

Exploring the Impact of Self-Esteem on Life Satisfaction in Adult Population

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Abstract—The present study explored the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among adults. The research aimed to determine whether individuals with higher levels of self-esteem also experience greater satisfaction with life. Data were collected from adult participants through online questionnaires that included the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. Statistical analyses were conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables. Results indicated a strong positive association between self-esteem and life satisfaction, suggesting that individuals who perceive themselves more positively tend to evaluate their lives more favorably. This finding supports the hypothesis that higher self-esteem is linked to greater life satisfaction. The study highlights the significance of self-worth and self-acceptance in shaping overall psychological well-being. It further suggests that interventions focused on enhancing self-esteem could contribute to improved life satisfaction and overall mental health among adults.

Index Terms—Self-esteem; Life satisfaction; Well-being; Adults; Positive psychology; Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Satisfaction with Life Scale; Mental health; Self-worth; Online survey

I. INTRODUCTION

Psychology has increasingly shifted its focus from illness and dysfunction toward the promotion of well-being and positive functioning. Within this framework, life satisfaction and self-esteem have been recognized as two essential indicators of mental health and personal adjustment.

Life satisfaction can be described as a person's overall assessment of their life based on their own standards and expectations (Diener, 1984). It represents the judgmental or evaluative aspect of Subjective Well-Being (SWB), which also includes emotional experiences such as positive and negative affect (Diener et al., 1999). Because it reflects a

broader evaluation rather than momentary emotions, life satisfaction tends to remain relatively stable over time.

Self-esteem, in contrast, refers to the value individuals place on themselves and the degree to which they perceive themselves as capable, worthy, and competent (Rosenberg, 1965). It plays a crucial role in shaping psychological resilience, motivation, and interpersonal functioning (Baumeister et al., 2003). High self-esteem is generally linked with confidence and healthier coping strategies, whereas low self-esteem has been associated with vulnerability to stress, depression, and anxiety (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012).

Connection between Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem
A consistent finding across psychological research is that self-esteem and life satisfaction are positively related. For example, a cross-cultural study by Diener and Diener (1995) found that self-esteem was one of the strongest predictors of life satisfaction in both individualistic and collectivist societies, suggesting that self-worth plays a universal role in shaping how people evaluate their lives.

Other studies further support this association. Baumeister and colleagues (2003) concluded that individuals with higher self-esteem tend to experience more happiness and overall satisfaction, partly because they approach challenges with optimism and are more likely to maintain fulfilling relationships. Orth et al. (2012) also demonstrated that self-esteem has a long-term influence, showing that people with higher self-esteem earlier in life are more likely to experience greater life satisfaction as they age.

Theoretical Explanations

Several theories offer insight into why self-esteem and life satisfaction are strongly connected:

1. Subjective Well-Being Theory (Diener, 1984) highlights that evaluations of life satisfaction are

influenced by personal self-perceptions, making self-esteem a key predictor of well-being.

2. Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Theory (1965) emphasizes that individuals who view themselves as valuable are more capable of maintaining emotional balance and deriving meaning from life.
3. Sociometer Theory (Leary & Baumeister, 2000) proposes that self-esteem reflects perceived social acceptance. A sense of belonging enhances both self-esteem and life satisfaction.
4. Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001) suggests that positive emotions associated with high self-esteem expand cognitive and social resources, leading to long-term increases in satisfaction.

Although the link between self-esteem and life satisfaction is well established, culture influences its strength. In individualistic cultures, personal achievement and self-worth are central, making the relationship stronger. In collectivist societies, where social harmony and family obligations play a larger role, the relationship is slightly weaker, though still present (Diener & Diener, 1995). This suggests that while self-esteem is important everywhere, cultural values shape the extent to which it determines life satisfaction.

Despite extensive evidence, several issues remain. Most studies are cross-sectional, which makes it difficult to establish whether self-esteem leads to life satisfaction or whether the reverse is also true. Longitudinal studies are needed to clarify this relationship. Additionally, much of the research has been conducted in Western countries, limiting the understanding of how these variables interact in diverse cultural contexts. Factors such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, and social support also require closer examination, as they may influence how self-esteem contributes to life satisfaction.



