



# Activating Hope across Life Circumstances in the Face of Adversity: A Concise Review

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## Abstract

The current state of the world has left uncertainty and despair for many, subsequently leading to increased risks in numerous areas of life (i.e., health, education, workplace, relationships) and overall wellbeing. Hope, as a stand-alone construct, is a protective factor against many mental and physical health conditions, while serving as a strategy to improve all areas of life. Moreover, research has found hope is teachable, measurable, and learnable. However, the skills of hope are not taught, leaving us susceptible to the risks associated with hopelessness if we do not know how to proactively manage it and grow our hope. The following narrative review provides a synthesis of hope-related research across numerous domains of life, provides evidence for hope as a teachable construct, and compiles evidence-based Hopeful Mindset and Hopeful Minds curriculums to help ignite the dissemination of its skills.

**Keywords** Hope · Hopelessness · Health · Education · Workplace

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## Introduction

The wake of COVID-19 is subsiding, and yet we live in an era of hopelessness marked by economic decline, poor social support, natural disasters, and falling wages. Hopelessness, defined by researchers as emotional despair and motivational helplessness, is high (Abramson et al., 1989; Pan & Chiou, 2004). For example, the Harvard Kennedy School (2023) revealed 47% of Americans under 30-years-old reported hopelessness at least several days in the last two weeks. Additionally, the CDC (2023) documented 57% of teen girls report persistent hopelessness, which amounts to a nearly 60% increase in hopelessness since 2011.

Intermittent episodes of hopelessness, characterized as state hopelessness, are typical responses to commonplace challenges in life, such as encountering traffic congestion, experiencing interpersonal conflicts, or falling short on tasks (Burr et al., 2018). However, when these instances of state hopelessness become cumulative or when individuals confront more severe adversities, such as the loss of a loved one, unemployment, or eviction, they may develop persistent hopelessness, known as trait hopelessness (Burr et al., 2018). Persistent hopelessness is linked to numerous adverse outcomes across all areas of life that can result in poor academic and work performance, poor mental and physical health outcomes, worsening relationships, and increased engagement in risky behaviors (i.e., substance use, violence, weapon carrying; Bolland, 2003; Demetropoulos, 2017; Everson et al., 1996; Jalilian et al., 2014; Oppenheimer & Hankin, 2011). The antidote of hopelessness is hope, which is a documented interdisciplinary strategy to address the adverse consequences of hopelessness while improving all areas of life. Additionally, hope is a teachable skill evidence-based programs like Hopeful Mindsets have shown significant increases in participants' levels of hope between before to after course completion (Bryce et al., 2024).

We are not aware of a review that has specifically addressed hope as a strategy for improving numerous domains of life. The specific objective of this narrative review, therefore, is to examine the current theoretical and empirical basis for hope using Snyder's (1994) Hope Theory as the framework. As part of an integrative approach for treating and preventing outcomes related to hopelessness. We first describe the theory of hope, with a focus on Snyder's (1994) hope theory as our framework for understanding and discussing hope. We next describe the evidence on how hope is a teachable and measurable construct before disseminating research on hope's impact on education, workplace performance, healthcare, violence prevention, trauma outcomes, suicide, climate change, and connectedness. We finalize our paper by offering evidence on the strategies for teaching hope.

## Methods

This literature review was conducted primarily through Google Scholar, utilizing keyword searches related to "hope," "hopelessness," "mental health," "resilience," "violence prevention," "health," "workplace," "education," "trauma" and other related terms. The selection of sources was guided by relevance, citation frequency,

and publication recency, with a preference for peer-reviewed journal articles, meta-analyses, and systematic reviews. Studies using Snyder's Hope Theory as a framework were prioritized to maintain theoretical consistency.

## Hope Theory

Hope, operationalized as “an expectation of positive outcomes for future events” (Vance, 2010), has garnered attention across various domains of inquiry for its potential to influence positive life trajectories amidst adversity and hopelessness. While integral to overall well-being and resilience, hope has often been overlooked as a quantifiable parameter for measuring positive development or psychological growth (Germann et al., 2015). Weingarten (2010) articulated the problem very clearly “... few theoreticians have been able to move from the abstract to the pragmatic. Few clinicians have taken up the challenge to articulate specific connections between hope as a theoretical construct and hope as a practice” (p. 5).

