

The Relationship Between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity Among Young Adults

Ms. Laiba Khan¹, Dr. Annie Khanam Singh²

¹Student, Psychology, Amity University, Noida

²Assistant Professor, Psychology, Amity University, Noida

ABSTRACT

The development of a clear and stable sense of self is a central psychological task during young adulthood. At the same time, individuals in this developmental stage often experience heightened sensitivity to social evaluation and external validation. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity among young adults aged 18–30 years. Need for approval refers to the tendency to seek positive evaluation and avoid negative judgment from others, whereas self-concept clarity refers to the extent to which an individual's beliefs about themselves are clearly defined, internally consistent, and stable over time.

A quantitative correlational research design was employed for the study. Data were collected from 120 young adult participants using standardized self-report measures, including the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE) to assess need for approval and the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS) to measure clarity of self-beliefs. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and linear regression analyses were used to analyze the data.

The results revealed a significant negative correlation between need for approval and self-concept clarity ($r = -0.625, p < .001$), indicating that individuals with higher approval-seeking tendencies tend to have lower levels of self-concept clarity. Regression analysis further showed that need for approval significantly predicts self-concept clarity, accounting for 39.1% of the variance.

The findings suggest that excessive reliance on external validation may interfere with the development of a clear and stable sense of identity. The study highlights the importance of fostering self-awareness and internal confidence among young adults in order to support healthier identity development.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The development of a coherent and stable sense of self is one of the most significant psychological achievements of young adulthood. This period, typically spanning the ages of 18 to 30 years, is marked by transition, self-exploration, relational shifts, academic and occupational decision-making, and increasing independence (Arnett, 2000). While adolescence initiates identity exploration, young adulthood represents a critical phase in which identity must become more consolidated, internally grounded, and functionally stable (Erikson, 1968).

However, identity formation does not occur in isolation. It is shaped by interpersonal relationships, cultural expectations, social evaluation, and broader sociocultural forces (Harter, 2012). In contemporary society, young adults are immersed in environments that amplify visibility and evaluation. The digital landscape, especially social networking platforms, has intensified processes of social comparison and public

validation (Vogel et al., 2014). Approval is no longer confined to close interpersonal relationships but is quantified and continuously displayed. In such a context, psychological constructs related to validation and self-definition become particularly salient.

Two constructs that appear theoretically interconnected within this developmental stage are Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity. The need for approval reflects the extent to which individuals rely on external validation to regulate self-worth (Leary et al., 1995), while self-concept clarity reflects the structural stability and coherence of one's self-beliefs (Campbell et al., 1996). When individuals depend heavily on others' evaluations to define themselves, their internal sense of identity may become unstable or fragmented. Conversely, individuals with a clearly defined self-concept may be less vulnerable to fluctuations in social approval.

The present study seeks to explore the relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity among young adults. By examining these constructs together, the study attempts to contribute to a deeper understanding of identity regulation in the context of social evaluation.

1.2 Conceptualization of the Self in Psychological Theory

Before examining the variables individually, it is important to situate them within broader theories of the self. The concept of self has occupied a central place in psychological thought across theoretical traditions. William James (1890) distinguished between the "I" (the subjective knower) and the "Me" (the known aspects of self). Later theorists elaborated on this distinction by conceptualizing the self as a cognitive schema, a narrative construction, or a socially constructed identity (Baumeister, 1998). Across these perspectives, one theme remains consistent: the self is not static but is constructed through interaction between internal processes and social experiences.

Symbolic interactionism, particularly the work of Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934), emphasized that the self emerges through social interaction. Cooley's concept of the "looking-glass self" proposed that individuals form self-perceptions by imagining how others see them. Thus, social feedback becomes central to identity formation. While such processes are developmentally normative, excessive reliance on external evaluation may undermine internal stability (Leary & Tangney, 2012).

In contemporary cognitive theories, the self is conceptualized as a network of organized beliefs about personal attributes, roles, and values (Markus & Wurf, 1987). The structural quality of this network—whether it is coherent, stable, and confidently held—determines the degree of self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996).

