

Life satisfaction in middle and aging adults



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This is a study to find out the differences between middle adults and aging adults in their self esteem and what the relationship between self-esteem and life-satisfaction . There are 50 male (50%) and 50 female (50%) subjects, age ranged from 40 to 77 with a mean of 57. 6, 50% of participants is in middle age (Age from 40-59 years old) category (N= 50) while another 50% of them is in older age (Age 60 years old and above) category (N= 50). Most of the subject collected is Malaysian. Survey was conducted by researcher toward the subjects using Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) by Diener and colleague (1985) and also Self-esteem Rating Scale (SERS) (Nugent & Thomas, 1993). Independent sample t test showed that there was no significant difference between middle and old age adult in self-esteem. Correlation showed that high significant positive relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction.

As we know the elderly generation is getting more and more. Department of accounting and Statistic of Taiwan in 2005 said that the elderly population is increasing rapidly, with 9. 7% of the population currently over the age of 65 and has been predicted to increase to 14. 4% by the year 2020 (Chao and colleague 2006). So it is important to study about the elderly as one day from now, their population is getting more than the young generation. To make the society can function in order, we, as the younger generation has to facilitate their needs. This is a research to find out the self-esteem and life satisfaction in middle and aging adult.

We defined the middle age adult as adult who aged 40-59 and old adult or elderly is age 60 years and above. Adult from middle age are usually those who are preparing for the retiring and older age. During middle age,

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normally their children had grown up and ready to live home and be independent. Older age adult is elderly who usually had retired and enjoying the old age.

Self-esteem is mankind's most basic psychological needs (Lai & Colleague, 2009). Self-esteem also involves developing a sense of self-worth by feeling lovable and capable (Oesterreich, 2007). Self-esteem is also the feeling of self-worth and self-acceptance (Chao & colleagues, 2006). Here, we can see that in communication with the elderly, if they always blame or scold them self, probably their level is self-esteem is low because they don't have self worth. For the past ten years, researcher discovered that self-esteem is the key to well-being. To have self-esteem, we must learn to like ourselves and then finally love ourselves (Kirkpatrick, 2006). People with high self-esteem are more likable, attractive, have better relationship, and to make better impressions on others than people with low self-esteem (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003).

Life satisfaction is a circumstances or a result obtained through comparing someone expectations (desired) with possessions (gained) (Å-zer, 2004). Author Veenhoven defined life satisfaction as " the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole favourably."(Dockery, 2005).

When comparing adults from middle age and older age on their self esteem, there are always some others factor that affect their self-esteem. Problem face by adult of middle and old age is different. Older adults are more likely to have worse health than that of younger adult (Ho & colleague, 2009). So,

this means older people had the health problem which will lower their self-esteem as compare to middle age adults. Middle-age adults are also generally in good health(Li & Ferraro, 2006). Krause (1987) found that the relationship between stress and self-esteem is important factor influencing the self worth among older age adults. In the same study, is his study mention that Bengtson and colleague (1985) argue that in American Cultural, elderly people are usually viewed negatively due to their dependent, weak, sick and poor. This stressful event had lowering the self-esteem of the older age people (Krause, 1987). He also suggested that self esteem of older adult is increase when there is worth, caring, love and trust (Krause, 1987). With all the evident, we assume that older adults' has lower self esteem as compare to middle adults.

On another hand, some study found that middle-age adult had decrease interest in participating in volunteering social service while increase the interest at the later life (Li & Ferraro, 2006). The decreasing part has the possibility to lover the self esteem of middle age people and by increasing interest to participate, it will somehow improving the self-esteem of the older age adult.

When we look at the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, Puyenbroeck and Maes (2009) in their research cited that there are significant positive effects on self-esteem, life satisfaction, mood and depression. Factor that influence life satisfaction include personal traits such as self-esteem, physical health, financial recourse and others (Rogers, 1999). Chiang and colleagues (2007) said that aging is an important issue to be

concern to make sure the older people live as healthy individuals to enhance their self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Moreover, life satisfaction and self-esteem change their relative positions in comparison with each other across nations. Diener and Diener (1995) suggest that the relationship between self-esteem and satisfaction deserve further research as there is possibility that people from different cultural perceive life satisfaction differently which will made the result to oppose with the original. This is because they found that from their studies, life satisfaction and self-esteem change their relative positions in comparison with each other across nations(Diener & Diener, 1995).

In this study, the researcher is investigating are the differences between middle adults and aging adults in their self esteem and what is the relationship between self-esteem and life-satisfaction. From all the research available, the researcher made the assumption that older adults' has lower self esteem as they are facing many problems such as health, financial and stress.

Considering the available research reviewed above, two hypotheses were developed as following:

Hypothesis 1 : " Middle age adult had higher self-esteem than older adults."
and

Hypothesis 2 : " There is a positive relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction."

METHOD

Study Design

Survey was conducted by researcher toward the subjects using Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) by Diener and colleague (1985) and also Self-esteem Rating Scale (SERS) (Nugent & Thomas, 1993) Researcher will approach the subject and ask for permission. Consent from the subject was obtained before they start answering the survey.

The independent variable for the hypothesis is nationality (Malaysian or Arabs) and dependent variable is the social support perceived (Social Support Index).

Subjects

There are one hundred or 100 [50 male (50%) and 50 female (50%)] subjects participated in this studies. Their age ranged from 40 to 77 with a mean of 57. 6. There are 50% of participants is in middle age (Age from 40-59 years old) category (N= 50) and 50% of them is in older age (Age 60 years old and above) category (N= 50). Most of the subject collected is Malaysian. See Table 1.

Table 1.

