

## Humor Styles and Self-Esteem among Young Adult

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined how humor styles and self-esteem are correlated. 75 samples were selected through random sampling. They completed the Humor Styles Questionnaire and, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, shared using Google Forms. Results of the study showed affiliative humor style (one of the adaptive humor styles) significantly predicted higher self-esteem, which they are positively correlated. Aggressive humor style (maladaptive humor style) was negatively correlated with self-esteem. The study supported the findings of the previous literature.

**Keywords:** *Humor Styles, Self-Esteem, Affiliative Humor, Aggressive Humor*

Humor is the tendency of experiences to provoke laughter and provide amusement. The term derives from the Humoural medicines of the ancient Greeks, which taught that the balance of fluids in the human body, known as humours (yellow bile, black bile, blood, phlegm) also known as the "body fluids" which controlled human health and emotion. Researches have shown that humor contributes to higher subjective well-being. It suggested that humor has relation with positive effect on an individual's psychological and physiological well-being. A few researches have also found that humor plays a major role in achieving and sustaining, higher psychological well-being.

### *Humor styles*

Humor styles are a subject of research in the field of personality psychology that focuses on the ways in which individuals differ in their use of humor. People of all ages and cultures respond to humor, but their use of it can vary greatly. There are multiple factors, such as culture, age, and political orientation, that play a role in determining what people find humorous. Although humor styles can be somewhat variable depending on social context, they tend to be a relatively stable personality characteristic among individuals. Humor can play an instrumental role in the formation of social bonds, enabling people to relate to peers or to attract a mate, and can help to release tension during periods of stress. And as said earlier, humor has become an important part of the young population.

It wasn't always positive researches. Some researches did not consider negative humor styles. There are two types of humor – Adaptive and maladaptive. Each type consists of two styles – adaptive consist of facilitative and self-enhancing humor style. Maladaptive on the other hand

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consist of self-defeating and aggressive humor styles. Each of these styles have different impact on psychological and individuals overall subjective well-being.

### *Affiliative Humor*

Affiliative Humor is a way of amusing others to facilitate relationships. It is positive and inclusive. This style of humor used to enhance one's relationships with others in a positive manner. This style of humor is typically used in a self-accepting way. Individuals high in this dimension often use humor as a way to charm and amuse others, ease tension among others, and improve relationships. They are often spontaneous in their joke telling, frequently participate in witty talks, and enjoy laughing with others. Affiliative humor is also associated with increased levels of (explicit) self-esteem, psychological well-being, emotional stability, and social intimacy. They are also more likely to exhibit higher levels of implicit self-esteem (independently of their level of explicit self-esteem).

This style of humor is also associated with decreased levels of depressive symptoms and anxiety. Individuals who use affiliative humor tend to have higher levels of extraversion and openness to experience as personality characteristics.

Examples of items targeting affiliative humor on the HSQ (the scale used in this paper) include:

- I don't often joke around with my friends. (reversed)
- I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself. (reversed)

### *Self-Enhancing Humor*

Self-Enhancing Humor is finding amusement in life's hardships and staying positive. Something like what Kurt Vonnegut suggested "Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward." This style of humor is related to having a good-natured attitude toward life, having the ability to laugh at yourself, your circumstances and the idiosyncrasies of life in constructive, non-detrimental manner. It is used by individuals to enhance the self in a benevolent, positive manner. This type of humor is best understood as a type of coping or emotion-regulating humor in which individuals use humor to look on the bright side of a bad situation. The self-enhancing style of humor has also been shown to be related to increased levels of self-esteem, optimism, and psychological well-being, as well as decreased levels of depression and anxiety. Individuals who use the self-enhancing humor style are more likely to exhibit extraversion and openness to experience as personality characteristics and less likely to exhibit neuroticism.

Examples of self-enhancing humor on the HSQ include:

- If I am feeling upset or unhappy, I usually try to think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better.
- Even when I'm by myself, I'm often amused by the absurdities of life.

### *Aggressive Humor*

Aggressive Humor is using humor to disparage others as a way of manipulating them. It's the humor we see so often in the form of some memes, The Daily Show, or the late, great George Carlin. Today this type humor has been common, like sarcastic comments, mocking people, or giving people/friends mean-spirited nicknames and many more. There is a sort of 'trend' of aggressive humor among all population. Virtual world (social media) is the go-to platform for this kind of humor.

Aggressive humor is related to higher levels of neuroticism and lower levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness. Individuals who exhibit higher levels of aggressive humor tend to score

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higher on measures of hostility and general aggression. Males tend to use aggressive humor more often than women.

Examples of aggressive humor on the HSQ might include:

- When telling jokes or saying funny things, I am usually not very concerned about how other people are taking it.
- People are never offended or hurt by my sense of humor. (reversed)
- If you think people are laughing at you, they probably are.

### *Self-defeating humor*

Self-defeating humor is the style of humor characterized by the use of potentially detrimental humor towards the self in order to gain approval from others.

This style of humor is sometimes seen as a form of denial in which humor is used as a defense mechanism for hiding negative feelings about the self.

