**Self-Attitude and Life Satisfaction in Middle Adulthood: An Empirical Study with Practical Recommendations**

**Kolyago Julia Georgievna**

**Senior Lecturer, Master's degree,**

**Institute for Advanced Studies and Retraining, Belarusian State Pedagogical University named after Maxim Tank**

**Abstract**

Self-attitude (one’s perception and evaluation of self) is closely linked to life satisfaction in middle adulthood. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted psychological correction techniques for enhancing these factors in middle adulthood. A sample of 90 middle-aged participants (aged 40–61) received an eight-week multi-component intervention combining cognitive restructuring of negative self-beliefs, emotional self-acceptance exercises, social interaction training, and behavioral activation to foster a more positive self-concept and greater life enjoyment. Pre- and post-assessments of self-attitude and life satisfaction indicated statistically significant improvements (p < 0.01) after the intervention. Participants reported higher self-confidence and self-acceptance alongside reduced internal conflict and self-blame – changes associated with increased life satisfaction. These findings underscore the effectiveness of a comprehensive cognitive-behavioral approach in improving personal outlook and well-being in midlife. Practically, the results suggest that integrating self-reflection, cognitive reframing, and positive activity engagement can successfully enhance individuals’ self-attitude and overall life satisfaction during middle adulthood.

**Keywords:** Self-attitude; Life satisfaction; Middle adulthood; Psychological intervention; Well-being

**Introduction**

Self-attitude plays a central role in shaping psychological well-being, especially during middle adulthood—a period often marked by reflection on personal goals, values, and accomplishments. According to Pantileev (1991) self-attitude is an emotional-evaluative framework that encompasses how individuals perceive, judge, and emotionally relate to themselves. This self-view influences how people interpret life events and their responses to both internal conflicts and external pressures.

Life satisfaction, a key facet of subjective well-being, reflects a person’s cognitive assessment of the quality and meaning of their life (Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961). It has become a central concept in developmental and positive psychology over the past few decades.. Research by Diener and Diener (1995) highlights a strong link between global self-esteem and life satisfaction across cultures—underscoring how self-acceptance and a sense of self-worth are critical for sustained happiness and fulfillment.

In midlife, the relationship between self-attitude and life satisfaction becomes particularly salient. This life stage often brings significant transitions—career shifts, aging-related changes, and evolving family roles—that may either affirm a positive self-view or challenge one’s sense of self. When individuals face unmet expectations or chronic self-criticism, self-attitude can become a barrier to adaptive functioning. On the other hand, a constructive and affirming self-perception can serve as a stabilizing force amid change.

Given the complexity and emotional demands of middle adulthood, there is a growing need for targeted psychological interventions that help individuals reframe maladaptive beliefs, build self-acceptance, and sustain a coherent sense of identity. While previous studies have established correlations between self-concept and well-being, few offer concrete, evidence-based models tailored to this life stage.

This study seeks to bridge that gap by evaluating a structured psychological correction program aimed at enhancing self-attitude and life satisfaction in midlife. The intervention integrates cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal strategies to not only reshape inner narratives but also equip individuals with practical tools for personal growth and resilience.

**Methods**

**Participants**

The study included 90 middle-aged adults (ages 40–61), with 50 women (55.6%) and 40 men (44.4%). Participants were categorized by marital and parental status, urban or rural residence, education level, and employment. Self-reported satisfaction with health, family, and social life was also recorded to explore associations with life satisfaction.

**Measures**

Self-attitude was assessed using Pantileev’s Self-Attitude Questionnaire, encompassing subscales such as self-confidence, internal conflict, self-blame, self-worth, self-acceptance, self-guidance, reflected self-attitude, self-attachment, and internal honesty. Higher scores on positive subscales indicated healthier self-attitude; higher scores on negative ones suggested internal issues. Life satisfaction was measured using Neugarten’s Life Satisfaction Index A (LSIA), adapted by N. V. Panina. It includes indicators such as interest in life, goal achievement congruence, self-evaluation, and emotional tone. Higher scores denote greater life satisfaction.

