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## Research Article

### Life Orientation and Academic Performance of Selected Students with Physical Disabilities

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#### ABSTRACT

Disabled individuals often spend their lives grappling with low levels of optimism and unmet needs. It has been widely accepted that people with disabilities generally have fewer educational opportunities and a lower quality of life than their non-disabled counterparts. This present study employs descriptive research to investigate the relationship between life orientation and academic performance among selected students with physical disabilities. The participants were chosen through purposive sampling, consisting of sixty-four respondents from selected schools in Manila. Data were collected using a survey instrument, The Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R). The researcher utilized the Z-test, H-test, weighted mean, and ANOVA to identify differences in variables, and Pearson's *r* to explore relationships. The findings revealed that students with physical disabilities are optimistic individuals; they accept and confront their condition despite the inconveniences and pain it may cause. Moreover, the present study showed that the higher the level of life orientation, the better the academic performance. Therefore, there is a need for the educational system to consider the life orientation of students when developing new strategies and approaches to understanding and teaching students with physical disabilities.

**Keywords:** *Academic performance, Learned optimism, Life orientation, Physical disability, Self-efficacy*

#### Introduction

Physical disability refers to impairments that are temporary or permanent that affect the bones and muscle systems and make mobility and manual dexterity difficult and impossible. According to the U.N. Convention on the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities, “persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with

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others" (UNCRPD, 2006: article 1, purpose). Disability influences the lives of hundreds of millions over the world. Individuals with disabilities regularly face segregation and unequal treatment. Oftentimes the simple categorization of individuals into groups, for example, 'healthy' vs. 'disabled', is sufficient to trigger unfair conduct against individuals with disabilities (Mattila and Papageorgiou, 2016).

The disabled individuals spend their life struggling with low optimism level and unmet needs. It has been widely accepted that disabled people generally have fewer educational opportunities and a lower quality of life than non-disabled people. According to Peters (2008), exclusion from education and employment means limited social contacts, poor health, and low self-esteem. The social and physical environment creates unequal outcomes for people with impairments compared to able bodied people. The negative attitudes of people towards disabled people have led to discrimination and internalized oppression; as a result, disabled people feel that they are worthless citizens of this country. The severity of physical, cognitive, and social-emotional challenges in children with developmental disabilities significantly impacts their quality of life. (Widyawati, Y, et.al, 2023).

Chronic sorrow is prevalent among parents of children with a chronic illness or disability (Coughlin and Sethares, 2017). Parents care about their child's academic performance because they believe good academic results will provide more career choices and job security but sometimes because of their child's condition they feel that it is their fault that their child has this problem. Parents sometimes feel broken-hearted because their children feel worthless because of the discrimination they experience. Sometimes they feel alone, angry and stressed especially in finding help or care that their child needs. Parents and family of the child with physical disabilities play a very significant role in helping this child to have a positive outlook in life.

In the study of Ling Qi et. al., (2022) showed that students with impairment reported similar quality of life to their normal peers. The findings contradicted with the hypothesis that hearing impaired students could have poorer

quality of life compared with their normal hearing peers. Promoting peer relationship and school performance may be conducive to the improvement of quality of life in hearing impaired students. There is a need to optimize society for people with physical disabilities and improve access to healthcare facilities (Alqasim, A.Y. et. al., 2022).

Many students with disabilities remain segregated using pullout and categorical placements. The efforts to reach the needs of all students evolved from mainstreaming to inclusion. Mainstreaming was an effort to place special education students into the general education classroom without having specialized assistance, but many students struggled (Pizana, R. F., 2022).

Personalized and specialized learning approaches are crucial for children with disabilities. Each child is unique, and their educational needs can vary significantly. Specialized learning programs can help address these individual differences and provide an inclusive and supportive environment. The study of Gonzalez, B. T., & Hermosa, J. P. (2023). showed that there is a significant relationship between instructional methods and the learning outcomes as to Cognitive, Behavioral, and Attitudinal. The classroom environment was found to have highly significant relationships with cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal learning outcomes.

This research measures the respondents' life orientation which has two variables: the first one is optimism, which refers to generalized outcome expectancies that good things will happen rather than bad things; the second variable is pessimism, which refers to the tendency to expect negative outcomes in the future (Macarthur, 2005)

This research on Life Orientation and Academic Performance of Selected Students with Physical Disabilities served as an important material in establishing and strengthening the importance of knowing the students with physical disabilities' life-orientation and academic performance, the differences in the level of life orientation and academic performance when respondents were grouped according to the demographic variables and in determining if there is an existing relationship between life orientation and academic performance.

