

The Interplay of Capitalist and Political Attitudes in the Development of Nihilistic Perspectives: Implications for Mental Health in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the interplay between capitalist and political attitudes in shaping nihilistic perspectives among young adults and its implications for mental health. Quantitative analysis employing the Existential Nihilism Scale (ENS), Political Attitudes Questionnaire (PAQ), Beliefs about Social Mobility Scale (BSMS), and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ28) was conducted. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive associations between ENS and GHQ28 ($r = 0.517$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that as existential nihilistic views increase, general health perceptions tend to improve. Regression analysis further elucidated these relationships, demonstrating that ENS had the strongest positive impact on GHQ28 ($\beta = 0.470$, $p < 0.001$), followed by PAQ and BSMS, though the effects of the latter two were weaker and non-significant. These findings suggest that capitalist and political beliefs influence nihilistic perspectives, affecting mental well-being among young adults.

Keywords: *Capitalist Attitudes, Political Attitudes, Nihilistic Perspectives, Mental Health, Young Adults*

In contemporary society, the interplay between capitalist ideologies, political attitudes, and existential perspectives has emerged as a focal point of inquiry, particularly concerning its implications for mental health among young adults. Capitalism, as an economic system, champions individualism, competition, and material success. Simultaneously, political attitudes shape perceptions of societal structures, justice, and opportunities for advancement. This interaction intersects with existential concerns, notably existential nihilism, which questions life's inherent meaning or purpose.

Nihilism, a philosophical stance, contends that life lacks inherent meaning, purpose, or value. It posits that life is devoid of objective meaning or intrinsic worth. This philosophy holds that traditional beliefs and moral principles are baseless constructs, often resulting in a sense of existential despair or absurdity. Friedrich Nietzsche's work, particularly "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" and "The Will to Power," is seminal in exploring nihilistic themes. Additionally, Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel "Notes from Underground" delves into the psychological implications of nihilism.

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Existential nihilism is a philosophical position that asserts life lacks inherent meaning or purpose, emphasizing the individual's responsibility to create their own significance (Camus, 1942). It suggests that traditional beliefs and societal constructs are ultimately meaningless in the face of existential questioning (Nietzsche, 1883). This viewpoint is exemplified in the works of existentialist philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, particularly in Sartre's "Being and Nothingness" and Camus' "The Myth of Sisyphus". These texts explore the existential angst stemming from the recognition of life's inherent absurdity and the absence of inherent meaning.

Postmodernists such as Lyotard and Foucault extend this discourse, questioning grand narratives and truth. Psychoanalytic theory, with Freud's death drive and Frankl's existential analysis, delves into the psychological roots of nihilism. Cultural critiques by Adorno and Horkheimer examine how capitalist systems erode authentic meaning. Philosophical responses vary from affirming subjective meaning to embracing existential freedom. These diverse perspectives illuminate the complex nature of existential nihilism and its profound implications for human existence, encompassing philosophical, psychological, and cultural dimensions.

Understanding the intricate interplay among capitalist values, political attitudes, and existential nihilism is vital for comprehending their collective impact on mental health, particularly among young adults. The transition from adolescence to adulthood signifies a pivotal developmental stage characterized by identity exploration, autonomy, and the formation of worldviews. During this period, individuals often grapple with existential questions about life's meaning and their societal roles, all while contending with societal pressures to conform to capitalist ideals of success.

Research suggests that this developmental phase provides fertile ground for the exploration of existential concerns. According to Baumeister (1991), individuals transitioning to adulthood frequently confront existential questions, wrestling with the concept of life's ultimate purpose. Similarly, Yalom (1980) posits that the process of identity formation during this stage involves a quest for meaning and an endeavor to establish one's place in the world, potentially leading individuals to confront existential nihilism. Moreover, societal expectations, particularly those rooted in capitalist values, significantly shape young adults' experiences. The emphasis on material success and achievement within capitalist societies can heighten existential tensions by promoting a narrow definition of fulfillment centered around wealth and status. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) argue that income inequality, a hallmark of capitalism, contributes to worsened mental health outcomes within societies. Additionally, Stuckler and Basu (2013) demonstrate how economic policies rooted in capitalism, such as austerity measures, can exacerbate mental health challenges among populations. Young adults may find themselves torn between adhering to these societal ideals and seeking deeper existential fulfillment.

Political attitudes further influence individuals' responses to existential questions and societal pressures. Research by Jetten, Haslam, and Haslam (2012) suggests that individuals with progressive or egalitarian political beliefs may seek alternative sources of meaning, such as social justice or community engagement, in response to existential concerns. Conversely, those with conservative or libertarian leanings may prioritize individual autonomy and self-reliance, potentially exacerbating feelings of existential isolation (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009).

