

The Relationship between Self-Esteem, Subjective Happiness and Overall

Life Satisfaction.

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Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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Abstract:

Objective: Research on self-esteem to date has focused on either happiness levels or life satisfaction. This investigation looks at self-esteem as it relates to both happiness levels and overall life satisfaction levels and whether happiness levels, life satisfaction levels, age and gender are associated with self-esteem.

Method: A random sample of 71 participants completed a pencil and paper questionnaire including three scales: the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES), the Satisfaction with life Scale (SWLS) and the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

Results: The male group had significantly higher self-esteem levels than the female group with lower levels of satisfaction with life and subjective happiness levels whereas females had significantly lower levels of self-esteem but higher levels of satisfaction with life and subjective happiness. Subjective happiness and satisfaction with life had a stronger relationship than self-esteem had with either subjective happiness or life satisfaction. As expected, self-esteem was strongly correlated with both satisfaction with life and subjective happiness.

Conclusion: The results support the objectives put forward, they support self-esteem as a predictor of both satisfaction with life and subjective happiness and gender differences in levels of self-esteem, happiness and overall life satisfaction.

Introduction:

‘What is Self-esteem?’ Self-esteem is a positive or negative orientation toward oneself, an overall evaluation of one’s worth or value. Self-esteem affects happiness and satisfaction in life and is developed through an individual’s life experiences, it is unrealistic to think self-esteem can be taught. (Blascovich, Tomaka, 1993).

The current study will explore self-esteem and how high levels of self-esteem are associated with high levels of happiness and satisfaction in life. High levels of self-esteem may lead to an increase in happiness levels and life satisfaction. The dependent variable as part of this study is self-esteem and the independent variables are age, sex, education level, employment level, subjective happiness level and life satisfaction level.

This study will look at the relationship between the individual’s happiness levels, satisfaction with life levels and self-esteem levels. This study hopes to give a greater insight into why people with high self-esteem tend to be happier and more satisfied with their life than people with low self-esteem. It will look at many concepts including upward and downward comparisons, self-fulfilling prophecy, success and failure.

Literature Review:

Recently a controversy has arisen about the importance self-esteem plays in influencing life outcomes. Some theorists including Baumeister (2003) contend it is somewhat epiphenomenal - if good things happen self-esteem is high if not self-esteem is low. According to this viewpoint self-esteem is a consequence rather than a cause of social adjustment. However, other theorists such as Lyubomirsky, Tkach and Robins (2006, p.363-404) argue that a solid sense of self allows for productive achievement, positive experiences and protection against mental health problems, substance abuse and antisocial behaviour.

Although the controversy is far from resolved, at least one recent study and meta-analytic report imply that a positive self-evaluation predicts favourable outcomes ahead whereas low self-esteem predicts a less positive future. One longitudinal study was carried out on adolescents from high risk environments. It was found that self - esteem carries a protective effect indicating positive self-regard acts as a safeguard against psychological discomfort, resulting in higher levels of self-esteem and lower inclination to become depressed or display future conduct disorder. Self-esteem was more influential in warding off depressed mood than conduct problems among high risk adolescents, reflecting a close link between self-appraisal and mood states.

What's more, one meta-analytic review reported that programs designed to boost the self-worth of low self-esteem children and adolescents produce notable improvements in participants' personal adjustment and academic performances. Taken together, these findings do seem to imply that a solid sense of self-worth is a potentially valuable resource that helps children and adolescents cope with adversity and achieve favourable development outcomes (Buehler, Griffin and Ross, 1994).

Taken together, these findings do seem to imply that a solid sense of self-worth is a potentially valuable resource that helps children and adolescents cope with adversity and achieve favourable development outcomes. The long term consequences of self-esteem could not be explained in this study by adolescent depression, gender or socioeconomic status. Although, the findings suggest low self - esteem during adolescence predicts negative real world consequences during adulthood (Donnellan et al., 2005).

According to one recent study, the use of upward comparisons are generally more threatening to well-being and levels of self-esteem than any other action. This supports my hypothesis that how a person feels about themselves and their own self-worth really determines how happy they are and how satisfying their life is. It is possible to deduce from

this that high self-esteem levels tends to increase the individual's level of happiness and life satisfaction (Smith, 2000). This may work alongside Baumeisters idea that the individual may avoid taking risks such as taking part in a competition to avoid their self-esteem being threatened. This in turn means avoiding the feeling of worthlessness because their upward comparisons tend to lead to reduced levels of happiness and life satisfaction.

If the individual has low levels of self-esteem they tend to make upward comparisons. Upward comparisons are where they will tend to negatively think about themselves and their abilities because they compare themselves to people they class as 'better' than them. These comparisons tend to be highly unrealistic, opinion based and can have severe negative effects on the individual's overall self-beliefs. The purpose of these negative comparisons is to reinforce to the individual that they are no good and have low self-esteem (Springer, 2000).

In contrast, this previous study also looked at downward comparisons and how they appear to be self-enhancing and reassuring (Smith, 2000). People with low self-esteem tend to avoid these types of comparisons and favour the upward comparisons to enhance their low self-esteem. People with low levels of self-esteem tend to do upward comparisons because they are not happy with themselves and continue to reinforce their low levels of self-esteem, just as the self-fulfilling prophecy explains (Vohs, 2004). They continue to reinforce their beliefs that 'I am no good' and 'other people can do things better than me'. From this it is possible to believe that low self-esteem levels increases unhappiness levels and dissatisfaction with life. If low self-esteem increases unhappiness levels it is very possible high self-esteem levels increase happiness levels and satisfaction with life.

