

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING (In case of NUM students)

G.Uyanga\*, N.Sonintamir\*\*, B.Nomundari\*\*\*

**Abstract:** We have examined the relationship between subjective well-being and self-esteem. A total of 237 students aged between 18-19 university students in Mongolia participated in the current study.

This age is an important period in a person's life. They go through many challenging changes in terms of biology and psychology. They responded to the Rosenberg' the adolescent and self-esteem scale. Exploratory factor analysis of scales was analyzed via SPSS 23.0 software. The result suggested that the there's strong correlation between high self-esteem and positive affect. When students' self-esteem lowers their positive affect declines. There's slight difference the correlation between high and low self-esteem with life satisfaction. Students with high self-esteem perceive life as good and happy. Even though their self-esteem low they still tend to be happy.

**Keywords:** Self-esteem, subjective well-being, positive affect, negative affect, life satisfaction

## ӨӨРТӨӨ ИТГЭХ ИТГЭЛ БОЛОН БОЛОН СУБЪЕКТИВ САЙН САЙХАН

(МУИС-ийн оюутнуудын жишээн дээр)

**Хураангуй:** Тус судалгаагаар бид, “Сайн сайхан байдал болон өөртөө итгэл итгэлийн хамаарлыг” МУИС-ийн нэгдүгээр курсын нийт 237 оюутны хувьд судалж үзлээ. 18-19 нас бол, бие болоод сэтгэл зүйн хувьд олон сорилтыг давдаг гэх утгаараа хүний амьдралын маш чухал үе байдаг. Бид энэхүү судалгаандаа, судлаач Rosenberg-ийн “өсвөр насныхны өөртөө итгэх итгэл”-ийн асуулгыг ашиглан, судалгааны үр дүнг шинжилж үзлээ. Судалгааны үр дүнгээс үзвэл оюутнуудын өөртөө итгэх итгэл болон сайн сайхан байдлын “эерэг нөлөө” гэсэн үзүүлэлтүүд хүчтэй эерэг хамааралтай (.689\*\*) гарч байна. Харин өөртөө итгэх итгэл буурах тусам “эерэг нөлөө” буурч байна. Өөртөө итгэдэг оюутнууд амьдралыг “аз жаргалтай” гэж үздэг бөгөөд, итгэх итгэл нь бага байсан ч тэдний хувьд “аз жаргалтай” л байдаг гэх сонирхолтой үр дүн гарлаа.

**Түлхүүр үгс:** Өөртөө итгэх итгэл, субъектив сайн сайхан, эерэг үр нөлөө, сөрөг үр нөлөө, амьдралын сэтгэл ханамж

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\* Business school, National University of Mongolia, (E-mail): [uyanga.g@num.edu.mn](mailto:uyanga.g@num.edu.mn)

\*\* Business school, National University of Mongolia, (E-mail): [nsonintamir@num.edu.mn](mailto:nsonintamir@num.edu.mn)

\*\*\* Business school, National University of Mongolia, (E-mail): [22M1NUM0003@stud.num.edu.mn](mailto:22M1NUM0003@stud.num.edu.mn)

## Introduction

Scholars and intellectuals have been searching for the answer of “well-being”, “happiness”, exploring their own perspectives and conducting research. Aristotle addressed this topic in his work “Ethic”. Philosophers like Bentham stated that the ultimate goal of government should promote the well-being of individuals and achieve “the greatest good for the greatest number of people”. Recent years, the concept of “well-being” have focused on how individual evaluating and assessing one’s own well-being. The very idea involves various fields, such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, and the behavioral sciences (Alston, Lowe, & Wirgley, 1972). Some researchers argue that “happiness” is objective, while many scientists believe that people who are able to detach themselves from the complexities of this world can experience “happiness” (D.C Shin, 1978).

Self-esteem plays important role for individuals to perceive as “happy” or “well” among many influential factors (Lin Zhang, 2020). The concept of Self-Esteem is crucial in everyday life, affecting various aspects of human actions and behaviors (Shimizu, Takahashi, & Koike, 2023).

The discussion of self-esteem was first introduced by William James in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He is the first social scientist who defined the concept of “self” into the literature (Flynn, 2003). Self-esteem is an integral part of interpersonal relationships and one serves as a fundamental human need. In the field of “positive psychology”, researchers pay particular attention to the concept of “well-being”. According to the Sarason, “even though the idea of well-being is individual concern, it generated in interpersonal settings such as family, society and the broader community” (Huebner, 2015).

