Research Paper

Association between Narrative Coherence, Identity Styles, and Satisfaction with Life in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

As telling stories is an essential part of our lives, narrative coherence has important links to mental well-being, such as life satisfaction and identity construction. This cross-sectional study aimed to explore the relationship between narrative coherence, identity styles, and satisfaction with life. A sample of 61 individuals aged between 18 and 25 were selected for the study, involving questionnaires and an interview. From the results, it was found that narrative coherence has a positive relationship with informational identity style, a negative relationship with normative identity style, and no correlation with diffuse-avoidant identity style. Informational and normative identity styles could predict narrative coherence. Furthermore, it was found that narrative coherence could predict life satisfaction. These findings have significant implications for psychotherapy.

Telling stories and narrating lived experiences form some of the core aspects of human social interaction. Telling these stories provide the narrator with a method to explain their lives, either to themselves or to others (McAdams, 2006). Personal narratives also aid in the process of helping people make sense of their experiences (Reese et al., 2011).

While several definitions exist for the same, narrative coherence has been defined as "the extent to which a narrative makes sense to a naïve listener" and is able to "convey the content and meaning of the described events in a structurally and thematically cohesive manner" (Vanaken et al., 2022).

Theoretical research into narrative coherence has increased within several domains of psychology. This coherence forms an essential part of our psychological well-being, and any disruption can have recognizable implications for an individual's mental health (Adler et al., 2018; Waters & Fivush, 2015). While studies have been conducted to understand the theoretical underpinnings and implications of narrative coherence, it is important to define what constitutes a coherent and incoherent narrative. A study defined a coherent narrative as

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a "lucid chronological flow with identifiable temporal and causal milestones" with context to orient the listener and convey the feelings of the narrator along with the interpretation of the event by the speaker (Adler et al., 2018). Essentially, a personal narrative that is coherent is one that "makes sense to a naïve listener," not necessarily in terms of where and when this event took place, but rather what this event *meant* to the narrator (Reese et al., 2011).

Psychopathological implications of narrative incoherence have also received research attention. When life experiences are "perceived as fragmented and not meaningfully related" it may be more difficult for an individual to develop a "comprehensive self-concept," which can increase their susceptibility to emotional disorders (Hallford et al., 2021). Depression showed "the strongest (negative) correlation with life story coherence." Less coherent narratives characterised by lack of structure and orientation can contribute to externalizing behaviour in adolescents. Increased life story cohesion to be linked to fewer symptoms of anxiety and greater satisfaction with life. Narrative coherence has been found to have a negative relationship with symptoms of antisocial personality disorder. Patients with schizophrenia are found to have impaired ability to coherently describe a narrative of their entire life. This has been attributed to a reduction in autobiographical reasoning skills, executive dysfunction, and overall decreased sense of coherence (Baerger & McAdams, 1999; Lind et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2020; Vanderveren et al., 2021; Allé et al., 2015; Lysaker et al., 2003; Raffard et al., 2010). Narrative incoherence was found to be an indicator of ineffective strategies of coping (Waters & Fivush, 2015).

Identity processing styles and narrative coherence
Narrative coherence has also been studied in light of identity and identity development. Through telling stories of one's lived experiences, people can consolidate several aspects of the self to not only project a particular identity, but to have a more cohesive understanding of oneself. Thus, the act of narration is beneficial to the listener as well as the speaker. The relationship between narrative coherence and identity can be bidirectional in the sense that one's identity style can influence their likelihood of having a coherent life story and a more coherent life story can influence identity development and identity coherence.

A well-structured and cohesive identity gives rise to "a frame of reference for making decisions and interpreting experience and self-relevant information." This then aids the maintenance of a sense of continuity and sameness while telling a story (Berzonsky et al., 2013). The link between identity formation, sense of self, and narrative coherence has been studied together. Waters and Fivush (2015) found that telling coherent stories are extremely helpful to identity development, especially in emerging adulthood. These findings eventually merge with Erik Erikson's theory that those who resolve issues with their identity in a coherent manner are less likely to develop identity confusion and distress and are more likely to develop a sense of purpose.

