

# Strengthening Hope and Psychosocial Competencies Within Education Communities in Muslim Societies

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## Abstract

This article is based on a study examining hope among a group of teachers, university students, and instructors in educational contexts in Muslim societies. It utilizes a measure of perceived hope and examines correlates to include forgiveness attitudes, emotional regulation, gratitude, and meaning making to understand their importance in the local context. The study contributes to understanding components of psychosocial wellbeing, especially hope in development education and ways it interacts with other competencies. The empirical research results suggest significant correlations between the variables and significant differences between males and females, age groups, and students versus educators. Multiple regression analyses also suggest a strong prediction of having gratitude on perceived hope, followed by meaning making, emotional regulation, and forgiveness having the lowest prediction value. As a quantitative study, it has limitations and the results cannot be generalized to the whole population. Nevertheless, it has implications for social and personal development as well as social policies that support hope to motivate people to create change and pursue better futures.

## Keywords

youth and hope, Muslim youth, education in Muslim societies, human and child development

## Introduction

Hope plays a crucial role in shaping educational policy by fostering a positive and forward-thinking environment for both students and educators. When hope is integrated into educational policies, educators can inspire students to overcome obstacles and strive for excellence in their personal, academic, and professional lives. With the increase in global pandemics, conflicts, and climate uncertainties, hope is critical in education policy (Bourn, 2021). Scholarly work on hope and its role in education highlights promoting resilience, and social emotional learning including the prevention of conflicts and building peace (Burde & King, 2023; Webb, 2013).

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Hope is also a necessity and a condition to proactively move on beyond crisis especially in post-wars and conflicts. Despite the current hopeless conditions across the globe, there is an opportunity for changing the perceptions of hope as an approach grounded in the power of people to plan and execute innovative solutions for the future. Exploring the attitudes of university students and educators on hope in Muslim societies extends the conversation to educational environments and to societies in the Global South. The study contributes to the larger discourse on education transformation and informs experts, policy makers, and researchers on the importance of a system-wide approach to change (Young & Lewis, 2015). Educational environments, such as higher education institutions, are ideal spaces to increase hope and rally people despite the challenge of applying it in daily activities. This study includes participants from Muslim societies, namely, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Tanzania, Kenya, India, Bosnia, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, and Mauritius.

In educational settings, previous research suggests that integrating hope as part of education policy, curriculum, and a psychosocial wellbeing agenda improves academic achievement and overall avoidance of unsafe behaviors by youth and equips them with skills to navigate their experiences better (Chemers et al., 2001; Durlak et al., 2011; Zins et al., 2004). This study on hope is unique in its contribution to new knowledge on psychosocial wellbeing as well as situating hope as an integral part of a social and educational reform agenda for peaceful societies. It adds empirical knowledge on psychosocial wellbeing in the target Muslim societies especially among educators in secondary schools as well as university instructors and their students because the perception of hope may function as a catalyst for change for individuals and their communities and contribute to general wellbeing (Greenaway et al., 2016; Kirmani et al., 2015). Finally, this study is unique in its ability to report on participants in Muslim societies and as a result increase our understanding of students and educators in these contexts (Al-khalili, 2016).

## **Research Review**

### *Definitions of Hope*

Hope is multidisciplinary and includes cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. When asking “What is hope?,” scholars and practitioners agree on its importance, but an array of disciplines define it differently. In this study, hope is defined as an orientation to pursue innovation, critical thinking, and promote creativity and initiative. This definition emphasizes a proactive orientation of perceived hope among students and educators in Muslim societies.

Hope, also, has broader meanings and includes cultural, spiritual, and social perspectives that goes beyond glorifying the past and/or accept the unknown with optimism (Krafft, 2018). Weingarten (2010) argues that hope is not about an ideal concept that is perfect, but it encompasses the dreams, visions, wishes, and values of people. In other words, it is grounded, real, and focuses on what is possible. It also has deep cultural connotations and can be a catalyst for bringing people together in shared spaces.

