

Contentment and Self – Esteem among Smokers and Non – Smokers

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Abstract

Contentment and Self-esteem are important indicators of psychological well-being and they impact health-related behaviours. Although smoking has been linked to detrimental psychological effects, there has been no national-level study on these variables in combination. The present national quantitative study aims to examine the relationship between contentment and self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers. It highlights whether smoking affects these psychological factors (Panchal, K. K., Tewari, P., & Singh, S. K., 2024). Generalized Contentment Scale (GCS) (Walter W. Hudson, 1993) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg M, 1965) are used to administer the study. The study is to understand the strength of correlation between contentment and self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers. Standardized questionnaires are chosen and distributed among 60 participants. Quantitative analysis and Pearson's correlation are constructed to find out the significant relationship between contentment and self-esteem. T tests are administered to find out the impact of these variables in smokers and non-smokers. The study concludes that contentment and self-esteem are correlated. While contentment levels show no significant difference, self-esteem differs significantly between smokers and non-smokers.

Keywords: self-esteem, contentment, smokers, non-smokers

Introduction

More than a century later, the definition of self-esteem that was offered by James continues to be relevant such that self-esteem is generally considered to be the evaluative aspect of self-knowledge that reflects the extent to which people like themselves and believe they are competent (e.g., Brown, 1998; Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). High self-esteem refers to a highly favorable view of the self, whereas low self-esteem refers to evaluations of the self that are either uncertain or outright negative. The degree to which the qualities and characteristics contained in one's self-concept are perceived to be positive. It reflects a person's physical self-image, view of their accomplishments and capabilities and values and perceived success in living up to them, as well as the ways in which others view and respond to that person. The more positive the cumulative perception of these qualities and characteristics, the higher one's self-esteem. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself. Individuals tend to show a desire for high levels of self-esteem and engage in a variety of strategies to maintain or enhance their feelings of self-worth. Positive reinforcement, supportive relationships and achievements contribute to the development of high self-esteem. The variables self-esteem and contentment were chosen by the researchers as it was a less explored combination. High self-esteem and a sense of contentment have been linked to better physical health outcomes.

Problem of the Study

- To determine any relationship between self-esteem and contentment among smokers and non-smokers.
- To compare the contentment among smokers and non-smokers.
- To compare the self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers.

Significance of the Study

Smoking represents a significant global health crisis, characterized by profound implications for both physical and mental health, which are especially acute among younger demographics such as adolescents and young adults. The younger generation is fond of smoking (K. Panchal, K. & Tewari, Poonam & Singh, Sudhir., 2024). Psychological factors such as self-esteem and life contentment play an important role in understanding smoking behaviour. Research suggests that individuals experiencing anxiety, depression and emotional distress may use smoking as a coping mechanism, while smoking itself negatively affects

mental health and psychological well-being (K. Panchal, K. & Tewari, Poonam & Singh, Sudhir.,2024). The effects of smoking on various psychological variables have been a topic of interest in recent years with studies investigating the relationship between smoking and mental health, including self-esteem and self-efficacy behaviors (Licu, Monica & Ionescu, Claudiu Gabriel & Suci, Maria., 2023). The significance of studying self-esteem and life contentment in smokers versus non-smokers lies in its potential to reveal the psychological impact of smoking behaviors. Understanding the relationship between smoking, self-esteem and life contentment can contribute to more effective smoking cessation and prevention strategies by addressing both psychological and behavioural factors. This study focuses on Indian adolescents and young adults aged 13-30 years, comparing smokers and non-smokers to explore how smoking influences psychological well-being within the Indian cultural context. The findings may help develop culturally relevant interventions that promote smoking cessation, improve self-esteem and enhance overall life satisfaction (Licu, Monica & Ionescu, Claudiu Gabriel & Suci, Maria., 2023).

Definition of Key Terms

Self-esteem refers to "the ratio of our actual achievements to our pretensions". It emphasizes that self-worth depends on the success one attains relative to personal aspirations. Contentment is a low-intensity, pleasant emotion that arises when we perceive our environment to be complete as it is, without the need for modifications or additions. Smokers are "individuals who regularly inhale tobacco smoke through cigarettes, cigars or pipes." Non-smokers are defined as "persons who do not engage in smoking behaviors, including those who have never smoked."