Berzonsky and colleagues conceptualised identity processing styles as "the differences in how individuals process identity-relevant information as they engage or manage to avoid the challenges of constructing, maintaining, and/or reconstructing a sense of identity" (Berzonsky et al., 2013).

There are three identity styles identified by Berzonsky. *Informational identity processing style* is characterised by self-discipline, sense of direction and commitment, and the active seeking out of self-relevant information. This identity processing style has been linked with

open mindedness, vigilant manner of decision making, personal effectiveness, and cognitive complexity. Individuals with a *normative identity processing style* are "conscientious, self-disciplined and possess a strong sense of commitment and purpose," they are also more likely to strictly follow rules and standards of others. These individuals do not like uncertainty and desire closure and structure. Their main goal is to "defend and preserve their existing self-views and identity structure." Individuals with *diffuse-avoidant identity processing style* are characterised by procrastination, avoidance regarding identity conflicts, and their behaviour depends largely on who they socially interact with. This style is linked with lack of self-control, problematic behaviours, and external locus of control (Berzonsky, 2013).

A recent study examined the correlation between Berzonsky's identity styles and narrative awareness. Narrative awareness was conceptualised as "a conscious recognition of the structure and function of narratives in one's personal life" and was measured using the Awareness of Narrative Identity Questionnaire (ANIQ). The results found positive relationship between informational identity style and narrative awareness, no relationship between normative identity style and narrative awareness, and negative relationship between diffuse-avoidant identity style and narrative awareness (Webster, 2021). Individuals with an informational identity processing style narrated their stories more coherently, which provides additional support to the earlier findings by Waters and Fivush (2015).

Satisfaction with life and narrative coherence
Narrative coherence has also been studied alongside well-being and satisfaction with life. Psychological research has linked coherent narratives with mental health and well-being. By telling narratives in a well-structured and organised format (i.e., having coherence), individuals have a sense of meaning and connect with the world, while a lack of this structure causes a "sense of discontinuity, detachment, and meaninglessness" (Baerger & McAdams, 1999). Thus, psychopathology can be understood as a result of narration of stories that are "saturated with problems" without any positive, hopeful, or redemptive messages and meanings. Studies have established that narrative coherence is positively correlated with well-being. Several studies within positive psychology began research into subjective well-being. One of the "constituent components" of this subjective well-being is life satisfaction. Satisfaction with life is "a cognitive process of judgement through which individuals assess the quality of their life." This subjective judgement leads to people defining their life as "more or less satisfactory" (Lopez-Ortega et al., 2016).

Narrative psychologists have identified that "mental health is inextricably connected to an individual's ability to create and maintain an integrated and cohesive self-narrative" (Baeger & McAdams, 1999; Waters & Fivuesh, 2015). The link between psychological well-being and narrative coherence have mostly been found in adult participants. However, the establishment of this link has been less clear in adolescents and children. For younger adolescents, more coherent narratives have been linked with poorer psychological well-being. Researchers have proposed that this could be because the "cognitive effort required to engage in an abstract task" (Mitchell et al., 2020). The link between psychological well-being and narrative coherence was also explored in a longitudinal study in light of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This study found that individuals with higher life story coherence about autobiographical events at the baseline measurement in 2018 had a "higher emotional well-being during the stressful circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic" during the second measurement in 2020 (Vanaken et al., 2022).

Association between Narrative Coherence, Identity Styles, and Satisfaction with Life in Young Adults

The current study

The current study aims to explore this relationship between narrative coherence, identity styles, and satisfaction with life. The population being studied in this current study is young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. This period of emerging adulthood can be identified by "a feeling of being in between adolescence and adulthood," the instability this brings, openness to new experiences and opportunities, and an increased focus on oneself. This allows for exploration into careers, sexuality, relationships, spirituality, and religion (Schwartz et al., 2015). The process of identity formation and identity development takes place during adolescence, and this is further strengthened during young adulthood. Narrative coherence also develops during this period where skills of autobiographical reasoning start to emerge in late childhood and early adolescence and continues to develop as the individual enters early adulthood. Failure to develop coherent narrative accounts of the self during adolescence can lead to purposelessness, hopelessness, and difficulties in forming and maintaining interpersonal relationships. This has important psychotherapeutic implication and suggests the importance of studying narrative coherence in this age group (Waters & Fivush, 2015).