One interesting study that looked at low self-esteem concluded that insecurity in adult attachment has been found to relate to lower self-esteem (Collins & Read, 1996). This reinforces the importance of developing high self-esteem from the earliest possible age,

reducing any attachment tendencies. Age is a very relevant part of the design of this study. People who make upward comparisons find themselves constantly comparing themselves to unrealistic people or unrealistic achievements set by others because of having had attachment tendencies and low self-esteem from a very young age. This makes the chances of being successful even less as they tend to not make any effort at all if they believe someone else is better than them or more capable.

There have been consistent findings that upward comparisons reduce happiness levels and have largely negative reductions on the individual's ability to find satisfaction in life, beginning at a very young age (Smith, 2004). For example, a child at school comparing himself to another student who he classes as 'smarter' than him. These upward comparisons may have been introduced by a parent or guardian when comparing their child with an older sibling. Morse and Gergen, (1970) have supported this proposition showing greater increases in subjective well-being and overall life satisfaction e.g. Elevated mood and happiness levels tend to increase when making downward comparisons (Hakmiller, 1966) as the individual is comparing oneself to someone they think is not 'as good', as intelligent' etc. as them, allowing them to feel better about themselves. This previous study specifically supports the aim of this research study that higher levels of self-esteem increases levels of happiness and satisfaction in life based on comparing ones abilities to another.

Following on within this study it was found that when the individual has high self-esteem they tend to be extroverted and not afraid to create a life full of events, create personal values which then leads to happiness and satisfaction in life. It has been found that unfortunately sometimes positive life events seem to actually disrupt physical well-being (Evans, 1996). One possible reason for the ambiguity recorded in many of these previous research studies recording positive life events on self-esteem, is that positive life events do not always have favourable consequences. The individual may feel high self-esteem and

happiness instantly but afterward could develop feelings of low levels of self-esteem, a lack of personal values and a lack of happiness.

Self-Consistency theories suggest that among people low in self-esteem positive life events might be psychologically disruptive therefore reducing the ability to have satisfaction in the individual's life (Andrews, 1989; Swann, 1992). One reason for this may be that their low levels of self-esteem are not being reinforced as explained above through the use of upward comparisons. As psychologists have come to understand, positive life events can be disturbing for the individual with low self-esteem as they may have come to expect a life full of hardship. This then could possibly lead to reinforced upward comparisons and these events may constantly remind the individual of the reality that the individual has low levels of self-esteem.

Self-esteem is assumed to be responsive to life events. Life changes that bring a person closer to his or her ideal are thought to increase self-esteem. Thus the purpose of the study is to investigate if the self-image of a person with high self-esteem is more positive and allows them to be happier and more satisfied with life and whether having low self-esteem and a low opinion of their body image means the complete opposite, that the individual will be unhappy and dissatisfied with life.

Furthermore, when investigating the concept of self-esteem we must look at the key concept of the ego; an investigation of the psychology of all conscious contents and how they are related. The ego forms the centre of the field of consciousness, and in so far as this comprises the empirical personality, the ego is the subject of all personal acts of consciousness. Having an ego is usually associated with arrogance and is used to describe someone who thinks they are better than others. Yet, this is only one part of the ego, it is possible to have some positive self-esteem and some negative self-esteem, while being aware

of these different beliefs at different times (Morse & Gergen, 1970). The negative beliefs and thoughts about ourselves make up negative self-esteem, while positive beliefs and thoughts comprise positive self-esteem. Together both the negative and positive self-esteem forms our ego (Warmerdam, 2013).

Recent research has demonstrated that the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction appears significant for both genders, but stronger for women, resulting in a stronger mediated effect of heritage-culture retention on life satisfaction for women than men. Greater retention of one's heritage culture predicted higher levels of self-esteem and happiness. Higher personal self-esteem predicted higher life satisfaction (Diener, 2009).

Personal self-esteem directly predicts life satisfaction. Previous research has demonstrated a similar relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among college students (Lucas et al., 1996), retired persons (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006) and Spanish adolescents (Rey et al., 2011). A vast amount of literature has documented the relatively high degree of relations among self-esteem, optimism and life satisfaction, as well as the fact that each of these constructs hold similar patterns of relations with various aspects of individual functioning such as health, job success and interpersonal relationships which holds a general level of happiness (Schimmack & Diener, 2003).

One very influential individual in the area of self-esteem research is Baumeister, who recommends using praise to boost self-esteem as a reward for socially desirable behaviour and self-improvement. Subjective experience creates the impression that self-esteem rises when one wins a contest, garners a reward, solves a problem or gains acceptance to a social group and that it falls with corresponding failures.

In contrast to previous findings this pervasive correlation may well strengthen the impression that one's level of self-esteem is not just the outcome but indeed the cause of

life's major successes and failures (Baumeister, 2003). The level of self-esteem an individual has is the main product of their success in all types of achievements. If self-esteem is indeed an outcome rather than a cause, then it is even plausible that raising self-esteem could backfire and produce undesirable effects (Baumeister et al, 2003) such as lower satisfaction with life and lower happiness levels.

In large part the concern with self-esteem is due to it being an important aspect of psychological functioning (Croker & Major, 1989). Low self-esteem is associated with depression, anxiety, motivation and general dissatisfaction with one's life (Harter, 1986, Rosenberg, 1986). Given these associations' children and adolescents who lack self-esteem may be more dependent on their parents, develop depression or anxiety disorders, lack levels of motivation and have lower academic and vocational goals. Interestingly, although one may think that children and adolescents with disabilities are unhappier because they have lower self-esteem than same aged peers without disabilities, studies have found this is not the case as little evidence exists that the self-esteem or happiness levels of the two groups is significantly different (Appleton et al.,1994).

Self-esteem in the area of disabilities and chronic illness is becoming a fast growing concept. Children with chronic physical illness face considerable challenges to their self-esteem levels and overall well-being with Zashikhina and Hagglof (2007) report significantly higher levels of psychiatric disorders compared to healthy children and lower levels of self-esteem because of the hardships of the disorder (Pinquart and Shen, 2011). Child self-esteem mediates the impact of maternal depressive symptoms and family functioning on anxiety disorders in children (Roustit et al, 2010). From this having a chronic physical illness, maternal depression and bad family functioning seems to negatively affect a child's self-esteem levels.