Hope is proactive and focuses on the pursuit of societal justice and is a virtue applicable to politics, economy, and society (Zournazi, 2002). Hope is also an expectation for things to change for the better (Feldman and Snyder, 2005; Freire, 1997). Simon (1992) further reiterates that “hope is a commitment to responsibility” (p. 4). Freire’s work on hope portrays it as a “necessary impetus in the context of our unfinishedness” (Freire, 1985, p. 127; 1998, p. 69). Concepts of reflections, dialogue, and transformation are used to describe hope suggesting multidimensional and social action-oriented views. For Freire, humans seek hope in order not to despair, this resonates in Muslim societies too especially where economic and political instabilities may easily lead people to despair especially among

Muslim youth (Skalli, 2004). Snyder et al. (1991) add that hope is about “having positive expectations toward the future. Additionally, hope involves having positive expectations, anchored by future goals, and possessing perceived ‘will’ and perceived ‘ways’ for reaching these goals, even when faced with obstacles” (Alverson, 2014, p. 10). According to Snyder there seems to be two action-oriented elements to hope which are “will and a way,” a plan, which Snyder (1995) calls a pathway and agency needed to produce high hope (Snyder, 2002).

Based on this multidimensionality of hope, Webb (2013) suggests that it is best understood as “a socially mediated human capacity with varying affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions (p. 398). He outlines five modes of hope that are relevant to the philosophy, theology, and psychology of hope and have educational implications. Those modes are “patient, critical, sound, resolute, and transformative” (p. 398). *Patient* hope is all about a future orientation that is positive and appreciative of the pathway to a better life. *Critical* hope is about the future that is unpredictable and new but is action oriented. According to Giroux (2002), critical hope is about moving forward with a future orientation and an eye for what is missing. In this case, the role of the leaders is to open the spaces for possibilities and taking responsibility “to show the way” (Webb, 2013, p. 404).

*Sound* hope is a mode of hope that is calculated and planned to avert disappointments and risk by focusing on possible gains versus losses. In this case, leaders are reality checkers to make sure expectations are not too high. *Resolute* hope is the fourth mode and is a self-regulated hope which is oriented toward the achievement of goals through willpower and self-empowerment (Webb, 2013). Educators, as leaders with high perceived hope, may create environments for students to experience high hope regardless of the external sociopolitical conditions. This is of high priority in many contexts where schools function as the only hopeful and peaceful place for youth and families (Sheehan & Rall, 2011). The last mode, according to Webb, is the *transformative* one that is beyond setting individual goals and is more about changing reality to pursue hope. It is the advocacy and mobilization for a better way of being that is political and action oriented. As Ball (2016) and Te Riele (2009) argue, the possibility of hope can be an impetus for young people to re-engage in their education through alternative learning environments. A pedagogy of hope in education, according to Te Riele (2009), is more than an individual’s wish to succeed and requires the involvement of “both teachers and students, clarifying what is hoped for and the ownership of those hopes” (p. 67). Hope can only be beneficial when it meets three criteria: it must be complex, it must be attainable, and it must be sound (Te Riele, 2009).

The literature on hope as described above stems from a state of being that is future oriented and which is a necessity in today’s political, economic, and global conditions. In the literature, there is a strong consistent suggestion that hope and positive thinking about it makes a difference in being hopeful or not (Bücker et al., 2018; Korhonen et al., 2014). One can conclude that engaging in hope and its related skills brings better physical and mental health and overall wellbeing.

### *Hope and Peacebuilding*

Hope is a teachable and learnable construct, but the related skills are not which lends itself to more research on constructs and skills that bring to higher perceived hope in education settings instead of risking the association with hopelessness (Belfer et al., 2025). Higher education and education spaces, in general, can function as windows of hope. With education offered in different and alternative ways and in marginalized communities such as refugees and the displaced, more youth are graduating high school through the support of civil societies and international organizations such as the United Nations. These educated on hope can contribute to their societies and communities and can promote peaceful living and civic life (Martin, 2018). When there is investment in higher education in protracted refugee context, conflict often decreases because individuals can bring

their skills and new knowledge back to their communities (Martin, 2018). Hope is suggested to correlate with having less desire to retaliate and more inclination to forgive in conflict areas (Halperin, 2011; Moeschberger et al., 2005).