Thus, the interplay between social validation and internal coherence becomes central in understanding identity functioning during young adulthood.

1.3 Need for Approval

1.3.1 Definition and Core Features

Need for approval refers to a dispositional tendency to seek positive evaluation and avoid negative judgment from others. It is characterized by heightened sensitivity to interpersonal feedback and a strong desire to be accepted, appreciated, and affirmed (Leary, 1983).

Individuals high in need for approval often:

- Monitor their behavior closely in social contexts
- Modify opinions to align with group expectations
- Experience discomfort when facing disagreement
- Fear rejection or criticism

- Base self-worth on interpersonal validation

While the desire for belonging is a fundamental human motive (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), the need for approval becomes psychologically significant when it functions as a primary regulator of self-esteem.

1.3.2 Developmental Origins

The roots of approval-seeking tendencies can be traced to early relational experiences. Humanistic theorists, particularly Carl Rogers (1951), emphasized that children require unconditional positive regard to develop a stable and congruent self. When acceptance is conditional—contingent upon performance, obedience, or achievement—children may internalize conditions of worth. Over time, they learn that love and approval must be earned rather than inherently possessed.

Attachment theory further explains individual differences in approval-seeking behavior. According to Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1978), early attachment experiences shape internal working models of the self and others. Individuals with anxious attachment styles often exhibit heightened sensitivity to relational cues and fear of rejection (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). These patterns may persist into adulthood and manifest as chronic approval-seeking behavior.

1.3.3 Cognitive and Emotional Mechanisms

From a cognitive perspective, need for approval may be driven by core schemas involving self-doubt and fear of inadequacy (Beck, 1976). These schemas influence attention, interpretation, and memory processes. For example, individuals high in approval needs may selectively attend to signs of disapproval and magnify minor criticism.

Emotionally, approval-seeking is associated with:

- Anxiety during evaluation
- Relief following praise
- Rumination after perceived rejection

Behaviorally, it may result in people-pleasing, overcommitment, difficulty asserting boundaries, and suppression of authentic self-expression (Leary & Kowalski, 1995).

1.3.4 Adaptive vs. Maladaptive Dimensions

It is important to recognize that a moderate need for approval is adaptive. Humans are social beings whose survival historically depended upon group belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Sensitivity to social norms promotes cooperation and relational harmony. However, when approval becomes central to self-definition, it may undermine autonomy and authenticity.

Excessive approval-seeking may lead to:

- Emotional dependency
- Identity diffusion
- Vulnerability to manipulation
- Chronic self-doubt

Thus, the degree and rigidity of approval dependence determine whether it functions adaptively or maladaptively.

1.4 Self-Concept Clarity

1.4.1 Definition

Self-concept clarity refers to the extent to which beliefs about oneself are clearly defined, internally consistent, and stable across time and situations (Campbell et al., 1996). It concerns the structural quality of the self rather than specific traits or evaluations.

An individual may have high or low self-esteem but still differ in how clearly those beliefs are organized. Thus, self-concept clarity is conceptually distinct from self-esteem (Campbell et al., 1996).

1.4.2 Characteristics of High Self-Concept Clarity

Individuals with high self-concept clarity:

- Possess stable self-views
- Demonstrate confidence in self-knowledge
- Exhibit behavioral consistency across contexts
- Are less reactive to temporary feedback
- Experience psychological coherence

Such individuals are more likely to make decisions aligned with personal values and less likely to shift identity based on social pressure (Campbell et al., 1996).

1.4.3 Characteristics of Low Self-Concept Clarity

Low self-concept clarity is characterized by:

- Identity confusion
- Frequent changes in goals or values
- Contradictory self-descriptions
- High susceptibility to social influence
- Emotional instability

Individuals with unclear self-concepts may rely heavily on external input to define who they are, making them vulnerable to fluctuations in approval (Campbell et al., 2003).