The psychotherapeutic and clinical implications of studying narrative coherence also suggest narrative meaning making in therapy has been associated with sudden gains in clients' mental health. This implies that clients actively work to make sense of their lived experiences through the process of psychotherapy to promote sudden therapeutic gains. The results of this study by Adler and Harmeling (2013) point towards the significance of an "open, active processing style for positive transformation following difficult experiences." This reiterates the positive influence of gaining insight and the negative effects of avoidance behaviours in clients.

The most prominently identified research gap was the paucity of literature that studies the association between the three variables of narrative coherence, identity styles, and satisfaction with life in an overarching study. Furthermore, there is no available research on narrative coherence that have been conducted in India. Exploring this will give insight into cultural variances of understanding the shaping and sharing of narratives.

It was hypothesized that informative identity styles will have a positive correlation with narrative coherence among young adults, normative and diffuse-avoidant identity styles will have a negative correlation with narrative coherence among young adults. Finally, higher levels of narrative coherence will predict higher satisfaction with life among young adults.

METHODS

Participants

A total of 61 participants aged between 18 and 25 were chosen for this study (M= 21.4 years.) A total of 43 females (70.5%) and 16 males (26.2%) participated in this study. One participant (1.6%) chose not to disclose their gender and one participant (1.6%) identified as non-binary. Individuals with an active psychological illness (diagnosed under 6 months ago) undergoing psychotherapy for the same were exempt from the study. All participants were informed on informed consent and was approved by the Institutional Research Board.

Instruments
- **Satisfaction with Life Scale:** The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed by Diener et al. (1985). The scale measures subjective perception of life

satisfaction. The brief scale includes 5 questions which is rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being strongly disagree to 7 being strongly agree. Scoring of the SWLS was according to the manual instructions. The scores were added up and tallied according to a predetermined range of extremely satisfied, satisfied, slightly satisfied, neutral, slightly dissatisfied, dissatisfied, and extremely dissatisfied. The internal consistency is 0.87 and test-retest reliability is .82.

- **Identity Style Inventory:** The Identity Style Inventory (ISI-5) developed by Berzonsky et al. (2013) was used to measure identity processing style. The inventory is a 36-item scale which is divided into 9 items each for measuring informational style, normative style, diffuse-avoidant style, and strength of commitment. The items are statements which were rated on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 signifying not at all like me and 5 being very much like me. Scoring of the ISI-5 was done according to the manual instructions. Some negatively worded items required reverse scoring. The scores are added up for each identity style. The highest score among the three identity styles indicated a participant's identity processing style. Scores for the strength of commitment was not calculated, approved by manual instructions, as the concept was not being explored under the current study. Cronbach's alpha for informational identity style is .79, .71 for normative identity style, and .73 for diffuse-avoidant identity style. The convergent and discriminant validity ranged from .86 for informational identity style, .82 for normative identity style, and .87 for diffuse-avoidant identity style.

- **The Life Story Interview:** The Life Story Interview by Dan McAdams (1996) consists of structured open-ended questions. This interview structure was used to evaluate narrative coherence. The participants were asked to create and narrate an integrated story of their life to the researcher based on the protocol questions. The interview is divided into 8 sections: life chapters, key scenes in the life story, future script, challenges, personal ideology, life theme, and other. For the current study, the questions regarding high point, low point, turning point, positive childhood memory, and next chapter were asked. The interview was coded according to Reese and colleagues' (2011) Narrative Coherence Coding Scheme (NaCCS) according to chronology, theme, and context. Reliability for chronology averaged .82, for theme it averaged .89, and for context .80. The interviews were coded by the researcher and another individual to ensure interrater reliability, which was found to be 0.797.

Procedure

Ethics clearance was received by the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) of Manipal Academy of Higher Education (IEC number: 600/2021). The IEC then recommended Clinical Trials Registry- India (CTRI) registration. After being approved at all levels, the study proceeded for data collection. The consent form, sociodemographic sheets, and the SWLS and ISI-5 were made available on Google Forms, the link for which was circulated on social media platforms. The participants were also requested to give their email addresses so they could be contacted for the Life Story Interview. The participants were then contacted for the Life Story Interview via email, and interviews took place via Skype and Zoom and were recorded for transcription. The interviews were then transcribed and coded for analysis using SPSS.