### *Hope and Faith*

Historically, the concept of hope has been interwoven with the classical traditions and rituals. An example can be seen in Greek mythology where hope was the only thing that remained in Pandora's box after she let go of all the evils, almost as if to provide humans with comfort (as described in Bailey et al., 2007). In modern history, leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi believed in the intrinsic goodness of human nature. "His message and his pedagogy of hope aimed to educate on alternatives to violence and to offer real possibilities for transformation. He hoped that they would respond positively" (Grey, 2007, p. 15).

The world is experiencing unprecedented conditions of isolation and fear because of economic struggles, political instability, especially in poor communities, ethnic minority groups, and refugees (INEE, 2020). The Global South is experiencing unprecedented challenges caused by natural disasters, conflicts, and political unrest resulting in internal displacement, refugees, and extreme poverty such as in the case of Palestine, Yemen, and other countries in the Middle East and South Asia (UNICEF, 2021). In these societies, hope alone cannot reform education or end conflicts but empirical research on hope may increase its instrumental value in social engagement, civic life, rule of law, and promoting messages of peace and prosperity.

### *Hope and Related Competencies*

This study includes psychosocial competencies that relate to hope and strengthens its expression in people's attitudes toward life events and adversaries. A hopeful orientation strengthens positive attitudes toward forgiveness, gratitude, meaning making, and emotional regulation. This study hypothesizes that these competencies are linked and may also mediate each other. Hope is also examined in its fullest meaning using perceived hope and attitudes about it as a measure of the extent of its existence among the participants and their attitudes about it. The related competencies may be different, but this study focuses on those that relate to living with others, finding value and meaning in life as well as regulating emotions as a result of interacting with others. The following defines each one of the competencies.

**Forgiveness.** In this study, forgiveness is the ability and willingness to let go of hard feelings and the need to seek revenge from someone who has wronged the subject or committed a perceived injustice against the subject or others. Classical theorists such as Enright and Gassin (1992) define it as the "willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly hurt us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her" (p. 102). Forgiveness is also defined by Ahmed and Braithwaite (2005) to ameliorate and reduce the destructive cycle of conflict and violence between individuals and groups. Forgiveness is "the emotional replacement of (1) hot emotions of anger or fear that follow a perceived hurt or offense, or (2) ridding of the unforgiveness that follows ruminating about the transgression, by substituting positive emotions such as unselfish love, empathy, compassion, or even romantic love" (Worthington, 2001, p. 32). Nasser et al. (2014) suggest that forgiveness is a personal decision that originates from intrinsic motivation to let go, while forgiveness education promotes understanding of different perspectives and reduces stereotypes (Abu-Nimer, 2001).

**Emotional Regulation.** In this study, emotional regulation is “a process through which individuals modulate their emotions consciously and non-consciously to respond appropriately to environmental demands” (Goubet & Chryssikou, 2019, p. 1). Emotional regulation can also be automatic or controlled and may affect at one or more points the emotion producing experiences and processes (Gross, 1998). This definition is related to both positive and negative emotions and refers to one’s ability to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience, and it is found to be an essential contributor of health and wellbeing (Tamir, 2009). Emotion regulation strategies are coping strategies used for adjustment in demanding situations throughout daily life (Gross, 1998).

**Meaning Making.** Defined here as a “sense of coherence or understanding of existence, a sense of purpose in one’s life, the pursuit and attainment of worthwhile goals, and an accompanying sense of fulfillment” (Ho et al., 2010, p. 2). Frankl (1963) suggested that individuals need to develop an unclouded vision about what is important for them and what they are looking for in their life to clarify their life meaning. Although the meaning in life is a personal experience, there are also related social connections; for example, the collectivist cultural values characteristic of Eastern societies versus the individualistic ones more characteristic of Western societies (Garcia-Alandete, 2015). Having purpose and meaning in life is an essential component of humans’ wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Steger et al., 2006). Research findings suggest a positive role of sense of meaning and purpose throughout the life span and wellbeing of adolescence and adults (Kiang & Fuligni, 2010; Lerner et al., 2010). Purpose and meaning are important developmental resources for adolescents, helping youth development and healthy transition to adulthood (Burrow et al., 2010).