A variety of variables are associated with self-defeating humor. Individuals who more frequently use self-defeating humor show increased depressive symptoms. Individuals who use this style of humor tend to have higher levels of neuroticism and lower levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Examples of self-defeating items on the Humor Styles Questionnaire might include:

- I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders, or faults.
- If I am having problems or feeling unhappy, I often cover it up by joking around, so that even my closest friends don't know how I really feel.

The Humor Styles Questionnaire is a 32-item self-report inventory used to identify how individuals use humor in their lives.

The present research uses, The Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) to determine the 4 different styles of humor present among the participants. HSQ was developed by Rod Martin and Patricia Doris (2003) to measure individual differences in styles of humor. Humor has been shown to be a personality characteristic that remains relatively stable over time. Humor is most of the times viewed as a one-dimensional trait. However, individuals seem to differ in the ways in which they use humor in their everyday lives, and different styles of humor seem to have different outcomes. As a result, two variables are measured within the questionnaire to cover multiple dimensions that humor contain. The Humor Styles Questionnaire was developed to identify the ways in which individuals differ in humor styles and how these differences influence health, well-being, relationships, and other outcomes.

### *Self-esteem*

What you think about yourself plays a major role in an individual's well-being overall, and also personality. It is a highly positive factor in someone's life. Possessing little self-regard can lead to depression, to fall short of their potential, or to tolerate abusive relationships and situations, and there are many more results of less self-regard. In scientific words, self-esteem is an individual's subjective evaluation of their own self-worth. Self-esteem encompasses belief about oneself as well as emotional state, such as triumph, despair, pride, shame. A person's self-esteem can change during the lifespan, it largely depends on an individual's life experiences. Childhood has a significant influence on an individual's self-concept, parents play

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a major role on this and are considered as the main source of negative and positive experiences a child will have. Self esteem may make people believe they deserve happiness. This belief itself can work wonders in an individual's thought process, perception about life, having healthy relationships and many positive effects on an individual's life.

Self-esteem may be defined by many factors including:

- Self-confidence
- Feeling of security
- Identity
- Sense of belonging
- Feeling of competence

Other terms that are often used interchangeably with self-esteem include self-worth, self-regard, and self-respect. Self-esteem impacts your decision-making process, your relationships, your emotional health, and your overall well-being. It also influences motivation, as people with a healthy, positive view of themselves understand their potential and may feel inspired to take on new challenges. People with healthy self-esteem:

- Have a firm understanding of their skills
- Are able to maintain healthy relationships with others because they have a healthy relationship with themselves
- Have realistic and appropriate expectations of themselves and their abilities
- Understand their needs and are able to express them

Various studies have confirmed that self-esteem has a direct relationship with our overall well-being,

The present study has used the most common scale of self-esteem i.e. Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (also called the RSE and sometimes the SES). This scale was developed by Rosenberg and presented in his 1965 book *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*.

It contains 10 items rated on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Some of the items are reverse-scored, and the total score can be calculated by summing up the total points for an overall measure of self-esteem

### ***Significance***

As we all know, comedy has been gaining a lot of attention these days. People are interested in Stand-up comedy shows, comics memes, which has in turn shifted the limelight to the importance of sense of humor a lot over the decade amongst the youth. Having good sense of humor has become something to brag about among young adults. But, this also is a fact that different styles of humor indicate a lot of different things, feelings, emotions. Like for example, it has been seen self-defeating humor is used as a defense mechanism by a lot of youth, this usually means they are in the state of denial. Denial could be from anything, their current situation, personality, serious mental illnesses like depression, anxiety and so on. Self-esteem is an important self-concept. It plays a major role in a person's personality, their way of dealing with problems, their coping mechanisms and so on, it is important to know how the young adult population of our country is using sense of humor, and how it is related to self-esteem. This paper has attempted to study the correlation between the four different humor styles and self-esteem.

### ***Statement of the problem***

The proposed research wants to explore the relationship between adaptive humor style

(affiliative humor style) and maladaptive humor style (aggressive humor style).

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### *Humor styles*

Humor can play an instrumental role in the formation of social bonds, enabling people to relate to peers or to attract a mate, and can help to release tension during periods of stress, scientists are still struggling to explain exactly what makes people laugh. Indeed, the concept of humor is itself elusive. Although everyone understands intuitively what humor is, and dictionaries defines it simply as “the quality of being amusing,” it is difficult to define in a way that encompasses all its aspects. It may evoke the merest smile or explosive laughter; it can be conveyed by words, images or actions and through photos, films, skits or plays; and it can take a wide range of forms, from innocent jokes to biting sarcasm.

*“What’s So Funny? The Science of Why We Laugh”.* Sabato, Giovanni, 2020

The paper talks about different theories on humor from the past to some of the present ones. The oldest theory of humor dates back to Plato and other ancient Greek philosophers, posits that people find humor in, and laugh at, earlier versions of themselves and the misfortunes of others because of feeling superior.

Then in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the best-known version of humor was formulated by Sigmund Freud, he said that laughter allows people to let off steam or release pent-up “nervous energy.” According to Freud, this process explains why tabooed scatological and sexual themes and jokes that broach thorny social and ethnic topics can amuse us. When the punch line comes, the energy being expended to suppress inappropriate emotions, such as desire or hostility, is no longer needed and is released as laughter.

