

**THE ROLE OF GENDER IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
HOPE AND PRIMAL BELIEFS**

by

**MATSON MEYER**

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**SUPERVISOR: PROF THARINA GUSE**

30 November 2023

## DECLARATION

I declare that

### **THE ROLE OF GENDER IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOPE AND PRIMAL BELIEFS**

is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Mr Matson Meyer



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SIGNATURE

**31 November 2023**

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DATE

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

I, **Matson Meyer (96070812)**, obtained the applicable research ethics approval for the research titled, **The Role of Gender in The Relationship Between Hope and Primal Beliefs**, on 31 March 2023 (reference number: HUM033/0922) from the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee (APPENDIX A).

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## ABSTRACT

Against the background of positive psychology, this study examines two conceptualisations of hope, namely dispositional hope and perceived hope, and their possible relationship with individual world beliefs (primal beliefs or primals) to better understand the complexities of human feeling, thought, and behaviour. A recent extensive scientifically motivated endeavor has identified 26 primals, and it has been hypothesised that primal world beliefs affect a variety of outcomes that are relevant to many psychological constructs. This study expands this exploration by examining the relationship between hope and primal beliefs and considers gender as a possible moderating variable in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs. Gender is an important universal psychological and social construct and defines an individual's identification, identity, and social perception of being a woman or a man and could influence how an individual perceives and experiences hope and different beliefs. The South African data collected in 2021 and presented here, forms part of a yearly online cross-sectional survey, called the Hope-Barometer Survey. The sample consisted of 563 South African adults (53.8% female and 46.2% male), aged 18 to 75 ( $M = 38.87$ ,  $SD = 14.52$ ), and comprised of 279 white participants (49.6%), 268 black participants (47.6%), 8 Indian participants (1.4%), 5 coloured participants (.9%), and 3 participants who identified as 'other' race (.5%). Following the results of a correlation and multiple regression research analysis, the findings suggest that although a strong, positive relationship exists between hope and primal beliefs, the correlation is not moderated by gender. This implies that the strength and the direction of the relationship and the interaction between hope and primal beliefs are not influenced or dependent on gender. It is recommended that additional studies between hope and gender, primal beliefs and gender, and hope in relation to primals

and other possible moderating demographics are considered and explored. This might open new scholarly directions and provide empirical ways to advance the trajectory of society and individual well-being.

**KEYWORDS:** Dispositional hope, perceived hope, primal beliefs, gender, South Africa

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AND OVERVIEW**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Positive psychology is a field of psychology that focuses on the study of human well-being, flourishing, and the factors that contribute to a fulfilling and meaningful life (Wissing, 2020). It emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the traditional emphasis on the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness in psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Key elements comprise, for example, positive emotions, character strengths and virtues, and relationships. Positive psychology aims to provide practical tools and interventions for individuals to enhance their mental health and overall quality of life (Wissing et al., 2020). It has applications in various fields, including therapy, education, organisational psychology, and self-improvement, with the goal of helping people lead happier and more meaningful lives. Positive psychology seeks to explore and promote the positive aspects of the human experience and one such aspect is hope. This study intends to examine data collected during the International Hope-Barometer research program in 2021 to better understand hope and how it relates to individuals' belief system about the world (primal beliefs) and whether this relationship is influenced by the demographic variable, gender.

### **1.2 Background, Rationale, and Problem Statement**

Traditionally, research in psychology, has been characterised by a focus on what is wrong with individuals, and services and interventions to remedy such deficits (Seligman, 2002). However, recognition and the essential need to move beyond this deficient-focused framework, has gained momentum (Ivtzan et al., 2016). The need to understand optimal psychological functioning that supports

healthy development and psychological strengths, such as hope, has surged (Goodmon et al., 2016; Seligman, 2002). Hope is an important positive psychological construct and basic human phenomenon (Krafft & Walker, 2018). It entails a positive belief about future outcomes and is associated with positive mental health (Alarcon et al., 2013; Krafft & Walker, 2018). There exists a plethora of research on hope throughout the world. However, a recent European economic crisis, presented an opportunity to collect data on hope and other attitudes among the public by initiating the international Hope-Barometer program and its findings to possibly counteract negative public discourse about the future. The online questionnaire surveyed people about two conceptualisations of hope, namely dispositional hope and perceived hope. In addition, data was collected pertaining to various traits found to be associated with living a good life and demographics, such as gender. This study examines the two categorisations of hope, that is, dispositional hope and perceived hope.

Dispositional hope, as defined by Snyder (1994) is a psychological concept that refers to an individual's enduring, relatively stable, and general outlook on life and their belief in the possibility of achieving their goals and aspirations. It is not just about hoping for a specific outcome in a particular situation but rather a more pervasive and fundamental trait related to optimism and a positive attitude toward the future. The author defined the key components of hope as pathways thinking and agency. Individuals with high levels of dispositional hope tend to be more optimistic, goal-oriented, and resilient in the face of challenges (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2014). They are more likely to view problems as surmountable and believe in their capacity to shape their own futures. Dispositional hope has been associated with various positive outcomes, including better mental health, increased motivation, and higher

levels of life satisfaction (Arnau et al., 2007; Cankaya, 2016; Carver et al., 2010; Chang, 1998; Guse & Shaw, 2018; Herrero, 2014; Krafft et al., 2018; Krafft & Walker, 2018; Perrig-Chiello et al., 2018; Rand et al., 2020; Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991a; Villar & Villamizar, 2012; Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015).

According to Krafft et al. (2019), perceived hope is a more expansive conceptualization of hope. These scholars contended that the dispositional concept of hope addresses only one aspect of understanding hope. In particular, when people feel they have less personal control over their success and won't be able to cope by using their own resources, it is vital to recognize the subjectivity of individualistic experiences and perceptions of hope (Krafft et al., 2021).

According to Slezáková et al. (2018), perceived hope is characterized as a sense of assurance in how occurrences or events will play out, regardless of predictions based on computed probabilities. In other words, perceived hope is linked to an optimistic perspective even when expectations are low, or the individual wishing has little control over the result. In other words, perceived hope is linked to a good outlook for the future, even when expectations are modest, or the individual wishing has little control over the result. This emotional aspect suggests that perceived hope is more complex than dispositional hope since it takes the form of a belief or trust. In addition to cognition, it also largely relies on transcendence and spirituality elements that enable people to reach for something more than themselves to achieve and keep hope, particularly in situations where events are out of their control (Slezáková & Prosek, 2018).

Krafft et al. (2023b) stressed the significance of social support from friends and family members and how good relationships could increase hope in addition to faith in a higher power. Perceived hope has been associated with numerous

elements of well-being and living a positive and prosperous life (Flores-Lucas et al., 2023; Guse & Shaw, 2018; Krafft, 2014; Kraft et al., 2021; Marujo, 2021).

Despite hope being explored by the international Hope-Barometer, the survey included the examination of individuals' primal beliefs, as Clifton (2020) found that these beliefs could shape various feelings, thoughts, and behaviour, including dispositional hope and perceived hope. Clifton et al. (2019) developed a comprehensive model about our world-beliefs and coined it primal beliefs or 'primals'. Primal beliefs are the general beliefs a person has about the world, for example, 'good versus bad', 'safe versus dangerous', 'enticing versus dull', and 'alive versus mechanical'. The authors explored the dynamics and mechanisms of primals and how these beliefs interact with each other and with other psychological constructs. In other words, they asked how beliefs about the world could contribute and relate to constructs, such as hope.

To better understand hope and its correlates, this study considers the relationship between hope and individuals' basic understanding of the world (primal beliefs). Furthermore, how do personal characteristics, such as gender affect these views? Does gender play a role in one's experience of hope or one's beliefs about the world, and how does gender interplay in the possible relationship between hope and primal beliefs? Research on gender differences in hope has been inconsistent. Demirli et al. (2014) examined the causality between hope and subjective well-being, with additional variables, such as gender, and found significance in the relationships between the variables. Contrary to this finding, a study by Dargan et al. (2021) found no gender differences in levels of hope between females and males. Considering primal beliefs, Clifton et al. (2019) as well as Clifton and Yaden (2021) did not examine gender specific beliefs in their studies. However, Clifton et al. (2019) noted

that females were more likely to endorse the secondary primal belief 'Alive'. It is therefore plausible to expect that the relationship between hope and specific primal beliefs, and their relationship strength, may be influenced by gender. To this end, the current study intended to explore the interconnection between an individual's views of the world and hope as a personal strength and further examines whether gender could play a role in this relationship.

This study emphasises an important area of discovery as it builds on the current knowledge of hope and embarks on a new journey to understand the interconnection between one's views of the world, one's hope, and one's gender. By doing this, the study hopes to contribute to science in a way that will benefit society, since knowledge and research in this area is limited. Additionally, hope research in South Africa, particularly how it relates to primal beliefs, is lacking. Nel (2020) stated that South Africa faces a variety of environmental challenges and that research on hope is particularly important. In addition, Clifton and Kim (2020) emphasised that primal beliefs are important to understand mental health. It is therefore justified to investigate the correlation between hope and primal beliefs among South African adults, and to also consider the possible role of gender in this relationship.

Understanding the relationships between different characteristics is crucial for several reasons, across various fields such as the social sciences. Examining the relationships between different characteristics, such as hope, primal beliefs, and gender, allow for a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of a system or phenomenon, for example, living a good life. Instead of isolating individual characteristics, understanding how they interact provides a more accurate and nuanced picture. Understanding relationships helps in predicting outcomes and controlling variables. In scientific research, for example, knowing how different



factors interact allows researchers to make predictions and design experiments to test hypotheses more effectively. In practical situations, problems are often complex and interconnected. Understanding the relationships between different characteristics helps in identifying the root causes of problems and developing more effective solutions, therapies, and interventions for the optimisation of well-being. The world is dynamic and constantly changing. Understanding the relationship between hope, primal beliefs, and gender can help individuals adapt to new circumstances, as they can anticipate the potential impacts of changes in one characteristic on others.

### **1.3 Research Question, Aim, and Objectives**

The beliefs one has about oneself, the future, and environment shape our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and help us make sense of the world (Clifton & Kim, 2020). These views may influence how one looks at and perceives the future. Existing research showed that certain world views (primal beliefs) are more strongly associated with hope (Clifton et al., 2019). However, the possibility exists that the relationship is specific and unique to each individual and their characteristics, such as whether an individual identifies as female or male, and this might influence the relation and could be further explained by gender. Specifically, will the relationship between hope and primal beliefs differ, depending on whether an individual identifies as female or male?

The study examines hope and its correlation with primal beliefs, and whether this relationship is moderated by gender. Understanding how primal beliefs relate to hope will enable researchers to make informed decisions when developing interventions to build individuals' positive psychological characteristics, such as

character strengths (Stahlmann & Ruch, 2021). This leads to the following research question, what is the role of gender in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs among South African adults? The study aims to answer the research question, and defines the research objectives, as follows:

1. To investigate the relationship between hope and primal beliefs among South African adults.
2. To examine the moderating role of gender in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs.

#### **1.4 Chapter Overview**

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 introduced and provided the background of the study. The research problem, aim, and objectives were discussed, and a justification was provided for the study's undertaking. Chapter 2 scrutinises previous scholarly work and findings on hope, primal beliefs, and gender. The study is embedded in positive psychology and relevant literature on the subject is reviewed. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology as well as the data analysis process and concludes with ethical considerations implemented for the research process. This is followed by Chapter 4 which provides the results of the statistical analyses. Chapter 5 allows for a discussion and interpretation of the results and relates it back to the literature, while Chapter 6 puts forward a summary of findings by answering the research question, acknowledging the study's limitations, and making recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: HOPE AND PRIMAL BELIEFS

### 2.1 Introduction

The discourse about fostering and maintaining hope can be found in historical and present literature, ranging from various philosophical, theological, and scientific views. However, the assumption that living a life without hope would be detrimental to humanity, seems similar across disciplines (Slezáčková et al., 2021). As a result, hope and its contribution to flourishing has become an important construct to be examined in the domain of positive psychology. Although hope is important in living a good life, no construct exists in isolation, making it imperative to not only describe and define hope but also the relationships and correlations with other facets of human psychological functioning. For example, hope might and could contribute to a person's views and beliefs about themselves and their future, and their views about the world in general, and vice versa. The latter is coined primal beliefs or 'primals' (Clifton & Kim, 2020).

