

Dispositional Optimism and Social Networks: A Systematic Literature Review*

Andreea Amănalăchioaie¹, Loredana R. Diaconu-Gherasim²,
& Petru L. Curseu^{3,4}

¹Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences,
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași, Romania

²Department of Psychology and Cognitive Science,
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest,
Bucharest, Romania

³ Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences,
Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania

⁴Open Universiteit, Heerlen, the Netherlands

This review advances the previous literature regarding how personality traits are related to the features of social networks by investigating how dispositional optimism is linked with the structure of personal social networks. We evaluated these relations from a socio-psychological perspective, suggesting that individual differences shape the structure of social networks people participate in as well as from a sociological perspective, arguing that the structural configuration of social networks shapes individual differences. A systematic literature review search was conducted in six databases (Science Direct, Scopus, Taylor and Francis, Sage Journals, Ingenta, and Pro-Quest) for articles published between 2000 and 2022. The results indicated that dispositional optimism is a relevant personality trait for structural indicators of social networks (i.e., size, contact frequency and social connection). Further, there is also some evidence that structural features of social networks predict dispositional optimism. Our review advances the previous literature by providing an integrative view on the way dispositional optimism is related to structural features of social networks.

Keywords: dispositional optimism, social networks, network size, social connection, systematic review

Highlights:

- Evaluates of the bi-directional relationship between dispositional optimism, as a personality trait, and the structure of social networks.

Corresponding author: amanalachioaie.andreea@gmail.com; loredana.diaconu-gherasim@fpse.unibuc.ro

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- The relation between dispositional optimism and social network structure was analyzed through both psychological and sociological perspectives.
- Dispositional optimism is a key personality trait related to various features of social networks (i.e., size, contact frequency, and social connection).

The structure of social networks, the nature of social relationships (i.e., ties) and social support are key concepts in understanding of the quality of social relationships (Benson, 2012; Santini et al., 2015). From a functional theoretical perspective, social support refers to the nature of, quantity and quality of interpersonal resources that a particular social actor acquires through social ties (Antonucci, 2001; Santini et al., 2015). From a structural theoretical perspective, social networks (i.e., social connections, network size) play an important role in shaping social interactions and reflect the flow of interpersonal resources in social settings (Wellman, 1983). According to this perspective, social relationships are formally represented as social networks, with nodes representing agents and the connections among them representing social ties (House, 1987). Social networks, such as personal or ego networks, reflect the social context or the relational landscape in which people participate, and are conceptualized as the sum of interpersonal relationships captured by the direct and indirect social ties with others in a social environment (Bosworth & Schaie, 1997; Chipperfield et al., 2019; Kawaet al., 2019).

In structural terms, ego networks include the actor (ego) and other social actors (alters) as well as their social relationships (ties). The ties can illustrate stable relational tendencies among the actors of the network or relational states (e.g., family, friends or work colleagues), yet they can also illustrate transitory relational exchanges or relational events (e.g., communication, information exchange) (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). Previous literature indicates that structural indicators of social networks predict outcomes in various domains. Specifically, more diverse social networks (composed of family, friends, and colleagues) were related to lower levels of depression and risk of mortality (e.g., Harasemiw et al., 2018), and centrality in diverse social networks is positively related to job performance and career success (see Fang et al., 2015 for a meta-analysis). In other words, the pool of resources available through numerous social ties and in more diverse social networks are key drivers of adaptation and well-being.

One of the key questions in social network research is how individual attributes relate to social network features and the mechanisms that explain such relationships (Landis, 2016; Fang et al., 2015). Personality traits are stable individual attributes that involve specific patterns of behavior, attitudes and values across various situations (McAdams, 2009; McAdams et al., 2021; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Several theoretical models (e.g., the post-structuralist perspective; Kadushin, 2002; Landis, 2016; the personality-interaction model, Buss, 1987; Burt et al., 2013) argue that personality traits predict the features of the social network individuals are part of. Three mechanisms may explain the links between personality traits and the social network structure, namely, social selection, social evocation and manipulation (Jackson & Poulsen, 2005; Buss,

1987). Specifically, the social selection mechanism describes the tendency to participate in social structures that fit their personality traits, social evocation refers to the changes in people's individual characteristics triggered by the nature of the social structure one is embedded in, whereas the manipulation mechanism refers to intentional changes induced in the social structure in line with the behavioral tendencies specific to particular personality traits (Buss, 1987). Social selection and social evocation are two key mechanisms, as they explain, on the one hand, the embedding in social networks as driven by personality traits (the similarity-attraction effect describes the tendency to initiate, establish and maintain ties with similar others; Montoya and Horton, 2013), while, on the other hand, social evocation explains changes in behavioral tendencies triggered by the perceived or inferred personality traits of others. Our systematic literature review will build on these two mechanisms (selection and evocation) that explain the association between dispositional optimism and social network structure.