The present study aimed to determine the relationship of life orientation and academic performance of selected students with physical disabilities.

Specifically, the researcher pursued answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the selected students with physical disabilities in terms of sex, age, type of physical disability, and year level?
2. What is the level of life orientation of the students with physical disabilities as measured by the Life Orientation Test Revised (LOTR) when grouped according to demographic variables?
3. What is the academic performance of the students with physical disabilities based on their general weighted average during the school year 2011 – 2012 when grouped according to demographic variables?
4. Are there significant differences in the life orientation and academic performance of selected students with physical disabilities when grouped according to the demographic variables?
5. Is there a significant relationship between life orientation and academic performance of selected students with physical disabilities?

The following hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance:

1. There are no significant differences in the level of life orientation and academic performance among the selected students with physical disabilities when grouped according to the demographic variables.
2. There is no significant relationship between the life orientation and academic performance of selected students with physical disabilities. The present study can help develop new strategies and approaches in understanding and teaching students with physical disabilities, thereby improving the optimism level and academic performance of their students and making them develop positive outlook in life.

The result of this study can serve as a guide for them to have a positive perception about the world they are living in despite their condition, which in turn can make them independent

and productive members of society, thus minimizing the negative emotional effects of having disabilities.

Furthermore, the outcome of the research can help the families and communities of these students with disabilities to have a better understanding of the plight of people with physical disability to accept the condition of their loved ones and to give them strong support and appreciation.

The information from this research can help the government and non-government organizations advocating for special children develop, provide or improve the existing program for the disabled citizens of this country, this will help improve the life orientation and will boost the self-esteem of the students with physical disabilities despite their limitations because of their condition.

### **Methods Research Design**

The researcher utilized descriptive research method to portray the nature of the situation as it exists at the time of the study and to explore the causes of phenomena. Specifically, the researcher used correlational study to clarify the relationship of life orientation and academic performance.

In the same way, the researcher employed comparative study to determine the differences on the level of life orientation and academic performance of selected students with physical disabilities when grouped according to the demographic variables.

### **Respondents**

The respondents of this study were sixty (64) male and female students who were already diagnosed with physical disabilities, enrolled in an educational, home or learning institution. Their ages ranged from school age (6 to 12 years old), adolescence (13 to 18 years old) and young adulthood (19 – 35 years old).

The purposive sampling technique was utilized in this study, wherein the researcher handpicked the subjects who participated in the study based on the identified variables under consideration. This sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents who possessed the following criteria:

1. The respondents can either male or female.
2. Ages of the respondents should be 6 years old and above.
3. The respondents must be diagnosed with physical disabilities but with normal intelligence.
4. The respondents must able to understand and speak English or Tagalog language.

### **Instruments**

The Life Orientation Test Revised is a standardized psychological test developed by Carver C.S., Bridges, M.W. and Scheier, M.F. in 1994 to assess the individual differences in optimism and pessimism. This test has been used in a good deal of research on the behavioral, affective and health consequences of this personality variable.

In standard application, the LOT-R has 10 items, 6 active items and 4 fillers. The test uses likert scale to obtain the respondents' degree of agreement and disagreement. The response options were 1 (I agree a lot), 2 (I agree a little), 3 (I neither agree or disagree), 4 (I disagree a little) and 5 (I disagree a lot).

The LOT-R has an overall internal consistency of .78 and the test-retest reliability ranges from .56 to .79 (Carver & Scheier, 2002).

### **Statistical Treatment**

To answer problem 1 2 and 3, the researcher used the Frequency and Percentage to determine the distribution of the respondents with regard to the level of life orientation and academic performance of selected students with physical disabilities, as well as the demographic variables.

To answer problem 4, the researcher used the Z-test, H-test weighted mean and Anova, to look for the differences in the level of life orientation and academic performance when the respondents were grouped according to their sex, age, type of physical disabilities and type of school.

To answer problem 5, the researcher used the Pearsons r to look for the relationship of life orientation and academic performance. Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) was used in the computation of results.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study is committed to upholding ethical standards, with a primary focus on obtaining informed consent from all key informants. Key informants will be provided comprehensive information regarding the study's purpose, the nature of research interventions, criteria for respondent selection, the procedural aspects of the study, and potential benefits derived from participation.

In line with ethical principles, key informants will be explicitly informed of their right to withdraw or refuse participation voluntarily, emphasizing the importance of their autonomy. Confidentiality of all collected data will be strictly maintained to safeguard the privacy of the key informants.