Review of Literature

Gupta and Mehta (2011) conducted a study titled Effect of Smoking on Self-Esteem and Personality Type: A Study on Engineering Students. The study used a survey research design and comprised a sample of 100 engineering students both smokers and non-smokers with 25 females and 75 males. The findings indicated that smokers were more likely than non-smokers to exhibit Type A personality traits and reported higher levels of self-esteem.

Karki (2019) conducted a study titled Perceived Risks and Benefits of Smoking Among Male College Students to examine attitudes and beliefs regarding smoking among male college

students in India. The study included 111 participants aged 18 years and above with 61 smokers and 50 non-smokers from Bangalore, India. Participants completed the Attitudes and Beliefs About the Consequences of Smoking Scale to evaluate their perceptions of the risks and benefits associated with smoking. The findings have shown significant differences between smokers and non-smokers in three domains of perceived risks and benefits: health risks, emotional benefits and self-confidence benefits. The study also shed light on how attitudes and beliefs regarding smoking shift after cigarette experimentation and regular smoking.

Mujidin, Rustam and Rizqyanto (2024) conducted a study titled *The Role of Self-Esteem and Self-Control on Smoking Behavior in Men: A Case Study Among College Students* to examine the influence of self-esteem and self-control on smoking behaviour among college students in Yogyakarta. The study used a cross-sectional research design with random sampling and included 75 college students who were active smokers. The findings revealed that students with higher levels of self-esteem were more likely to lessen or quit smoking, but more self-control related to a lesser inclination to participate in smoking habit. The study concluded that self-esteem and self-control are important factors in determining smoking behaviour among college students.

Foley (1997) conducted a study titled *An Examination of the Differences in Self-Concept, Self-Esteem and Locus of Control in Adolescent Female Smokers and Non-Smokers* to investigate the psychological differences between adolescent female smokers and non-smokers in rural Ontario. The study used a descriptive-comparative research design and a stratified random sampling technique to select 263 female secondary school students aged 14-18 years. The findings have shown significant differences between smokers and non-smokers with smokers reporting lower self-concept, lower self-esteem and a more external locus of control. The study also found significant relationships between smoking behaviour and a variety of demographic variables that emphasizes the need for further research on smoking among adolescents.

Fithria, Tahlil, Adlim, Jannah, Darmawati, Dirna and Armanda (2018) conducted a study titled *Psychological Well-Being Among Adolescent Smokers* to assess the psychological well-being of adolescent smokers. The study examined six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in

life and self-acceptance. The findings suggested that the overall psychological well-being of adolescent smokers was low (70.8%). Although many participants claimed high autonomy (55.4%), they showed low levels of environmental mastery (53.8%), personal growth (55.4%), positive relationships with others (55.4%), purpose in life (55.4%) and self-acceptance (55.4%). The study also suggested that teachers work with parents to help adolescents deal with developmental challenges and reduce anxiety.

Another research was conducted by Jinadu, Salmiah and Azuhairi (2016) on a study titled Association Between Self-Esteem and Smoking Among Religious School Students in Petaling District, Selangor to examine the relationship between self-esteem and smoking among secondary school students. According to the Youth Behaviour Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (YBRFSS, 2011) the nationwide smoking prevalence among Malaysian government secondary school students in Forms 1, 2 and 4 was 9.1% for ever smokers and 8.7% for current smokers. In Petaling District, Selangor, 10.1% of students had smoked at least once with smoking being more common among males. The data revealed that age, gender and low self-esteem were all significant predictors of smoking behaviour among students.

Method

Aim

To examine the relationship between contentment and self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers.

Objectives

1. To find if the variables self-esteem and contentment are correlated.
2. To evaluate the self-esteem levels of smokers and non-smokers.
3. To evaluate the contentment levels of smokers and non-smokers.

Hypotheses

H₁: There is no significant relationship between contentment and self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers.

H₂: There is no significant difference in contentment levels between smokers and non-smokers.

H₃: There is no significant difference in self-esteem levels between smokers and non-smokers.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between contentment and self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers. Data was collected through an online survey using Google Forms.

Participants and Sampling Method

The research design is quantitative. This study involved a total of 60 participants from different recognised institutions. The samples were collected through online platforms using probability sampling. Participants were provided with the instructions and consent form along with the questionnaires. Participant's comfortable mother tongue was also used to furnish necessary instructions. Once the participant had given their consent and the questionnaires were filled out, they were thanked for their participation and provided with a mode of contact for any further enquiries.