Previous narrative reviews and meta-analyses provide evidence for these two social embedding mechanisms. In their review, Selden and Goodie (2018) found that Big Five personality traits (e.g., extraversion) are related to the individual's perceived and reported structure of personal networks (e.g., maintaining certain personal relationships, network diversity) and workplace networks (e.g., position, composition, network size). Further, Rapp et al. (2019) reported that Big Five personality traits (i.e., neuroticism, extraversion) are related to the structure of personal social networks in terms of what individuals want from their networks (e.g., emotional support, new information) and what network structure they prefer (e.g., close networks, avoid close social contacts). Finally, in their meta-analysis, Fang et al. (2015) also found that individual characteristics such as extraversion and self-monitoring, positively predict an individual's centrality in organizational networks.

Although previous literature reveals that individual attributes such as Big Five personality traits and self-monitoring are related to the structure of different types of social networks, the links between dispositional optimism and features of social networks were not addressed in previous reviews and meta-analytic studies. Dispositional optimism, as a personality trait, reflects the extent to which people have a generic positive outlook toward their life (Carver & Scheier, 2014). Previous literature consistently found that dispositional optimism is positively related to better outcomes in various life domains, including mental and physical health (Rozanski et al., 2019; Uribe et al. 2022), and adaptative coping strategies (Nes & Segerstrom, 2006) across different samples. The optimistic view regarding the future might also impact on how individuals interpret social cues, how they engage in social interactions and, ultimately, how they structure their social network (see Carver et al., 2010; Carver & Scheier, 2014). From a cognitive perspective, optimists are likely to have a more positive outlook on their social relations, and they are also more likely to make efforts when it comes to engaging with others in pursuit of individual or collective goals (e.g., Brissette et al., 2002; Musich et al., 2021). Given the motivational dimension of dispositional optimism (Carver & Scheier, 2014), it is a trait closely related to an individual's social context. In theoretical terms, in line with the social selection

mechanism, people who score high on dispositional optimism tend to find similar others as preferred social interaction partners as they provide social validation, reinforcement and interpersonal predictability (Montoya & Horton, 2013), while social evocation predicts that interacting with people scoring high on optimism prompts behaviors that are aligned with this personality trait. However, to date, there was no attempt to synthesize the existing research regarding the interplay between optimism and social network structure. The present review advances the literature by focusing on the relationship between dispositional optimism and social network structure, as well as the potential mechanisms (selection, evocation) that explain these links.

The Structure of Social Networks

Theorists in the field of social psychology state that social networks offer a basis for an understanding the structure of social relationships with significant others (e.g., relatives, friends). According to the convoy model of social relationships (Antonucci, 2001), social ties accumulate and generate social structures based on individual (i.e., personality characteristics, skills) and contextual factors (e.g., environment, family), and this has consequences for individual well-being (Ajrouch et al., 2005).

Several indicators of social network structure were highlighted in the literature, including type, composition (or the nature of social connections) and size (Santini et al., 2015). Thus, a distinction was made between global social networks (i.e., secondary groups) and personal social networks (i.e., primary networks) (Wrzus et al., 2013). Global social networks include all established social connections (family, colleagues, co-workers, neighbors and acquaintances) where formal linkages exist and have a variable length (e.g., professional organizations) (Wrzus et al., 2013). Personal social networks consist of family members, acquaintances or associates, and contain informal and more profound relationships (Thoits, 2011). Depending on its type, social networks can be diverse (composed of family, friends and neighbors) or more restrictive (with little social connection), oriented towards friends or family (Cheng et al., 2022; Li & Zhang, 2015). Moreover, several types of network ties were identified in the literature based on the nature of the connection established among actors, varying from stable state-like ties such as friendship, to more transient event-like ties such as advice seeking or giving (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). Social network researchers have mainly focused on the general importance of networks and the beneficial impact of larger and more diverse social networks (composed of family, friends, colleagues) for physical and mental health (e.g., Satıcı et al., 2016; Bosworth et al., 1997; Burt et al., 2012; Perry et al., 2015).

Dispositional Optimism and the Social Network Structure

According to the dispositional optimism model (Carver et al., 2010; Carver & Scheier, 2014), there are individual differences regarding people's expectations toward the future; some people expect good things to happen to them

(optimists), whereas others expect bad things to happen to them (pessimists). These differences in people's views regarding the future reflect in their tendency to exert effort in pursuing goals across diverse life domains (Carver & Scheier, 2014). Given the motivational dimension of dispositional optimism (Carver & Scheier, 2014) it is a trait closely related to the social context in which people navigate. Thus, optimists have a positive view of their relationships, are more satisfied with their relationships, maintain and build them more easily (Carver & Scheier, 2014).

