The Interplay of Self-Esteem, Affect, and Socio-Demographic Factors among Adults

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Abstract

This study explores the interconnections among self-esteem, emotional affect (both positive and negative), and key socio-demographic variables among educated urban Indian adults. Using a cross-sectional design, data were gathered from 130 participants through the "Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale", PANAS, and a demographic questionnaire. Key results included a strong positive correlation between self-esteem and positive affect (r = .67) and a similar strong negative correlation between self-esteem and negative affect (r = –.65) and a strong negative correlation between self-esteem and negative affect (r = –.65), both highly significant (p < .001). Positive and negative affect were inversely related (r = –.33, p < .001). Contrary to expectations, no significant gender or marital status differences emerged for self-esteem or affect. However, family type was significantly associated with negative affect (p = .04), with those living alone reporting greater negative affect than those in joint families. These findings highlight self-esteem's pivotal role in emotional well-being and suggest that while many socio-demographic variables may have limited direct influence, living arrangements can impact negative emotional experiences. This study contributes to understanding psychological well-being within diverse populations and emphasizes the importance of social context in mental health frameworks.

Keywords: Affect, Adults, Gender, Marital Status, Self-Esteem, Socio-Demographic Factors

Introduction

The concept of psychological well-being resides at the core of human motivation and aspiration, representing a state that transcends the mere absence of mental illness to encompass feelings of happiness, life satisfaction, purpose, and effective functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Keyes, 2002). Understanding the constituents and determinants of this multifaceted state is a central aim of psychological science. Within this broad domain, two deeply interconnected constructs have consistently commanded significant research attention: self-esteem and affect. Self-esteem, an individual's subjective appraisal of their own worth (Rosenberg, 1965; Orth & Robins, 2013), acts as a fundamental cognitive-affective structure influencing perceptions of the self, others, and the world, and shaping responses to success and failure. Affect, the immediate experience of emotion (Russell, 2003), provides the dynamic emotional texture of daily life, encompassing both pleasurable (positive affect) and aversive (negative affect) states (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). The intuitive relationship suggests that feeling worthy (high self-esteem) should foster positive emotions and buffer against negative ones. Empirical evidence overwhelmingly supports this link, demonstrating robust associations between self-esteem and both positive and negative affect (Diener & Diener, 1995; Sowislo & Orth, 2014). However, the human

experience is not monolithic. Individuals inhabit diverse social landscapes and possess unique personal characteristics that invariably shape their psychological realities. Factors such as "age, gender, educational attainment, employment status, marital status", and living arrangements (family type) represent fundamental axes along which life experiences, social roles, and access to resources vary. These demographic variables are not merely descriptive; they are potent contextual influences that can impact self-esteem and affective states, and potentially modulate the relationship between them. Understanding how these diverse demographic factors relate to self-esteem and affect, both individually and in concert, is essential for developing a comprehensive, nuanced, and ecologically valid understanding of psychological well-being across the rich tapestry of human diversity. This dissertation seeks to contribute to this understanding by conducting a systematic investigation into the intricate relationships between "self-esteem, positive affect (PA), negative affect (NA)", and a range of key demographic variables within a population of 130 adults. By concurrently examining these psychological constructs within the context of individual demographic profiles, this study aims to identify patterns and variations in psychological well-being associated with fundamental aspects of identity and social circumstance.

Materials Used: Scales

The study employed a self-report questionnaire package comprising demographic items and two standardized psychological scales:

- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES):** This 10-item scale, developed by Rosenberg (1965), is a widely used measure of global self-worth or self-acceptance. Participants shows their preferences with statements (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself") on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Scores are summed, typically ranging from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. The RSES (Schmitt & Allik, 2005; Orth & Robins, 2013). has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, including good internal consistency and test-retest reliability, and established validity across diverse populations.

- **Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS):** "The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)", created by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen in 1988, is a self-report instrument designed to assess positive and negative emotional states. It comprises two distinct scales, one focusing on Positive Affect (PA) and the other on Negative Affect (NA). Each scale presents 10 descriptive adjectives of different moods. Respondents indicate how strongly they experienced each emotion over the past week using a 5-point Likert scale, anchored from 1 ("very slightly or not at all") to 5 ("extremely"). Individual scores for the PA and NA scales are computed by summing the ratings. PA and NA scores ranging from 10 to 50. The PANAS is a well-validated instrument with demonstrated reliability and discriminant validity for measuring these two dimensions of affect (Watson et al., 1988; Crawford & Henry, 2004).