A third long-standing explanation of humor is the theory of incongruity. People laugh at the juxtaposition of incompatible concepts and at defiance of their expectations—that is, at the incongruity between expectations and reality. According to the resolution of incongruity, laughter results when a person discovers an unexpected solution to an apparent incongruity, such as when an individual grasps a double meaning in a statement and thus sees the statement in a completely new light. This type of double meaning jokes have increased amongst the youth today. We can see that even kids of ages between 9-14 have started joking around, using sarcasm, double meaning jokes

*“The Relation Between Humor Styles and Empathy”* Hampes, W. P. (2010)

Humor has been associated with social competence (Levine & Zigler, 1976; Masten, 1986; Pelligrini, Masten, Garnezy & Ferrarse, 1987), intimacy (Mutthaya, 1987; Hampes, 1992, 1994), trust (Hampes, 1999), and satisfying marriages (Ziv, 1988; Rust & Goldstein, 1989; Ziv & Gadish, 1989; Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, 1990). To successfully use and appreciate humor involves a person’s ability to shift mentally to different perspectives (Apter, 1982; Wyer & Collins, 1992), which could be helpful in understanding and experiencing the thoughts and feelings of another person. It could also be conducive to reducing the stress that inevitably occurs in a close relationship. Kuiper, Martin, & Olinger (1993) and Kuiper, McKenzie, & Belanger (1995) found that those high in humor were more likely than those low in humor to perceive potentially threatening events in a positive manner. Many other studies have found humor to be a factor in reducing stress. Individuals who use humor to reduce stress in their relationships should find it easier to focus on another person’s thoughts and feelings and thus be more empathic. Mart (2003) did the characterization of affiliative humor as an adaptive interpersonal style of humor and self-enhancing humor as an adaptive intrapersonal style of

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humor is consistent with the difference in the correlations between affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor with empathic concern. Those who are more interpersonally oriented are seemingly more likely to show concern, warmth, and compassion for others than those who are more intrapersonally oriented. That the correlation between affiliative humor and empathic concern was stronger than between self-enhancing humor and empathic concern is also consistent with Davis (1983), who found that of the two types of empathy, empathic concern is a more “emotional” measure of empathy and perspective-taking empathy the more “cognitive” type of empathy. Therefore, it was seen the interpersonal affiliative humor was seemingly be more strongly related to the “emotional” empathic concern than was self-enhancing humor, just as the more intrapersonal self-enhancing humor seemingly would be more strongly related to the “cognitive” perspective taking empathy than would affiliative humor.

*“Humor styles predict emotional and behavioral responses to COVID-19.” Olah, A. & Ford, T. (2021)*

Many researches have also established that humor is an effective means of coping with adversity by, for instance, reducing perceived stress and promoting positive affect (Strick et al. 2009; Szabo 2007). Thus, it’s not surprising that people have created and shared a common platform of humorous memes poking fun at the pandemic; the same trend emerged earlier the same year when memes about a potential World War III flooded social media after the assassination of an Iranian general (Romano 2020). Beyond *exposure* to humor, one’s humor style—their habitual way of expressing humor in their daily lives—can serve to mitigate or exacerbate the psychological effects of stressors, hardships, and challenges.

The paper hypothesized that self-defeating humor style is associated with more stress in response to COVID-19 and thus greater hopelessness. But the hypothesis was proved wrong and, self-defeating humor style did not significantly relate to stress from COVID-19. This suggested that self-defeating humor had no relationship with stress from COVID-19. Self-defeating humor style, however, relate significantly and positively to hopelessness about COVID-19 (177-199)

*Do humor styles matter in the relationship between personality and subjective well-being? V Jovanovic - Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 2011* Jovanovic (2011) found that the self-enhancing humour style had incremental validity in predicting affective well-being and life satisfaction overall.

The authors examined how certain humor styles mediate the relations between self-evaluative standards (which form the primary evaluative component of the self-schema) and psychological well-being. The analysis supported the hypothesis of this paper, so it was seen, greater endorsement of positive self-evaluative standards led to the use of more affiliative humor, which, in turn, led to higher levels of social self-esteem and lower levels of depression. Also, as predicted, greater endorsement of negative self-evaluative standards led to the use of more self-defeating humor, which resulted in lower levels of social self-esteem and higher levels of depression. Further, affiliative humor also mediated the relation between negative self-evaluative standards and well-being. In this study, the greater endorsement of negative self-evaluative standards led to the use of less affiliative humor, which led to a decrease in social self-esteem. These results suggest that specific features associated with these 2 humor styles may contribute in a differential manner to an individual's level of well-being. Which also meant that the increased use of affiliative humor may facilitate the development and maintenance of social support networks that foster and enhance well-being. Alternatively, the

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greater use of self-defeating humor may result in the development of maladaptive social support networks that impede psychological well-being.

Many researches examined the relationships between four personality traits, humor styles, and happiness. Replicating previous research, happiness was positively correlated with four personality traits: extraversion, locus of control, self-esteem, and optimism. Further, happiness positively related to self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles; it related negatively to self-defeating and aggressive humor styles. Thus, happy people habitually engage in positive uses of humor and avoid engaging in negative uses of humor in daily life. We also found support for our hypothesis. People high in extraversion, locus of control, self-esteem, and optimism are happier because they engage in positive humor in daily life.