Several theoretical models posit the relation between dispositional optimism and social network structure. Some sociological models (e.g., the weak tie theory, Granovetter, 1973; the reciprocity or interdependency, Burt, 1992; Tasselli et al., 2015; the similarity-attraction models; Montoya & Horton, 2013) state that individual attributes such as personality traits are related to the processes that take place within a social network, the role or the position they might hold in the network. Individuals having similar social network positions tend to share the same norms, feelings and attitudes, and thus, they tend to select others who are similar to them (Montoya & Horton, 2013; Tasselli et al., 2015). In other words, an optimist tends to select as preferred interaction partners other optimists, while pessimists tend to participate in networks composed of more pessimistic members. Alternatively, some psychological theoretical models (e.g., reciprocity Tasselli et al., 2015, the optimism contagion model, Lopes, 2012) posit that individuals can change their own or others' behaviors within their social networks, as well as their social connections as a response to the typical behaviors exerted in their social network. In other words, people exposed to optimistic behaviors tend to behave similarly. Further, according to the personality-interaction model (Buss, 1987; Burt et al., 2013), the individuals' position in a social network (e.g., degree centrality) might be related to their personal characteristics, to the extent that the individual shows consistency across different social roles (Burt et al., 2012). Further, according to the optimism contagion perspective (Lopes, 2012), optimistic people have the tendency to evaluate their social relationships more positively, and also transmit their favorable (or optimistic) expectations toward the future to other members of their social network. Thus, optimistic people might transmit their optimistic perspectives toward the future within their social networks as well.

A growing body of work has investigated the relation between dispositional optimism and features of social networks, with mixed results. Some studies indicate that optimistic people have larger and more diverse social networks (e.g., Andresson, 2012; Brissette et al., 2002), however, non-significant relations were also reported in the literature (Segerstrom, 2007). Further, optimistic people seek to accumulate social (e.g., relationships with friends or family) and status resources more actively (e.g., socio-economic status) to attain their goals, which might help them have larger social networks (Hobfoll, 1989; Segerstrom, 2007). In line with the social selection mechanism hypothesis (Buss, 1987; Jackson & Poulsen, 2005), the optimists, due to

their positive outlook on life and interpersonal relationships, are more likely to assess their social networks in more positive terms. Given that optimists may evaluate the value of diverse others as sources of personal support more positively, they are also more likely to participate in broader and more diverse social networks. Optimists are more likely to reach out to others and engage in social relationships. Therefore, they are more likely to be perceived by others as desirable social partners. Through such reciprocity optimists are expected to exert more direct influence on the structure of their social networks. In line with the social evocation mechanism hypothesis, people participate larger and broader social networks are expected to develop more favorable evaluations of interpersonal relationships, receive more social support and as such develop a more positive outlook on life and relations.

Little empirical research has explored the mechanisms that might explain the relationships between features of social networks and individual attributes, i.e., whether the social network structure may impact the personality traits or vice versa. One study investigated whether the individuals' centrality within organizational networks might predict their personality characteristics (i.e., charisma) or whether individuals, perceived as charismatic, tend to occupy central network positions in work networks (Balkundi et al., 2011). The results support the network-to-personality (i.e., centrality-to-charisma) model and not the personality-to-network (i.e., charisma-to-centrality) model; formal leaders with a central position in networks (i.e., team advice) were seen as charismatic by their subordinates, whereas leader charisma (evaluated by subordinates) did not predict leaders' central positions within organizational networks.

To advance the literature, this review investigated the nature of the relationships between dispositional optimism and structural characteristics of the social network. We relied on several structural indicators of social networks: size, type, diversity, frequency of contact and social connection. Further, we explored this relation from two distinct theoretical perspectives: a psychological perspective (Buss, 1987; Lopes, 2012), by exploring whether dispositional optimism may shape the social network structure; and a sociological perspective (Burt et al., 2012), by investigating whether the features of the social network structure have an impact on people's level of optimism. In line with the social selection mechanism hypothesis, suggesting the impact of dispositional optimism on structure of social network (Buss, 1987; Jackson & Poulsen, 2005), we evaluated whether the optimists, due to their positive outlook on life and interpersonal relationships, are more likely to engage in social relationships, to navigate in broader and more diverse social networks and be perceived by others as desirable social partners. In line with the social evocation mechanism hypothesis (Buss, 1987), arguing the impact of social networks on dispositional optimism, we evaluated whether people participate larger and broader social networks and who are expected to develop more favorable evaluations of interpersonal relationships, develop a more positive outlook on their life (high levels of dispositional optimism).

Our review focused on the structural aspects of the social network, rather than social support, considering that social support could be conceptualized as an epiphenomenon of social ties (Zhu et al., 2013). Previous studies showed that dispositional optimism and social support may derive from social networks and are both protective factors for peoples' adjustment, such as internalizing symptoms (e.g., Litwin & Levinsky, 2022; Santini et al., 2015). In addition, some empirical evidence shows that the structural features of the network (i.e., size, social contacts) have a mediating role for the relation of personality traits (i.e., extraversion), participants' well-being and perceived social support (Zhu, et al., 2013). Therefore, is it highly relevant to understand the nature of the relation between personality traits and social structure in order to better understand why personality is associated with social support. Thus, our review focuses on the relation between optimism and social relationships, relying on a structuralist perspective, as well as a functionalist perspective, considering that the support emerges from the social network features.

