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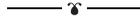
(San Agustín, Ep. 120, III, 13, 4)



Homenaje al Profesor Octavio Uña Juárez
Catedrático de Sociología y Filosofía,
Escritor y Poeta

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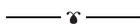
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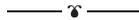
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LIFE ORIENTATION AMONG PALESTINIANS

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*With lots of appreciation and admiration for your inspiration,
knowledge, and wisdom in getting sociology off the ground worldwide.
You are a famous sociologist, you were a famous sociologist,
you are still a famous sociologist, and you will stay like this for ever...
To you Professor Octavio Uña Juárez.*

INTRODUCTION

Life orientation (LO) is an inter-disciplinary topic that is embedded in various disciplines of social science, education, arts, and humanities. Over the past decades, scholars and researchers have shown increased interest in LO as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. The concept of LO refers to the study of self in relation to others and to society. It is the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, and physical growth and development of people and the way in which these dimensions relate to each other and express themselves in everyday life (Prinsloo, 2007).

Historically, Antonovsky's (1979) perspective regarding < is largely determined by a single psychological factor, which is the general attitude towards the world and one's own life. According to Louw et al. (2012), LO explains how people feel, how they behave and cope with stress, and how they keep healthy; and to make sense of the world, a person with LO prefers classified, categorized, and structured information.

Recently, Scheier and Carver (1985) constructed the basic characteristics of future expectancies in LO test. However, assuming that optimism is a one-dimensional construct, some research found support for the bi-dimensionality of optimism and pessimism (Chang et al., 1997).

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Life orientation (LO) assesses individual's global expectancies about the future. The word "life" encompasses and merges the vocational, spiritual, psychological, health, beliefs, and the physical dimensions of living beings (Maree & Ebersohn, 2002). On the other hand, orientation refers to an ability to adjust to circumstances such as political, social, psychological or economic (Manzini, 2012).

Literature review of LO contains several useful conceptualizations. Antonovsky's (1979) perspective on the construct of LO is of relevance to the literature review. Antonovsky (1979) posits that individuals' general attitude towards the world and their own lives can be viewed as a particular stable dispositional orientation that reflects a sense of coherence toward life and the world in general. This LO or sense of coherence explains how people feel, how they perceive, behave and cope with demanding and challenging (stressful) situations, and how they keep healthy (Louw et al., 2012).

According to Eriksson (2007), Antonovsky (1993) claimed that the way through which people view their life has a significant impact on their health. Therefore, a sense of coherence is a resource that explains life orientation as a global view of life to be comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. Consequently, LO reflects one's ability to comprehend the entirety of a stressful situation and the capacity to use the resources which are available.

Recently, Scheier and Carver (1985) developed the LO Test (LOT) with the aim to measure dispositional optimism as a personal construct which is more widely accepted in the literature. Optimism may be defined as a generalized expectation that good things will occur. On the other hand, pessimism is associated with an anticipation of negative events transpiring (Scheier & Carver, 1985; Chang et al., 1997). The two authors considers it as a global generalized tendency to believe that one will usually experience good versus bad outcomes in life (Pais Ribeiro et al., 2012).

According to Scheier and Carver (2001), dispositional optimism is the tendency to believe that good things will happen in the future. In other words, optimistic individuals tend to have global positive expectancies for future events. Scheier and Carver's approach differs from the explanatory style approach in that it does not examine causal expectations of the past to determine an individual's expectation for the future.

Although the LOT was widely used, it had some problems. Most importantly, its original items did not all focus explicitly on expectations for the future as the theory dictated. To remedy this deficiency in part, they developed a modest revision of the LOT called LOT-R (Scheier et al., 1994). Both versions were designed to measure an individual's generalized perceptions about future events. The revisions to the original scale removed two items which was related to measuring the personality variable of neuroticism (Scheier et al., 1994). The resulting scale included twelve items about optimistic and pessimistic traits of personality, four optimistic, four pessimistic, and four filler items (Scheier et al., 1994). The highest score indicates optimistic trait of personality, while the lowest score shows pessimistic traits of personality.

Moreover, people with a highly optimistic LO experience daily events in a more positive way, and they expect more positive outcomes than pessimists (Scheier & Carver, 1985, 1987). Besides, a positive LO is believed to be beneficial to health; however, highly optimistic individuals appear to attract supportive social relationships, use adaptive coping strategies, possess different health habits than pessimists, and they tends to give up and turn away in stressful situations (Scheier & Carver, 1992. Kivimäki et al., 2005). In this regards, Machaty (2013) indicated that optimism has been linked to positive mood, high morale, effective coping and problem solving, better social functioning, and positive mental and physical health outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, optimism and pessimism are viewed as part of a self-regulatory model in which the individual must appraise potential difficulties relative to attaining a desired goal. In response to this appraisal, optimists attempt to obtain their goals despite adversity; in addition, pessimists are more likely to resign (Vassar & Bradley, 2010).