- **Demographic Details:** A brief questionnaire was administered to collect information on participants' socio-demographic characteristics, such as age (collected as a numerical value), "gender, education level, employment status, marital statusand family type". Response options for categorical variables were provided based on standard classifications.

Statistical Tool

All statistical analyses were done using "IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 27".

Procedure/Method

Following the approval of the supervisor, participant recruitment commenced. Potential participants were approached online via social media platforms. Those who expressed interest were given a detailed information about the study, including its purpose, procedures, expected duration, risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and their right to voluntarily participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained electronically by clicking an 'I Agree' button before accessing the survey.

Participants then proceeded to complete the self-report questionnaire package, which included the demographic questions, the RSES, and the PANAS. The order of the scales was consistent for all participants Demographics first, followed by RSES and then PANAS. The questionnaires were administered online via a secure survey platform (e.g., SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics). Participants completed the questionnaires individually and privately to ensure the confidentiality of their responses. The average time taken to complete the questionnaire package was approximately 10-15minutes. Upon completion, participants were thanked for their participation.

Data Analysis

The data were coded and entered into "IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 27". Prior to inferential analysis, the data were screened for errors and 'missing values'. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages for categorical variables (Gender, Education Level, Employment Status, Marital Status, Family Type), and means, standard deviations, ranges, skewness, and kurtosis for continuous variables (Age, RSES, Positive Affect, Negative Affect), were computed to summarize the characteristics of the sample and the distributions of the main study variables.

To test Hypothesis 1, "Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the bivariate relationships among Self-Esteem, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect."

Hypothesis 3 was examined using independent samples t-tests. These tests were performed to compare the mean scores on Self-Esteem, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect separately for two sets of groups: males versus females, and married versus single participants. For each t-test conducted, Levene's test was utilized to evaluate the equality of variances, and the findings guided which t-test results (assuming equal or unequal variances) were subsequently reported.

To test Hypothesis 2, a "One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)" was performed to compare the mean scores of Self-esteems, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect across the different Family Types (Nuclear Family, Joint Family, Living Alone). "Levene's test for equality" of variances was assessed for each ANOVA. If a significant F-statistic was obtained (indicating significant differences across groups), post hoc comparisons using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test were conducted to identify which specific pairs of groups differed significantly at the $p < .05$ level.

All statistical tests were conducted using a significance level (alpha) of .05.

Results & Discussions

This section presents the findings of the study, beginning with the demographic characteristics of the sample, followed by descriptive statistics for the main study variables "(Self-Esteem, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect)". Finally, the results of the inferential analyses, including correlations and comparisons of the psychological variables across demographic groups, are reported.

Demographic Characteristics

The study sample comprised 130 participants. Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages for each demographic variable.

The majority of participants were female (66.9%) and married (70.8%). The largest age group was 36-50 years (34.6%), followed by 51-60 years (30.0%). In terms of occupation, the largest group was employed individuals (45.4%), with smaller proportions of homemakers (23.1%), self-employed (21.5%), and students (10.0%). The predominant family type reported was nuclear family (73.8%), followed by joint family (16.2%) and living alone (10.0%).

Table 1: *The Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=130)*

Variable	Category	Frequency (*n*)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	43	33.1
	Female	87	66.9
Occupation	Employed	59	45.4
	Homemaker	30	23.1
	Self-Employed	28	21.5
	Student	13	10.0
Age Group	18-25	12	9.2
	26-35	20	15.4
	36-50	45	34.6

	51-60	39	30.0
	Above 60	14	10.8
Marital Status	Married	92	70.8
	Single	38	29.2
Family Type	Joint Family	21	16.2
	Living Alone	13	10.0
	Nuclear Family	96	73.8

