

Empathy and Life Satisfaction Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to determine the level of empathy and life satisfaction among young adults. Sample of 100 young adults (50=males, 50=females) was taken from residents of Bangalore. The study aimed to check the significant relationship between empathy and life satisfaction among young adults and as well as to find out the significance difference in empathy and life satisfaction based on gender. The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire and The Satisfaction with Life Scale were used. The data were analyzed using different statistical tools such as the t- test and Pearson's correlation. Findings revealed positive correlation between empathy and life satisfaction and significant difference in empathy among males and females. The study concluded that empathy might increase life satisfaction among young adults.

Keywords: *Empathy, Life Satisfaction, Young Adults*

The years from late adolescence to early adulthood are years of great transformation and significance for the majority of young people in industrialized nations. A lot of young individuals complete their education and training at this period, laying the groundwork for their future professional success and earnings on Work, Family, and Citizenship. Many people are going through a period of constant transition as they explore other options for love, employment, and worldviews. By the end of this time, in their late 20s, the majority of people have made decisions that will affect them for the rest of their lives. More focus is being paid to the critical period between adolescence and adulthood since how this psychological and social transition is managed might affect both present and future welfare. (Arnett, 2000).

Titchener coined the term “empathy” 100 years ago by an adaptation of the German word *Einfühlung* (Wispé, 1986). Colman (2009) defines empathy as “the capacity to understand and enter into another person’s feelings and emotions or to experience something from the other person’s point of view.”

Empathy can be seen as a multifaceted concept that involves various practices and experiences. These practices may differ depending on the therapist's orientation and the objectives they seek to achieve. A concise yet helpful explanation of empathy is provided by Barrett Lennard's (1981) notion, which specifies three unique components and views. These

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components include the client's experience ("received empathy"), the observer's perspective ("expressed empathy"), and the therapist's own experience ("empathic resonance"). They combine to provide a sequential process model for understanding empathy.

The first finding of so-called "mirror neurons" in the motor cortex of macaque monkeys has led to a greater understanding of human empathy due to research exploring the brain correlates of several component subprocesses of empathy (Decety & Ickes, 2009). As a result, there is growing agreement that it is composed of the following three main neuroanatomically based subprocesses: (a) an emotional simulation process that replicates the emotional components of the other's bodily experience by activating parts of the limbic system and elsewhere in the brain (b) a conceptual, perspective-taking process that is localised in the prefrontal and temporal cortex; and (c) an emotion-regulation process that reduces personal distress in response to the other's pain or discomfort, enabling the mobilisation of compassion and assisting in being present. (Elliott et al., 2011)

Life satisfaction is a judgmental and cognitive process in which individuals assess the merits of their lives in light of a number of factors. Life satisfaction is the subjective assessment of one's overall quality of life, including all parts of it or just certain facets, such as family and educational experiences; it is a reflection of the harmony between one's goals and their current circumstances. In other words, the wider the gap between an individual's level of wishes and their current situation, the lower their level of satisfaction. Life satisfaction is defined as the cognitive aspect of subjective well-being and refers to people's global evaluation of the quality of their life. (Nemati & Maralani, 2016)

Individualists tend to base their assessments of life satisfaction more on their own feelings, whereas collectivists tend to place more weight on society and the opinions of others. The connections with health behavior may differ if the sources of life pleasure are different. (Grant et al., 2009).

Menci and May conducted an investigation on the effects of proximity and empathy on ethical decision-making. The study aimed to explore the impact of consequences and proximity types on ethical decision-making, as well as empathy's influence. The researchers administered a vignette and questionnaire on carpal tunnel syndrome to human resource management professionals. The results indicated significant relationships between magnitude of consequences and various types of evaluation and empathy. Additionally, physical and cognitive empathy moderated the relationships between proximity, consequences, and evaluation.

In a study on Empathy and Altruism, Dennis Krebs investigated the psycho-physiological responses of 60 subjects as they observed a performer play a roulette game. The study found that subjects who observed a performer who ostensibly experienced pleasure and pain exhibited greater psychophysiological reactions than those who did not. The findings suggested that empathic responses play a crucial role in determining altruistic behavior, providing insights into century-old questions about human nature (Krebs, 1975)

Nasello et al. (2021) investigated whether empathy predicts decision-making in everyday trolley-like problems. The researchers created two scenarios and tested 255 participants. Results showed that both men and women tend to make more utilitarian choices with low penalties in the no-direct-impact scenario, but women make more utilitarian choices than men in the direct-impact scenario. Men's affective empathy negatively correlated with utilitarian

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choices in the no-direct-impact scenario, while lower levels of affective empathy predicted utilitarian choices differently for men and women in the direct-impact scenario. Finally, the study found that the attribution of penalties increased. These findings highlight the role of scenarios, gender, and empathy in predicting utilitarian choices in the Trolley Problem.