Central to the discussions on hope is the framework of Snyder's cognitive theory, which posits three interconnected components: goals, agency, and pathways (Snyder, 1994). Agency refers to one's motivation and determination to achieve desired goals, while pathways denote the belief in generating successful plans to reach those goals. High-hope individuals experience temporary distress but rebound to pursue their life goals effectively, showcasing the resilience inherent in hopeful thinking (Snyder, 1994). Research corroborates Snyder's (1994) theory, indicating that hope significantly predicts psychological well-being across diverse populations (Hsu et al., 2003).

Hope is a motivating force that energizes efforts to improve a situation deemed unsatisfactory; thus, it is a catalyst for action (Lazarus, 1999). Though hope acts as a motivator, someone with higher levels of hope does not expect a favorable outcome; thus, it is important to distinguish hope from optimism, where a positive outcome is expected. Additionally, hope is primarily centered on specific goals, whereas optimism pertains more to the general expectation of positive future outcomes (Bryant & Cvcengros, 2005). Likewise, hope is often subsumed under resilience, but if a relationship between hope and resilience exists, it is more likely that resilience is an outcome of having hope and not the reverse (Ho et al., 2010; Mednick et al., 2007; Seligman & Gillham, 2000). Researchers distinguish resilience from hope by explaining that resilience develops from adapting to challenging life experiences (Bowling et al., 2021). This ability to adapt is fueled by overcoming obstacles and achieving goals, which is rooted in hope. Furthermore, Munoz et al. (2020) found that while hope significantly predicted flourishing, resilience was a nonsignificant predictor, providing further evidence of the difference between these constructs.

Hope is considered an essential component of human development, made possible through the development of trust (Erickson et al., 1975). “Hope arises from a sense of moral and social order embodied in the expression of key cultural values: faith, family unity, service, effort, morals and honour” (Eggerman & Panter-Brick, 2010, p. 71). These values “form the bedrock of resilience, drive social aspirations, and underpin self-respect and dignity” (Eggerman & Panter-Brick, 2010, p. 71). As a component of resilience, Mrazek and Mrazek (1987) stated that hope (and optimism) is “an

orientation to life that permeates many personal characteristics and is reinforced by the successful use of ...other traits and skills to foster resilience...they can pull a ... child through a difficult situation” (p. 362).

Hope is a universal human experience, yet its cultivation and expression vary significantly across cultural groups. Research has shown that BIPOC populations and their White counterparts exhibit indistinguishable differences in hope levels, suggesting that hope is equally achievable across racial and ethnic identities (Edwards & McConnell, 2023). However, how hope is conceptualized can differ based on national origin, with some cultures emphasizing different dimensions of hope. For example, studies in Brazil, Spain, and the Netherlands suggest that a unidimensional conceptualization of hope may be more fitting compared to the two-factor structure (i.e., pathways and agency) proposed by Snyder (Brouwer et al., 2008; Galiana et al., 2015; Pacico et al., 2013). Extensions to Snyder’s model, such as incorporating the idea of “peaceful hope”—which involves transcendental adaptation and persistence—or considering hope in the context of locus of control, where hope is either individualistic or communal, offer a broader understanding of how different cultures approach hope (Bernardo, 2010; Bernardo et al., 2018; Snyder et al., 1991). These cultural nuances highlight the need to consider local values and worldviews when assessing and fostering hope in diverse populations.

Across diverse groups, the outcomes of hope have primarily been positively correlated with well-being; however, research has primarily focused on White participants. Importantly, recent research has found higher hope in Black college students facing race-related stress or discrimination experienced more negative outcomes (i.e., higher stress). The authors speculate that stress may benefit Black students by motivating them to overcome systematic barriers and pursue academic pursuits, or these students have learned to suppress their hope and set lower expectations to manage discrimination-related stress.

## Hope Is Teachable

Snyder’s (1995, 2000) contributions have suggested that hope levels are formed by age three. However, newer research has demonstrated that hope is a teachable learnable skill for all age levels. For example, Bryce et al. (2024) found college students’ hope level significantly increased following a semester-long hope curriculum. Additionally, Kirby et al. (2021b) found significant increases in hope in children 8–14 years old following a hope curriculum. Several other studies have documented rise in hope across various adult populations (e.g., chronically ill patients, general adults, Chan et al., 2019; Pretorius et al., 2008).