In this chapter, the constructs of hope and primal beliefs are discussed. Further, the role of gender in the interrelationships between hope and primal beliefs are considered. In this study, hope and primal beliefs are examined from the perspective of positive psychology, which will first be elucidated.

### 2.2 Positive Psychology as Explanatory Framework

Positive psychology provides a key lens for the examination of hope and how one views the world. The explanatory framework presents the perspective that hope and one's beliefs about life encourages an enlargement of the well-being continuum. In addition to the identification, motivation, and treatment of psychopathology, positive psychology proposes that optimal human health could only be achieved by

balancing the importance of human pathology of the mind with that of developing aspirations and personal growth goals (Wong, 2011). It aims to impede pathology by emphasising positive character traits, experiences, and beliefs, such as a hopeful outlook towards life and the future to enhance the quality and standard of life, despite difficulties (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Wissing, 2020). Moreover, it is the scientific inquiry of helpful qualities and abilities that can assist people in aspiring to live ambitious lives, develop the best version of themselves, and raise the quality of their experiences in love, work, and play (Bretherton, 2015; Magyar-Moe et al., 2015). Accordingly, Peterson (2013) stated:

“Positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living. It is a call for psychological science and practice to be as concerned with strength as with weakness; as interested in building the best things in life as in repairing the worst; and as concerned with making the lives of normal people fulfilling as with healing pathology” (p. 3).

The underlying assumption is that treating disease alone is insufficient and that well-being must be built while paying attention to a holistic view of life’s multiple levels and domains. This includes hope and belief systems surrounding individuals, groups, communities, institutions, and ultimately the world at large (Schulenberg, 2016). Such initiatives are embedded in positive psychology and put forward to not only improve the experience and quality of life, but also help to prevent problems and decrease negativity (Kloos et al., 2019). This puts positive psychology and its focus to understand and promote well-being in a unique position to aid the comprehension and encouragement of flourishing in psychological functioning (Dekel & Taubman–Ben-Ari, 2015; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Waterman, 2013).

Hope is a construct that has gained extensive interest in the field of positive psychology. Research has consistently showed that hope is associated with well-being (Krafft et al., 2019). Recently, the role of primal beliefs in understanding human flourishing has also been examined (Clifton et al., 2019). Accordingly, these two constructs will be discussed in the following sections.

### **2.3 Hope**

Throughout history, a variety of academic fields have shown a great deal of interest in studying the distinctively human phenomenon of hope (Krafft & Walker, 2018). However, there are significant variances in theoretical models in and across different knowledge bases regarding the fundamental components of hope and the characteristics that set it apart from other constructs like optimism and self-efficacy (Krafft et al., 2019). These distinctions extend beyond the walls of academia. According to different religious, political, and cultural settings, hope is also defined and used in different ways (Krafft & Walker, 2018).

Hope is typically described in the social sciences as a favourable supposition of a future event (Krafft & Walker, 2018). Moreover, it is a positive expectation, more specifically, a desire and a belief for a particular event or occurrence to happen (Slezáčková et al., 2018). Miceli and Castelfranchi (2014) stated that hope necessitates an optimistic mindset about the development of events and situations or conditions in an individual's life or the world in general.

Despite the examination of hope by various scholars and disciplines across time, the construct is mostly described as a positive predisposition to favourable outcomes in the future (Krafft et al., 2019). In the next section, theoretical perspectives on hope, relevant to this study, will be discussed.

### 2.3.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Hope

Although most theories defined hope as a positive construct, there are divergent theories, philosophies, theological, and scientific reasoning surrounding the definition and description of hope regarding its psychological conceptualisation and basic elements (Krafft et al., 2019). Aristotle (1962) stated that a happy life is one that is consistent with one's character traits and human virtues, without the presence of hope as a human attribute. Christians point to God as the source of hope, a godlike attribute based on a belief surrounding certainty that God's love, omnipresence, and supremacy can and will ensure a good life (Godfrey, 1987; Marcel, 1978). Irrespective of religion, worthiness and moral behaviour direct hope and can be achieved by the trust and support of a kind and compassionate God (Michalson, 1999). Some historical and present definitions of hope object to hope as a personal trait, but a descendant of love. Marcel (1978), an existential philosopher, described hope as an unknown spiritual force based on the loving interaction between human beings. This formed the basis for Peterson and Seligman (2004) to include hope as a character strength. The authors described hope as being similar among different cultures, while stressing the importance of transcendence and connection with something greater than oneself, rooted in spirituality and religion.

Other theories emphasised the role of cognition in hopeful behaviour and the belief that something favourable might occur, fundamentally based on an individual's own desires, actions, and capacity (Gottschalk, 1974; Snyder, 1994; Stotland, 1969). In accordance, Fredrickson (2013) acknowledged the cognitive component of hope, but highlighted the emotional element, and again proposed that nourishment of hope is obtained by spiritual and religious practices. In addition, the characteristics and

behaviour of hope was supported by Erikson (1963) who positioned hope as a virtue contained in developmental theory, however, Erikson emphasised trust between individuals and their immediate social environment as an antecedent for a hopeful outlook, especially when one does not have sufficient resources to influence situations or experiences. These increasing number of viewpoints, scientific studies, and theoretical perspectives demonstrate that hope can be defined according to various conceptualisations. In this study, hope is conceptualised and operationalised in two ways, namely as dispositional hope and perceived hope.

### **2.3.1.1 Dispositional Hope**

Dispositional hope is a dispositional trait and a cognitive-motivational construct proposed by Snyder's (2002) hope theory. It is one of the key conceptualisations of hope and has widely been implemented in research. (Demirli et al., 2014; Gomez et al., 2015; Holloway et al., 2017). According to this theory, hope involves an intentional engagement with a belief that actions can lead to goal-achievement (Snyder, 2002). Snyder (1994) proposed a two-dimensional model of dispositional hope, defining three components that ultimately enable the reaching of goals: (1) goals; (2) pathways, the capacity to produce routes to reach a goal ('WayPower'); and (3) agency, a positive motivational state to direct towards the goal ('WillPower'). More specifically, 'WayPower' is the term used to describe people's belief in their capacity to create many, adaptable routes to their objectives, which enables them to recognise obstacles and devise solutions as they advance toward goal fulfillment. (Snyder et al., 1991a). 'WillPower' fuels a sense of agency in the pursuit of a goal, defined as goal-directed energy or determination to succeed (Snyder et al., 1991a). While pathways and agency are positively related, the two

factors are distinct, that is, a person with a strong sense of agency could lack the display of a successful planned path to reach their goals (Snyder, 1989). The reciprocal interaction between the two components, on the other hand, could provide a resulting accumulating positive experience that provides an energetic and powerful aspiration to act (Snyder, 2002).

Although hope is defined as a mental state, the model includes the possibility that it could be a temporary experience, as external factors and inconsistent occurrences across time, could play a role (Snyder et al., 1996). In addition, not reaching a goal or experiencing barriers can lead to a negative emotional reaction and negative emotions, and therefore hope could likely be a notable participant towards mental health and well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

#### **2.3.1.1.1 Goals**

The precursor to hope is the proposition or consideration to reach and aim for either the tangible and/or intangible, a 'thing', an experience or an occurrence; the realisation of something one wishes for or wants to happen or to have. Despite poor performance or excuses for not doing well, individuals still express a natural tendency or inclination to establish a goal (Snyder, 1989). Snyder (1994) found hope to be the motivational mental state by which one desires, decides, and aims for 'something' and in doing so, sets goals. People not only have the capacity to think about their goals, but they can produce pathways to reach them, as long as the goals are specific, clearly defined, challenging, and attainable (Snyder, 1994; Snyder et al., 1991b).



### **2.3.1.1.2 Pathways**

Snyder's (1994) model referred to pathways thinking as the capability to create strategies to meet goals. This component of hope is the ability to think of a possible means to an end, that is, to reach a goal. This process requires patience and persistence, and sometimes, the ability to rethink initial strategies which correlate positively with hope (Snyder, 1994). Those with raised levels of hope can generate a realistic and logical method to move closer to a goal, whereas individuals with lower levels of hope find the task more difficult, and are not able to come up with a sufficient route (Snyder et al., 1998).

### **2.3.1.1.3 Agency**

Believing that one can reach desired goals comprises the motivational component of the model. Snyder (1994) referred to this as agency thinking, as it is goal-directed determination and drives the movement towards reaching a goal. Snyder (1991b) stated that pathways and agency thinking combined as a collaboration and integration of thoughts will enable an individual to successfully complete the required tasks necessary to reach a desired goal. Positive self-talk and perseverance are thus important components of agency thinking (Snyder, 1994).

### **2.3.1.1.4 Correlates of Dispositional Hope**

A large body of scholarly work has explored and examined the associations between dispositional hope and facets of well-being. For example, it is positively related to academic and professional performance and achievement (Cankaya, 2016; Chang, 1998; Herrero, 2014; Krafft & Walker, 2018; Rand et al., 2020), athletics (Rand et al., 2020), confidence (Krafft et al., 2018), coping strategies and

coping with and adaptive approaches to stressors (Cankaya, 2016; Chang, 1998), energy levels (Snyder, 2000), forgiveness (Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015), and goal achievement (Cankaya, 2016; Chang, 1998; Krafft et al., 2018; Snyder, 2000; Snyder et al., 1991a). Perrig-Chiello et al. (2018) found dispositional hope to be positively related to happiness, while Chang (1998) and Villar and Villamizar (2012) found a positive relationship between dispositional hope and interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, dispositional hope has positive correlations with inspiration (Cankaya, 2016), life satisfaction (Cankaya, 2016; Chang, 1998; Perrig-Chiello et al., 2018; Rand et al., 2020), low levels of depression and anxiety (Arnau et al., 2007; Snyder et al., 1991a), meaning in life (Guse & Shaw, 2018; Krafft et al., 2018; Rand et al., 2020; Perrig-Chiello et al., 2018; Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015), and motivation (Herrero, 2014; Krafft et al., 2018; Snyder, 2000; Snyder et al., 1991a). Additionally, dispositional hope is positively related to optimism (Carver et al., 2010; Rand et al., 2020), personal growth (Cankaya, 2016), physical health (Cankaya, 2016), positive affect and emotions (Rand et al., 2020), problem solving (Chang, 1998; Snyder, 2000; Snyder et al., 1991a), psychological adjustment and functioning (Cankaya, 2016), and psychotherapy (Cankaya, 2016). Dispositional hope also has positive relationships with quality of life (Cankaya, 2016), relationship satisfaction (Cankaya, 2016; Villar & Villamizar, 2012), resilience (Herrero, 2014), self-efficacy (Cankaya, 2016; Snyder, 2000; Snyder et al., 1991a), self-esteem (Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015), and social capital, competence, and support (Cankaya, 2016; Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015). Therefore, dispositional hope could promote adaptive approaches towards stressful events and adversity and could serve as a viable protective factor towards the consequences of unfavourable events (Long & Gallagher, 2018). Furthermore, Snyder (1994) stressed the importance of the different ways people

approach difficult situations, moreover, the utilisation of obstacles to instil and motivate a person to reach their goals. This refers to positive coping strategies that focus on success rather than failure. The author stated that dispositional hope contributes to a shift in attention towards a resourceful, problem-solving, and adaptive mindset that promotes a sense of self-efficacy and the capacity to adjust to events, enabling well-being and personal growth. The approach, attitude, and attention to life, also allow for emphasis on meaning in life. In addition to hope's relationship with emotions and everyday life events, it has been found that hope and hope-based interventions might play an important role when faced with, during, and recovering from a medical condition (Berg et al., 2008). For example, higher levels of hope are associated with constructive adjustment, greater psychological stress and pain management, and increased motivation to recover and heal.