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As this study adopts a quantitative survey approach, its aim is to glean insights from the results rather than proposing interventions directly. By examining these dynamics through a quantitative lens and analyzing the data collected, this research seeks to uncover the nuanced relationships among capitalist values, political attitudes, existential nihilism, and mental well-being among young adults. Through empirical investigation, the study aims to shed light on how these factors interact and influence one another, potentially offering valuable insights for future interventions aimed at promoting holistic well-being among young adults.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pooley (2023), discussed Nietzsche, Nihilism and the Crisis of Piety. This essay offers an alternative perspective on Nietzsche's exploration of nihilism by comparing his ideas with those of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, a key figure in the development of modern nihilism. Despite Nietzsche's silence on Jacobi, this analysis suggests that Nietzsche's treatment of nihilism indirectly addresses Jacobi's concerns, particularly regarding the crisis of piety. Additionally, the essay contextualizes Nietzsche's examination of nihilism within significant historical events, such as the 1881 assassination of Russian Tsar Alexander II. It also briefly outlines the various historical and literary sources that shaped Nietzsche's conception of nihilism.

Bayındır (2023), deliberates upon nihilism's philosophical history post-Nietzsche, emphasizing its transcendence beyond philosophy alone. It underscores the necessity of considering various domains, including art, science, politics, ethics, and spirituality, in overcoming nihilism. Differential ontologies are highlighted for their role in re-problematizing nihilism and identifying its oppressive facets. Beyond philosophical discourse, the article discusses nihilism's pervasive influence and the post-continental shift in philosophy as a lens for understanding its profound implications.

Lehner and Restrepo (2023), examine the philosophical perspectives of Nishitani, Jonas, and Brassier regarding nihilism, normativity, and human-nature relationships. Nishitani argues for the existence of personal qualities in entities and advocates for an ecological imperative. Jonas emphasizes the explanatory significance of biological facts and the inclusion of normative phenomena independent of human subjectivity. Brassier defends nihilism, rejecting normativity in the natural world. The essay proposes exploring normativity in non-anthropocentric ways and fostering an ecological imperative.

Mocombe (2023), delves into the pathologies associated with modernity and presents libertarian communism as a potential solution. It scrutinizes the construction of society and individual agency within power dynamics, interpellation, and socialization processes. Additionally, it investigates the interplay between neoliberalism and identity politics within the framework of globalization. The author contends that adopting an anti-humanist perspective aligned with libertarian communism could effectively tackle the afflictions stemming from modernity.

Crome (2022), reviewed Jean-François Lyotard's "Libidinal Economy," emphasizing its performative power, seductive qualities, and its departure from traditional critique. The article delves into the historical background, reception, and its significance in addressing nihilism and capitalism. Specifically, it discusses the disruption of representational theater, capitalism's affective dimension, and the portrayal of desire in the text. Furthermore, it underscores the coherence of Lyotard's work and its enduring relevance.

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Querido (2021), reviewed Nolen Gertz's "Nihilism", which delves into various conceptions and misconceptions of nihilism, tracing its intellectual history from Socrates to Nietzsche. The book establishes parallels and differences with pessimism, cynicism, and apathy, while examining four ways of thinking about nihilism. It also explores the relationship between technology and nihilism, offering insightful perspectives on the conservative nature of technological progress and the concept of fighting passive nihilism with active nihilism.

Visone (2019), talked about Facing Nihilism with a Camusian Route to reshape Politics. The discussed political philosophy emphasizes the importance of preserving human dignity and justice within political actions. The erosion of democratic solutions in favor of technical and intergovernmental ones has led to hostility, populism, and isolationism. Drawing inspiration from Camus, the philosophy of revolt warns against the dangers of destructive nihilism and revolution if not managed carefully. It advocates for a balance between pragmatism and maintaining the creative reality of humanity in political decision-making.

Draskovic et al. (2019), analyzed negative phenomena, processes, and tendencies in the crisis environment of transition countries in Southeast Europe (SEE). The article examines the formation and maintenance of an institutionally monistic order, termed institutional nihilism, which encompasses various destructive elements. The aim is to highlight the root causes and consequences of systemic and institutional failures, focusing on the dominance of politics over the economy and society. Through the verification of hypotheses, it is concluded that institutional nihilism significantly impedes the successful transition of SEE countries from socialism.

Veit (2018), contemplates existential nihilism, focusing on how philosophers such as Nietzsche and Camus confront the inherent meaninglessness of life. The paper delves into the absurdity of existence and humanity's quest for purpose in a universe seemingly indifferent to our struggles. Moreover, it examines contemporary influences from popular culture, such as "Bojack Horseman" and "Rick and Morty," in addressing the existential dilemma. The author's personal journey in search of meaning is emphasized, highlighting the ongoing philosophical discourse on navigating life's inherent lack of purpose.

Chouraqui et al. (2018), discuss Nihilism and Fiction. They address how Nietzsche's perspective challenges conventional notions of nihilism by emphasizing subjective meaningfulness detached from external entities. His genealogical approach scrutinizes the origins of fundamental concepts like "reality" and "value." The slave revolt in morality, according to Nietzsche, gave rise to the notion of truth as a yardstick for meaningfulness. Hyperbolic thinking plays a pivotal role in Nietzsche's philosophy, with fiction remaining impervious to nihilism. Even in a world governed by ideals, fiction retains its value. Nihilism, as Nietzsche perceives it, is characterized by an underlying cognitivist assumption and the revelation of inherent meaninglessness.

