

**WIU CENTENNIAL HONORS COLLEGE**  
**Thomas E. Helm Undergraduate Research Day 2023**

**Abstract**

Podium

Major: Psychology

Faculty Mentor(s): Kristine Kelly

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**Optimist or Pessimist: An Analysis of Personality Difficulties**

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Optimism is a mental variable noted by generalized positive beliefs about a subject matter and is linked with higher levels of coping (Carver et al., 2010). Research shows that optimism significantly negatively correlates with mood disorders, alcohol abuse, and anxiety disorders (Öcal et al., 2022). Additionally, people with personality disorders tend to have less optimism (Huprich et al., 1996). Optimism is also associated with higher scores of hope, resilience, and quality of life in individuals with depressive personality disorders (Huprich, & Frisch, 2004). Even in people with diagnosed personality disorders, optimism is linked with a positive self-schema (Hoffart, & Sexton, 2002). In sum, it appears that optimism can serve as a protective factor against developing personality difficulties. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine possible links between personality problems and optimism. We expected negative correlations between optimism and various personality difficulties.

Participants were 61 undergraduate students (mean age = 21) who completed an online questionnaire consisting of the Life Orientation Test (Scheier et al., 1994), a measure of optimism, and the Interpersonal Difficulties Scale (Kelly, 2023), which measures 10 personality difficulties (e.g., suspiciousness, eccentricity, emotionality). A correlational analysis was conducted to measure the relationship between optimism and personality difficulties. The results revealed negative correlations between optimism and suspiciousness,  $r(61) = -.44$ ,  $p < .05$ , impulsiveness,  $r(61) = -.35$ ,  $p < .05$ , social inhibition,  $r(61) = -.62$ ,  $p < .05$ , and clinginess,  $r(61) = -.45$ ,  $p < .05$ . Thus, our hypothesis was partially supported.