Rogers (2004) spoke in his theory about the real self - the underlying organismic self; what a person is capable of becoming if they lived in an ideal world. An individual, according to Rogers, would need to live in an environment of unconditional positive regard, building up from the child's levels of self-esteem in an obtainable way, leading to overall happiness with the self. Their parents would have accepted and loved them just as they are and continued to do so as they aged. These individuals would have been psychologically healthy with high self-esteem and the potential to attain self-actualisation in their lifetime. Unfortunately such environments are rare and as a result people develop conditions of worth, the tendency to approve or disapprove themselves (Passer et al, 2009). Childhood is seen to be the crucial time of esteem development both low and high self-esteem, showing age to be a crucial variable within this study.

For Rogers environment was also key. Rogers developed the client-centred therapy to learn more about the development of self-esteem. From his theory and beliefs it appears the individual is very much not only physically dependent on the guardian but mentally dependent on them too. If the individual had a disapproving childhood they may continue to disapprove themselves as they were taught to do by their parents. If the individual experiences conditional positive regard from their parents the individual develops their parent's positive values and feelings of worth. Therefore my understanding of Roger's theory is if the parent has high self-esteem themselves and an overall sense of worth for themselves the child tends to develop this too. It is clear that parents are a key feature in a child's development in not only how they teach the child but in how the parent views themselves and act toward others.

The individual needs high self-esteem to develop self-actualisation at some point in their lives. The 'fully functioning individual' in accordance with Rogers is not afraid to make decisions based on their own experience and they trust their own feelings of doing what is

right and will accept the consequences. They will accept life changes and they welcome the opportunity to adapt to new changes (Rogers, 2004). This very much describes an extroverted, high self-esteem and motivated individual who is eager to achieve, displaying overall high happiness levels, as without happiness found in some aspect the individual may not be motivated to be emotionally or physically active at all.

According to Maslow's five stage model, self-esteem lies under self-actualisation. Once self-esteem has been satisfied and achieved only then can the individual move on to reach full self-actualisation, which very few people have been said to reach (Maslow, 1943). Carl Rogers was a humanist and psychotherapist. He believed if an individual attained self-actualisation they would be a fully functioning person living the 'good life'. By this he means the individual would have a positive healthy psychological outlook, meaning happiness and acceptance, trust their own feelings and have congruence in their lives between the self and experience (Rogers, 2004). The individual would have high levels of self-esteem, the ability to enjoy their experiences or if not, the ability to change them.

To integrate and summarise Rogers' and Maslow's work around self-esteem, it is clear that self-esteem is necessary to reach self-actualisation but as not many people reach self-actualisation but reach self-esteem, it appears self-esteem may be something that grows with age and experience as well as achievement. The more motivated a person is to achieve and the more experience they have the more chance they have at obtaining high levels of self-esteem and happiness.

My proposal is building on both Maslow's work as well as Rogers' theories of self-actualisation and person-centred theory. This research supports the concept that in order to reach self-actualisation, happiness and life satisfaction the self-esteem needs must be met first. The research is also building significantly on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as the

theory suggests each level must be accomplished before the individual can move to the next, therefore self-esteem must be accomplished before happiness levels and self-actualisation ever can. My study built on Rogers' work in the theory of personality as in his opinion 'the core of man's nature is essentially positive' and this is what my research is portraying. Each individual strives to be happy, at their core they are positive and with high levels of self-esteem this happiness derives in the individual naturally and is unaffected (Gardner, 1985). It is a consistent, natural feeling of happiness that is benefited from the high levels of self-esteem.

Maslow looked at the opposite, low levels of self-esteem. Maslow believed negative mental states could be developed from a deficiency in self-esteem. Maslow believed neurosis and psychotic behaviours arose from need deficiencies and that if basic needs are not satisfied pathology is the result. This may take the form of a neurotic need. It appears that one main criticism of Maslow's research in contrast with Rogers' is that Maslow's recognition of self-actualised individuals, who according to the main aim of this research should be encouraged by some level of self-esteem and lead to total happiness, were almost exclusively limited to highly educated white males.

Both Maslow and Rogers' were criticised for their work in this area. Maslow was criticised for using a biased sample when looking at self-esteem as his sample only consisted of white males. In contrast to the criticism of Maslow's work, Rogers' client-centred therapy had a varying sample but the effectiveness of the therapy has been criticised for lacking some fundamental requirements of a scientific approach e.g. inappropriate control groups and lacking scientific rigour (Halgin & Whitbourne, 2009).

Although there were criticisms of Maslow and Roger's work there appear to be many consistencies across the board in findings where Rogers and Maslow are concerned. Carl

Rogers was most interested in improving the human condition and applying his ideas. His self-actualisation and person-centred theory and therapy has been seen by many to be his most influential contribution to psychology. Rogers' pervasive interest in therapy is what clearly differentiates him from Maslow, despite some similarities in their ideas. The person centred approach by Rogers have had impact on domains outside of therapy such as family life, education, leadership, politics and community health (Krebs & Blackman, 1988), whereas Maslow's Hierarchy only applies to a more restricted domain.

Many previous studies have used the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale including a study by Kernis (2003) looking at different types of self-esteem and the effects it has on overall happiness levels. There are two types of self-esteem, secure and fragile (Kernis, 2003). Secure self-esteemed individuals do not feel a need to be superior to others; instead they are satisfied with being on an equal plane with others (Rosenberg, 1959). It appears secure self-esteem is a lot safer than high self-esteem and future research could look into supporting this idea. Secure self-esteem means the individual experiences everyday positive and negative outcomes in ways that do not implicate their global feelings of worth value, or change their overall happiness levels.