Krellenstein (2017), talks about how philosophers have identified principles underlying moral judgments, yet failed to establish widely accepted justifications for them. The "error theory" positing moral judgments as unjustified remains unrefuted. Evolutionary psychologists offer insights into the origins of morality but don't justify specific values. Consequently, moral nihilism emerges — the absence of incontrovertible values or prescribed behaviors. This leads to accepting shared, non-absolute values as sufficient,

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adopting a more modest approach to moral judgments, and possibly acknowledging the harsh reality of value nihilism.

Peters and Crutzen (2017), researched pragmatic nihilism in health psychology theory development, stressing the understanding of behavior through psychological variables and emergent properties. They highlight the significance of operationalization in delineating variables and forecasting behavior. Complete disclosure of measurement instruments in empirical research is deemed essential for the effective development of interventions.

Dannenberg (2016), surmised that Nietzsche's critique of nihilism suggests that the pursuit of absolute moral foundations may signify ethical skepticism. Katsafanas explores the challenge of justifying the authority of morality amidst skepticism inherited from Kant, highlighting various obstacles, including epistemological and practical concerns. Nietzsche advocates for embracing the will to power and rejecting traditional values as a solution to alienation and suffering. Conversely, Korsgaard emphasizes autonomy and efficacy as fundamental principles for self-formation in addressing ethical skepticism. These differing perspectives offer valuable insights into the intricacies of moral epistemology and the quest for ethical grounding.

Drochon (2017), reviews how Maudemarie Clark challenges Allan Bloom's interpretation of Nietzsche, liberating Nietzsche from Strauss' influence. She examines Nietzsche's connections to feminism, queer theory, democracy, and community, advocating for a synthesis of Nietzsche's aristocratic ethics with modern democratic politics. Clark's political writings engage in debates but refrain from constructing a positive theory. She critiques Strauss and Straussianism as life-denying and plebeian, perpetuating nihilism. Clark argues that Nietzsche's critique of democracy does not equate to opposition to equal rights. Instead, Nietzsche criticizes democracy for prioritizing common values over higher ones, while exploring alternative ethics for the "overmen."

Flavel (2015), notes how in "Religion and Nothingness," Nishitani offers a sympathetic yet critical interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy, focusing on the will to power and the transcendence of nihilism. He interrogates Nietzsche's concept of time, particularly eternal recurrence, stressing the uniqueness of each moment. Nishitani's Zen-inspired perspective challenges Nietzsche's cyclical time notions, emphasizing the impermanence of moments. He critiques the idea of the will to power as an external force, advocating instead for a direct experience of self-awareness rooted in genuine momentariness. Overall, Nishitani's work demonstrates a nuanced engagement with Nietzsche's philosophy, influenced by Zen principles and a deeper exploration of existential themes.

Streeck (2014), talks about how Capitalism confronts a crisis marked by diminishing growth, oligarchic dominance, neglect of the public sphere, corruption, and global instability. The absence of effective regulatory mechanisms exacerbates economic and social challenges. Environmental degradation, widening economic disparities, and pervasive financial misconduct persist without evident remedies. The once-solid alliance between capitalism and democracy since 1945 is unraveling, ushering in a phase of decay and uncertainty. Despite forewarnings, societal tolerance of inequality and environmental degradation persists, obscured by technological progress and consumerism. The future of capitalism appears grim, characterized by systemic dysfunctions and a dearth of sustainable solutions.

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METHODOLOGY

Aim

- To study how capitalist and political beliefs influence nihilistic views in young adults and to analyze the impact of these perspectives on their mental well-being.

Objectives

- To assess the relationship between capitalist attitudes and nihilistic perspectives.
- To examine the association between political attitudes and nihilistic perspectives.
- To explore the impact of nihilistic perspectives on mental health.
- To provide insights into the mechanisms linking capitalist and political attitudes with nihilistic perspectives and mental health.