### 1. Subjective well-being

As Ed Diener stated that “Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to the comprehensive assessment of an individual’s life satisfaction and happiness” (Diener, Subjective well-being: a general overview, Dec 2009). This subject is characterized by its interdisciplinary nature, drawing upon a variety of fields such as psychology, economics, sociology, philosophy, gerontology, kinesiology, and health sciences (Diener, 2018)

The notion of happiness has been a subject an important topic throughout history of mankind. The “happiness index” was initiated by “Psychological Abstracts International” in 1973. Researchers and scholars have since sought to define this concept for long. SWB contributors are interested in evaluations of the quality of a person’s life from that “person’s own perspective”. Thus, to distinguish between “subjective” and “objective” well-being. When evaluating the impact of events, interventions and decisions on quality of life, by authorities, subjective evaluations

may provide better mechanisms for assessing the impact of such circumstances (Diener, 2018). Subjective well-being (SWB) research focuses on how and why people experience their lives in positive ways (E.Diener, 1984)

The discussion of “well-being” and “happiness” can be divided into three main categories.

**Eudemonic well-being:** This kind of well-being emphasizes personal growth, self-actualization, and the pursuit of meaningful and fulfilling life. It involves engaging in activities that align with one’s values, developing personal strengths and virtues, and achieving a sense of purpose and self-realization. Another word, this notion can be described as desirable state defined by a set of values. This kind of criterion for happiness is not a person’s own subjective judgment but an observer’s value (Diener, 1984). Eudemonic well-being includes such characteristics as a sense of purpose in life and existence of positive relationship with others.

**Hedonic well-being:** This category focuses on the pleasurable experiences and positive emotions that contribute to an individual’s subjective well-being. It encompasses the pursuit of happiness, enjoyment of life, and the absence of negative emotions or distress. Defined by Bradburn in 1969, a person considers the positive aspects of his/her life more than the negative ones. In other words, according to this definition, “SWB” is considered as pleasant emotion (D.C Shin, 1978).

**Social /life satisfaction/ well-being:** Social well-being recognizes the importance of social connections and relationships in contributing to an individual’s overall well-being. This definition of SWB has labeled as “life satisfaction” and relies on the standards of the respondent to determine what is good life (Diener, 1984). It includes aspects such as social support, belongingness, and positive interpersonal relationships. It was derived based on the respondents’ understanding of what a “good life” is and their standard of living. Scholars Shin and Johnson define this category of “happiness” as “the way a person measures the quality of his life by his own criteria” (D.C Shin, 1978).

Subjective well-being is related to many factors such as individual behavior, culture, social support, and social role (Lin Zhang, 2020).

SWB is defined by three correlated but distinct factors: the relative presence of positive affect, absence of negative affect, and satisfaction with life (Cha, 2003)

**Pleasant affect:** state of positive mood or emotions such as happiness, joy, gladness etc of an individual.

**Unpleasant affect:** includes the individual’s experience of negative moods and emotions (guilt, shame, anxiety, depression, stress, sadness, etc)

**Life satisfaction:** refers to cognitive reflection on the overall state of one’s life (satisfaction one’s current or past life) (Ed Diener R. A., 1985)

Many scholars have contributed to the literature proposing methods to study the antecedents and consequences of SWB. Thus, from bio-social perspective such as age and gender, personality traits such as self-esteem and extravert, introverts; social support such as family satisfaction (Cha, 2003). When people reflect on their lives and give judgements about their life as a whole, or about parts of it such as work and health, they compare with the standards they have for the good life. Community and Societal factors are also associated with SWB. Sociopolitical factors such as lower inequality and lower corruption have also been linked to SWB (Ed Diener S. O., 2018). Among these factors, self-esteem is an important factor in SWB (Diener, Subjective well-being: a general overview, Dec 2009) .

## 2. Self-esteem

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1970), self-esteem is one of the basic human needs. Research suggests that having too high self-esteem has some drawbacks. However, many factors such as physical and mental health and quick adaptation to the environment are positively related to the "self-esteem" (Shimizu, Takahashi, & Koike, 2023). The idea "self-esteem" has attracted the attention of psychologists for the past half century and many scholars have contributed to the literature. **Self-esteem refers to an individual's subjective evaluations of his or her worth as a person** (MacDonald & Leary, Mark, 2012). Another words self-esteem is commonly conceptualized as the "feeling that one is good enough," and consequently, individuals with high self-esteem do not necessarily believe they are superior to others (Rosenberg, M., 1965). Thus, self-esteem involves feeling of self-acceptance and self-respect.

