	4
Age	17.831	1.100	6	21					
Gender	1.410	.494	1	2					
Year Level	2.566	.718	2	4					
No. of Siblings	1.784	1.198	0	6					
CGPA	3.167	.423	1.800	.898	---				
1. Internal	.040	.664	1.429	4.000	.884	.772***	---		
2. Ext-Spir	3.144	.842	1.000	4.000	.944	.808***	.790***	---	
3. Ext-Par	3.317	.602	1.625	4.000	.925	.477***	.379***	.499***	
4. Ext-Pe	2.892	.574	1.125	4.000	.906	.076	.224*	.108	191

***p<.001; *p<.05

effectively with barriers to the achievement of goals and demonstrate high levels of competence across a wide range of human endeavors. Moreover, it was found that higher-hope students not only set more challenging school-related goals for themselves when compared to lower-hope students, but also tend to perceive that they will be more successful at attaining these goals even if they do not experience immediate success (Snyder et al., 1991). Furthermore, the results also see its close alignment with Snyder’s (1994) study where hope is linked with the perceived ability to reach goals. Thus, by and large, a person with high hope can be thought of as having a vast reservoir of resources from which to draw (Alarcon, Bowling, & Khazon, 2013).

The current data also yield the importance of faith and religion as an important source of hope. This further affirms the findings of Isaacs and Savahl (2014) as regards the importance of faith where they found their participants’ equation of hope with prayers and faith. Furthermore, their participants see hope in connection with their faith and their dreams for the future. Religion seems to be important to them and consequently so is hope. Moreover, hope in the light of faith has been associated with coping skills and other systems whereby people deal with life and frame their understanding of the world. This characteristic should be closely aligned with the “meaning of life” (Frey, Pedrotti, Edwards, & McDermott, 2004).

Finally, the results of the current study found the importance of parental support as another significant source of hope. It supports the findings of McDermott

and Hastings (2000) where they found parents whose hopeful behavior to their children help them cope with difficult challenges in a positive way and by persevering in the face of difficulties. This also further confirms the study of Snyder (2000b) where parents are seen as primary teachers in instilling agency (motivational thinking) and pathways (routes to goals) thinking, which is accomplished as children begin to perceive and make sense of external events, understand that one event can lead to another, and comprehend the value of goal-directed behavior.

Lastly, Table 3 shows the regression data based on the locus of hope dimensions as predictors of CGPA.

The regression results validated the correlation as regards the positive relationship between the students’ CGPA vis-a-vis internal locus-of-hope and external locus-of-hope (spiritual, and parents) as sources of hope. What seems to be interesting is the negative relationship of their academic achievement with their external locus-of-hope involving their peers.

The results suggest that these students’ peers play no important influence in the achievement of their goals. As can be observed from the data, the students have high internal-locus-of hope, which would suggest their self-reliance and the feeling of being secured in one’s self despite some challenges. Quick, Nelson, Matuszek, Whittington, and Quick (1996) found in their study that secure individuals work effectively both autonomously and with others as they find ways to achieve valued goals. Their resourcefulness and confidence in their own skills facilitate their goal-directed attitudes and behavior. These interpersonal

Table 3.
Regression Results of Locus of Hope Dimensions as Predictors of CGPA

Locus of Hope	β	Se β	t	p
Internal	.392	.088	4.457	.000
Ext--Spiritual	.446	.093	4.823	.000
Ext---Parents	.122	.061	1.990	.049
Ext---Peers	-.083	.055	-1.511	.134

F(4,104)=65.287, Adjusted R²=.704, p<.001

impacts of secure attachment on hope are made possible by unique internal regulatory processes that allow them to view their circumstances in a positive light. Secure individuals have a sense that the world is a safe place that is amenable to them and the accomplishment of their goals. For secure people, this means that their resourcefulness is especially likely to help them find the will and the way to accomplish valued work goals. Furthermore, individuals with high levels of hope may tend to see difficult circumstances as challenging but not overwhelming. People who are hopeful have a desire for a good outcome and an expectation that good things will happen (Hagen, Myers, & MacKintosh, 2005).

Self-security, faith in God, and parental support seem to influence the current study's participants' hope to achieve their goals through their good academic performance. Despite challenges such as limited economic support and resources, the students seem to develop reliance on themselves, in God, and their parents for them to achieve their goals.

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