Name(s)	Project Number
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Project Title
The Glass Is Half Full: The Effect of Age on Optimism

Abstract

Objectives/Goals
The goal of the project is to determine whether or not the age of a person has an effect on their "Total Optimism" score on Dr. Martin Seligman's optimism scale. The result of the experiment would also relate to the validity of the concept of "Learned Optimism"

Methods/Materials
There were three age groups for the experiment: teenage (13-19), adult (20-59) and senior citizens (60+). I gave 20 people in each age group the optimism test, designed by Dr. Martin Seligman, Ph.D. It has 48 questions, 8 on each of the six main sub-divisions of optimism which combine to form the Total Optimism score. The Total Optimism score is what I used to determine overall optimism or pessimism.

Results
I found three significant trends in the data: 1)Teenagers are far more pessimistic than adults and seniors, who scored about the same, 2)Teenagers had a far smaller range of scores in most of the sub-divisions of optimism, and 3) All three age groups averaged a score of "Very Pessimistic." These results caused me to reject my hypothesis that the oldest group would be the least optimistic.

Conclusions/Discussion
I believe that the explanations for all three of these trends lie in the concept of learned optimism. Learned optimism is the idea that a person's life experience plays a role in making a person optimistic or pessimistic.It is likely the pessimism is caused by teenagers learning of and facing situations for which they are not ready. The smaller range of scores in teenagers is probably because they have not had as many life experiences which may cause their optimism levels to change and therefore making the range larger. The overall pessimism may be a result of the general negative social climate of the world we live in. These results indicate that learned optimism is a large factor in determining our overall optimism.

Summary Statement
The purpose of the project is to determine whether or not a person's optimism levels vary with age.

Help Received
My Grandma gave surveys to her senior friends and my family helped me score the 60+ surveys I used.