These findings suggest that fragile self-esteem includes individuals who are caught up in how they feel about themselves and that they will go to great lengths to bolster, maintain and enhance these self-feelings. People who have high self-esteem and have their egos threatened engage in maladaptive self-regulating processes (e.g. taking excessive risks by overestimating their competencies) that result in unnecessary slumps in performance (Baumeister, Heatherton & Tice, 1993). This research suggests having an average self-esteem level is better for the physical and mental capacity of the person. Other findings also validate previous research such as feelings of self-worth are dependent on achievement of certain outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 1995).

Overall, many previous studies in this area have supported the research aims and objectives of this study as they support my main hypothesis that high self-esteem increases levels of happiness and overall satisfaction in life. From these studies as a researcher I can see that high levels of self-esteem tends to lead to a positive, self-fulfilled, happy life but is not a necessary factor for the individual to pursue a happy, contented life. My study differs with its use of a different sample, college students and adults already with a developed sense of self. It includes individuals who have experienced a variety of events that would have tested their levels of self-esteem to a varying degree throughout their life. The sample includes individuals all over the age of 18 and have all been subject to appraisal, criticism and social interaction.

The research aims and objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine if an individual's level of self-esteem affects their happiness levels and their overall life satisfaction. Another purpose of this study is to investigate the associations between age, employment type, gender, high levels of self-esteem, happiness levels and overall life satisfaction.

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

- To expect a relationship between self-esteem and subjective happiness, with the prediction that along with recent research to support the idea the relationship will be a positive correlation.
- To expect with support from relevant research that there will be a positive correlation between subjective happiness and life satisfaction.
- To assume there will be a relationship between high levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction.
- To predict that there will be a gender difference among all three variables in support of past literature.

The rationale for the project

The main rationale of this study is to add to the extensive research in the area of self-esteem and happiness, to investigate the previous research and to help this area of research find a way to completely stop low self-esteem from being a debilitating factor on the average individual. Secondly to teach and encourage parents and guardians to increase a child's self-esteem levels from a very young age and continue to keep their self-esteem safe from attack until they are ready to do it themselves. To allow research to create ways to help individuals develop high levels of self-esteem from a very young age, to encourage their peers to have more self-belief and to allow for each child to continue to develop high levels of self-esteem into adulthood.

I looked at self-esteem as the importance of having high levels of self-esteem is growing immensely day to day in our society. In society today, high levels of self-esteem are necessary from early childhood into school years, college and the workplace etc. To make it in this world and to get the most out of the resources you are entitled to, high levels of self-esteem appear to be essential. Self-esteem also appears to play a huge part in the development of disorders such as depression and anxiety and this is of huge interest to me as it appears depression will be the second leading cause of disease by 2020 (Moussavi, Chatterji, Verdes, Tandon, Patel and Ustun, 2007).

Method:

Participants:

The total number of participants involved in this study was 71. The participants were made up of 53% males and 47% females. All participants ranged in age from 18 years to 40 years or older. 59% of participants fell into the 18-29 years of age category with 14% of participants falling into the 30-39 years of age category and 27% of participants falling into the 40 years or older category, with an overall standard deviation of .877.

In the area of employment 34% of participants were students, 6% of participants were unemployed looking for work, 7% unemployed not looking for work, 21% were part-time employment and full-time employment included 31% of participants. Employment levels appear to be significant when looking at self-esteem, happiness and life satisfaction levels. Education levels of the participant was included to investigate the relationship between education and the three independent variables; self-esteem, subjective happiness and satisfaction with life. Necessary information includes the education levels of the sample; 66% of people completed secondary school, 14% achieved a college degree and 20% achieved other qualifications such as a Fetac Level 5 and diplomas etc.

A random sampling technique was used as all participants were approached randomly to take part in the study. The participants understood what was required of them before they were asked to sign the consent form and could ask any necessary questions they saw appropriate. 120 participants were approached and 71 participants agreed to take part. Each individual completed the questionnaire in its entirety.

Design:

The design used as part of this study was a quantitative, non-experimental, correlational design. The correlational design was used as this study looked at the relationship between different variables. Multiple regression analysis is a main component in this research study as the study focuses on the relationship between the three main variables and whether the relationships regress in similar or opposite directions.

Prior hypotheses have been made in particular concerning self-esteem, The Rosenberg Scale, and overall life satisfaction. Many previous hypotheses investigated self-esteem, well-being and life satisfaction whereas this study looks at self-esteem, life satisfaction and substitute's well-being with happiness level. The dependent variable is self-esteem with the main independent variables being gender, age, employment type, life satisfaction levels and happiness levels.

The main conditions of testing included a quiet, familiar environment for some participants such as a coffee shop or a college classroom, while for others this may have been an environment that was less familiar, where the participant could fill out the questionnaire both comfortably and privately. The assessor explained the conditions and reasons for carrying out the study previous to the administration of questionnaires. The participant had 15 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. The conditions were not necessarily standardised but were quasi-experimental as each participant filled out the questionnaire in their natural environment, without distraction from the administrator.

Materials:

Each participant was given a questionnaire booklet (see Appendix 1), this included three published questionnaires. The three published questionnaires were The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) and The Satisfaction with life Scale (SWLS). Demographic questions were collected in section 1 of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Participants were also asked to indicate their gender and age.

Additional items included those related to employment (e.g. which of the following categories best describes your primary area of employment? – Student, Unemployed/ Looking for work, Unemployed/ Not looking for work, Part-time employment, Full-time employment) and those related to their education level (e.g. what previous education levels have you acquired? - Secondary school level, College degree, other).

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a ten-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be uni-dimensional. All items are answered using a 4 point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Reverse coding is used on certain items within the questionnaire. Factor analysis identified a single common factor, contrary to some previous studies that extracted separate self-confidence and self-depreciation factors.