### **Result and Discussion**

#### **Level of Life Orientation of the Respondents**

##### **1. Sex**

The findings showed that out of the 33 male respondents, 20 or 61% are optimistic with LOTR result ranging from 15 - 23 while 13 or 39% are pessimist with LOTR result 14 below. On the other hand, out of the 31 female respondents, 22 or 71% are optimistic with LOTR result ranging from 15 - 23 while 9 or 29% are pessimist with LOTR result 14 below. From these findings, the researchers concluded that the female respondents are more optimistic than the male respondents.

##### **2. Age**

Based on the findings of the study out of the 13 school age respondents, 8 or 62% are optimistic whose LOTR result ranges from 15 - 23, while 5 or 38% are categorized as pessimist with LOTR score of 14 below. Meanwhile out of the 35 adolescence, 25 or 71% are optimistic whose LOTR result ranges from 15 - 23 and 10 or 29% are categorized as pessimist with LOTR score of 14 below. Lastly, 9 or 53% young adulthood are categorized as pessimist with LOTR score of 14 below and 8 or 47% are optimistic whose LOTR are 15 - 23.

These findings revealed that the adolescent respondents are more optimistic than school age children and young adulthood.

### 3. Types of physical disabilities

The findings show that out of 12 respondents with spinal cord injuries 9 or 75% are optimistic and 3 or 25% are pessimistic. On respondents with cerebral palsy 13 or 68% are optimistic and 6 or 32% are pessimistic. In terms of the respondents with hip dysplasia 6 or 60% are optimistic and only 4 or 40% are pessimistic, meanwhile out of 11 respondents with muscular dystrophy 7 or 64% are optimistic and 4 or 36% are pessimistic and lastly in terms of respondents with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis 8 or 67% are optimistic and 4 or 33% are pessimistic.

### 4. Year level

Based on the findings of the study, out of 29 elementary respondents, 19 or 66% are optimistic and 10 or 34% are pessimistic and in terms of high school respondents out of 35 respondents 23 or 66% are optimistic and 12 or 34% are pessimistic. These data implied that high school students are more optimistic than elementary students.

## Academic Performance of the Respondents

### 1. Sex

The findings showed that out of the 33 male respondents 20 or 61% earned a satisfactory grade of 81-86 followed immediately by 12 or 36% who incurred a fair grade ranging from 75 - 80 and only 1 or 3% earned a rating of poor with average ranging from 70-74. On the other hand, out of 31 female respondents 21 or 68% of the respondents got a satisfactory grade ranging from 81-86 closely followed by 8 or 26% are rated fair with grades ranging from 75 - 80.

This is consistent with a recent nationwide survey which found out that female students study more and they study better, according to the report.

### 2. Age

Based on the findings out of 13 school age respondents 7 or 54% are rated satisfactory whose grade ranges from 81 - 86 followed immediately by 5 or 38% who earned a fair grade of 75-80. On the other hand, out of the 34 ado-

lescent students, 24 or 71% earned a satisfactory grade ranging from 81-86 while 8 or 23% got a fair rating ranging from 75-80. Furthermore, 9 or 56% from the young adulthood students are rated satisfactory whose grade ranges from 81 - 86 followed immediately by 7 or 44% got a fair rating ranging from 75-80.

### 3. Types of physical disabilities

Based on the findings, out of 11 respondents with spinal cord injury 9 or 82% obtained a grade of satisfactory with scores ranging from 81-86 and 2 or 18% rated fair ranging from 75-80. In terms of respondents with cerebral palsy 12 or 67% obtained a grade of satisfactory with scores ranging from 81-86 followed by 5 or 28% obtained a fair rating ranging from 75-80 and only 1 or 5% received poor rating with scores ranging from 70 - 74. Meanwhile, in terms of respondents with Hip Dysplasia 6 or 60% earned a grade of satisfactory ranging from 81 - 86 and 4 or 40% earned a fair grade with average ranging from 75 - 80% while out of 12 respondents with muscular dystrophy 1 or 8 percent earned a rating of very satisfactory with average ranging from 87 - 92, 7 or 58% earned satisfactory

rating or 81 - 86 and 4 or 34% obtained a fair rating with an average of 75 - 80 or fair rating. Lastly out of 12 respondents with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis 1 or 8% obtained a rating of very satisfactory with average ranging from 87 - 92, 7 or 58% earned satisfactory rating with average ranging from 81 - 86 and 4 or 34% received a fair rating with average ranging from 75 - 80.

### 4. Year level

Based on the findings out of 29 elementary students, 14 or 49% earned a satisfactory grade with average ranging from 81-86 followed immediately by 13 or 45% who incurred a fair grade ranging from 75 - 80. On the other hand, 25 or 71% of the high school respondents got a satisfactory grade ranging from 81-86 closely followed by 9 or 26% are rated fair with grades ranging from 75 - 80.

