

SELF-ESTEEM, LIFE SATISFACTION AND NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT AMONG PEOPLE IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

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Abstract: One of the most widespread theoretical concepts in psychology and psychotherapy is the rational-emotive theory. It provides explanations of how the individual evaluates the things that happen to him or her through the system of beliefs, and this makes it different in relation to other cognitive-behavioral theories and psychotherapeutic directions. The system of beliefs can be rational and irrational. Rational beliefs are characterized by: logical consistencies, flexibility and correspond with reality, while irrational beliefs are characterized by: logical inconsistencies, absolutism and do not correspond with reality. Self-esteem is often seen as a conditional concept which implies that a person is respected on the basis of the good things that he or she has done. A healthy alternative is unconditional self-acceptance. The need for achievement has its own irrational component because a person has a constant tendency toward personal achievements that will reflect his value as being. People in their early adulthood have a number of challenges that they face in everyday life, and they are very often related to the degree that reflects the respect towards oneself, the way in which life lives and how satisfied they are, as well as the intrinsic need for achievement. What was important to determine is how irrational beliefs affect the self-esteem of an early-aged person, the connection of self-esteem with life satisfaction, as well as gaining insight into whether the need for achievement with its irrational nature influences positively or negative for people who are in early adulthood. The survey included 100 respondents aged 30 to 40, of whom 50 male and 50 female. The following measuring instruments were used: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Life Satisfaction Scale and General Attitude and Beliefs Scale. From the obtained results, we can see the following: self-esteem is in a negative significant correlation with irrational beliefs ($p < .01$); self-esteem is in a positive correlation with life satisfaction ($p < .01$) and self-esteem is in a negative significant correlation with the need to achieve ($p < .05$).

Keywords: irrational beliefs, self-esteem, life satisfaction, need for achievement, early adulthood.

1. INTRODUCTION

In psychological literature can be found many theories that give an explanation of what a person really is. One comprehensive definition states: "Personality is a set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively durable, and which influence the interaction and adaptation of the individual to the intrapsychic, physical and social environment" (Larsen & Buss, 2005, p. 4). Personality as a whole can be observed from several aspects (i.e. domains). These are: dispositional, biological, intrapsychic, cognitive and socio-cultural domain.

In order to clarify the essence of this paper, it is important to give an explanation for the cognitive domain, because the guiding concept that has been elaborated (the system of beliefs) belongs to the cognitive part of the person. Important components of the cognitive domain are: perception, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and other conscious processes. Within this domain of personality, it is emphasized to understand what an individual has experienced. One kind of people's perceptions relate to cognitive experiences, i.e. what people perceive and how they interpret the events around them, what are their goals and ways to achieve them. The central place in this paper gets the notion of the belief system. There are two systems of belief in man, which are actually part of the nature of every human being, which are: rational and irrational (Ellis, 1962, 1971). Rational belief system is characterized by following criteria: internal consistency (logical and coherent), empirically valid, not authoritarian (conditional and relative), results with adaptive emotions and helps us to realize our goals, while irrational belief is: logically is not consistent, it is not supported by evidence, absolutistic and dogmatic, results with disturbing emotions that are not adaptive and does not help in the realization of the set goals (Walen, DiGiuseppe, & Dryden, 1992). In addition, it is important to note that there are three basic psychological aspects in people: thoughts, feelings and attitudes. All three aspects are intertwined and interconnected, which means that change in one aspect will bring change in others (Walen, DiGiuseppe, & Dryden, 1992).

Viewed historically, the concept of life satisfaction has undergone several stages in order to form it fully and explain it. There are many explanations and definitions of the concept of life satisfaction, which is not easy and simple to understand. The objective explanation of this concept, further complicates the fact that there are individual criteria according to which people assess the level of satisfaction from life. The satisfaction of life depends on the cognitive processes of the individual's personal judgment through which he or she assesses the quality of life

according to previously personally set criteria (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). In addition to the previously determined, the degree of satisfaction from life is determined by the cognitive evaluations and the emotional perceptions of the individual (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002).