The scores range from 0-30, higher score means higher self-esteem levels. Scoring the RSES can be complicated involving a method of combined ratings. Low esteem responses are ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ on items 1, 3, 4,7,10 and ‘strongly agree’ on items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9. The scale is scored by totalling 4 point items after reverse coding the negatively worded ones. The RSES has high internal consistency, construct reliability and validity with

internal consistency reliability ranging from .85 - .88 with an alpha coefficient of .88.

Originally designed to measure overall feelings of self-worth in adolescents, the Rosenberg scale has been used in many populations. Little evidence exists however to support its sensitivity to change (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991).

The SHS uses a subjectivist approach to the assessment of happiness, a 4 item measure of global subjective happiness. The SHS appears to have high internal consistency, test-retest and self-peer correlations, and suggesting good to excellent reliability. Convergent and discriminant validity confirms the use of this scale to measure the construct of subjective happiness. This 4 item scale was derived from an original pool of 13 self-report items. During a pilot study some original items were discarded because of high semantic similarity. All items load into one interpretable factor when principal component analysis is performed. The possible range of scores on the SHS is 0-7, with higher scores reflecting greater happiness levels. (Lepper & Lyubomirsky, 1999).

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed to assess satisfaction with respondent's lives as a whole. Life satisfaction assessed by the SWLS tends to show a degree of temporal stability e.g. a score of .54 for a period of 4 years. The SWLS shows strong internal reliability and moderate temporal stability with a coefficient alpha of .87 (Diener et al, 1985). The scale has high internal consistency, high temporal reliability and discriminant validity (Diener, 1993).

Procedure:

A pilot study was carried out previous to the collection of data. The pilot study involved giving one student from a third year psychology class the study in a quiet environment. The researcher explained what was required from the participant and then the participant filled out the consent form and carried on through the questionnaires. All participants had to fill the consent form out before completion of the questionnaires.

The pilot study allowed the administrator to monitor how the participant proceeded through the study and what type of questions might need to be explained for future purposes. All instructions were given on the cover page of the questionnaires and included all information from the purpose of the study, to the supervisor of the study's contact information. It allowed the study to be timed and gave the administrator a time of completion, 15 minutes approximately to place on the information page, to inform the participant how long completion of the questionnaires may take.

The tasks were completed by the participant to interact and get introduced to the administrator, pay attention to what was required of them through verbal explanation, provide written consent for taking part in the study by filling out and signing the attached consent form, spending approximately 15 minutes answer demographic questions to provide the background information necessary to interpret the results and fill out the three questionnaires attached as honestly and as openly as possible. As there is no intervention, the individual is answering the questionnaires in that moment with nothing applied from the administrator to purposely affect their happiness, self-esteem and overall life satisfaction, thus providing true representation of the sample.

Results:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Frequencies for the current sample of individuals on each demographic variable (N = 71)

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Gender		
Male	38	53.5
Female	33	46.5
Employment		
Student	24	33.8
Unemployed/ seeking work	4	5.6
Unemployed/not seeking	5	7.0
Part-time employment	15	21.1
Full-time employment	23	32.4
Education level		
Secondary school	46	64.8
College Degree	10	14.1
Other	15	21.1

From the output shown above there are 38 males and 33 females, 71 participants in total. 59% of participants are in the 18-29 year old category, 14% of participants are in the 30-39 year old category and 27% of participants are in the 40 years or older category.

From the results scales it can be seen that the subjective happiness histogram scores are normally distributed with most scores occurring in the centre tapering out toward the extreme, while life satisfaction is normally distributed with minor outliers. Male self-esteem levels appear to be more normally distributed throughout the bar chart than female self-esteem levels.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for continuous variables

Descriptive statistics and reliability of all continuous variables

	SE	SH	SWL
<i>Mean</i>	24.17	18.97	18.48
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	2.18	4.41	5.44
<i>Range</i>	18 - 30	7 - 28	7 - 28
<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	.77	.76	.86

The self-esteem scale consisted of 10 items ($\alpha = .77$), the satisfaction with life scale consisted of 5 items ($\alpha = .86$) and the subjective happiness scale consisted of 4 items ($\alpha = .86$). The self-esteem scores ranged from 18-30 showing considerably high self-esteem levels across the sample, while both subjective happiness scores and satisfaction with life scores ranged from 7-28. 68% of scores range 2.18 below and 2.18 above the mean for the self-esteem levels, 4.41 above and below the mean for subjective happiness and 5.44 below and above the mean for satisfaction with life.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for continuous variables

Descriptive statistics and reliability of differences in gender. (Displayed in percentages)

	SHS	SWL	SE
<i>Male</i>			
Mean	18.84	18.02	24.42
Standard Deviation	4.26	5.24	1.90
N	38	38	38
Female			
Mean	19.12	19.00	23.88
Standard Deviation	4.64	5.70	2.46
N	33	33	33

There appears to be very little difference between female SWL mean total and the female SHS mean total whereas with males there is a slight difference between male SWL levels and SHS levels (approx. 0.8158), and an even greater difference between male levels of subjective happiness and self-esteem. Females have lower levels of self-esteem than males but have higher levels of subjective happiness and satisfaction with life. From investigating the difference between male and female participant's levels of self-esteem, males appear to

have higher levels of self-esteem than female participants. Females appear to have higher levels of satisfaction with their lives than males. There appears to be very little difference between female SWLS mean total and the female SHS mean total whereas with males there is a slight difference between SWLS levels and SHS levels (approx. 0.82).

The histogram shows a clear normal distribution of self-esteem across the sample, with a gradual increase in self-esteem scores. Males appear to have higher levels of self-esteem than females but lower levels of satisfaction with life than females. Females have slightly lower self-esteem but slightly higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness levels which can be clearly viewed (See Appendix 2).