Self-esteem is basically consisting of intrinsic and instrumental value. **Instrumental value refers** to an observable ability, skills, and talents. **Intrinsic value** refers to moral character, attractiveness, and other aspects of social worth (R.W Tafarodi, 2001). Tafarodi et al labelled the two dimensions' self-competence and self-liking. Psychologists have studied the issue further and emphasized the importance of "adaptation" (Lin Zhang, 2020). Sociometric theories suggest that self-esteem is an individual's perception of how others view him or her (Leary M, 2001). In other words, according to this theory, "self-esteem" is a sociometric relationship that derived from relationship with other people. Basically, people define themselves in comparison to other people. Having high self-esteem connotes to be being healthy and happy, while low self-esteem is a general sign of dissatisfaction or disappointment (Flynn, 2003). Leary et al., stated that, it is an individual's own perception of the degree if he is accepted in his own community. Being accepted in the social group, the individual's self-esteem increases and feels safe (Self-esteem,

2015). On the contrary, if the one cannot accepted in the group, there's a survival issue arises. One may even face the problem of finding a partner, feeling depressed and dissatisfied with their own lives (Lin Zhang, 2020).

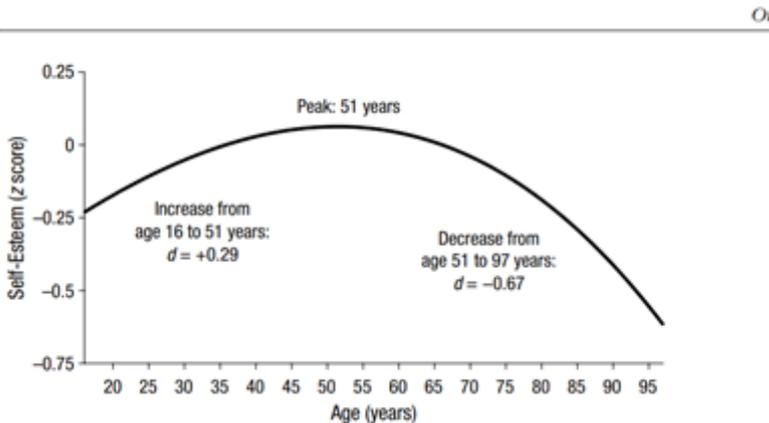
“Self-esteem” is divided into internal or automatic, external or personal optimization and response system. Internal self-esteem occurs at the unconscious level and cannot be controlled, while external self-esteem is conscious and controllable (L.Koole & W.Pelham).

Many researchers have assumed that implicit associations with the self are more primitive, and develop earlier, than explicit self-views. People with secure sense of self-worth seek out their strengths and weaknesses and generally have positive psychological state (H.Kernis, E.Lakey, & L.Heppner, 2008). If self-esteem low, people usually have high internal self-esteem, but lower external self-esteem. Such people are fragile to the outer influence (BOSSON, BROWN, & ZEIGLER-HILL, 2003).

According to Diener et al, there's high correlation between self-esteem and life satisfaction in the individualistic countries such as USA. The result is contrary in the collectivistic culture (Cha, 2003). Thus, independent and personal characteristics of individual culture revealed and the interdependence and collective characteristics of collectivist culture is emphasized (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Individuals may differ in the, research suggests that self-esteem tends to increase from adolescence to middle adulthood, peak at about age 50 to 60 years, and then decrease into old age (Ulrich Orth, 2014)

#### 1. PICTURE.



Averil et al., defined “Subjective Well-being” as the long term emotional experience of an individual. The concept of “Subjective Well-being” is often used

interchangeably with “Happiness”. Kwan et al., (1997) compared “self-esteem” and “relationship harmony” in predicting life satisfaction for US and Hong-Kong samples. They found that self-esteem was more powerful than relationship harmony in predicting life satisfaction for the US samples, whereas, for the Hong-Kong samples, self-esteem and relationship harmony were equal importance in predicting life satisfaction (Cha, 2003). As result of the study, Campbell et al., (1981) concluded that the “self-esteem” is the most powerful factor to determine life satisfaction in US (Diener, 1995).

