

**Psychological Factors Influencing Life Satisfaction of Undergraduates in Ekiti State  
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**ABSTRACT**

This study was designed to assess the psychological factors influencing life satisfaction of undergraduates. The instruments used were Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), Rosenberge Self-esteem Scale (RSS), and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). A total number of 190 participants were purposively selected across various faculties in Ekiti State University. Four hypotheses were tested using Independent t-test to find the effects of perceived stress, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem on life satisfaction. Multiple regression was used to find the joint and individual influences of these variables. The results showed that there is no significant influence of perceived stress on life satisfaction ( $t(75) = 1.23, p = .22, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.14, 4.83]$ ). There is no significant influence of self-esteem on life satisfaction ( $t(51) = -1.31, p = .20, 95\% \text{ CI } [-5.28, 1.11]$ ), and there is no significant joint influence of perceived stress, emotional intelligence and self-esteem on life satisfaction ( $F(3,187) = 1.79, p = .15, R^2 = .03$ ). Additionally, perceived stress ( $\beta = .07, p = .33$ ), emotional intelligence ( $\beta = .14, p = .054$ ) and self-esteem ( $\beta = .02, p = .83$ ) did not have independent influences on life satisfaction. Implications of the present findings for future research are discussed, as well as potential interventions for improving life satisfaction.

**Key Words:** Perceived stress, Emotional intelligence, Self-esteem, Life satisfaction, Undergraduates.

## INTRODUCTION

Diener (1984) defined life satisfaction as “a cognitive judgmental global evaluation of one’s life. It may be influenced by affect but is not itself a direct measure of emotion”. The definition highlights the distinction between the sub-categories of subjective well-being; the evaluation of life satisfaction involves a judgmental process that differs from that involved when reporting affect as it requires a conscious, cognitive assessment of life circumstances and a comparison of these to a subjectively set standard (Pavot & Diener, 1993). A greater amount of discrepancy between the set standard and one’s actual standing means less happiness.

To say that one is satisfied with life would generate a lot of questions and arguments such as, is it well with everybody? Are humans truly satisfied? What percentage of satisfaction counts as real and absolute satisfaction? Over time researchers have opined that life satisfaction involves a satisfaction from the present life, a desire to change their life, satisfaction from the past life, satisfaction towards the future and the ideas of relative past about that person’s life (Diener, 1994). Likewise satisfaction could be viewed as an emotional and intrinsic recognition process in which a mental construction of an individual and its development are involved (Herberg, Mauser & Snyderman, 2005).

Perceived stress is described as the appraisal of the situation in a person’s life as generating any mental, emotional, or physical strain, and any factor that threatens the health of the body or has an adverse effect on its functioning. Emotional intelligence is the ability for one to integrate another’s emotion to his for optimal performance, those with high emotional intelligence are always with optimal life satisfaction due to their ability to consider others’ intelligence (Brackett, Mayer & Warner, 2004). Self-esteem is also an important factor that determines life satisfaction of individuals; it is defined as the personal evaluation which an individual makes of her or himself, their sense of their own worth, excessively low self-esteem is regarded as indicating a likelihood of psychological disturbance, and it’s particularly characteristic of depression (Zeidner, Mathews, Roberts, 2012).

## **METHODS**

### **Research design**

The present study is reliant on the Expo-facto design. This is because some important variables in this study cannot be manipulated. The study also made use of survey method to gather data from subjects who are thought to have desired information. The questionnaire included 41 questions adopted from four different scales which are, Perceived Stress Scale (10-item), Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (16-item), Rosenberge Self-Esteem Scale (10-item), and Satisfaction With Life Scale (5-tem). These scales were used to measure Perceived Stress, Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, and Life Satisfaction, respectively.

### **Participants and Sampling**

A total of one hundred and ninety (190) respondents were purposively selected in various faculties across Ekiti State University campus. The faculties are; Arts, Education, Engineering, Law, Social Sciences, Management Science, Sciences and Agricultural sciences where each Faculty included 23 respondents except the Social Sciences and Education which included 24 respondents.

### **Research Instruments**

Four main instruments were used. These are:

1. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) 5-item version.
2. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
3. Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)
4. Rosenberg self-esteem scale

- **Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) 5-item version.**

This scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985). In this scale, a 5-item scale is designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction (not a measure of either positive or negative affect). Participants indicate how much they agree or

disagree with each of the 5 item using a 7-point scale that ranges from 7 strongly agree to 1 strongly disagree.