1.4.4 Developmental Perspective

Erikson's psychosocial theory emphasizes that successful resolution of identity crises results in fidelity and coherent self-definition (Erikson, 1968). Failure to consolidate identity may lead to confusion and instability. Marcia's identity status model further suggests that individuals who have neither explored nor committed to identities may exhibit lower clarity (Marcia, 1966).

Young adulthood is a period where commitments regarding career, relationships, and values become more concrete. If internal clarity has not developed, individuals may experience uncertainty and anxiety (Arnett, 2000).

1.5 The Interplay Between Approval-Seeking and Self-Concept Clarity

Theoretically, need for approval and self-concept clarity are interconnected through processes of self-regulation and identity construction.

When individuals derive self-worth primarily from external validation, their self-concept becomes externally anchored (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). In such cases, identity may fluctuate depending on social context. For example, a person may adopt different values in different peer groups to maintain acceptance. Over time, this adaptive flexibility may compromise internal coherence.

Conversely, individuals with strong self-concept clarity possess an internal reference framework. Their self-definition remains relatively stable despite disagreement or criticism. Because their identity is internally grounded, approval enhances but does not determine their self-worth.

Several mechanisms may explain the negative association between need for approval and self-concept clarity:

1. External contingency of self-worth disrupts internal stability (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001).

2. Chronic self-monitoring weakens spontaneous self-expression.
3. Fear of rejection inhibits exploration of authentic preferences.
4. Identity becomes socially constructed rather than internally integrated.

Thus, high approval-seeking may contribute to identity fragmentation, while high self-concept clarity may buffer against excessive validation dependence.

1.6 Sociocultural Considerations

In collectivistic societies, social approval often carries significant weight due to emphasis on interdependence and family expectations (Triandis, 1995). Young adults may experience tension between personal aspirations and societal norms. This tension may intensify approval-seeking behaviors, particularly in domains such as career choice, marriage, and lifestyle decisions.

Additionally, the digital era has normalized constant feedback cycles. Social media platforms create environments where validation is publicly measurable. Such environments may reinforce external orientation of self-worth and potentially weaken internal clarity (Vogel et al., 2014).

Understanding these constructs within sociocultural context enhances the relevance of the present study.

1.7 Need for the Present Study

Despite extensive research on identity and self-esteem, the specific relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity remains underexplored, particularly within young adult populations. Given rising concerns about mental health, social anxiety, and identity confusion among emerging adults, examining these constructs together is timely (Arnett, 2000).

This study aims to:

- Explore the association between external validation dependence and identity structure.
- Contribute to theoretical understanding of self-regulation in young adulthood.
- Provide implications for counselling interventions focused on autonomy and self-definition.

By investigating these variables, the study seeks to illuminate how reliance on approval may shape the clarity and stability of self-identity.

1.8 Operational Definitions

Need for Approval: A dispositional tendency to seek positive evaluation and avoid rejection, measured through standardized assessment tools (Leary, 1983).

Self-Concept Clarity: The extent to which self-beliefs are clearly defined, internally consistent, and stable over time (Campbell et al., 1996).

Young Adults: Individuals aged 18–30 years (Arnett, 2000).

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The transition from adolescence to young adulthood represents a crucial stage in psychological development. During this period, individuals gradually move from dependence on external influences toward the development of a more stable and internally guided sense of identity. This developmental phase often involves significant self-reflection, identity exploration, and increased awareness of social evaluation. Young adults begin to define their beliefs, values, and goals while simultaneously negotiating social expectations from peers, family members, and society.

Two psychological constructs that are particularly relevant during this developmental period are Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity. The need for approval refers to an individual's tendency to seek

validation and acceptance from others and to avoid negative evaluation. In contrast, self-concept clarity refers to the extent to which an individual's beliefs about themselves are clearly defined, internally consistent, and stable over time.

Understanding the relationship between these two constructs is important because individuals who rely heavily on external validation may struggle to develop a stable and coherent sense of self. The following sections review previous theoretical perspectives and empirical studies related to approval-seeking tendencies and self-concept clarity. The literature also highlights existing research gaps, particularly within the socio-cultural context of India, which provides the rationale for the present study.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The present study is grounded in two major psychological perspectives that help explain the relationship between approval-seeking tendencies and the development of self-concept.