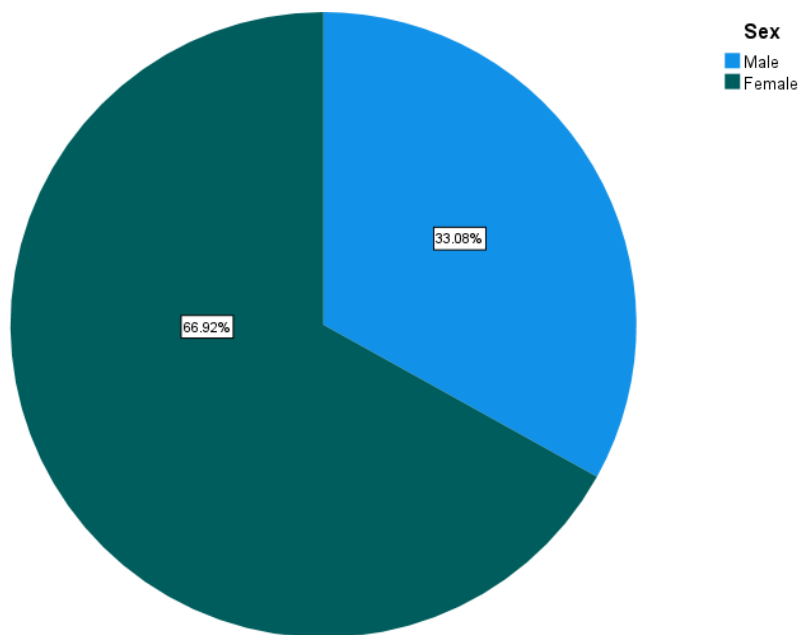**Figure.1** *ThePie Chart Showing Gender Distribution*

Fig. 1 showing the gender distribution within a given sample. The chart illustrates that 66.92% of the participants are female, whereas 33.08% are male, highlighting a greater representation of females in the dataset.

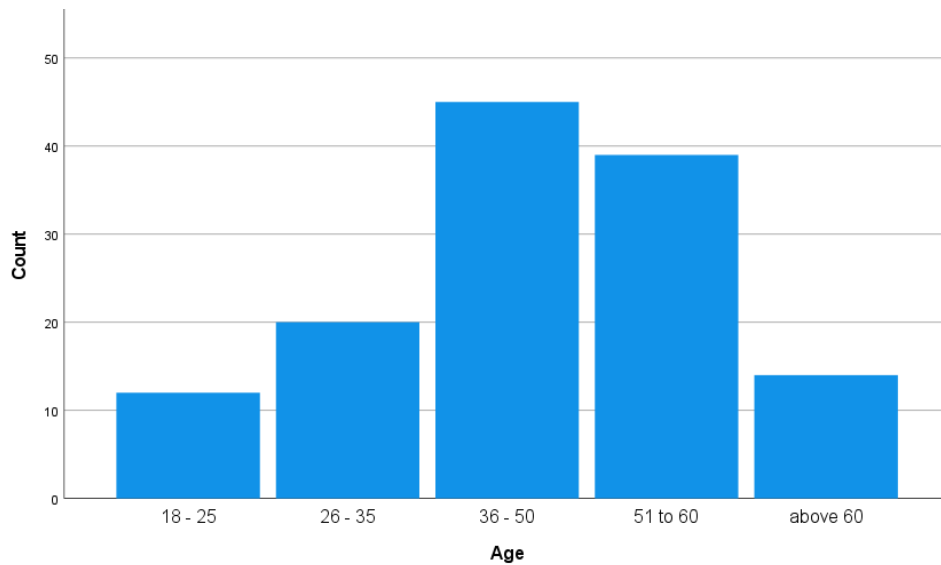**Figure.2** *Bar Chart Showing the Age distribution*

Fig. 2 is a bar chart showing the age distribution of the participants. The highest count falls in the 36–50 age group, followed by 51 to 60. The 18–25 and above 60 age groups have the lowest representation.

