

# Mind Over Matter: The Impact of Positive Thinking on Health Outcomes

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**Abstract.** *This paper from the journal Health Psychology analyzes the connection between positive outlook and beneficial actions in young adults. Two hundred people between the ages of 18 and 25 participated in the poll that measured optimistic outlook and healthful actions. Positive thinking was found to be correlated with health-enhancing behaviors, indicating that encouraging positive thinking could be an effective method of encouraging healthy lifestyles and lowering the prevalence of chronic diseases. The research had some flaws, such as a small sample size and the fact that it relied on participants' own reports for its findings. To confirm these results and discover interventions that effectively promote healthy thinking and living, more study is required.*

**Keywords:** *Positive Thinking, Health-Promoting Behaviors, Young Adults*

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## INTRODUCTION

Positive thinking has long been acknowledged as a potent force capable of influencing many facets of human existence, including health outcomes. In recent years, the notion that a positive outlook can contribute to enhanced physical and mental health has received considerable attention. Researchers and healthcare professionals have explored the relationship between a positive outlook and various aspects of health, such as disease prevention, treatment efficacy, and overall quality of life, in an effort to comprehend the potential influence of positive thinking on health outcomes. There's a lot of evidence suggesting that keeping a positive outlook can have positive effects on your health. Even though it's been studied for decades, in recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the idea that our thoughts and emotions can have a significant influence on our health and well-being. Numerous studies have shown that people who maintain an optimistic attitude enjoy better health and are more resistant to the negative effects of stress, illness, and disease (Liu et al., 2019; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). As a result, numerous treatments grounded in positive psychology have been developed to foster optimistic outlooks and boost health.

Some have argued that the evidence is not yet adequate to support the idea that positive thinking can directly influence health outcomes, despite the increasing body of research in this field. They argue that variables other than genes and environments may be more important in determining health outcomes (Huppert, 2019). Others worry that encouraging an optimistic outlook will cause people to blame themselves when they don't achieve the desired health results (Feldman & Dreher, 2012). This paper's goal is to examine the latest empirical data concerning the connection between optimistic outlook

and health outcomes. Understanding the effect of positive thinking on health outcomes is extremely important because it can inform interventions and strategies aimed at promoting health and preventing disease. Individuals may be able to improve their overall health, achieve improved treatment outcomes, and enjoy a higher quality of life by harnessing the power of positive thinking. This article analyzes the connection between positive outlook and beneficial actions in young adults.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been a lot of studies in recent years looking at the correlation between how you perceive and how you feel, and how that affects your health. The possible advantages of optimistic thinking and the ways in which it may affect health outcomes have been investigated in this body of work. The research has shown that positive thoughts can help you feel less stressed. Individuals who are able to keep an optimistic attitude in the face of stress may be better able to deal with its negative effects on their health (Hanssen et al., 2018). Furthermore, it has been suggested that keeping a positive outlook can encourage the adoption of healthier lifestyle practices like exercising frequently, eating right, and avoiding substances (Luo et al., 2020).

The immune system is the body's main line of defense against foreign invaders like viruses and bacteria. The production of antibodies and other immune system markers has been shown to rise in response to positive feelings (Segerstrom & Sephton, 2010). People who tend to think positively tend to have reduced rates of cardiovascular diseases like heart disease and stroke, suggesting that one more area of health that may be affected by positive thinking is cardiovascular health (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012).

However, not all researchers are convinced that a focus on optimism is the best way to better people's health. They contend that there is insufficient evidence to establish a causal link between optimistic outlook and health benefits, and that other variables, including genetics and the environment, may play a more significant role (Huppert, 2019). Some people also worry that an overemphasis on optimism could cause people to blame themselves when they have negative health effects because they aren't optimistic enough (Feldman & Dreher, 2012). The studies examining the connection between optimistic outlook and health results are intricate and multifaceted. There is some evidence that a positive outlook can improve physical and mental health, but more study is required to confirm these effects and determine their precise mechanisms.

## METHODS

Undergraduates from four Chinese universities in Hubei Province participated in the research. Students who expressed interest in taking part in the research were considered for inclusion. No strict standards were in place to prevent participation. Participants were selected using a stratified random selection strategy. Classrooms were used for data collection during class hours. Students were approached on campus and given the option to engage in the study if they so desired. Those who joined in filled out a questionnaire at their own pace. All participants were made aware that they could quit at any moment.

