



## Factors Contribute to Adolescent's Life Satisfaction

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### Abstract

*The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among adolescents. This study also would like to identify whether self-esteem factors namely friends, school and family are the main contributors of adolescents' life satisfaction. Self-esteem refers to a form of individual's personal assessment of themselves and it contribute something of value to be associated with self-concept. Life satisfaction is an important concept in term of psychological well-being. This research involved 316 of Form Two students from several secondary school in Kuala Ketil zone, Kedah. The data were collected using questionnaires. The research instruments used in this study is DuBois's Self-Esteem Questionnaires (SEQ) and Huebner's Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS) 2001 version. This research shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among adolescents ( $r = .505$ ). Regression analysis presented that the self-esteem sub constructs namely friends, school and family are significant predictors of life satisfaction among adolescents. The self-esteem factor which is friends has been recognized as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = .251$ ) of adolescents' life satisfaction compared to school and family.*

**Keyword:** Self-esteem, life satisfaction, adolescent

### Introduction

Life satisfaction is an important aspect for every individual. It is vital in the effort to shape a strong individual to build a quality livelihood (Huebner & Ma,2008). The study of the well-being of adolescents is an important field to produce a superior generation for the future of a country. Furthermore, the studies in the context of adolescent well-being are mostly discussed within the scope of adolescent self-development where the aspects of life satisfaction are the major contributor to their well-being. Adolescent developmental processes in terms of cognitive, affective and social change impact their self-satisfaction. Therefore, continuous studies on the

aspects of adolescent self-satisfaction need to be carried out from time to time to see the changing trends so that we can understand the needs to produce prosperous adolescents (Chui & Wong 2016; Lerner et al. 2019; Povedano-Diaz, Muñiz-Rivas & Vera-Perea 2020)

The National Education Philosophy that aims to produce individuals who are knowledgeable and ethical, balanced and harmonious, so as to contribute to the well-being, social welfare and prosperity of the country (Ministry of Education, 1990). In this FPK, four main elements are summarized, namely, intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical, which plays a big position for the welfare of the community as it works to establish community members who have high self-integrity in which life satisfaction is one of the elements in the aspect of individual harmony (Mohd Salleh, 1996). To achieve the satisfaction of living in an individual, there are many factors that contribute to it and one of its elements is the self-esteem (Chen et.al, 2006). Huebner (1991) concluded that, various studies have been done by scholars in the field of psychological aspects of self-esteem but they still lack a study focusing on life satisfaction among school-going teenagers. Although, studies on life satisfaction among adolescents have been studied for more than a decade, but continuous exploration to identify more contributing factors in the context of their living environment such as school, family, peers and psychological factors such as self-esteem is still under-explored. This is important so that future research can help adolescents to avoid getting involved with social problems (Aldridge, McChesney & Afari 2020).

Adolescents are a group that should be given serious attention as these people will shape the future of the country (Shamsudin, 1994). Shamsuddin assumed human's physical, cognitive and emotional changes are most noticeable in adolescence because this is a crucial phase of transition in human life. It is approved by the western writers such as Ann (1994) in Mok (2008) who viewed that adolescents who do not have self-well-being will have a crippled life. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine in detail the relationship between the self-esteem of teenagers and the satisfaction of life.

## **Literature Review**

### **Life Satisfaction**

According Pavot and Diener (1993), life satisfaction is a method for evaluating a cognitive process by calculating the quality of life of a person on the basis of specific criteria defined by them. Cognitive assessment has greater contribution compared to evaluation based on the interpretation of emotion over something that happens in life as an individual usually distinguishes a standard that they use to assess the fulfilment of life (Huebner, Gilman & Furlong, 2009).

In the context of school, for example, the students will engage in an activity of the school in a positive mind without being influenced negatively. Nonetheless, an assessment on aspects of life satisfaction is also believed to have links with a concrete experience (Biswas-Diener, Vitterso & Diener, 2005; Chen, 2003). So, based on these views, it can be concluded that not only the cognitive aspects are taken into account but the experiences that happen in life also contributed to the assessment of a person's life satisfaction (Chen, 2003). Besides that, an assessment of life satisfaction based on domain-specific domain such as relationships with friends, family factors, school, living environment and self-factors should also be considered for review (Cummins, 1996). A Study on the aspects of life satisfaction is based on the Erikson Theory of Emotional-Physical development because in the view of previous researchers, at every stage of development, the individual is experiencing different conflicts which would affect the individual's degree of life

satisfaction (McKnight, Huebner & Suldo, 2002). According to the Erikson Theory of Emotional-Physical Development, there are eight stages of human development where there are specific differences in each stage of the human life beginning from infancy to old age (Erikson, 1963 in Mok, 2008).