**Gratitude.** Gratitude is considered as “the appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to oneself and represents a general state of thankfulness and/or appreciation” (Sansone & Sansone, 2010 p. 18). It is related to pleasant feelings of experiencing a favor or benefit from others (McCullough et al., 2002). Gratitude is “a positive emotion and an important human virtue, like many of the same emotions found in the adult research, such as on hope, forgiveness, pride, contentment, optimism, inspiration, and global positive affect” (Wood et al., 2010, p. 895). Gratitude is positively related to active coping styles, perceived social support, life satisfaction, and wellbeing. Individuals who express their gratitude usually show more prosocial behaviors, adapt more coping strategies (Lin & Yeh, 2014). Gratitude intervention programs result in increased positive affect and wellbeing.

## Methods

### Participants

The study is a cross-sectional survey that included university students, faculty, and secondary education teachers. The participants were in a mix of schools and universities, some of which were public and some private institutions. In total, 24% were students attending universities and 76.4% were educators teaching in schools and universities. The age groups were regrouped into two (based on analysis of variance of differences): the first is 18–34 (78.7%,  $n = 6495$ ) and the second is 35 and above (21.3,  $n = 1762$ ). As for the gender of the participants, there were slightly more females (57.4%) than males (42.2%).

The participants were from the 13 mentioned Muslim societies (Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Tanzania, Kenya, India, Bosnia, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, and Mauritius). Sampling was random in some contexts and convenient in others depending on access to schools and permits to conduct the study. Data was collected between October 2019 and March 2021.

## Measures

The measures selected were reviewed for their fit in the sociocultural contexts, and to ensure accuracy, the measures were translated into more than 10 languages using standard translations and back translations method to validate. All the local research coordinators and data collectors were native speakers and received training on human subject protection before the data collection process began.

**Perceived Hope.** To measure hope and attitudes toward it, the Perceived Hope Scale (PHS) was utilized along with others measuring psychosocial skills and competencies. The PHS was developed by Krafft et al. (2017) and included six items. The focus on perceived hope stems from its simplicity and length which makes it easier to translate into multiple languages. The response format ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). In this study and across all countries, this scale had a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.79$ . It is concise and designed for ordinary people according to Krafft (2021). Item examples included:

- In my life, hope outweighs anxiety.
- My hopes are usually fulfilled.

**Forgiveness.** Forgiveness was measured by a scale originally developed by Tangney et al. (1999), modified by Nasser and Abu-Nimer (2014) and further aligned in its structure and number of items in this study. This scale has nine items, and the response format ranged from 1 (*Extremely unlikely*) to 4 (*Extremely likely*). This scale had Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.75$  in this study across all countries. Item example included:

- Imagine that one of your friends starts a nasty rumor about you that is not true. As a result, people begin treating you worse than they have in the past. Imagine a young man from your town who was almost engaged to one of your sisters broke up with her.

**Emotion Regulation.** Emotion regulation was measured by a scale adapted from Gross and John's (2003) 10-item scale designed to measure respondents' tendency to regulate their emotions in cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. We used eight items in our survey. Response format ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). This scale had Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.66$  in this study across all countries. Item examples included:

- When I want to feel more positive emotion, I change the way I am thinking about the situation.
- I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I am in.

**Meaning Making.** This construct was measured with the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Steger et al. (2006). MLQ is a 10-item questionnaire designed to measure two dimensions of meaning in life: (a) presence of meaning (how much respondents feel their lives have meaning), and (b) search for meaning (how much respondents strive to find meaning and understanding in their lives). Response format ranged from 1 (*not at all true*) to 4 (*very true*). This scale had Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.71$  in this study across all countries. Item examples included:

- I am always looking to find my life's purpose.
- I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful.