### **Psychometric properties**

The SWLS was included in Statistics Netherlands' 2010 Perceptions Survey ('Onderzoek Belevingen'). The sample consists of 340 people aged 18 years and older.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Correlation of the PSS to other measures of similar symptoms ranges between .52-.76 (Cohen et al., 1983). Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein (1983) reported Cronbach's  $\alpha$  between .84-.86 for the PSS.

Test-retest reliability for the PSS was .85

- **Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS)**

The scale is a 16-item self-report scale developed and validated by Law and Wong (2002) based on Davies (1998) four dimensional definition of emotional intelligence. It assesses emotional intelligence competencies in the four areas as follows:

- Self-Emotional appraisal (SEA) with test item numbers 1-4
- Others-Emotions Appraisal (OEA) with test item numbers 5-8
- Use of Emotion (UOE) with test item numbers 9-12
- Regulation of Emotion (ROE) with test item numbers 13-16

The answers are categorized with a 5-Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

### **Validity and Reliability**

The construct validity of the WLEIS was examined by using principal component analysis with varimax rotation and examination of scree plot. This method aimed to replicate the four-factor structure as proposed by Wong and Law (2002). Measurement of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) yielded the value of  $KMO = 0.87$ . According to Brace et al. (2009), factor analysis can be done if Bartlett Sphericity is significant. Results of principal

component analysis with varimax rotation and scree plot successfully extracted four factors which contributed a total of 75.1% variance and yielded loadings between 0.60 and 0.88. The four factors extracted replicated the same four factors as proposed by the WLEIS. Based on the results, Factor 3 was similar with self-emotional appraisal (SEA), Factor 1 (others' emotional appraisal; OEA), Factor 4 (regulation of emotion; ROE) and Factor 2 (use of emotion; UOE).

Correlations were also conducted to examine the relationships among the four dimensions and results obtained showed that all the dimensions significantly correlated with each dimension with  $r=0.46$ ,  $p < 0.01$  between SEA and OEA,  $r=0.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$  between SEA and ROE,  $r=0.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$  between SEA and UOE,  $r=0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$  between OEA and ROE,  $r=0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$  between OEA and UOE, and  $r=0.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$  between ROE and UOE. The significant correlations indicated that all dimensions are related to one another which meant that it validly measures the same construct which is emotional intelligence.

The concurrent validity of the WLEIS in measuring emotional intelligence was examined by correlating it with the criteria of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and life satisfaction. Results of correlation analysis showed that there was significant correlations between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction with  $r= 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . There was also significant correlation between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment with  $r = 0.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Significant correlation was also obtained between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction with  $r = 0.25$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . These results showed that the WLEIS has good concurrent validity from the significant correlations with the criteria.

Two methods were used namely Cronbach alpha and split half reliability. Results showed that Cronbach alpha for all 16 items yielded alpha 0.91 indicating a high reliability. Results by dimensions also showed that all dimensions have good reliability with SEA= 0.83, OEA = 0.92, ROE = 0.85 and UOE = 0.89. Results of split half reliability also showed similar patterns of results with SEA = 0.84, OEA = 0.91, ROE = 0.81 and UOE = 0.83. The results obtained in this study showed that the WLEIS and all of its dimensions have high internal consistency and reliability.

- **Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale**

The scale is ten item Likert scales with items answered on a four point scale – from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The original sample for which the scale was developed consisted of 5,024 High School Juniors and seniors from 10 randomly selected schools in New York State. It is a tool for assessing global self-esteem. Psychologist and sociologist are common users for this instrument. Also, the instrument is a vital part of self-esteem measure in social science research and it is mainly used for adolescents.

The Rosenberg self- esteem scale presented high rating in reliability areas; internal consistency was 0.77, minimum coefficient of reproducibility was at least 0.90 (Rosenberg, 1965).

A varied selection of independent studies each using such samples as –parents, men over 60, high school students, civil servants- showed alpha coefficient ranging from 0.72 to 0.87 ( all fairly high ). Test-retest reliability for the 2 weeks interval was calculated at 0.85, the 7 month interval was calculated at 0.63. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is connected with the Coopersmith self-esteem inventory.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Two hundred questionnaires were distributed from one lecture theatre to the other across the campus among males and females of eight (8) faculties in Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, after creating rapport with the students on the nature of the research and assurance of their confidentiality. A total of 190 questionnaires were retrieved of the 200 administered questionnaires.