Hypothesis

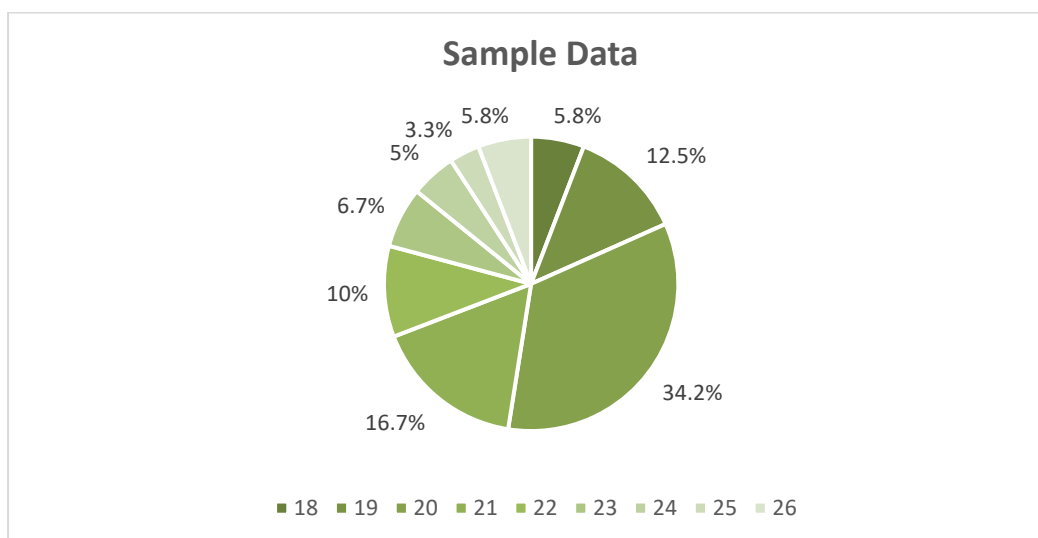
- **H1-** There will be a significant and negative relationship between beliefs about social mobility and existential nihilism in young adults.
- **H2-** There will be a significant and negative relationship between political attitudes and existential nihilism in young adults.
- **H3-** There will be a significant and negative relationship between beliefs about social mobility and mental health as measured by the GHQ-28 in young adults.
- **H4-** There will be a significant and negative relationship between political attitudes and mental health as measured by the GHQ-28 in young adults.
- **H5-** There will be a significant and positive relationship between nihilistic perspectives and mental health as measured by the GHQ-28 in young adults.

Design

The paper follows a quantitative approach as data is collected via survey (offline and online), and then analyzed via statistical tools as mentioned.

Sample Details

The target sample was young adults i.e. individuals in the age range of 18 to 26 years of age. The sample was collected from 120 participants. There were no geographical criteria, as such the participants were observed to be from all over India.



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Of the entire sample, 34.2% (n=41) of the respondents were of the age 20, 16.7% (n=20) were aged 21 and 12.5% (n=15) were aged 19 etc. Overall, there respondents from all ages within the chosen cluster.

Variables

The research examines political and capitalist attitudes, as independent variables. These constructs are assessed using the Political Attitudes Questionnaire, and Beliefs about Social Mobility Scale. The resulting nihilistic perspectives and mental health outcomes, evaluated through the Existential Nihilism Scale and General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28), constitute the dependent variables in this set-up.

Data Collection

- Data collection was conducted through convenience sampling. In total 120 samples were collected, with 100 samples collected through offline surveys and 20 samples collected through online surveys, over a course of 2 months (Jan-Feb, 2024).
- For the offline surveys, participants were approached in-person at convenient locations such as cafes, libraries and events. They were given a small rundown about the purpose of the survey and with voluntary participation data was collected.
- For the online surveys, a google form was created which was shared online on social media apps. Data was collected, with voluntary participation from the respondents.

Tool Description

- **Existential Nihilism Scale (ENS):** The Existential Nihilism Scale developed by Jeremy Forsythe (2021) is a unidimensional 8-item scale, that is measured on a 7-point Likert scale and is designed to evaluate an individual's existential nihilism. It is hypothesized to demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency, as indicated by acceptable Cronbach's alpha estimates ($\alpha \geq 0.80$) and acceptable McDonald's omega estimates ($\omega \geq 0.80$). It is shown to have adequate convergent and concurrent validity with relevant associations.
- **Political Attitudes Questionnaire (PAQ):** The Political Attitudes Questionnaire (III) used in this study is one of three developed by Pyszczynski and Kesebir (2018) to measure an individual's political ideological consistency. It consists of 8-items and is measured on a 7-point Likert scale. It has demonstrated good internal reliability ($\alpha = .85$).
- **Beliefs about Social Mobility Scale (BSMS):** The Beliefs about Social Mobility Scale (Adult) developed by Browman et al. (2017) is an 8-item scale measured on a 7-point Likert scale. It is designed to evaluate an individual's perception of social mobility and assess the degree to which they believe in the potential for upward socio-economic advancement within society. It is hypothesized to have adequate internal consistency and concurrent validity.
- **General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28):** The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) is a widely used self-report instrument designed to assess an individual's mental health status. The original General Health Questionnaire was developed by Goldberg in the 1970s consisted of 60 items. The GHQ-28, GHQ-30, and GHQ-12 are all subsequent versions, covering various aspects of psychological well-being, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, social dysfunction, and somatic complaints. Respondents are asked to rate their experiences over a recent time

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period, typically the past few weeks, using a four-point Likert scale. It is shown to have test-retest reliability and excellent concurrent validity.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The objectives of the research were to evaluate how capitalist and political beliefs influence nihilistic views in young adults and to analyze the impact of these perspectives on their mental well-being.

