

## Life Satisfaction, Personal Growth Initiative and the Role of Hope in Alcoholics and in People Who are Occasional Drinkers

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### Abstract

The study was conducted to find out the Life Satisfaction, Personal Growth Initiative and the role of Hope in Alcoholics and in people who are Occasional Drinkers. The sample chosen for this study was, 100 adults aged 20-50 years (50 for each group), both males and females with minimum five years of formal schooling. The tools of assessment used were Satisfaction with Life Scale, The Personal Growth Initiative Scale and the Adult Trait Hope Scale. It was found that occasional drinkers scored significantly higher on the variables of Life Satisfaction, Hope and Personal Growth Initiative. The results are discussed in terms of role of positive factors in alcoholism as compared to occasional drinkers.

**Keywords:** Life satisfaction; Personal growth initiative; Hope; Alcoholics

### Introduction

Alcoholism, also known as alcohol use disorder (AUD), is a broad term applied for any drinking of alcohol that results in problems [1]. According to the American Medical Association, "alcoholism is an illness characterized by significant impairment that is directly associated with persistent and excessive use of alcohol. Impairment may involve physiological, psychological or social dysfunction." Psychologically speaking, alcoholism has less to do with "how much" someone is drinking, and more to do with what happens when they drink. In a medical context, alcoholism is said to exist when two or more of the following conditions is present: a person drinks large amounts over a long time period, has difficulty cutting down, acquiring and drinking alcohol takes up a great deal of time, alcohol is strongly desired, usage results in not fulfilling responsibilities, in social problems, in health problems. Withdrawal occurs when stopping, and alcohol tolerance increases over a period of time with use. Generally, women are more sensitive to alcohol's harmful physical and mental effects than men. Both environmental factors and genetics are associated with alcoholism with about half the risk attributed to each. Long-term misuse of alcohol can cause a wide range of mental health problems [2].

Positive psychology can be understood as the scientific study of what makes life most worth living [3]. In broad terms, positive psychology is the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels that include the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life [4,5].

Life satisfaction i.e., cognitive evaluation of one's life based on self-selected standards, is one of the key components of happiness. The concept of happiness has shaped the thinking of some of the most influential writers. Collectively, research indicates that happiness is not a unidimensional entity, but rather consists of frequent positive affect (emotions), infrequent negative affect and life satisfaction. Given that the affective and cognitive elements are related, albeit separable,

researchers prefer the term subjective well-being to reflect its multidimensional nature. Life satisfaction is very closely associated in the promotion of healthy behaviour and is seen to have a positive correlation with healthy lifestyle choices [6]. Life satisfaction reports incorporate objective standards such as relative income, employment status, and availability of environmental resources with more subjective impressions such as current mood states, attitudes, goals and expectations. Constructs such as hope and optimism play a vital role in predicting the life-satisfaction of an individual [7]. Life-satisfaction is closely related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs [8].

Hope has been described by numerous philosophers, theologians, educators, and scientists over the years [9]. While there are many different definitions of hope, it can generally be thought of as a positive mental state about the ability to achieve goals in the future [10-12]. One of the most widely followed theory of hope was developed by C. R. Snyder. This conceptualization of hope is primarily cognitive in nature, though the theory evolved to include emotions as well. Snyder and colleagues described hope as a motivational state based on goals, pathways, and agency goal-directed thinking [13]. Snyder proposes that goals are the targets of mental action sequences, and that in order to necessitate hope goals need to be sufficiently important to individuals. In addition to goals, hope involves pathways thinking. Snyder described path-ways as the mental capacity necessary to reach goals, which is also known as way power. Pathways thinking allows individuals to find routes around obstacles to goals, which naturally occur as people often encounter challenges in their goal pursuit. Agency is the third component of hope. Agency refers to the motivation that propels individuals to initiate and sustain movement towards their goals [14,15].

Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) can be described as the intentional and active desire to grow in areas that are salient for a person [16]. PGI consists of general skills for personal growth. Moreover, these skills are transferable to different growth opportunities and life stages [16,17]. Personal growth initiative is intentional engagement in the process of trying to change oneself. It includes cognitive and behavioral elements. The cognitive elements, such as believing that change within the self is possible, valuing this type of change, and knowing how to change the

self-function as precursors for the behavioral elements. Personal growth initiative exists on a continuum from low to high levels, with the individual's level of personal growth initiative determining, in part, how the person will respond in a situation that either requires the person to change or presents an opportunity for change and growth. Personal Growth Initiative is an important component when it comes to psychological well-being and reduction of distress [18].

Positive psychology variables are known to have some effect in the process of developing an addiction. Recent times have seen a rapid growth of interest in the study of the relationship between alcohol consumption and psychological well-being in recent years. However, the conclusions derived is debatable and often mixed.

Wnuk M., [19] on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2016, conducted a research on, "Hope as an important factor for mental health in alcohol-dependent subjects attending Alcoholics Anonymous". The researcher found positive correlation between hope and evaluation of life up to now as well as negative correlation between hope and level of stress. Vaillant G. E., [20] on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014, published a study on, "Positive Emotions and the Success of Alcoholics Anonymous". In this study, the researcher explains that the positive emotions such as joy, hope etc. induced by AA provide a safe, nonpharmacological substitute for alcohol. A study conducted by Nazish F, Panday R., Rizvi A., [21] (2015), on, "Comparative study of marital adjustment and life satisfaction among spouses of patients with alcohol dependence and normal healthy control: a case control study", indicated that, there was significant difference in respect to life satisfaction among the spouses of individual with alcohol dependence syndrome and normal healthy control. Life satisfaction was better in spouses of normal healthy control as compared to spouses of patients of alcohol dependence. Mäkelä P, Raitasalo K., Wahlbeck K., [22] (2015) carried out a study on, "Mental health and alcohol use: a cross-sectional study of the Finnish general population". Frequent binge drinking and alcohol problems are associated with poor mental health, especially with a lack of life satisfaction and psychological distress. This result was shown to be equally valid for both lower and higher social status groups.

After extensive review of literature, we found a dearth of studies on Alcohol and Personal Growth Initiative and therefore, this variable was chosen to be studied.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of Life Satisfaction, Hope and Personal Growth Initiative in people who are Alcoholics and in people who are Occasional Drinkers.

There has been a growing interest in the study of the shape of the relationship between alcohol consumption and psychological well-being in recent years. Overall, evidence is however still mixed and debated. Though the individual variables have been studied individually and have been scrutinized over the years, the combination of them is something which has not received much attention. There has been little evidence which shows that positive psychology plays an important role in addiction and in the process of getting out of it, however, the exact nature of it is not quite explicit. The present study focuses on the difference between alcoholics and occasional drinkers in terms of positive psychology variables such as Life Satisfaction, Hope and Personal Growth Initiative.

It was proposed that:

Life Satisfaction is higher in people who are occasional drinkers as compared to those who are alcoholics.

Hope is higher in people who are occasional drinkers as compared to those who are alcoholics.

The Personal Growth Initiative is higher in people who are occasional drinkers as compared to those who are alcoholics.

## Method

### Participants

A convenience sample of 100 (50 alcoholics and 50 occasional drinkers) participants was selected for the study. Participants were both males and females. The age range of the participants was between 20 to 50 years. All participants had at least five years of formal education.

### Sample inclusion criterion

Only diagnosed alcoholics, who have not undergone any therapy or who aren't on any medication at present were included in the pathological group.

Occasional drinkers included were those people who consume alcohol at least once a month to a maximum of 5 times.

### Sample exclusion criterion

Participants with co-morbidity of depression, schizophrenia or any other disorder or who are under any medications were excluded. A brief interview was conducted with probing questions regarding any other psychiatric illnesses, visits to a psychiatry set-up as inpatients or outpatients. All the participants who reported negatively for these questions were selected for the study.