*The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach, Martin Rod. (2007).*

Most relevant aspect of humor for psychological adjustment may be the manner in which people use humor in their social interactions (Martin et al., 2003). Humor is essentially an interpersonal phenomenon that occurs primarily in social contexts and is employed to fulfill a variety of interpersonal functions, including social control, status maintenance, group cohesion, and integration (Martin, 2007) Past research has demonstrated that adaptive humor is positively related with self-esteem ( Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003 [affiliative humor  $\beta = 0.21$ , self-enhancing humor  $\beta = 0.28$ ]; Kuiper, Grimshaw, Leite, & Kirsh, 2004 [affiliative humor  $\beta = 0.23$ , self-enhancing humor  $\beta = 0.27$ ]; Hiranandani & Yue, 2014 [Indian university students: affiliative humor  $\beta = 0.35$ , self-enhancing humor  $\beta = 0.33$ ; Chinese university students: affiliative humor  $\beta = 0.20$ , self-enhancing humor  $\beta = 0.28$ ])[7] The study found that the stable high level of esteem would be associated with positive styles or, unstable high level of self-esteem was related to the injurious use of humor. Individual's who were found to have unstable high self-esteem reported low level of affiliative behavior and high level of aggressive and self-defeating humor style.

Many researches have found that affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles correlated positively with optimism, whereas aggressive and self-defeating humor styles correlated negatively with optimism. Similarly, self-enhancing humor and affiliative humor relate positively to self-esteem and judgments of self-competence. Aggressive and self-defeating humor styles, in contrast, are associated with lower self-esteem, and negative judgments of self-competence. This analysis of humor has been backed up many researchers. (Kuiper, Grimshaw, Leite, & Kirsh, 2004; Lui, 2012; Zeigler-Hill & Besser, 2011).

*"Personality, Humor Styles and Happiness: Happy People Have Positive Humor Styles" Ford, T. E., Lappi, S. K., & Holden, C. J. (2016).*

People who have an affiliative humor style use humor to attain *interpersonal* or social rewards. They use humor to entertain others in order to enrich the quality of social relationships. People who have a self-enhancing humor style use humor to achieve *intrapersonal* rewards, that is, to enhance or maintain positive psychological well-being and distance themselves from adversity. They maintain a humorous outlook on life, coping with difficult circumstances by viewing them from a humorous perspective. Thus, self-enhancing humor is closely related to coping sense of humor (Cann, 2010; Martin, 2003)

Those with an aggressive humor style use humor, not to make interpersonal relationships more rewarding for the self and others, but rather as a means of criticizing or manipulating others. They tease and ridicule others to demonstrate their superiority over others, without concern for others' well-being.

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Finally, it was seen that people who have a self-defeating humor style used fun at their own weaknesses in order to ingratiate themselves to others. They also use humor as a means to avoid confronting problems and dealing with negative feelings (Stieger, Formann, & Burger, 2011). The study showed correlations replicated research showing that happiness is positively correlated with self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles. The correlations between the happy personality traits and happiness were seen, and people reported being happy as they were high in extraversion, personal (internal) control, self-esteem and optimism. Second, the correlational research showed that happiness is positively correlated with self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles, in addition. The Positive humor styles mediated the relationship between each of the four happy personality traits identified by Myers and Diener (1995) and happiness. The findings of the study suggested that people who are high in extraversion, internal locus of control, optimism, and self-esteem have developed adaptive strategies of using humor in daily life, which in turn help make them happy. They experience greater happiness because they are better at finding strategies to regulate their emotions, and the habitual use of positive humor is one of those strategies. Happy people may be adept at using positive humor styles as a means by which they frame or appraise life events to form positive, self-affirming views of the self. Indeed, people protect their psychological well-being by using self-enhancing humor as a means of reframing stressors in a more positive, light-hearted way.

### *Self-esteem*

*“A theory of self-esteem” Alicia D. cast, Peter J. Burke ,*

Self-esteem continues to be one of the most commonly researched concepts in social psychology (Baumeister 1993; Mruk 1995; Wells & Marwell 1976; Wylie 1979). Generally conceptualized as a part of the self-concept, to some self-esteem is one of the most important parts of the self-concept.

The research suggested that self-esteem is an outcome of, and necessary ingredient in, the self-verification process that occurs within groups, maintaining both the individual and the group. Verification of role identities increases an individual's worth-based and efficacy-based self-esteem. The self-esteem built up by self-verification buffers the negative emotions that occur when self-verification is problematic, thus allowing continued interaction and continuity in structural arrangements during periods of disruption and change. Also, the, desire for self-esteem, produced in part through self-verification, stabilizes the group because it motivates individuals to form and maintain relationships that verify identities.

The finding of the present study also suggested something interesting that, it is low efficacy based rather than worth-based self-esteem that appears to motivate individuals to leave relationships. Because it was assumed and usually assumed that failure in this area would be more likely to lead one to leave unaccepting others. It is possible that the collinearity between the two forms of esteem is suppressing the effect, but it is also possible that efficacy-based self-esteem is a more central component of self-esteem than self-worth, as some have suggested (Ervin & Stryker 2001; Sangster & Burke 1993). Alternatively, efficacious behaviors that produce efficacy-based self-esteem may be central to ensuring worth-based self-esteem.