As it can be seen in Table 1, for ENS the data points are concentrated towards the lower end of the scale, indicating a tendency towards lower existential nihilism. For PAQ, the scores are spread across a wide range, with a mean score leaning towards the lower half, suggesting a mix of political attitudes with a slight lean towards more liberal views. For BSMS, the scores are centered around the mid-point of the scale, indicating a balanced distribution of responses. And for GHQ-28, there seems to be a wide range of scores with a relatively high standard deviation, indicating significant variability in the general health status of the participants.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	120	18	26	21.04	2.051
ENS	120	1	7	2.63	1.609
PAQ	120	10	51	26.96	6.425
BSMS	120	2	7	4.48	1.053
GHQ28	120	3	77	33.99	17.670
Valid N (listwise)	120				

Existential Nihilism Scale (ENS)

It is observed that the majority of participants scored lower on the ENS (scores of 1 and 2), indicating a lesser agreement or identification with existential nihilistic views. The frequency of higher scores (indicating stronger existential nihilistic views) decreases as the score increases, with the least number of participants scoring a 7. To elucidate upon the interpretation:

- **Lower Scores (1 and 2):** The majority of participants (58.3% cumulative) scored either a 1 or 2 on the scale. This suggests that a significant portion of participants may have a lower level of agreement with existential nihilistic views. Participants scoring lower may have a stronger sense of purpose, meaning, or value in life.
- **Middle Scores (3 and 4):** A smaller proportion of participants (28.3% cumulative) scored a 3 or 4. These scores indicate a moderate level of agreement with existential nihilistic perspectives. Participants in this range may have some doubts about the inherent meaning or purpose in life.
- **Higher Scores (5, 6, and 7):** Fewer participants (13.3% cumulative) scored a 5, 6, or 7 on the scale. These scores suggest a higher level of agreement with existential nihilistic beliefs. Participants with higher scores may lean towards the belief that life is inherently meaningless or lacks objective purpose.

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Political Attitudes Questionnaire (PAQ)

The distribution of scores on the PAQ shows a diverse range of political attitudes among the participants, with a mix of liberal, moderate, and conservative viewpoints. To elucidate upon the interpretation:

- **Liberal Attitudes (Low Scores):** Participants with scores ranging from 10 to 26 (inclusive) are more likely to have liberal attitudes. The frequency of participants with these scores ranges from 1 to 8, cumulatively accounting for 50.8% of the total.
- **Moderate Attitudes:** Scores between 27 and 33 indicate moderate political attitudes. Participants with these scores make up 25% of the total, with frequencies ranging from 6 to 12.
- **Conservative Attitudes (High Scores):** Scores from 34 to 51 suggest more conservative political attitudes. Participants with these scores represent 24.2% of the total, with frequencies ranging from 1 to 4.

Beliefs about Social Mobility Scale (BSMS)

The distribution of scores in the BSMS suggests that while there's a range of beliefs about social mobility among the participants, a majority have a moderate to high belief in the possibility of moving between social classes. To elucidate upon the interpretation:

- **Lower Belief in Social Mobility (Scores 2 and 3):** A small portion of participants (15.8% cumulative) scored either a 2 or 3, indicating a lower belief in social mobility. These participants may perceive significant barriers to moving between social classes.
- **Moderate Belief in Social Mobility (Score 4):** The largest group of participants (36.7%) scored a 4, suggesting a moderate belief in social mobility. This indicates a balanced view, where participants may recognize both opportunities and barriers to social mobility.
- **Higher Belief in Social Mobility (Scores 5 and 6):** A significant number of participants (46.7% cumulative) scored either a 5 or 6, showing a higher belief in social mobility. These participants likely view the ability to move between social classes as relatively accessible, with fewer perceived barriers.
- **Very High Belief in Social Mobility (Score 7):** Only a very small fraction (0.8%) scored a 7, indicating an extremely high belief in social mobility. This suggests an optimistic view, where participants may believe that there are minimal barriers to moving between social classes.

General Health Questionnaire-28 (GHQ-28)

The findings in the GHQ-28 suggest that the majority of the respondents in this sample are experiencing elevated levels of psychological distress, with only a small percentage reporting minimal symptom. To elucidate upon the interpretation:

- **Low Scores (3-10):** Scores in this range were reported by 9 respondents, comprising 7.5% of the total sample. This suggests that approximately 7.5% of the respondents are experiencing minimal symptoms of psychological distress or are in relatively good mental well-being.
- **Moderate Scores (11-26):** Scores in this range were reported by 27 respondents, making up 22.5% of the total sample. This indicates that about 22.5% of the respondents are experiencing moderate levels of psychological distress, suggesting they may be facing some symptoms of anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues, but are still functioning reasonably well in their daily lives.