From a neurophysiological lens, Peterson et al. (2008) provided evidence that hope is amenable to training and development through their study of psychological capital (i.e., hope, confidence, and resiliency). They found individuals higher in psychological capital had greater activity in the left prefrontal cortex, whereas individuals with low psychological capital showed more activity in the right frontal cortex and right amygdala. Given what we know about brain adaptability, Peterson et al.’s (2008) findings provide preliminary evidence that psychological capital, including

hope, can be strengthened. Additionally, Wang et al. (2017) studied the mediating role of hope on the physiology of anxiety and found higher expressions of hope related to less activity in the bilateral medial orbitofrontal cortex, which is the part of the brain affiliated with emotion, including motivation production, problem-solving, and goal-directed behaviors. Lastly, LeDoux (1998) noted the amygdala is “quieted” by chemicals released from the prefrontal cortex allowing for the expression of hope. Taken together, these physiological findings provide neurological support for the enhancement of hope.

## Hope Is Measurable

Hope is a measurable construct allowing us to understand its growth and trajectory throughout various domains of life. Redlich-Amirav’s (2018) systematic review of hope scales found 18 different hope scales with the most popular being (1) The Snyder Adult Hope Scale/Snyder Children Hope Scale, (2) The Herth Hope Index, (3) The Locus of Hope Scale, and (4) The Comprehensive Hope Scale. The Snyder Hope Scale is used in nearly half of all studies on hope; the scale is unidimensional and is based on the cognitive-behavioral framework (i.e., agency and pathways thinking) embedded into Snyder’s (1994) Hope Theory (Redlick-Amirav et al., 2018). In contrast, the other most popular scale in literature, the Herth Hope Scale, defines hope as a multidimensional construct involving relationships, emotions, cognitive-behavioral, spiritual, and contextual aspects. Measuring hope using the Herth Hope Scale allows researchers to see which dimension of hope is higher in individuals. While the two scales have consistent fair psychometric properties across various populations, they use opposing frameworks, making it challenging to compare results of research that do not use the same measure. Thus, the following narrative review primarily selected studies that used an iteration of the Snyder Hope Scale with the exception of studies that used qualitative methodology ( $n=5$ ).

## Hope’s Impact across Areas of Life

Hope is interdisciplinary; for example, hope has been studied from a philosophical (Bloeser & Stahl, 2022), theological (Junker-Kenny, 1995; Moltmann, 1975), psychological (Kaplan & Schwartz, 1993), and sociological (Desroche, 1979) perspective. Turner (2005) summarized the several ways in which hope has been constructed in the literature by stating hope is (a) futuristic (Holt, 2000), (b) motivational (Stotland, 1969), (c) self-sustaining (Hall, 1990), (d) malleable (Sheehan & Rall, 2011), (e) pervasive (Cutcliffe, 1997), (f) action- or goal-oriented (Farran et al., 1992), (g) necessary to live (Obayuwana, 1980), and (h) an aid in crisis expectancy (McGee, 1984). A plethora of research has demonstrated the benefits of hope across areas of life. Though not an exhaustive list, the following topics provide further evidence for the need for hope-related research and instruction.

## Hope in Education

We are facing an educational crisis, as numerous education metrics are demonstrating deficiencies. In 2021, 2 million students between 16 and 24 years old dropped out of high school and did not earn a high school diploma or equivalency credential (i.e., GED; NCES, 2023). Moreover, some states have reported increases in dropout rates; Shen-Berro (2023) reported increased high school dropout rates in Colorado, Michigan and Illinois in the past year, with North Carolina reporting rates that are 17% higher than before the pandemic. Gallup (2019) research found that 29% of students reported they weren't engaged in school and 24% noted they were actively disengaged. Moreover, the study found a steady decline in academic engagement from sixth grade through high school, which only one-third of high schoolers reporting high levels of engagement. While these data were collected before the pandemic, it is believed that COVID-19 exacerbated disengagement. Across the United States, 29.7% of students are deemed chronically absent by missing at least 10% of school days (Blad, 2023).

