



The Association between Optimism and Goal Achievement

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Introduction

- Dispositional optimism has consistently been discovered to be a factor in goal engagement (Geers, Wellman, & Lassiter, 2009), goal pursuance (Monzani, Steca, Greco, D'Addario, Pancani, & Cappelletti, 2015; Crane & Crane, 2007; Jackson, Weiss, Lundquist, Soderlind, 2002), and goal achievement (Monzani et al., 2015; Hmieleski & Baron, 2009; Geers et al., 2009).
- Evidence for this association comes from multiple surveys that show a positive relationship between optimism and goal achievement (Jackson et al., 2002; Monzani et al., 2015; Crane & Crane, 2007).
- However, a study conducted by Hmieleski and Baron (2009) showed that optimism can lead to a decreased rate of goal achievement because of overestimations of ability.
- Due to countering evidence (Hmieleski & Baron, 2009; Crane & Crane, 2007) and largely unrepresentative sampling, it remains unclear whether there is a relationship between optimism and goal achievement that is applicable to the entire national population.

Research Questions

- Is an individual's level of optimism associated with their ability to achieve their goals, controlling for age, yearly income, and effective goal pursuit?
- Does the association between optimism and goal achievement differ for individuals based on their age, yearly income, or level of goal pursuit?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=1,458) were drawn from the 2016 General Social Survey (GSS), a nationally representative sample of English-speaking, non-institutionalized adults in the U.S.

Measures

- The participants' optimism was assessed using the sum of two questions about how optimistic they were. Each response was coded on a scale of 1 to 5, then summed. Scores ranged from 2 (least optimistic) to 10 (most optimistic).
- Goal achievement was assessed using the statement "I'm meeting my current goals," to which participants responded on a scale from 1 (definitely false) to 8 (definitely true).

Measures (cont.)

- Similarly to optimism, participants' goal pursuit was measured using the sum of two questions about how vigorously they pursued goals. Each response was coded on a scale of 1 to 8, then summed. Scores ranged from 2 (least effective goal pursuit) to 16 (most effective goal pursuit).
- The ages and yearly incomes provided by the participants were used without any alteration.

Results

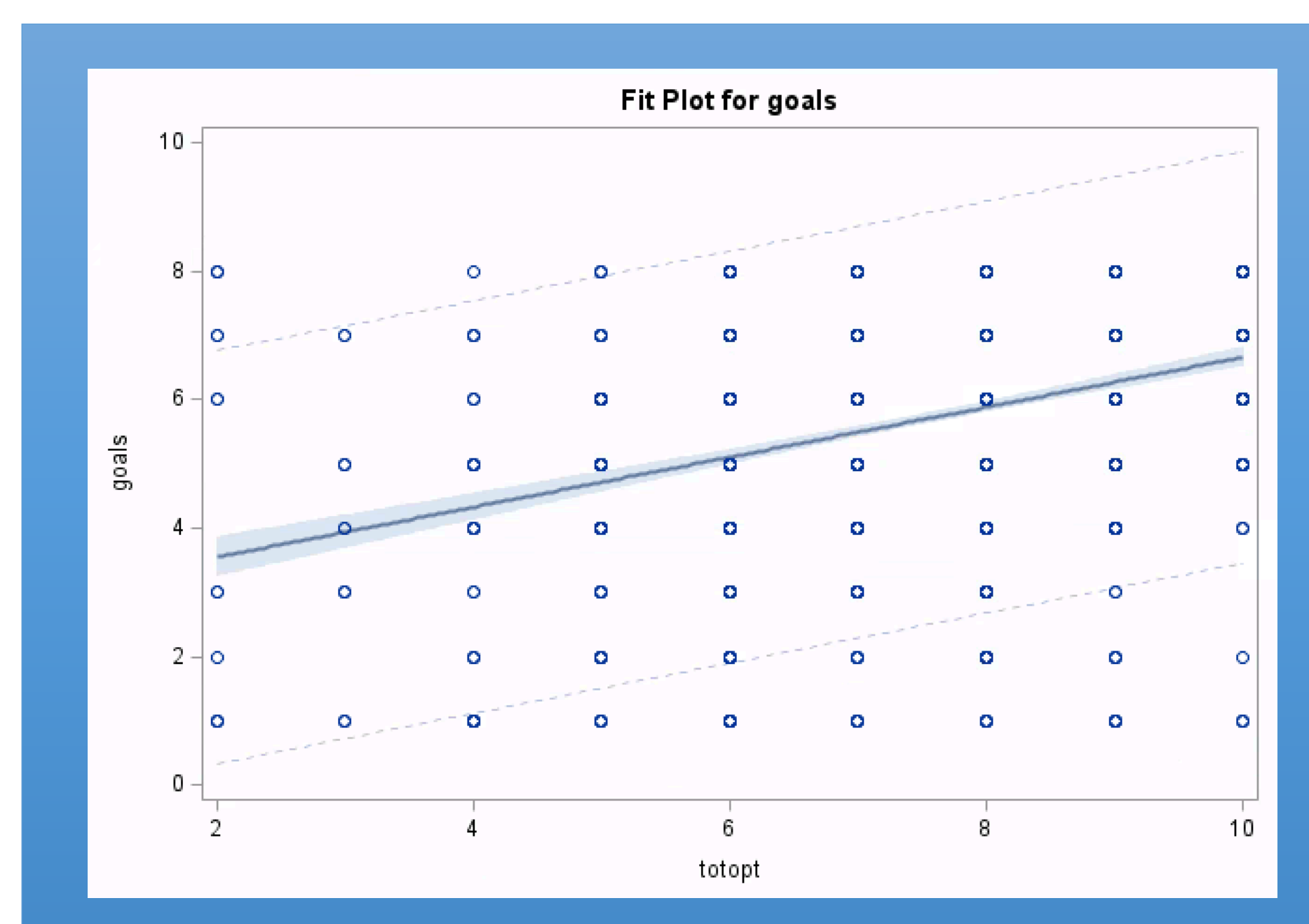
Univariate

- 77.43% of respondents are optimistic (optimism score > 6)
- 80.96% of respondents achieved the majority of their goals (goal achievement score > 4).