Dispositional hope has been found to correlate negatively with detrimental elements of well-being, for example, acting aggressively (Holloway et al., 2017), appraisal of circumstances to be unnecessary stressful (Snyder, 2000), anxiety (Arnau et al., 2007; Krafft & Walker, 2018), avoidant thoughts and strategies (Snyder, 2000), burnout (Gomez et al., 2015), depression (Arnau et al., 2007; Krafft & Walker, 2018), and depressive symptoms (Espinoza et al., 2017; Gomez et al., 2015). Additionally, studies have found that dispositional hope correlates negatively with immature defense styles (such as passive-aggression, acting out, and denial) (Holloway et al., 2017), loneliness (Slezáčková et al., 2018), negative coping mechanisms (Snyder, 2000), negative emotions and affect (Demirli et al., 2014; Espinoza et al., 2017; Snyder et al., 1991a; Snyder, 2000), negative relations (Slezáčková et al., 2018), and poor adjustment (Snyder et al., 1991a). Furthermore, it was found that participants who scored low on dispositional hope experience more

psychological distress (Espinoza et al., 2017; Holloway et al., 2017), display reductions in well-being (Demirli et al., 2014), set unrealistic goals (Demirli et al., 2014), are unsuccessful in goal pursuit (Demirli et al., 2014), display various symptoms of unhappiness (Demirli et al., 2014; Krafft & Walker, 2018), are unmotivated (Demirli et al., 2014), and vulnerable (Holloway et al., 2017). Existing literature and studies by Michael (2000), Snyder (1999, 2000), Snyder et al. (1991a), and Snyder et al. (1996) found negative correlations with dispositional hope and affective lethargy, apprehension, anger, counterproductive thoughts and emotions, disengaging with preventative behaviours to improve health, inability to endure physical pain, low energy levels, fearful of interpersonal closeness, feeling stuck, frustration, helplessness, inability to focus on goals, passive engagement with task endeavours, self-critical rumination, self-deprecatory thinking, self-doubt, suicidal ideation, underperforming in sporting activities, and unforgiving of others.

Dispositional hope might be conditional and contingent on surrounding factors. Peterson and Seligman (2004) and Snyder et al. (1996) stated that dispositional hope could be susceptible to and dependent on environmental and emotional experiences that could strengthen or weaken hope. For example, Long and Gallagher (2018) found that the obstruction of goal achievement might activate a loss of agency, leading to frustration and anger, and the likelihood of triggering thoughts and memories of trauma-related occurrences. The authors stated that this could subsequently hinder goal-directed reasoning and ultimately reduce hope. Snyder (2002) as well as Change et al. (2015) further argued that violence and victimisation contribute to the undermining of a hopeful outlook.

### 2.3.1.1.5 Hope Research in South Africa

In recent years, the idea of hope has acquired popularity in political and academic settings against the backdrop of the new South African democracy and discourses around the establishment of a rainbow nation (Boyce & Harris, 2013). Though there has been interest in this topic, there has been little research done up until recently on the dynamics and levels of hope in the South African context. Therefore, more information is still needed to understand the dynamics and prevalence of hope among South Africans (Boyce & Harris, 2013; Slezáčková et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 2021). Due to its troubled past of racial segregation, South Africa has one of the most unequal populations in the world and has many difficulties in the social, political, and economic spheres (Boyce & Harris, 2013). High unemployment rates, high levels of corruption, gender-based violence, inadequate service delivery, subpar educational standards, and social and racial conflicts in society are a few of the most notable problems (Kagee, 2014; Wilson et al., 2021). It is conceivable that hope might be constrained in light of these difficulties (Boyce & Harris, 2013).

However, Slezáčková et al. (2021) found that participants from South Africa were much more hopeful than those from other countries like the Czech Republic, Germany, and India in a study that evaluated hope and harmony in life in diverse situations. In a similar vein, the South African cohort outperformed the global average on optimism measures in the Global Optimism Outlook Survey, which was commissioned by World Expo 2020 and involved 20,000 participants from 23 countries (Brophy, 2019). Nonetheless, the results of this poll should be regarded with caution because it was not subjected to peer review. Taking into account these limitations, the research suggested that optimism and hopefulness may be notable traits among South African adults, notwithstanding innate difficulties. As a result, one

could wonder where hopeful thinking originated and what the primary causes were for the optimistic outcomes for South African adults.

Identifying the need to acquire an enhanced understanding of positive psychology from an Afrocentric perspective, Wilson et al. (2021) examined the relationships between hope, goals and meaning making among participants from Ghana and South Africa. The findings highlighted the strong sense of a collectivist identity and how conceptual understandings of hope and well-being were intrinsically linked to relational experiences (Wilson et al., 2021). The South African participants noted that hope was found in the context of emotionally supportive relationships with significant others and in experiences of connection with the spiritual world, including ancestors and deities (Wilson et al., 2021). These findings support Cherrington (2018) who explored children's conceptualisations of hope in a South African rural community. The children in the study explained that hope exists within interpersonal interactions and added that "hopeful people within the community are able to help others in need by holding their hope for them until they are able to be hopeful themselves" (Cherrington, 2018, p. 7). This is related broadly to Weingarten's (2010) construction of hope as a shared project and the idea that the act of hope can be lent to others.

Wilson et al. (2021) and Cherrington (2018) emphasized that the Afrocentric worldview's emphasis on collectivism does not diminish the importance of individual agency and intrapersonal processes related to the quest of hope and well-being. Instead, Wilson et al. (2021, p. 509) claimed that "individuals make meaning and develop positive futures in relation to others," taking into account the notion that personhood is so strongly linked with a sense of community. Therefore, from an Afrocentric standpoint, hope seems to be created as an ideal that is shared and

derived from a collective. The findings of these two studies highlighted the impact of cultural context on people's everyday sources of optimism and how they find it. It also called into question the mechanics and workings of hope in a multi-cultural community such as South Africa. Further research in this area is necessary to obtain a better understanding of the interactions between these components.

Hope studies become especially relevant when considering the South African setting in which adolescents encounter a range of environmental problems; youth must rely on agency and routes to be able to handle challenges within their context (Guse et al., 2016). Concerned about the hopelessness of South African youth, Maree et al. (2008) set out to create a hope measure specific to the country. Items were produced and the Maree Hope Orientation Measure (HOME) questionnaire was designed to be relevant and appropriate within the South African context, drawing on a previous qualitative investigation of what South African students consider to be hope. The scale was redesigned by Maree and Maree (2013), who also demonstrated the scale's capacity to correlate with academic success. It is currently known as the Goal Achievement Questionnaire (GAQ). The validity of the Children's Hope Scale among South African adolescents in the Johannesburg area was further investigated by Guse et al. (2016). When evaluating levels of hope, the scale's overall psychometric qualities were found to be adequate. Abler et al. (2017) identified the essential components of what hope means to young women living in rural South Africa, and then constructed and validated a hope scale among them, namely the Rural South African Women's Hope Scale. All things considered, their measure showed outstanding reliability, and they offer a viable tool for evaluating hope in young South African women. Lundgren and Scheckle (2019), who also concentrated on South African youth, investigated the aspects that young people in

townships there cited as important in forming their identities. Every day for a week, thirteen previously underprivileged Grade 11 students took pictures. They variedly named their families as sources of hope when naming 'Hope for the future' as one of the components. In the Eastern Cape, Adamson and Roby (2011) examined the degree of hope in a sample of orphans and non-orphans. They discovered that both non-orphaned girls and orphaned youngsters, particularly girls, had somewhat higher levels of hope. Moreover, Guse and Vermaak (2011) investigated psychological well-being and hope in 1169 South African teenagers. They discovered that while hope varies among various population groups, it is generally high, with no statistically significant differences found in the levels of hope among African, coloured, Indian, and white adolescents. They also show that among their subjects, psychological well-being is positively correlated with hope. Cherrington (2018) conducted a qualitative study, focusing on higher education in South Africa, in which 12 students discussed hope through a variety of interactive techniques (such as a hope workshop). The desire and efforts to put hope into action were revealed by the results, which pointed to the mobilization of individual, interpersonal, and group experiences of hope. One beneficial side effect of the study was that students thought of the notion of making a hope wall where they could write their aspirations for their academic careers. In closing, the author made a strong case for academics to do more to implement hope in higher education.

A positive approach to organizational leadership in South Africa was proposed by Luthans et al. (2004). It was based on the use of useful guidelines to develop the psychological capacity of hope. They recommend that:

- Within the context of human resource development, hope may and ought to be fostered for both people and groups.



- The objectives that South African organisational leaders wish to accomplish must be their own.
- It is possible for leaders to become more aware of the nature of hopeful thinking. Coaching and mentoring hopeful strategies are ways to foster hope.
- Experience-based learning and rehearsing can be beneficial to the growth of hope's leadership.

Since then, a number of hope interventions have been created and given to various vulnerable or at-risk communities in South Africa. The hope-infused future orientation intervention is one such program that is used with juvenile offenders in South Africa (Marsay et al., 2018). This intervention is offered in six-, two-, and half-hour sessions and uses a range of therapeutic approaches to foster conceptions of hope (such as survival and mastery). The majority of individuals showed a rise in hope, according to the results.

It is evident that dispositional hope is a cognitive-motivational construct that focuses on the belief that determination and strategic thinking can enable the attainment of a future goal. However, this process could be vulnerable to external variables or reinforced by complementary elements. Another conceptualisation that could shed further light on considering the future, is perceived hope.

### **2.3.1.2 Perceived Hope**

Krafft et al. (2019) proposed a broader conceptualisation of hope, namely perceived hope. These authors stated that viewing hope as a dispositional trait addresses only one dimension of understanding hope. It is also important to recognise the subjectivity of individualistic experiences and perceptions of hope, especially when people feel they have less personal control and may not cope by

utilising their own resources (Krafft et al., 2021).

Perceived hope is defined as a feeling of confidence in how things, a wish, or a desire, will turn out, regardless of expectations based on calculated probabilities (Slezáková et al., 2018). Perceived hope is applicable when resources are immediately available or might become available in the future (Guse et al., 2023). In other words, even when expectations are low or when the person hoping has little control over the outcome, perceived hope is associated with a positive outlook of the future. The emotional quality, manifested as a belief or trust, implies that perceived hope has a broader context than dispositional hope. It relates not only to cognition but relies heavily on elements of transcendence and spirituality that allow people to reach for something greater than themselves to attain and maintain hope, especially when occurrences are beyond personal control (Slezáčková & Prosek, 2018). In addition to faith in a higher power, Krafft et al. (2023b) also emphasised the important role of social support from others, such as family and friends and how positive relationships could enhance hope. Hence the theory's emphasis on the spiritual, relational, and emotional characteristics of hope to deal with setbacks and challenges (Guse & Shaw, 2018; Krafft et al., 2023b; Krafft et al., 2019). Krafft and Walker (2018) further suggested that a true understanding of hope should also acknowledge diverse cultural environments and demographics, with varying meanings, values, and views, as it pertains to hope and hope's subjective perception. Research on perceived hope is still limited, but some existing findings are discussed in the next section.

### 2.3.1.2.1 Empirical Studies on Perceived Hope

Literature on the correlates of perceived hope is just now beginning to surface. Existing research suggested that perceived hope is a crucial precursor to dispositional hope and constitutes a vital psychological construct in the prognosis of well-being and healthy living (Kraft et al., 2021).

Marujo (2021) found that perceived hope has a strong relationship with other psychological characteristics, such as vitality, thriving (in a positive way), and harmony in life, and a negative relationship with despair and anxiety. Studies also showed that perceived hope is related to positive affect, life satisfaction, and meaning in life (Guse & Shaw, 2018; Krafft, 2014).