Hope rises as a strategy to improve these education metrics, as many studies have found a positive links between higher levels of hope and educational outcomes in both grade school students and college students (Gallagher et al., 2017). For example, Dixson et al. (2017) found that the students with the highest hope scores also had higher levels of academic self-concept (i.e., how well one feels they can learn information), academic investment, perceived life chances (i.e., one's expectations that positive events will occur in their future) self-esteem, school belonging and consideration of future consequences; these findings were significantly higher than students with low hope or high levels of only one of the two dimensions that make up hope (i.e., agency or pathway thinking). Additionally, researchers have found hope predicts a higher Grade Point Average (GPA) in students beyond a student's intelligence, personality, and previous academic achievement (Day et al., 2010). In a college sample, hope strengthened the relationship between high school academic performance and college retention, suggesting college students with higher levels of hope may drop out from college less frequently (Bryce et al., 2021). A school whose graduation rate was at one in three students due to hardships and adversity within the community found that their graduation rate increased to 100% after teaching their students hope skills (Bashant, 2016). Taken together, there is a clear case for implementing a hope-building curriculum within schools to help strengthen academic metrics.

## Hope in the Workplace

We spent a great amount of time at work; on average, Americans work 1,820 h per year or 176 h per month (Kulakov, 2024). Moreover, since the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work has grown, as 49% of U.S. workers report partial or full remote work and this metric has risen 42% since 2019 (Jones, 2023). The World Health Organization (2022) estimated that employee depression costs employers \$1 trillion in lost productivity throughout the world. Research suggests that every \$1 invested into employee well-being has an ROI of \$4, making it appealing to integrate strategies into the workplace (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Gallup (2021) noted that hope is one of the four needs in strength-based leadership, and researchers have found numerous positive outcomes associated with higher levels of hope in the workplace. For example, researchers suggest higher levels of hope protect against and can mitigate symptoms of depression (Favale et al., 2020). Treating and protecting against depression is an asset for employers, as employees who are depressed miss nearly five days of work every three months and lose one to two hours of productivity during every eight-hour shift (CDC, ). Additionally, researchers have found higher hope leads to a 14% improvement in workplace productivity, outperforming productivity that is based on the worker's intelligence, optimism, and self-efficacy (Lopez, 2013). Hopeful employees stay with their job longer due to increased satisfaction, sleep better, and have less risk of chronic conditions (Long et al., 2020; Makaremnia et al., 2021). Taken together, hope emerges as an economically beneficial strategy to improve worker health and productivity while saving managers and company owners money.

## Hope in Healthcare

Following the global upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments worldwide escalated healthcare spending, reaching a staggering \$9 trillion (WHO, 2022). Amidst this backdrop, understanding the pivotal role of hope in health and well-being becomes paramount, especially considering the top three global causes of death in 2019—*ischemic heart disease, stroke, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease* (WHO, 2022).

Hope emerges as a strategy for health promotion, catalyzing efforts to prevent numerous health conditions. Individuals with higher levels of hope exhibit a more positive view on life, driving them towards proactive health preservation measures (Khan et al., 2023). Evidence suggests that hopeful individuals often adopt healthier lifestyles, embracing increased physical activity, balanced diets, and abstaining from substance misuse (Berg et al., 2011; Nsamenang & Hirsch, 2014). Harvard University's "The Human Flourishing Program" underscores the profound impact of these positive health behaviors, correlating them with enhanced physical health and reduced risks of chronic conditions, mental health disorders, and improved sleep patterns (Feldman & Sills, 2013; Long et al., 2020). Moreover, hope fosters a sense of connectedness and belonging, further fortifying preventive efforts and positive health outcomes (Vella et al., 2023).

Beyond prevention, hope serves as a documented intervention in health outcomes. Individuals with higher hope exhibit greater adherence to treatment plans, driven by their motivation to achieve recovery goals (Kurita et al., 2020). Research further illustrates that heightened hope correlates with expedited recovery times from injuries and diseases, offering a more favorable prognosis for postoperative recovery (Long et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2017).

In tandem with the rise in physical health conditions, global rates of anxiety and depression have surged by 25% since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2022). Alarming, suicide now ranks as the fourth leading cause of death among individuals aged 15–29 worldwide (WHO, 2023b). The pervasive sense of hopelessness



ness, particularly among youth, underscores the urgent need to address mental health crises, with hopelessness serving as a major symptom of depression and a predictor of suicidal ideation (APA, 2023; Baryshnikov et al., 2020; CDC, 2023). The economic toll of anxiety and depression disorders, estimated at \$1 trillion annually in lost productivity, is projected to skyrocket to \$6 trillion by 2030 (The Lancet Global Health, 2020).

