

Life Satisfaction among Indonesian Emerging Adults: The Impact of Perfectionism and Self-Esteem

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Abstract: The emerging adulthood stage has now reached a period where individuals are ready to begin the search for a suitable profession, find a life partner, build a new family, and pursue their childhood aspirations. Conventional societal and personal expectations put pressure on emerging adults. When these expectations cannot be met, it creates distress and a sense of dissatisfaction among emerging adults. We made assumptions about the impact of perfectionism and self-esteem on the overall satisfaction experienced during the young adult phase. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to determine the correlation between perfectionism and self-esteem with the level of life satisfaction. This study utilized a quantitative methodology, using a non-probability sampling technique to recruit 175 individuals who met the criteria of being between 18 to 25 years old and Indonesian. The results of this study found that perfectionism and self-esteem are able to predict life satisfaction simultaneously. Self-esteem positively affects life satisfaction. Surprisingly, perfectionism also positively affects life satisfaction. However, the correlates of perfectionist aspects were found to be significantly positive to life satisfaction, namely parental expectation, personal standards, and organization. Future research is expected to provide a more complete picture in explaining the influence between these variables.

Keywords: life satisfaction, perfectionism, self-esteem

How to Cite: Damri, R., Lubis, N.S.J., Mariyati, & Qudsyi, H. (2025). Life Satisfaction among Indonesian Emerging Adults: The Impact of Perfectionism and Self-Esteem. *Intuisi: Jurnal Psikologi Ilmiah*. 17(2), 73-82

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.26714/intuisi.17.2.2025.73-82>

Introduction

There is a consensus that the greatest challenge faced during early adulthood is maintaining healthy psychological functioning (Dwivedi & Rastogi, 2017). The phase of emerging adulthood is often marked by individuals comparing themselves to others, both physically and non-physically (Ananta & Suhadianto, 2022; Arnett et al., 2014). This tendency can significantly affect daily life during emerging adulthood, particularly influencing life satisfaction. Consequently, these factors have a profound impact on life satisfaction during this developmental stage. Life satisfaction is a key component of psychological well-being, directly linked to positive mental and physical health (Fowler et al., 2018). It is defined as a cognitive evaluation where individuals compare their current state with their established standards (Diener, 2012). Moreover, life satisfaction is crucial in motivating individuals to influence their environment by setting life goals (Luhmann & Hennecke, 2017).

A high level of life satisfaction can help individuals navigate various aspects of life effectively. Students with very high life satisfaction tend to have a significant advantage over those with moderate or low satisfaction in terms of academic performance, including greater engagement, academic self-efficacy, achievement, and higher GPA (Antaramian, 2017). When individuals experience positive feelings toward

their well-being, including happiness in various life aspects, their life satisfaction tends to be high, as they feel content with what they have and are not envious of others (Uraningsari & Djalali, 2016).

However, the percentage of life satisfaction among emerging adults in Indonesia remains relatively low. An initial survey conducted by the researcher indicated that out of 56 emerging adults, the majority fell into the moderate category at 23.2%, while equal percentages were recorded for high and low satisfaction levels, both at 21.4%. This finding is supported by previous research. According to Novianti & Alfiasari (2017), a portion of students still report low life satisfaction, such as satisfaction with oneself at 10.8%, pleasure at 6.9%, physical condition and health at 12.8%, satisfaction with friends at 22.6%, and social life at 2.9%. Another study found that 60% of undergraduate students from outside Java in Malang City have low life satisfaction scores (Ramadhani, 2019). Additionally, 85% of students reported moderate life satisfaction, 14.3% reported low satisfaction, and only 0.7% reported high satisfaction (Rahmad & Kirana, 2023). Sirajuddin et al. (2023) also reported that 55.5% of Generation Z have moderate life satisfaction, 39.5% high, and 5% low. These findings indicate potential issues related to life satisfaction.

Low life satisfaction can trigger negative impacts on an individual's life. Szcześniak et al. (2021) revealed that low life satisfaction could lead to poor self-esteem, as others tend to underestimate the individual's abilities. Similarly, Raharjo & Sumargi (2018) stated that people with low life satisfaction often experience negative emotions, low self-esteem, unhappiness, lack of confidence, and difficulties in adjusting both personally and socially. According to (Nemitz, 2022), life dissatisfaction can result in physical weakness or vulnerability to illness and social withdrawal.