**Gratitude.** To measure gratitude, the Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form was used, developed by McCullough et al. (2002). Response format was based on 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). In the present study, this scale had Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.59$  across all countries. After reviewing the Cronbach alpha for the six items it was determined that the last item was significantly impacting the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and it was determined to exclude this item from the total scale which increased the alpha to 0.59. As a result, the item was dropped from the analysis. Item examples included:

- I am grateful to a wide variety of people.
- If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.

## Procedures

As mentioned, all data collectors went through an online training on the ethical conduct of research and protection of human subjects as requested by the Institutional Review Board. They were read a statement about the voluntarily nature of this study and consent was received from every participant. The data collectors reached out to universities and surveyed instructors who agreed to participate. They also asked students around campuses and selected those who were in their third or fourth year to ensure they were eligible to participate. The instructors' group was smaller because of their limited availability while schoolteachers were more accessible to data collectors. Paper and pencil surveys and answer sheets were attached to the surveys and the responses were recorded on the sheets. In some cases, participants transferred their responses from the survey to the sheets. Identification codes were also assigned to every participant to keep personal information confidential.

## Analytical Methods

The focus of this study, as mentioned earlier, is on perceived hope and psychosocial competencies. More specifically, meaning making, gratitude, forgiveness, and emotional regulation as possible predictors of the perceived hope items. First, we conducted descriptive statistics and distributions of means and counts by country (Table 1). Second, Pearson's correlation was used to examine the direction and the strength of the relationship between the various scales (see Table 2). Third, we completed *t* test analyses to understand mean differences between demographic groups and their agreements and disagreements with each of the variables (Table 3). The independent *t* test was utilized to examine mean differences in hope, meaning making, gratitude, emotional regulation, and forgiveness based on age, source, and gender. Independent *t* test and multivariate analysis of variance were used to examine groups differences on these scales. Fourth, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict what competencies best predict perceived hope. Statistical tests were conducted at a two-tailed alpha 0.05 level of significance. Those showing significant association with the PHS are presented in Table 4.

## Results

### Correlations

Table 1 provides a summary of the general counts and means from each country on the PHS and the others. Examining the means suggested that countries differed in the way they scored each scale. Kenya and Kyrgyzstan had higher scores on few of the scales while Jordan was highest on meaning making. Tanzania also scored higher on several of the scales. Table 2 presents the correlation coefficient between hope and the other four scales. It also displays the means, SD, and the range for each scale this study is

**Table I.** Means by Country.

		N	Mean (range)	SD
Hope	1. Bosnia	1299	17.92 (2–24)	3.822
	2. Indonesia	638	18.29 (6–24)	3.031
	3. Jordan	406	18.74 (7–24)	3.328
	4. Kyrgyzstan	662	20.44 (10–24)	3.094
	5. Morocco	464	18.24 (3–24)	3.644
	6. Tanzania	365	20.36 (5–24)	2.862
	7. Tatarstan	102	18.36 (6–24)	2.639
	8. Bangladesh	352	18.50 (5–24)	3.179
	9. Algeria	439	18.43(6–24)	3.536
	10. India	627	19.54 (6–24)	3.090
	11. Kenya	536	20.52 (8–24)	2.877
	12. Mauritius	372	18.37 (6–24)	2.908
	13. Sudan	411	19.87 (7–24)	2.801
	14. Malaysia	169	19.50 (12–24)	2.750
	15. USA	37	20.35 (13–24)	2.918
	Total	6879	19.01 (2–24)	3.395
Gratitude	1. Bosnia	1335	15.67	3.265
	2. Indonesia	670	16.37	2.610
	3. Jordan	405	15.06	2.397
	4. Kyrgyzstan	679	16.48	2.391
	5. Morocco	609	14.69	2.515
	6. Tanzania	541	17.33	2.461
	7. Tatarstan	126	15.33	2.517
	8. Bangladesh	348	15.15	2.218
	9. Algeria	601	15.20	2.389
	10. India	706	15.91	2.502
	11. Kenya	842	16.62	2.476
	12. Mauritius	418	15.47	2.547
	13. Sudan	456	16.07	2.318
	14. Malaysia	180	16.92	2.555
	15. USA	53	17.92	2.448
	Total	7969	15.92	2.707
Forgive	1. Bosnia	1374	21.01	4.411
	2. Indonesia	674	24.57	3.880
	3. Jordan	416	21.27	4.496
	4. Kyrgyzstan	683	23.14	4.782
	5. Morocco	658	22.42	4.922
	6. Tanzania	560	26.35	4.757
	7. Tatarstan	126	23.10	4.086
	8. Bangladesh	375	21.95	5.517
	9. Algeria	654	20.89	4.616
	10. India	709	19.32	5.089
	11. Kenya	865	22.37	6.340
	12. Mauritius	428	21.29	5.643
	13. Sudan	484	22.02	4.610
	14. Malaysia	182	23.75	5.211
	15. USA	57	23.12	5.500
	Total	8245	22.18	5.220
Meaning making	1. Bosnia	1374	28.48	4.849
	2. Indonesia	674	30.55	3.981