RESULTS

The aim of this study was to find the relationship between narrative coherence, identity styles, and satisfaction with life.

A total of 61 participants were recruited with a mean age of 21.4 years. A total of 43 females (70.5%) and 16 males (26.2%) participated in this study. One participant (1.6%) chose not to disclose their gender and one participant (1.6%) identified as non-binary. 43 participants had completed their undergraduate education and 18 participants had completed their education till high school level or 12th grade.

Table No. 1 Showing the Mean and Standard Deviation of the Satisfaction with Life Scale and Results on the Life Story Interview (N=61)

|	Mean	Standard deviation
Satisfaction with Life Scale	23.196	5.650
Life Story Interview	26.672	6.893

Table 1 represents the mean and standard deviation for the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and results on the Life Story Interview (LSI), which was a measure of narrative coherence. It can be seen from the table that the mean for the results on the SWLS is 23.196 and the standard deviation is 5.65. The total mean is out of the maximum score of 35 that can be received on this scale. For the LSI, the mean is 26.672 and the standard deviation is 6.893. The total mean is out of a score of 45 that can be received on this interview after coding.

Table No. 2 *Showing the Mean and Standard Deviation for the sub-domains of the Identity Style Inventory (N=61)*

ISI sub-domain	Mean	Standard deviation
Informational identity style	37.049	4.047
Normative identity style	21.508	5.643
Diffuse-avoidant identity style	22.655	5.750

The Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviations for the sub-domains of the Identity Style Interview (ISI-5). The scores were calculated individually for each of the sub-domains. The mean score for informational identity style is 37.049 and the standard deviation is 4.047. The mean score for normative identity style is 21.508 and the standard deviation is 5.643. And lastly, the mean for the diffuse-avoidant identity style is 22.655 and the standard deviation is 5.75. The mean is out of a score of 45.

Figure No. 1 Total Identity Style of Participants in the Study (N=61)
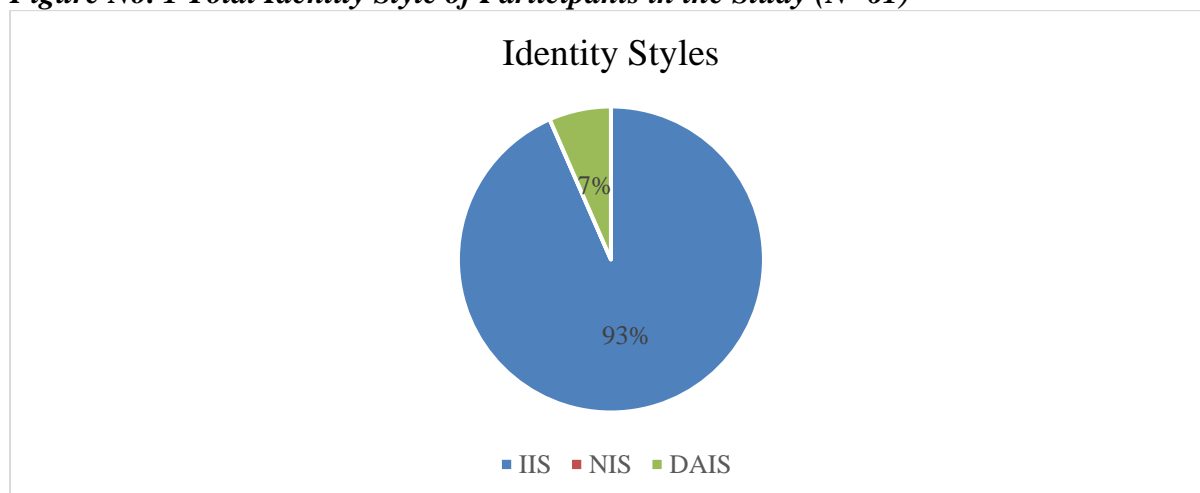
Total identity style was also calculated for the participants. From the figure above, it can be seen that 93% or 57 participants had an informative identity style (IIS) and 7% or 4 participants had a diffuse-avoidant identity style (D-AIS). No participant had a normative identity style (NIS).