*“The Relations Among Social Media Addiction, Self-Esteem, and Life Satisfaction in University Students” Nazir S. HawiI and Maya Samaha*

In this study the correlation between social media addiction (as measured by SMAQ) and satisfaction with life (as measured by the SwLS) was investigated using a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. There was a zero-order correlation between social media



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addiction and satisfaction with life. The relation between self-esteem and satisfaction with life was investigated using a Pearson product– moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. There was a strong, negative correlation between the two variables  $r = -.57$ ,  $N = 364$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of self-esteem associated with high levels of satisfaction with life. That is, if perceived self-esteem decreases by 1 SD from its mean, satisfaction with life would be expected to decrease by 0.57 SDs from its own mean, holding all other relevant regional connections constant. These results confirmed the hypothesis of the study.

The study found that, University students who scored high on social media addiction reported lower levels of self-esteem compared with students who scored low on social media addiction, which is in congruence with other studies' results (Błachnio et al., 2016; Faraon & Kaipainen, 2014; Schwartz, 2010). It confirmed that, independently from the culture where the study is conducted, it appears that people with lower self-esteem tend to depend on social media more. Furthermore, it was also found that students who used social media with the intention of enhancing their self-image are at risk of not only lowering their self-esteem but also their satisfaction with life as well. The analysis showed that self-esteem is strongly positively associated with satisfaction with life. Research has shown a strong relation between self-esteem and satisfaction with life. A study that included more than 13,000 students from 31 nations showed that self-esteem and life satisfaction correlated .47 (Diener & Diener, 2009).

*Measures of self-esteem. Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes, 2010*  
Blascovich, J., Tomaka, J., Robinson, J. P., Shaver, P. R., & Wrightsman, L.S.

It was suggested by many researchers that individuals are motivated to maintain or enhance self-esteem partially through the establishment and maintenance of opportunity structures where self-meanings are verified and esteem is enhanced. Thus, individuals should be less likely to leave relationships that verify identities and more likely to leave relationships when their self-esteem is not maintained through self-verification. Results of a logistic regression of separation/divorce on self-verification, the esteem components, and emotional reactions were presented. The more identities are verified, the less likely couples are to divorce or separate (the odds drop 40% for every standard deviation increase in self-verification), while those with lower efficacy-based self-esteem (though not worth-based esteem) are more likely to divorce or separate (again, the odds drop about 40% for every standard deviation increase in efficacy) independently of their self-verification status. The fact that self-esteem and self-verification are both significantly related to the stability of the relationship suggests that both are important to the maintenance of relationships. Self-esteem operates as a type of personal resource (particularly efficacy-based) that protects individuals from these experiences, allowing individuals to remain engaged in the situation while they either find new ways of verifying their identities or identity standards adjust to new levels in the negotiation process.

*“A Study of Self Esteem and Adjustment among Students” Sheetal Yadav, S. K. Srivastava*  
This Indian study revealed that there is significant difference was found between hosteller students and non hosteller students on self esteem. The non hosteller students self esteem is higher than hosteller students. There was a significant difference was found between hosteller students and non hosteller students on adjustment. The non hosteller student's adjustment is higher than hosteller students. There is significant positive relationship between self esteem and adjustment among students.

The study was backed up with literatures like, Mishra (2017) examined the self esteem and happiness level of hosteller and non hosteller students. The total sample was 120 students

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(60 were hosteller and 60 were non hosteller students). The result revealed that self esteem had no significant impact on hosteller and non hosteller students. But hosteller students were found better self esteem than non hosteller students. Hosteller students were found to be happier than non hosteller students. Singh (2016) examined the impact of social environment on school students and find out the positive or negative effect of home environment on self concept of school students. The total sample was 200 (100 were hosteller and 100 were non hosteller) school students. The result revealed that non hosteller students has better self concept as compared to hosteller students.

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*“The Dark Side of Humor: DSM-5 Pathological Personality Traits and Humor Styles”* Zeigler-Hill, V., McCabe, G. A., & Vrabel, J. K. (2016).

In another study, the authors wanted to determine whether pathological personality traits were also associated with humor styles. They examined the associations between the pathological personality traits captured by the Personality Inventory for the DSM-5 (PID-5) and humor styles in a sample of college students. Results were that Negative affectivity and detachment were negatively associated with the affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles. Antagonism was positively associated with the aggressive humor style but negatively associated with the affiliative humor style. Disinhibition was positively associated with the aggressive humor style, whereas disinhibition and psychoticism were both positively associated with the self-defeating humor style. Discussion of the paper focused on the implications of these findings and how they can expand our understanding of the connections between the darker aspects of personality and humor.

*“Humor styles, self-esteem, and subjective happiness”*. ,Yue, X. D., Liu, K. W., Jiang, F., & Hiranandani, N. A. 2014

This study examined how humor styles could mediate the effect of self-esteem on subjective happiness. 227 Hong Kong undergraduate students completed the Humor Styles Questionnaire, the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, and the Subjective Happiness Scale. Results showed adaptive humor styles (affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor) significantly predicted self-esteem and subjective happiness and mediated the relationship between self-esteem and subjective happiness. Maladaptive humor styles (aggressive humor and self-defeating humor) did not strongly predict self-esteem or subjective happiness. The mediation effects of humor styles found in the present research provided useful suggestions for future studies.