Since the publication of the Life Orientation Test (LOT) during 1985, it has been widely applied in empirical literature in social and behavioral sciences. The study of Pais Ribeiro et al. (2012) appropriated to accept the LOT of Scheier and Carver (1985) and to use it as

a bi-dimensional tool for measuring both optimism and pessimism when necessary. Consequently, the study revealed that participants have a more optimistic orientation. Also, no statistically significant differences were found based on gender, age, and school level for LOR score. Moreover, a positive linear relationship was found in the study of Louw et al. (2012) between life orientation and job satisfaction.

From an educational point of view, the study of Manzini (2012) concluded that life orientation program enabled students to be able to demonstrate initiative in identifying and utilizing opportunities and to take responsibility for self-development within a dynamic environment; identify and solve problems when encountering obstacles to personal development; understand and accept themselves as unique and worthwhile beings; practice acquired life and decision making skills; and develop positive psychological well-being. However, the study of Theron and Dalzell (2006) concluded that Lo curriculum is not perfectly tailored to the needs of learners. Also, additional topical life skills need to be included. Here, adolescents who are expressing disinterest should be re-evaluated for inclusion in the curriculum.

Furthermore, Conversano et al. (2010) indicated that positive and negative expectations regarding the future are important for understanding the vulnerability to mental disorders, in a particular mood and anxiety disorders, as well as to physical illness. The study of Madelon et al. (2010) concluded that imagining a positive future can indeed increase expectancies for a positive future.

Consequently, a meta-analytic study of Rasmussen et al. (2009) concludes that optimism is a significant predictor of positive physical health outcomes. Additionally, Chang et al. (2009) assert that there is no doubt that optimism and pessimism strongly influence physical health.

To sum up, Lo is a bi-dimensional concept, consisting of optimism and pessimism factors for life expectations. Most people are filled with many life expectations. Some of these expectations are positive versus negative outcomes.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Lo has accrued in recent years. However, research studies that have been conducted on Lo focuses mostly on normal societies rather than the conflicted scarcities, such as the Palestinian occupied society which remains unclear. An attempt was made in order to get an accurate understanding of Lo and its indicators in the Palestinian occupied society. This was done using a more sociological and educational approaches.

The overall aim of this study was to enquire the construct of Lo among Palestinians, where empirical studies of such an important topic are scarce. Differences of Lo between the participants were also assessed so as to determine the characteristics of demography that is related to this issue among Palestinians. The current study is considered as one of the leading studies that dealt with Lo in the Palestinian occupied society. Based on the author's knowledge, it is the first of its kind in the Palestinian society. Thus, it will be an important reference to those concerned in the area of Lo.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Life Orientation (Lo): Lo assesses individual's global expectancies about the future. Lo is a bi-dimensional concept, consisting of optimism and pessimism factors for life expectations (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Optimism: Optimism is an individual difference variable that reflects the extent to which people hold generalized favorable expectancies for their future (Carver et al., 2010).

Pessimism: Pessimism is associated with the anticipation of negative events transpiring (Scheier & Carver, 1985; Chang et al., 1997).

Palestinians: The term “Palestinian” refers to both male and females over fifteen years of age in West Bank regardless of their social, legal status, race, religion, class, or any other factor.

HYPOTHESES

Taking into consideration the set objectives, questions, and variables of the study, the following hypothesis is proposed: There are no statistically significant differences at $\alpha \leq 0.05$ in LO among Palestinians according to their age, gender, religion, marital status, number of household members, place of residency, educational level, and work status.

In terms of the study variables, independent variables were age, gender, religion, marital status, number of household members, place of residency, educational level, and work status. On the other hand, the dependent variable was LO among Palestinians with its bi-dimensional factors, optimism, and pessimism.

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study is quantitative in nature by using a questionnaire. The questionnaire is used to enquire about the construct of LO among Palestinians and how they are perceived by the actors in a situation by using convenient research instruments.