A Cross-Sectional Study on the Role of Self-Reflection, Self-Esteem, and Empathy on Happiness Index in Nursing Students was conducted by Kim Jimée & Hong Sung-Kyung (2016) The objective of this study was to examine the levels of self-reflection, self-esteem, and empathy in nursing students and identify the factors that influence their happiness index. The study found that self-understanding, self-esteem, and economic status were significant factors in predicting happiness index, accounting for 42% of the explained variance. The findings suggested that intervention strategies to enhance the happiness index in nursing students should focus on improving self-understanding, self-esteem, and economic status.

Mehpare and Mehmet Tahir (2018) conducted a study on Examining Relationships Among Well-being, Leisure Satisfaction, Life Satisfaction, and Happiness. The relationship between happiness, life satisfaction, leisure satisfaction, and well-being is investigated in this study. Data from 1230 respondents in Turkey were gathered, and the findings revealed a strong correlation between these characteristics. The research backs up the idea that wellbeing is a predicate that directly influences leisure time and life satisfaction and indirectly influences happiness. The results imply that life satisfaction and leisure satisfaction modulate the effects of national well-being on happiness as well as the aspects of happiness. The study's findings are in line with other empirical investigations, underscoring the significance of taking into account a variety of factors that affect happiness.

Heller et al. (2006) argues that it is necessary to examine the within-individual variation in life satisfaction, drawing from the Cognitive Affective Personality System. The authors investigated the causes, effects, and scope of intra-individual variance in life satisfaction by conducting a diary research on 76 married people who were in full-time employment. In comparison to other personal assessments evaluated using a state method, the study indicated that life satisfaction showed a large level of within-individual variance, although less so than main mood dimensions. The study also discovered that variations in life happiness were correlated with variations in marital and work satisfaction. The findings, however, did not confirm the hypothesis that neuroticism moderates these correlations. The study also showed evidence in favour of the delayed effect of life satisfaction on domain satisfaction ratings the following day. Overall, the study emphasized the significance of systematic within-subject variance in life satisfaction.

(Heydari, 2012) reviewed the data on happiness, resiliency, and life satisfaction in Iran and other cultures reveals that these factors influence one another in mutually beneficial ways. For instance, research on and comparison of the relationship between life quality, hope, and happiness and life satisfaction among regular people and war veterans in Iran shows that these factors can significantly predict life satisfaction in both regular people and the wives of war veterans.

METHOD

Objectives

- To identify if there is a significant difference in the level of empathy and life satisfaction between males and females.

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- To determine the relationship between empathy and life satisfaction among young adults.

Hypothesis

H₀1: There is no significant differences in the level of empathy and life satisfaction among males and females.

H₀2: There is no significant relationship between the level of empathy and life satisfaction among young adults.

Research design

The present research was descriptive in nature. Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. Among the different methods that are used in the descriptive research, the survey (questionnaire) method was used for the present study. A survey is an attempt to collect the data from members of the population with respect to one or more variable.

Sample

The sample consist of 100 participants, out of which 50 (50%) were females and 50 (50%) males. The mean age of participants ranged from 18-25 years. The participants were the residents of Bangalore.

Inclusion criteria

- The age group of participants ranged from 18-25 years.
- Young adults who are currently residing in Bangalore
- Both male and female were included in the sample.

Exclusion criteria

- Physically and mentally challenged groups of people coming under this age group were excluded from the study.
- Those people who were not fluent in English were excluded from the study.

Ethical considerations

- No one was harmed during this study.
- Informed consent was obtained from the participants and they had complete freedom to quit from the study at any point.
- All the information provided was maintained with confidentiality.