Self-Concept Theory

The concept of self-concept has long been a central topic in psychology. William James (1890) proposed that the self consists of both the subjective "I" and the objective "Me," suggesting that individuals form beliefs about themselves through both internal reflection and social interaction. Later researchers expanded this idea, emphasizing that a stable and coherent self-concept plays an important role in psychological adjustment.

Campbell et al. (1996) introduced the concept of Self-Concept Clarity, describing it as the degree to which individuals possess clearly defined and internally consistent beliefs about themselves. According to this perspective, individuals with high self-concept clarity tend to show greater emotional stability, stronger decision-making abilities, and greater resistance to social pressure.

Sociometer Theory

Sociometer Theory proposed by Leary et al. (1995) suggests that self-esteem functions as a psychological monitor of social acceptance. According to this theory, individuals constantly evaluate their social standing and adjust their behavior in order to maintain acceptance within social groups.

From this perspective, the Need for Approval can be understood as a response to perceived threats to social belonging. When individuals become overly sensitive to others' evaluations, they may rely heavily on external validation to maintain their sense of self-worth. Over time, this reliance on social approval may weaken the stability of an individual's self-concept.

Together, these theoretical frameworks suggest that excessive concern with social approval may interfere with the development of a clear and internally grounded sense of identity.

2.3 Global Perspectives on Need for Approval and Self-Concept

Research conducted in different cultural contexts has consistently examined the influence of social evaluation on individuals' self-perceptions.

The Role of Social Evaluation

Several studies have demonstrated that individuals who strongly fear negative evaluation tend to experience higher levels of self-doubt and uncertainty regarding their identity. Campbell et al. (1996) found that individuals with low self-concept clarity were more vulnerable to external feedback and social comparison.

Similarly, Leary and Kowalski (1995) suggested that individuals who are highly concerned about others' opinions often engage in impression management behaviors. While such behaviors may temporarily improve social acceptance, they can also create internal inconsistencies in how individuals perceive themselves.

The Influence of External Validation

Research has also highlighted the psychological consequences of excessive reliance on external validation. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) proposed that individuals whose self-worth depends heavily on others' approval may experience emotional instability and fluctuations in self-perception.

Studies conducted among university students have found that approval-seeking tendencies are associated with social anxiety, increased sensitivity to criticism, and lower self-confidence (Anthony et al., 2007). These findings suggest that dependence on social validation may weaken the internal stability of self-beliefs.

2.4 The Indian Context: Cultural Influences on Self-Concept

In collectivistic societies such as India, social relationships and community expectations often play an important role in shaping individual identity. Family values, social harmony, and respect for authority are often emphasized, which may influence how individuals perceive themselves and respond to social evaluation.

The Role of Social Approval

Studies conducted in India suggest that social approval and family expectations can significantly influence self-perception among young adults. Saha and Sen (2016) found that perceived parental support and social acceptance were positively associated with self-esteem and emotional well-being among Indian college students.

Similarly, Chaudhary and Shukla (2021) reported that individuals who perceived strong social support demonstrated higher levels of psychological adjustment. These findings suggest that positive social relationships can contribute to healthy identity development.

Challenges of Excessive Social Evaluation

However, some research also suggests that excessive concern about social approval may negatively affect psychological functioning. Raval et al. (2015) reported that high levels of perceived social pressure were associated with increased anxiety and emotional distress among Indian youth.

Kaur and Kaur (2018) found that individuals who were overly concerned with others' evaluations often reported lower levels of self-confidence and greater dependence on external feedback. These findings highlight the potential challenges associated with excessive approval-seeking behavior.

2.5 Synthesis of Variable-Wise Research

Need for Approval

Previous research suggests that the need for approval is closely linked to individuals' fear of negative evaluation and desire for social acceptance. Individuals who exhibit high levels of approval-seeking behavior tend to be more sensitive to criticism and may frequently adjust their behavior to meet others' expectations.