Table No. 3 Pearson's Correlations between Identity Styles and Narrative Coherence and Satisfaction with Life (N=61)

		IIS	NIS	D-AIS	SWL	NC
IIS	$r =$	1.000	-.122	-.110	.070	.330**
	p-value	.	.348	.398	.590	.009
NIS	$r =$		1.000	.358**	-.044	-.266*
	p-value		.	.005	.734	.038
D-AIS	$r =$			1.000	-.222	-.183
	p-value			.	.085	.157
SWLS	$r =$				1.000	.248*
	p-value				.	.034
NC	$r =$					1.000
	p-value					.

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

Table 3 gives the correlation between the variables of identity style, satisfaction with life, and narrative coherence. There exists a significant positive relationship between informational identity style (IIS) and narrative coherence (NC) (r=.330, p=.009). There exists a negative relationship between normative identity style (NIS) and narrative coherence (r=-.266, p=.038). No significant relationship can be identified between diffuse-avoidant identity style (D-AIS) and narrative coherence (r=-.183, p=.157).

Table 3 also gives information on the relationship between satisfaction with life (SWL) and narrative coherence. There exists a significant positive relationship between the variables (r=.248, p=.034).

*Table No. 4 Regression Analysis between Narrative Coherence and Satisfaction with Life (N=61)*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1	(Constant)	18.352	2.865		6.405	.000
	NC	.182	.104	.222	1.746	.036

Dependent variable: satisfaction with life

To more thoroughly examine the relationship between narrative coherence and satisfaction with life, regression analysis was conducted. The simple regression model was used, where narrative coherence was the independent variable and satisfaction with life was the dependent variable. The results of the regression indicated that 65.6% variation in satisfaction with life is explained by narrative coherence, whereas 34.4% is determined by factors that are not considered in the current study (R^2=0.656). Narrative coherence could statistically predict life satisfaction in the subjects at 5% significance level, $F(1,59)$=3.047, p=.036.

Figure No. 2 Regression Scatter Plot for Narrative Coherence and Satisfaction with Life.
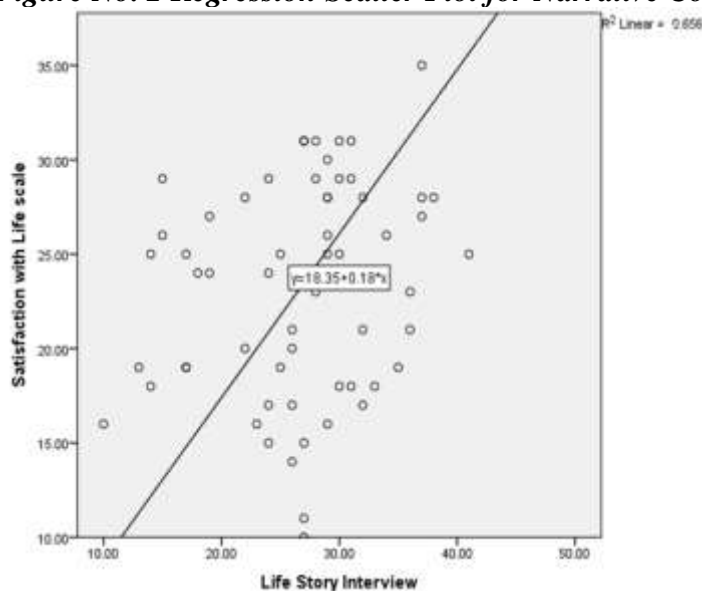
From Figure 2, it can be noted that there is a positive slope coefficient for the independent variable, narrative coherence (written as life story interview in the graph). This indicates that if the narrative coherence of the subjects increases on an average, the satisfaction with life of the subjects would increase by 0.182. Hence narrative coherence has a statistically significant impact on the life satisfaction of the participants.