*“Harmony and Distress: Humor, Culture, and Psychological Well-Being in South Korean Organizations.”* Kim, H. S., & Plester, B. A. (2019).”

Humor is often seen as a positive phenomenon within the organizational context, helping to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships between organizational members (Cooper, 2008), dissolve unproductive thinking patterns (Minsky, 1980), improve problem solving techniques, and increase creativity (Isen et al., 1987).Humor is a highly contextual and subjective phenomenon that may be interpreted differently by individuals and can create unintended and unexpected workplace outcomes that impact the psychological well-being of individuals.

Both light and dark forms of humor may help individuals to relieve stress and tension. A Freudian notion of humor suggests that people use humor to relieve emotions and desires that may be considered antisocial (Freud, 1960). By using humor as a mechanism to relieve strong feelings (such as anger) people may safely release internal tensions while still observing the social norms and behavior. Therefore, humor helps to reduce stress and helps people to manage

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their psychological well-being (Martin et al., 2009). High levels of humor are associated with a more positive and self-protective stance when individuals experience stress, and humor helps people to respond more positively to both positive and negative life events, enhancing their psychological well-being (Martin et al., 2009; Papousek, 2018).

Light forms of humor such as Crawford and Caltabiano's (2011) experimental study suggests that humor helps to improve individuals' self-efficacy, positive affect, optimism, and perceptions of control, while decreasing anxiety, depression, and perceived stress, to enhance the overall psychological well-being of individuals. Erickson and Feldstein (2007) also suggest that humor may help individuals to cope and relieve psychological distress, to maintain a clinically healthy state of well-being. However, humor may not always create *positive* affects for health and emotional well-being.

The participants in the study suggested that humor may help to release stress and tension. However, many of the research participants in lower hierarchical positions also suggested that humor may also lead to negative emotional effects such as hurt feelings and anxiety. It is important to note that instances of humor can have both light and dark aspects at the same time. For example, a superior may make a joke that many of the subordinates enjoy and a collective good feeling may be created. However, one subordinate may find the humor offensive and/or insulting and therefore may experience psychological distress. Adding to this distress is the need to either smile or remain quiet, but overall to accept the humor in the interests of collective harmony.

This showed that humor is experienced differently according to the relative hierarchical differences between the work colleagues. The experience of stress creation or relief through humor may differ according to the hierarchical dynamic determined by organizational position, age, and other demographic factors.

*Positive and negative self-worth beliefs and evaluative standards.*, Leite, C., & Kuiper, N. A. (2010). The negative and positive self-evaluative standards of the self-schema model of emotion were significantly predictive of psychological well-being (as indexed by social self-esteem and depression). Past humor researches showed that, the two adaptive humor styles (i.e., affiliative, self-enhancing) were associated with higher levels of social self-esteem and reduced depression. For self-defeating humor, we found the opposite pattern. Last, the self-evaluative standards in the self-schema model were also predictive of these three humor styles. In particular, individuals who endorsed more positive self-evaluative standards displayed significantly higher levels of affiliative and self-enhancing humor and lower levels of self-defeating humor. In contrast, those individuals with more negative self-evaluative standards displayed higher levels of self-defeating humor and lower levels of both adaptive humor styles. Affiliative humor Self enhancing humor Negative self-evaluative standards Depression Self defeating humor. The Journal of Psychology In the conceptual model underlying our approach, humor styles are considered to be one relatively common set of behavioral tendencies that can be expressed in day-to-day interactions and encounters (Cann et al., 2008). These humorous behaviors then mediated between self-evaluative standards and wellbeing. For example, those individuals who endorsed more positive self-evaluative standards have a more life-affirming approach to themselves, the world, and those around them (Hillson, 1997).

The study also found greater endorsement of negative self-evaluative standards was associated with the increased use of self-defeating humor, which, in turn, led to lower levels of social self-esteem. The greater use of self-defeating humor leads to more social rejection by others,

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which ultimately results in poorer psychological well-being, as is evident by lower levels of social self-esteem.

The classic psychodynamic model of humor suggested that people primarily used humor as a defense mechanism to deal with feelings of anxiety and to express unconscious desires (e.g., Freud, 1928), whereas later theorists suggested that humor served a variety of other functions, including perspective-taking (e.g., Allport, 1961; Maslow, 1954). Defense mechanisms are behaviors people use to separate themselves from unpleasant events, actions, or thoughts. They use it as an escape from their thoughts, situation, environment. Higher self-esteem was predicted by the greater use of adaptive humor styles in the present sample. This partially confirms previous findings that students with higher self-esteem tended to use more adaptive humor (Martin, et al., 2003; Hiranandani & Yue, 2014)

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### *Objectives*

The aim of this study is to assess or measure relationship between humor styles and self-esteem among young adults.

#### *Hypothesis*

- There will be positive correlation between Affiliative humor style and Self-esteem among young adults.
- There will be negative correlation between Aggressive humor style and Self-esteem.

#### **Theoretical Definition**

- *Humor styles* are a subject of research in the field of personality psychology that focuses on the ways in which individuals differ in their use of humor. People of all ages and cultures respond to humor, but their use of it can vary greatly. There are multiple factors, such as culture, age, and political orientation, that play a role in determining what people find humorous. Although humor styles can be somewhat variable depending on social context, they tend to be a relatively stable personality characteristic among individuals
- *Self-esteem*- In the mid-1960s, social psychologist Morris Rosenberg defined self-esteem as a feeling of self-worth and developed the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES), which became the most-widely used scale to measure self-esteem in the social sciences.