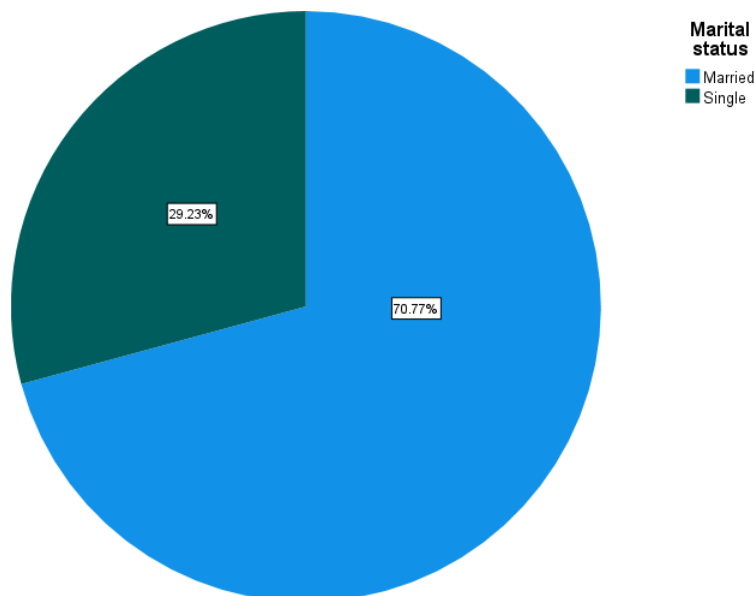**Figure.3** *Pie Chart Showing the marital status distribution.*

Fig. 3 is a pie chart illustrating "the marital status distribution of the sample. A majority of 70.77% are married, while 29.23% are single", indicating a predominantly married population

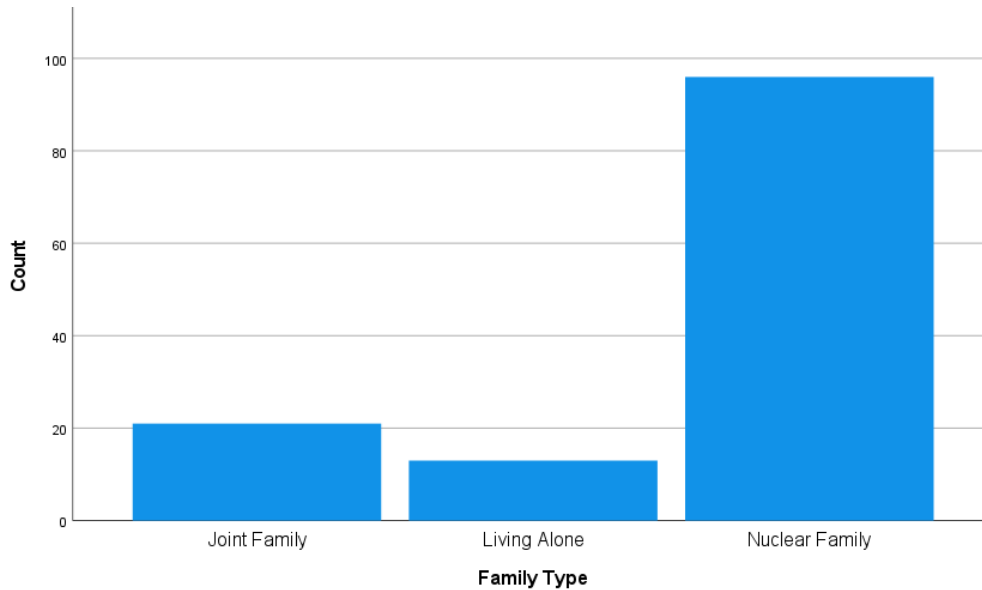**Figure.4** *Bar Chart Showing Family Type Distribution.*

Fig. 4 is a bar chart representing the distribution of family types among participants. The majority belong to nuclear families (highest count), followed by those in joint families, with the fewest participants living alone.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for "Self-Esteem (RSES), Positive Affect (PANAS-Positive), and Negative Affect (PANAS-Negative)".

On average, participants reported moderate levels of self-esteem ($M = 20.75$, $SD = 5.33$). Positive affect scores were generally higher ($M = 36.03$, $SD = 7.22$) than negative affect scores ($M = 24.02$, $SD = 8.37$). The range of scores for each measure indicates variability among participants. Skewness and kurtosis values suggest that the distributions of scores for each variable were within acceptable ranges for parametric analyses.