Table No. 5 Multivariate Regression Analysis between Informational and Normative Identity Style on Narrative Coherence (N=61)

	LSI (Y_1)			Collinearity Statistic- VIF
	Beta	*t*-value	*p*-value	
(Constant)	15.532	1.801	.077	1.005
IIS	.462	2.216	.031	1.005
NIS	-.278	-2.860	.038	
Adjusted R^2	36.7%			
F-value	4.507		0.020	

Dependent variable: NC

Further regression analysis was conducted on the identity styles and narrative coherence. As there were only significant correlations between informational and normative identity styles, they were considered as the independent variables in the multivariate regression. Narrative coherence was considered as the dependent variable. The results of the regression indicated that 36.7% of variation in narrative coherence is explained by the identity styles, whereas 53.3% is determined by factors that are not considered in the current study (R^2=.367). Informational and normative identity styles could statistically predict narrative coherence of the subjects at 5% significance level, $F(2,58)=4.507$, $p<0.01$. The *p*-value for informational identity style is $p=.031$ and for normative identity style is $p=.038$. A negative slope is identified for the coefficient normative identity style, indicating that if the normative scores of the subjects increases, on average, narrative coherence would decrease by 0.278. There is a positive slope coefficient for informative identity style, indicating that if informational scores of the subjects increases, on average, narrative coherence would increase by 0.462.

These results suggest that informational and normative identity styles have an impact on the narrative coherence of the subjects in the current study.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to explore the relationship between narrative coherence, identity styles, and satisfaction with life. More specifically, to correlate specific identity styles to the levels of narrative coherence and to predict satisfaction with life from scores of narrative coherence.

This study aimed to find the correlation between narrative coherence and the different identity styles. It was hypothesized that informational identity styles would be positively correlated to narrative coherence and normative identity styles and diffuse-avoidant identity styles would be negatively correlated to narrative coherence. The results indicated that there is a significant positive correlation between informational identity styles and narrative coherence. Additionally, a significant negative correlation was found between normative identity styles and narrative coherence. However, no significant correlation was identified between diffuse-avoidant identity styles and narrative coherence. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there would be a negative correlation between diffuse-avoidant identity and narrative coherence is rejected.

The positive correlation between informational identity style and narrative coherence extends the findings of the Webster (2021) study, which found a similar correlation between informational identity style and narrative awareness. This suggests that individuals with an informational identity style are more "psychologically minded" and can better analyse themselves and reflect on their patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Findings also suggest that such individuals can better focus on the processing of self-relevant information (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992; Berzonsky & Luyckx, 2008). Since narrative coherence is essentially the ability to actively organize self-relevant information and explain it in an organized fashion, it is consistent with theory that there is a significant positive correlation between informational identity style and narrative coherence.

A negative correlation was identified between normative identity style and narrative coherence. While similar variables were explored in the Webster study (2021), no correlation was found between normative identity style and narrative awareness. The findings of the current study are interesting because normative individuals tend to internalize the standards, values, and expectations of their significant others and are associated with limited self-exploration. Previous literature has also identified the denial and repression as "reality-distorting defence mechanisms" in normative individuals. Furthermore, studies prove that normative individuals tend to be more closed and rigid, which could be because it might "serve the role of protecting the individual from having to deal with dissonance-inducing experiences and information that might threaten or invalidate critical self-views" (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992; Berzonsky & Luyckx, 2008; Berzonsky et al., 2013). The implications of this suggest that normative individuals might lack or have limited narrative coherence because they remain rigid and closed off to self-exploration. The questions in the Life Story Interview required deep introspection into several aspects of the participants' life and future. A reason behind low levels of narrative coherence could be because of the limited self-exploration that is found in such individuals. Furthermore, there is much internalization of values of authority figures, which could mean participants were hesitant to

share information that required introspection into aspects of their life that were not be influenced by the values or standards of these authority figures.