The population of this study was limited to Palestinians, male and female, over fifteen years of age in West Bank during 2016. The overall sample composed of three hundred and eighty-four Palestinians stratifiedly selected due to gender and place of residency. The sample size was calculated using the sampling web. of <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>, sample size calculator, with a margin error of 0.05. Furthermore, the target population consists of Palestinian citizens, in the West Bank during 2015, which includes 1361065 citizens; and the population comprised 687821 males and 673244 females (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

LO were measured with an Arabic translation of the 12-item Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) introduced by Scheier et al. (1994). In addition, it takes into consideration the cultural appropriateness in the Palestinian society. The resulting scale included twelve items about optimistic and pessimistic traits of personality, four optimistic, four pessimistic, and four filler items. Respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed with each item on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Participants of the research were approached in the West Bank by trained researchers, and were asked to complete the questionnaire. The interview was conducted with the person in the household who was more than fifteen years of age. The sampling survey instrument sought background information about participants' age, gender, religion, marital status, number of household members, place of residency, educational level, and work status.

Subsequently, the validation of the instrument proceeded in three distinct phases. The initial phase involved a group of referees and expert arbitrators, who provided some comments on the tool. The second phase involved a small focus group session (N=20). The third phase involved the implementation of a pilot study (N=40) to validate the survey using exploratory factor analysis. Factor loading for all items exceeded 0.60 (0.62 to 0.82), which means that those items are suitable in measuring every item of LO among Palestinians.

The reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Guttman split-half coefficients to ascertain reliability and consistency of the survey. Cronbach's Alpha and Guttman split-half

for the survey instrument was 0.83 and 0.80, respectively, indicating good reliability and consistency.

The demographic breakdown of the participants were as follows, age, gender, religion, marital status, number of household members, place of residency, educational level, and work status. There were a total of three hundred and eighty-four completed interviews. Respondents were between 15 and 71 years of age (M 30.88 SD 11.45). Males represented 50.5% of the participants, while the remaining 49.5% were females. Also, the vast majority (87.5%) were Muslims. In relation to marital status, 47.1% were singles compared to 48.7% married. There was an average of 5.72 children, with a range of 1 to 14 (SD 2.68). Half (51.3%) of the participants were rural, 35.4% urban, while the remaining 13.3% were from refugee camps. The majority (61.2%) of the participants had a college or undergraduate degree; and almost 58.6% were employed.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Data was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The questionnaire items were rated on a 1-5 Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree). Thus, the highest score indicates optimistic trait of personality, while the lowest score shows pessimistic traits of personality. Descriptive statistics gauged Lo among the sampled population. Additionally, the following statistical techniques were measured: Regression, T.test, One way analysis of variance, Tukey test, Cronbach's Alpha, Guttman Split-Half Coefficient, and Factor Analysis.

The mean score of Lo among Palestinians for the sample of three hundred eighty-four participants have a more pessimistic orientation (M 2.52 SD 0.38). The total score showed that half (50.4%) of the Palestinians were pessimistically orientated in their life. Furthermore, findings revealed the indicators of Lo among Palestinians ranked in a descending order as follows; I hardly ever expect things to go my way (M 3.37 SD 0.93); I rarely count on good things happening to me (M 3.21 SD 1.09); Things never work out the way I want them to (M 3.06 SD 1.09); If something can go wrong for me, it will (M 2.67 SD 1.09); In uncertain times, I usually expect the best (M 2.10 SD 0.96); I always look on the bright side of things (M 2.07 SD 0.98); I'm always optimistic about my future (M 2.01 SD 1.00); and they are believer with the idea that every cloud has a silver lining (M 1.53 SD 0.84).

Furthermore, the study explored demography breakdown over Lo among Palestinians with the aim of identifying any differences. Findings show that religion and educational level do not indicate any significant difference. However, it was found that gender, marital status, place of residency, work status, age, and number of household members are significant variables. In relation to gender, the differences were in favor of males (M 2.62 SD 0.38) compared to (M 2.42 SD 0.35) for females: T.test value was (5.306 P=0.000). As for marital status, the differences were in favor of urban participants (M 2.62 SD 0.31) compared to (M 2.37 SD 0.31) for refugee camp residents: F-value was (9.960 P=0.000). In terms of work status, the differences were in favor of employed participants (M 2.59 SD 0.38) compared to (M 2.42 SD 0.36) for unemployed: T.test value was (4.451 P=0.000).

Furthermore, differences were found in couple's educational level in favor of well-educated couples (M 3.99 SD 0.60) compared to (M 3.61 SD 0.70) for less-educated couples: F-value was (7.118 P=0.000). As for religious commitment, the differences were in favor of deeply-religious couples (M 3.98 SD 0.55) compared to (M 2.89 SD 0.42) for less-religious couples: F.test value was (37.881 P=0.000).

Finally, findings indicated that there are statistical significant negative correlation between age, number of household members, and the average score of Lo among Palestinians. Thus, Beta-value was (-0.224 P=0.000) and (-0.312 P=0.000), respectively.