Slezáčková et al. (2023) reported that perceived hope is negatively correlated with loneliness and predicted the majority of variance in psychological well-being. The authors found perceived hope to mediate the relationship and correlation between harmony in life and positive emotional states. Another study by Flores-Lucas et al. (2023) corroborated that perceived hope is an important construct that could predict flourishing in human life.

Krafft et al. (2023a) recently examined perceived hope, posttraumatic growth, and posttraumatic coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors found that even in this time of crisis, most people remained hopeful, positively coped with the challenges, and in some instances experienced personal growth. Their findings supported the notion that, whatever the crisis, personal power is found within the attitude one chooses to face the problem. Events, like the pandemic, often limit one's own possibilities and capabilities, but this is when people turn to others or a higher power for assistance and support (Krafft et al., 2023a). Herein lies the trust and acceptance of help from another to solve and overcome problems and beliefs

that wishes and desires are attainable. Perceived hope strengthened the capability of finding power in hope during the COVID-19 pandemic (Krafft et al., 2023a).

Some studies also examined perceived hope in cultural context. Slezáčková et al. (2018) investigated the subjectivity of perceived hope by examining how psychosocial aspects of different cultures affect perceived hope. The authors found that the dominant and main predictor of perceived hope was dependent on a positive outlook on life, however, the predictive capability of the varying predictors in relation to perceived hope was found to be dependent on the cultural environment. Their findings correspond with the statement by Krafft and Walker (2018) that emphasised the subjectivity of hope and the importance of conceptualising perceived hope to ensure the inclusion and understanding of hope in diverse cultural environments. Perceived hope may be a common motivating need that is applicable across cultures, even though people in different countries and cultures have different ways of hoping, and as a result, perceived hope will behave differently in different settings (Flores-Lucas et al., 2023; Krafft et al., 2023b).

Accordingly, Guse et al. (2023) examined various datasets from different countries. The authors found that although most people maintained moderate to high levels of hope, across time and context, developing countries with more collectivistic lifestyles displayed higher levels of hope than more prosperous, individualistic societies. Their findings seemed to point to perceived hope and the way it connects people and perceived hope's emotional dimensions (Braun-Lewensohn et al., 2021). Additionally, individualistic countries displayed more expectations of a future characterised by crisis and conflict, whereas the countries with collectivistic views held beliefs of prosperity and sustainability (Guse et al., 2023). These findings support the notion that perceived hope is context-specific and that culture might

influence emotions, mood, and behaviour, and resultantly people's experience of hope (Scioli & Biller, 2009).

Guse et al. (2023) further found that self-transcendence, and self-mastery were strongly associated with hope. In other words, hope encompasses the care for others' well-being and the excitement of novel and new challenges and experiences, supporting the definition of perceived hope. This included traditional and religious experiences. The authors discovered that most people wish for the same things, such as good health and happy and satisfying interrelationships. This aligns with eudaimonic well-being and supports the notion that transcendence is an important element in hope (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ryff, 2014).

These findings complement the definition of perceived hope, in that hope is not only a personal trait, as defined by dispositional hope, but also a belief in the possibility that a desire could be fulfilled regardless of sufficient resources. It emphasises trust in something more than oneself to assist in the realisation of a wish, irrespective of setbacks or obstacles. Thus, perceived hope is an important additional factor to consider while examining well-being. While hope is defined as an individual attribute, it is also a perception and a belief system. However, it is possible that hope may be influenced by demographic variables, such as age and gender (Perrig-Chiello et al., 2018). In this study, the role of gender is specifically examined to better comprehend hope and its role in the human psyche and life experiences.

### **2.3.2 Hope and Gender**

While many theories, philosophical, and scientific viewpoints have explored the definition of hope, there is limited existing research on whether and how gender might be a variable for consideration. Gender is an important universal psychological

and social construct and defines an individual's identification, identity, and social perception of being a woman or a man (Winter, 2015). Scholars have investigated possible gender differences in levels of hope, with conflicting findings.

In terms of dispositional hope, some studies reported lower levels of hope in men compared to women (Ciarrochi et al., 2015; Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008; Jackson et al., 2014) whereas others failed to reach a similar conclusion (Bailey & Snyder, 2007). Perrig-Chiello et al. (2018) provided possible explanations for the findings, namely that gender differences were not examined across the lifespan, random sampling of the general population was not employed, and that the distinction between agency thinking and pathways was for the most part, not evaluated. Perrig-Chiello et al. (2018) examined the stability of hope across lifespan and gender, and how the relationship varied considering factors such as gender. The authors reported that agency showed a similar age-related rise in hope for females and males, whereas pathway thinking was dominated by young and middle-aged women, and younger men (Perrig-Chiello et al., 2018). Although one of the highest scoring age groups in pathways, young women scored lower than young men, but overall, the authors found that women scored higher than their male peers in terms of dispositional hope.

In terms of perceived hope, Slezáčková et al. (2018) examined gender, hope, and spirituality among participants from Czechia and Malta. The authors found that the Czech sample did not reveal any notable influences by gender on hope. In the Maltese sample spirituality played an important role in the prediction of perceived hope, with male participants yielding significantly lower levels of spirituality compared to their female counterparts. Lower levels of perceived hope were presented by men (Slezáčková et al., 2018). Since religiosity and spirituality are assumed to play a

prominent and positive role in perceived hope, Margelisch (2018) examined the possible association between these constructs and gender. The author found that only women between 40 and 59 scored higher than men in the belief in something greater than themselves; no other gender differences were found. Although a possible overinterpretation of the data, this could imply that women possibly and generally, experience perceived hope, more often than men.

Although researchers have investigated possible gender influences in different levels of dispositional hope and perceived hope there is a lack of research pertaining to the possibility of gender playing a moderating role in the experiences and mechanisms of hope. Further research is therefore warranted.

### **2.3.3 Conclusion**

Hope is a subjective multidimensional phenomenon, and two conceptualisations were discussed in this chapter. Firstly, dispositional hope, a cognitive and motivational process, are influenced by interacting components: 1) agency (self-determination, self-motivation, self-efficacy, positive self-talk, and perseverance); and 2) pathways (patience and persistence) to reach a desired outcome or goal. The second conceptualisation was perceived hope; the belief or trust in something other or greater than oneself to provide a favourable result, even though the probability of expectations might be low. Both theoretical perspectives indicated that hope has a strong relationship with positive psychological attributes and plays a significant role in mental health.

## 2.4 Primal Beliefs

How does one view the nature of the world? Is the world good or bad? These questions transcend mere mechanics and are concerned with metaphysical, philosophical, and aesthetic notions about the nature of the universe. That is, a worldview, in which humans live and discover themselves, and in turn shapes thoughts, feelings, and behaviour (Stahlmann et al., 2020).

Although Beck's (1976) cognitive triad incorporated similar beliefs, the model focused on an individual's immediate environment, excluding global world schemas and the possible influence on an individual's cognition and behaviour across various domains. Notwithstanding, the model played a fundamental role in understanding and identifying the cause of depression and was praised for its inspiration, that in turn, improved mental health treatment (Clifton et al., 2019).

Resultantly, researchers were motivated to expand on cognitive studies to unravel the roots of behaviour, however, the belief about the self, received much more attention than the belief about and role a person's worldview-environment plays in understanding human thought and action (Chen et al., 2016). Even though various beliefs could dramatically shape behaviour and well-being, unspecified worldview beliefs might mould vital identities and personas as well. This should be considered and explored to include a broader examination of beliefs and how it could address the gap in existing literature, as research in this field is scarce (Dweck, 2017; Hofmann et al., 2012).

Consequently, Clifton et al. (2019) explored the notion that believing that the world is a bad place could provide a basis for negativity that might cause uncertainty to shift towards thinking that things are bad or pointless. On the other hand, a person might view the world as a positive place where an individual is inclined to a positive



base and therefore an optimistic and hopeful viewpoint on various experiences and situations (Clifton et al., 2019). Further, Clifton (2020), Clifton et al. (2019), and Clifton and Kim (2020), suggested that many psychological variables could be shaped by these views and beliefs. The authors stated that everyone might not perceive the world in the same way and the possibility exists that the subjective individual perception could contribute to the understanding of an individual's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. This could explain many invariances and the impact between various psychological constructs, such as hope, optimism, and pessimism.

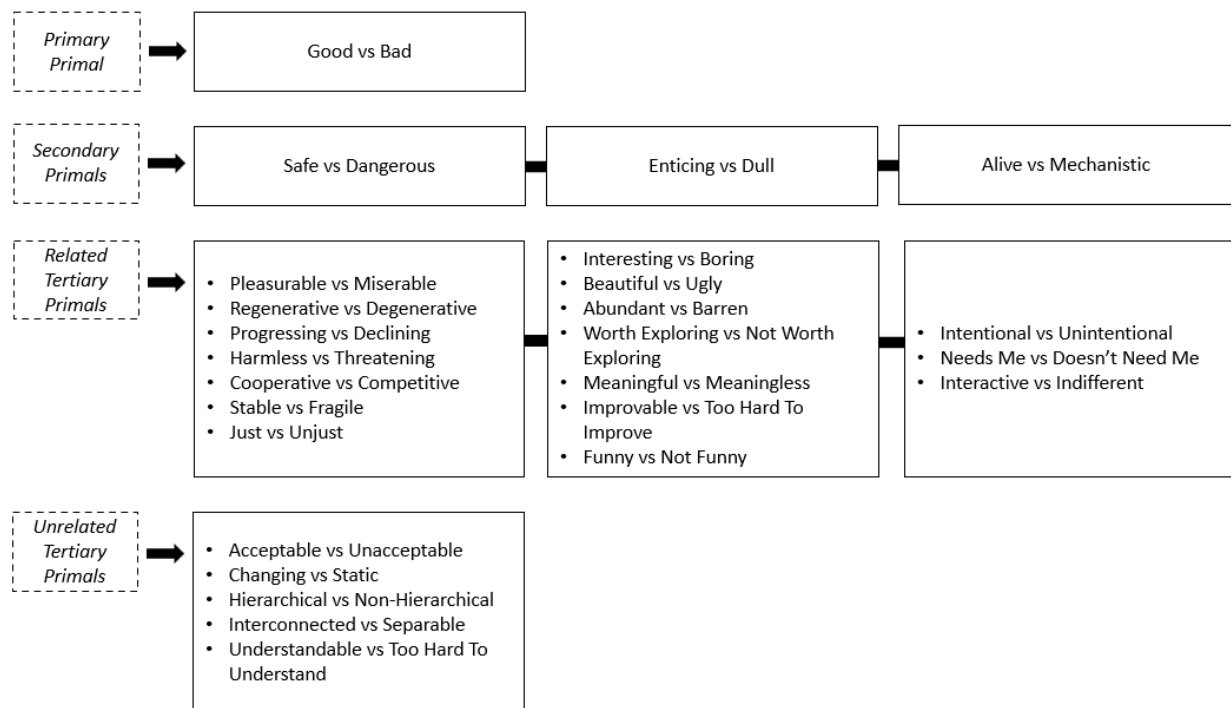
The researchers believed that people's sense of self could be influenced more by their surroundings and circumstances than by their internal qualities. In other words, they thought that external factors, like their environment or what's happening around them, might have a stronger impact on how they see themselves than their inherent traits.

Accordingly, Clifton et al. (2019) developed a framework for understanding major fundamental worldviews and the relationships between them, through an empirical investigation, and referred to these views as primal beliefs (primals). The authors systematically evaluated 99 items, namely candidate primals, and found 26 normally distributed dimensions of worldview beliefs, with four overarching, higher order primals, 'Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive'. Additionally, the researchers found that these primals were approximately as stable as the Big Five traits but outperformed the Big Five model's predictability when it came to gratitude, interpersonal trust, growth mindset, and life satisfaction. The Primal Beliefs model is among the most stable variables psychologists could measure and can help psychologists make predictions (Clifton et al., 2019).