Multiple regressions were performed to investigate levels of self-esteem as a predictor of satisfaction with life and levels of self-esteem as a predictor of subjective happiness. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Additionally, the correlations between the predictor variables included in the study were examined. All correlations were weak to moderate, ranging between $r = .05, p < .001$ and $r = .30, p < .001$. This indicates that multicollinearity was unlikely to be a problem (see Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007).

Self-esteem as a predictor variable was statistically correlated with both subjective happiness and satisfaction with life which indicates that the data was suitably correlated with the dependent variable for examination through multiple linear regressions to be reliably undertaken. Since no prior hypotheses had been made to determine the order of entry of the predictor variables, a direct method was used for the multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 4: Displaying correlations between variables

Correlations between all continuous variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Type of Employment	1				
2. Education level	-.10	1			
3. RSES Total	-.13	.08	1		
4. SHS Total	-.10	.33**	.29*	1	
5. SWLS Total	-.06	.22*	.31**	.60**	1

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$;

Self-esteem and subjective happiness were significantly correlated, $r = .29$. Satisfaction with life and self-esteem were significantly correlated, $r = .31$. Satisfaction with life and subjective happiness were significantly correlated, $r = .60$. There was no significant correlation, $r = .08$ between self-esteem levels and education. There was no significant correlation between SH, SWL, RSE and employment type, all were negatively correlated.

Table 5: Displaying multiple regression results

Multiple regression model showing self-esteem and the demographics contributing to the variance of subjective happiness.

	R^2	β	B	SE	CI 95% (B)
Model	22.4				
Self- esteem		.40*	.24	.18	.02 / .74
Age		.47*	1.9	.50	.90/2.9
Gender		-.15	-1.1	.80	-2.7/.54
Employment Type		-.13	-.27	.25	-.78/.23

Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Multiple regression analysis was used to test if self-esteem levels significantly predicted participant's ratings of happiness levels. The model showed 22.4% variance. It was found that self-esteem did predict subjective happiness in life ($\beta = .40$) but age appeared to be an even greater predictor of subjective happiness ($\beta = .47$).

In model one Self-esteem and age were significant predictors of subjective happiness with the variable subjective happiness explaining 22% of variance of (F (4, 65) = 4.688, p < .005).

Table 6: Displaying multiple regression results

Multiple regression model showing self-esteem and demographics contributing to the variance of satisfaction with life.

	<i>R</i> ²	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	CI 95% (B)
Model	19.4				
Self- esteem		.41*	1.23	.35	.59/2.0
Age		.12	.91	.99	-1.06/2.9
Gender		.11	1.5	1.6	-1.6/4.7
Employment Type		-.12	-.48	.49	-1.47/.50

Note. Statistical significance: **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001

Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate whether participant’s self-esteem levels significantly predicted satisfaction with life. The model showed 19.4% variance. It was found that self-esteem did predict satisfaction in life ($\beta = .41$)

Self-esteem appeared to be the only significant predictor of satisfaction with life. In model two self – esteem was a statistically significant predictor of satisfaction with life with the variable satisfaction with life explaining 19% variance of $F(4, 65) = 3.908, p < .005$.

Discussion:

Research objectives and findings:

The major research objectives were to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and subjective happiness with the prediction that along with recent research to support the idea there will be a positive correlation between the two variables. The second research objective was to develop with support from relevant research a prediction of a positive correlation between subjective happiness and life satisfaction, to investigate whether there is a relationship between high levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction. The final objective was to investigate whether there is a gender difference among the relationship between all three variables.

The results point first to the complexity of the concepts of subjective happiness, self-esteem and life satisfaction, in that the dimensions of each often operated differently from one another in relation to other factors, in particular drawing from the results age appears to be an even greater predictor of subjective happiness than self-esteem levels. In general however, the study did find evidence that subjective happiness may be caused from having high levels of self-esteem and that having high levels of subjective happiness tends to mean high levels of satisfaction with life. The multiple regression analysis found the self-esteem significantly predicted both happiness levels and satisfaction with life.

The results also point clearly to the conclusion that low self-esteem could also possibly mean a person is happier and more satisfied with life. This point is clearly supported

by the results of this study within the female sample. Females had lower self-esteem levels than males but higher levels of satisfaction with their life and higher levels of subjective happiness. Males had higher levels of self-esteem but lower levels of satisfaction with life and lower happiness levels. As mentioned in the literature review this study supports Diener's ideology that there is a relationship between self-esteem and both satisfaction with life and subjective happiness.

As Diener states the relationships are significant for both genders but stronger for women, this appears to be one of the main findings of this study. Although in contrast to Diener's findings as part of this study females had lower self-esteem but had higher levels of happiness and more satisfaction with their life whereas males had higher self-esteem but were not as happy as females and not as satisfied with their life. Higher personal self-esteem predicted both higher levels of subjective happiness and higher life satisfaction (Diener, 2009). This study found the opposite results, higher levels of self-esteem meant lower satisfaction with life and lower happiness for males and lower levels of self-esteem meant higher satisfaction with life and higher happiness levels for females.

Additionally, several studies report gender differences in specific self-esteem factors (Gentile et al., 2009). This may be the main reason why the results from this study differ from past research on gender difference and its effect on self-esteem levels. It is clear that previous research very much supports the idea that women's self-esteem levels appear to be stronger whereas my findings suggest quite the opposite, that female levels of self-esteem are slightly weaker than male self-esteem levels. Males had higher self-esteem but unlike Diener's research findings they did not have higher life satisfaction instead lower life satisfaction and lower happiness levels. Females had lower self-esteem levels but higher life satisfaction and subjective happiness levels.