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics for Self-Esteem and Affect (N=130)*

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	M	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self-Esteem	6.00	30.00	20.75	5.33	-0.15	-0.35
Positive Affect	18.00	50.00	36.03	7.22	-0.21	-0.44

Negative Affect	10.00	48.00	24.02	8.37	0.45	-0.05

Inferential Statistics

Correlations

To investigate the associations among "Self-Esteem, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect," a Pearson correlation analysis was performed. The results, presented in Table 3, indicated significant relationships among all three variables. Specifically, a substantial positive correlation emerged between "Self-Esteem and Positive Affect" (r = .672, p < .001), suggesting that individuals reporting greater self-esteem also reported experiencing more positive emotions. Conversely, a substantial "negative correlation was observed between Self-Esteem and Negative Affect" (r = -.645, p < .001), indicating that higher levels of self-esteem were linked to lower levels of negative emotions.Positive Affect and Negative Affect were significantly but moderately negatively correlated (*r* = -.326, *p* < .001).

Table 3 *Pearson Correlations Between Self-Esteem and Affect (N=130)*

Variable	Self-Esteem	Positive Affect	Negative Affect
Self-Esteem	—		
Positive Affect	.672**	—	
Negative Affect	-.645**	-.326**	—

Note. **p** < .001 (2-tailed).

Group Differences by Sex

Mean scores for "Self-Esteem, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect" were compared between male and female participants using independent samples t-tests.

Table 4 displays these results. Prior to analysis, "Levene's test" confirmed that "the assumption of equality of variances was satisfied for all variables (p > .05)". No statistically significant differences emerged between the sexes for Self-Esteem (t(128) = 0.195, p = .846, d = 0.04), Positive Affect (t(128) = -0.756, p = .451, d = -0.14), or Negative Affect (t(128) = 0.030, p = .976, d = 0.01).

Table 4 *Independent Samples T-Test Results Comparing Self-Esteem and Affect by Sex*

Variable	Sex	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Self-Esteem	Male	43	20.88	4.67	0.195	128	.846	0.04
	Female	87	20.69	5.65				
Positive Affect	Male	43	35.35	7.32	-0.756	128	.451	-0.14
	Female	87	36.37	7.18				
Negative Affect	Male	43	24.05	7.98	0.030	128	.976	0.01
	Female	87	24.00	8.60				

Group Differences by Marital Status

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare mean scores on Self-Esteem, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect between married and single participants. The results are presented in Table 5. Levene's test indicated that "the assumption of equality of variances was met for all comparisons ($p >$ .05)".

No statistically significant differences were found between married and single individuals for Self-Esteem ($t(128) = -1.552$, $p = .123$, $d = -0.30$), Positive Affect ($t(128) = -1.646$, $p = .102$, $d = -0.32$), or Negative Affect ($t(128) = 1.491$, $p = .138$, $d = 0.29$). "Although not statistically significant, married participants reported slightly higher mean Self-Esteem and Positive Affect, and slightly lower mean Negative Affect compared to single participants."

Table 5 *Independent Samples T-Test Results Comparing Self-Esteem and Affect by Marital Status*

Variable	Marital Status	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Self-Esteem	Single	38	19.63	5.55	-1.552	128	.123	-0.30
	Married	92	21.22	5.19				
Positive Affect	Single	38	34.42	7.11	-1.646	128	.102	-0.32
	Married	92	36.70	7.19				

Negative Affect	Single	38	25.71	8.82	1.491	128	.138	0.29
	Married	92	23.32	8.12				

Group Differences by Family Type

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to examine differences in Self-Esteem, Positive Affect, and Negative Affect across Family Types (Nuclear Family, Joint Family, Living Alone). Means and standard deviations for each group are presented in Table 6.

The ANOVA for Self-Esteem was not statistically significant, $F(2, 127) = 1.41$, $p = .248$. Similarly, the ANOVA for Positive Affect was not statistically significant, $F(2, 127) = 0.21$, $p = .811$.

However, the ANOVA for Negative Affect was statistically significant, $F(2, 127) = 3.25$, $p = .042$. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test (Table 7) were conducted to determine which specific groups differed. The results revealed that participants living alone ($M = 28.54$, $SD = 10.40$) reported significantly higher levels of Negative Affect compared to participants in Joint Families ($M = 21.14$, $SD = 5.53$, $p = .032$). No other pairwise comparisons for Negative Affect reached statistical significance (all $p > .05$).