Studies conducted among young adults indicate that excessive reliance on approval may contribute to emotional instability and self-doubt (Leary et al., 1995; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). As a result, individuals may struggle to develop an internally grounded sense of identity.

Self-Concept Clarity

Self-concept clarity has been identified as an important factor influencing psychological well-being and personal stability. Campbell et al. (1996) suggested that individuals with high self-concept clarity tend to demonstrate greater confidence, better emotional regulation, and stronger decision-making abilities.

Research has also shown that individuals with unclear self-concepts are more susceptible to social influence and external feedback. As a result, they may rely more heavily on others' opinions when forming

their self-beliefs.

2.6 Research Gap Analysis

Although previous research has explored both approval-seeking tendencies and self-concept clarity, several important gaps remain.

Contextual Gap:

Much of the existing research on approval-seeking and self-concept clarity has been conducted in Western societies. There is limited empirical research examining this relationship within the socio-cultural context of India.

Developmental Gap:

Many studies have focused on adolescents rather than young adults. However, the age range between 18 and 30 years represents a critical stage of identity development during which individuals begin to form independent beliefs and life goals.

Relational Gap:

While previous studies suggest that approval-seeking tendencies and self-concept clarity may be related, relatively few studies have examined the predictive relationship between these variables.

2.7 Summary

The literature reviewed highlights the important role of social evaluation and self-perception in shaping psychological development. Across both international and Indian studies, a consistent pattern emerges: individuals who rely excessively on external validation may experience greater difficulty developing a clear and stable sense of self.

Previous research indicates that self-concept clarity contributes to psychological well-being, emotional stability, and independent decision-making. At the same time, approval-seeking tendencies may increase vulnerability to social pressure and identity uncertainty.

Despite the growing body of research on these constructs, there remains limited empirical evidence examining the relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity among young adults in the Indian context. The present study aims to address this gap by investigating how approval-seeking tendencies may influence the clarity of self-concept among young adults.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to investigate the relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity among young adults. It explains the research design adopted for the study, the variables examined, the population and sample characteristics, and the sampling procedures used for participant selection. Additionally, the chapter describes the research instruments employed to collect data, the procedure followed during data collection, ethical considerations taken into account, and the statistical techniques used to analyze the data.

To ensure that the research maintained acceptable levels of validity, reliability, and replicability, the methodology was designed in accordance with general guidelines commonly used in quantitative psychological research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Providing a clear and systematic description of the methods used helps demonstrate how the research was conducted and allows future researchers to replicate or build upon the study.

3.2 Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative research methodology to explore the relationship between Need

for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity among young adults. A correlational, cross-sectional research design was employed in order to examine the association between the two variables.

A correlational design allows researchers to study the relationship between variables as they naturally occur, without manipulating them or introducing experimental interventions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since psychological constructs such as self-concept and approval-seeking behavior develop naturally within social contexts, a correlational approach was considered appropriate for examining the degree to which these variables are related.

In addition to correlation analysis, linear regression analysis was used to examine whether Need for Approval significantly predicts Self-Concept Clarity. Regression analysis helps determine the extent to which one variable contributes to explaining variations in another variable. Through this approach, the study aimed to understand whether reliance on external validation plays a meaningful role in shaping the clarity and stability of an individual's self-concept.

3.3 Variables of the Study

Independent Variable

Need for Approval

Need for Approval refers to the tendency of individuals to seek validation, acceptance, and positive evaluation from others. Individuals with a high need for approval often depend on external feedback to maintain their sense of self-worth.

Dependent Variable

Self-Concept Clarity

Self-Concept Clarity refers to the degree to which an individual's beliefs about themselves are clearly defined, internally consistent, and stable over time.

3.4 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Need for Approval

In the present study, Need for Approval was operationalized as the total score obtained on the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE). The scale measures an individual's concern about being judged negatively by others and their tendency to seek social acceptance. Higher scores on the scale indicate a stronger need for approval and greater sensitivity to others' evaluations.