### **Methods of Statistical Analysis**

The results of the study were mainly on the data obtained from the questionnaires. The total scores were computed for each respondent after proper scoring.

## RESULTS

The data collected were scored and analysed. The following are the results:

**Table 4.1: Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD) and Correlations among the Study**

### Variables

Variable N=191	M (SD)	1	2	3
1. Perceived stress	19.99 (5.02)	-		
2. Emotional intelligence	55.86 (14.78)	-.09	-	
3. Self-esteem	28.08 (4.93)	-.004	.13	-
4. Life satisfaction	22.60 (6.49)	-.08	.15*	.04

\*\* $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

The result of correlation analyses between studies variables are presented in table 1 above. There is a weak positive relationship between life satisfaction and emotional intelligence [ $r(190) = .15$ ,  $p = .02$ ]. However, life-satisfaction is not related with perceived stress [ $r(190) = -.08$ ,  $p = .25$ ] and self-esteem [ $r(190) = .04$ ,  $p = .76$ ].

**Table 4.2: Comparison of mean scores on life satisfaction between high and low perceived stress**

	Low stress		High stress			
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t <sub>(75)</sub>	95%CI
Life satisfaction	22.93	7.38	21.08	5.56	1.23	[-1.14, 4.83]

The result in table 2 above shows that difference in life satisfaction scores between participants who have low perceived stress ( $n = 35$ ,  $M = 22.93$ ,  $SD = 2.19$ ) and high perceived stress ( $n = 37$ ,  $M = 21.08$ ,  $SD = 5.56$ ) were not statistically significant,  $t(75) = 1.23$ ,  $p = .22$ , 95% CI [-1.14, 4.83]. This means that perceived stress does not influence life satisfaction.

**Table 4.3: Comparison of mean scores on life satisfaction between high and low emotional intelligence**

	Low emotional intelligence	High emotional intelligence	
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Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t <sub>(68)</sub>	95%CI	Cohen's d
Life satisfaction	22.14	6.88	25.71	6.72	-2.20*	[-6.82, -.33]	-.53

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

The result in table 3 above shows that difference in life satisfaction scores between participants who have low emotional intelligence ( $n = 35$ ,  $M = 22.14$ ,  $SD = 6.88$ ) and high emotional intelligence ( $n = 35$ ,  $M = 25.71$ ,  $SD = 6.72$ ) were statistically significant,  $t(68) = -2.20$ ,  $p = .03$ , 95% CI [-6.82, -.33],  $d = -.53$ . This means that participants with high-emotional intelligence have significantly higher life satisfaction scores than those who have low emotional intelligence with a moderate effect size.

**Table 4.4: Comparison of mean scores on life satisfaction between high and low self esteem**

	Low self-esteem		Low self-esteem			
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t <sub>(51)</sub>	95%CI
Life satisfaction	22.19	5.36	24.27	6.21	-1.31	[-5.28, 1.11]

The result in table 4 above shows that difference in life satisfaction scores between participants who have low self-esteem ( $n = 27$ ,  $M = 22.19$ ,  $SD = 5.36$ ) and high self-esteem ( $n = 26$ ,  $M = 24.27$ ,  $SD = 6.21$ ) were not statistically significant,  $t(51) = -1.31$ ,  $p = .20$ , 95% CI [-5.28, 1.11]. This means that self-esteem does not influence life satisfaction.

**Table 4.5: Regression analysis showing the influence of the independent variables on life satisfaction**

Variable	β	T	p- value	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p-value
Perceived stress	-.07	-.97	.33	.17	.03	1.79	.15
Emotional intelligence	.14	1.94	.054				
Self-esteem	.02	.21	.83				
Dependent Variable: Life satisfaction							

$F(3, 187) = 1.79$ ,  $p = .15$ ,  $R^2 = .03$

Table 4 showed that perceived stress, emotional intelligence and self-esteem did not jointly predict life satisfaction [ $F(3, 187) = 1.79$ ,  $p = .15$ ,  $R^2 = .03$ ]. Additionally, perceived stress [ $\beta =$



.07,  $p = .33$ ], emotional intelligence [ $\beta = .14$ ,  $p = .054$ ] and self-esteem [ $\beta = .02$ ,  $p = .83$ ] did not have independent influences on life satisfaction.