(continued)

**Table 1.** Continued

		N	Mean (range)	SD
	3. Jordan	418	31.25	4.796
	4. Kyrgyzstan	683	30.64	4.305
	5. Morocco	652	29.08	5.582
	6. Tanzania	560	33.04	4.081
	7. Tatarstan	126	26.82	5.251
	8. Bangladesh	373	30.06	4.742
	9. Algeria	652	29.40	5.178
	10. India	709	29.76	4.419
	11. Kenya	864	31.89	4.448
	12. Mauritius	428	28.47	3.991
	13. Sudan	481	31.52	4.483
	14. Malaysia	182	30.56	3.994
	15. USA	57	29.11	4.216
	Total	8233	30.14	4.829
Emotional regulation	1. Bosnia	1366	23.13	4.17555
	2. Indonesia	674	24.90	3.01729
	3. Jordan	417	24.29	3.79183
	4. Kyrgyzstan	683	26.83	3.65167
	5. Morocco	647	23.43	4.21552
	6. Tanzania	559	24.45	4.09346
	7. Tatarstan	126	22.27	3.33647
	8. Bangladesh	360	25.96	4.25014
	9. Algeria	651	23.22	4.10074
	10. India	708	24.31	3.71860
	11. Kenya	864	24.43	3.65606
	12. Mauritius	425	23.56	3.34292
	13. Sudan	480	23.37	3.50119
	14. Malaysia	180	24.68	3.00983
	15. USA	57	23.95	3.55277
	Total	8197	23.90	3.90465

**Table 2.** Correlation Matrix.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Hope	1.00				
2. Gratitude	.49**	1.00			
3. Forgiveness	.12**	.11**	1.00		
4. Meaning making	.46**	.37**	.12**	1.00	
5. Emotional regulation	.46**	.35**	.10**	.33**	1.00
Mean	19.01	15.92	22.18	30.14	23.90
SD	3.39	2.71	5.22	4.83	3.90
Range	2–24	5–20	3–36	1–40	2–32

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

based on. The results suggest that there are significant positive correlations between hope and gratitude ( $r = .49, p < .01$ ), meaning making ( $r = .46, p < .01$ ), emotional regulation ( $r = .46, p < .01$ ), and forgiveness ( $r = .12, p < .01$ ). In this study, participants with greater hope also reported greater gratitude, positive meaning making, higher emotional regulation, and higher forgiveness attitudes. The results show that

