

A Study of the Impact of Hope Exercise in Building Hope among the Students of Secondary School

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Abstract: *Hope is the ability to plan pathways to desired goal despite obstacles and agency or motivation to use these pathways. The present paper is an attempt to develop some skills to cultivate hope. It also attempts to test the extent to which hope can be taught and learnt. Hope has very significant implication on the life satisfaction and subjective well-being of an individual. Through this it also contributes to social well-being. Despite such significance, positive emotions like hope and the strengths of life has been getting less importance in scientific psychological study. So, present paper is an effort to bridge such gaps in Indian context. Hope plays a critical role in academic success and subjective well-being of an individual. Therefore, it is necessary to develop certain skills to build hope in scientific way. Researches, conducted in the field of Positive Psychology support that skills of well-being can be taught and learnt scientifically. Positive Psychology research also discovered that cultivating the skills of well-being works as an antidote of depression, vehicle of life satisfaction and as a means of creative thinking. On the basis of such discoveries present study tested the effectiveness of some skills in cultivating hope. It was discovered through close participant observation and experimental treatment that hope is skill based and can be taught effectively.*

Hope is the idea and energy for the future. It has two main components (Snyder, 2000): the ability to plan pathways to desired goal despite obstacles and agency or motivation to use these pathways. According to this conceptualization, hope is strongest when it entails valued goals that there is an intermediate probability of attaining due to challenging but not insurmountable obstacles. When we are certain of achieving goals, hope is unnecessary and when we are certain that we will not, we become hopeless. Positive and negative emotions of life are by-products of goal-directed hopeful or hopeless thoughts.

Snyder (2000) subdivided Hope theory into four categories: goals, pathway thoughts, agency thoughts and barriers. *Goals* that are valuable and uncertain are the anchors of hope theory as they provide direction and an endpoint for hopeful thinking. Goals should be attainable yet challenging in nature. Goals that are hundred percent likely to be achieved do not give people hope. *Pathway thoughts* refer to the routes we take to achieve our desired goals and the individual's perceived ability to produce these routes (Snyder, 2000). This type of thought process begins in infancy when cause and effect relationship are first being established. Children see that certain actions influence events that occur. Singular or multiple pathways need to be generated. In fact, alternative pathways should be generated when obstacles are faced. Those with the highest levels of hope tend to generate multiple pathways to goal achievement. *Agency thoughts* refer to the motivation we have to undertake the routes towards our goals. This type of thought begins after one year of age when children realize they are actors who can influence their environment. Barriers block the attainment of our goals and in the event of a barrier we can either give up or we can use our pathway thoughts to create new routes (Snyder, 2000). In any situation where a valued goal is pursued, the hopeful goal-directed behaviour will be determined by the interaction of:

- i. The degree to which the outcome or goal is valued
- ii. Thoughts about possible pathways to the goals and related expectations about how effective these will be in achieving the outcome or goal; and

- iii. The thoughts about personal agency and how effective one will be in following paths to goal. (Carr, 2004)

Can Gratitude be Taught?:

Seligman (2013) discovered that Subjective well-being and flourishing can be taught and learnt like language, mathematics, etc. Seligman (2013) proposed that the term flourish could be decomposed in to five scientifically manageable realms. These are *positive emotion* (pleasant life), *engagement* (engaged life), *meaning* (meaningful life), *relationship* and *Accomplishment*. These terms are measurable, manageable, and can be handled precisely. Most importantly the components are skill based and can be taught and learnt. Among the positive emotions related with past, present and future hope is one which measurably determines the pleasant life and also plays a critical role in happiness (Snyder, 1994). Increasing amount of depression, frustration, hopelessness and other mental problems demand that the skill of happiness and subjective well being should be taught to the new generation. Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson (2005) discovered that teaching happiness will serve at least three purposes—as an antidote of depression, as a vehicle of increasing life satisfaction and as a means of development of creativity. Therefore, it is necessary to find out the scientific ways to teach happiness. Teaching happiness thus refers the teaching of the components independently. Seligman found that the different positive emotions, engagement, (term ‘Flow’ is used by Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1990), meaning (Seligman, 2003), relationship and accomplishment (Seligman, 2013) can be taught and learnt systematically and scientifically.