Self-esteem is the positive or negative self-views and reflect people’s self-worth evaluations. In contrast, SWB is a judgement, not an attitude, of the good life and places more emphasis on positive affect (Diener, Dec 2009).

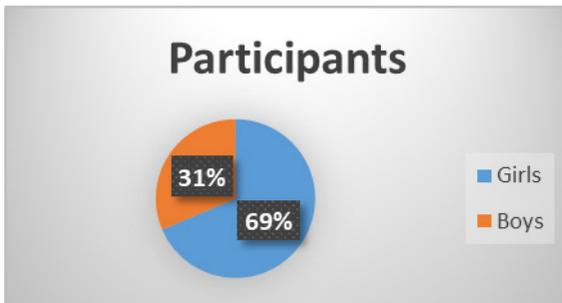
The purpose of this study are:

1. To gain knowledge of SWB in students of NUM
2. To assess the relative contributions made by self-esteem in predicting SWB

## Methodology

**Procedure** Participants answered the questions online. Participants were instructed to answer as accurately and honestly as they could. All data were collected during May, 2023.

## Participants 2. PICTURE.



A total of 236 university students in NUM participated in the current study. There were 164 girls and 76 boys.

## Measures

*Life satisfaction* was assessed by the Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS; Diener et al/. 1985). The SWLS is five-item measure that asks respondents to rate their life satisfaction from their subjective perspective. The SWLS translated into Mongolian.

*Affective well-being* was measured by asking how much of their time during the past month they felt four pleasant (joy, affection, pride, and contentment) and four unpleasant (fear, anger, guilt, and sadness) emotion.

*Self-esteem* was assessed by the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (1965). A 10-item scale measures self-worth both positive and negative feelings about self.

## Result

1. TABLE. Factor analysis

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Cronbach's <math>\alpha</math></i>	<i>Factor loading</i>	<i>KMO</i>
		<b>Items</b>	<b>.913</b>
Life satisfaction	0.757	LS1	0.595
		LS2	0.687
		LS3	0.660
		LS4	0.631
		LS5	0.606
Positive affect	0.881	PA2	0.601
		PA3	0.566
		PA4	0.694
		PA5	0.525
		PA7	0.776
		PA8	0.668
		PA9	0.760
		PA10	0.662
		NA1	0.623
		NA2	0.698
Negative affect	0.904	NA3	0.617
		NA4	0.731
		NA5	0.807
		NA6	0.678
		NA8	0.749
		NA9	0.728
		NA10	0.509
		SE1	0.654
		SE3	0.823
		Self-esteem/high	0.788
SE7	0.693		
SE10	0.614		
SE2	0.723		
SE6	0.656		
Self-esteem/low	0.732	SE8	0.714
		SE9	0.785

The factor loading shows high consistency within the items and with high Cronbach's alpha. But there are few items have excluded due to low factor loading. Overall, the participants of have understood the questions defined by the theory.

2. TABLE Correlation

		PAffect	Negative affect	Life_sat	SE_plus	SE_minus
PAffect	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	240				
Negative_affect	Pearson Correlation	-.500**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	240	240			
Life_sat	Pearson Correlation	.566**	-.556**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	240	240	240		
SE_plus	Pearson Correlation	.689**	-.431**	.484**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	240	240	240	240	
SE_minus	Pearson Correlation	.389**	-.545**	.386**	.423**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	240	240	240	240	240

There's positive correlation between self-esteem and positive affect, life satisfaction. Negative correlation between self-esteem and negative affect. All items have statistical significance. The most significant correlation exists between self-esteem and positive affect with 0.689. Another highlight is there's slight difference between plus, minus Self-esteem and negative affect.

## Discussion

Present study findings provide that students with high self-esteem perceive the life as good and happy. Even though their self-esteem low they still tend to be happy. Students with high self-esteem claim to be more likable and attractive, to have better relationships, and make better impression (Rosenberg.M, 1965) High self-esteem makes people more willing to speak up in groups.

When students' low self-esteem increases their negative affect decreases. Another words, more students think negative about themselves they tend to have negative moods and emotions. But, even they think positively about them they still tend to experience negative moods. There's no significant difference in terms of life satisfaction and high and low self-esteem.

There's no difference between boys and girls in terms SWB. Overall, for the time being, they are happy with their life, even they differ with high and low self-esteem.

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