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- **High Scores (27-77):** Scores in this range were reported by 84 respondents, accounting for 70% of the total sample. This highlights a significant proportion of respondents, approximately 70%, experiencing higher levels of psychological distress. These individuals are likely facing significant symptoms of anxiety, depression, or other mental health disorders, potentially interfering with their ability to function effectively in various aspects of life.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 Correlations

		ENS	PAQ	BSMS	GHQ28
ENS	Pearson Correlation	1	.066	-.380**	.517**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.474	.000	.000
	N	120	120	120	120
PAQ	Pearson Correlation	.066	1	-.217*	-.083
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.474		.017	.369
	N	120	120	120	120
BSMS	Pearson Correlation	-.380**	-.217*	1	-.296**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.017		.001
	N	120	120	120	120
GHQ28	Pearson Correlation	.517**	-.083	-.296**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.369	.001	
	N	120	120	120	120

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As it can be observed in Table 2, ENS and GHQ28 have a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.517$), which is significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that as existential nihilistic views increase, general health perceptions also tend to be more positive.

ENS and BSMS show a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.380$), significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that higher existentially nihilistic views are associated with lower beliefs about societal mobility, which could suggest that individuals with higher existential nihilism might perceive society as less mobile and more concrete.

BSMS and GHQ28 also have a moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.296$), significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that higher beliefs about social mobility are associated with better general health perceptions.

PAQ and BSMS have a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.217$), significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates a slight tendency for conservative attitudes to be associated with less faith societal mobility.

The correlations involving PAQ with ENS and GHQ28, and GHQ28 with PAQ, are not statistically significant, indicating no strong evidence of a linear relationship between these variables.

The significance levels indicate how confident we can be about these relationships not occurring by chance. The ** and * symbols denote correlations that are statistically

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significant, with ** indicating a higher level of confidence (0.01 level) compared to * (0.05 level). This analysis provides insights into how these scales relate to each other, potentially guiding further research or interventions aimed at improving mental health outcomes.

Regression Analysis

Table 3 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
	(Constant)	5.367	.939		
1	PAQ	-.004	.022	-.017	.844
	BSMS	-.587	.134	-.384	.000

Note. Dependent Variable: ENS

Table 3 provides information on the relationship between the independent variables (PAQ, BSMS) and the dependent variable (ENS). Here's the interpretation of the coefficients:

- **Constant (Intercept):** The constant term represents the expected value of ENS when all independent variables are zero. The coefficient of 5.367 suggests that when all independent variables are zero, the expected value of ENS is 5.367.
- **PAQ:** The coefficient of -0.004 indicates that for a one-unit increase in PAQ score, the ENS score is expected to decrease by 0.004 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of -0.017 suggests a weak negative relationship between PAQ and ENS, but it is not statistically significant ($p = 0.844$).
- **BSMS:** The coefficient of -0.587 implies that for a one-unit increase in BSMS score, the ENS score is expected to decrease by 0.587 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of -0.384 indicates a moderate negative relationship between BSMS and ENS, and it is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

In summary, the results suggest that BSMS has a significant negative impact on ENS, while PAQ does not have a statistically significant effect on ENS. The coefficients provide insights into how changes in the independent variables are associated with changes in the dependent variable ENS.

Table 4 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
	(Constant)	42.445	10.596		
1	ENS	5.166	.923	.470	.000
	PAQ	-.402	.219	-.146	.069
	BSMS	-2.500	1.441	-.149	.085

Note. Dependent Variable: GHQ28

Table 4 provides information on the relationship between the independent variables (ENS, PAQ, BSMS) and the dependent variable (GHQ28). Here's the interpretation of the coefficients:

- **Constant (Intercept):** The constant term represents the expected value of GHQ28 when all independent variables are zero. The coefficient of 42.445 suggests that when all independent variables are zero, the expected value of GHQ28 is 42.445.

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- **ENS:** The coefficient of 5.166 indicates that for a one-unit increase in ENS score, the GHQ28 score is expected to increase by 5.166 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.470 suggests a strong positive relationship between ENS and GHQ28, and it is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).
- **PAQ:** The coefficient of -0.402 implies that for a one-unit increase in PAQ score, the GHQ28 score is expected to decrease by 0.402 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of -0.146 indicates a weak negative relationship between PAQ and GHQ28, but it is not statistically significant ($p = 0.069$).
- **BSMS:** The coefficient of -2.500 suggests that for a one-unit increase in BSMS score, the GHQ28 score is expected to decrease by 2.500 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of -0.149 indicates a weak negative relationship between BSMS and GHQ28, but it is not statistically significant ($p = 0.085$).