This study focused only on these high-level conditions' two categories, namely primary ('Good') and secondary ('Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive') primals. Despite the scarcity of scholarly work on primal beliefs, existing studies and their findings are discussed in the next section; no additional research is currently available. The structure of primal beliefs is depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

***The Structure of Primal Beliefs (Clifton & Kim, 2022, p. 2)***



*Note.* The figure demonstrates the basic structure of the 26 primal world beliefs (one primary, three secondary, and 22 tertiary) as identified by Clifton et al. (2019).

### 2.4.1 Primary Primal Beliefs

The model defined and proposed 'Good' as a comprehensive and all-inclusive level that categorises all other beliefs and positioned it to be the primary primal belief

(Clifton et al., 2019). The belief encompasses all the primals and their interrelated interactions, and ultimately, whether an individual views the world as positive (good) versus negative (bad). Clifton and Yaden (2021) defined 'Good' as "the belief that the world is a delightful place that is beautiful, fascinating, safe, abundant, full of meaning, improvable, and getting better" (p. 387). The authors explained that those with a low score on 'Good' tend to believe that the world is sad, threatening, senseless, unproductive, desolate, unable to change, and deteriorating. Clifton et al. (2019) stated that 'Good' is largely defined by pleasurable items. 'Good' was found to positively correlate with most Big Five personality traits and character strengths, but most strongly with agreeableness, curiosity, extraversion, flourishing, gratitude, hope, leadership, optimism, spirituality, subjective well-being, and zest (Stahlmann & Ruch, 2021). As informed by the correlations, and regression analysis, 'Good' was a positive predictor and explained the most variance in most character strengths, except for judgment, humility, and prudence (Stahlmann & Ruch, 2021). Clifton et al. (2019) suggested that interventions targeting this primal may enhance optimism, purpose, and meaning, thereby reducing the risk of age-related disease and extend longevity. Clifton et al. (2019) developed a second higher order level group of primal beliefs that positively correlates with 'Good', namely, 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive'.

#### **2.4.2 Secondary Primal Beliefs**

The secondary primals are referred to as 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive'. Clifton et al. (2019) defined 'Safe' as the belief that the world is a safe place, as opposed to a dangerous place. The authors found that 'Safe' had the highest positive correlation with optimism and elements that are pleasurable, regenerative, progressing, harmless, cooperative, stable, and just (tertiary primals). Alternately, 'Safe' had the

highest negative correlation and predictive ability with neuroticism. In other words, the higher a person endorses 'Safe', the lower their levels of negative emotions and ability to positively respond and deal with stressors. Moreover, people with lower scores on 'Safe' experienced a world characterised by suffering, decay, scarcity, brutality, and various threats. They believe the risk is high for things to go 'Bad', for example being stabbed in the back, being infected by a virus or bacteria, or being involved in an accident. These individuals maintain a state of high alert in response to ongoing external threats and frequently perceive those who are not watchful as irresponsible (Clifton et al., 2019). In contrast, Clifton and Yaden (2021) found that individuals who endorsed 'Safe' more strongly, perceived a world that is cooperative, cosy, stable, and lacking in hazards. These people believe that something is safe until proven otherwise, that danger is not all that risky, and that people should, in general, calm down (Clifton & Yaden, 2021).

'Enticing' is the belief that the world is attractive and alluring, as opposed to dull and boring (Clifton et al., 2019). This belief related mostly to components of interest, beauty, abundance, worthy exploration, meaningfulness, the possibility to improve, pleasure, regeneration, and humour (tertiary primals). Clifton et al. (2019) found that this primal had the highest positive correlation and predictive ability with curiosity and the highest negative correlation with depression. Moreover, the authors found that people with low endorsement of this belief, lived in drab, unpleasant landscapes where exploration has little payoff, and that genuine treasure - truly lovely and fascinating objects - is uncommon. These people believe that seeking joy and excitement is only appropriate when the discovery is guaranteed. They further stated that individuals who score higher on the 'Enticing' worldview live in a captivatingly compelling reality and are aware that beauty permeates everything and

that there is treasure hidden in everyone, everywhere, and in everything. Thus, the only sensible way to live is via exploration and appreciation; life is a gift, and boredom is an ignorant lifestyle choice.

Clifton and Yaden (2021) described 'Alive' as believing in a mindful interconnection between human beings and the world; that the world needs one for a task, and world events interact with an individual (tertiary primals). Clifton et al. (2019) found that 'Alive' had the highest positive correlation and predictive ability with meaning. In addition, this primal positively correlated uniquely with higher religiosity, conservatism, acceptability, and change (Stahlmann & Ruch, 2021). Clifton et al. (2019) explained that people who score low on the primal 'Alive' believed the world to be a mechanical environment without consciousness or purpose. The authors stated that these people deny the possibility of interplay and reciprocity between humans and their surroundings because according to them, the universe can't communicate. People holding a strong 'Alive' worldview are sensitive to their environment because they believe that everything occurs for a reason (Clifton et al., 2019). They see life as a partnership with a dynamic world that drives events, employs synchronicity, communicates, and seeks assistance with crucial tasks (Clifton et al., 2019).

All three secondary primal beliefs ('Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive') positively correlate with constructs that are defined to be positive in life and that optimise well-being. The primals are negatively related to negative constructs, for example, 'Safe' versus 'Dangerous', 'Enticing' versus 'Dull', and 'Alive' versus 'Mechanical'. Further examples can be seen as defined in the tertiary primal beliefs, depicted in Figure 1. Additionally, primals could be related to demographic variables and constructs, such as gender, and this is discussed in the next section.

### 2.4.3 Primal Beliefs and Gender

When exploring primal beliefs, it is important to investigate its relationship with other constructs to enable a greater and more comprehensive understanding of individual thought, behaviour, and identity. According to Langnes and Fasting (2017), gender is an important criterion for individual identification. The authors stated that gender categorises and organises social life, and shapes existing behaviours and beliefs. Moreover, it defines how the world is structured and how people are perceived (Langnes & Fasting, 2017). Therefore, one could assume that gender possibly plays an important role when exploring primal beliefs. For instance, one could argue that women are externally exposed to more negative and inferior experiences and treatment, for example gender societal prejudice, gender-based violence, and discriminating culture expectations. These would likely cause women to have a more negative view of the world when compared to their male counterparts (Clifton, 2020). Consequently, females might be inclined towards lower levels of the 'Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive' primals. However, Stahlmann and Ruch (2021) found that the secondary primal 'Alive' had a uniquely higher, stronger positive relationship with the female gender. Similarly, Stahlmann et al. (2020) found that women more often than men supported the primal beliefs 'Good', 'Enticing', and 'Alive'. Even though both studies showed that females had more positive world beliefs, Clifton (2022) stated that demographics, such as gender, are weakly related to primals. Some existing research on primal beliefs offered no discussion and conclusion regarding gender (Clifton, 2022; Clifton & Yaden, 2021; Stahlmann et al., 2020; Stahlmann & Ruch, 2021). Additional studies on primal beliefs that explored the possible role and relevance of worldviews and the correlation to and

understanding of other psychological constructs, such as hope, also made no reference to gender (Clifton, 2019; Clifton, 2020; Clifton et al., 2019; Clifton & Kim, 2020). Overall, literature on primal beliefs and the possible role of gender on these beliefs are extremely limited. It is evident that there is a major gap in the literature regarding the investigation and exploration of the role of gender in understanding primal beliefs and their association with other psychological variables.

#### **2.4.4 Conclusion**

Humans have a disposition and a natural tendency to beliefs about themselves, but in addition, people also have subjective beliefs about their environment, immediate and more broadly, the world. Historically, the latter, referred to as primal beliefs, have been understudied. Recently, a model was developed to identify such beliefs, and to enable an understanding of the possible role these beliefs could play in human behaviour and emotions. Literature provided evidence of how certain personal characteristics positively and negatively correlate with different primals, but limited attention was given to gender as a variable. This study aims to address this lacuna in existing research.

#### **2.5 Hope, Primal Beliefs, and Gender**

Dispositional hope is a cognitive-motivational construct and involves a belief that actions can lead to achieving a goal (Snyder, 2002). Perceived hope is a broader conceptualisation of hope and implies that reaching a goal, whatever the odds, is obtainable by believing in the help of others or a greater power that can go beyond ordinary limitations (Krafft et al., 2021; Slezáčková & Prosek, 2018). This is especially relevant when a person does not have sufficient resources to accomplish

a goal by themselves. Further, dispositional hope and perceived hope could be influenced by and dependent upon environmental factors (Flores-Lucas et al., 2023; Krafft et al., 2019; Krafft & Walker, 2018; Long & Gallagher, 2018; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Slezáčková et al., 2018; Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1996). The two dimensions of hope are positively related to various favourable elements of well-being, while having negative correlations with harmful or disadvantageous factors pertaining to healthy living (Arnau et al., 2007; Cankaya, 2016; Carver et al., 2010; Chang, 1998; Guse & Shaw, 2018; Herrero, 2014; Krafft et al., 2018; Krafft & Walker, 2018; Perrig-Chiello et al., 2018; Rand et al., 2020; Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991a; Villar & Villamizar, 2012; Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015).

Primal beliefs refer to the fundamental views and convictions a person holds about the world at large. These can include concepts like 'good versus bad,' 'safe versus dangerous,' 'exciting versus boring,' and 'alive versus mechanical' (Clifton et al., 2019). These beliefs tend to be interconnected and are linked to various positive traits that contribute to overall well-being. Additionally, they are inversely related to negative aspects that hinder a fulfilling life (Clifton et al., 2019; Clifton & Yaden, 2021). Although research on primal beliefs is relatively new, there is limited scholarly exploration of these beliefs and their significance.

Both hope and primal beliefs are belief systems, correlate positively and negatively with similar constructs, and could therefore, possibly have a relationship with each other. In addition, research indicated that hope is susceptible to environmental factors and thus, hope could be influenced by primal beliefs (Snyder et al., 1996). Although studies examining the relationship between hope and primals are limited, Clifton et al. (2019) and Stahlmann and Ruch (2021) found that primal beliefs could play a significant role in a hopeful outlook on life and future events.



Personality development and many personality characteristics, behaviour, and well-being factors are shaped, influenced, and can be predicted by a person's primal beliefs, especially hope (Clifton et al., 2019; Stahlmann & Ruch, 2021).

Most existing research on hope and primal beliefs included the examination and exploration of personal characteristics associated with hope and primal beliefs, but less is known about the relationship between gender and hope and primal beliefs. Studies that included gender as variable showed contradictory findings (Bailey & Snyder, 2007; Ciarrochi et al., 2015; Clifton, 2020; Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008; Jackson et al., 2014; Margelisch, 2018; Perrig-Chiello et al., 2018; Slezáčková et al., 2018; Stahlmann et al., 2020; Stahlmann & Ruch, 2021). In addition, there is a major gap in research on the possible moderating role of gender in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs.

This study intended to address these gaps to extend the current knowledge and broaden the scope of understanding hope and primal beliefs. Specifically, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between these constructs, and the probability that gender could influence the possible correlation between hope and primal beliefs.

## 2.6 Evaluative Summary

This chapter introduced the reader to the domain of positive psychology, which is important to our understanding well-being and quality of life. Hope is an important construct in positive psychology and a necessary component for an individual to function as a coherent whole towards a better life. Various theoretical perspectives and streams of empirical research on hope were briefly discussed, leading the way to a discussion on hope and its correlates. However, the literature provided insufficient and inadequate evidence about the relationship between hope and core beliefs about the world.