**Table 3.** Group Comparison (Mean and SD).

Groups	Hope	Gratitude	Forgiveness	Meaning making	Emotional regulation
Gender ( <i>t, p</i> )	-3.60, <.001	-10.2, <.001	5.30, <.001	1.24, >.05	-6.91, <.001
Male	18.85 (3.41)	15.56 (2.68)	22.51 (5.27)	30.21 (4.95)	23.58 (3.93)
Female	19.14 (3.37)	16.21 (2.70)	21.90 (5.16)	30.09 (4.72)	24.18 (3.85)
Age ( <i>t, p</i> )	9.08, <.001	4.02, <.001	6.08, <.001	.14, >.05	5.74, <.001
18–34	18.79 (3.47)	15.86 (2.75)	22.00 (5.18)	30.14 (4.84)	23.78 (3.90)
35 and above	19.64 (3.06)	16.15 (2.52)	22.85 (5.31)	30.16 (4.80)	24.4 (3.87)
Source ( <i>t, p</i> )	9.08, <.001	4.02, <.001	6.08, <.001	.137, >.05	5.67, <.001
Students	18.72 (3.50)	15.79 (2.80)	22.25 (4.94)	30.00 (4.80)	23.76 (3.93)
Educators	19.44 (3.13)	16.05 (2.60)	22.10 (5.49)	30.29 (4.85)	24.05 (3.88)

**Table 4.** Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis: Predictors of Hope.

Factor	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Gratitude	.49	.239	.30	27.45	<.001	2084.48	<.0010
Meaning	.57	.329	.26	24.52	<.001	1624.35	<.0001
Emotional regulation	.62	.382	.25	23.40	<.001	1364.99	<.0001
Source	.62	.388	-.06	-4.50	<.001	1050.74	<.0001
Forgiveness	.62	.388	.03	3.15	<.010	843.85	<.0001
Age	.62	.389	.03	2.32	<.050	704.57	<.0001

gratitude accounted for 24% of the variance in perceived hope, and emotional regulation and meaning making each accounted for 21% of the variance in hope while forgiveness accounted for less than 2% of the variance. This suggests high correlations on most of the variables with perceived hope, supporting the established research on the links between hope and other competencies that contribute to wellbeing.

### Group Comparisons

The independent *t* test was used to compare the mean scores for hope, gratitude, forgiveness, meaning making, and emotional regulation based on gender, age groups (18–24 and 35 and above), and university students versus educators. Table 3 reports the results of the *t* test, which shows that males and females were significantly different on all scales except for meaning making, with females reporting higher scores on hope, gratitude, and emotional regulation and lower scores on forgiveness. Regarding age, the results suggest significant differences in hope, gratitude, forgiveness, and emotional regulation based on age. No difference was found on meaning making. In this study, participants aged 35 and above reported higher hope, gratitude, forgiveness, and emotional regulation. Lastly, the results in Table 3 show a statistically significant difference in hope, gratitude, meaning making, and emotional regulation while no significant results on forgiveness among students versus educators. More specifically, university students reported lower hope, gratitude, meaning making, and lower emotional regulation suggesting that older people have the stamina and experiences to be more hopeful or at least they perceive it this way.

### Multiple Regression: Predictors of Hope

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine which competencies best predict participants perceived hope. Seven factors were used in this analysis, and they include age, gender, source (grouping), emotional regulation, gratitude, meaning making, and forgiveness. The results of the multiple regression

analysis revealed that six of these factors were significant predictors of hope ( $R = .62, f = 704.57, p < .001$ ). Table 4 presents these factors in order of their strength. Table 4 suggests that gratitude was the most significant predictor of hope (beta = .30 and  $p < .001$ ), accounting for 24% of the variance in perceived hope. The second was meaning making (beta = .26,  $p < .001$ ) accounting for an additional 9% of the variance in perceived hope. The third predictor was emotional regulation (beta = .25,  $p < .001$ ) accounting for an additional 5.3%. The next three factors that emerged as significant predictors of hope were source, forgiveness, and age. However, these three factors accounted for less than 1% of the variance in perceived hope thus indicating while significant their contribution is very minimal. This means that, overall, older participants who were not students, with higher gratitude, higher meaning making, higher emotional regulation, and more forgiveness were more hopeful.