Self-Concept Clarity

Self-Concept Clarity was operationalized as the total score obtained on the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS) developed by Campbell et al. (1996). Higher scores on this scale indicate that an individual possesses a clearer, more stable, and internally consistent understanding of their self-beliefs.

3.5 Population of the Study

The population for the present study consisted of young adults aged between 18 and 30 years living in India. This age group was selected because young adulthood is considered an important developmental stage characterized by identity exploration, self-reflection, and increasing independence (Arnett, 2000). During this stage, individuals actively form beliefs about themselves while navigating social expectations and relationships. As a result, examining approval-seeking tendencies and self-concept clarity within this population provides valuable insight into the psychological processes involved in identity formation.

3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique

3.6.1 Sample Size

The final sample consisted of N = 120 participants. This sample size was considered adequate for conduc-

ting correlational and regression analyses, which require a sufficient number of observations to produce reliable statistical results.

3.6.2 Sampling Technique

A combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling techniques was used to recruit participants. Convenience sampling allowed the researcher to collect data from individuals who were easily accessible, while snowball sampling enabled participants to share the questionnaire with other eligible individuals within their networks.

Participants were primarily recruited through online platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and academic networks, which allowed access to a diverse group of young adults within the specified age range.

3.6.3 Inclusion Criteria

Participants were included in the study if they met the following criteria:

- Individuals between 18 and 30 years of age.
- Currently enrolled in or recently graduated from an educational institution.
- Able to read and understand English in order to respond accurately to the questionnaires.
- Provided informed consent and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

3.6.4 Exclusion Criteria

Participants were excluded from the study if:

They were below 18 or above 30 years of age.

- Their responses were incomplete or showed patterned answering (for example, selecting the same option for all items).
- They chose not to provide consent for participation in the study.

3.7 Tools and Instruments for Data Collection

Data for the present study were collected using the following standardized psychological instruments.

Instrument 1: Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE)

- **Author(s):** Leary (1983)
- **Purpose:** To measure individuals' concern about negative evaluation by others.
- **Description:** The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE) is a widely used self-report measure designed to assess the degree to which individuals fear being judged negatively by others. The scale consists of multiple statements describing feelings related to social evaluation and approval. Participants respond to each item using a Likert-type scale, indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement.
- **Scoring:** Responses are summed to obtain a total score. Higher scores indicate a greater fear of negative evaluation and a stronger tendency to seek approval from others.
- **Reliability and Validity:** Previous studies have reported satisfactory reliability for the BFNE, with Cronbach's alpha values generally above 0.70, indicating good internal consistency.

Instrument 2: Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS)

- **Author(s):** Campbell et al. (1996)
- **Description:** The Self-Concept Clarity Scale measures the extent to which individuals possess clear and stable beliefs about themselves. The scale consists of 12 items, each rated on a Likert scale ranging

from strong disagreement to strong agreement. The items assess whether individuals feel confident about their self-beliefs or whether they frequently experience confusion regarding their identity.

- **Scoring:** Some items in the scale are reverse-scored before calculating the total score. After reversing the relevant items, responses are summed to obtain the overall Self-Concept Clarity score. Higher scores indicate greater clarity and consistency in self-beliefs, whereas lower scores suggest uncertainty or instability in one's self-concept.
- **Reliability:** The scale has demonstrated strong internal consistency across studies, typically reporting Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80.

3.8 Procedure of Data Collection

Prior to collecting data, the research procedure was carefully planned to ensure clarity, feasibility, and adherence to ethical research standards. Data were collected using an online questionnaire created through Google Forms.

The questionnaire included three main sections: an informed consent form, demographic questions, and the standardized psychological scales used in the study. Participants were first provided with a brief description of the study, including its purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality assurances.

Participants were invited to complete the questionnaire through links shared via social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram, as well as through personal academic networks. Only those individuals who provided informed consent were allowed to proceed with the questionnaire.

Participants were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. Data collection continued until the desired number of responses was obtained.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in accordance with widely accepted ethical principles for studies involving human participants (World Medical Association, 2013).