Primal beliefs shape our thoughts and behaviour and consequently could affect how (and if) hope is experienced and perceived. Although beliefs about the self have received much research attention, beliefs about the world, or the environment has been neglected. This study explores how primal beliefs about the world might influence personal characteristics and well-being, more specifically, hope. Although limited, research suggested that gender could play a role in the experience of hope and one's primal beliefs. However, these findings were contradictory, and thus this study also examines the possible moderating role of gender in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs. The aim of this study was to address these gaps in the literature by examining hope, primal beliefs, and gender among a group of adults in South Africa. The following chapter discusses the research methodology for this study.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The chapter defines and describes the study's research approach that underlines the methods and techniques for conducting the research to answer the research question. First, the research question, aim, and objectives, noted in Chapter 1, are reviewed. Additionally, the research design, measurement instruments, data collection procedure, and analysis of the data are discussed. Last, the chapter explains the applicable ethical considerations.

### 3.2 Research Question, Aims, and Objectives

The purpose of the study was to examine hope, conceptualised as dispositional hope and perceived hope respectively, and its correlation with primal beliefs, as well as whether this relationship is moderated by gender among South African adults. The two specific objectives of the study were:

1. To investigate the relationship between hope and primal beliefs among South African adults.
2. To examine the role of gender in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs.

### 3.3 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative research strategy that involved collecting numerical data and quantifying and analysing variables using statistical methods to obtain relevant results that inform the research question (Apuke, 2017).

The study followed a correlation research design and was not concerned with the provision of a causal inference, but rather its goals were to examine and describe

the connection and correlation between the variables. More specifically, the purpose was to firstly, establish that a relationship exists between the variables and secondly to describe the nature of that relationship (Gravetter & Forzano, 2010). To accomplish its goal, the researcher measured three different variables (dispositional hope, perceived hope, and primal beliefs) and then searched for a relationship within the set of scores, without any attempt to manipulate, control, or interfere with the variables. To further understand and illustrate the possible relationship between the variables, hope and primal beliefs, the statistical interaction of a possible moderating variable, namely gender, was analysed to provide insight into the possible influence of a third variable.

### **3.4 Participants and Sampling**

A worldwide public survey, the international Hope-Barometer, was initiated in 2009, and aimed to gather information on hope (Krafft et al., 2018). The project started as a small initiative and was driven by the perception that throughout Europe, notably in Switzerland and Germany, prospects and potentials have received far less attention than issues, risks, disasters, worries, and fears for the future (Krafft & Walker, 2018). To scientifically examine the essential components, circumstances, and relationships of a hopeful outlook on the future and to be able to communicate the findings, a multidisciplinary group, including experts from several scientific disciplines, was formed, and led to the publication of a summarised report, grounded on the verifiable results of the international Hope-Barometer survey in 2009 and 2010 (Krafft et al., 2018). The following years marked a growing international network of interest in the survey and research collaboration with several other universities and countries (Czech Republic, France, Germany, India, Israel, Malta,

Poland, South Africa, Spain, and Switzerland), with annual results regularly presented for discussion and consequently, every year, hundreds of people, from different cultural backgrounds, have had the opportunity to take part in the survey and consider their own expectations for the future (Krafft et al., 2018).

A South African sample was utilised from this existing dataset included in the International Hope-Barometer Survey (Krafft et al, 2023b; Krafft & Walker, 2018). Data was collected in 2021 by means of convenience sampling and allowed for a wide range and diverse sample across multiple demographics with the exclusion of participants younger than 18 years of age. Inclusion of participants was restricted to the provision of consent, completion of the entire survey, and the understanding that no incentives were offered for participation.

The sample consisted of 563 South African adults (53.8% female and 46.2% male), aged 18 to 75 ( $M = 38.87$ ,  $SD = 14.52$ ), and comprised of 279 white participants (49.6%), 268 black participants (47.6%), 8 Indian participants (1.4%), 5 colored participants (.9%), and 3 participants who identified as 'other' (.5%).

### **3.5 Measurement Instruments**

In addition to biographical information, which included gender, questionnaires relating to hope and primal beliefs, were included in the survey.

#### **3.5.1 The Dispositional Hope Scale (DHS) (Snyder et al., 1991b)**

The DHS conceptualizes and measures hope as a cognitive-motivational construct and originally consisted of 12 items with four non-scoring distractors (Snyder, 2000; Snyder et al., 1991a). The Hope-Barometer Survey removed these distractors to minimise the time it takes to complete the survey and only included the

remaining eight items. The cognitive component (pathways), e.g. “I can think of ways to get out of a difficult situation”, and motivational component (agency), e.g. “Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem”, are measured by four items each (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 572). Each item has a 6-point response scale ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’. The summed combination of the responses creates a total hope score, ranging from eight to 48. Higher levels of hope are indicated by higher scores. Several studies reported a sufficient internal consistency with an alpha coefficient ranging from .73 to .85 (Demirli et al., 2014; Holloway et al., 2017; Snyder, 2002). South African studies have shown greater measures of internal consistency with an alpha coefficient varying from .83 to .89 (Boyce & Harris, 2013; Guse & Shaw, 2018).

### **3.5.2 The Perceived Hope Scale (PHS) (Krafft et al., 2019)**

The PHS scale measures hope as appraised by individuals and includes additional elements of hope, namely self-transcendence, spirituality, and religiosity (Krafft et al., 2019). It is composed of six items (e.g., “In my life, hope outweighs anxiety”) and participants respond to each item on a Likert-type scale ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’, with a summed score ranging from six to 72 (Krafft et al., 2019, p. 1607). The higher the score, the higher the level of perceived hope. Research reported satisfactory alpha coefficients ranging between .87 and .89 when applied to Swiss and Czech samples (Krafft et al., 2019). South African studies reported adequate alpha coefficients of .92 (Guse & Shaw, 2018), and .89 and .93 (Krafft et al., 2021).

### **3.5.3 The Primal Beliefs Scale (PI-18) (Clifton et al., 2019)**

The PI-18 measures primal beliefs, that is, an individual's general beliefs about the world (Clifton & Yaden, 2021). It consists of an 18-item measure (e.g., "In life, there's way more beauty than ugliness") of beliefs of the world as 'Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive' (Clifton et al., 2019, p. 92). The items are scored and measured on a Likert-type scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. The initial study reported a satisfactory alpha coefficient of .88, .83, .83, and .85 for 'Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive', respectively (Clifton & Yaden, 2021). High internal reliability across studies were shown, with an average Cronbach alpha of .97 for 'Good', .96 for 'Safe', .95 for 'Enticing', and .89 for 'Alive' (Clifton et al., 2019). This study examined the reliability of the scale and found the Cronbach alpha to be .81 for 'Good', .70 for 'Safe', .70 for 'Enticing', and .66 for 'Alive'. According to Pallant (2016), internal consistency is acceptable when above .70, while values above .80 are preferable. However, the author stated when the number of items in a scale are less than 10, such as in the case of 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive', in this study, the Cronbach alpha values could be quite small and the author suggested to rather report on the mean inter-item correlation for the items, with an optimal value ranging from .20 to .40. This study found satisfactory mean inter-time correlation values for 'Safe' (.28), 'Enticing' (.26), and 'Alive' (.28).

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

The study utilised archival data from an existing project collected at a single brief time period during a cross-sectional survey. The International Hope-Barometer Survey 2021 collected online data by means of social media, email, and by using a data panel provided by Qualtrics. Data collection took place in November 2021.

### 3.7 Data Analysis

The study utilised correlation statistical techniques provided by IBM SPSS (Pallant, 2016) to explore the relationships (strength and direction) between the variables. Bivariate correlations were calculated to explore the relationship between dispositional hope, perceived hope, and the four primal beliefs ('Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive'). A Pearson Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) that described the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables was calculated. The PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2022) add-on was used to perform a moderation analysis to examine the role of gender as a possible moderating variable between hope and primal beliefs.

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee at the university of Pretoria (HUM033/0922). The study forms part of a larger international study, namely the Hope-Barometer Survey 2019-2022. The project has already received ethical approval (HUM006/0819). In the main study, the participants were invited to complete the survey voluntarily and anonymously, as no identifying information was obtained. The nature of the questions used in the International Hope-Barometer Survey constituted minimal risk for causing distress.

The data from the larger study was stored in an online repository at the university to which only the research team has access. The current study's analysis of data was encrypted, password-protected, and stored on a university server for a period of 15 years.



### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the research methodology of the study, which utilised South African data, extracted from the international Hope-Barometer Survey 2019-2022, and followed a quantitative research strategy. A correlation design and multiple regression analysis were utilised to examine and describe the relationship between the variables and to answer the research question. This chapter also briefly discussed the ethical considerations that formed an integral part of the research process. The following chapter presents the results of the data analysis.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

The chapter discusses the results obtained from the descriptive and inferential statistics. The results are presented in accordance with the research objectives, namely: 1) To investigate the relationship between hope and primal beliefs among South African adults; and 2) To examine the role of gender in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs.

### 4.2 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The descriptive statistics for scores on dispositional hope, perceived hope, primal beliefs 'Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive' are presented in Table 1. An examination of the table revealed that the standard deviation of the variables was smaller than their respective means, which suggests that there was no reason for concern (Pallant, 2016). The skewness of the variables indicated that the distribution of scores was skewed negatively.

**Table 1**

***Descriptive Statistics of Dispositional Hope, Perceived Hope, and Primal Beliefs ('Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive')***

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Dispositional Hope	3.73	.89	-.91	1.22
Perceived Hope	3.58	.99	-.79	.65
Good	2.98	.67	-.15	.40
Safe	2.37	.89	-.06	.45
Enticing	3.39	.79	-.13	-.23
Alive	3.12	.96	-.52	.26

### 4.3 Inferential Statistical Analysis

Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of level of measurement, related pairs, independence of observations, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity and singularity. The scores of the variables were not normally distributed and indicated a violation of the assumption of normality. However, according to Pallant (2016), this is quite typical in bigger samples. The relationships between the variables were linear and the scatterplots displayed straight lines, not curves. The variability in scores for the variables were similar at all values and showed fairly even cigar shapes along their lengths. The variables were not highly correlated and therefore, multicollinearity did not exist. Singularity did not occur since no variable was a combination of another variable.

#### 4.3.1 Correlations of Measures

The strength and direction of the relationship between dispositional hope, perceived hope and four primal beliefs ('Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive') were investigated by calculating Pearson correlation coefficients, as reflected in Table 2. The results showed statistically significant positive correlations between all variables. Dispositional hope and perceived hope were strongly correlated ( $r = .67, p < .01$ ), and the results indicated that the strongest correlation between the four primal beliefs were between 'Good' and 'Safe' ( $r = .81, p < .01$ ). Additionally, the primal belief 'Good' had the strongest relationship with both dispositional hope ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ) and perceived hope ( $r = .54, p < .01$ ), followed by 'Alive', 'Safe', and 'Enticing'. The correlation coefficients between dispositional hope and all primal beliefs indicated a medium strength in the relationship. The correlation coefficients of the

variables between perceived hope and primal beliefs ('Good' and 'Alive') indicated a large strength in the relationship, whereas 'Safe' and 'Enticing' indicated a medium strength in the relationship.

**Table 2**

***Correlation Matrix for All Variables***

Variables	Dispositional	Perceived	Good	Safe	Enticing	Alive
	Hope	Hope				
Dispositional Hope	1					
Perceived Hope	.67**	1				
Good	.48**	.54**	1			
Safe	.37**	.39**	.81**	1		
Enticing	.34**	.35**	.77**	.42**	1	
Alive	.42**	.52**	.74**	.44**	.32**	1

*Note.* \*\* Reflects a significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### **4.3.2 Gender as a Moderator in the Relationship Between Dispositional Hope and Primal Beliefs**

Possible moderation effects of gender in the relationship between dispositional hope and primal beliefs 'Good' (PI-Good), 'Safe' (PI-Safe), 'Enticing' (PI-Enticing), and 'Alive' (PI-Alive) were examined by multiple regression analysis using SPSS and the PROCESS (Hayes, 2022) add-on with a 95% confidence interval (CI).