## Discussion and Conclusions

It's been suggested in previous studies that hope correlates with wellbeing factors and in some cases it may predict psychosocial health. For example, protective factors such as humor, resilience, happiness, and healthy functioning when they exist can increase hopefulness (Cann & Collette, 2014; Diener & Ryan, 2009; Feldman & Snyder, 2005; Krafft et al., 2017; Vilaythong et al., 2003). This study confirms previous research, for example, gratitude positively correlates with hope and forgiveness among the participating groups (educators and students) in Muslim education institutions. It correlated with pride, contentment, optimism, inspiration, and global positive affect in a previous study by Wood et al. (2010). As these are promising results, nevertheless, further research on the measure of gratitude may be needed because of its low reliability in this study (Cronbach's alpha, 0.59). The study also suggests positive patterns in direction and strength of correlations between hope and other competencies. The study suggests that women had significantly higher scores on all except for forgiveness where they scored lower while differences were not significant on meaning making. Older people, who are 35 and above, had higher scores on all except for meaning making. Further, judging by the high means in each country, the results reflect a hopeful agenda despite the economic and political hardship experienced in countries such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Sudan among others.

The results suggest high significance and power of constructs such as gratitude, emotional regulation, meaning making, and forgiveness in predicting hope which may be useful in guiding educational interventions and policy makers to include these competencies in peacebuilding and psychosocial programs in and out of schools. A hopeful orientation that is transformative (according to Webb, 2013) requires internal strength and a positive outlook on life. In order to achieve that more programs should be designed to further an agenda of hope as the younger generations, in Muslim societies, navigate new challenges in the 21st century.

In a study on university students, Saroughi (2019) suggested that emotional regulation was a mediator for other variables that predicted hope such as gratitude and a sense of belonging. O'Sullivan (2011) also suggests similar results and interactions and provides evidence that hope is the best predictor of life satisfaction. There is also a link between hope and optimism (as a hopeful future orientation only) but there is less work on the links between hope and other important competencies that are needed to reach hope such as creativity, innovation, and social activism which are all action oriented. Eagleton (2015) suggests that optimism does not differ from pessimism because both are speculations and just mere opinions. She continues that hope has the potential to be an active force that may change reality and bring a new future and transformation. This study and its results strengthen the support for the notion that hope is not only a vague and an optimistic state of mind, but also it is action oriented and understanding what is needed for it to survive, we need to believe in its power to motivate people to change. Webb (2013) writes: "Hope is not a desire plus a probability estimate grounded in a survey of the evidence, but rather a utopia plus a sense of possibility grounded in a

confidence in the powers of human agency” (Webb, 2013, p. 409). This is when competencies such as meaning making and forgiveness come into play as predictors of hope.

This study has several limitations which require further investigation and different methodology. For example, the selection of a cross-sectional survey that may only capture the mood at the time of the study is one of the shortcomings of surveying attitudes. In addition, quantitative surveys may trigger responses in ways that are desirable even though in a similar study, country differences were found on the constructs indicating a variation in the responses (Nasser et al., 2021). Even though gratitude has a low reliability of 0.59, the scales, in general, have good reliability suggesting the authenticity of the data. Another limitation is that the study and its data cannot be generalized and cannot represent the whole population in each society. The study and its results only represent the districts and schools/universities where Muslim communities reside and engage in education. The variation in data sources and accessibility makes a comparative study between the different countries in accurate and in appropriate.

Finally, latest world events including the Covid pandemic and human-made disasters bring to light the fears people have about the new realities we face as a global community. The pandemic heightened the global disparities we see between rich and poor countries and the Global North versus Global South. Nevertheless, education functions as a catalyst for peaceful change and for transformation (Webb, 2003). Education scholars believe this type of studies may motivate more international solidarities across religious, ethnic, and class divides (Vlieghe, 2019). This study supports educators and change agents to take responsibility on working with students on wellbeing and social emotional learning as a model for a just peaceful living (<https://CASEL.org>). There is enough evidence to support socioemotional education that includes self and emotional regulation as a strong predictor of academic achievement and peaceful attitudes toward others (Nasser et al., 2021; Sahranavard et al., 2018). This study and future ones in Muslim societies will bring focus to these important life competencies including hope. Further research to examine the results overtime is needed as well as an in-depth examination of the power of hope and other forms and measures of it.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Ethics Approval**

This study complies with ethical research standards. It went through an Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Indiana University. Informed consent has been obtained from participants. Data files are available publicly at the Harvard depository and other public sites.

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