Method

The authors followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses (PRISMA; Liberati et al., 2009; Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021) guidelines for the drafting of this systematic review.

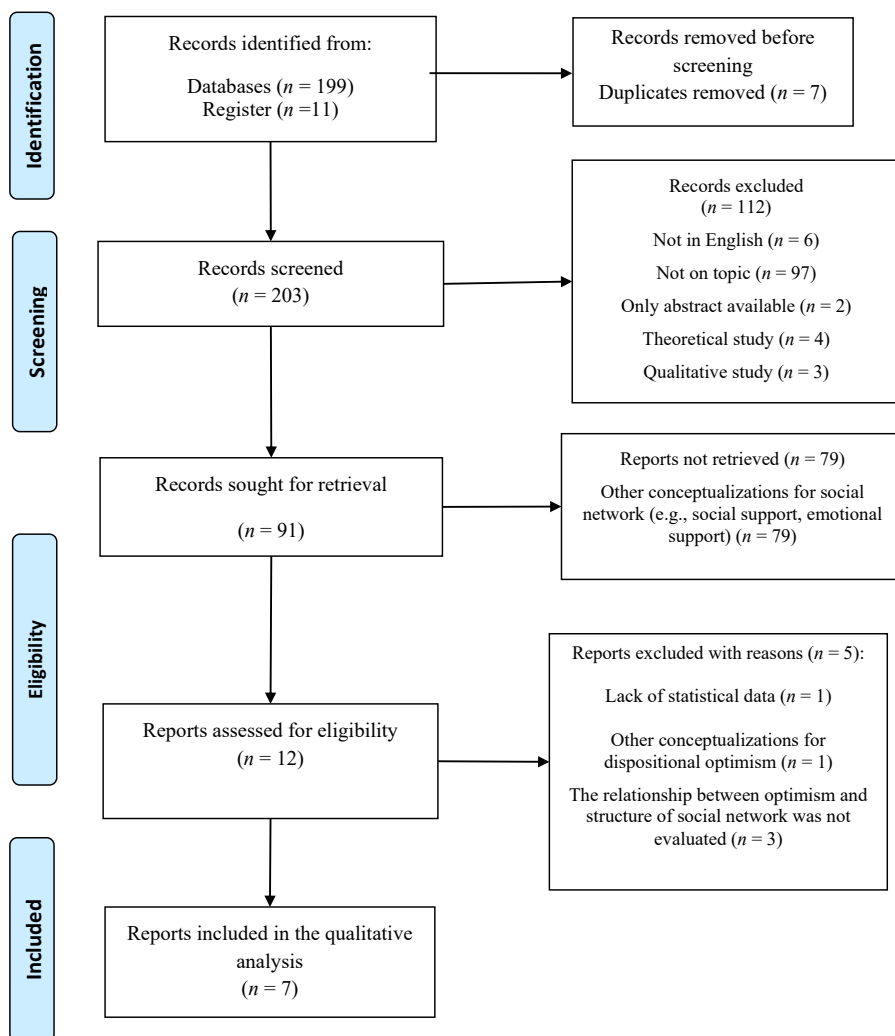
Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted in six databases: Science Direct, Scopus, Taylor and Francis, Sage Journals, Ingenta and Pro-Quest. The initial search covered a period from 2000 (the earliest paper of Carver and Scheier's dispositional optimism model) to 2021. The final literature search reported in the current review was performed in November 2022. The literature search was limited to title and abstract fields. In all the databases we applied the same search strategy, using the following combination of terms: ("social network" OR "network size" OR "type of network" OR "network diversity" OR "frequency of contact" OR "social connection") AND ("dispositional optimism" OR "optimism" OR "pessimism"). We also carefully reviewed the articles included in the previous reviews and meta-analyses (e.g., Nes & Segerstrom, 2006; Carver & Scheier, 2014; Santini et al., 2015) in order to find out whether there are missing articles in the computerized search of the literature. To avoid the bias of publication, we also searched for unpublished dissertations or doctoral theses. There was no restriction to publication type; different types of research reports were eligible for inclusion. In addition, we contacted all the authors who conducted empirical studies eligible for inclusion (April 2021).

Study Selection

First the duplicates were eliminated, and then all the studies, found as a result of the search period, were screened based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria by two coders (the first two authors). Further, all retrieved full-text studies were evaluated for eligibility and selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, by the same coders. The overlapping between the coders was .89 for screening and .90 for the study selection. The differences between the coders were resolved through discussion, and an agreement was reached. The diagram of the process of selection is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
PRISMA diagram



Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion criteria are the following: 1) studies must focus on the relation between dispositional optimism social networks viewed as the structural aspect of social relationships; 2) we selected studies that conceptualized dispositional optimism based on Scheier and Carver's (1985) model; 3) the studies must be written in English; 4) we included quantitative studies with relevant information about the relationships between dispositional optimism and social network structure.