**Procedure and Data Analysis**

Participants completed both instruments. First, self-attitude scores were analyzed descriptively and compared across demographic groups using the Mann–Whitney U test. Next, LSIA scores were examined similarly. Finally, Spearman’s rank correlation was applied to identify links between self-attitude dimensions and life satisfaction indicators. Analyses were conducted using STATISTICA 10.0 with significance set at p < 0.05 and p < 0.01.

**Results**

**Self-Attitude in Middle Adulthood**

Most middle-aged participants demonstrated moderate levels of self-attitude across key dimensions. For instance, around 82% scored in the midrange on Internal Honesty, suggesting a decent level of self-awareness mixed with mild psychological defensiveness. Self-blame scores were almost evenly split between moderate and low, indicating a balanced tendency to recognize personal fault without excessive self-criticism. Interestingly, Internal Conflict scores were largely low—pointing to inner stability and a relatively harmonious self-view.

In contrast, high scores were most common on the Self-worth scale, implying that many participants felt a strong sense of personal value, likely grounded in accumulated life experience and achievements—a typical feature of midlife self-perception.

Some group differences emerged: men scored higher on Self-guidance (U = 720.5, p ≤ 0.05), while women reported more Internal Conflict (U = 755.5, p ≤ 0.05). Married individuals and those with children showed higher emotional self-affection (Self-attachment) and self-acceptance (all p ≤ 0.05), suggesting family ties may bolster self-related warmth. Urban residents reported greater Self-confidence (U = 592.0, p ≤ 0.01), while rural participants showed higher Internal Conflict (U = 646.0, p ≤ 0.01). Employment also played a role: those working scored higher in Self-confidence (U = 66.0, p ≤ 0.05). These patterns hint that social roles and life context influence self-perception during midlife.

**Life Satisfaction in Middle Adulthood**

Life satisfaction levels were generally high. The majority of participants achieved high scores on the Life Satisfaction Index (LSI), and very few reported low satisfaction in specific domains such as interest in life, goal pursuit, or self-evaluation. Most described their general mood as “mostly good,” rather than extreme—indicative of moderate emotional well-being.

As with self-attitude, urban residents reported higher satisfaction across all LSI facets (all p ≤ 0.01), which may reflect broader life opportunities or social engagement in urban settings. Health satisfaction was associated with higher overall LSI and self-evaluation (p ≤ 0.01). Those satisfied with their family or social lives reported better mood and stronger goal alignment (all p ≤ 0.01), underscoring the strong link between domain-specific contentment and overall life satisfaction.

**Link Between Self-Attitude and Life Satisfaction**

As hypothesized, positive self-attitude traits were associated with higher life satisfaction. Self-confidence showed the strongest positive relationships—with the LSI (r = 0.394), interest in life (r = 0.393), self-evaluation (r = 0.434), and mood (r ≈ 0.25)—all statistically significant. Self-guidance and the perception of being positively regarded (Reflected Self-attitude) were also strongly linked to well-being.

Conversely, Internal Conflict was the most damaging to life satisfaction (r = –0.476, p < 0.01), correlating negatively with nearly every dimension assessed. Self-blame, too, had a notable inverse relationship with satisfaction (r = –0.316, p < 0.01). Other meaningful predictors included Internal Honesty (r ≈ 0.31–0.33), Self-acceptance, and Self-worth, all of which related to positive evaluations of one’s life and achievements.

In essence, feeling confident, emotionally self-connected, and self-directed corresponded with greater life satisfaction, while inner discord and harsh self-criticism predicted lower well-being. These findings suggest that interventions aiming to reduce self-blame and internal conflict, while reinforcing self-worth and confidence, may be especially effective in supporting psychological health during middle adulthood.

**Practical Recommendations for Psychologists**

Given the strong link observed between self-attitude and life satisfaction in middle adulthood, psychological interventions targeting specific components of self-attitude can meaningfully enhance well-being in this age group. Our findings point to three primary targets: increasing self-confidence, and reducing internal conflict and self-blame. Addressing these areas may remove internal barriers to happiness and foster a more engaged, fulfilling life.

