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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND MEANING IN LIFE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Self-esteem and meaning in life are two important aspects of mental health and psychological well-being. This study examines the relationship between self-esteem and meaning in life among young adults. 112 individuals participated in this study; 56 males and 56 females. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) and The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (2006) were used to collect the data. The Pearson's correlation method was used to analyse the data. Results show a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and presence of meaning in life suggesting that people with higher self-esteem have a greater sense of presence of meaning in life. Results also show a negative relation between self-esteem and search for meaning in life suggesting that people with higher self-esteem have a lower desire to search for meaning. The results of this study contribute to our understanding of psychological well-being in young adulthood, highlighting the importance of self-esteem as a factor in experiencing life as meaningful.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Meaning in life, Rosenberg, Psychological wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

Both self-esteem and the meaning of life have been the subject of substantial study in the field of psychology, each of which is a very important topic in its own right. However, in recent years there has been an increase in interest in how one's sense of purpose in life affects their sense of personal worth. Finding meaning and importance in one's life is related to self-esteem, which is one's opinion of one's own value and worth. This study aims to investigate the relationship between a person's life purposes and their perception of their own value.

Self-Esteem

A person's sense of self-worth, or self-esteem, is an expression of how they value themselves in general. Individuals' self-concepts consist of their thoughts, emotions, and worldviews, all of which influence their behaviour, decisions, and well-being (Rosenberg, 1965). Having a healthy sense of self-worth is crucial to maintaining emotional steadiness and psychological resilience throughout life (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012).

Morris Rosenberg's self-esteem theory, first published in 1965, is one of the most influential and well-known theories of self-esteem. He defined self-esteem as an individual's overarching sense of their own importance. Rosenberg proposed a unidimensional model of self-esteem that combined measures of ability and likeability.

Meaning in Life

Philosophers, theologians, and psychologists have all spent considerable time and energy trying to define what it means to live a meaningful life. According to Steger (2009), "meaning in life" refers to the extent to which individuals perceive and accept that their lives have a purpose, significance, and internal coherence. Higher levels of fulfilment in life and mental health have been related to having a clear sense of why one is living their life.

Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl (1905-1977) established the logotherapy school of psychotherapy. Even in the most dire of circumstances, Frankl's school of psychotherapy maintains that one can find a reason to live. The pursuit of meaning, he argued, is more potent than the desires for pleasure or the avoidance of pain. Frankl argues that an existential void causes people to feel empty and despondent when they lack a sense of purpose in life.

Self-Esteem and Meaning in Life

Having a meaningful life and high self-esteem go hand in hand. High self-worth positively affects our ability to experience meaning in life, and vice versa. Engaging in pursuits that are congruent with our values and interests strengthens our sense of purpose and, in turn, our confidence. On the other hand, if we don't value ourselves, we may not feel worthy of living a life of significance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Orth and Robins (2022) gave a fresh perspective on the extensive body of research (including numerous meta-analyses) evaluating the effects of low self-esteem on relationships, education, employment, mental and physical health, and antisocial behaviour. Overall, the results indicate that having high self-worth is advantageous in all these areas, and that these advantages hold true regardless of one's age, gender, or race or ethnicity.

Gori et al., (2022) explored the effect of professional adaptability as a preventive resource on the relationship between self-esteem and purpose in life. The findings of this study demonstrated that worker self-esteem

levels were positively correlated with the existence of meaning and negatively correlated with the pursuit of meaning.

Angulo et al., (2021) investigated the connection between Mexican adolescent Internet addiction and self-worth. The significance of life and self-worth were negatively and strongly correlated with internet addiction. It was concluded that self-esteem and meaning of life can predict a decrease in Internet addiction.

Hosseini and Zadehmohammadi (2021) examined how music therapy affected the sense of purpose and self-worth of 60 senior Tehran residents. Research has found that music therapy significantly improves elderly people's self-esteem and significance in life. Based on the findings, nursing homes can use music and related therapies to boost senior residents' sense of purpose and self-worth and thereby improve their quality of life.