Exclusion criteria are the following: 1) studies that focused on other optimism-related constructs (i.e., unrealistic optimism, hope or attributive style) which relied on other theoretical models (e.g., unrealistic optimism; Harris & Hahn, 2011, hopelessness theory; Gillham et al., 2001); 2) studies that focused on other aspects of social relationships, as perceived social support; 3) studies assessing online social networking websites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) were excluded due to boundary definition issues (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008); 4) articles that were not written in English; 5) studies for which we had no access to full text or the authors did not send it upon request; 6) qualitative studies, qualitative reviews and conceptual papers. After reviewing the articles based on the criteria described above, our final list consisted of seven articles. The results at each stage of the literature search strategy are illustrated in the PRISMA Diagram (see Figure 1).

The literature search resulted in 210 relevant papers. After excluding the duplicates (7 published papers), 203 potential papers were further analyzed. The following exclusion criteria were used for screening, and further studies were excluded: articles that were not in English (6), theoretical articles (4), qualitative studies (3) and articles for which we did not have full-text access (2), the articles that did not analyze the relationship between the social network structure and dispositional optimism (97). Further, the articles were evaluated based on eligibility criteria, and further studies were excluded: the articles that conceptualized the social relationships as perceived support, e.g., emotional support, social support received from family, friends or peers (79). We also excluded articles in which optimism was not conceptualized based on Carver and Scheier's (1985) theoretical model (2), lack of statistical data about the relationship between optimism and social network (1). In the end, seven papers were included in the analysis (see Figure 1). The search strategy and results for each stage are included in Figure 1. Additional information about all potential papers found after a literature search and the reasons for exclusion of the studies can be found in the Supplementary Material section.

Data Collection

The following aspects were evaluated in each study: conceptualization of dispositional optimism, conceptualization of social network (e.g., average number of friends, frequency of social contact), sample characteristics (age, gender, and cultural context where the study was conducted), methodological characteristics (scales used to measure dispositional optimism, scales used to assess the structure of social network, type of research design), and the correlation coefficients. The data extracted and coded are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Summary of the studies included in the review

Studies	Country	Design	Sample <i>N</i>	Sex	Sample Type	Dispositional Optimism	Social Network	Correlations	Findings
1. Brissette et al., (2002)	US	longitudinal	89	51.68% women	young people (<i>M</i> = 17.9)	LOT (Scheier & Carver, 1985)	Friendship network size	$r = .24^*$ (Time 1) $r = .27^*$ (Time 2)	A high level of dispositional optimism was significantly associated with larger network size at Time 1 and Time 2. Dispositional optimism did not significantly predict the increases in social network.
2. Dumitrache et al., (2015)	Spain	cross-sectional	406	62.1 % women	Older people (<i>M</i> = 74.88)	LOT-R (Scheier et al., 1994)	Global network size (i.e., family, friends, and others)	$r = .24^{**}$	Dispositional optimism was significantly linked with global network size.
3. Iovu et al., (2018)	Romania	cross-sectional	1509	59.04% women	young people	LOT-R (Scheier et al., 1994)	Family connectedness	$r = .14^{**}$	Dispositional optimism was positively significantly related to the quality of family connection; more optimism led to better family connections.
4. Segerstrom (2007)	U.S.	longitudinal	61	52% women	Adults	LOT (Scheier & Carver, 1985)	Social Network Index (Cohen et al., 1997)	$r = -.17$ ns (Time 1) $r = .29^*$ (Time 2)	Dispositional optimism was significantly associated with an increase in social resources as well as an increase in social resources, which lead to a more optimistic view of people.
5. Andersson (2012)	U.S.	cross-sectional	1231	55.2 % women	Adults (<i>M</i> = 44.3)	LOT-R (Scheier et al., 1994)	Social Network Size (adapted from Brissette et al., 2002) with dimension: overall network size Non-kin network size	$r = .07^{**}$ $r = .12^{**}$ $r = .11$ ns	Dispositional optimism was significantly positively related to increased network size as well as non-kin ties.
6. Griffin et al. (2013).	Australia	longitudinal	2579	48% women	Older people (<i>M</i> = 62.06)	LOT (Scheier & Carver, 1985)	No non-kin Social connectedness (Hesketh & Griffin, 2010)	$r = -.34^*$	Older participants reporting higher levels of dispositional optimism also reported higher social connection.
07. Musich et al., (2021).	U.S.	cross-sectional	3577		Older people (<i>M</i> > 65.00)	LOT-R (Scheier et al., 1994)	Social network Index (Cohen et al., 1997)	$r = .14^{***}$	Dispositional optimism was significantly associated with high levels of social connections.

Note. $^*p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$ PSIHOLOGIJA, 2025, Vol. 58(3), UDC

Measures

Dispositional Optimism

Three studies (Brisette et al., 2002; Segerstrom, 2007; Griffin et al., 2013) used the Life Orientation Test (LOT; Scheier & Carver, 1985) to measure dispositional optimism. The scale consists of 8 items and 4 filter items, assessing the generalized expectations regarding future positive or negative results. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). For this scale the Cronbach's alpha coefficients range from .85 to .86. Further, the Life Orientation Test-R (LOT-R; Scheier et al., 1994) was used to evaluate dispositional optimism in the other four studies (Andersson, 2012; Dumitrache et al., 2015; Iovu et al., 2018; Musich et al., 2021). The questionnaire consists of 10 items, with 6 items and 4 filter items.