#### **Methodology**

##### *Variables*

- Humor styles
- Self-esteem

##### *Research design*

Correlational study was done using random sampling. This study was conducted on males and females between the age range of 18-25.

##### *Samples*

The sample comprised of 75 people lying within the age group of 18 to 25 years. The sample was selected at random and majority of the population comprised of Indian university students. Participants were invited to participate in this study on a voluntary basis.

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### Tools

*Humor Styles Questionnaire* (HSQ; Martin et al., 2003).

The HSQ consists of 32 items measuring four humour styles. Sample items are as follows- “I enjoy making people laugh” (affiliative style), “Even when I’m by myself, I’m often amused by the absurdities of life” (self-enhancing style), “If I don’t like someone, I often use humor or teasing to put them down” (aggressive style), and “I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should” (self-defeating style). The instrument uses a seven-point Likert scale from “totally disagree” (1) to “totally agree” (7).

*Reliability* of the four scales is demonstrated by internal consistencies of .77 to .81, test-retest reliabilities of .80 to .85. Evidence of *validity* includes theoretically meaningful differential correlations with other measures of sense of humor, self-esteem, psychological well-being, hostility, coping, intimacy, social support, relationship satisfaction, five-factor model of personality, etc. (Martin, R. A., Puhlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., & Weir, K. (2003). Individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being: Development of the Humor Styles Questionnaire. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37, 48-75.)

*Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale* (also called the RSE and sometimes the SES). This scale was developed by Rosenberg and presented in his 1965 book *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*.

The scale contains 10 items rated on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Some of the items are reverse-scored, and the total score can be calculated by summing up the total points for an overall measure of self-esteem. *Reliability*: Internal consistency for the RSE range from 0.77 to 0.88. Test-retest reliability for the RSE range from 0.82 to 0.85 *Validity*: Criterion validity = 0.55 Construct validity = correlated with anxiety (- 0.64), depression (- 0.54), and anomie (- 0.43). (Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.)

### Procedure

Informed consent was obtained from all the respondents before collecting the data. Two questionnaires regarding the humor style and self-esteem were administered to them along with the socio-demographic data sheet. The scale was administered to the participants through Google Forms. The respondents were given assurance based on the ethical guidelines of this study as well. 10-15mins.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### Results

The result (Table1) indicated significant use of self-enhancing humor style and affiliative humor style then aggressive and self-defeative humor style among the participants.

*Table1- Mean and Standard deviation for the four different humor styles*

		Affiliative	Aggressive	Self-enhancing	Self-defeative
N	Valid	75	75	75	74
	Missing	15	15	15	16
Mean		31.43	26.69	33.64	26.92
Std. Deviation		5.866	6.562	7.542	8.064

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

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Table 2 gives an overview about the relationship between affiliative humor style and self-esteem. There was significant positive correlation between these two variables. There was a moderate correlation between the two variables. ( $r=$ )

**Table 2- Correlation values between affiliative humor and self-esteem**

		Affiliative	Self-esteem
Affiliative	Pearson Correlation	1	.501**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	75	75
Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	.501**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	75	75

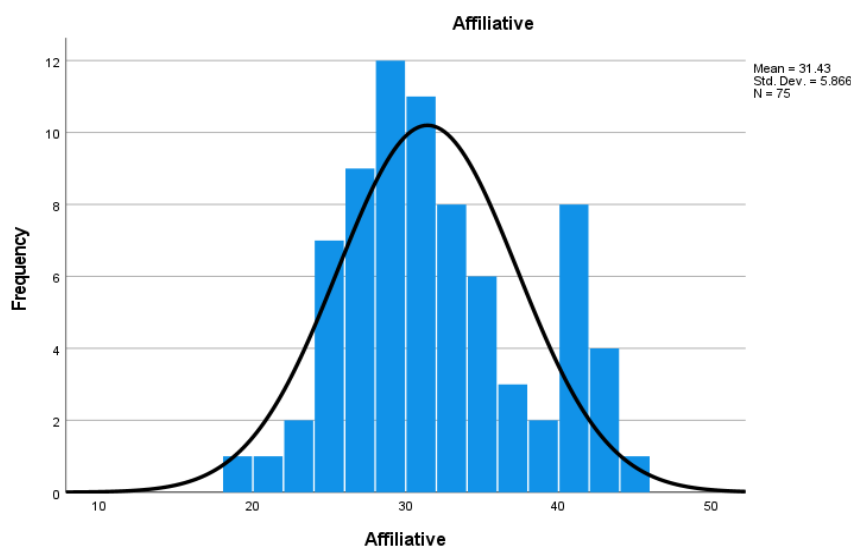
\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 gives an overview about the relationship between Aggressive humor style and self-esteem. It was found that there was significant negative correlation between aggressive humor and self-esteem. The results supported the second hypothesis if the present paper. There was low-correlation between the two variables.