DISCUSSION

Findings of the study indicated that Palestinians have a more pessimistic orientation in their life. In fact, the Palestinian experience under Israeli occupation was and still is the most tragic one in terms of the victims and violence it has left behind. This occurred due to acts of killing, injury, handicap, physical and psychological torture which is exercised in the form of house demolition, confiscation of lands and water, arrests, raids, pursuits, and other forms of violence. Palestinians have faced one of the most brutal occupations that history has ever known which has brought destruction and hatred to this region of the world more than a century ago (Najib et al., 2015).

The Israelis have created facts on ground which makes it almost impossible for Palestinians to move from one area to another, and from north to south or vice versa. Following the Al-Aqsa Intifada, all the Palestinian territories are subject to Israeli control except for municipal services and issues like health and problematic citizens' issues which they want to handover to the Palestinian National Authority, while the security matters and borders will remain under the Israeli control (Said, 2006).

About four million Palestinians are exposed to collective punishment on a daily basis for sixty-seven years. This is in addition to continuous confiscation of Palestinian lands, damage of plants and olive trees for the erection of the apartheid wall, and a remapping of the geography of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to provide more control for Israel. The situation is disastrous and warns of a new catastrophe, under the on-going conflict (Banat, 2010).

Results show that Palestinian women scored lower in LO than males consistently with the devalued and subordinated position of women in the Palestinian Arab society. Patriarchal ideology is deeply rooted in the Palestinian society, where the notions of father and brother are prevalent. According to these notions, male dominance supports the structure that keeps men in positions of power, authority, and control. This allows for a larger space for males compared with females in relation to the nature of social ranks, roles, freedom, participation in decision making, responsibility, large scale engagement in labor market, and the development of potentials and skills (Banat & Rimawi, 2014). Thus, it follows that women would likely experience a more pessimistic orientation than males.

Findings show that Palestinian singles are more optimistic than married. Also, the number of household members leads to a more pessimistic orientation. Consequently, with increased number of children, couples have more family responsibilities and deal with different problems including economic issues under the difficult living conditions prevalent in the Palestinian society and new challenges. Thus, this would agitate the stability of the family and decrease their LO.

Moreover, findings revealed that Palestinian refugees scored lower in LO than urban and rural participants. In fact, 1948 is a key date that is unerasable from the collective memory of Palestinians; in that year, a country and its people disappeared from both maps and dictionaries (Sanbar, 2001; Banat, 2015).

Palestinian refugees constitute the largest group of refugees on the globe. Palestinians have been uprooted from twenty cities and from about four hundred villages. Also, about seven hundred thousand Palestinians i.e. 66% of the residents of Palestine became homeless. This was the complete deterioration of the Palestinian society with all its components and bases. It has led to the emergence of a new phenomenon in the Palestinian society which is the Palestinian Refugees Camps which spread in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and neighboring countries: Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and the rest of the world. These camps which bear witness to the catastrophe, homelessness and uprooting of Palestinians from their lands and homeland, symbolized their daily sufferings on all levels: cultural, social,

economic, and political. They are still waiting for a political decision to put an end to their pain and suffering that was promised to them by the international community, although the United Nations General Assembly adopts resolution 194 (III), resolving that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date” (UN, 1948). In short, in the human history, there is no crime that is as brutal as the crime of forcing Palestinians out of their homelands in 1948 at the hands of the Zionist gangsters; however, this was later called the Palestinian Nakba (Sayegh, 1983. Kana’na, 2000. Banat, 2014a). This will lead to a more pessimistic orientation among Palestinian refugees.

Findings showed that employed Palestinians report a more optimistic orientation in their daily life than unemployed participants. Sociologically, Karl Marx (1844) had pointed out in his social theory about the significance of the economic aspect in the social structure and its role in controlling all aspects of the society (Banat, 2012). Economic gives independence and social status. Thus, this is regardless of the harsh living conditions in the Palestinian society as a result of the high rate of unemployment and poverty under the on-going Israeli occupation.

On the economic level, most Palestinians experience harsh conditions as they cannot work or bring food to their children. Since 1996, Israel has imposed a series of closures by preventing Palestinians, who earn their living by working inside Israel, from going to their jobs. They were replaced by tens of thousands of workers imported from Romania and Thailand (Said, 2006).

Most parts of the infrastructure were destroyed in the Palestinian territories like electricity, water, and health services. The destruction was not limited to the offices of the Palestinian National Authority which Israel considered as a gang of terrorists, but it also targeted and included those that are related to the civil authority like Labor and Education ministries and health centers (MacAskill, 2002).