## Measures

### Satisfaction with life scale

The Satisfaction with Life Scale, created by Diener et al., 1985, is a 5 item Self-report scale. The Satisfaction with life scale includes a seven point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Scores can range from a low of 5 to a high of 35. Higher scores indicate higher levels of life satisfaction. The test takes less than 5 minutes to complete. This test can be used to better understand general levels of client life satisfaction as they cognitively (versus emotionally) reflect on their experiences in the world thus far. This scale is reported to have internal consistency, with an alpha of 0.87 and test-retest reliability, with a correlation of 0.82 across a two-month time period. Concurrent validity has been established with scores on the Satisfaction with Life Scale correlating positively with scores on nine other measures of well-being and a self-esteem inventory. Negative correlations were also found between the Satisfaction with Life Scale and measures of neuroticism, emotionality, and a checklist of clinical symptoms.

### Adult trait hope scale

The Adult Trait Hope Scale, created by Snyder et al., in 1991, is a 12-item self-report scale. This scale is based on Snyder's model of Hope which is a cognitive model comprising three components: goals, agency, and pathways. Use of the Adult Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) can result in a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses clients possess related to setting and attaining goals in life. This scale consists of 12 items using an 8 point scale which ranges from

1 (Definitely false) to 8 (Definitely true). The test takes approximately ten minutes to complete. Scores can range from 8 to 64, with higher scores representing higher hope levels. For the total scale, internal consistency alphas range from 0.74 to 0.84. Test-retest reliability, was reported at 0.85 over a 3-week interval, 0.73 over an 8-week interval, and 0.76 and 0.82 over 10-week intervals. Concurrent validity has been established between the Adult Trait Hope Scale and measures of optimism, expectancy for attaining goals, and self-esteem ( $r=0.50-0.60$ ). Discriminant validity has been reported between the Adult Trait Hope Scale and measures of hopelessness ( $r=0.51$ ) and depression.

### Personal growth initiative scale

The Personal Growth Initiative Scale, created by Robitschek, in 1998, is a 9-item self-report scale. The items are measured on a 6 point scale which ranges from 1 (definitely disagree) to 6 (definitely agree). Scores can range from 9 to 54, with higher scores indicating greater levels of intentional self-change. Validity of the PGIS yielded internal consistency estimates ranging from 0.78 to 0.90 in college students and adults. Test-retest reliability estimates were 0.84 for one week, 0.73 for four weeks, and 0.74 for eight weeks. Construct validity was supported by factor analysis which confirmed a single factor for the PGIS. The convergent and discriminant validity of the PGIS shows that scale scores are positively related with assertiveness, instrumentality and an internal locus of control, and negatively related to chance locus of control.

### Procedure

The participants were contacted individually. Rapport was established with them. After the brief interview to rule out the comorbidity, the participants who met the inclusion criterion were requested to participate in the study. The purpose of the study was explained to them and written informed consent was taken from each participant. The participants were assured of confidentiality of data. They also had the freedom to leave the study if they desired to do so. The questionnaires were then administered explaining the instructions for answering them. Any queries or doubts of the respondents were answered by the researchers. Although there was no time limit, the respondents were requested to respond with the first response that comes to their mind. It took approximately 45 minutes to one hour for each respondent to fill all the measures. After making sure that no statement was left unanswered, the participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation in the study.

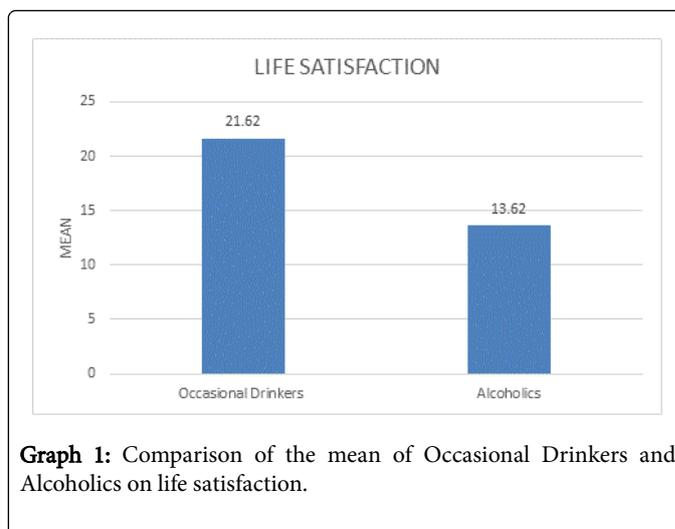
### Results and Discussion

In this study it was proposed that life satisfaction is higher in occasional drinkers compared to alcoholics Table 1 and Graph 1.

LIFE SATISFACTION	Occasional Drinkers	Alcoholics
Mean	21.62	13.62
SD	6.46	5.90

**Table 1:** Mean and SD of Life Satisfaction of the occasional drinker group and alcoholic group.

$t = 6.40, df=98, sig.0.05$



**Graph 1:** Comparison of the mean of Occasional Drinkers and Alcoholics on life satisfaction.

The results show that the mean scores of the occasional drinkers on life satisfaction scale was 21.62 (6.46) as compared to alcoholics 13.62 (5.90). Therefore occasional drinkers have higher life satisfaction than the alcoholics. This is in line with proposed hypothesis. A study was conducted by Fergusson DM et al., [23] (2015) to understand relation of life satisfaction with mental health problems. This study showed evidence that life satisfaction is affected by the presence of mental disorders like alcohol dependence, and that presence of alcohol dependence influences life satisfaction. Koivumaa-Honkanen H et al., [24] (2012) conducted a study on Life Satisfaction and Alcohol use. This was a study carried out on normal twins across a span of 15 years. This study indicates that alcohol indications and risk factors are associated with people becoming dissatisfied regardless of study period.

In this study, it was proposed that Hope is higher in occasional drinkers compared to alcoholics Table 2 and Graph 2.

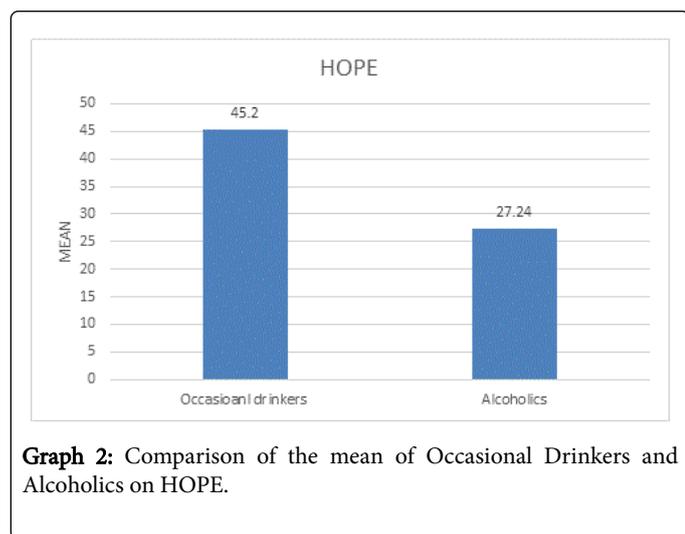
HOPE	Occasional Drinkers	Alcoholics
Mean	45.2	27.24
Standard Deviation	12.56	11.62