Structure of the Social Network

The studies included in this review analyze social networks from an egocentric perspective where the participants had to think and report about their social network ties. Two characteristics of social networks were evaluated: network size (Brisette et al., 2002; Segerstrom, 2007; Andersson, 2012; Dumitrache et al., 2015; Musich, 2021) and social connection (Griffin et al., 2013; Iovu et al., 2018). The social network size is measured by the number of close relations or using a social network index. Three studies evaluated the network size as the number of close friends in college (a person perceived as close and trustworthy if needing to seek help, Brisette et al., 2002), as the overall network size, non-kin ties size and no non-kin ties (Andersson, 2012), as well as the number of family members, friends or close friends (Dumitrache et al., 2015). Further, two studies (Musich, 2021; Segerstrom, 2007) used the Social Network Index (Cohen et al., 1997) to evaluate 12 types of social relationships, including relationships with parents, partners/spouses and co-workers. The participants reported whether they contacted (personal/telephone) the reference/named person at least once every two weeks. A total score was computed by adding up the total number of people with whom the participants interacted at least once every two weeks. The other two studies evaluated social networks as social connectivity or connectedness. In one study (Griffin et al., 2013), the *Social connectedness scale* (Hesketh et al., 2011) was used to assess the participants' contact with their family and friends. Finally, another study evaluated the family connection through a scale composed of 4 items, which assessed the degree to which adolescents feel emotionally close to other people in their family (Ioivu et al., 2018).

Results

General Aspects

The identified studies were conducted in four different countries: Romania (Ioivu et al., 2018), US (Musich et al., 2021; Andersson, 2012; Segerstrom, 2007; Brisette et al., 2002), Spain (Dumitrache et al., 2015) and Australia (Griffin et al., 2013). The studies included 9,452 participants, aged between 18 and 85 (*Mage* = 26.50). Regarding the sample selectivity, two studies were conducted on samples of adolescents and young people (Brisette et al., 2002; Iovu et al., 2018), two studies on samples of adults (Andersson, 2012; Segerstrom, 2007) and the final three studies on samples of older adults (Dumitrache et al., 2015, Griffin et al., 2013; Musich et al., 2021). Further, the design of the studies was cross-sectional (Andersson, 2012; Dumitrache et al., 2015; Iovu et al., 2018; Musich et al., 2021), or longitudinal (Brisette et al., 2002; Griffin et al., 2013; Segerstrom, 2007).

Links Between Dispositional Optimism and the Structure of Social Networks

We found consistently significant and positive correlations between dispositional optimism and social network indicators of size and connectedness such as closeness of family connection. Specifically, higher levels of dispositional optimism were associated with larger social networks (Andersson, 2012; Brissette et al., 2002; Dumitrache et al., 2015; Segestrom, 2007). These findings were reported for all network size types, overall network size (Andersson, 2012; Dumitrache et al., 2015; Segestrom, 2007), number of friends (Brissette et al., 2002) or non-kin network size (Andersson, 2012). Further, dispositional optimism was positively related to connection in the family context (Iovu et al., 2018) and general social connectivity (Musich et al., 2021); individuals scoring high on dispositional optimism also reported more positive expectations about the future in the family context or a stronger sense of social and family connections. Further, higher levels of dispositional optimism were associated with a higher frequency of social contact (Griffin et al., 2013).

A limited number of studies addressed the potential mechanism (social selection, evocation and manipulation) that might explain the association between dispositional optimism and social network structure. Two studies evaluated the longitudinal relation between dispositional optimism and the structural features of social networks (Brissette et al., 2002; Griffin et al., 2013). The findings indicate that dispositional optimism is longitudinally associated with social network size and social contact (Brissette et al., 2002; Griffin et al., 2013). Only one study evaluated the direction of the relation between dispositional optimism and social networks (Segestrom, 2007) showing that large networks lead to increased dispositional optimism over time. However, higher levels of dispositional optimism did not lead to larger social networks ten years later (Segestrom, 2007).

Discussion

Our review advances the literature regarding the reciprocal relation between dispositional optimism and the structure of social networks. Further, we explored nuanced relations between these constructs by reviewing evidence regarding two different approaches (psychological and sociological) derived from the literature and organizing the literature depending on the mechanisms of social selection and evocation captured in different studies. Specifically, we reviewed empirical evidence exploring whether personality traits impact on the social network features or whether social network structure shapes personality traits.