Additionally, the statistics of Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2014) reflects the highest percentage of poverty and the difficult socio-economic conditions in Palestine in general and in the refugee camps in particular. Here, 47.5% of the refugee families are under risk of poverty, which is as a result of the high rate of unemployment; high fertility rate; the large family size; and the high dependency rate (Banat, 2014b). This would surely decrease Lo and leads to a more pessimistic orientation among Palestinians.

The study results also revealed that religion and educational level do not indicate any significant difference in Lo among Palestinians. This indicates that Lo is not very much influenced by these variables and is more likely to be affected by other factors other than religion and educational level.

Finally, an inverse relationship was found between age and Lo. Furthermore, optimism declines substantially among aged Palestinians. According to Chowdhury et al. (2014), increasing age usually heralds an array of negative life events including bereavement, reduced social networks, a decline in physical health and cognitive function, leisure, and together with an inevitable time horizon foreshortening. While optimism in younger adults seems to be related, at least in part, to have a better life than their parents, it takes into consideration their most tragic experience under Israeli occupation which is the longest one in the history of human being after sixty-eight years of the Nakba (Catastrophe). In this context, Louw et al. (2012) argued that the younger generation needs to be inspired by the mature generation, and shared experiences and knowledge need to be integrated across the age groups. In addition, appropriate stimuli need to be created for the younger generation. It would be beneficial to devote greater attention to the systematic assessment of different perceptions and experiences of creativity and innovation across the age groups. Therefore, the findings of the current study are similar to some findings in the related studies and it disagreed with others as well.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LO is an excitingly diverse subject, incorporating many aspects of life. LO addresses individual's global expectancies for the future. People are filled up with many life expectations. Some of these expectations will be positive versus negative outcomes in a conflicted society. The most horrifying conditions - over unemployment, poverty, and starvation - which Israel imposed as part of its occupation practices and the siege policy against Palestinians increased the pessimistic orientation in their life. Thus, this is because Palestinian would find himself thrown out of this life and isolated from all that is surrounding him and away from his fellow Palestinians, parents, brothers, and sisters. The present study shed light on the pervasive nature of LO in the Palestinian occupied society, where far less attention has been devoted to the empirical test of such assumptions. The implications of the current study will be helpful for sociologists, educators, and family counselors in many prospective. Based on the findings and conclusions in this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Sociologists, educators, and family counselors and others with the necessary expertise should be consulted and co-opted in promoting a more optimistic LO among Palestinians.
2. Policymakers and curriculum developers should give the concept of LO the utmost importance in the Palestinian curriculum.
3. Moreover, a comparative study of LO among Palestinian Diaspora should be stimulated.
4. A cross-sectional study would be interesting for more understanding of LO in different cultures.

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*I*ntellectum valde ama - Ama intensamente la inteligencia, expresión tomada de San Agustín (*Ep.* 120, III, 13, 4), y título del presente libro-homenaje al profesor Octavio Uña, reúne tres centenares de colaboraciones - estudios, semblanzas, poemas e investigaciones sociales -, elaborados por profesores, investigadores, escritores, poetas, y artistas, en su mayoría compañeros, alumnos y amigos del ilustre zamorano, con motivo del merecido homenaje a quien ha sido, es y seguirá siendo siempre referente cultural por sus enciclopédicos conocimientos, investigaciones y publicaciones académicas, y artísticos versos.

Sabedores de su estima, afición y pasión por los libros, la presente obra expresa por sí misma de forma completa aquellos principios, virtudes y actitudes encarnados en la figura del excelente profesor. Sus múltiples facetas no solo alcanzan al catedrático, investigador y escritor, sino al sabio, maestro y amigo. Escudriñador de la realidad, observador profundo de los hechos sociales y tejedor de un discurso erudito, hermoso y verdadero, con múltiples elementos tomados de la sociología, la historia, la política, la literatura y los puntuales acontecimientos, que de algún modo han moldeado su mente y su ánimo.

Más de un lector, llegado a este punto, seguramente se pregunte: ¿quién es Octavio Uña? Veamos con brevedad algunas pinceladas de esa su desbordante biografía. Octavio es un hombre sosegado, de mirada cálida, expresiva y luminosa, de sólida formación, colmado de erudición y rebosantes conocimientos desde Hammurabi a esta parte, fruto de una ingente tarea intelectual. Como hijo de la Castilla más profunda, Octavio es un alma libre - "libre como ave que vuela", así dice él -, creativa e intensa. Heroico y hondamente humano, defensor de la honestidad de las cotidianas tareas, el respeto a la ley como base de la vida en común y la defensa de la verdad. "Magis amica veritas".



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