

Life Satisfaction in Early vs. Late Adolescents: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a transitional stage marked by significant biological, emotional, and social changes that influence overall well-being. Life satisfaction, an important component of subjective well-being, provides insight into how young people evaluate the quality of their lives. The present study aims to examine differences in life satisfaction between early and late adolescents. A sample of adolescents was assessed using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and statistical analysis was conducted through an independent sample t-test. Results show that early adolescents report significantly higher levels of life satisfaction than late adolescents. The findings suggest that developmental challenges such as academic pressures, peer influences, and identity concerns contribute to lower satisfaction during late adolescence. The study highlights the need for supportive interventions from parents, educators, and counsellors to promote psychological well-being across adolescence. The chief conclusion is that life satisfaction decreases as adolescents grow older.

Keywords: *Adolescence, life satisfaction, early adolescents, late adolescents, well-being*

Over time, a large body of research has focused on understanding the personal and social factors that influence healthy development during adolescence (Compas et al., 1995; Lerner & Steinberg, 2004). Adolescence is a critical stage marked by significant biological changes, educational demands, and shifting social roles, many of which occur simultaneously. How successfully adolescents cope with these multiple transitions largely depends on their capacity to respond and behave appropriately across different areas of life.

Adolescence is a critical period for the formation of personal identity, according to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1968). People actively investigate their values, aspirations, and beliefs at this time. While some adolescents go through this process with a strong sense of conviction and clarity regarding their chosen beliefs and life directions, others may experience confusion and self-doubt (Schwartz & Petrova, 2018).

A significant change in psychological research and theory is represented by positive youth development, which shifts the emphasis from deficiencies and issues to strengths and potential (Damon, 2004). This viewpoint focuses on encouraging young people to have

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effective and healthy developmental outcomes. It emphasizes the idea that every young person has the capacity to develop in a positive way and emphasizes the significance of identifying each person's unique developmental assets, including positive attitudes, life skills, competences, and fundamental beliefs that promote wellbeing. In addition, this approach underscores the role of supportive developmental environments, including family, educational institutions, peer groups, neighborhoods, and broader social systems, which together provide essential opportunities, guidance, and resources for positive growth (Benson et al., 2006).

Life satisfaction is widely recognized as a crucial indicator of effective and healthy growth within the framework of Positive Youth growth (Park, 2004). Life satisfaction is an integral part of subjective well-being, which is considered as a multifaceted notion consisting of both emotional and cognitive elements (Diener et al., 1999). Life satisfaction, in contrast to emotional responses, is a comprehensive, deliberate assessment of one's total quality of life (Pavot & Diener, 1993). It involves a reflective process through which individuals judge how satisfied they are with their lives based on personal standards and expectations (Shin & Johnson, 1978). Accordingly, life satisfaction is a deliberate and personalized assessment of one's circumstances, with different evaluation criteria for each individual (Pavot & Diener, 1993).

As a result, life satisfaction is a cognitive aspect of subjective well-being that is crucial to constructive growth. Subjective well-being is both a broad enabling element that improves health outcomes and a crucial sign of positive growth (Park, 2004). Higher levels of Life Satisfaction in teenagers are associated with optimal mental health and successful adaptability, much like a greater experience of Developmental Assets (see Proctor et al., 2009, for a review).

Therefore, examining differences in life satisfaction between early and late adolescents is essential for understanding their developmental needs and designing effective interventions to promote well-being during this critical stage of life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Diener et al. (1985) conceptualized life satisfaction as a cognitive judgment of one's overall life quality and developed the widely used Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). This measure has been utilized extensively in adolescent well-being research.

Goldbeck et al. (2007) conducted a study on developmental changes in life satisfaction among adolescents and found that satisfaction tends to decline with age. The authors attributed this decrease to heightened academic, emotional, and social pressures experienced by older adolescents.

Proctor, Linley, and Maltby (2009) reviewed youth well-being literature and reported that higher life satisfaction is linked to resilience, optimism, and better coping strategies. They emphasized its protective role against psychological difficulties.