As expected, dispositional optimism was found to be beneficial for social networking. Overall, optimistic people tend to participate in larger social networks (e.g., Andersson, 2012; Segerstrom, 2007), and this expansion of their network is a result of inclusion of friends (Andersson, 2012) and a better connection with family members and friends (Iovu et al., 2018; Brissette et al., 2002). These results were supported in both cross-sectional studies (Dumitrache

et al., 2015; Iovu et al., 2018) and longitudinal studies (Griffin et al., 2013; Brissette et al., 2002). Further, these relations were found across various samples: adolescents (Brissette et al., 2002), adults (Andersson, 2012) and older people (Musich et al., 2021) as well as across various social contexts (Western and Eastern cultures). Overall, these results are in line with the dispositional optimism model (Carver & Scheier, 2014) suggesting that optimistic people are focused on positive aspects of their relationships, are motivated to initiate new relations and work hard to maintain them. Future studies can extend these results by exploring how dispositional optimism is related to functional characteristics of social networks, such as social support. Future studies may also explore the relation between dispositional optimism and social networks, not only from the participants' perspective (i.e., egocentric perspective) but also from a socio-centric perspective where reciprocity within network can be assessed.

Our review advances the literature by focusing on the bi-directional relationship between dispositional optimism and the social network structure from a social selection perspective that seems dominant in the psychological literature as well as from a social evocation perspective that is a preferred theoretical stance in sociological literature. Our findings indicate that higher levels of optimism are associated with larger social networks and greater social connections in both cross-sectional (Dumitrache et al., 2022) and longitudinal studies (Brissette et al., 2002; Griffin et al., 2013). These findings confirm the similarity-attraction theoretical model (Buss, 1987; Burt et al., 2013; Robins & Kashima, 2008) suggesting that, based on their personality traits, individuals select similar people with whom to interact, establish and maintain social relationships. In other words, it seems that optimists tend to select other people who are similar to them, and this is a result of a process of selection that takes place over time. Our results also support the idea that through social network ties, optimistic people could generate and transmit their optimistic perspective to other members of their social network. Thus, optimistic people not only see social relations in a more positive light, but through contagion they can pass on this perspective within their network as well.

Further, some studies investigated whether social networks impact optimism such that navigating in richer social environments fosters dispositional optimism over time (Ioivu et al., 2018; Segestrom, 2007). The results indicate that higher levels of optimism are related to a higher connection with family and friends (Ioivu et al., 2018). Further, a large social network increases the levels of optimism over time, whereas dispositional optimism does not lead to an increase in the social network size over time (Segestrom, 2007). These studies are in line with structural theoretical models on social networks (Burt et al., 2012; Tasselli et al., 2015) arguing that individuals' personality traits might be the result of a particular structure of their immediate social network or that they could be exhibited in appropriate social situations. Being embedded in larger social networks, individuals are also exposed to more social interactions and develop a more positive outlook on life and social relations. These findings highlight the importance of social resources (e.g., financial or social support) as in larger social networks actors have access to more socially valued resources and are

thus more likely to develop more positive expectations toward their future or higher levels of optimism (Nes & Segerstrom, 2006).

Overall, our review provides evidence for both social selection and social evocation mechanism models regarding the relation between personality traits and social network structure (Buss, 1987; Tasselli et al., 2015). Specifically, our review shows that optimism, as a personality trait, has an impact on social networks and also for the impact of the features of social networks on a level of optimism. These findings refine insights about how one's personality is related to features of social networks (Jackson & Poulsen, 2005). It is important to further investigate whether there are certain traits or behaviors that can be imprinted on other people from networks and which factors related to personality or networks are important for relationships within a group (O'Malley & Onnela, 2014).

Strengths, Limitations and Future Research

Our review supports the social selection and social evocation mechanisms explaining the association between optimism and the egocentric network structure. We show that optimism attracts and breeds optimism, as optimists are embedded in larger and more diverse social networks, while social ties increase optimism in time due to possible optimism contagion effects. These insights open important avenues for future research that could explore the social selection and social evocation mechanisms further at the network level. For example, future research could use whole network studies to explore the way in which consistency in optimism ratings within networks actually impacts well-being outcomes of the network members. Based on the similarity-attraction argument, it could be expected that higher network congruence in terms of optimism is associated with better adaptation and more well-being. It would also be interesting to explore the extent to which optimists cluster in clique-like social network structures and as such optimism could be one metric for social network fragmentation. In particular, the diffusion models of optimism could explore the way in which status impacts the evocation of optimism in others. Based on social influence models in leader-followed dyads, we could expect that network centrality might drive the social evocation effects of optimism, as illustrated by studies in leader-follower dyads showing that a leader's optimism is likely to benefit followers (Parent-Rochelleau et al., 2021). In addition, research could explore the extent to which optimists could occupy more central structural places in networks and act like network connecting hubs of interpersonal resources within networks. Optimism is a personal resource, and it is very likely that optimists, due to their positive outlook on life and relations, are seen as resourceful network members and valued as such by others. Literature to date has focused on the positive network effects and has not explored the effects of negative ties that have a destructive role for interpersonal relations (De Jong et al., 2014) and ultimately well-being. The valence and the type of network ties is therefore another valuable direction for future research exploring the extent to which optimists and pessimists also differ in the type of network ties they