Snyder (1994) proposed that hope has no hereditary contributions but rather is entirely a learned cognitive set about goal-directed thinking. The teaching of pathways and agency goal-directed thinking is an inherent part of parenting, and the components of hopeful thoughts are in place by age two. Pathway thinking reflects basic cause and effect learning that a child acquires from caregivers and others. This is an attempt to teach a positive emotion i.e. hope through some exercises. This experiment will through light on the extent to which hope can be taught and learnt. He has also proposed that strong attachment to caregivers is crucial for imparting hope.

Hope and Academic Success:

Research revealed that hope has no significant correlation with native intelligence (Snyder, McDermott, Cook & Rapoff, 2002) or income (Lopez & Calderon, 2011). Rather it has a consistent link with attendance and credits earned (Gallup, 2009). High hope has been found to correlate with a number of beneficial constructs including, academic achievement (Snyder et al, 2002) and lower levels of depression (Snyder et al, 1997) whereas low hope is associated with negative outcomes including a reduction in well-being (Diener, 1984). Hopeful college students (Lopez & Calderon, 2011), High school students (Snyder et al., 1991) have a higher overall GPA and middle school students have better grades in core subjects (Marques, Pais-Riberio & Lopez, 2009) and scores on achievement testes (Snyder et al., 1997). Hopeful students see the future as better than the present and believe they the power to make it so ((Lopez & Calderon, 2011). These students are more energetic and enthusiastic in work. They can develop many strategies to reach goal and plan contingencies in the event that they are faced with problems along the way (Lopez & Calderon, 2011). Whereas, the students having low hope lack the energy to get things done. When they encounter barriers to achieve goal they give up the goal. This often results in frustration, loss of confidence, and lowered self esteem (Snyder, 1994). Students with low hope experience high anxiety, especially in test-taking situations. They do not use feedback from failure experiences in an adaptive manner so as to improve future performances (Onwuegbuzie, 1998).

Statement of the Problem:

The problem under study is formally entitled as “A Study of the Impact of Hope Exercise in Building Hope among the Students of Secondary School.”

Significance of the study:

Hope is one of the most potent predictors of the success of life. To be more particular it is one of the most potent determinants of student’s academic success. Intelligence and aptitude are not the only determinants of a student’s academic success (Dweck, 1999), future success in job market

and social adjustability. This is important to understand the many factors that keep students on track and in pursuit of their educational and vocational goal. Hope pushes a person to climb up the ladder of success. In the absence of hope he becomes pessimistic about what the future holds for him and he remains at the bottom of the ladder of achievement. He even stops fixing a goal. Lack of study on the positive aspects of life like hope, gratitude, resilience, savour, self efficacy, happiness, etc. keeps the society unaware of their positive impacts. In this context the present study will through some light on hope as one of the positive aspects of life and its credit in success. Therefore, it is necessary to build a capacity like hope to ensure the increments. I found that the scientific psychologists in India are very less concern about the building of positives in lives through scientific methodologies. I thought that an attempt to build the positives of life is must to meet the current alarming psychological problems of the students. Along with the Positive Psychologists I also propose to strengthen the positives and strengths rather than repairing the negatives and damages. So this is an effort to build a positive of human life i.e. hope.

Objectives:

The objectives of the study were-

1. To compare the level of hope between male and female Secondary School students before Hope exercises.
2. To compare the level of hope between male and female Secondary School students after Hope exercises.
3. To study the significance of change of the level of hope of the secondary school students after hope exercises.
4. To study the significance of change of the level of hope of the male secondary school students after hope exercises.
5. To study the significance of change of the level of hope of the female secondary school students after hope exercises.
6. To study the opinion of the secondary school students after hope exercises.

Hypotheses:

- H₁**- There is no significant difference in the level of hope between male and female students of Secondary Schools before hope exercise.
- H₂**- There is no significant difference in the level of hope between male and female students of Secondary Schools after hope exercises.
- H₃**- There is no significant change in the level of hope of the students of Secondary Schools after hope exercises.
- H₄**- There is no significant change in the level of hope of the male students of Secondary Schools after hope exercises.
- H₅**- There is no significant change in the level of hope of the female students of Secondary Schools after hope exercises.