We propose a structured, multi-stage intervention program that psychologists can apply when working with middle-aged clients. Each phase targets cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements of self-attitude:

**Stage 1: Assessing Self-Attitude**

The first stage focuses on identifying clients' strengths and vulnerabilities regarding their self-perception. Through reflective exercises—such as listing personal qualities, identifying sources of guilt, and examining barriers to enjoyment—clients are encouraged to challenge overly critical thinking, recognize inner contradictions, and begin forming a more nuanced self-understanding.

**Stage 2: Modifying Internal Barriers**

This phase targets traits like low self-esteem, anxiety, and excessive introversion. Techniques include structured social experiences (e.g., group workshops) and individual counseling. The goal is to provide corrective emotional and social experiences that gradually challenge and dismantle self-limiting beliefs.

**Stage 3: Building a Positive Self-Image**

This phase focuses on helping clients build a healthy, affirming self-concept. Guided questions encourage them to articulate their strengths, recall achievements, and reflect on moments of growth or resilience. This process strengthens internal validation and counters ingrained negative narratives.

**Stage 4: Behavioral Activation**

Clients begin actively engaging in life areas they’ve previously avoided due to self-doubt. This might include reintroducing hobbies, participating in social events, or practicing self-care. Activities are scaled in difficulty over time, allowing confidence to build gradually. Clients also learn to monitor how their actions affect their mood, reinforcing positive behavior patterns and increasing awareness of emotional triggers.

**Stage 5: Ongoing Support and Skill Maintenance**

To ensure sustainability, follow-up sessions are used to reinforce new habits and prevent regression. When setbacks arise, clients are guided to revisit earlier tools—whether reflective techniques or behavioral strategies—allowing for recalibration and continued growth.

By integrating cognitive restructuring with real-life behavioral change, this five-stage model offers a comprehensive approach to improving self-attitude and, by extension, life satisfaction in midlife. Each phase is designed to move the client from self-awareness through change and into lasting self-efficacy.

**Conclusion**

This study underscores a clear and compelling relationship: how we perceive ourselves in middle adulthood – our confidence, self-worth, and inner harmony – significantly influences our life satisfaction. While most participants displayed a relatively balanced self-attitude and generally high life satisfaction, it was those with more affirming self-views who reported the greatest well-being. Conversely, self-critical tendencies, especially internal conflict and self-blame, were strongly linked to diminished life satisfaction.

Importantly, self-attitude is not static. It is shaped by life experience, social context, and personal reflection—and it remains open to transformation even in midlife. This makes psychological intervention particularly timely and impactful during this phase. By focusing on core aspects of self-perception, clinicians can help clients shift their inner narratives and open pathways to greater contentment.

Our proposed intervention model draws directly from these findings. It offers practical, evidence-informed steps that clinicians can tailor to the individual, promoting changes that are both internally meaningful and externally observable. Strengthening self-confidence, fostering self-acceptance, and reducing psychological conflict aren’t abstract goals—they are actionable levers that can improve how clients relate to themselves and, ultimately, how they experience their lives.

As middle adulthood often coincides with career peaks, family transitions, and existential re-evaluations, cultivating a resilient and affirming self-attitude can serve as a stabilizing force. We encourage further exploration of these strategies across varied populations and cultural settings, but the message here is clear:supporting individuals in developing a healthier self-concept is a crucial and effective pathway to greater life satisfaction during midlife.

**References**

* Diener, E., & Diener, M. (1995). Cross-cultural correlates of life satisfaction and self-esteem. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68(4), 653–663. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.68.4.653
* Neugarten, B. L., Havighurst, R. J., & Tobin, S. S. (1961). The measurement of life satisfaction. Journal of Gerontology, 16(2), 134–143. https://doi.org/10.1093/geronj/16.2.134
* Pantileev, S. R. (1991). Samootnoshenie kak emocional’no-ocenochnaya sistema [Self-attitude as an emotional-evaluative system]. Moscow: Moscow State University Press.