Hope emerges as an intervention against mental health conditions such as anxiety, stress, and depression, crucial given depression's status as the leading global cause of disability (Rahimipour et al., 2015; WHO, 2023a). Utilizing hope as an intervention for anxiety and stress also serves as a strategic approach to mitigate hypertension (Spruill, 2010). For individuals grappling with chronic, incurable conditions, hope becomes indispensable in enhancing their quality of life, equipping them with the tools to confront challenges and navigate their journey with resilience (Soleimani et al., 2022). Taken together, as we confront the multifaceted challenges to global health and well-being, cultivating and harnessing hope emerges as a strategy for positive change, offering pathways to prevention, recovery, and resilience in the face of adversity.

## Hope's Role in Violence Prevention

In 2023, new research revealed a total of 183 regional and local conflicts, marking a 12% increase in global conflicts and the highest number of wars in the last three decades (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2023). Moreover, the United Nations reported we are facing the highest number of violent conflicts since World War II (United Nations, 2023). The only known predictor of gun violence is a history of violent behaviors and researchers have found hopelessness is the only consistent predictor of violent behaviors (APA, 2013; Demetropoulos, 2017). However, higher hope is related to lower levels of violence, and hope is one of five recommended elements for intervention in the face of trauma resulting from mass violence (Hobfoll et al., 2007; Stoddard et al., 2011).

Eggerman and Panter-Brick (2010) studied Afghans who were caught up in ongoing violence, and a participant stated, "The only way to make life better is to be hopeful. If a person has hope, then he or she can work and acquire knowledge to make their life better" (p. 76). Eggerman and Panter-Brick (2010) concluded that resilience and grit rest upon a sense of hope: the belief that adversity can ultimately be overcome and lead to a process of "meaning-making" that gives coherence to past, present, and future experiences. In the face of continuing adversity in Afghanistan, the "Back to School" campaign is an example of hope-building policies that have raised expectations but whose outcomes remain to be seen (Eggerman & Panter-Brick, 2010). Hope-based interventions that help students explore their goals and identify actions to achieve them have been shown to increase life satisfaction (Marques et al., 2013). Gan et al. (2013) found that future expectations were significantly correlated with resilience among adolescents who experienced the Sichuan earthquake "...the future is...predicted by the manner in which a person thinks about it..." (p. 1239).



## Hope and Trauma

Researchers have also explored the relationship between hope and trauma. Walsh (2007) described hope as a positive outlook and its presence as a predictor of recovery from trauma. These observations led Wu (2011) to conclude that treatment plans could be devised that would lead family members of trauma victims, especially those who were symptomatic of posttraumatic stress disorder or depression, that would lead to a hopeful outlook on life goals. Wu (2011) concludes that hope “fuels energies for people to rebuild their lives, rebuild their dreams and renew their attachments” (p. 1908). In their study of sexually abused adolescents, Williams and Nelson-Gardell (2012) reported lower levels of hope and expectancy in those who were less resilient. Finally, Valle et al. (2006) contended that developing cognitive-motivational strengths such as hopeful thinking may foster protection against adverse life events. Given the research on hope as a protective factor, there is a need to understand how the development of hope can be implemented into children’s lives.

## Hope and Suicide

Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 15-29-years old globally and more than 700,000 people die by suicide each year (WHO, 2023b). Moreover, hopelessness is a primary predictor of suicidal ideation (Wolfe et al., 2019). When discussing hope’s role in suicide prevention, it’s crucial to recognize the complexity surrounding the issue. Suicide is often perceived solely as a manifestation of hopelessness, yet evidence challenges this assumption (Goetzke et al., 2016). According to Snyder (2000), suicidal ideation arises from a perceived blockade of hope. McCann (2002) emphasized that hope inherently involves envisioning a future goal or plan, tangible or intangible. Moreover, Johnson and Roberts (1996) highlighted the pivotal role of hope in successful adaptation, suggesting that hopelessness acts as a significant barrier. Snyder (1995) even linked hope to survival, underscoring its importance in crisis resolution (McGee, 1984).