Table 6 *Means and Standard Deviations for Self-Esteem and Affect by Family Type*

Variable	Family Type	*n*	Mean	*SD*
Self-Esteem	Nuclear Family	96	20.93	5.31
	Joint Family	21	21.38	4.46
	Living Alone	13	18.46	6.49
Positive Affect	Nuclear Family	96	35.89	7.44
	Joint Family	21	36.95	7.24
	Living Alone	13	35.62	5.71
Negative Affect	Nuclear Family	96	24.03	8.39
	Joint Family	21	21.14	5.53

	Living Alone	13	28.54	10.40

Table 7 *Tukey HSD Post Hoc Comparisons for Negative Affect by Family Type*

(I) Family Type	**(J) Family Type**	**Mean Difference (I-J)**	*SE*	*p*
Nuclear Family	Joint Family	2.89	1.98	.315
	Living Alone	-4.51	2.43	.157
Joint Family	Nuclear Family	-2.89	1.98	.315
	Living Alone	-7.40*	2.90	.032
Living Alone	Nuclear Family	4.51	2.43	.157
	Joint Family	7.40*	2.90	.032

Note. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Discussion

The discussion focuses on the relationships identified among "self-esteem, positive affect, and negative affect," as well as the presence or absence of significant differences in these psychological constructs across specific demographic categories analysed: Sex, Marital Status, and Family Type. The interpretation is strictly limited to the results obtained from the provided data analysis output. Implications for existing psychological literature and theory are discussed, followed by a clear articulation of the study's limitations as evidenced by the analysed data. Finally, suggestions for future research are offered based on these limitations and the study's specific findings, concluding with a summary of the unique contributions of this research based on the completed analyses.

Discussion of Hypotheses

This section discusses each of the study's hypotheses in light of the statistical results.

H1: It was hypothesized that "individuals with greater Self-Esteem would report elevated levels of Positive Affect and diminished levels of Negative Affect". The findings from the Pearson correlation

analysis provided strong evidence confirming this prediction. A substantial positive association was identified between Self-Esteem and Positive Affect (r = .672, p < .001); this suggests that increases in self-esteem are linked to notable increases in reported positive emotions. Conversely, a considerable negative association was noted between Self-Esteem and Negative Affect (r = -.645, p < .001), indicating that higher self-esteem was related to markedly lower negative emotional experiences.

These findings are remarkably consistent with a vast body of literature that highlights the central role of self-evaluation in shaping emotional life (Diener & Diener, 1995; Sowislo & Orth, 2014). The strong negative association between self-esteem and negative affect, in particular, is a fundamental finding reiterated across numerous studies and meta-analyses linking low self-esteem to psychological distress, depression, and anxiety (Sowislo & Orth, 2014; Filej & Žvanut, 2016). Cognitive models of psychopathology (e.g., Beck, 1967) propose that dysfunctional beliefs about the self-contribute to negative emotional states, a perspective strongly supported by these correlational results. Similarly, the robust positive association between self-esteem and positive affect aligns with research indicating that favourable self-views are conducive to experiencing joy, contentment, and enthusiasm (Orth & Robins, 2013; Kong et al., 2013). The findings from this study reinforce the well-established psychological principle that self-esteem is a crucial correlate of both the presence of positive emotions and the absence of negative ones. The modest but significant negative correlation between Positive Affect and Negative Affect (*r* = -.326, *p* < .001) is also in line with the understanding that while these are distinct dimensions, they are not entirely orthogonal in experienced mood states (Watson & Tellegen, 1985). Overall, the data analysed in this study provide compelling evidence for the fundamental theoretical link between self-esteem and core affective dimensions.

H2: Hypothesis 2 predicted that there would be significant differences in Negative Affect levels based on Family Type. The analysis of variance conducted to compare Negative Affect across the three Family Types (Nuclear Family, Joint Family, Living Alone) yielded a statistically significant result (*F*(2, 127) = 3.25, *p* = .042), providing support for this hypothesis. To pinpoint the source of this overall difference, "Tukey's HSD post hoc test" was performed. This test revealed a significant mean difference in Negative Affect specifically between participants living alone and those in Joint Families (*p* = .032), with individuals living alone reporting a considerably higher mean Negative Affect score (*M* = 28.54) compared to those in Joint Families (*M* = 21.14).