Definition of the key terms:

Hope: The ability to plan pathways to desired goals despite obstacles, and agency or motivation to use these pathways. Scores will be calculated on the basis of these dimensions. More the score in the scale means more the level of hope.

Sample:

The sample selected for investigation comprised forty two students studying in class nine and ten from Lakhipur High School, Nilakh High School, Baruah Block High School and Subahi Pather High School. Total forty two students were selected from these four schools by using purposive sampling technique out of 300 students.

Methodology:

Method used in the present study is experimental method.

Design:

I used Single group pre-test post-test design for the study. I organized a residential camp for eleven days and arranged for hope exercises for the students. A hope test was conducted on the students before providing hope therapy. After eleven days the levels of hope of the students were re-tested. In the last day of the camp I selected six students, three of them are having high hope and three of them are having low hope as found in pre hope test and told them to tell and write their experiences, opinions regarding the impact of hope exercise in their mind.

The Tool used:

I used Time Horizon Questionnaire developed by J. S. Gerald (In Car, 2004). This scale consists of 40 statements of which 31 are positive and 9 negative items. This is a five point scale. I used the Assamese adaptation of the scale in this study.

Statistical Technique: I used ‘t’ test to estimate the significance of difference between means.

Treatments:

Hope Exercises: I conducted the study to find out whether hope can be taught through exercise or not. If yes, what is the extent? For this I selected two exercises: ‘Your Best Possible Future Selves diary’ and ‘Goals and sub-goals diary.’ Students exercised both the exercises regularly for eleven days.

Your Best Possible Future Selves: This exercise was initiated by Laura A. King at University of Missouri—Columbia (King, 2001). To practice it I instructed the students “to try it out sit in a quiet place and take twenty to twenty five minutes to think about what you expect your life to be one, five or ten years from now. Visualize a future for yourself in which everything has turned out the way you have wanted. You have tried your best, worked hard, and achieved all your goals. Now write down what you imagine.”

This exercise puts one’s optimistic muscles in to practice. One may discover new insights in to himself as he writes about his future and his goals. Keeping a journal may even be a way of cultivating patience and persistence (Lyubomirsky, S., 2008). Basically this is a mental exercise in which one visualizes the best possible future for himself in multiple domains of life (King, 2001). For example a twenty-year old woman might imagine that in ten years, she will be married to her soul mate, have two healthy children, be working in a school etc. This is essentially her fantasy of what her life might be like if all her dreams were realized. But in reality this exercise involves considering one’s most important, deeply held goals and picturing that they will be achieved. King (2001) found that the people who wrote about their visions for twenty minutes per day over several days, relative to those who wrote about other topics, were more likely to show immediate increase in positive moods, to be happier several weeks later, and even to report fewer physical ailments several months thence.

Goals and sob-goals diary: In developing hopeful thinking one has to identify his long range goals and break them up into sub-goals. I instructed the students “during the first session of the writing the journal you describe the point or goal to be reached. In future sessions you could write about the steps you will take to reach that point. There may be many such steps or paths. If a discouraging or pessimistic thought comes to your mind pin point it and try to generate alternative routes or possible resolutions.”

Analysis and Interpretation:

Hypothesis No. 1

“There is no significant difference in the level of hope between male and female students of Secondary Schools before hope exercise.”

Table-1. Significance of difference in the level of hope between male and female students of Secondary Schools before doing hope exercises.

Sex	N	Mean	SD(pooled)	SED	Df	t	Inference
Boys	21	79.38	10.77	1.023	40	1.49	Not significant at 0.05 level
Girls	21	77.86					

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Table-1 shows that the t value is 1.49 which is less than table value (2.02 at 0.05 level) and therefore not significant at both 0.05 and 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the level of hope between male and female students of Secondary Schools before doing hope exercises.

Hypothesis No. 2

“There is no significant difference in the level of hope between male and female students of Secondary Schools after doing hope exercises.”

Table 2. Significance of difference in the level of hope between male and female students of Secondary Schools after doing hope exercises.

Sex	N	Mean	SD(pooled)	SED	Df	t	Inference
Boys	21	88	10.05	.95	40	1.10	Not significant at 0.05 level
Girls	21	86.95					

Table-2 shows that the t value is 1.10 which is less than table value (2.02 at 0.05 level) and therefore not significant at both 0.05 and 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the level of hope between male and female students of Secondary Schools after doing hope exercises.