In psychology, for many years, it has been known, studied and defended the concept of self-esteem. According to Rosenberg, which was one of the first who was exploring this concept, he concluded that self-esteem was an individual overall positive evaluation of the image for himself/herself (Rosenberg, 1965). Coopersmith (1967) said that self-esteem is based on someone's own judgment through which a person evaluates his or her abilities and capacities according to his personally determined standards and values, and in that way estimates his value as a being. Cognitive perspectives offer a different explanation of the essence of self-esteem, which is that it largely depends on cognitive patterns of thinking and evaluating events, and the whole process takes place on a conscious level. According to Albert Ellis, self-esteem that is conditioned is the greatest abnormality known to man (Ellis, 1994). In rational-emotional theory, theorists distinguish self-esteem (which is conditioned by success) and unconditional self-acceptance (man is accepted as he or she is, whether he or she has achieved success or not) (Neenan & Dryden, 1999). Unconditional acceptance of oneself means acceptance as who you are, regardless of whether you have acted correctly or not in a situation and whether the others accept and respect you as who you are (Dryden & Neenan, 2004; Ellis, 1994). According to rational-emotional theory, keeping the focus to increase self-esteem rather than unconditional acceptance of oneself as the dominant concept in human thinking, is unhealthy for the following reasons: (a) Self-esteem is an irrational process due to the fact that there are no objective and logical criteria to compare personality; (b) Focusing on self-esteem makes the person vulnerable to possible rejection of life situations in which he or she could be; and (c) Self-esteem can lead the person to compare with others and develop vulnerability to criticism rather than building healthy relationships with others (Chamberlain & Haaga, 2001; Davies, 2006; Ellis, 1994). Very often, someone tells specific advice to someone in order to raise his or her level of self-esteem. Interventions or verbalized speech aimed at raising the level of self-esteem include ungrounded and detrimental indication of the individual that is valuable and/or special for two reasons: (a) because they are proven successful in achieving the desired results achieved before and (b) coaching unfounded and/or global self-efficacy, according to the principle: "You can do that!" or "You can achieve whatever you want!" (DiGiuseppe, 2010).

2. METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted on 100 respondents (50 men and 50 women) aged 30 to 40 years. Variables that were used in this research: self – esteem (Individual overall positive evaluation of oneself – conditional concept), life satisfaction (Personal judgment of someone's quality of life according to previously personally set criteria) and need for achievement (Irrational construct and process that is characterized with intense, prolonged and repeated efforts to accomplish something, especially something difficult). These questionnaires were used: Questionnaire for obtaining demographic data, Scale of Life Satisfaction (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), Scale of Self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), General Scale of Attitudes and Beliefs (Bernard, 1988).

The following hypotheses were tested:

- Hypothesis 1: There is a connection between the degree of self-esteem and irrational beliefs among people in early adulthood.
- Hypothesis 2: People with a higher degree of self-esteem have a higher degree of satisfaction in life.
- Hypothesis 3: People with a higher need for achieving have lower self-esteem.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Demographic characteristic of sample

Regarding gender, the number of respondents is divided (N = 50 male and 50 female). As for education, 25% of the respondents have secondary education, while 75% of the respondents have a university degree. In terms of employment status, 86% are employed, while 14% are not in employment. Regarding marital status, 66% are married, 27% are single, 5% live with a permanent partner, while 2% are divorced.

3.2. Results from tested hypotheses

Table 1. Results from tested hypotheses.