In summary, life satisfaction and self-esteem are interdependent constructs that play a vital role in overall well-being. Theoretical models and empirical studies consistently show that individuals with higher self-esteem tend to report greater life satisfaction. However, cultural differences, contextual factors, and questions of causality highlight the need for further investigation. Understanding this relationship has important implications for designing interventions in education, counseling, and mental health aimed at fostering stronger self-esteem as a pathway to enhancing life satisfaction.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Orth, Robins, and Widaman (2021) advanced this line of research by focusing on longitudinal data. Their meta-analysis of longitudinal studies revealed a reciprocal relationship: self-esteem predicts future life satisfaction, and life satisfaction also contributes to the maintenance of high self-esteem. They highlighted the role of social relationships in this process, arguing that people with high self-esteem are more likely to form positive relationships, which then feed back into greater life satisfaction. This dynamic view moves beyond a simple one-way relationship, demonstrating that self-esteem and life satisfaction reinforce each other over time.

Kurnaz, Teke, and Günaydın (2020) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis that synthesized findings across multiple populations and age groups. Their results confirmed that individuals with higher self-esteem consistently report greater life satisfaction. Importantly, they concluded that this association holds true across cultural contexts, suggesting that self-esteem is a universal predictor of life satisfaction rather than a culturally specific phenomenon.

Butković, Bratko, and Chamorro-Premuzic (2019) demonstrated that self-esteem partially mediates the relationship between personality traits and life satisfaction. They found that individuals high in extraversion and low in neuroticism tend to have higher self-esteem, which in turn contributes to greater life satisfaction. Their work underscores that while personality traits provide a stable foundation, self-esteem serves as a crucial psychological mechanism linking personality to subjective well-being.

Han, Chen, Zhou, Liu, and Guo (2025) contributed further evidence using a longitudinal sample of

Chinese adolescents. They found that high self-esteem not only predicted greater life satisfaction but also served as a protective factor against depression and anxiety symptoms. This study highlights the dual role of self-esteem: it enhances well-being directly while also buffering against negative psychological outcomes, making it a key factor in adolescent development.

Moksnes and Espnes (2013) explored this relationship in adolescence, a critical developmental period. Their study revealed that gender and age moderated the strength of the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. Specifically, adolescent girls with low self-esteem reported significantly lower life satisfaction compared to boys, suggesting that sociocultural pressures and gender expectations may influence how self-esteem translates into life satisfaction. This highlights the importance of considering demographic and contextual factors when studying these constructs.

Rey, Extremera, and Pena (2011) provided evidence that self-esteem mediates the link between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction among adolescents. Their findings suggest that emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to experience higher self-esteem, which then leads to greater life satisfaction. Similarly, Zarei, Alipour, and Khormaei (2019) confirmed this mediating role among adults, showing that the capacity to manage emotions enhances self-esteem, which subsequently improves life satisfaction. Together, these studies indicate that self-esteem operates as a bridge between emotional competencies and well-being.

Cao and Liang (2017) examined social support and resilience as external influences in this relationship. Their results showed that adolescents with strong social networks and higher self-esteem reported greater life satisfaction, pointing toward the combined importance of internal and external resources. Complementing this, Nam (2020) demonstrated that resilience moderates the association between self-esteem and life satisfaction in college students. Students with both high self-esteem and resilience experienced significantly higher levels of life satisfaction, suggesting that resilience amplifies the positive effects of self-esteem.

Thomason and Moghaddam (2021) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of compassion-focused therapies designed to enhance self-esteem.

They found that therapeutic interventions targeting self-esteem improvement had significant positive effects on life satisfaction and overall well-being. This provides practical evidence that the self-esteem–life satisfaction link is not only theoretical but can also be leveraged in applied clinical and counseling contexts. Heng, Fulmer, Blau et.al (2020) examined the objectives, significance of life, social backing, and contentment levels of teenagers in Singapore and Israel. The findings suggested that Singaporean adolescents had four purpose categories, including no direction, self-centred, others-centered, and a combination of self and others-centered, while Israeli teenagers had three purpose categories. Israeli youth reported higher levels of life satisfaction compared to their Singaporean counterparts, and the lack of purpose direction had an adverse impact on satisfaction with life. The research discovered that life meaning, support from parents, and support from teachers were positive factors in predicting life happiness.