Differences in the life orientation and academic performance of the respondents

Respondents	LOTR Mean	df	t-value		Decision	Remarks
			Computed	Tabular		
Female	16.97	62	1.219	1.691	Accept	Not Significant
Male	15.90					

1. Sex  
 Table 1 portrays the significant difference of respondents' level of life orientation when grouped according to sex. Since the computed t-value of 1.291 is less than the tabular value of 1.691 with degrees of freedom of 62 at 0.05 level of significance, the hypothesis was accepted and concludes that there is no significant difference between the respondents' level of life orientation when grouped according to sex.

H - test		Df	Decision	Remarks
Computed	Tabular			
17.27	7.81	3	Reject	Significant

2. Age  
 Table 2 depicts the significant difference of respondents' level of life orientation when grouped according to age using Kruskal Wallis or the H-test. Since the computed h-value of 17.27 is greater than the tabular value of 7.81 with degrees of freedom of 3 at 0.05 level of significance, the hypothesis was rejected and concludes that there is a significant difference between the respondents' level of life orientation when grouped according to age.

H - test		Df	Decision	Remarks
Computed	Tabular			
2.02	9.35	4	Accept	Not Significant

3. Types of physical disabilities  
 Table 3 projects the significant difference of respondents' level of life orientation when grouped according to types of physical disabilities using Kruskal Wallis or the H-test. Since the computed h-value of 2.02 is less than the tabular value of 9.35 with degrees of freedom of 4 at 0.05 level of significance, the hypothesis was accepted and concludes that there is no significant difference between the respondents' level of life orientation when grouped according to types of physical disabilities. Data implies that even though the respondents experience different type of physical disabilities and experience a great deal of pain, problems, obstacle in life and physical limitations, most of the respondents are optimistic regardless of what physical disabilities have possessed because all of the respondents are given the opportunity to study, receive support from the government and majority already accepted their fate and conditions.

Respondents	LOTR Mean	Df	t - value		Decision	Remarks
			Computed	Tabular		
Elementary	17.12	62	1.34	1.691	Accept	Not Significant
High School	19.23					

4. Year Level  
 Table 4 displays the significant difference of respondents' level of life orientation when grouped according to year level using t-test. Since the computed t-value of 1.34 is less than the tabular value of 1.691 with degrees of freedom of 62 at 0.05 level of significance, the hypothesis was accepted and concludes that there is no significant difference between the respondents' level of life orientation when grouped according to year level using t-test.

freedom of 62 at 0.05 level of significance, the hypothesis was accepted and concludes that there is no significant difference between the respondents' level of life orientation when grouped according to year level. Children who are suffering from physical disabilities experience different level of life orientation. These students whether they are in elementary or

high school level must be guided and taught skills for dealing with life's many challenges.

They should be able to develop skills, such as decision making, tolerance and an insight and understanding of others from different communities that will help improve their life orientation. Meaning year level cannot influence the level of life orientation.

Respondents	Mean GWA	z - value		Decision	Remarks
		Computed	Tabular		
Female	84.53	1.129	1.96	Accept	Not Significant
Male	82.76				

5. Sex

Table 5 projects the significant difference in the respondents' academic performance when grouped according to sex. (see attached table on Appendix C).

Since the computed z-value of 1.129 is less than the tabular value of 1.96, the hypothesis

was accepted and concludes that there is no significant difference between the respondents' academic performance when grouped according to sex. The respondent's academic performance has nothing to do with the respondent's gender.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-comp	F-tab	Decision	Remark
Between Groups	51.60	2	25.80	0.583	3.88	Accept	Not Significant
Within Groups	530.80	12	44.23				
Total	582.40	14					

1. Age

Table 6 displays the significant difference in the respondents' academic performance when grouped according to age.

The hypothesis was accepted and concludes that there is no significant difference in

the respondents' academic performance when grouped according to age since the computed F-value of 0.583 is less than the tabular F-value of 3.88.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-comp	F-tab	Decision	Remark
Between Groups	7.84	4	1.96	0.144	2.87	Accept	Not Significant
Within Groups	272.40	20	13.62				
Total	280.24	24					

2. Types of Physical Disabilities

Table 7 depicts the significant difference in the respondents' academic performance when grouped according to types of physical disabilities.

Since the computed F-value of 0.144 is less than the tabular F-value of 2.87, the

hypothesis was accepted and concludes that there is no significant difference in the respondents' academic performance when grouped according to types of physical disabilities.

Relationship between life orientation and academic performance.