	Irrational beliefs	Life satisfaction	Need for achievement
Self-esteem	-,431**	,341**	-,255*

*p<0.05 level (2-tailed)

**p<0.01 level (2-tailed)

4. DISCUSSION

As we can see from the results, all tested hypotheses have been confirmed. In relation for Hypothesis 1, a result that is given indicates a significant negative correlation of irrational beliefs with self-esteem. Thus, the result obtained points to the fact that individuals who evaluate reality through the prism of irrational beliefs, they who have dominant irrational beliefs, have a lower degree of self-esteem. This means if irrational beliefs are present to a lesser extent, then the expectation is that the level of self-esteem be at a higher level. Knowing the conditional and illogical nature of irrational beliefs, we can expect the obtained result. Conditional respect for oneself on the basis of achieved success, the constant satisfaction of one's desire, the increased need for achievement, the need for approval by others, and similar concepts, are one of the main reasons for the low degree of self-esteem. In the face of early adulthood, this conditionality of self-esteem may occur in earlier development periods, especially in adolescence and early adulthood. People in this periods can learn that they should value themselves and respect themselves only in situations in which they acted nicely in interpersonal relations or has achieved a personal success based on personal criteria. This way of gaining self-esteem means that a person has absolutely rigid requirements (must, should) towards himself/herself, the others and the world in general (everything else) and clearly visible logical inconsistency with regard to the current events he/she faces. In addition, people in an early adulthood often experience the degree of self-esteem based on other aspects such as their financial incomes and comparison with others in this regard, the working position, the extent of social interactions with the cohort, and so on, and on the basis of this, they often perform generalized conclusions about their own value and the level of self-esteem.

From the tested Hypothesis 2, we got the conclusion that with the increasing the level of self-esteem, the life satisfaction grows. Beside conditioned self-esteem, on the other side there is the concept of unconditional self-acceptance, the world and others, which in its essence contains the thesis that acceptance of oneself, the world and others should be by accepting all positive and negative features. If we take into account the obtained result from the tested Hypothesis 1, it will be noted that what is obtained by the second hypothesis is expected in some way. Taking as relevant the fact that the presence of irrational beliefs affects self-esteem, that is, their low presence affects the high level of self-respect that a person has, and if such a connection is consistently present to the person, it is expected that the level of satisfaction from life is greater. The degree of satisfaction from life presents one final result of accumulated positive and negative experiences while assessing them in terms of how (not)favorable to the person. If a person assesses his value and the degree of self-esteem on the basis of logical and non-absolute requirements, that is, he does not generalize the actions of the entire person and approaches rationally to things in life, then life is expected to be satisfactory and fulfilled.

Regarding the tested Hypothesis 3, a result that is given indicates the influence of the irrational nature of the need to attain the level of self-esteem. The beliefs arising in every challenge that stand before the individual and lead to the person having one goal that must be achieved and that is achieving a good result or success in what works, and without accepting the eventual possibility of failure, lead to low self-esteem and often depreciation of themselves and their capacities.

5. CONCLUSION

The constant knowledge we receive about the cause-effect relationships of the psychological conditions led us to find in this paper the reason for the degree in which self-esteem and the satisfaction of life arise, and to find out how the system of beliefs in the early adulthood, which can be rational and irrational, affects those two aspects. The self-esteem that is conditioned, reflects the tendency of an individual to evaluate the things through an irrational prism that he/she does for himself/herself and with others, and by itself, it also represents a kind of psychopathological phenomenon. One of the key things is that many people thought that self-esteem must be gained through achievement, which means successful accomplishment of certain goals, which is an indication of its conditionality. Another important thing about self-esteem that complements the previously mentioned is that when self-esteem is based on the personal need for achievement, successes must be repeated over and over again, because the degree of self-esteem will not last based on that success. Knowing the nature of both rational and irrational beliefs, it is easy to guess what the outcome would be when evaluations were evaluated through rational, and what if they were evaluated through irrational beliefs. Logic and non-absolutism as components of the rational way of evaluating things provide a relatively high degree of satisfaction from life, contrary to the logical inconsistencies and the absolutism of the irrational beliefs which are potential reasons of the low degree of satisfaction, because of the attitude that a person must always get what he wants and realize what he/she has set for the purpose. After analyzing the tested hypotheses, it can be concluded that significant results have been obtained that are in favor of what has been established in the scientific literature. The synthesis of the previous theoretical frameworks that can

be found in the psychological literature, the already existing research, as well as what was obtained by this research, has been put into this paper which gives a modest contribution to the psychological literature.

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