Previous studies have shown that life satisfaction can be influenced by various factors. These include personality traits (Kiswantomo & Theofanny, 2021), proactive coping (Dwivedi & Rastogi, 2017), personality and perfectionism (Fowler et al., 2018), positive self-esteem, and family satisfaction (Garnique-Hinostroza et al., 2024), which are significant predictors of life satisfaction. This evidence suggests that perfectionism and self-esteem are critical factors affecting life satisfaction during emerging adulthood.

Life satisfaction is often perceived as subjective, meaning it is based on individual assessments compared to their ideal standards (Diener et al., 1985). Each person sets their own standards for achieving subjective satisfaction. When these standards are not met, disappointment arises. Individuals who set excessively high standards and exhibit perfectionistic behavior may find it harder to achieve satisfaction. If maladaptive perfectionism is ingrained, the tendency to feel satisfied diminishes (Dobos et al., 2020; Fowler et al., 2018; Gnlika et al., 2013; Şahin, 2021; Wang & Wu, 2022). Besides perfectionism, self-esteem is another potential factor influencing life satisfaction (Kachroo et al., 2021; Kurnaz et al., 2020).

High self-esteem enhances life satisfaction, and vice versa (Moksnes & Espnes, 2013). Moreover, self-esteem has been proven to mediate the achievement of desired life satisfaction (Butkovic et al., 2020). For example, self-esteem can bridge the gap between hopelessness and life satisfaction (Güldü, 2023), highlighting its role in life satisfaction.

The possibility of life satisfaction issues among emerging adults underscores the importance of investigating the factors influencing this. Previous studies have identified perfectionism and self-esteem as potential factors affecting life satisfaction in this demographic. However, research on the relationship between these variables in Indonesia is still limited. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between perfectionism, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. The research hypotheses are: 1) There is a partial influence of maladaptive perfectionism and self-esteem on life satisfaction, and 2) There is a simultaneous influence of perfectionism and self-esteem on life satisfaction.

Method

To address the research hypotheses, this study employs a correlational quantitative research method, with perfectionism and self-esteem as the independent variables and life satisfaction as the dependent variable. Perfectionism is measured using the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), self-esteem is assessed with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale adapted into Indonesian, and life

satisfaction is evaluated using the Indonesian version of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS-ID). Data collection was conducted through online questionnaires distributed via Google Forms, utilizing a Likert scale model.

The subjects of this study were individuals with the following characteristics: (a) male or female, aged 18-25 years, and (b) Indonesian citizens. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling. Participants were recruited through electronic questionnaires disseminated across social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and X). The sample size for this study was 175 emerging adults, with 80% being female and the remainder male. Additionally, the subjects included students (65.1%), individuals who both work and study (21.1%), those who work but do not study (10.9%), and those who neither work nor study (2.9%).

Several measurement tools were employed in this study. First, perfectionism was assessed using the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), developed by Frost & Marten (1990), which demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of .90. This multidimensional scale encompasses six dimensions: concern over mistakes (COM), personal standards (PS), parental expectations (PE), parental criticism (PC), doubts about actions (D), and organization (O), measured through 35 items. Participants completed the questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Self-esteem was evaluated using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), adapted into Indonesian by Maroqi (2018). This unidimensional scale consists of 7 items, and participants responded using a four-point Likert scale, with options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Life satisfaction was measured using the Indonesian version of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS-ID), adapted by Muttaqin (2022) from the original work of Diener et al. (1985), with a Cronbach's alpha exceeding .8. This unidimensional scale consists of 5 items, and participants responded on a seven-point Likert scale, with options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This study also measured social desirability using the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Short Form A Diener et al. (1985), which had a Cronbach's alpha of .74. This unidimensional scale consists of 11 items, and participants were asked to respond with either 1 (Yes) or 0 (No). This scale was utilized to control for potential bias or predisposition in the participants' responses.

Following data collection, multiple linear regression was conducted to test the hypotheses. Prior to the regression analysis, assumption tests, including tests for normality and linearity, were performed. The normality test of the residuals indicated that the research data were normally distributed ($p > .05$), and no issues of multicollinearity were detected. But we found that COM and PC had VIF values exceeding 3 but not greater than 5 (see Table 3). This indicates moderate multicollinearity, but the values are still within an acceptable threshold and do not pose a serious threat to the validity of the regression model (Akinwande et al., 2015). The collected data were analyzed using SPSS Version 25 for Windows.