Bivariate

- A Pearson correlation test showed that **optimism** was significantly and positively associated with **goal achievement** ($r=0.35$, $p<0.001$).

Figure 1. Simple Regression Analysis for Optimism and Goal Achievement

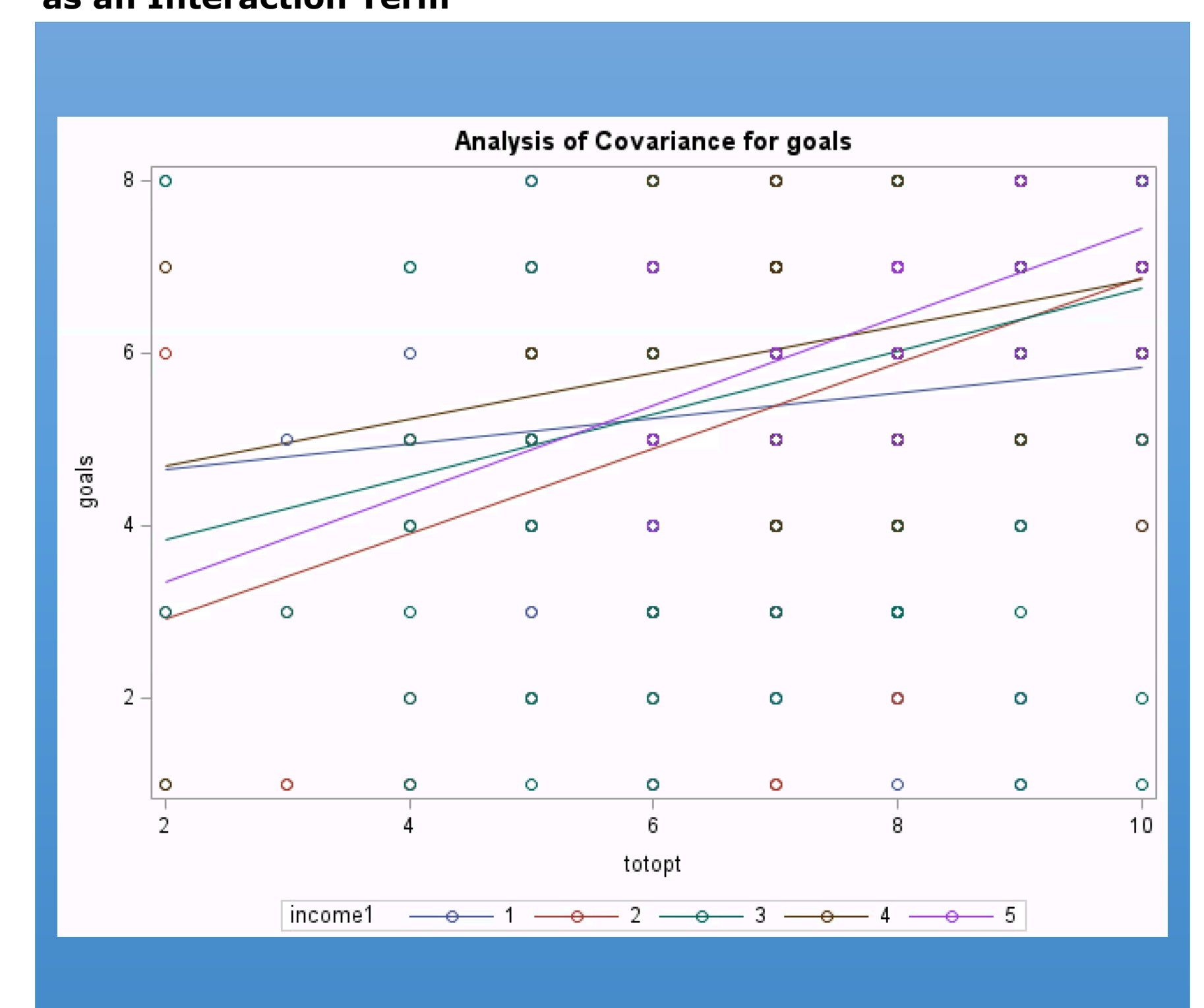


- Additionally, a simple regression analysis showed that optimism (Beta=0.3887, CI 0.361124-0.416332, $p<0.0001$) was significantly and positively associated with Goal Achievement. On average, for every additional level of optimism, someone's goal achievement is expected to be 0.3887 points higher (Figure 1).

Multivariate

- Age, yearly income, and effective goal pursuit do not appear to moderate the relationship optimism and goal achievement; however, individuals with a higher yearly income are predicted to be generally more optimistic overall (Figure 2).
- After controlling for age, income, and effective goal pursuit, optimism is still significantly associated with goal achievement ($B=0.14$, $p<0.001$).

Figure 2. Optimism vs. Goal Achievement with Yearly Income as an Interaction Term



Discussion

- Optimism is significantly and positively associated with goal achievement, meaning the more optimistic a person is, the more likely it is they achieve their goals.
- Regardless of age, yearly income, or effective goal pursuit, individuals who are more optimistic are more likely to achieve their goals.
- Individuals may use this information as motivation to change their outlook on life towards a more optimistic viewpoint, as they are incentivized by the increased goal achievement.
- Further research is needed to determine to what extent the association between optimism and goal achievement changes based on the type of goal, whether it be personal, professional, academic, etc.

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