When looking at both variables separately within a multiple regression model self-esteem significantly predicted subjective happiness, with age being an even greater predictor of subjective happiness. (Donnellan et al., 2005) , who carried out a study in New Zealand predicted self-esteem to lead to positive experiences and this is exactly what the results of this study show, the higher the happiness levels the higher the individuals life satisfaction. It appears that happiness and satisfaction carry an extremely significant correlation with each other and self-esteem is highly correlated with subjective happiness and life satisfaction on an individual scale also. From the meta-analytic review in the literature review above, reporting that programs designed to boost the self-worth of low self-esteem children and adolescents produce notable improvements in participants' personal adjustment and academic performances suggests very strongly that interventions need to be put in place. Overall, high self-esteem was a predictor of high happiness and high self-esteem also was a predictor of life satisfaction, leading to the belief that that self-esteem predicts both variables but that happiness and satisfaction with life are also highly correlated, the happier the person is the more satisfied with life they tend to be.

Self-esteem as suggested by this study may rightly be more influential in warding off depressed mood than conduct problems among high risk adolescents, reflecting a close link between self-appraisal and mood states. This strongly supports the idea that high self-esteem reduces a depressed mood leading to higher happiness levels, reducing the need for adolescents to release their negative emotions through developed conduct problems and increasing their overall satisfaction with their life. As mentioned in the introduction this could also be supported with findings such as low self-esteem being associated with depression, dissatisfaction with life, anxiety and motivation (Harter, 1986, Rosenberg, 1986)

When looking at both multiple regressions it is clear subjective happiness and life satisfaction is affected by the individual's self-esteem levels with the newer finding that age

also effects a person's subjective happiness levels. The ongoing controversy that suggests a positive self-evaluation predicts favourable outcomes ahead is clearly seen from these results. Self-esteem highly contributed to both levels of subjective happiness and satisfaction with life, suggesting that an individual's levels of subjective happiness and life satisfaction are affected if the individual has a sense of their own worth and value.

Another main finding gave support to Baumeister's beliefs surrounding self-esteem. Individuals who have low levels of self-esteem may have high levels of happiness and overall satisfaction with life because they have taken no risks and therefore no threat to their self-esteem, as they do not aim to achieve more difficult goals. As part of this study this may have applied to the female group, it may be possible that they do not take as much risks with their self-esteem as males do, resulting in higher happiness and satisfaction with life than males.

Baumeister strongly believes a person needs to achieve to allow self-esteem levels to rise, such as winning a contest. From this view self-esteem does not just appear to be the outcome but possibly the cause of life's major successes and failures (Baumeister, 2003). Self-esteem may be the product of achievement with happiness and life satisfaction being the products of self-esteem.

Limitations:

Even though the main constructs investigated as part of this study hold similar patterns of relations with various aspects of individual functioning, there may have been many confounding variables affecting self-esteem levels, life satisfaction and subjective happiness of the individuals involved in the study that were not investigated. One example may be a recent achievement or failure as a recent achievement may have provided more support for Baumeister's theory around achievement, success and failure and their connections to self-esteem levels, subjective happiness and overall life satisfaction. There may have been other confounding variables that were not examined such as a recent event, an interpersonal relationship or health that were also not controlled for.

Another limitation of the study may be that a weak pilot study was carried out. One individual was only available to carry out the pilot study where there was an initial aim to have 30 participants to carry out the pilot study. The pilot study was carried out to estimate the length of time required for completion and also to become aware of any possible difficulties that may occur for the participant when filling out the questionnaire. Even though it would have allowed more knowledge of how the procedure may take place for each participant having a range of participants with differences in gender, college year and college course if 30 participants carried out the pilot study the necessary information about time duration and possible difficulties were found.

Another limitation of the research was due to the self-reporting nature of the questionnaire. Participants were reporting how they feel about their own self-esteem, happiness and life satisfaction which may not be the true representations. It is also a possibility that without the consequence of someone seeing their true feelings and possibly making judgements about the participant and rating them they may have answered more honestly, making the results of the study more realistic and more reliable. All information was to remain confidential on the researcher's part which may have allowed the participants to feel more comfortable and answer more honestly knowing that their information would remain anonymous and private.

The pencil paper nature of the questionnaire meant it was not possible to obtain a large, broad representation of participants (N = 71). The cost of printing off questionnaires for this amount of participants was quite high and was paid for by the researcher. This was a significant limitation for this research study as costs were too high and sample was then limited because of this. Some other sample size issues were also seen however, for example there were only 4 participants who were unemployed looking for work, making comparisons of self-esteem levels, overall life satisfaction and happiness levels between all the employment levels very difficult.

Despite the number of potential limitations noted, this paper succeeds in its purpose to investigate the relationship between self-esteem levels and both subjective happiness levels and overall life satisfaction levels, and whether there is a gender difference in the relationship between all three variables.

Strengths:

The results produced not only a link to positive associations outlined in previous research between subjective happiness and satisfaction with life, self-esteem and satisfaction with life, self-esteem and subjective happiness, but have also drawn reports of male and female differences between subjective happiness, self-esteem and overall life satisfaction levels.

The main strength of this study was that it had great success in supporting and achieving the main objectives and supporting the reasons the study was carried out. The main rationale of this study was to add to the extensive research in the area of self-esteem, life satisfaction and happiness and to help this area of research find a way to completely stop low self-esteem from being a debilitating factor on the average individual, and there are many findings within this study that will allow for this to happen.

This study also highlights the importance of age and sex and their impact on a person's happiness levels, life satisfaction and self-esteem levels. Age, in particular the life stage of the individual appears to be a significant predictor of self-esteem levels. Growth curve analyses indicated self-esteem tends to increase from adolescence to middle adulthood, reaches a peak at age 50 and then decreases in old age. Self-esteem best modelled as a cause

rather than a consequence of life outcomes with subjective happiness and life satisfaction being labelled as consequences of life outcomes (Robins & Wideman, 2012).