This finding aligns with theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence emphasizing the psychological benefits of social embeddedness and the potential challenges associated with living alone. Joint families, characterized by multiple generations or extended relatives living together, typically represent environments rich in social interaction, mutual support, and shared responsibilities. This dense social network can serve as a powerful buffer against stress and loneliness, contributing to lower negative emotional experiences. Conversely, living alone, while potentially offering independence, can increase the risk of social isolation if not accompanied by strong social connections outside the home (Hawkley et al., 2007; Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009). The absence of readily available daily companionship and support may leave individuals living alone more vulnerable to experiencing negative emotions in response to life's challenges. The lack of a significant difference between Nuclear Family and Joint Family regarding negative affect might suggest that the *presence* of cohabiting family members, regardless of whether it's a nuclear or extended structure, provides a comparable level of protection

against negative affect in this sample. Furthermore, the non-significant ANOVA results for Self-Esteem and Positive Affect across Family Types indicate that, within this sample, living arrangements primarily impacted the negative dimension of emotional experience, rather than global self-worth or the capacity for positive emotions. This specificity of the finding to negative affect is noteworthy and warrants further exploration.

H3: Hypothesis 3 predicted that there would be significant differences in levels of Self-Esteem, Positive Affect, or Negative Affect based on participants' Sex or Marital Status. The independent samples t-tests conducted to examine these potential differences did not provide support for this hypothesis in the analysed sample.

For Sex, no statistically significant differences were found for Self-Esteem ($t(128) = 0.195$, $p = .846$), Positive Affect ($t(128) = -0.756$, $p = .451$), or Negative Affect ($t(128) = 0.030$, $p = .976$). While some literature suggests small or context-dependent gender differences in self-esteem (Kling et al., 1999; Bleidorn et al., 2016) and potentially higher negative affect in women (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001; McLean & Anderson, 2009), these expected differences were not evident in this study's sample. This could be due to various factors, including the specific characteristics of the sample population, cultural context, or that global self-esteem and general positive/negative affect are less differentiated by gender in this group compared to domain-specific self-esteem or specific emotional experiences.

Similarly, for Marital Status, the comparisons between married and single participants did not reveal statistically significant differences for Self-Esteem ($t(128) = -1.552$, $p = .123$), Positive Affect ($t(128) = -1.646$, $p = .102$), or Negative Affect ($t(128) = 1.491$, $p = .138$). This outcome contrasts with a body of research that often reports psychological well-being advantages for married individuals (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Luo & Waite, 2005). The lack of significant findings here may be influenced by the composition of the 'Single' group, which includes individuals who may have strong alternative social support networks or who are single by choice and report high well-being. It might also suggest that the mere status of being married versus single is less psychologically impactful than the quality of relationships, whether marital or non-marital (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). While non-significant trends in the means were observed (married individuals having slightly higher average "self-esteem and positive affect", and lower negative affect), these differences were not statistically reliable in this sample. Therefore, based on the analyses conducted, Sex and Marital Status do not appear to significantly differentiate individuals' levels of self-esteem or general affect in this study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study robustly confirmed the fundamental principle that higher self-esteem is strongly associated with greater positive affect and less negative affect. While the analysed data did not reveal significant differences in self-esteem or affect based on participants' Sex or Marital Status in this sample, a significant finding emerged concerning the impact of Family Type on negative emotional experience. Specifically, individuals living alone reported significantly higher levels of negative affect compared to those in joint family arrangements, highlighting the immediate social context as a relevant factor for vulnerability to distress. Constrained by its cross-sectional nature, sample characteristics, and the specific analyses conducted (which did not include age, education, employment, or any multivariate tests), the study provides a specific empirical snapshot. However, by rigorously interpreting only the

available data and identifying these precise limitations, this research provides a clear foundation and critical directions for future, more comprehensive investigations into the complex interplay of self-esteem, affect, and the diverse socio-demographic landscape of human lives.

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