Hypothesis No. 3

There is no significant change in the level of hope of the students of Secondary Schools after hope exercises.

Table-3. Significance of change in hope of the students of Secondary Schools after hope exercises.

	N	Mean	SD	SED	Df	t	Inference
Pre-test	42	78.61	10.69	.883	41	10.03	Significant at 0.01 level
Post-test	42	87.47	9.94				

Table-3 shows that the Mean Hope value in post test is larger than the mean Hope value in pre-test. The computed value of ‘t’ i.e. 10.03 is greater than the table value (1.68 and 2.42 at 0.10 and 0.02 level respectively) and hence it is significant at both 5% and 1% level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant progress in the level of hope after doing the hope exercises.

Hypothesis No. 4

There is no significant change in the level of hope of the male students of secondary Schools after hope exercises.

Table-4. Significance of change in hope of the male students of Secondary Schools after hope exercises.

	N	Mean	SD	SED	Df	t	Inference
Pre-test	21	79.38	11.25	1.26	20	6.84	Significant at 0.01 level
Post-test	21	88	10.05				

Table-4 shows that the Mean Hope value of boys in post test is larger than the mean Hope value in pre-test. The computed value of ‘t’ i.e. 6.84 is greater than the table value (1.68 and 2.42 at 0.10 and 0.02 level respectively) and hence it is significant at both 5% and 1% level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant progress in the level of hope among the boys after doing the hope exercises.

Hypothesis No. 5

There is no significant change in the level of hope of the female students of Secondary Schools after hope exercises.

Table-5. Significance of change in hope of the female students of Secondary Schools after hope exercises.

	N	Mean	SD	SED	Df	t	Inference
Pre-test	21	77.86	10.32	1.25	20	7.27	Significant at 0.01 level
Post-test	21	86.95	10.04				

Table-5 shows that the Mean Hope value of Girls in post test is larger than the mean Hope value in pre-test. The computed value of 't' i.e. 7.27 is greater than the table value (1.68 and 2.42 at 0.10 and 0.02 level respectively) and hence it is significant at both 5% and 1% level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant progress in the level of hope among the girls after doing the hope exercises.

Opinion of the students after hope exercises: One major advantage of best possible selves and goal and sub-goal diary techniques are the fact that they are to conduct it through writing. As writing is highly structured and systematic and rule-bound so it promotes one to organize, integrate and analyze thoughts properly. Lyubomirsky (2008) found that writing about goals helps one to put the thoughts together in a coherent manner, allowing him to find meaning in his life experiences. In my study also I attempted to collect their opinions and experiences during their hope exercises. One girl (Madhusmita) told me "Initially I did not take it so seriously. I did it in a very relax manner. But after the several trials I found it very significant. After the writing sessions I have started to feel very good and happy with myself. I found my life as having very clear goal and vision." Sikharani told me "the more I wrote about the goals the more I realized that they are not far away from my life. I shall be able to achieve them. It makes me very relax and comfortable with my life." Madhurya told me--"The exercises make me realize that I shall be able to work hard to achieve my goals." Satish wrote to me—"The exercises were very much helpful for me. Those exercises picked me up from the darkness of pessimism. Before this I had started to be pessimism very intensely. I found it very beneficial. I am now confident and hopeful enough to reach the best possible goal." The opinions of the students show that hope exercises have a very significant role in their hopeful thinking.

Major Findings:

1. There is no significant difference between male and female students in the both pre-test and post test values as far as their level of hope is concerned.
2. The hope exercise practiced in the experiment can significantly build hope among the secondary school students.
3. The hope exercise practiced in the experiment can significantly build hope among the secondary school students irrespective of sex.
4. Hope can be significantly learnt and taught.

Conclusion:

As emotion and as a whole as a life style hope plays very significant role in subjective well being. So it is an urgency to develop certain scientific skills to cultivate this virtue. Along with this other positive emotions like resilience, self-efficacy, gratitude, satisfaction, forgiveness, savour, etc. can also be taught and learnt. It requires serious research by the part of the scientific psychologists. Indian psychologists are still far away from the western positive psychology movement. Therefore this is an urgency to initiate some research in this area and to contribute in the subjective well-being as well as success of the citizens.

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