**Table3- Correlation values between aggressive humor and self-esteem**

		Self-esteem	Aggressive
Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	1	-.208
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.074
	N	75	75
Aggressive	Pearson Correlation	-.208	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.074	
	N	75	75

### Distribution of the responses



**Figure 1- Distribution of responses on Affiliative Humor Style**

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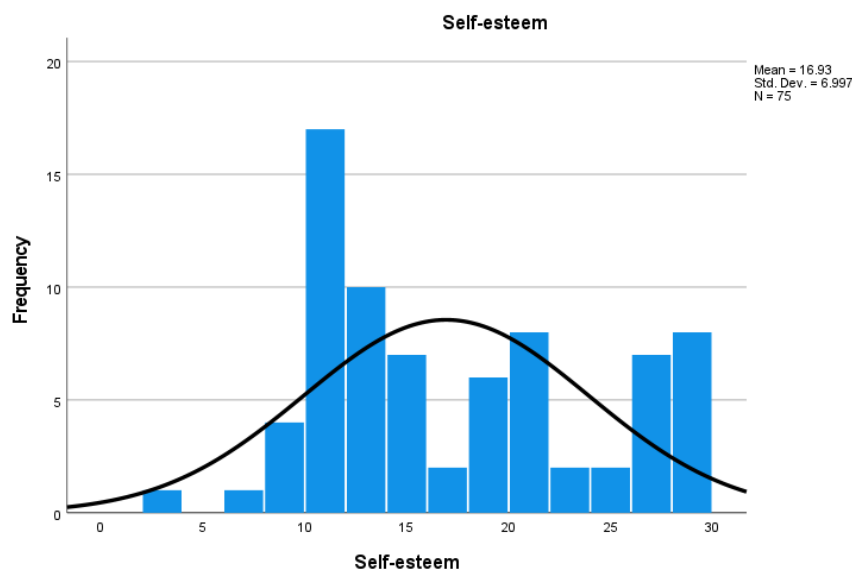
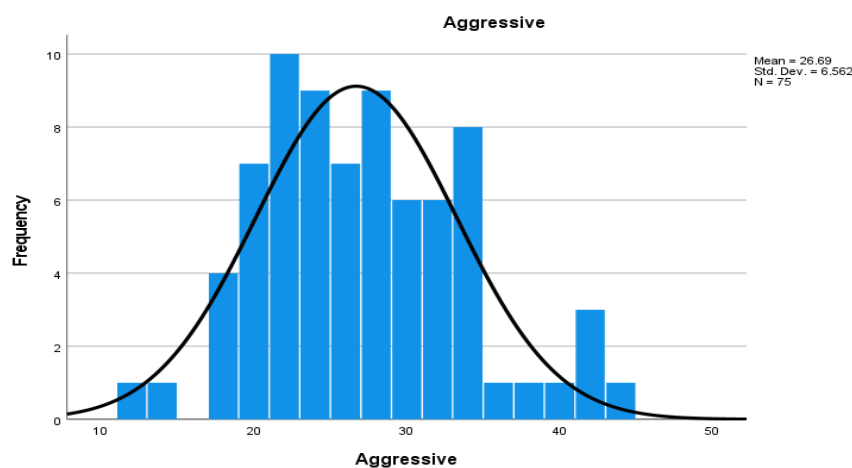


Figure 2- Distribution of Self-esteem



## DISCUSSIONS

The present study shows that self-esteem was positively associated with affiliative humor and negatively associated with aggressive humor. Higher self-esteem was predicted by the greater use of adaptive humor styles in the present samples. This partially confirms previous findings that students with higher self-esteem tended to use more adaptive humor (Martin, et al., 2003; Hiranandani & Yue, 2014). From study we can understand that there was a significant positive relationship between affiliative humor and self-esteem. There was significant negative correlation between aggressive humor and self-esteem. There was no significant positive or negative correlation. There have been studies saying that positive humor styles such as affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor have a positive relation with self-esteem and negative humor styles such as aggressive humor and self-defeating humor have a negative relation with emotional intelligence (Karahan et al., 2019; Reisoglu & Yazici, 2017). The results supported both the hypothesis of the present paper.

## SUMMARY

### Conclusion

The result of the study revealed that adaptive style of humor is positively correlated to self-esteem of an individual. Here the results (Table 2) have proved the hypothesis of the paper i.e.- Affiliative humor style will be positively correlated to self-esteem. It was also seen that

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maladaptive humor style was found negatively correlated to self-esteem. This again proved the second hypothesis i.e. –Aggressive humor style is negatively correlated to self-esteem. These results suggest Adaptive humor style (affiliative and self-enhancing) would help increase in self-concept like self-esteem in the individual.

### *Limitations*

- First of all, the present sample represents only people from age 18-25 in India, so generalization to other age groups of the population.
- The present study used self-report measures; participants might have responded in a socially desirable way. Therefore, collecting behavioral data are suggested for future studies.
- Sample size was not large enough. A bigger sample size might be more reliable and could have brought slightly different results.
- Time was a major constraint in the study.

### *Suggestions & Further implication*

The research can be replicated in other age-groups or can also be used to explore how humor styles and self-esteem manifest themselves in different cultures, and other demographic aspects. There is a dearth of literature bridging the so-called research-practice gap. It is suggested, further research is needed in this topic, to bridge the gap. As it is evident, that humor plays a major role in an individuals life today, starting from using it as a defense mechanism to using it to pick people.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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