In summary, the results indicate that ENS has the strongest positive impact on GHQ28, followed by PAQ and BSMS with weaker and non-significant effects. The coefficients provide insights into how changes in the independent variables are associated with changes in the dependent variable GHQ28.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to study how capitalist and political beliefs influence nihilistic views in young adults and to analyze the impact of these perspectives on their mental well-being. While each variable under study has a proper statistical measure to its name Capitalism while being the bane of one's existence understandably has no onus of measurement with it being a way of life. That said, Beliefs in social mobility, as gauged by Browman et al.'s (2017) scales, can serve as a measure of capitalist ideologies. High scores indicate faith in meritocracy and individual effort for success, aligning with capitalist principles. They reflect perceptions of equal opportunity and confidence in market mechanisms for advancement. Conversely, low scores suggest skepticism about fairness and structural barriers to mobility, questioning capitalist ideals. These beliefs influence attitudes towards economic competition, rewards, and government intervention, offering insights into the endorsement of capitalist values within society.

With the focal point of this study being nihilism, a nihilistic person might score low on beliefs about social mobility scales, indicating skepticism or disbelief in the efficacy of meritocracy and individual effort for success. They may perceive little opportunity for advancement and view structural barriers as insurmountable, regardless of capitalist principles. Their attitudes towards economic competition, rewards, and government intervention may be indifferent or dismissive, reflecting a nihilistic perspective that rejects the significance of such systems in shaping individual outcomes. An assumption which is only further supported by the findings of this study.

The findings of this quantitative research study shed light on the complex interplay between capitalist and political attitudes in the development of nihilistic perspectives, and the subsequent implications for mental health in young adults. Through the utilization of the Existential Nihilism Scale, Political Attitudes Questionnaire, Beliefs about Social Mobility Scale, and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28), several insights have been garnered. Firstly, the study underscores the correlation between capitalist attitudes and the emergence of nihilistic perspectives among young adults. Capitalist ideologies often emphasize individualism, competition, and the pursuit of material success. These values can contribute

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to a sense of existential emptiness and meaninglessness when individuals fail to achieve societal markers of success or find fulfillment solely through material acquisition. This aligns with existential nihilism, which posits that life lacks inherent meaning or purpose. The moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.380$) indicates that as existential nihilistic views increase, beliefs about societal mobility tend to decrease. This finding suggests that individuals with higher existential nihilism may perceive society as less dynamic or fluid in terms of social mobility. Existential nihilism, which often emphasizes the absence of inherent meaning or purpose, might lead individuals to adopt a more deterministic view of society, perceiving social structures as rigid and immutable (Baumeister, 1991).

Moreover, political attitudes were found to be closely linked to nihilistic perspectives. Young adults who exhibit more conservative or libertarian political ideologies may perceive societal structures as inherently flawed or unjust, leading to feelings of disillusionment and nihilism. Conversely, those with more progressive or leftist views may grapple with existential questions concerning societal progress and the possibility of meaningful social change. It may be suggested that political conservatism is associated with higher levels of existential anxiety and nihilism, as it may reinforce traditional societal structures that fail to provide meaningful answers to existential questions.

Furthermore, beliefs about social mobility emerged as a significant predictor of nihilism and mental health outcomes. As the moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.296$) suggests that higher beliefs about social mobility are associated with better general health perceptions. This finding could imply that individuals who perceive greater societal mobility also tend to feel more optimistic about their overall health. Individuals who perceive limited opportunities for upward social mobility may experience feelings of hopelessness and existential despair. Research by Kraus and Tan (2015) suggests that socioeconomic status and perceptions of social mobility are closely tied to mental health outcomes, with lower social mobility predicting higher levels of psychological distress and depressive symptoms.

As aforementioned in the results and analysis, the dependent variable (existential nihilism) was regressed on predicting variables of Capitalist and Political attitudes. The independent variables significantly predicted existential nihilism, $F(2,117) = 9.899$, $p < .001$, which indicates that the two factors under evaluation have a significant impact on existential nihilism. Moreover, the $R^2 = .145$ depicts that the model explains 14.5% of the variance in existentially nihilistic viewpoints.

Additionally, coefficients were further assessed to ascertain the influence of each of the factors on the criterion variable (Existential Nihilism). H1 evaluates whether BSMS significantly and negatively impacts ENS. The results revealed that beliefs about social mobility (capitalist attitudes) have a significant and negative impact on existential nihilism ($B = -.587$, $t = -.4,382$, $p = < .001$). Hence H1 was accepted.

H2 evaluates whether PAQ significantly and negatively impacts ENS. The results revealed that political attitudes have a weak negative impact on existential nihilism ($B = -.004$, $t = -.198$, $p = < .844$). While the expectancy is there the relationship is too weak, hence H2 was rejected.

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The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Hypotheses Results

Hypotheses	Regression Weights	B	t	p-value	Results
H1	BSMS → ENS	-.587	-.4,382	.000*	Accepted
H2	PAQ → ENS	-.004	-.198	.844*	Rejected
R	.380				
F (2,117)	9,899				

Note. BSMS: Beliefs about Social Mobility Scale, PAQ: Political Attitudes Questionnaire, ENS: Existential Nihilism Scale

For variance in perspectives, the dependant variable (general health) was regressed on predicting variables of Existential nihilism, and Capitalist and Political attitudes. The independent variables significantly predicted general health, $F(3,116) = 16,536$, $p < .001$, which indicates that the three factors under evaluation have a significant impact on general health. Moreover, the $R^2 = .300$ depicts that the model explains 30.0% of the variance in general health.