**Table 2:** Mean and SD of HOPE of occasional drinker group and alcoholic group.

$t = 7.337, df=98, sig.0.05$

The results show that the mean scores obtained by the occasional drinkers group on the hope scale was 45.2 (12.56) as compared to the alcoholics group, who scored a mean of 27.24 (11.62). Therefore occasional drinkers have higher hope than the alcoholics. This is in line with proposed hypothesis. A study was conducted by Wnuk M., [19] (2016) on, Hope as an important factor for mental health in alcohol-dependent subjects attending Alcoholics Anonymous. The researcher found Length of abstinence and length of being in Alcoholics Anonymous positively correlated with Hope and subjective evaluation of mental health which is in support of the hypothesis. Lacy M., [25] (2015), in her article on 'Portraits of Children of Alcoholics: Stories that Add Hope to Hope', mentioned that hope was one of the major factors involved in breaking the cycle of alcoholism, therefore correlating hope negatively with alcoholism which provides support

for the present hypothesis. This study was carried out on asymptomatic children of alcohol dependent parents. Bannen M., [26] in 2016, wrote an article on, "Experience, Strength, and Hope: An Analysis of Animal Interaction with Alcoholism and Recovery". According to the researcher, very little research has examined the useful insights animals can provide through their interaction with alcoholism. His work involved finding interaction between animals and humans, and also looking at factors like Hope, Strength and Experience.



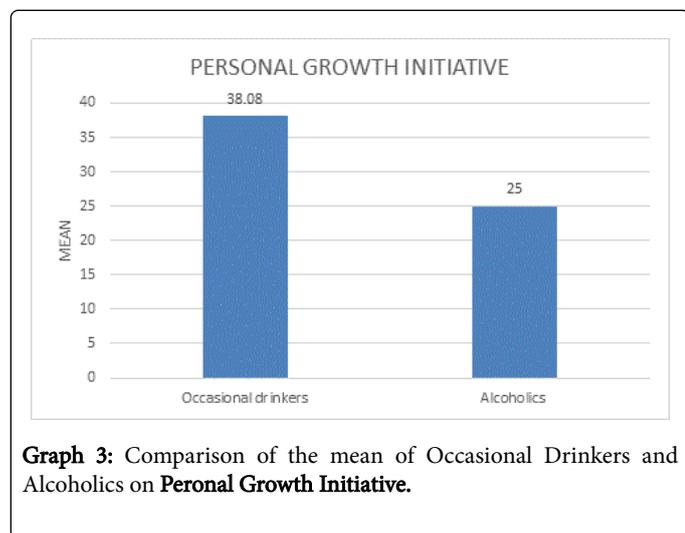
**Graph 2:** Comparison of the mean of Occasional Drinkers and Alcoholics on HOPE.

In this study it was proposed that Personal Growth Initiative is higher in occasional drinkers compared to alcoholics Table 3 and Graph 3.

PGI	Occasional Drinkers	Alcoholics
Mean	38.08	25
Standard Deviation	9.54	8.68

**Table 3:** Mean and SD of Personal Growth Initiative of occasional drinker group and alcoholic group.

t- 7.095, df-98, sig.0.05



**Graph 3:** Comparison of the mean of Occasional Drinkers and Alcoholics on Personal Growth Initiative.

The results show that the mean scores of occasional drinkers on Personal Growth Initiative scale was 38.08 (9.54) as compared to alcoholics, whose mean score was 25 (8.68). Therefore occasional drinkers have higher Personal Growth Initiative than the alcoholics. This is in line with proposed hypothesis. Efforts to study the role of Personal Growth Initiative among Occasional Drinkers and Alcoholics were made in the present study. The variable, Personal Growth Initiative has roots in the subject of positive psychology which is the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves and to enhance their experiences of love, work and play.

From the data obtained, it can be seen that there is significant difference in the scores obtained by Occasional Drinkers and Alcoholics on the Personal Growth Initiative. However, Personal Growth Initiative is strictly a positive psychology variable and is a relatively new concept. As these variables have not been studied together before, there is a severe exiguity of researches to support the data calculated in this study. There have not been many studies that have been carried which associate Personal Growth Initiative with other variables.

Therefore, there has not been any study which compares Personal Growth Initiative with alcoholics or any other clinical population. The data obtained from this study, depicted that Personal Growth Initiative is greater amongst the non-clinical population i.e. occasional drinkers and is relatively less amongst the clinical group i.e. the Alcoholics. The evidence provided by the findings is in line with the proposed hypothesis.

### Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will redound to the benefit of the society considering that Positive Psychology plays an important role in combatting addictions. The greater demand for psychologists to come up with new and effective therapeutic techniques justifies the need of incorporating the positive psychology variables such as Life Satisfaction, Hope and Personal Growth Initiative into the formulation of novel approaches towards rehabilitation of the individuals suffering from chronic addictions such as alcoholism.

In the present study, it was seen that occasional drinkers have a better score profile in terms of Life Satisfaction, Hope and Personal Growth Initiative which are Positive psychology variables which aid in making life 'most worth living'. The working assumption is that people who do not consume alcohol at all, tend to have the most superior profiles, however, even if complete abstinence from alcohol is not achievable, it was observed that the parameters were much better for occasional drinkers as compared to alcoholics.

It is also reported that alcoholics who enter complete abstinence programs, most often than not, have relapses as they are unable to keep up with the strict rules of complete abstinence. Therefore, programs like Moderation Management (MM), an alternative to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), a form of support group for people who would like to reduce their alcohol consumption, are rising popularity and success rate [2]. Incorporating aspects of positive psychology into those programs, such as, inculcating a sense of Hope and aiding to enhance their Personal Growth Initiative, along with helping the patients envision a more satisfied life, could lead to a superior outcome.

The findings of the study, therefore, would be helpful for the enhancement of the Quality of Life of the people who suffer from alcoholism whilst they are in recovery. Thus, a new approach towards rehabilitation for alcoholics could be arrived at. These findings could also be applied to various other substance and non-substance addictions. The present study also opens up a gateway to a whole new domain of studies which might be explored in the future.

## Limitations

The present topic involves Positive Psychology variable such as Life Satisfaction, Hope and Personal Growth Initiative. This study involves a comparison between these variables in two sets of populous, namely the clinical group consisting of Alcoholics and a non-clinical group consisting of occasional drinkers.

The topic at hand is multifaceted and because of this, there tends to be certain limitations to the study. The present study lacks enough empirical support in relation with Positive Psychology Variables, especially Personal Growth initiative and the overall interaction between the Positive Psychology variables and Alcohol. There were very few studies available on occasional drinkers and the access to them was not available.

Another limitation of the present study could be that matching of gender across the two groups of participants could not be achieved. Also, the small sample size of the two groups of populations involved in the study which is not a representative of the total population.

The geographic location was restricted to Western and Southern parts the city of Mumbai which may not a representative of the other regions of Mumbai City. The socio-economic level of the participants in the occasional drinking group could be kept relatively stable across the group, however there are disparities in the socio-economic levels of participants in the Alcoholic group which could also serve as a limitation for the study.

## Conclusion

The results of the study found that life satisfaction was significantly higher in occasional drinkers compared to alcoholics. Life satisfaction is the cognitive evaluation of one's life based on self-selected standards, and is one of the key components of happiness. Life satisfaction incorporates an objective standard such as relative income, employment status etc., with more subjective impressions such as current mood states, attitudes, goals and expectations.

While comparing occasional drinkers with alcoholics on the factor of hope, it was found that there was a significant difference in the two groups. Occasional drinkers were more hopeful than alcoholics. Hope, in general terms, can be thought of as a positive mental state about the ability to achieve goals in the future. The most noteworthy theory of Hope was developed by C. R. Snyder, in which he conceptualized hope as primarily cognitive in nature, though the theory evolved to include emotions as well. Snyder and colleagues described hope as a motivational state based on goals, pathways, and agency goal-directed thinking.

Participants in the Occasional Drinkers group scored significantly higher than those in the Alcoholics group on personal growth initiative, indicating that an intentional and active desire to grow in areas that are salient for an individual was much higher in occasional drinkers. Personal growth initiative is intentional engagement in the process of trying to change oneself. It includes cognitive and

behavioral elements. Personal growth initiative exists on a continuum from low to high levels.

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