Result and Discussion

This study identified the levels of Life Satisfaction (LS), Perfectionism (PF), and Self-Esteem (SE) among 175 emerging adults. The findings revealed that the majority of participants exhibited high LS levels (60%), followed by moderate (26.3%) and low levels (13.7%). For PF, most participants were categorized at a moderate level (63.4%), followed by high (18.9%) and low levels (17.7%). Similarly, the majority of participants demonstrated moderate SE levels (63.4%), followed by high (18.9%) and low levels (17.7%). Subsequently, a residual normality test was conducted, yielding a p -value $> .05$. No issues of multicollinearity were detected. Therefore, parametric tests, including Pearson's correlation and regression analysis, were applied.

Table 1. Data Description and Correlations Perfectionism and Its Aspects and Self-esteem to Life Satisfaction

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Life Satisfaction
LS	25.2	5.02	-
Total Perfectionism	130.5	19.12	.187**
COM	31,3	7.28	.052
D	14.9	3.12	.043
PE	20.0	3.15	.250**
PC	13.2	3.75	.007
PS	26.8	3.71	.279**
O	24.4	3.45	.351**
Self-esteem	21.4	3.01	.386**
SDS	6.3	1.75	.120

Note: LS = life satisfaction; COM = Concerns over mistakes; D = Doubts over actions; PE = Parental expectations; PC = Parental criticism; PS = Personal standard; O = Organization; SDS = Social desirability.

Based on Table 1, life satisfaction shows a positive correlation with self-esteem ($r = .386$) and total perfectionism ($r = .187$), each at weak and very weak levels, respectively (Myers & Well, 2003). Life satisfaction also positively correlates with certain aspects of perfectionism, such as parental expectations ($r = .250$), personal standards ($r = .279$), and organization ($r = .351$), all of which fall within the weak correlation range (Myers & Well, 2003). Additionally, no significant correlation was found between social desirability and either life satisfaction or total perfectionism, although a correlation was observed with self-esteem, indicating a potential bias or social desirability tendency among participants in their self-esteem responses.

Table 2. Summary of Regression Analysis of Total Perfectionism, Self-esteem, and Life Satisfaction

Predictors	B	β	Collinearity Test	
			Tolerance	VIF
Perfectionism	.093***	.353***	.890	1.123
Self-esteem	.837***	.502***	.890	1.123

Note: $R^2 = .260$; Adj. $R^2 = .251$

Based on Table 2, the study found a partial positive effect of Perfectionism (PF) and Self-Esteem (SE) on Life Satisfaction (LS), with B values of .093 and .837 and β values of .353 and .502, respectively. Additionally, PF and SE together can predict LS simultaneously, contributing 26% to the variance, with the remaining variance attributed to other variables.

Table 3. Summary of Regression Analysis of Perfectionism's Aspects, Self-esteem, and Total Life Satisfaction

Variables	B	β	Collinearity test	
			Tolerance	VIF
COM	.166	.090	.254	3.931
D	.071	.175	.368	2.721
PE	.171	.152	.480	2.084
PC	-.106	.157	.317	3.151
PS	.012	.149	.358	2.791
O	.211	.120	.640	1.563
Self-esteem	.776***	.154***	.511	1.956

Note: LS = life satisfaction; COM = Concerns over mistakes; D = Doubts over actions; PE = Parental expectations; PC = Parental criticism; PS = Personal standard; O = Organization; SDS = Social desirability.
 $R^2 = .273$; Adj. $R^2 = .243$

This study also aimed to examine the influence of perfectionism's aspects and self-esteem on life satisfaction. Table 3 shown that self-esteem has a positive effect on life satis ($B = .776$; $\beta = .154$). However, none of the perfectionism aspects individually predicted life satisfaction. Nevertheless, life satisfaction and all aspects of perfectionism combined can predict life satisfaction simultaneously, contributing 27.3% to the variance, which is not significantly different from the regression results between total perfectionism and self-esteem on life satisfaction.

The findings indicate that total perfectionism predicts life satisfaction positively, albeit at a very low level. The positive influence of perfectionism on life satisfaction observed in this study suggests that perfectionism does not always result in dissatisfaction. Perfectionism can readily accept the proposition that satisfaction and pleasure play a crucial role in a good life (Hayes, 2021). Since satisfaction and pleasure are subjective, individual differences are expected (Veenhoven, 2015). Dissatisfaction typically arises from maladaptive perfectionism, whereas adaptive perfectionism helps enhance life satisfaction (Fang & Liu, 2022; Gilman & Ashby, 1995; Liu et al., 2022). Both forms of perfectionism contribute to individual well-being and mental health (Fallahchai et al., 2019; Kruger et al., 2023; Molnar & Sirois, 2015; Sirois & Molnar, 2015; Suh et al., 2017).