## **Discussion**

This research examined the psychological factors influencing life satisfaction among undergraduates, looking at the influence of Perceived stress, Emotional Intelligence and Self-esteem on Life satisfaction of undergraduates. The findings revealed that there is no significant influence of perceived stress on life satisfaction, this finding is in favour of Ellison (1990) who asserted that stress is not necessarily a negative force, but can be stimulating or energizing, in which case it is positive and beneficial as to life satisfaction. It is suffice to say that the amount of stress which a person can withstand is dependent on the individual level of tolerance. Also, Cassandra (2015) noted that there is no association between stress and life satisfaction of college students.

Also result in this study revealed that participants with high emotional intelligence have significantly higher life satisfaction scores than those who have low emotional intelligence; although relatively new and seemingly unexplored area of research, Cassandra (2015) confirmed that there is a direct positive causal relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction of college students. Also, according to Law, Wong, and Song (2004), emotional intelligence does contribute to life satisfaction. As there is little or no research in the area of emotional intelligence, studies have not so evolved as to conflict these findings. The empirical studies and literature on Emotional Intelligence rarely discuss its application (Wong, Foo, Wang & Wong, 2007).

Likewise the result indicated that there is no significant influence of self-esteem on life satisfaction, based on previous research on self-esteem and life satisfaction in collectivistic cultures, it was hypothesized that self-esteem is still a significant predictor of life satisfaction. Nonetheless, Diener and Diener (1996) showed that the link between self-esteem and life satisfaction is relatively weaker in collectivistic cultures, where one's groups are more emphasized than the self. In collectivistic cultures, as argued by Heine et al. (1999), self-esteem is not as important as in Western cultures, for the need to feel good about oneself is subjected to

the goal of maintaining one's interdependencies; relevant social relationships are more crucial to how one assesses one's life.

Also, perceived stress, emotional intelligence and self-esteem did not jointly predict life satisfaction. Additionally, perceived stress, emotional intelligence and self-esteem did not have independent influences on life satisfaction; Prior studies have examined stress, emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. Research on stress in college students has focused on the sources of stress, coping styles and relevant outcomes. Research on life satisfaction has focused on specific relationships between life satisfaction and concepts like worry, self-concept and life events (Cassandra, 2015).

Furthermore, studies have examined the relationship between stress and life satisfaction, few studies on emotional intelligence and stress, as well as emotional intelligence and life satisfaction; this suggest that research about the joint and independent influence of perceived stress, emotional intelligence (Wong, Foo, Wang & Wong, 2007) and self-esteem on life satisfaction has rarely been conducted but according to Law, Wong, and Song (2004), emotional intelligence does contribute to life satisfaction.

## **Conclusions**

The current study provides substantial evidence that there is no significant influence of perceived stress on life satisfaction. Additionally, considering the influence of emotional intelligence on life satisfaction, influence of self-esteem on life satisfaction, as well as the joint and independent influence of self-esteem on life satisfaction, it was discovered that perceived stress did not significantly influence life satisfaction; neither did self-esteem influence life satisfaction. In addition, perceived stress, emotional intelligence and self-esteem did not significantly influence whether jointly or independently life satisfaction. However, emotional intelligence did influence life satisfaction of undergraduates in Ekiti State University.

## **Recommendations**

Taking into consideration, the scope of this research, its findings underline the significance of controlling the psychological effects meted on an individual's (student's) state of happiness or satisfaction with life, and where necessary, sensitize clinicians and/or counseling

psychologists especially in academic setting as to help break the barriers that hamper life satisfaction in the society at large.

Further studies need to disentangle the mediating factors in the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. Future studies can test if the impact of emotional intelligence is contingent on for example, age, sex, and socio-economic status and individual characteristics. Further studies can also examine which mediating mechanisms explain why emotional intelligence produces better well-being and academic achievement.

It is also worthy of note that this present study considered population sample from a narrow educational segment. That is, only students from university were studied and no other educational levels were considered. Studying a larger population of respondents will reveal more significant findings.

In addition, there are myriads of mediating factors between perceived stress and life satisfaction, as every individual has various definitions of whatever count as stressful in their lives. Such mediating factors could be for instance, bereavement, social support, disappointment, financial difficulty etc. Also, the mediating factors (such as shyness, family background etc.) among self-esteem and life satisfaction can also be researched for the purpose of confirming or disputing the findings of this study. Finally, the mediating factors among perceived stress, emotional intelligence and self-esteem are enjoined for future research as well.

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