Instruments

In this study, to measure empathy and life satisfaction the following tools were used:

The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire

The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire is a self-report measure used to assess an individual's ability to empathize with others. The questionnaire was developed by Jolliffe and Farrington in 2006. This questionnaire contains 16 items. 8 items are positively worded and remaining 8 items are negatively worded. This questionnaire has reliability 0.86 and the validity is strongly convergent. Positively worded items 1,3,5,6,8,9,13,16 .The following are negatively worded items are reverse scored: 2,4,7,10,11,12,14,15. Scoring patterns are:

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Never = 0, rarely = 1, Sometimes = 2, Often = 3, Always = 4. Higher scores indicate high levels of empathy while scores below 45 indicate below average empathy levels.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale

The SWLS is a brief 5-item questionnaire used to assess overall cognitive judgments of life satisfaction. Respondents often answer on a Likert scale, which normally only takes few minutes to complete. It was developed by Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The total score range between 5 and 35. Higher score indicates higher life satisfaction. Scoring patterns are: strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, slightly disagree=3, neither agree or disagree=4, slightly agree=5, agree=6, strongly agree=7. The scale has very good internal consistency, with an alpha of 0.87 and excellent test-retest reliability, with correlation of 0.82.

Procedure

The aim of the study is to find out the level of empathy and life satisfaction among young adults in Bangalore. A total of 100 participants took part in the study. The study followed a descriptive research design. Survey method was used and data was collected through questionnaires distributed through Google forms. The participants were aged between 18-25 and all were from different districts in Kerala. Informed consent, debriefing and voluntary participation were ensured. The participants were ensured of the confidentiality of the responses they given.

Statistical analysis

The data collected were analysed using the following statistical tests. The statistical analyses such as Student's t-test and Pearson's Correlation coefficient were carried out using the SPSS. Microsoft word and Microsoft excel were used to generate tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and t value in the level of empathy and life satisfaction between males and females

Variables	Males (N=50)		Females (N=50)		t value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Empathy	39.80	7.754	42.24	10.456	-1.325
Life satisfaction	23.10	7.416	22.32	7.161	0.535

SD: Standard Deviation

Table 1 indicates the mean, standard deviation, and t value among the level of empathy and life satisfaction between males and females.

Here, we can see that the mean score for empathy was 42.24 for women and 39.80 for men, with a standard deviation of 7.754 and 10.456 respectively. According to the t-value of -1.325, it can be interpreted that there is a significant difference in the empathy scores of male and female.

For life satisfaction, males had a mean score of 23.10 and a standard deviation of 7.416, while females had a mean score of 22.32 and a standard deviation of 7.161. The t-value of 0.535 indicates that there is no significant difference in the life satisfaction levels of males and females.

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Stotland and colleagues (1978) reported that empathy is typically found to be higher in women than in men, particularly on self-report measures (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). They also found that women had higher empathy than men. Furthermore, male and female did not differ on fantasy empathy. These findings support the possibility that men who choose helping professions may be more empathic than men in general.

Table 2: Correlation between empathy and life satisfaction among Young adults

		Life satisfaction
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	0.205
	Sig.(2 tailed)	0.804
	N	100

Table show that there is no significant relationship between life satisfaction and empathy. There is a positive correlation (0.205) between empathy and life satisfaction. However, the p-value (Sig.) is quite high (0.804), indicating that the result is not statistically significant. Coll et al., (2020) in his study suggested that cognitive empathy, emotional clarity, and emotional restoration are crucial self-esteem prediction factors. Meanwhile, the emotional clarity and emotional healing aspects as well as self-esteem strongly predict life satisfaction. According to the study, fostering emotional intelligence and empathy might increase life happiness and self-esteem.

Major findings

- i. There is a significant difference in the level of empathy and life among males and females.
- ii. There is no significant difference in life satisfaction among males and females.
- iii. There is no significant relationship in empathy and life satisfaction among young adults.

Limitation and suggestion

- The study only included participants from Bangalore. Hence, the study could have been done on a wider scale with sample involving people from all states of India as well as from individuals representing each state. Hence, a wider study could have provided more credibility to the results as well as in the generalization of the findings.
- The study excluded people who are not fluent in English language.
- The Satisfaction with Life Scale (1985) has only five items. It might not be accurate in assessing all the aspects of life satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The research concluded that there is no significant relationship between empathy and life satisfaction. There is significant difference in empathy among males and females, but there is no significant difference in life satisfaction among gender. The study is very relevant since empathy and life satisfaction which is closely related to factors such as happiness, emotional intelligence, self-esteem and resilience.

Several factors might have influenced the study such as the study only included participants from Bangalore and if the sample size was higher the result could have been more reliable.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) have disclosed no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

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