The hypothesis that suggested a negative correlation between diffuse-avoidant identity style and narrative coherence was rejected. No significant correlation was found between diffuse-avoidant identity style and narrative coherence. These findings are consistent with previous literature, where a negative correlation between diffuse-avoidant identity style and narrative awareness was initially hypothesized, but no significant correlation was found (Webster, 2021). It was hypothesized that this was due to the "ubiquity of narrative in everyday life," where even though individuals might lack the skills or motivation to organize their autobiographical experiences, they are exposed to several narratives daily, which might build narrative awareness. In line with previous literature, diffuse-avoidant individuals are seen to be in a state of avoiding dealing with their identity conflicts, having limited or minimal self-exploration and introspection, ignoring self-relevant information and problems, lacking focus on personal identity, and having a fragmented sense of self and identity, causing them to be uncertain about themselves (Berzonsky et al., 2013). These characteristics make it easier to understand why such individuals might lack the ability to construct coherent narratives, suggesting a reason behind the formulation of the initial hypothesis.

However, it is interesting that no such significant relationship between diffuse-avoidant identity and narrative coherence was found. The most compelling explanation for the current findings lies in another characteristic found in diffuse-avoidant individuals. They act in a "situation-specific fashion" and how they act or present themselves largely depends on "where they are and who they are with," indicating these individuals have frequently changing values and beliefs. Furthermore, such individuals are motivated to "convince others that they possess desired characteristics that may not imply that they are skilled and effective in these efforts." This need for positive self-presentation in front of others might be a possible explanation for the current findings (Berzonsky & Ferrari, 2009; Berzonsky et al., 2013; Soenens et al., 2005; Topolewska & Cieciuch, 2015). Frequently changing one's views to maintain a certain image of oneself might suggest that there was no introspection into any of the Life Story Interview questions. The answers were more likely to have been vague and general and might not have included any identity-relevant information pertaining to the questions. Furthermore, due to the fragmented sense of self and confusion about their identity, the answers might have lacked relevance or context to what was asked. Diffuse-avoidant individuals might not be actively trying to structure their life story, rather they might have sought to appease and show themselves in a positive light during the interview rather than share information about themselves.

Regression analysis was also conducted to evaluate whether narrative coherence can be predicted by a particular identity style. Since there was no correlation between diffuse-avoidant identity style and narrative coherence, this variable was not included in the multivariate regression analysis. The findings suggested that informational identity style and normative identity style can predict or impact narrative coherence. A positive correlation was identified between informational identity style and narrative coherence, suggesting an increase in informational identity scores led to an increase in the narrative coherence levels. This finding is significant in light of previous information regarding the characteristics of the identity style. The ability to self-reflect and introspect information regarding oneself in emerging adults suggests that they are better equipped to provide coherent narratives when

asked to describe life events. Additionally, the regression analysis also revealed a negative correlation for normative identity style and narrative coherence, suggesting the increase of normative identity scores leads to a decrease of narrative coherence levels. While normative individuals have a high desire for structure and dislike of uncertainty, these individuals are also rigid and closed-off, rarely introspecting or self-exploring (Berzonsky et al., 2013). Thus, it can be predicted that such individuals have incoherent narratives.

Another objective of the study was to examine the relationship between narrative coherence and satisfaction with life. Using Pearson's correlation, a positive significant correlation was identified between narrative coherence and satisfaction with life. Further regression analysis was conducted to examine whether satisfaction with life could be predicted from the level of narrative coherence. It was found that there is a positive correlation between these variables, suggesting higher levels of narrative coherence can predict higher levels of life satisfaction. These findings are consistent with previous literature studying narrative coherence and subjective well-being (Baeger & McAdams, 1999; Waters & Fivush, 2015). This study confirms previous findings that narrative coherence is linked to mental well-being. The findings imply that the ability to actively construct and maintain narratives about oneself is connected to one's mental health and how one views their lives. Narrative psychologists have long since hypothesized that "mental well-being is the consequence of a coherent life story." This might suggest that more contended or satisfied individuals organize their autobiographical stories in manners that are different from those who are less content. This is consistent with the claim that narrative incoherence is found in psychopathology such as depression and schizophrenia. Individuals with depression are more likely to interpret their life events in a depressive tone or assign a negative significance to life events (Baeger & McAdams, 1999).

This finding suggesting the predictive nature of narrative coherence also implies that it can predict future adjustment and emotional well-being. This finding has great practical and therapeutical relevance as it suggests that narrative coherence could be a resilience factor in the process of coping with adverse events. This notion is also reflected in the Vanaken et al. (2022) study, which suggests coherence can aid in the adaptive processing of trauma events but can also predict and reflect "the ability to create coherence out of emotionally challenging experiences, thus facilitating emotional well-being."