#### 4.3.2.1 Gender as Moderator in Relationship Between Dispositional Hope and PI-Good

A moderated analysis was implemented with dispositional hope as the dependent variable, PI-Good as the independent variable, and gender as the moderator variable (Table 3). The centred variables, PI-Good and gender, were able to account for 24% of the variance in dispositional hope,  $F(3, 559) = 58.74$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = .24$ . The interaction between PI-Good and gender, however, was not significant,  $F(1, 559) = 2.35$ ,  $p = .13$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.003$ .

**Table 3**

##### *Linear Model of PI-Good and Gender as Predictors of Dispositional Hope*

Variable	B	SE B	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	3.73	.03	113.57	.000	3.66, 3.79
PI-Good	.64	.05	13.18	.000	.55, .74
Gender	-.07	.07	-1.13	.258	-.20, .05
Interaction	.15	.10	1.53	.126	-.04, .34

#### 4.3.2.2 Gender as Moderator in Relationship Between Dispositional Hope and PI-Safe

A moderated analysis was implemented with dispositional hope as the dependent variable, PI-Safe as the independent variable, and gender as the moderator variable (Table 4). The centred variables, PI-Safe and gender, were able to account for 14% of the variance in dispositional hope,  $F(3, 559) = 29.29$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = .14$ . However, the relationship between PI-Safe and gender was not significant,  $F(1, 559) = .77$ ,  $p = .38$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.001$ .

**Table 4*****Linear Model of PI-Safe and Gender as Predictors of Dispositional Hope***

Variable	B	SE B	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	3.73	.04	106.64	.000	3.66, 3.80
PI-Safe	.36	.04	9.30	.000	.29,.44
Gender	-.02	.07	-.33	.744	-.16, .11
Interaction	.07	.08	.88	.381	-.09, .22

#### 4.3.2.3 Gender as Moderator in Relationship Between Dispositional Hope and PI-Enticing

A moderated analysis was implemented with dispositional hope as the dependent variable, PI-Enticing as the independent variable, and gender as the moderator variable (Table 5). The centred variables, PI-Enticing and gender, were able to account for 12% of the variance in dispositional hope,  $F(3, 559) = 25.74$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = .12$ . The interaction between PI-Enticing and gender was found to not be significant,  $F(1, 559) = 1.81$ ,  $p = .18$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.003$ .

**Table 5*****Linear Model of PI-Enticing and Gender as Predictors of Dispositional Hope***

Variable	B	SE B	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	3.73	.04	105.72	.000	3.66, 3.80
PI-Enticing	.39	.04	8.72	.000	.30,.48
Gender	-.06	.07	-.79	.432	-.19, .08
Interaction	.12	.09	1.35	.179	-.06, .30

#### 4.3.2.4 Gender as Moderator in Relationship Between Dispositional Hope and PI-Alive

A moderated analysis was implemented with dispositional hope as the dependent variable, PI-Alive as the independent variable, and gender as the moderator variable (Table 6). The centred variables, PI-Alive and gender, were able to account for 19% of the variance in dispositional hope,  $F(3, 559) = 43.70$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = .19$ . The results showed, however, that the relationship between PI-Alive and gender was not significant,  $F(1, 559) = 7.20$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ .

**Table 6**

##### *Linear Model of PI-Alive and Gender as Predictors of Dispositional Hope*

Variable	B	SE B	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	3.73	.04	105.72	.000	3.66, 3.80
PI-Alive	.39	.04	8.72	.000	.30, .48
Gender	-.06	.07	-.79	.432	-.19, .08
Interaction	.12	.09	1.35	.179	-.06, .30

### 4.3.3 Gender as a Moderator in the Relationship Between Perceived Hope and Primal Beliefs

Possible moderation effects of gender in the relationship between perceived hope, and primal beliefs 'Good' (PI-Good), 'Safe' (PI-Safe), 'Enticing' (PI-Enticing), and 'Alive' (PI-Alive) were examined by multiple regression analysis using SPSS and the PROCESS (Hayes, 2022) add-on with a 95% confidence interval (CI).

#### 4.3.3.1 Gender as Moderator in Relationship Between Perceived Hope and PI-Good

A moderated analysis was implemented with perceived hope as the dependent variable, PI-Good as the independent variable, and gender as the moderator variable (Table 7). The centred variables, PI-Good and gender, were able to account for 29% of the variance in perceived hope,  $F(3, 559) = 76.49, p < 0.001, R^2 = .29$ . The relation between PI-Good and gender, however, was not significant,  $F(1, 559) = 4.17, p = .042, \Delta R^2 = 0.005$ .

**Table 7**

#### *Linear Model of PI-Good and Gender as Predictors of Perceived Hope*

Variable	B	SE B	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	3.58	.04	101.06	.000	3.51, 3.65
PI-Good	.79	.05	15.01	.000	.69, .89
Gender	-.004	.07	-.06	.955	-.14, .14
Interaction	.22	.11	2.04	.042	-.01, .42



#### 4.3.3.2 Gender as Moderator in Relationship Between Perceived Hope and PI-Safe

A moderated analysis was implemented with perceived hope as the dependent variable, PI-Safe as the independent variable, and gender as the moderator variable (Table 8). The centred variables, PI-Safe and gender, were able to account for 15% of the variance in perceived hope,  $F(3, 559) = 34.14, p < 0.001, R^2 = .15$ . However, the relationship between PI-Safe and gender was not significant,  $F(1, 559) = 3.71, p = .055, \Delta R^2 = 0.006$ .

**Table 8**

##### *Linear Model of PI-Safe and Gender as Predictors of Perceived Hope*

Variable	B	SE B	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	3.58	.04	92.71	.000	3.51, 3.66
PI-Safe	.43	.04	9.89	.000	.34, .51
Gender	.06	.08	.75	.455	-.09, .21
Interaction	.17	.09	1.93	.055	-.003, .34

#### 4.3.3.3 Gender as Moderator in Relationship Between Perceived Hope and PI-Enticing

A moderated analysis was implemented with perceived hope as the dependent variable, PI-Enticing as the independent variable, and gender as the moderator variable (Table 9). The centred variables, PI-Enticing and gender, were able to account for 13% of the variance in perceived hope,  $F(3, 559) = 26.93, p < 0.001, R^2 = .13$ . The interaction between PI-Enticing and gender was found to not be significant,  $F(1, 559) = 2.10, p = .148, \Delta R^2 = 0.003$ .

**Table 9*****Linear Model of PI-Enticing and Gender as Predictors of Perceived Hope***

Variable	B	SE B	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	3.58	.04	91.11	.000	3.50, 3.65
PI-Enticing	.44	.05	8.92	.000	.35, .54
Gender	.02	.08	.26	.796	-.13, .18
Interaction	.14	.10	1.45	.148	-.05, .34

#### 4.3.3.4 Gender as Moderator in Relationship Between Perceived Hope and PI-Alive

A moderated analysis was implemented with perceived hope as the dependent variable, PI-Alive as the independent variable, and gender as the moderator variable (Table 10). The centred variables, PI-Alive and gender, were able to account for 28% of the variance in perceived hope,  $F(3, 559) = 71.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = .28$ . The results showed, however, that the relationship between PI-Alive and gender was not significant,  $F(1, 559) = 8.41$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ .

**Table 10*****Linear Model of PI-Alive and Gender as Predictors of Perceived Hope***

Variable	B	SE B	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	3.57	.04	99.43	.000	3.50, 3.64
PI-Alive	.55	.04	14.60	.000	.48, .62
Gender	-.07	.07	-.97	.332	-.21, .07
Interaction	.22	.07	2.90	.004	.07, .36

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The descriptive statistical analysis provided the opportunity to inspect and describe the dataset, more specifically, dispositional hope and perceived hope, and the primal beliefs ('Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive'). The dataset presented no missing data and the output showed that one can be 95 % confident in the sample true means of the constructs; extreme scores did not influence the means. Although the skewness values indicated some clustering of scores, the kurtosis values provided a less than optimal distribution, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov Sig. values indicated a violation of the assumption of normality, the reasonably large sample size counteracted the risk to an unreliable and insufficient data analysis (Pallant, 2016). Moreover, the assumptions for the inferential statistical analysis were checked and no violation presented a threat to the statistical analysis. The correlation coefficients indicated a medium to large, positive relationship between dispositional hope and perceived hope, and the four primal beliefs ('Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive'). The findings showed statistical significance and confidence in the results that strengthening a primal belief is associated with higher levels of hope. The moderation analysis indicated that gender did not moderate the relationship between hope and primal beliefs. The results of the statistical analysis in relation to answering the research question and in context of current literature are discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Introduction

The results of the statistical analysis for the sample of South African adults are discussed in this chapter. The findings are positioned in context of current literature and viewed in relation to the research question.

### 5.2 The Relationship Between Hope and Primal Beliefs

Stahlmann and Ruch (2021) examined primal beliefs and various character strengths and found that hope, optimism, and flourishing played a dominant role and had the strongest positive correlations with the belief that the world is 'Good'. In accordance, this study found that, although all four primal beliefs ('Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive') positively correlated with hope, both dispositional hope and perceived hope correlated the strongest with the primal 'Good'. As reported by Stahlmann and Ruch (2021), the primary primal, 'Good', is defined as a general effect, explaining the highest variance in a large number of character strengths, especially hope, while the secondary primal beliefs increased the predictive power. The primary primal, 'Good', encompasses all the positive psychological constructs, as defined in the model, while the secondary primal beliefs ('Safe', 'Enticing', 'Alive') point to specific character strengths. Thus, one can understand how 'Good' as the primary primal belief could score higher regarding correlations with some constructs, where 'Good' could be seen as the sum of its lower order parts, namely the secondary primal beliefs and tertiary primal beliefs. The higher the score of the lower order correlations with hope, the stronger the relationship between 'Good' and hope will be. Existing literature has shown that hope strongly and positively correlates with numerous positive character strengths (Arnau et al., 2007; Cankaya, 2016; Carver et al., 2010; Chang, 1998; Guse & Shaw, 2018; Herrero, 2014; Krafft et al., 2018; Krafft

& Walker, 2018; Perrig-Chiello et al., 2018; Rand et al., 2020; Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991a; Villar & Villamizar, 2012; Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015).

The findings of this study further supported the validity of hope's definition as dispositional and perceived as both conceptualisations correlated in the same manner with primal beliefs; 'Good' having the strongest relationship with both definitions, followed by 'Alive', 'Safe', and the lowest correlation with the primal 'Enticing'. According to Clifton et al. (2019) and Stahlmann and Ruch (2021), the belief that the world is enticing is mostly related to individual curiosity which in turn relates to meaning in life. Correlates and empirical studies on dispositional hope and perceived hope yielded strong relationships with meaning in life, but lacked evidence for a significant relationship with curiosity (Arnau et al., 2007; Cankaya, 2016; Carver et al., 2010; Chang, 1998; Guse & Shaw, 2018; Herrero, 2014; Krafft et al., 2018; Krafft & Walker, 2018; Perrig-Chiello et al., 2018; Rand et al., 2020; Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991a; Villar & Villamizar, 2012; Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015). Meaning in life might fuel hope and be related to curiosity, but curiosity as a stand-alone construct does not necessarily significantly endorse higher levels of hope. The literature on dispositional hope and perceived hope supports this study's findings that the primal 'Enticing' had the lowest significant correlation with hope.

Despite the similar pattern, 'Good' having the highest correlation measure with dispositional and perceived hope, followed by 'Alive', 'Safe', and the lowest score with 'Enticing', perceived hope scored higher with dispositional hope in all four primal belief relationships. This could possibly be explained by the role spirituality plays in perceived hope (Krafft et al., 2021) and that spirituality is one of the highest predictors of believing in a good world (Stahlmann & Ruch, 2021). Dispositional hope is defined as an individual and intentional engagement with setting goals, developing

pathways to reach these goals, and determination and motivation to succeed (Snyder, 1994). Despite Snyder's et al. (1996) acknowledgment that the environment and surroundings could temporarily influence the process, the cognitive and motivational components rely mostly on the self to engage with goal-directed behaviour. Dispositional hope is greatly dependent on individual thoughts and behaviour and is less vulnerable to interaction with the world. On the other hand, perceived hope pivots around dimensions of spirituality and relationships, in other words, interaction and engagement with something outside the self. One can deduce that this distinction between dispositional hope and perceived hope could explain the difference in importance between one's hope and the role the world plays in a hopeful outlook. Thus, as perceived hope engages mostly with external factors, primal beliefs might have a greater influence on perceived hope and vice versa.