Trzebiński et al., (2020) evaluated the effects of life satisfaction, significance in life, and convictions about the goodness and orderliness of society on people's emotional and mental responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the findings, higher levels of satisfaction in life and meaning and lower levels of state anxiety are correlated with lower COVID-19 stress and lower levels of state anxiety.

Rationale

There are studies which have explored the relationship between self-esteem and a meaningful existence but there are only a handful of studies focusing on the continual search for meaning, especially among young adults. This study intends to close this knowledge gap.

It might deepen our understanding of the relationships between self-worth, the existence of meaning in life, and the pursuit of meaning in life, perhaps revealing the ways in which these variables interact to affect general wellbeing. The results of this study may also help in the development of more comprehensive and focused intervention programmes for young adults that will boost self-esteem and encourage a healthy quest for meaning in life.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

- To determine the relationship between self-esteem and presence of meaning in life
- To determine the relationship between self-esteem and search for meaning in life

Hypotheses:

- There would be a relationship between self-esteem and presence of meaning in life
- There would be a relationship between self-esteem and search for meaning in life

Sample:

The sample consists of young adults with age range from 18 to 30. Participants under this age range had a minimum educational level of 12th grade, as well as undergraduate and graduate. A sample of 112 people participated in research of which 56 were female and 56 were male.

Inclusion Criteria

- The study was done on young adults with ranging from 18 to 30 years.
- The participants were from urban region.

Locale of the Study

- The sample was collected from Delhi NCR.

Description of Tools Employed:

It was asked in the questionnaire for demographic information, including consent, name, age, gender, and educational background.

The following tools were used:

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), a popular psychometric tool for measuring self-esteem, measures a person's level of self-worth. The scale was created in 1965 by sociologist Dr. Morris Rosenberg and has since been a crucial instrument in a variety of psychological, educational, and clinical settings for assessing self-esteem and comprehending its significance to a person's general well-being.

The 10 statements that make up the RSES are all about a person's overall emotions of self-worth and self-acceptance. According to a 4-point Likert scale, each statement is graded from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." To account for response bias, five of the items are positively written, and the remaining five are negatively worded. Better scores indicate better levels of self-esteem. The scores range from 0 to 30.

High levels of cross-population and cross-cultural validity and reliability have been demonstrated for the RSES. Internal consistency, which is typically assessed using Cronbach's alpha, has frequently been found to be above 0.80, indicating a high degree of reliability. Because it correlates well with other self-esteem assessments and negatively with tests of anxiety and depression, the scale has also shown convergent validity.

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) is a well-known psychometric instrument used to evaluate a person's sense of meaning and purpose in life. This self-report survey was created by Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006) and is based on the idea that life is meaningful and has a purpose. A crucial element of mental health and general well-being, one's sense of meaning can be better understood by medical professionals and researchers thanks to the MLQ.

The MLQ has 10 items that are split into two subscales:

Presence of meaning (5 items): This subscale gauges how much a person currently feels that their life has significance and purpose.

Search for Meaning (5 items): This subscale measures a person's motivation to actively look for meaning and purpose in life.

Each item is rated by respondents on a seven-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "absolutely untrue" and 7 representing "absolutely true." Higher scores suggest a larger presence of meaning or an active search for meaning. The total score for each subscale runs from 5 to 35. Item 9 is reverse scored.

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire has shown to have excellent psychometric properties, including:

Internal consistency: Cronbach's alpha coefficients have been observed to regularly be above .80.

Reliability between tests: Studies have revealed that the MLQ has a respectable test-retest reliability across intervals ranging from two weeks to four months.

Construct validity: The MLQ has shown convergent and discriminant validity with measures of well-being, mental health, and personality, as well as strong correlations with other measures of meaning and purpose in life.

Procedure:

First, the participants' self-esteem was assessed using the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale. The four responses on the RSES's 4-point Likert scale range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire was then used to ascertain whether they felt a sense of purpose in life and whether they were searching for it. Seven responses on a 7-point Likert scale, from "absolutely untrue" to "absolutely true," make up the MLQ. The participants were instructed to carefully read each item and select the appropriate response. They were instructed to follow their instincts and select the first response that came to mind. No response is right or wrong. No time limit was set; however, the participants were able to finish them in 5 to 10 minutes. The scoring was done once the questionnaires were completed. The outcomes were calculated.