Race and Gender distribution of participants

Age

Male (%)

Female (%)

Total (%)

Middle

25 (50%)

25(50%)

50 (100%)

Older

25 (50%)

25 (50%)

50 (100%)

Measurement Instruments

There are 2 measurement instrument being use in this study. The first one is Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The five item of this scale is part of the body if research on subjective well-being refers to the cognitive-judgemental aspects of general life satisfaction. SWLS also reveals the individual's own judgement of his or her quality of life. This question is very short yet uni-dimensional. Due to the reason satisfaction with life is often a key component of mental well-being; the SWLS may have clinical utility with a wide range of clients, including adolescent experiencing identity crises or adult undergoing midlife crisis.

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Subject will indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement on a 7-point Likert scale of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". All the items scores are summed for a total score that range from 5 to 35, higher score means more satisfaction with life. The 5 items of the scale were selected from a pool of 48 based on factor analysis. The instrument's internal consistency is excellent, with an alpha of .87. The test-retest reliability has a correlation of .82 for a 2 months period which is consider stable. In term of validity, this correlated with nine measures of subjective well-being for both college student samples. The scale was not correlated with a measure that affects intensity. It also correlates with self-esteem, a checklist of clinical symptoms, neuroticism, emotion and independent ratings of life satisfaction among the elderly.

The second measurement instrument is Self-Esteem Rating Scale (SERS) by Nugent and Thomas) colleague (1993). This is a 40 item instrument which was developed to provide a clinical measure of self-esteem that indicate problem on self esteem and also positive or non-problematic cases. The item is in the range of self-evaluation including overall self-worth, social competence, problem-solving ability, intellectual ability, self-competence, and worth relative to others people. This instrument is scored by scoring the items shown below of the measure as positive and negative. This item is summed in a total score ranging -120 to +120. Positive scores means more positive self-esteem and negative scores indicate more negative level of self-esteem. SERS has good internal consistency with an alpha of .97. The standard error of measurement is 5.67. In term of validity, it was reported to have good content and factorial validity. It also has good construct validity

with significant correlations with the Index of self-Esteem and the Generalized Contentment Scale (to measure depression), and low correlations with variety of demographic variables.

Procedure

A single survey was used to obtain information from subjects. Subjects were approached by the psychology students explaining the aims of the study and obtain their consent to participate in this study by completing consent form. After completing a demographic questionnaire, they received written instruction. All subjects are instructed to read the instruction before answering the study questions. Psychology students will guide the subjects along the survey. Subjects being reminded that they are free to terminate their participation at any time with no questions asked and also their rating would remain confidential. If they are not able to write or read in English, Psychology student will have to translate the question into the language that they understand which include mandarin and “hokkien” dialect and write on behalf of them.

RESULTS

An independent sample t test was used to find out self-esteem level between Middle and old age adults. The result obtained were no significant difference between middle and old age adult in self-esteem [$t(98) = 1.279, p > 0.05$]. The mean scores for middle age are 52.54 while old age is 45.26. This means either middle age or old age does not influence their self-esteem. Thus, the hypothesis 1 “Middle age adult had higher self-esteem than older adults” was rejected. See table 2.

Table 2.

Independent sample t-test depicting relationship between middle age and old age adults in self-esteem

Variable

Mean Scores

Middle Age

Old Age

t(98)

Social Support Index

52. 54

45. 26

1. 279

Note :

* $p < 0. 05$

To find out the relationship between Self-esteem and Life satisfaction, correlation test was used. The result indicated that there is high significant positive relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. ($r = . 429$, $p < 0. 01$). This means that a person who has high self-esteem will have higher level in life satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 accepted. See Table 3

Table 3.

Correlation depicting relationship between Self-esteem and Life satisfaction.

Self-esteem

. 429**

Life satisfaction

Note :

** p <0. 01

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to find out are there any differences between middle adults and aging adults in their self esteem and what is the relationship between self-esteem and life-satisfaction the role of friends and family among different cultural.

The result indicated that either middle age or old age does not influence their self-esteem. This might because when the hypothesis was set, it was based on the third factor such as health problem. For example, we know that alcohol consumption and illicit drug use will affect the health of elderly and later on affect their self-esteem. But study found that self-esteem was negatively associated with alcohol and illicit drug use (Kavas, 2009). The 1st hypothesis was rejected.

The second hypothesis was accepted. A person who has high self-esteem will have higher level in life satisfaction. Research showed that Life satisfaction was significantly correlated with self satisfaction (Diener & Diener, 1995).

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But we must be aware of the nation or cultural of the subject which might affect the result (Diener & Diener, 1995)..

The strength of this study is it was has an equal number of Middle age and Older age subject, this had contributed to the accuracy and reliability of the result. There is few limitation of the study which we wish to highlighted. As majority of the middle age and older age people around us do not understand English, the studies should be translated to the local language before approaching them. Translation by psychology student into different language had cost the reliability accuracy. Some of the elderly do not went to school do not went to school and are not able to write or read, psychology student have to write on behalf of them. Some elderly people feel that the survey is to judge them and they are afraid of giving true answer. Beside that the Self-Esteem rating scale instrument is not so suitable to use on elderly because it was too long. Future research on the similar topic should be done on more specific on the elderly who are educated or non-educated because this is another important factor that will affect self-esteem and life satisfaction.

To conclude, this study is to find out are there any differences between middle adults and aging adults in their self esteem and what is the relationship between self-esteem and life-satisfaction the role of friends and family among different cultural. By doing survey using Satisfaction with Life Scale and Self-Esteem Rating Scale, the result indicates that either middle age or old age does not influence their self-esteem and person who has high self-esteem will have higher level in life satisfaction. This study might be

useful for researchers who wish to study about middle and old age adult in term of life satisfaction and self-esteem.