### **Self Esteem**

Freshbach and Weiner (1991) explained that self-esteem is basically a form of either positive or negative assessment towards himself as an individual. Duffy et.al (2006) detailing that self-esteem is a personal evaluation against oneself and this concept gives something of value to be associated with self-concept. Self-esteem reflects the extent to which an individual feels confident of himself as a person of value, importance, and can give valuable results (Mansur and Siti Muhd Nordinar, 1998). In other words, self-esteem is an individual assessment of his own that is translated through his everyday behaviour. Rosernberg et.al (1995) found that self-esteem has a great influence on the behavior and judgments about themselves and others. This assessment, in view of Mulissa and Chapmana (2000), reflects the extent to which the individual has a level of acceptance and rejection of himself and how he believes that he is valuable.

The theory of self-esteem was based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs that was triggered by Abraham Maslow in 1943 in his book *A Theory of Human Motivation* that focused on basic human needs namely the physiology and psychology needs. In the context of schools, for example, in terms of students' physiology needs of basic food and psychological needs such as affection from their teachers. According to this theory, the basic needs are not met would hinder the individual to be able to meet the needs of others. According to Maslow's theory, there are five basic human needs that must be met, namely physiological needs, safety needs, needs for affection, self-esteem and self-improvement purposes (Mok, 2008).

Chen et.al (2006) reported that the study found that self-esteem was identified as a strong predictor of life satisfaction compared to other personality variables. Chen et.al (2006) opinion supported the research by Hong and Giannakopoulos (1994). Diener and Diener (1995) studied the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among university students from 31 countries and found that the relationship between the two variables are at a moderate level ( $r = 0.47$ ). The study by Cases et.al (2007) on teenagers found similar results where there is a positive relationship between the level of life satisfaction and self-esteem. The study by Cases et.al (2007) is also in line with findings by Ullman and Tartars (2001).

According to Bumpass and Lu (2002), family structure plays a role in contributing to the life satisfaction among adolescents. Teens who lived with their parents showed high achievement in education, less involved in criminal activities and have a healthy life (Carlson, 2006; Demuth & Brown, 2004; Jeynes, 2005; Ram & Hou, 2005). While the children who come from families who are separated have a high tendency to have negative attitude and behavior (Sweeney & Bracken, 2000). A review of the 887 students in Norway between the ages of 13 and 15 used an item that became an indicator to study the aspects of happiness found there is a relationship between the atmospheres in the school with their joy Natvig, Albrektsen, & Qvarnstrom (2003). Feeling happy in school has a positive relationship with a sense of hope for themselves. For Hoge et.al (1990), school environment, teaching in the classroom and academic achievement are significant contributors to the level of students' self-esteem. The self-discipline while at school also affects the self-esteem of students. The study conducted by Baker (1998) also showed that satisfaction at school is also a contributing factor to the satisfaction of the youth.

For Gilman (2001), environmental factors such as experience with neighbours and participation in the co-curriculum activities are significant contributors. However, a stronger contributor to life satisfaction among adolescents is the involvement of parents and friends (Nickerson & Nagle, 2005). Apart from the parents, teenagers are more likely to have a closer relationship with their peers and this becomes a factor that directly show the relationship with friends gives impact to an adolescent's life satisfaction. Friend have direct effect on the development of children and adolescents which include aspects such as self-esteem, self-concept, socialization and even contribute to academic achievement (Smith & Brownel, 2003). Relationships with friends in the context of children and adolescents can be caused by interactions that occur inside and outside the home such as at a child care centre, playground, school and neighbourhood environments and based on previous studies, 30% of social interaction in the lives of children and youth occurs due to the relationship with friends (Rubin, Bukowski & Parker, 1998). Zarbatany, Hartmann and Rankin (1990) explained that the relationship of children and adolescents with their peers can also occur through electronic interactions such as through virtual interaction.

### Research Objectives

1. To identify the association between self-esteem and life satisfaction among the adolescents.
2. To identify whether self-esteem aspects such as friends, school and families are the predictor to life satisfaction among the adolescents

### Methodology

The design of the study is selected by using a quantitative approach. The study of correlation is used to describe the relationship between variables (Cresswell, 2008). The selection of representative sample of the population uses the guidelines of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample selection schedule. 316 respondents represented the population being measured. The study involved the use of two types of measurement namely DuBois Self-Esteem Questionnaire 1996 (SEQ) and the Huebner Multidimensional Survey of Student Life Satisfaction Scale version 2001 (MSLSS). SEQ reliability is .83 and is .86 MSLSS based on reliability analysis Cronbach Alpha. The data from this pilot study were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 15.0.

### Results and Discussion

Based on statistical analysis findings, the study has found that there was medium positive relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among adolescents ( $r = .505, p < .01$ ).

Table 1. Correlative Findings between Self-Esteem and Self-Satisfaction

		Self	Life
Self-Esteem	Pearson correlation	1	.505
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		316

The findings of this correlation is consistent with previous findings that there was a significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among adolescents (Neto, 1993; Ullman & Tartar, 2001; Zhang & Leung, 2002; Cases et.al, 2007). With reference to the findings of the regression tests statistical analysis conducted, researchers found that the self-esteem of friends,

school and family is a significant predictor of adolescent life satisfaction ( $R^2 = .187$ ,  $F(3,312) = 23,883$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Table 2 Findings of linear regression analysis of self-esteem factor towards life satisfaction

Model	Unstandardised Beta	Standardised Beta	t	Significant
Constant	1.421		8.101	.000
Friend	.192	.251	4.132	.000
School	.130	.160	2.714	.007
Family	.140	.139	2.489	.013

$R^2 = .187$   
 $F(3, 312) = 23.883$

*Adjusted R* = .179  
 $p = .000$

Based on these findings, the results suggest that the self-esteem of a friend is the most dominant contributor to adolescent life satisfaction as much as 25.1%, while overall school self-esteem and self-esteem of their friends as much as 16% and 13.9% by value of  $R^2$  is .187, The finding is consistent with previous findings that the family and friends to become a strong influence on adolescent's life satisfaction (Smith & Brownel, 2003; Nikerson & Nagle, 2005)

Overall findings of the study have shown that self-esteem and adolescent life satisfaction are related. These findings reflect that the level of life satisfaction among adolescents in schools is affected by self-esteem. Teens who have high self-esteem levels would likely acquire a high level of life satisfaction. This study also identified the factors of self-esteem to be a predictor of life satisfaction. The self-esteem of your friends, family and school proved to be a significant contributor to life satisfaction among adolescents.

Based on the findings, the self-esteem of a friend becomes a stronger contributor to the aspects of life satisfaction compared with the self-esteem of families and schools. This is possible because the teenagers consider their friends are the most important things in their life. The process of development that is being applied in adolescents, in which the relationship with friends influenced their behaviour (Steinberg, 2008). Aikins, Bierman and Parker (2005) stated that the factors contributing to a strong partnership could be because the majority of adolescents are more focused on relationships with friends to earn high moral support and establish a strong friendship between them. According to Wentzel (2009), relationships with strong partners for a teenager help to gain strong social relationships and high emotional support for them to face the challenges in their development process.

The self-esteem of friends who become the dominant contributor to life satisfaction can be attributed to the theoretical adhesion (attachment theory). Adhesion theory refers to a theory that describes the relationship between human beings. According to Bretherton (1992) this theory was pioneered by Ainsworth (1960) in which he stated that in childhood, an individual is much closer with families, especially parents who are their social world. However, when an individual is experiencing a change from childhood to adolescence, the individual is more attached with their colleagues and friends, thus creating a strong relationship. At this stage, teenagers consider that the views of their peers are more important than family members. Based on the theory of adhesion, even during youth, relationships with friends become more special for them, but parents remain their attachment figures (Kerns, 2008). Based on the theory of this adhesion, Ma

and Huebner (1998) also pointed out that the relationship with friends is an important factor in determining life satisfaction among adolescents.

While this study proves that the self-esteem of a friend becomes a more dominant contributor to life satisfaction, family and school factors also play an important role in shaping teenagers who have high levels of life satisfaction. This is supported by the views of Suldo and Huebner (2006) that parental support to their teenage children also contributes to a high level of life satisfaction. Ash and Huebner (2001) argues, based on their study, adolescents have low levels of life satisfaction if they had a bad experience with family. Research by Milevsky et al. (2007) and Pérez-Fuentes et al. (2019) explored the relationship between parenting and the happiness of young people, found that inclusive and permissive schooling have been positively related to life satisfaction. It has been emphasized that parental support is one of the most significant predictors of life satisfaction. However, the school must also be considered as a factor contributing to this as an element of adolescent's life satisfaction. Learning in school should be an important element to create a prosperous youth.

## Conclusion

Further studies should be conducted to examine more closely the relevant study of life satisfaction among students and aspects of self-esteem. Further studies are encouraged to use a larger sample to study so that it becomes more meaningful. Subsequent studies by other researchers are encouraged to focus on factors like ethnicity, socioeconomic status and achievement in academics. This is because this study only included some information on the relationship factors in self-esteem and satisfaction of life. Other factors such as personality, intelligence and learning styles should also be assessed with regard to fine-tune the self-esteem and life satisfaction among adolescents.

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