Variable	Pearson's r	Interpretation	T		Decision	Remarks
			Comp	Tab		
<b>Students Academic Performance</b>	0.69	High Correlation	5.33	1.697	Reject	Significant
<b>Level of Life Orientation</b>						

Table 8 projects the significant relationship between students' academic performance and level of life orientation. (see attached table on Appendix C).

Based on the results, there was a high correlation between the students' academic performance and their level of life orientation based on the Pearson's  $r$  of 0.69. Furthermore, since the computed  $t$ -value of 5.33 is greater than the tabular  $t$ -value of 1.697, the hypothesis was rejected and concludes that there is significant relationship between the students' academic performance and their level of life orientation.

The result of the current research can be compared with the research conducted by Schumacher (2006), who investigated the association between optimism and academic success as a variety of different studies on optimism and school achievement have resulted in conflicting results. Specifically the previous research intended to answer the problem "What is the relationship between optimism and successful course completion at the high school level. The respondent consisted of 48 high school students who answered the consent forms and completed a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to assess the level of dispositional optimism via their perception of self efficacy. Data concerning Grade Point Average (GPAs) was gathered from the report card marks at the end of the semester. The result showed that there are no significant associations between grade and optimism scores.

It can be considered that the previous study is dissimilar with that of the current research because the previous research declared grades has no connection with the respondents optimism score while the current research showed that optimism or positive life orientation has relationship with academic performance.

The result of the current research can be supported by the study of More (1998) particularly the second benefit of optimism or the description of optimistic people which states that the optimist will seek medical and educational advice and stick to health and educational programs better than the pessimist. The pessimist saying "it doesn't matter what I do" will give up easily and fail to seek information and professional advice and the third benefit which states that the more negative life events a person encounters, the more illness or pain he will probably suffer. The pessimist experiences more of these negative events. He takes less action to prevent bad things and when negative events occur he makes them seem worse by thinking persistently, negatively and helplessly about them.

In relation to the previous research done by More, the second benefit of optimism explains the relationship of being optimist with ambition to attain educational degree and it also describes that the respondents who are optimist will stick to educational program until they finish it. In addition, the third benefit explain that people who are optimist will take action to prevent bad things and when negative events occur he will still think positively and try to overcome the problems. This also explains the tendency to regard potentially stressful events as interesting opportunity for growth. Generally it implied that respondents who are optimist have a greater tendency to have a good academic performance and it also implied that academic performance and life orientation has significant relationship.

The other support to the findings of the current research was the study done by Boss (1998), where the previous researcher quoted Cooper Smith's four concept of self esteem that increases a person's optimism. These four components of self-esteem comprise the power



which is the ability to influence and control others; second is significance which is the acceptance, attention and affection of others; third is the virtue which is the adherence to moral and ethical standards and lastly is the competence which is the successful performance in meeting demands of achievement. In relation to the current research both study revealed that life orientation has significant relationship with lifeorientation meaning if a person received a good grade in school it will help improve his positive life orientation.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were obtained:

1. Students with physical disabilities are optimistic people; they have a positive outlook in life.
2. Respondents with impairments that are either temporary or permanent that affect their bones and muscle systems and make mobility and manual dexterity difficult and impossible, accept and face their condition despite the inconveniences and pain it gives them.
3. Although the respondents have a loss or restriction of functional ability or activity in either body or mind, most of them are still striving to surmount their conditions successfully and aimed to finish their studies.
4. The higher the level of life orientation the higher the academic performance.

In view of the findings and conclusions, the researcher came up with the following recommendations.

1. For persons with physical disabilities: to pursue their academic ambitions and career to a higher degree by enrolling in higher academic institutions such as college level or enrolling in a vocational course, since they have positive life orientation and they do not have intellectual disabilities.
2. For the family of the students with physical disabilities: to provide additional care and parental support to students with physical disabilities. In addition, they can also motivate their family member with

disabilities to have a better orientation in life and encourage them to join support group or enrolled them in a special education center.

3. For the medical professionals: to consider life orientation as one of the focuses in the management of physical disabilities.
4. For the special education teachers: to consider life orientation of the students in developing new strategies and approaches in understanding and teaching students with physical disabilities, thus helping improve the optimism level and academic performance of their students and making them develop positive outlook in life.
5. For the special education and psychology students: to adopt, revise and implement the Life Orientation Program made by the current researcher.
6. For the readers: to continue reading and reviewing studies such as this one, to gain more knowledge about the psychological disposition of students with physical disabilities.
7. For the future researchers: to pursue further studies about life orientation and academic performance of students with physical disabilities. They may also balance the distribution of the number of respondents and lastly, they may put additional variables like socio-economic status, marital status, religion and quality of life.

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