Inclusion Criteria

- Males and females aged 15 or above
- Students enrolled in higher education institutions
- Individuals identifying as either smokers or non-smokers

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals below the age of 15
- Non-students within the specified age range.
- Individuals who did not provide consent for participation.
- Former smokers who have successfully quit.

Assessment Tools

Two standardized psychological scales were used to assess the variables of interest:

1. Generalized Contentment Scale (GCS) – Developed by Walter W. Hudson (1993), this scale was used to measure the levels of contentment among participants.
2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) – Created by Rosenberg M (1965), this scale was utilized to assess participant's self-esteem levels.

Generalized Contentment Scale (GCS)

- A 25-item scale evaluating client responses to treatment for non-psychotic depression, assessing overall contentment and well-being.

- Reliability: Excellent internal consistency (mean alpha .92) and short-term stability (test-retest correlation .94).
- Validity: Good concurrent validity with significant correlations to the Beck Depression Inventory and Zung Depression Inventory, effectively discriminating between clinically depressed and non-depressed groups.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES):

- A 10-item scale measuring global self-worth using a 4-point Likert scale.
- Reliability: High internal consistency (Guttman scale coefficient .92) and excellent stability (test-retest correlations .85 and .88).
- Validity: Strong correlations with other self-esteem measures, and predictive validity correlating with depression and anxiety.

Ethical Considerations: Participants were randomly selected, provided informed consent, ensured privacy, and could withdraw without penalty. The study maintained confidentiality and anonymity.

Data Collection Procedure: Consent forms accompanied questionnaires distributed via Google Forms to various institutions in India.

Scoring: Average scores for both scales were calculated separately for smokers and non-smokers by summing responses on the respective Likert scales, with higher scores indicating greater contentment or self-esteem.

Statistical Analysis

Analysis of the raw scores was done using the SPSS statistical software. The following statistical analyses were done:

Pearson's correlation: used to measure the degree of the relationship between the two variables, Self-Esteem and Contentment to test Hypothesis 1.

t-test: used to compare the means of the two groups (smokers & non-smokers) for each variable to determine any differences in the levels of each variable, self-esteem and contentment to test Hypotheses 2 and 3.

Results

The difference between the two groups, smokers & non-smokers were compared based on the two variables and the results are discussed below:

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Table 1: Relationship between Self Esteem and Contentment among smokers and non-smokers

		Contentment Score	Self-esteem score
Contentment score	Pearson Correlation	1	.366
	Sig. (2 tailed)		.004
	N	60	60
Self-esteem score	Pearson Correlation	.366	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.004	
	N	60	60

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. (2 Tailed)

Table 1 shows the relationship between contentment and self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers. It indicates the Pearson correlation, significance (two-tailed) and the sample size, N.

Table 2: Contentment among smokers and non-smokers

Variable	Group	Sample Size	Mean	SD	t-Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Contentment	Smoker	30	96.9000	15.25496	1.341	0.185
	Non-smoker	30	92.4333	10.00236		

Table 2 shows the comparison of contentment among smokers and non-smokers. It indicates the sample size, mean, SD, t-value and significance (two-tailed). The sample size of smokers and non-smokers was 30. Smokers had a mean of 96.9000 with SD of 15.25496 while non-smokers had a mean score of 92.4333 with SD of 10.00236. The t-value was 1.341 at a significance of 0.185.

Table 3: Self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers

Variable	Group	Sample Size	Mean	SD	t-Value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self-esteem	Smoker	30	23.5000	8.07615		
	Non-smoker	30	29.0667	3.72256	3.425	0.001

Table 3 shows the comparison of self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers. It indicates the sample size, mean, SD, t-value and significance (two-tailed). The sample size of smokers and non-smokers was 30. Smokers had a mean of 23.5000 with SD of 8.07615 while non-smokers had a mean score of 29.0667 with SD of 3.72256. The t-value was -3.425 at a significance of 0.001.