Numerous studies have found an inverse relationship between higher hope and suicidal ideation (e.g., Huen et al., 2015; Tucker et al., 2013; Ropaj, 2023; etc.). Collectively, these findings stress the critical importance of cultivating and maintaining hope, particularly in the context of suicide prevention (Turner, 2005). While hopelessness is indeed associated with suicide attempts, it’s essential to recognize the potential confounding factor of depression (Wilkinson et al., 2011). Thus, understanding and nurturing hope emerge as crucial components in the multifaceted effort to prevent suicide and promote mental well-being.

## Hope in Climate Change

Scientists predict the average global temperature is expected to rise above 1.5 degrees C in 2024, this temperature is often cited as the point of no return within literature (Climate Copernicus, 2023; Harvey, 2022; Hausfather, 2020; McGuire, 2023) WHO (2023c) reported 3.6 billion people worldwide live in areas that are highly susceptible to the consequences of climate change (i.e., heatwaves, wildfires, storms, and

hurricanes). The adverse effects of climate change-induced challenges pose physical threats and have severe implications on mental health. People exposed to such disasters often suffer from acute traumatic stress, and their symptoms persist until safety and security are reestablished (Fritze et al., 2008). Furthermore, the looming threat of essential resources, such as water, becoming scarcer due to climate change intensifies anxiety among populations (Fritze et al., 2008). Scarcity of water resources can also lead to violent conflicts as communities vie for access to clean water.

Numerous studies have underscored the positive relationship between hope and engagement in climate-change-related activities, as well as pro-environmental behaviors (e.g., Bury et al., 2019; Ojala, 2023; Ojala, 2011). For example, Bury et al. (2019) found that hope can be used as an antecedent for group motivation toward an outcome that is not within one's sole ability to obtain, which is applicable to combatting climate change. Moreover, Sangervo et al. (2022) found that a combination of climate-change-related anxiety and hope were adaptive emotions and could be used as a motivator for taking action against climate change. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that hope emerges as a catalyst, propelling individuals, and societies toward combatting climate change.

### Hope and Connectedness

There is a positive correlation between hopefulness and connectedness in parent-family and school contexts. For example, Stoddard et al. (2011) proposed that youth may be protected from participation in violence due in part to the connection they had with their mother, which fostered hopefulness. To reiterate, adolescents with higher levels of hope are less at risk of internalizing behavior problems and negative impacts on life satisfaction when facing adversity, which is created through connectedness developed early in life. Another example of hope's relationship to connection comes from Mednick et al. (2007), who examined hope as a potential resilience factor. They found hope may act as a protective factor against anxiety in mothers of children diagnosed with type 1 diabetes.

### Disseminating Hope Skills

Given the benefits associated with hope and the evidence for its development, the next step in disseminating hope skills determining the best route for teaching hope. Recent research and program development has started to demonstrate the effectiveness of hope instruction (e.g., Bryce et al., 2024; Ghazali et al., 2021; Kirby et al., 2021a, b).

Standish (2018) developed a hope-building exercise that encouraged students in classrooms to answer the following questions: (1) list two things that cannot happen; (2) list two things that will not happen; (3) list two things that should not happen; (4) list two that that could happen; (5) list two things that can happen; (6) list two things that you want to happen; and (7) of the two items listed in #6 pick one and imagine HOW it could happen, then repeat with item 2. The questions are based on the creative hopefulness techniques by Boulding (2000) and Lederach (2004) who noted that visioning utilizes hope as a tool for creating change. While Standish (2018) did

not explore the efficacy of this model in raising hope, the author noted that the questions map onto Snyder's (2000) hope model because item seven harnesses pathway thinking while item six looks at the agency or potential action towards achieving the goal.

Additionally, the De La Salle School establishes a "culture of hope for children in poverty" (Sheehan & Rall, 2011). The findings from the school's program suggested that it is possible to infuse hope, agency, and pathways in any school (Earls et al., 2008). As reported by Sheehan and Rall (2011), there are three identifiable processes: "hope finding," "hope bonding," and "hope enhancing." As described, "hope finding" involves identifying agency in the children and pathways for achieving a goal. "Hope bonding" and "hope enhancing" are active, interactive processes that support achieving goals. These three hope components demonstrate the ability to train for "hope" and thus open the opportunity to consider programming to achieve "hope" and arrive at goals. From the research on these three identifiable processes, Sheehan and Rall (2011) produced another program called "Making Hope Happen for Kids," adding evidence to the idea that programs can be established around the concept of hope.