Adaptive perfectionism allows individuals to evaluate mistakes constructively, mitigating potential negative impacts. Adaptive perfectionists are often able to overcome challenges that might otherwise diminish life satisfaction, as they set realistic standards (Enns et al., 2002; Karababa, 2018). Frost et al. (1993) describe adaptive perfectionism in terms of organization and personal standards. In this study, organization and personal standards showed a positive correlation with life satisfaction, although they did not significantly predict LS in regression analyses. Individuals who maintain regular routines, effective planning, and control over their lives are more likely to experience higher satisfaction and happiness. Additionally, individuals set standards to achieve satisfying outcomes.

In contrast, maladaptive perfectionism tends to lower life satisfaction. This occurs when individuals set unrealistic standards, often influenced by external expectations or self-imposed pressures. Maladap-

tive perfectionism includes an excessive concern over mistakes, doubt about actions, parental expectations, and parental criticism (Frost et al., 1993). Interestingly, in this study, parental expectations showed a positive correlation with life satisfaction, although no significant predictive effect was found. This might be attributable to the influence of Eastern (Asian) cultural norms regarding parent-child relationships, particularly in Indonesia.

In Asian cultures, including Indonesia, parental control is often interpreted within a cultural framework that values interdependence. This contrasts with Western cultural frameworks that emphasize independence. In the Asian context, parental authority is seen as a manifestation of care within closely-knit family structures (Chao & Tseng, 2002). It is common in Asian cultures for individuals to involve their parents in decision-making processes (Firdaus & Kustanti, 2019), suggesting that children's decisions are often aligned with parental expectations. Several studies have shown that parental expectations influence children's standards (Burke, 2013), academic performance and recognition (Danişman, 2017; Zhang et al., 2011), career readiness and decision-making (Nilan et al., 2011; Nurida & Suharso, 2022), and more. Parents often strive to provide the best for their children, hoping to secure a bright future. Parental expectations and aspirations likely shape the aspirations of children in Indonesia (Nilan et al., 2011). Thus, it is plausible that, in this case, parental expectations are perceived as a form of adaptive perfectionism by the study's respondents. Furthermore, life satisfaction tends to increase when individuals positively accept various aspects of life, including the fulfillment of basic and additional needs, influenced by how they perceive life and respond to their social environment (Astriewardhany & Purnamasari, 2021).

As expected, self-esteem also significantly predicts individual life satisfaction, consistent with previous studies (Butkovic et al., 2020; Kaçay et al., 2020; Kachroo et al., 2021; Ling & Ee, 2023; Patel et al., 2018; Saad et al., 2020). Self-esteem has also been reported to mediate the relationship between perfectionism and life satisfaction (Chen et al., 2017). Individuals with high self-esteem tend to be more confident, have better interpersonal relationships, and feel more capable of facing life's challenges. They are also more likely to be optimistic, highly motivated, and generally more satisfied with their lives. Therefore, higher self-esteem is associated with greater life satisfaction.

However, there are limitations to this study, including the limited number of participants due to resource constraints and the research timeframe. The sample of 175 respondents is relatively small to represent the entire population of emerging adults in Indonesia. Moreover, the unique finding that parental expectations can enhance life satisfaction warrants deeper investigation. This study hypothesizes that cultural factors related to parent-child relationships in Indonesia may play a role, as children often involve their parents in decision-making, leading to a sense of satisfaction when fulfilling parental expectations. Therefore, this study recommends that future research explore the relationship between perfectionism, self-esteem, and life satisfaction among emerging adults in Indonesia in a more complex and accurate manner, considering the influence of cultural factors.

Conclusion

The current study aims to identify the influence of perfectionism and self-esteem on life satisfaction among emerging adults in Indonesia. The findings indicate that both perfectionism and self-esteem can predict life satisfaction, both partially and simultaneously. As expected, self-esteem positively predicts life satisfaction. Interestingly, the study also reveals that overall perfectionism positively predicts life satisfaction. However, regression analysis of individual aspects of perfectionism did not show any significant effects on life satisfaction. Additionally, correlation analysis indicates that aspects of perfectionism, such as parental expectations, personal standards, and organization, as well as overall self-esteem, positively correlate with life satisfaction.

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