report. The positive vibe surrounding optimists would mean that they will report fewer negative network ties (enemies, rivalry, etc.) as compared to pessimists that are more likely to attract more negative interpersonal judgments from their network peers. Also related to the contents flowing through the social networks' ties, future research could explore the event-like structures more clearly to better understand which resources optimists bring or take from the social networks. Previous research shows that in religious networks, members that report having many contacts praying for them also report higher levels of optimism (Schafer, 2013). It would not be surprising that other forms of symbolic or instrumental support exchanged through social ties drives the development of optimism, while networks in which social ties reflect rivalry, antagonism and discord are hotbeds for pessimism. Future research could explore the type of network ties as well as the content that is transferred through network ties in relation to dispositional optimism more in depth. The network benefits tied to optimism are presented in Western samples as well as in Eastern ones, regardless of the participants' age, yet future research could explore cultural and value differences that may impact such benefits. We argue that optimists are likely to be network hubs, yet other, overlapping variables like values or attitudes are also relevant drivers of network dynamics. Future research could therefore explore the interplay between optimism and other individual differences in relation to social networks.

Our review has some limitations. First, the studies included in the review used self-reporting measures of social networks and dispositional optimism. It is possible that the participants presented themselves in a more positive light, and that could have negatively impacted the results. However, the desirability bias was decreased considering that the participants were informed about the confidentiality of their responses. Second, a relatively limited number of structural indicators of social networks was investigated in relation to dispositional optimism. Exploring other network-related characteristics (e.g., social support) might provide a clearer picture about the strength of the relationships between social network and dispositional optimism. Future studies could focus on an evaluation of the social network with regard to personality traits and the evolution of their relation over time. Third, our review focused on dispositional optimism as a specific personality trait. Future studies need to focus on a broader conceptualization of optimism such as unrealistic optimism (Harris & Hahn, 2011) or optimistic attributional style (Gillham et al., 2001) and their impact on social network structure in order to better understand the relation among these constructs. Fourth, most studies included in the present review used a cross-sectional design, which did not allow us to come to a conclusion regarding the direction of the relationships between dispositional optimism and the structural indicators of the social network. Future studies evaluating longitudinal relationships between these constructs could bring helpful information regarding the direction of the relation over time. Given the small number of eligible articles included in our review (less than four articles available per indicator; see Shanahan et al., 2021 for a similar procedure), we could not embark on an adequate assessment of the risk of bias. We hope that

as the empirical evidence accumulates, future systematic literature reviews will be able to include a comprehensive risk of bias assessment that would account for the attributes and methodological strengths of the studies. In conclusion, the current review synthesized the empirical studies regarding the relationship between dispositional optimism and social network structure. Our findings indicate that dispositional optimism is an important personality factor related to the size of social networks, contact frequency and social connection. Further, we also found evidence that social network structure is an important predictor of dispositional optimism. Moreover, our results suggest that efforts of researchers and practitioners to improve people's optimism could be more efficient by taking into account their social network structure. Finally, preventive and intervention programs can be designed for individuals with a poor social network, as limited social connections or small social networks might call for strategies that focus on improving their optimism and related optimistic expectations.

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Dispozicioni optimizam i društvene mreže: sistematski pregled literature

Andreea Amănilăchioaie¹, Loredana R. Diaconu-Gherasim², &
Petru L. Curseu^{3,4}

¹Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences,
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași, Romania

²Department of Psychology and Cognitive Science, Faculty of Psychology
and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania

³Department of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences,
Babeș-Bolyai University

⁴Open University, Heerlen, the Netherlands

Ovaj pregled literature unapređuje prethodna znanja o tome kako su osobine ličnosti povezane sa karakteristikama društvenih mreža istražujući kako je dispozicioni optimizam povezan sa strukturom personalnih društvenih mreža. Ove odnose smo procenjivali iz psihološko-teorijske perspektive, s obzirom na to da individualne razlike oblikuju strukturu društvenih mreža u kojima se ljudi okreću, kao i iz sociološke teorijske perspektive, tvrdeći da strukturna konfiguracija društvenog umrežavanja oblikuje individualne razlike. Sistematsko pretraživanje literature sprovedeno je u šest baza podataka (Science Direct, Scopus, Taylor and Francis, Sage Journals, Ingenta, i Pro-Quest) za članke objavljene između 2000. i 2022. godine. Rezultati

su pokazali da je dispozicioni optimizam relevantna osobina ličnosti za strukturne indikatore društvenih mreža (kao što su veličina, učestalost kontakta ili društvena povezanost). Dalje, postoje i neki dokazi da strukturne karakteristike društvenih mreža predviđaju dispozicioni optimizam. Naš sistematski pregled unapređuje prethodnu literaturu pružajući integrativni pogled na način na koji je dispozicioni optimizam povezan sa strukturnim karakteristikama društvenih mreža.

Ključne reči: dispozicioni optimizam, društvene mreže, veličina mreže, društvena povezanost, sistematski pregled

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