Coefficients were further assessed to ascertain the influence of each of the factors on the criterion variable (General Health). H3 evaluates whether BSMS significantly and negatively impacts GHQ-28. The results revealed that beliefs about social mobility (capitalist attitudes) have a weak negative impact on general health ($B = -2,500$, $t = -1,735$, $p = .085$). While the expectancy is there the relationship is too weak, hence H3 was rejected. H4 evaluates whether PAQ significantly and negatively impacts GHQ-28. The results revealed that political attitudes have a weak negative impact on existential nihilism ($B = -.402$, $t = -1,834$, $p = < .069$). While the expectancy is there the relationship is too weak, hence H4 was rejected.

H5 evaluates whether ENS significantly and positively impacts GHQ-28. The results revealed that existential nihilism has a significant and positive impact on existential nihilism ($B = 5,166$, $t = 5,598$, $p = < .001$). Hence H5 was accepted.

The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Hypotheses Results

Hypotheses	Regression Weights	B	t	p-value	Results
H3	BSMS → GHQ-28	-2,500	-1,735	.085*	Rejected
H4	PAQ → GHQ-28	-.402	-1,834	.069*	Rejected
H5	ENS → GHQ-28	5,166	5,598	.000*	Accepted
R	.547				
F (3,116)	16,536				

Note. BSMS: Beliefs about Social Mobility Scale, PAQ: Political Attitudes Questionnaire, ENS: Existential Nihilism Scale, GHQ-28: General Health Questionnaire-28

Overall, these findings highlight the interplay between existential beliefs, perceptions of societal mobility, political attitudes, and general health perceptions, underscoring the importance of considering philosophical and ideological factors in understanding individual differences in well-being and societal perceptions.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the intricate relationship between capitalist and political attitudes, existential nihilism, and mental health in young adults. Findings revealed a strong positive correlation between existential nihilistic views and general health perceptions, suggesting a nuanced understanding where heightened nihilism doesn't necessarily equate to poorer mental health. Additionally, a moderate negative correlation between nihilistic views and beliefs about societal mobility was observed, indicating a tendency for those with higher nihilism to perceive society as less mobile and more rigid. Moreover, beliefs about societal mobility were found to be moderately correlated with better general health perceptions, emphasizing the significance of perceived social opportunities in mental well-being. Conservative political attitudes were weakly associated with lower faith in societal mobility. However, political attitudes did not significantly correlate with either existential nihilism or mental health perceptions. And as observed through the regression analysis H 1 and 5 were accepted while H 2, 3, and 4 were rejected. These findings underscore the complex interplay between individual perspectives on society, politics, and mental health, emphasizing the need for comprehensive approaches in addressing young adults' well-being.

Recommendations

- **Promotion of Mental Health Programs:** Given the positive correlation between existential nihilism and general health perceptions, it's crucial to implement mental health programs targeting young adults, focusing on addressing existential concerns and promoting positive coping mechanisms.
- **Education and Awareness Campaigns:** Educating young adults about the impact of capitalist and political attitudes on mental well-being can be beneficial. Encouraging critical thinking about societal structures and providing resources for understanding and navigating these systems can help alleviate feelings of hopelessness and nihilism.
- **Support for Social Mobility Initiatives:** Considering the negative correlation between beliefs about social mobility and both existential nihilism and general health perceptions, supporting initiatives aimed at increasing social mobility can contribute to improving mental well-being in young adults. This might involve policies promoting education, job training, and equal opportunities.
- **Addressing Conservative Attitudes:** While the correlation between conservative attitudes and beliefs about societal mobility is weak, there may still be value in addressing any tendencies towards conservatism that hinder faith in social mobility. Encouraging openness to social change and diversity could potentially mitigate the negative impact on mental health.

Limitations

- **Sample Representation:** The study's findings may not be generalizable to all young adults, as the sample may not accurately represent the diverse range of backgrounds and experiences within this demographic.
- **Cross-sectional Nature:** The study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causality. Longitudinal studies would provide more insight into the directionality of relationships between capitalist and political attitudes, nihilistic perspectives, and mental health outcomes over time.
- **Self-Report Measures:** Reliance on self-report measures introduces potential biases, such as social desirability bias or inaccurate self-assessment of mental health.

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Incorporating objective measures or multiple informants could enhance the reliability of findings.

- **Measurement Limitations:** The scales used to assess existential nihilism, political attitudes, beliefs about social mobility, and mental health perceptions may not capture the full complexity of these constructs. Future research could benefit from refining or supplementing these measures to provide a more comprehensive understanding.
- **Confounding Variables:** There may be other variables not accounted for in the study that could influence the relationships observed, such as socio-economic status, cultural background, or experiences of discrimination. Controlling for these variables or conducting subgroup analyses could yield more nuanced insights.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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