Suldo and Huebner (2006) highlighted the influence of family and peer relationships on adolescent well-being. They found that supportive family environments and positive peer interactions significantly enhance life satisfaction.

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Park (2004) examined subjective well-being in the context of positive youth development and demonstrated that life satisfaction contributes to healthier psychological outcomes and better adjustment.

Aim

To compare the level of life satisfaction between early and late adolescents.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Objective

1. To assess the level of life satisfaction among early adolescents.
2. To assess the level of life satisfaction among late adolescents.
3. To compare life satisfaction between early and late adolescents.

Hypothesis

- **H₁:** There is a significant difference between early and late adolescents with regard to life satisfaction.
- **H₀:** There is no significant difference between early and late adolescents with regard to life satisfaction.

Variable

- **Independent variable**
Age group (Early adolescents aged 13–14; Late adolescents aged 20–21).
- **Dependent variable**
Level of life satisfaction in the two groups.

Sample detail

The total sample consisted of 150 adolescents.

- Early adolescents: 75 students from Class VIII (age 13–14; 40 males and 35 females).
- Late adolescents: 75 undergraduate final-year students (age 20–21; 37 males and 38 females).

Research Design

The present study follows a comparative research design to examine differences in life satisfaction between two age groups.

Tool

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by **Diener et al. (1985)** is a widely used measure of an individual's overall evaluation of life satisfaction. The scale contains five items, each rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The total score therefore ranges from 5 to 35, with higher scores reflecting greater satisfaction with life. Scores between 5 and 20 indicate low satisfaction, a score around 20 suggests a neutral level of satisfaction, and scores between 21 and 35 represent moderate to high satisfaction. The respondent's overall life satisfaction is determined by summing the ratings for all five items. The SWLS is simple to administer, easy to understand, and has been widely validated in research on well-being.

RESULT

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-value of Life Satisfaction among Early and Late Adolescents

	LIFE SATISFACTION			
	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
Early Adolescents	75	24.35	5.18	
Late Adolescents	75	22.32	6.10	2.19*

*p<0.05 (Significant)

As seen in the above table, the mean score of early adolescents is 24.35 and the mean score for late adolescents is 22.32. The obtained t-value is at 0.05 level. This reveals that there is a significant difference between early and late adolescents with regard to satisfaction in life.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study revealed that early adolescents have significantly higher life satisfaction than late adolescents. This supports the research hypothesis and aligns with previous findings (Goldbeck et al., 2007; Proctor et al., 2009). The decline in satisfaction during late adolescence may be attributed to increased academic challenges, identity formation concerns, peer pressure, and uncertainties related to career planning.

In early adolescence, family support, reduced responsibilities, and stable social environments contribute to higher satisfaction levels. As adolescents grow older, they encounter greater emotional and psychological demands, which may reduce their overall satisfaction with life.

The study reinforces the importance of supportive interventions, such as counselling programs, stress-management training, and positive youth development initiatives, particularly for late adolescents.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that life satisfaction significantly differs across developmental stages, with early adolescents reporting higher satisfaction than late adolescents. These findings highlight the need for targeted psychological support and guidance for older adolescents to help them manage academic, social, and emotional challenges effectively.

Limitations

1. The sample was limited to students from a specific geographic region.
2. Only one psychological variable (life satisfaction) was studied.
3. Self-report measures may include response bias.
4. Cross-sectional design does not assess long-term developmental trajectories.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Include a larger and more diverse sample from multiple regions.
2. Conduct longitudinal studies to track life satisfaction across adolescent years.
3. Examine other related variables, such as stress, social support, and mental health.
4. Compare findings across different socio-economic and cultural groups.

Implications

The findings can help:

- **Parents**, by encouraging emotional support and communication.
- **Teachers**, by promoting positive classroom environments.
- **Counsellors**, by designing age-appropriate mental health programs.
- **Schools/Colleges**, by implementing stress-management and well-being initiatives.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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