Discussion

Table 1 represents the correlation between self-esteem and contentment among smokers and non-smokers. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between self-esteem and contentment among smokers and non-smokers. The results revealed that there is a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.01$, two-tailed), suggest that higher self-esteem is associated with the greater contentment across both groups. In the light of supporting evidence, we reject the null hypothesis. Previous research showed similar results. Dina Amalia, Shams Ur Rehman Khan and Chee Chew Sim (2016) analyzed the differences in stress and self-esteem between smoking and non-smoking Acehnese teenagers. Teenage smoking is a growing public health problem worldwide and research has long suggested that psychological factors like stress and self-esteem play a role in shaping this behavior. Adolescents deal with many pressures in life socially, emotionally and academically and some cope by turning to smoking or using it to fit in with those around them. Self-esteem or how a person views their own worth and capabilities heavily influences the choices teenagers make and how they manage their emotions. Those with lower self-esteem are often more easily swayed by peer pressure and more prone to risky behaviors such as smoking. With this one study focused on teenagers in Aceh, Indonesia to find out whether smokers and non-smokers differed in their levels of stress and self-esteem.

Table 2 compares the contentment levels of smokers and non-smokers. Smokers had a slightly higher average contentment score of 96.90 compared to 92.43 for non-smokers. The

smokers scores were less consistent with some feeling very content and others much less so reflected in their higher standard deviation of 15.25 against 10.00 for non-smokers. The statistical results showed that this difference was not significant with a t-value of 1.341 and a significance value of 0.185, both exceeding the 0.05 cutoff. This means that smoking status does not appear to meaningfully affect how content a person feels. Panchal, Tewari, and Singh (2024) found that self-esteem and life satisfaction go hand in hand among college students, regardless of whether they smoke or not. Interestingly, their study found no notable difference in either self-esteem or contentment between smokers and non-smokers. The present study found how clear and significant difference in self-esteem between the two groups ($p = 0.001$). This disagreement between the two studies reveals that smoking may affect self-esteem differently depending on who is being studied how the research is carried out and the broader environment in which people live.

Table 3 shows how self-esteem scores differ between smokers and non-smokers The results indicate that smokers have a slightly lower self-esteem mean score of 23.5000 with a standard deviation (SD) of 8.07615 compared to non-smokers who have a higher mean score of 29.0667 and a smaller standard deviation of 3.72256. This means non-smokers tend to feel better about themselves than smokers do. The results of the t-test, which shows that t-value of 3.425 indicate that this difference in self-esteem levels between smokers and non-smokers is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). The gap in self-esteem between the two groups appears to reflect an actual difference, not a random fluctuation. This result shows what has been found before. Abernathy, Massad and Romano-Dwyer (1995) studied adolescents and found that self-esteem could play a role in whether someone smokes. Their work supports the idea seen here that people with lower self-esteem may be more prone to smoking.

Summary

This study aimed to explore the relationship between contentment and self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers. A total of 60 participants were surveyed using the Generalized Contentment Scale and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Pearson's correlation and independent samples t-tests were used for statistical analysis. The study found a correlation between self-esteem and contentment. However, while contentment levels did not differ significantly between smokers and non-smokers, self-esteem levels showed a significant difference between the two groups.

Tenability of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Acceptance/Rejection
There is no significant relationship between contentment and self-esteem among smokers and non-smokers.	Rejected
There is no significant difference in contentment levels between smokers and non-smokers.	Accepted
There is no significant difference in self-esteem levels between smokers and non-smokers.	Rejected

Conclusion

The study revealed a correlation between self-esteem and contentment. However, while contentment levels showed no significant difference between smokers and non-smokers, self-esteem levels exhibited a significant difference between the two groups.

Implications of the Study

The results indicate that self-esteem and contentment share a relationship, though not a strong one. While contentment levels do not significantly differ between smokers and non-smokers, smoking status does influence self-esteem. This suggests that interventions aimed at improving self-esteem should focus on broader psychological and environmental factors rather than solely addressing smoking behaviour. Future mental health programs should emphasize personal development, resilience and positive self-perception to enhance overall well-being. The findings align with previous research that suggests self-esteem is influenced by various external factors such as social environment and lifestyle choices.

Limitations of the Study

The study's relatively small sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, self-reported data may be influenced by biases such as social desirability. Future research should include larger and more diverse populations, as well as longitudinal studies to examine how self-esteem and contentment change over time.

Future Directions

Further research should investigate other psychological and social factors that may influence self-esteem and contentment, such as stress, peer influence and socio-economic

background. Comparative studies across different demographic groups may also provide deeper insights into the factors affecting these psychological variables. Expanding the research to include other lifestyle behaviours could help develop more comprehensive well-being interventions.

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