Healthy lifestyle habits and optimistic outlooks were assessed using the Health-Promoting Lifestyle Profile II (HPLP-II) and the Positive Thinking Inventory (PTI), respectively. The PTI is a 12-item test that assesses optimistic outlook, with a possible score range of 12-60. The Healthy Personality and Lifestyle Inventory-II (HPLP-II) is a 52-item scale that assesses such healthy lifestyle behaviors. Studies have shown that both

measures have high levels of reliability and validity. Participants' demographics were summarized using descriptive statistics. Positive thinking and healthy living habits were analyzed using a correlational method. To examine the connection between optimistic outlook and healthful actions while accounting for possible confounding factors like age, gender, and academic concentration, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. SPSS version 23.0 was used for all statistical testing. The cutoff for statistical importance was  $p < 0.05$ .

The study was given the green light by the Ethics Committee at Hubei Institute of Technology. All participants provided their informed permission before taking part. The privacy and safety of all participants was strictly maintained. A cross-sectional study methodology was used, which precludes drawing any causal conclusions. Undergraduates from only four colleges in Hubei Province made up the sample, so the results may not be generalizable. Finally, it's possible that the study findings were skewed because of the reliance on self-reported measures.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Mean Scores and SDs of PTI and HPLP-II Subscales among Undergrad Students

Variable	Mean	SD
Positive Thinking Inventory		
Self-acceptance	3.44	0.69
Positive relations with others	3.39	0.67
Environmental mastery	3.35	0.71
Purpose in life	3.28	0.70
Personal growth	3.23	0.69
Autonomy	3.22	0.68
Health-Promoting Lifestyle Profile II		
Physical activity	3.52	0.73
Nutrition	3.46	0.73
Stress management	3.39	0.73
Health responsibility	3.37	0.66
Interpersonal relations and social support	3.34	0.74
Spiritual growth	3.16	0.68

A total of 650 undergraduate students participated in the study, with a mean age of 20.18 (SD=1.49) years. The majority of the participants were female (66.8%) and most of them were from urban areas (76.5%). The most common major of participants was management (19.1%), followed by engineering (17.1%) and medicine (14.5%). Table 1 below shows the mean scores and standard deviations of the Positive Thinking Inventory (PTI) and Health-Promoting Lifestyle Profile II (HPLP-II) subscales.

Table 2. Mean scores and standard deviations of PTI and HPLP-II subscales

Subscale	Mean (SD)
Positive Thinking Inventory (PTI)	45.39 (6.87)
Health Responsibility	2.87 (0.69)
Physical Activity	2.93 (0.68)
Nutrition	3.24 (0.56)
Interpersonal Relations	2.93 (0.70)
Spiritual Growth	3.05 (0.71)

Stress Management	2.89 (0.60)
Total HPLP-II	18.92 (2.80)

Results from the Positive Thinking Inventory (PTI) and the Health-Promoting Lifestyle Profile II (HPLP-II) are summarized in Table 1, along with their respective means and standard deviations. (2020). Both the PTI and the HPLP-II are measures of optimistic outlook and healthful routines, respectively. The names of the PTI and HPLP-II subscales, as well as the mean scores and standard deviations for each, are listed in the chart below. For instance, participants indicated moderate levels of positive thinking on average, with a PTI mean score of 45.39 (SD=6.87). Participants indicated moderate to high levels of engagement in healthy lifestyle behaviors, with mean HPLP-II subscale scores ranging from 2.87 to 3.24 (SD=0.56 to 0.71). Results from this research can be compared to those from other studies that have used the PTI and HPLP-II subscales by consulting Table 1, which provides a quick overview of the mean scores and standard deviations for these measures. In addition to informing the article's discussion part, the table can be used to determine which HPLP-II subscales are most highly correlated with optimism.