A key point to discuss is the importance of the age group in the sample of the current study. The sample was aged between 18 and 25, signifying emerging adulthood, a critical developmental period marked by exploration into new opportunities and experiences as one transitions into a life of responsibilities. This period is also marked by forming an identity for oneself. A huge part of this identity development involves narrative coherence, to give a holistic account of one's life and experiences. Erikson states that *the* most salient developmental task of adolescence is creating a "coherent account of who we are and how we came to be that way" (1950, 1968, as cited in Waters & Fivush, 2015). An inability to develop this coherence during adolescence can lead to lack of sense of purpose, inability to form positive relationships, and helplessness, in line with Erikson's identity role confusion stage of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1950; Waters & Fivush, 2015).

Most narrative coherence studies have been conducted on adults, adolescents, or clinical populations. Research into this emerging adulthood developmental phase is growing yet holds extremely important value in psychology and psychotherapy. Studying coherence

during this period where "identity construction is at its most salient" is essential. Life story coherence usually begins around adolescence, where there are more cognitive capabilities, suggested by Piaget, such as formal operational thinking and hypothetical reasoning into one's own life and experiences. These skills only develop as the individual enters young adulthood (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Thus, this period of emerging adulthood gives individuals a "first-in-a-lifetime" chance to create a coherent story of oneself, as they move away from the shadow of authority figures such as parents and teachers and institutions like high school. This age group of late teens and early 20s, where one is not a teenager and yet not entirely an adult, allows for the construction and internalization of a personal myth or a life story to "give their life some unity, sameness, and continuity" to aid in the development of prospective and retrospective thinking, which Erikson postulated to be a key characteristic in what it means to be an adult (McAdams, 2014).

The sample in the current study included individuals who had finished high school and were pursuing undergraduate or postgraduate education or were employed. As mentioned earlier, they are in a phase of their life where they have their first opportunity to start redefining and authoring their life according to their past experiences and how they see the world, away from the views of their caregivers. The questions of the Life Story Interview invoked introspection and exploration into aspects of one's life not frequently thought about or discussed. Participants were able to identify critical moments in their lives and evaluate them as being positive, negative, or turning events. This process allowed participants to have some control over the version of their life story that they chose to share.

Limitations
First, since participants were recruited using convenience sampling, many were unknown to the researcher. This might have had some impact on the participants opening up about personal details of their life to a researcher they were not acquainted with. This hesitation to share intimate details to questions such as *low points* or *childhood memories* could have affected the scores for narrative coherence. Second, the study used quantitative analysis for narrative coherence, which meant much of the rich data collected through the interview were only analysed numerically and not qualitatively. Third, the interview protocol and the coding scheme were made by different authors. Using the coding scheme designed for the interview protocol might have ensured greater consistency in the coding of the Life Story Interview. Furthermore, the study only used five interview prompts from the Life Story Interview as the entire interview takes over three hours, due to the fact that most of the sample were students or working, it had to be condensed to account for time.

Despite these limitations, the study has implications for therapy, especially in light of the emergence of narrative therapy. Since positive correlations were identified between narrative coherence and life satisfaction, it emphasises the importance of having coherent narratives for one's mental well-being. Furthermore, through the identified relationships between narrative coherence and the different identity styles, the identity styles which are negatively correlated or not correlated with highly coherent narratives (i.e. normative and diffuse-avoidant), can benefit from narrative therapy to aid in the more coherent and holistic approach to forming and constructing one's own life story.

CONCLUSION
The current study aimed to explore the relationships between narrative coherence, identity styles, and satisfaction with life. The findings reported a positive relationship between

informative identity style and narrative coherence, a negative relationship between normative identity style and narrative coherence, and no significant correlation between diffuse-avoidant identity style and narrative coherence. Further analysis found that informational identity style and normative identity style could predict narrative coherence of the participants. Finally, a positive correlation was identified between satisfaction with life and narrative coherence. A higher level of narrative coherence could predict a higher level of life satisfaction. These findings have important implications for psychotherapeutic outcomes.

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Conflict of Interest
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