Statistical Analysis:

Correlation was used to find out the relationship of self-esteem with the two domains of meaning in life: presence and search.

IBM SPSS Version 26 was used to facilitate the calculations in this study.

RESULT**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Self-Esteem (30)	19.08	5.940	112
Presence (35)	24.79	7.055	112
Search (35)	24.65	6.634	112

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics

The mean value of Self-esteem came out to be 19.08 with a standard deviation of 5.940. The maximum score can be 30.

The mean value of Presence of Meaning in Life came out to be 24.79 with a standard deviation of 7.055. The maximum score can be 35.

The mean value of Search for Meaning in Life came out to be 24.65 with a standard deviation of 6.634. The maximum score can be 35.

Relationship of Self-Esteem and Presence of Meaning in Life

		Self-Esteem	Presence
Self-Esteem	Pearson	1	.592**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	112	112
Presence	Pearson	.592**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	112	112

Table 4.2: Relationship between Self-Esteem and Presence of Meaning in Life

The Pearson correlation between Self-Esteem and Presence of Meaning in Life came out to be positive .592. The significant difference came out to be .000 which means that the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Relationship between Self-Esteem and Search for Meaning in Life

		Self-Esteem	Search
Self-Esteem	Pearson	1	-.187*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.048
	N	112	112
Search	Pearson	-.187*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.048	
	N	112	112

Table 4.3: Relationship between Self-Esteem and Search for Meaning in Life

The Pearson correlation between Self-Esteem and Search for Meaning in Life came out to be negative .187. The significant difference came out to be .048 which means that the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

DISCUSSION

Relationship between Self-Esteem and Presence of Meaning in Life

This study shows a strong positive correlation between Self-Esteem and Meaning in Life. This means that people with higher self-esteem have a greater sense of existence of meaning in life.

This study supports the previous findings done by Steger, Frazier, Oishi and Kaler (2006). The study found that individuals with higher self-esteem tended to report a greater sense of presence of meaning in their lives. Schnell (2009) did a study where it was found that people with higher self-esteem had a stronger sense of meaning in life.

Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Search for Meaning in Life

This study shows a negative correlation between Self-Esteem and Search for Meaning in Life. This suggests that people with higher self-esteem have a lower desire to search for meaning.

Steger, Frazier, Oishi and Kaler (2006) found out that higher self-esteem was associated with a lower search for meaning. Zika and Chamberlain (1992) also found out that higher self-esteem was associated with lower scores on the framework dimension, which is related to the search for meaning.

CONCLUSION

Self-Esteem is strongly positively correlated to Presence of Meaning in Life. This means that people with higher self-esteem have a greater sense of presence of meaning in life.

Self-Esteem is negatively correlated to Search for Meaning in Life. This suggests that people with higher self-esteem have a lower desire to search for meaning.

This study offers important new understandings into the intricate relationship between self-esteem and meaning in life, opening the way for further investigation of these constructs and the creation of specialised interventions and educational initiatives that support psychological health and personal development.

Implications

Future research might be guided by the findings to examine potential personality traits, social support, and coping mechanisms as mediators and moderators of the relationship between self-esteem and meaning in life.

When working with clients who exhibit poor self-esteem or struggle to find purpose in their lives, mental health practitioners may want to investigate the connection between these two concepts.

To encourage a more comprehensive approach to well-being and personal development, educators and counsellors can create programs that focus on both self-esteem and meaning in life.

Limitations

The study's cross-sectional design makes it difficult to determine if one condition caused another. To determine the links between self-esteem and the presence of or search for meaning in life, longitudinal or experimental research designs would be required.

To measure participants' sense of self-esteem and meaning in life, the study used self-report measures. Even though these measurements are often used and validated, they may be subject to biases including self-presentation and social desirability.

The study did not take into consideration any potential confounding factors, such as personality traits, mental health, or life experiences, that might have an impact on the relationship between self-esteem and meaning in life.

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