This study had many strong points, in particular it was possible to control how and when participants took the questionnaire. This meant they gave their full attention to the questionnaires enabling them to answer each question as honestly as possible. Even though the sample may have been quite small the random sample of participants enabled a good mix of gender, sex, education level and profession amongst participants avoiding any potential issues around having an overly similar sample.

The research findings of this study are quite consistent with the overall literature when looking at the relationship between self-esteem and its prediction of high happiness levels and satisfaction with life. There was a significant relationship in my research that supported self-esteem as a predictor of happiness a construct that also holds close association to the third variable of this study, life satisfaction levels. These main results of this research study supports research done by Kiang and colleagues who found self-esteem to be a significant predictor of satisfaction with life (Kiang et al., 2006).

Future Research:

It would be interesting to build on this research by conducting a longitudinal, qualitative research study in the form of interviews with children starting at 5 years old and interviewing them twice a year till they complete their first college degree approximately at age 23. As part of the study they would have to write regular diary entries on how they feel and why they feel that way. The aim of this study would be to investigate what influences a person's self-esteem, happiness and life satisfaction as they grow from a child to an adolescent and then into an adult, and whether when one variable is negatively affected how are the others effected, why are they effected and what are the various outcomes of these negative effects.

Future research may also look into the area of self-esteem and disability. The main aim of this research may be to investigate whether self-esteem levels would be higher with individuals that have a physical disability in comparison to a mental disability. The research could possibly investigate the different variables that would affect individuals with a mental disability in comparison to a physical disability and the degree to which these different variables may affect both groups, such as education, employment etc. A separate investigation could possibly be carried out to investigate the effect a disability is having on

surrounding family members and the different variables effecting their self-esteem, happiness and life satisfaction levels.

If I was to carry out this study again I would use online facilities to create my questionnaires and gather my participants as it would be a lot faster to gather and to interpret and insert into an SPSS file through online resources. There would also be no paper cost associated with using online resources saving both time and money while also gaining an even larger sample size.

Conclusions:

The four main objectives of this study were achieved .There was an investigation into the relationship between self-esteem and subjective happiness, with the finding that there was a significant relationship between subjective happiness and self-esteem, supporting recent research. Self-esteem was a strong predictor of subjective happiness with age being an even greater predictor. The second objective was supported as there was a positive correlation found between subjective happiness and life satisfaction.

The third objective was to investigate whether there is a relationship between high levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction. Self-esteem was the only significant predictor of life satisfaction out of all the tested variables, showing self-esteem to be a strong predictor of life satisfaction, supporting the third objective. The final objective was to investigate a gender difference between all three variables to see whether it supported past literature. From carrying out this study it was found that there were gender differences between all three variables. Self-esteem levels were higher for men but they tended to have lower satisfaction with life and lower levels of happiness whereas females had lower self-esteem but higher levels of life satisfaction and higher happiness levels.

Another key finding was that satisfaction with life increased significantly with age and then returned to its original level in the older age category across both gender samples. Subjective happiness appeared to be constant across all age categories neither increasing nor decreasing with age, with self-esteem decreasing first with age and then increasing in the older age category. From this it may be possible to suggest that happiness levels and self-esteem are both affected by age. Further investigation into this may be necessary in future studies to investigate within a larger sample if the older a person gets whether their levels of self-esteem and satisfaction with life all have a peak level and if happiness continues to stay constant across the sample if it is increased.

The final major conclusion and perhaps the most unique contribution of the study is that there is evidence that begins to suggest that subjective happiness leads to satisfaction with life. Self-esteem is a significant predictor of both satisfaction with life and subjective happiness. This research was very worthwhile to carry out and does not appear to have any negative implications but many positive ones including widening the current research in this area of psychology and positively affecting the average individual in their everyday lives with their own esteem issues. It also allows for future researchers to further investigate this area and possibly put interventions in place that allows the individual to be resolved of any low self-esteem issues they have to allow them the chance to prosper in different areas of their life.

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Appendix 1:

13.1 Consent Page:

Participant Information:

There are 3 questionnaires in total that should take no longer than **15 minutes** all together to complete. If you finish it in a shorter amount of time you can leave. **Involvement in the study is completely voluntary.**

If you decide to take part in the study the number on the top corner of the page will be entered into a draw for different prizes. Each person is anonymous and only identified by this number on the top of the page. Please do take note of this number as it will be used to recognise the winners of the prizes.

I really appreciate your involvement in this study. Please note that all the information will be destroyed after testing. Thank you all very much for your time if you decide to get involved in the study. If there are any questions feel free to ask now and if there are any further questions feel free to email me at edelhill123@gmail.com.

Demographic Questions:

Please circle the correct answer.

1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

2. What is your age?

18-29 years old

30-49 years old

50 years or older

3. Which of the following categories best describes your primary area of employment?
Please circle **more than one if appropriate.**

Student

Unemployed/ Looking for work

Unemployed/ not looking for work

Part-time employment

Full-time employment

Other:

4. What previous education levels have you acquired?

Secondary school level

College Degree

Other

Details (Specifically information about the other college degree if completed **previous** to this psychology degree):

The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale: (Rosenberg, 1965)

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Circle the relevant answer.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. At times I think I am no good at all.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I certainly feel useless at times.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

The subjective happiness Scale: (Lyubomirsky, 1999)

For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

1. In general, I consider myself:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not a very
happy person

A very
happy person

2. Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Less happy

More happy

3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterisation describe you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

A great deal

4. Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterisation describe you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all

A great deal

The Satisfaction with life Scale: (Diener, 1993)

Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number in the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Slightly Disagree

4 = Neither Agree or Disagree

5 = Slightly Agree

6 = Agree

7 = Strongly Agree

_____ 1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

_____ 2. The conditions of my life are excellent.

_____3. I am satisfied with life.

_____4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

_____5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Appendix 2:

Individual graphs showing a normal distribution curve for self-esteem and differences between male and female distribution of happiness, self-esteem and life satisfaction.