This study's findings of medium to strong positive relationships between hope and primal beliefs support Clifton et al.'s (2019) view that the correlation between hope and primal beliefs suggest that the constructs function in similar ways. A positive viewpoint about life and the world inclines an individual toward an optimistic and hopeful outlook of the future. For example, believing that the world is a bad place would give rise to pessimism and could lead to thinking that life is evil or pointless - hopeless. On the other hand, a person may believe that the world is a good place where people tend to have positive outlooks and, as a result, are confident and upbeat about various events and circumstances - hopeful. In addition, this study's variance findings - primal beliefs explaining a significant variance in hope – was also found by Clifton and Kim's (2020) study which stated that primal beliefs could explain our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and help us make sense of the world. In doing so, primal beliefs could contribute to our understanding of hope.

This study's results indicated that there were statistically significant positive correlations between both dispositional hope and perceived hope, and the four primal beliefs ('Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive'). The strengths of these relationships were medium to large, with  $r$  ranging from .32 to .67. Primal beliefs explained 12% to 24% of the variance in dispositional hope and 12% to 29% of the variance in perceived hope. The results showed that the stronger the primal beliefs, the higher the levels of hope. The more one views the world in a positive light, the more one will expect good things to happen and vice versa. A hopeful mindset and the belief that the world is good form a notable and integral relationship.

### **5.3 The Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship Between Hope and Primal Beliefs**

In addition to the exploration of the relationship between hope and primal beliefs, this study included the examination of gender as a possible moderating variable to determine whether gender played a role in the correlations' strength between dispositional hope and perceived hope, and the primary and secondary primal beliefs. The findings might be important in building on and developing current knowledge to better understand and improve individual psychological treatment towards enhanced well-being.

The study utilised a SPSS add-one, called PROCESS (Hayes, 2022) to perform separate multiple regression analyses on dispositional hope and the four primals, and perceived hope and the four primals, and the possible moderating variable, gender. Given that gender could determine how individuals and the world are perceived and organised, and how social life is structured and classified (Langnes & Fasting, 2017), one could expect that that gender could play an

important role in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs. However, the findings revealed no statistically significant evidence to indicate that gender is a moderator between either dispositional hope and perceived hope, and the four primals ('Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive'). In summary, the current study's findings align with the findings yielded by Bailey and Snyder (2007), Slezáčková et al. (2018), and Clifton (2022) who reported that gender played no significant role in the understanding of either hope or primal beliefs.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

The study intended to answer the following research question: what is the role of gender in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs among a group of South African adults? Against the backdrop of positive psychology that calls for the cultivation of a fulfilled life, hope is seen and pursued as an important phenomenon to a better and flourishing life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). To better understand hope, this study examined hope using two conceptualizations namely dispositional hope and perceived hope. The relationship between hope and one's belief system about the world were examined, and the personal characteristic, gender, was investigated for its possible moderating role between the variables.

While the findings showed a moderate to large positive relationship between hope and primal beliefs, with primal beliefs explaining some of the variance in hope, the study found gender played no role in moderating the relationship between hope and primal beliefs. Gender was defined as a construct that shapes feelings, thoughts, and behaviour but the study did not provide evidence to support the notion that gender shaped the relationship between hope and primal beliefs. The next



chapter presents the summary of findings and limitations of the study, and discusses recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Although the literature noted many studies on hope, with several studies pertaining to South Africa, limited studies have been conducted to explore hope's relationship with primal beliefs. Additionally, there is a gap in scholarly work pertaining to this relationship in relation to gender and the South African context. This study sought to answer the following research question: what is the role of gender in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs among a group of South African adults? In this chapter, the findings are summarised, limitations of the research are acknowledged and recommendations for further research are listed.

### **6.2 Summary of Findings**

The broad aim of the study was to examine hope and primal beliefs among a group of South African adults, and to investigate the role gender plays in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs. Accordingly, two objectives were formulated. The first research objective sought to explore the relationship between hope and primal beliefs. The findings revealed significant associations between hope and primal beliefs, thus participants with more positive world beliefs are likely to experience higher levels of hope and vice versa. The results concur with research on hope and primal beliefs (Clifton et al., 2019; Stahlmann & Ruch, 2021). The second research objective was concerned with exploring gender as a possible moderating variable between hope and primal beliefs. The results showed that gender did not moderate the relationship between hope and primal beliefs, in a South African context. These findings challenged the notion that gender plays a role in explaining levels of hope and that gender inclines individuals towards certain primal beliefs (Ciarrochi et al., 2015; Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008; Jackson et al., 2014; Perrig-

Chiello et al., 2018; Slezáčková et al., 2018; Stahlmann & Ruch, 2021). Instead, the findings supported the idea that hope and primal beliefs are weakly related to gender (Bailey & Snyder, 2007; Clifton, 2020; Slezáčková et al., 2018).

The findings presented met the aim of the study's intention to provide an understanding and comprehension of the constructs' relationships and the research can therefore be seen as a steppingstone towards further examination of the variables. Understanding its impact on individuals, contributes and compliments the current literature on hope and primal beliefs and the possible impact of gender diversity.

### **6.3 Limitations**

It is important to recognise that this study had several limitations that could affect the findings' internal and/or external validity. Researchers are advised to be aware of the possible limiting factors and possibly address some of the challenges in future studies.

The international data collection took place during the COVID-19 pandemic that could have introduced other explanations for the relationship between hope, primal beliefs, and gender. Other explanations might include personal characteristics, in other words, traits of one person could influence how they deal with a lockdown situation versus how another deals with the exact same environment. Some people are more prone to depression and a lockdown situation could have exacerbated the condition. The study's heterogenous sample provided an opportunity to study different individual contexts, but on the other hand the study was limited to lockdown contextuality. The environmental factors and the fact that the study employed a cross-sectional design where data was collected at a single and

brief time period, could have introduced risks for the study's findings. A disadvantage is that the results offer minimal information on the long-term impacts of external events. For example, the influence of lockdown on the findings, how adapting to lockdown could change over time, and its effects on hope and primal beliefs, or the implications when lockdown was discontinued.

The data collection was conducted in English, which for the most part of South Africa, is not the participants' first language. In addition to measuring hope and primal beliefs in accordance with a western conceptualisation, the questionnaires utilised in this study may have overlooked the multidimensional culturally specific perspective of these dimensions. Thus, this might have affected the reliability and validity of the results.

Although the sampling created for a heterogenous group (female versus male) that increased the likelihood of generalisability, the study could have been limited by the online self-selection process. This can introduce bias that could confound the results and limit representativeness in relation to economically disadvantaged individuals without online, digital access to participate. In other words, the average person that took part in the study might not represent the average person on the street. One can assume that different results could be obtained from a more diverse cultural and livelihoods group.

The study only examined the role of the primary and secondary primal beliefs ('Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive') in relation to hope and gender and did not consider the related tertiary and unrelated tertiary primals. Additionally, dispositional hope was not examined by specifically exploring pathways and agency, respectively. The examination of the separate components of dispositional hope and their

correlation with the four primals, and possible gender-moderating role could introduce different results.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

Several recommendations for further research are discussed, as there seems to be a shortage in literature, specifically South African studies, concerning how hope relates to primal beliefs, and the role of gender. Based on the research findings and the limitations, the following recommendations are made for further research:

- Longitudinal studies on possible changes in the relationships between hope and primal beliefs across the lifespan. This could provide rich information regarding the potential changes in hope and primal beliefs, as people age and move through different developmental phases.
- Studies that examine a wider spectrum of gender identities in the context of hope and primal beliefs.
- Qualitative research on the experiences of hope and primal beliefs among diverse population and cultural groups in the South African.

#### **6.5 Concluding Remarks**

This study focused on two definitions and categorisations of hope, namely dispositional hope and perceived hope. Although distinct in their theory's, this study found a strong relationship between these diverse viewpoints, providing the possibility that hope's various philosophical, theological, and scientific explanations might be more closely related and posits for a probable more accurate universal definition of hope. This could warrant further investigation into hope and an acceptable worldwide definition. Either way, scholars do agree that hope plays an

imperative role in well-being and flourishing in life. In addition to hope, the study examined a recent world belief model that encapsulates how individuals perceived the world as good versus bad. This study focused on the primary and secondary primal beliefs, 'Good', 'Safe', 'Enticing', and 'Alive'. Literature provided evidence that individual world beliefs influence and are important considerations to ensure and enhance well-being and psychological health. This study's examination of the relationship between hope and primal beliefs yielded significant results that a strong positive relationship between hope and primal beliefs exists, and complements and are imperative to positive living. To expand the understanding of the relationship between the constructs, the study explored whether gender could play a moderating role in the relationship between dispositional hope, perceived hope, and the four primal beliefs. The study found that gender does not influence the strength or direction of the relationship. This study contributes to the understanding of how hope relates to primal beliefs that could enable and inform future researchers to make informed decisions when developing interventions to build individuals' positive psychological characteristics, such as character strengths.

The study process has been a tremendous, personal, and beneficial experience. It granted me the opportunity to understand the research process and develop my own research skills. The study made me think about the significance of hope in my own life and made me more aware of events, circumstances, but most importantly, how I view the world and how my beliefs raise and lower my own levels of hope. As toxicity and violence, especially in South Africa increases, I can only '*hope*' and '*believe*' in a possible better future.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

#### A.1 ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR THE INTERNATIONAL HOPE-BAROMETER SURVEY 2019-2022



21 October 2019

Dear Prof C Guse

**Project Title:** International Hope Barometer Survey 2019 -2022  
**Researcher:** Prof C Guse  
**Supervisor:**  
**Department:** Psychology  
**Reference number:** 04444583 (HUM006/0819)  
**Degree:** Staff Research / Non Degree

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 21 October 2019. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely



**Prof Maxi Schoeman**  
**Deputy Dean: Postgraduate and Research Ethics**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**  
**e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za**

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotho

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A Bizos; Dr L Blokland; Dr K Booyens; Dr A-M de Beer; Ms A dos Santos; Dr R Fasselt; Ms KT Govender; Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr W Kelleher; Mr A Mohamed; Dr C Putters; Dr D Reuberg; Dr M Soar; Prof E Tsalard; Prof V Thebe; Ms B Tsaba; Ms D Mokgaloa

## A.2 ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR THE CURRENT STUDY: THE ROLE OF GENDER IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOPE AND PRIMAL BELIEFS



### Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotheo



31 March 2023

Dear Matson Meyer

Project Title: The role of gender in the relationship between hope and primal beliefs  
Researcher: Matson Meyer  
Supervisor(s): Prof C Guse  
Department: Psychology  
Reference number: 96070812 (HUM033/0922)  
Degree: Masters

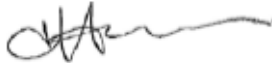
Thank you for the application that was submitted for ethical consideration.

**The Research Ethics Committee** notes that this is a literature-based study and no human subjects are involved. The application has been **approved** on 31 March 2023 with the assumption that the document(s) are in the public domain. Data collection may therefore commence, along these guidelines.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. However, should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, a new research proposal and application for ethical clearance will have to be submitted for approval.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,



**Prof Karen Harris**  
Chair: Research Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Humanities  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof KL Harris (Chair); Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Dr P Gutura; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr D Krige; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noomé; Dr J Okeke; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Ms D Mokalapa

Room 7-27, Humanities Building, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)12 420 4853 | Fax +27 (0)12 420 4501 | Email pghumanities@up.ac.za | www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities