

## Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem among Urban University Students

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### ABSTRACT

In the present study, the researchers have attempted to assess the relationship between life satisfaction, self-esteem and happiness among 150 university students comprising of 75 males and 75 females. The sample was collected from three districts of Assam (Guwahati, Jorhat and Dibrugarh). A correlational research design was used in the present study. A significant difference was found between males and females on happiness in favour of the females. While it was found that they do not differ in life satisfaction and self-esteem but a significant relationship was found between them.

*Keywords: Happiness, Life Satisfaction, Self-esteem, Urban University Students*

Happiness differs from people to people. While some people focus on the external factors, others tend to give importance to the internal factors. The external factors include materialistic goods, such as marriage, social life, job satisfaction, leisure activities etc. The internal factors include self actualization, goals, personality traits; coping styles etc. happiness has a lot of positive effects on a person's behavior. It can improve people's health, increase problem solving capacity, work performance, helps in social interaction. It also tends to reduce stress level of a person (Argyle, 2001). Activities such as listening to music, playing sports, engaging in art work and living in a positive environment helps a person to remain stable and happy. Researchers have observed that people who are happy with themselves have a positive attitude towards life and who are not satisfied with themselves have a negative attitude. Seligman, the founder of positive psychology, in 2002, said that the concept of happiness is linked with well-being, pleasure and satisfaction. The concept of well-being refers to optimal psychological functioning and experience. Individuals strive for perfection which recognizes their potential and the cognitive and affective evaluation of their life.

Self-esteem can affect life satisfaction and happiness. It is a positive or negative evaluation or attitudes towards oneself and an overall evaluation of one's worth or value. Many studies have also found that high levels of self-esteem are associated with high levels of happiness and satisfaction in life. Individuals having good or strong relationships or friendships tend to

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## Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem among Urban University Students

be happier more satisfied in life and high self-esteem. Also, not all people like to build up any kind of relationship and can be happier and satisfied in life. A number of items have been identified by Rosenberg which influences the self-esteem of individuals such as ethnicity, family structure, social class and social problems. Carl Rogers focused on three criteria which mainly focused on parent-child relationship for developing self-esteem. The first criterion is to reflect concern, acceptance, and warmth towards the child. Allowance and punishment is the second criteria. Democratic attitude of parents is the third criteria. Children raised with these three criteria have high self-esteem.

Life satisfaction refers to a cognitive, judgmental process. Shin and Johnson define life satisfaction as “a global assessment of a person’s quality of life according to his chosen criteria”. Judgments of satisfaction are dependent upon a comparison of one’s circumstances with what is thought to be an appropriate standard. It is important to point out that judgment of how satisfied people are with their present state of affairs is based on a comparison with a standard which each of the individual sets for him or herself. To increase life satisfaction many individuals often seek psychotherapy. A study in 1978, defined life satisfaction as an overall cognitive assessment of one’s quality of life. People often crave for satisfaction when their ideal and real self do not match. Students perceive high levels of life satisfaction as having good social system and self-efficacy.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Studies done on gender differences in self-esteem among college going students found out that gender has an impact upon the development, expression of self-esteem and that there is gender difference among college students with respect to self-esteem (M. Sadia, 2013). Baumeister (2003), in his study found that the level of self-esteem an individual has is one of the important aspect of their success in all types of achievements. Therefore, lower self-esteem can produce lower levels of happiness and life satisfaction. Contradicting his own study, he also found that individuals with low self-esteem may also have lower levels of happiness and life satisfaction as they have not taken any risks which may hamper their self-esteem. Therefore, self-esteem is considered as an important aspect of psychological functioning (Croker and Major, 1989). It buffers against stress and experience of failure. Self-esteem is considered to be a product of happiness while happiness and life satisfaction are considered to be the products of self-esteem.

According to Rogers (2004), environment is also an important factor in building up self-esteem. People living in an environment of unconditional positive regard leads to overall happiness with self. These individuals are considered to be psychologically healthy with high self-esteem and have a potential to reach the level of self actualization. The more motivated a person is to achieve or reach a goal and the more experience they gather, they have a greater chance of obtaining high levels of self-esteem and happiness.

Studies revealed that though there were no significant gender differences in level of happiness among university students. However, other findings suggested that male students scored high in happiness levels than female students (Argyle, 2001; Diener and Diener, 1995; Ryff and Singer, 2008). Child rearing techniques and gender role is an important determinant in this area.

A positive relationship was found between self-esteem and happiness. Many studies found that self-esteem is correlated with happiness and considered to be a part of happiness (Argyle, 2001).

## Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem among Urban University Students

A study (Inglehart, 2002) found that women reported higher levels of life satisfaction than men. A significant relationship was found between self-esteem and life satisfaction. The study stated that level of satisfaction is highly affected by one's self-esteem, as high self-esteem reflects high level of satisfaction (Patel, A.K. et al., 2018). Life satisfaction is said or considered to be an important determinant of positive psychology. Studies done by Cecen (2008) and Chen et al., (2006) found that life satisfaction and self-esteem is highly related to positive feelings of an individual and because of this reason people with high self-esteem is expected to have high life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is considered to have one of the three indicators of well-being. They include presence of positive effect, absence of negative effect and a global sense of satisfaction with life (Diener, 1985). Self-esteem and life satisfaction indicate one's global evaluation yet the direction of these evaluations is different (Civitci & Civitci, 2009).

Studies have also found that though women had lower self-esteem, they had higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness in their life. While men who had higher self-esteem were not happy and satisfied with their lives as compared to women. According to studies done by Diener, higher self-esteem predicted higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction. Previous studies have found a positive relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction (Yetim, 2002; Deniz, 2006; Chen et al., 2006; Çeçen, 2008).

### **METHODOLOGY**

The researchers have raised the following questions which have been answered in the present study.

#### *Research questions*

- Is there a relationship between self-esteem and happiness among urban university students?
- Is there a relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among urban university students?
- Is there any gender difference in self-esteem among urban university students?
- Is there any gender difference in happiness among urban university students?
- Is there any gender difference in life satisfaction among urban university students?

#### *Objectives*

- To assess the relationship between self-esteem and happiness among Urban University Students.
- To assess the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among Urban University Students.
- To find out the gender differences in self-esteem among Urban University Students.
- To find out the gender differences in happiness among Urban University Students.
- To find out the gender differences in life satisfaction among Urban University Students.
- In order to achieve the above objectives, the following hypotheses have been formulated and generated in the study.

#### **Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and happiness among Urban University Students.

## Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem among Urban University Students

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among Urban University Students.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant gender difference in self-esteem among Urban University Students.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant gender difference in happiness among Urban University Students.

**H<sub>05</sub>:** There is no significant gender difference in life satisfaction among Urban University Students.

### *Design of the study*

The design used for the present study was correlation research design to assess the relationship between self-esteem, happiness and life satisfaction.

### *Sample*

For the fruitful study of the topic first hand data has been collected from total number of 150 students of Guwahati, Jorhat and Dibrugarh District, from the State of Assam, studying in different institutions and colleges. The sample consisted of 75 males and 75 females, ranging from age 19 to 24 years.

### *Sampling framework*

Students from the state of Assam of different universities		
Students from Guwahati	Students from Jorhat	Students from Dibrugarh
College and university – 2	College – 1	College and university – 2
Students – 50	Students – 50	Students – 50
Total students – 150		

### *Tools and technique used*

Variables	Tool	Developer	Psychometric properties
Self-esteem	Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale	Dr. Morris Rosenberg (1965)	The scale has high reliability, test-retest correlations are typically in the range of .82 to .88 and Cronbach's alpha for various sample are in the range of .77 to .88.
Happiness	Oxford Happiness Inventory	Michael Argyle and Peter Hills (1989)	Reliability of the questionnaire was 0.78 (P<0.001). Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire's test and retest stages are 0.84 and 0.87 respectively.
Life satisfaction	Satisfaction with Life Scale	E. Diener and R.A Emmons (1985)	The coefficient alpha for the scale has ranged from .79 to .89, indicating that the scale has high internal consistency. The scale was also found to have good test-retest correlations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data were scored, tabulated and their descriptive statistics were calculated. The results were treated hypothesis wise with inferential statistics. The obtained results are presented and discussed as follows.

**Hypothesis 1. There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and happiness among Urban University Students.**

In order to test the hypothesis, the mean scores, standard deviation was computed and obtained by the students. Further, the significant relationship between self-esteem and happiness among the students was computed using the correlation test, which yielded the following.

**Table 1. Significance of the relationship between self-esteem and happiness among the urban university students.**

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Self-esteem</i>	150	16.70	3.24		
<i>Happiness</i>	150	4.03	.845	.095	.245

The mean for self-esteem is 16.7 and for happiness 4.03 respectively. The standard deviation for self-esteem is 3.24 and for happiness it is .845. There was no significant relationship between happiness and self-esteem ( $r = 0.95$ ,  $p < .245$ ,  $N = 150$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted at significance level of 0.05. It means that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and happiness. In many studies it was found that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and happiness. Some studies found that lower self-esteem results in lower levels of happiness and vice versa. Studies have found out that high self-esteem does not necessarily leads to happiness. Self-esteem is considered to be essential only in some cases. People with high self-esteem are considered to be more attractive, have good interpersonal relationships than the people with low self-esteem. Although some research believes in the fact that there is a high relationship between self-esteem and happiness, it is also true that high self-esteem mitigates the effect of stress and not necessarily boosts happiness (Baumeister, 2003).

**Hypothesis 2. There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among Urban University Students**

In order to test the hypothesis, the mean scores, standard deviation was computed and obtained by the students. Further, the significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among the students was computed using the correlation test, which yielded the following.

**Table 2. Significance of the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among the urban university students.**

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Self-esteem</i>	150	16.70	3.24		
<i>Life satisfaction</i>	150	21.25	5.48	.235**	.004

The mean for self-esteem was found to be 16.70 and 21.25 for life satisfaction. The standard deviation for self-esteem and life satisfaction was found to be 3.24 and 5.48 respectively. There was a significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction ( $r = .235^{**}$ ,  $p > 0.004$ ,  $N = 150$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_02$ ) has been rejected and alternative

## Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem among Urban University Students

hypothesis (H<sub>12</sub>) has been accepted, at 0.01 level of significance. It means that there is a relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction among the university students. Self-esteem eventually increases the level of satisfaction of an individual. High self-esteem leads to high confidence, it also increases the positive feelings of an individual (Cecen, 2008). Life satisfaction has been an important aspect in the field of positive psychology. The present study findings clearly showed that the effect of self-esteem on the level of life satisfaction is important as high self-esteem indicates high life satisfaction. The results of the study are also supported by the studies done by Patel, A.K. et al (2018).

### ***Hypothesis 3. There is no significant gender difference in self-esteem among Urban University Students.***

In order to test the hypothesis, the mean scores, standard deviation was computed and obtained by the students. Further, the significant gender difference in self-esteem among the students was computed using the 't' test, which yielded the following.

***Table 3. Significance difference in self-esteem among the urban university students***

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<b><i>Males</i></b>	75	16.53	3.41	.653	148	.515
<b><i>Females</i></b>	75	16.88	3.07			

The table shows the significant difference in self-esteem between males and females respectively. The sample size out of (N=150), 75 were males and females were 75. The mean value of self-esteem for males was (M=16.53) and for females was (M=16.88). The standard deviation for males was (SD=3.41) and for females, it was (SD=3.07). The difference between the scores is low. The Degree of Freedom was found to be (df= 148). To find the statistical significance of the difference between two means, a t-test was conducted and the t value was found out. The t-value was (t= 6.53) and p value to be (p< .515), which is not statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in self-esteem with respect to gender. It can be said that both the gender has equal levels of self-esteem. Study done by, Sadia M (2013), found gender differences in levels of self-esteem. Many studies also found high levels self-esteem in men rather than in women. Though it can be said that future research can help and promote self-esteem while reducing the negative feelings an individual has (Kearney-Cooke A., 1999).

### ***Hypothesis 4. There is no significant gender difference in happiness among Urban University Students.***

In order to test the hypothesis, the mean scores, standard deviation was computed and obtained by the students. Further, the significant gender difference in happiness among the students was computed using the 't' test, which yielded the following.

***Table 4. Significance difference in happiness between males and females***

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<b><i>Males</i></b>	75	3.85	.569	2.57	148	.011
<b><i>Females</i></b>	75	4.20	1.02			

In the above table, the significant difference in happiness between males and females is shown. The sample size out of (N=150), 75 were males and females were 75. The mean value of happiness for males was (M=3.85) and for females was (M=4.20). The standard deviation for males was (SD=.569) and for females, it was (SD=1.02). The difference

## Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem among Urban University Students

between the scores is low, although the mean is deviated towards the female. The Degree of Freedom was found to be ( $df= 148$ ). To find the statistical significance of the difference between two means, a t-test was conducted and the t value was found out. The t-value was ( $t= 2.57$ ) and p value to be ( $p>.011$ ), which is statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is significant difference in happiness between males and females. Other studies have also found that there are no gender differences in the level of happiness among university students. While contradictory to our results, some studies have also found that men tend to be happier than women (Ryff and Singer, 2008; Argyle, 2001). Study done by Inglehart (2002) found that gender differences in happiness levels were basically dependent on age. It was found that older women are less happy than older man, while young women tend to be happier than the young men.

### *Hypothesis 5. There is no significant gender difference in life satisfaction among Urban University Students.*

In order to test the hypothesis, the mean scores, standard deviation was computed and obtained by the students. Further, the significant gender difference in life satisfaction among the students was computed using the 't' test, which yielded the following.

**Table 5. Significance of the difference in life satisfaction between males and females**

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Males</i>	75	21.44	5.09	.416	148	.678
<i>Females</i>	75	21.06	5.88			

The above table shows the significant difference in life satisfaction between males and females respectively. The sample size out of ( $N=150$ ), 75 were males and females were 75. The mean value of life satisfaction for males was ( $M=21.44$ ) and for females was ( $M=21.06$ ). The standard deviation for males was ( $SD= 5.09$ ) and for females, it was ( $SD=5.88$ ). The difference between the scores is low. The Degree of Freedom was found to be ( $df= 148$ ). To find the statistical significance of the difference between two means, a t-test was conducted and the t value was found out. The t-value was ( $t= .416$ ) and p value to be ( $p=<.678$ ), which is not statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in life satisfaction between males and females. Studies found out that women reported higher level of life satisfaction than men and a positive relationship was found between high self-esteem and life satisfaction. Inglehart (1990) findings supports our study that by controlling demographic variables the gender differences in life satisfaction decreases or fades away.

## **CONCLUSION**

The aim of the study was to find the relationship between self-esteem, happiness and life satisfaction. From this study, it can be concluded that self-esteem has a positive relation with life satisfaction and how influences how an individual evaluates his or her life. Though no relation was found between self-esteem and happiness.

This study paves a way for the future researchers to look upon how individuals can resolve their low self-esteem issues, so that they can prosper in different areas of their life.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

A larger population can be studied to examine the relationship between self-esteem, life satisfaction and happiness. Further studies can also be done by selecting samples from same socioeconomic background to get precise results. Future research can also look into the area

of self-esteem and disability. This study could investigate whether persons with certain disabilities have higher or lower self-esteem and whether they are satisfied with their lives or not.

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## Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Self-Esteem among Urban University Students

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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