Mugabe, Brug, and Catling (2016) carried out a study to look into academic motivation, support systems, self-esteem, and social mobility across three different student cohorts in higher education. The study comprised 267 students from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Uganda, and it discovered significant cultural differences in intrinsic, extrinsic, and intergenerational upward mobility scores between the three cohorts. Intergenerational upward socioeconomic mobility was found to be intellectually engaging and highly related to academic self-esteem in the study.

Satisi, Uysal, Yilmaz et.al (2016) performed a study to look into the relationship between social safety, psychological vulnerability, and life happiness among Turkish college students. According to the findings, life satisfaction had an important role in moderating the connection between social safety and psychological vulnerability. According to the findings, having a higher degree of life satisfaction may improve perceptions of social safety while decreasing psychological vulnerability.

Hawi and Samaha (2016) A study was carried out to investigate the relationship between self-esteem, life satisfaction, and addictive social media use. The findings demonstrated a negative association between addictive social media use and self-esteem, but a good relationship between self-esteem and life happiness.

Kong, Ding, and Zhao (2015) A study was undertaken in Chinese undergraduate students to investigate how social support and self-esteem influence the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction. The study included 427 people who filled out the Gratitude Questionnaire, the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. The findings demonstrated that social support totally mediated the association between gratitude and life satisfaction, and that there was a considerable path from gratitude to life satisfaction via both social support and self-esteem. Furthermore, the study discovered gender disparities in the relationship between gratitude, social support, and life happiness.

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants

The study consisted of 100 participants recruited through convenience sampling. All participants were adults who voluntarily took part in the study after providing informed consent. The sample included individuals from various educational and social backgrounds to ensure diversity. No missing data were reported, as participants were required to complete all items in the online questionnaire before submission.

Design

The present study adopts a quantitative correlational research design to explore the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among adults. This design is appropriate for identifying the strength and direction of association between two psychological constructs without manipulating any variables.

Measures

Two standardized psychological scales were used to measure the key variables of the study:

1. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): The Satisfaction with Life Scale, developed by Diener et al. (1985), was used to assess the participants' overall cognitive evaluations of their life satisfaction. The scale consists of five items rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher scores reflect greater satisfaction with life. The SWLS has shown high internal consistency and cross-cultural validity.

2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES): The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, developed by Rosenberg (1965), was used to measure global self-esteem. It contains ten items rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Higher total scores indicate higher self-esteem. This scale is one of the most widely used measures of self-esteem and demonstrates strong reliability across different populations, including Indian samples.

Sample and Sampling Method

The study includes a total of 100 adult participants aged between 20 and 45 years. Participants were selected through a random sampling method to ensure a diverse and representative group in terms of gender, occupation, and educational background. The inclusion criteria required participants to be within the specified age range, literate in English, and residing in India. Exclusion criteria included individuals below 20 years or above 45 years, as well as those currently undergoing clinical treatment for severe mental health issues, to avoid confounding variables.

Procedure

Data were collected using online Google Forms to ensure accessibility and ease of participation. The link to the questionnaire was shared with potential participants through social media platforms and email. The online form included an informed consent section, followed by demographic questions and the two standardized scales. Participants were instructed to read each statement carefully and respond honestly. The form was designed so that responses could only be submitted once all items were completed, ensuring data completeness. Confidentiality was maintained by not collecting any personal identifiers such as names or contact details.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, were calculated for both life satisfaction and self-esteem to summarize the data. Normality of the distributions was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test. Since both variables showed significant deviation from normality, both Pearson's and Spearman's correlation tests were conducted to assess the relationship between life satisfaction and self-esteem. All analyses were performed using the Jamovi statistical software.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H01): There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among adults.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Higher self-esteem is associated with greater life satisfaction among adults.