Hopeful Minds, another hope program of interest, was founded by the iFred, International Foundation for Research and Education on Hope ([www.iFred.org](http://www.iFred.org)). The Hopeful Minds program, previously called Schools for Hope, uses the "Five Keys to Shine" framework to teach hope. Each letter in "Shine" stands for Stress Skills, Happiness Habits, Inspired Actions, Nourishing Networks, and Eliminating Challenges. There are three versions of the Hopeful Minds curriculum: one for teenagers, another for youth providing a brief introduction to the concept of hope, and a third deep dive version aimed at giving children a comprehensive understanding of hope's core components. Three studies have been published on the efficacy and outcomes of the Hopeful Minds Curricula on elementary and middle school children. Kirby et al. (2021a) found that following the completion of 10 Hopeful Minds' lessons, children 8–13 years old had significant increase in hope and improvements in anxiety, emotional regulation, coping and resiliency. The primary limitations were a small sample size ( $n_{pre} = 88$ ;  $n_{post} = 39$ ) and measuring hope qualitatively rather than using the a valid measure. A second study by Kirby et al. (2021b) used a 12-week curriculum on middle schoolers ages 11–14 improved their methodology with a larger sample size and quantitative measures (i.e., The Children's Hope Scale). They found and found significant increases in hope levels along with improvements in anxiety, depression, resilience, positive emotion, reduced negative emotion, emotional control, stoicism, social support seeking and self-care. A major limitation in the study was a lack of control group, preventing them from comparing improvements to students who went through school as usual. Lastly, Ghazali et al. (2021) studied the 10-lesson Hopeful Minds curriculum outcomes using a control group and treatment group. Within the treatment group, they found significant increases in hope, emotional regulation, and emotional control, and significant decreases in depressive symptoms. Notably, they measured hope using the Children's Hope Scale as well.

The Hopeful Mindsets curriculum, offered by The Shine Hope Company, integrates The Five Keys to Shine Hope framework into its teachings ([theshinehope-company.com](http://theshinehope-company.com)). Recent research conducted on college campuses using the Hopeful Mindsets program showed significant increases in hope levels among college students

upon completing the course (Bryce et al., 2024). The study utilized a matched-control design with 50 participants; 25 students were enrolled in the in-person Hopeful Mindsets course at their college. While the sample size was low, the study provided proof of concept for the course. Hopeful Mindsets curricula are offered for adults in various life settings, such as college, workplace, veterans, or general environments.

Lastly, Hopeful Cities is a program that adopts a city-wide approach to teaching hope within a community (hopefulcities.org). This initiative provides a playbook designed to equip cities, counties, states, and countries with practical and actionable resources for instilling hope in their communities. The goal of Hopeful Cities is to cultivate a culture of hope and empower all community members with the skills necessary to boost hope levels across the entire community. To date, there is no outcome data to support the Hopeful Cities initiative.

### **Clinical Implication**

Understanding the outcomes and relationships between hope as a measurable and teachable construct and various domains of life has significant real-world applications. In educational settings, hope-based curricula could enhance student engagement, motivation, and academic performance. In workplaces, fostering hope may improve employee well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction. Within healthcare, integrating hope into treatment strategies may aid in patient recovery, mental health interventions, and chronic disease management. Additionally, hope has implications for violence prevention, trauma recovery, and climate change action, positioning it as a critical tool for addressing contemporary societal challenges. The synthesis of hope-related research underscores the need for more research on hope as a strategy and intervention across various domains of life.

### **Limitation**

Despite efforts to provide a comprehensive synthesis, this literature review has several limitations. First, the reliance on Google Scholar may have introduced selection bias, as it primarily indexes academic papers and may exclude relevant but unpublished or non-traditional sources, such as government reports or industry white papers. Second, while Snyder's Hope Theory provided a consistent theoretical lens, it may have limited the exploration of alternative conceptualizations of hope. Additionally, most studies reviewed focused on Western populations, raising concerns about the generalizability of findings to diverse cultural contexts. Finally, while the review highlights the teachability of hope, empirical studies on large-scale interventions remain limited, warranting further research.

### **Conclusion**

In light of these findings, it is imperative that organizations, companies, schools, and hospitals integrate evidence-based hope curricula into their frameworks to empower individuals with the necessary skills to transition from hopelessness to hope. With a

proven return on investment and the economic advantage of equipping people with hope-building skills in communal settings, it is essential to ensure universal access to these resources.

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