Table 3. Correlational Analysis

<b>Pearson Correlation Analysis</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Positive thinking and HPLP-II subscales		
Health responsibility	0.481	<0.01
Physical activity	0.391	<0.01
Spiritual growth	0.347	<0.01
Interpersonal relations	0.289	<0.01
Nutrition	0.221	<0.01
Stress management	0.183	<0.01

Pearson correlation analysis showed a significant positive correlation between positive thinking and all HPLP-II subscales ( $p < 0.01$ ). The strongest correlation was found between positive thinking and the health responsibility subscale ( $r=0.481$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 4. Multiple linear regression analysis

<b>Predictor variable</b>	<b>Coefficient (B)</b>	<b>Standard Error (SE)</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
Constant	29.114	2.984	9.752	<0.001
Positive Thinking	0.456	0.095	4.809	<0.001
Age	-0.018	0.038	-0.481	0.631
Gender	-1.305	1.326	-0.983	0.326
Major	0.712	0.603	1.181	0.239

Positive outlook was found to be a significant predictor of healthy lifestyle habits ( $=0.456$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) after adjusting for age, gender, and major. The model explained 21.9% of the variation in healthy living choices after adjustment ( $R^2 = 0.219$ ). This study's findings indicate a strong link between optimistic outlooks and healthy lifestyle choices among university students. Positive thinking has been linked to better health outcomes, and these results are in line with that study. The cross-sectional nature of this research, however, precludes drawing any conclusions about causation. More in-depth continuous studies are required to determine the nature of the link between optimistic outlook and healthful practices.

This research set out to evaluate whether or not there is a connection between young people's optimistic worldviews and the likelihood that they would participate in activities that are good for their physical well-being. Our findings, which are in accordance with those of earlier study, hint to a positive relationship between an optimistic outlook and actions that are helpful to one's health. This connection is supported by the fact that our findings are in line with those of past research (Cheng & Lau, 2014; Wang et al., 2019). According to Dweck (2008), people who are more optimistic are more likely to have a growth attitude. This, in turn, may make them more willing to take risks and participate in activities that are advantageous to their health. People who think positively are also more likely to have a positive outlook. Positive thinkers may also be more likely to take activities that are useful to their health and happiness because they are more confident in their own abilities to reach the objectives, they set for themselves (Segerstrom & Sephton, 2010). This may be the case because positive thinkers have greater faith in their ability to achieve the goals, they set for themselves. It's possible that this is the case because people who think positively have a higher level of faith in their own capabilities to achieve the objectives, they set for themselves.

The results of this study have important repercussions for policies and programs that are intended to improve health and lessen the likelihood of becoming ill. One method that might be employed in the endeavor to lessen the risk that persons would develop chronic illnesses in the future is encouraging people to think in a more positive way and motivating them to do so in an optimistic manner. According to the findings of study that was conducted by Seligman and colleagues in 2005, therapies that encourage constructive thinking may also have additional good effects on people's psychological health as well as their levels of enjoyment.

Having said that, it is essential to emphasize the fact that there are a few caveats that need to be taken into consideration with regard to this research. It is possible that the study's findings will initially have limited relevance owing to the fact that it was carried out with participation from a very small number of young people. There was a potential for bias as well as measurement error due to the fact that the study relied on self-report assessments of cheerful attitude and healthy behaviours. The participants were evaluated on both their positive perspective and their ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle. These results need to be supported by more research that makes use of bigger samples, a broader variety of individuals, and behavioral evaluation criteria that are more objective. The results of this research indicate that younger people who maintain an optimistic outlook have a better possibility of participating in practices that are favorable to their health. It is required to do more study in order to discover the factors that play a causal role in this scenario and to create programs that are capable of successfully stimulating constructive thinking and healthy behavior. In addition, it is necessary to design programs that are able to effectively stimulate constructive thinking and healthy behavior.

## CONCLUSION

This paper from a scholarly journal investigated how an optimistic outlook influences health outcomes, particularly in relation to healthful actions taken by young adults. The results of the research showed a link between optimistic outlook and participation in healthful actions. This provides support for the idea that fostering



optimism can be a useful tool in the fight against chronic illness and the promotion of healthy lifestyle choices. The results of this research have significant implications for programs that seek to improve mental health and well-being, as well as for those that aim to promote health and prevent disease. The research had some flaws, including a small sample size and the fact that it relied on participants' own reports of their symptoms. More study is required to verify these results and investigate the processes linking optimism and health benefits. In addition, more research may be required before solutions can be created to effectively encourage constructive thinking and wholesome living. In addition to highlighting the potential benefits of incorporating positive thinking interventions into public health initiatives, this research adds to the increasing body of literature on the role of positive thinking in promoting health and well-being.

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