Ethical Considerations

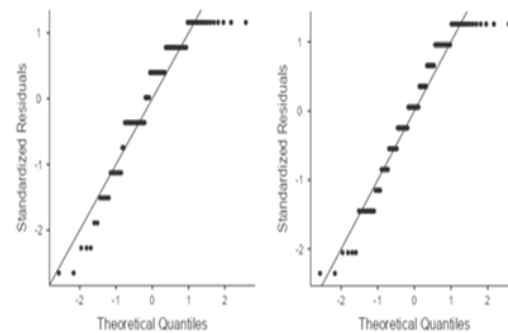
The study followed ethical principles of psychological research. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained digitally before starting the survey. Participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and be used solely for academic research purposes. No sensitive or identifying information was collected, and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage before submission.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1.1: Shows the Normality test Results

Descriptives		
	Life Satisfaction	Self Esteem
N	100	100
Missing	0	0
Mean	32.0	35.8
Median	33.0	36.0
Standard deviation	2.62	3.33
Minimum	25	28
Maximum	35	40
Skewness	-0.825	-0.519
Std. error skewness	0.241	0.241
Kurtosis	-0.0658	-0.619
Std. error kurtosis	0.478	0.478
Shapiro-Wilk W	0.901	0.931
Shapiro-Wilk p	<.001	<.001

Graph 1.1: Depiction of the normality results of both the variables



Before analyzing the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, it was necessary to assess whether the data for both variables were normally distributed. Normality testing is an essential preliminary step because it determines the suitability of parametric statistical tests, such as Pearson's correlation. In this study, the Shapiro–Wilk test was employed due to its reliability with sample sizes under 200.

The results indicated that for Life Satisfaction, $W = 0.901$ with a p -value $< .001$, and for Self-Esteem, $W = 0.931$ with a p -value $< .001$. Since both p -values are less than 0.05, the null hypothesis of normality was rejected, suggesting that the data for both variables do not follow a normal distribution.

Descriptive statistics further support this finding. Life Satisfaction displayed a mean of 32.0 with a standard deviation of 2.62, while Self-Esteem had a mean of 35.8 with a standard deviation of 3.33. The skewness values were -0.825 for life satisfaction and -0.519 for self-esteem, indicating a slight negative skew in both distributions. Kurtosis values were -0.0658 and -0.619, respectively, suggesting relatively flat distributions compared to a normal curve.

Because the assumption of normality was violated, both Spearman's rank-order correlation and Pearson's correlation were considered for analysis, with Spearman's rho providing a more robust measure for non-normal data.

Table 1.2: Shows the results of correlation test

Correlation Matrix									
		LIFE SATISFACTION	SELF ESTEEM						
LIFE SATISFACTION	Pearson's r	—							
	df	—							
	p-value	—							
	Spearman's rho	—							
	df	—							
	p-value	—							
SELF ESTEEM	Pearson's r	0.694	—						
	df	98	—						
	p-value	<.001	—						
	Spearman's rho	0.665	—						
	df	98	—						
	p-value	<.001	—						

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among 100 adult participants. The results are presented in the correlation matrix above.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between self-esteem and life satisfaction was 0.694, with a significance value of $p < .001$. This indicates a strong positive correlation, suggesting that adults with higher self-esteem tend to report higher levels of life satisfaction. The degrees of freedom for this analysis were 98, reflecting the sample size minus two.

To confirm the relationship without assuming normality, a Spearman's rank-order correlation was also calculated. Spearman's rho was 0.665, also statistically significant at $p < .001$, which again indicates a strong positive association.

The matrix shows dashes in some cells, which represent correlations of a variable with itself. These are not calculated because a variable is perfectly correlated with itself by definition.

Overall, the correlation analysis demonstrates a robust and statistically significant positive relationship

between self-esteem and life satisfaction across both parametric and non-parametric measures. This supports the hypothesis that higher self-esteem is associated with greater life satisfaction among adults.

V. DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to explore the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among adults. Based on the research hypothesis, it was expected that higher self-esteem would be associated with greater life satisfaction. The correlation analysis supported this hypothesis, with Pearson's correlation coefficient revealing a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.694, p < .001$), and Spearman's rho also indicating a strong positive correlation ($\rho = 0.665, p < .001$). Consequently, the null hypothesis, which proposed that there would be no significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, was rejected.

These findings are consistent with a substantial body of psychological research demonstrating the integral role of self-esteem in subjective well-being. Self-

esteem reflects an individual's evaluation of their own worth and competence, and higher self-esteem is often linked to more positive affect, resilience, and effective coping strategies. Adults with higher self-esteem are more likely to view life experiences in a constructive light, manage stress effectively, and maintain fulfilling relationships, all of which contribute to enhanced life satisfaction. In contrast, individuals with lower self-esteem may experience self-doubt, negative self-appraisal, and heightened vulnerability to psychological distress, which can reduce overall life satisfaction.

From a theoretical perspective, these results are supported by cognitive theories of well-being, which posit that thoughts and self-perceptions strongly influence emotional states and life evaluation. The findings also align with humanistic psychology, which emphasizes the importance of self-worth, personal growth, and self-actualization in achieving overall well-being. High self-esteem can be seen as a core psychological resource that enables individuals to pursue meaningful goals, engage in adaptive coping, and maintain a positive outlook on life.

The study also contributes to understanding the robustness of the self-esteem-life satisfaction relationship across different analytic approaches. Although the Shapiro–Wilk test indicated that the data for both variables deviated from normality, the strong positive correlation was consistent across both Pearson's parametric analysis and Spearman's non-parametric analysis. This consistency strengthens confidence in the reliability of the observed association and suggests that the relationship holds across variations in distribution assumptions.

In addition to theoretical implications, the findings carry practical significance for mental health interventions, educational programs, and workplace well-being initiatives. Interventions aimed at improving self-esteem such as cognitive-behavioral strategies, self-affirmation exercises, goal-setting, and skill development may have a direct impact on enhancing life satisfaction. Mental health professionals can design targeted programs to help adults build positive self-evaluation, resilience, and adaptive coping skills, thereby promoting overall psychological well-being. Moreover, organizations and community programs can integrate self-esteem enhancement activities to foster personal growth and satisfaction among adults in diverse social contexts.

Finally, these findings emphasize the importance of early identification and support for individuals with low self-esteem. Preventive and therapeutic efforts that cultivate self-worth not only address immediate psychological concerns but also promote long-term life satisfaction and quality of life.

In conclusion, this study confirms that higher self-esteem is strongly associated with greater life satisfaction among adults. The findings underscore self-esteem as a critical determinant of subjective well-being, highlighting its role as a psychological resource that influences how individuals perceive, evaluate, and experience their lives. These results provide a foundation for future research and practical interventions aimed at enhancing self-esteem to improve life satisfaction across adult populations.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among adults, with the hypothesis that higher self-esteem would be associated with greater life satisfaction. The findings supported this hypothesis, revealing a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between the two variables across both parametric and non-parametric analyses. Adults with higher self-esteem consistently reported higher levels of life satisfaction, indicating that self-perception plays a crucial role in overall well-being.

These results highlight the importance of self-esteem as a psychological resource that shapes how individuals evaluate and experience their lives. From a theoretical perspective, the findings align with cognitive and humanistic models, emphasizing the role of self-evaluation, personal growth, and resilience in promoting life satisfaction. Practically, the study underscores the value of interventions designed to enhance self-esteem, such as cognitive-behavioral strategies, self-affirmation exercises, and skill-building programs, which can contribute to improved life satisfaction and overall psychological well-being. While the study provides meaningful insights, limitations such as its cross-sectional design, reliance on self-report measures, and sample characteristics should be considered when interpreting the findings. Future research employing longitudinal designs, diverse samples, and multi-method assessments can further validate and expand upon these results.

In conclusion, the study confirms that higher self-esteem is positively associated with greater life satisfaction among adults. Enhancing self-esteem emerges as a key factor in promoting well-being, making it a critical target for mental health interventions, personal development programs, and strategies aimed at improving quality of life.

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