Several steps were taken to ensure ethical compliance:

- Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.
- Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time.
- Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. No personally identifying information was collected.
- The data collected were used solely for academic purposes.
- The study did not involve any procedures that could cause psychological or physical harm to participants.

3.10 Statistical Techniques for Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and analyzed using statistical software. The following statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data:

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were calculated to summarize the distribution of Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity scores among participants.

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation

Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity.

Linear Regression Analysis

Linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether Need for Approval significantly predicts Self-Concept Clarity and to assess the extent to which approval-seeking tendencies contribute to variations in self-concept clarity.

CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the statistical analysis of the data collected from 120 young adults. The analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity. The results are organized according to the objectives of the study. Reliability analysis was first conducted to ensure the internal consistency of the scales used in the research. Descriptive statistics were then calculated to understand the general distribution of the variables. Finally, correlation and regression analyses were performed to examine the relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity and to determine whether Need for Approval significantly predicts Self-Concept Clarity.

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the scales used in the present study. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated for both the Need for Approval scale (BFNE) and the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS). Reliability analysis helps ensure that the items included in the scale consistently measure the intended construct.

**Table 4.1
Reliability Statistics of the Scales**

Scale	Cronbach’s Alpha
Need for Approval (BFNE)	0.752
Self-Concept Clarity (SCCS)	0.770

As shown in Table 4.1, the Cronbach’s alpha value for the Need for Approval scale was 0.752, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency. The Self-Concept Clarity Scale showed a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.770, suggesting good reliability. In psychological research, reliability coefficients above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable. Therefore, the obtained values indicate that both scales demonstrate satisfactory reliability and are suitable for further statistical analysis.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to understand the overall levels of Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity among the participants. Measures such as mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values were computed to examine the distribution of the variables.

**Table 4.2
Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 120)**

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Need for Approval (BFNE Total)	2.68	0.623	1.00	4.58
Self-Concept Clarity (SCCS Total)	3.28	0.600	1.83	4.75

Table 4.2 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. The mean score for Need for Approval was 2.68 with a standard deviation of 0.623, indicating a moderate level of approval-seeking tendencies

among the participants. The mean score for Self-Concept Clarity was 3.28 with a standard deviation of 0.600, suggesting that participants generally reported moderate to relatively high levels of clarity regarding their self-beliefs and identity.

The range of scores also indicates variability among participants. Some individuals reported lower levels of need for approval, suggesting greater independence from external validation, whereas others showed higher levels of approval-seeking. Similarly, self-concept clarity varied among individuals, indicating differences in the degree to which participants possessed a clear and stable sense of self.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Pearson’s Product–Moment Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity. This statistical test was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables.

Table 4.3
Correlation between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity

Variable	r	p
Need for Approval & Self-Concept Clarity	-0.625	< .001

As shown in Table 4.3, the results revealed a significant negative correlation between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity ($r = -0.625$, $p < .001$). The negative correlation indicates that higher levels of Need for Approval are associated with lower levels of Self-Concept Clarity. In other words, individuals who strongly depend on external validation and approval from others tend to experience less clarity in their self-beliefs and personal identity.

The strength of the correlation suggests a moderately strong relationship between the two variables. This finding implies that approval-seeking tendencies may play an important role in shaping how clearly individuals understand themselves. Individuals who rely heavily on others’ opinions may experience greater uncertainty or inconsistency in their self-perceptions.

4.4 Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether Need for Approval significantly predicts Self-Concept Clarity. Regression analysis allows researchers to examine the extent to which one variable can explain changes in another variable.

Table 4.4
Model Summary for Regression Analysis

R	R ²
0.625	0.391

Table 4.4 presents the model summary for the regression analysis. The value of $R^2 = 0.391$ indicates that approximately 39.1% of the variance in Self-Concept Clarity can be explained by Need for Approval. This suggests that approval-seeking tendencies account for a substantial portion of the variation in how clearly individuals define their self-concept.

Table 4.5
Regression Coefficients Predicting Self-Concept Clarity

Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Intercept	4.894	0.190	25.71	<.001
Need for Approval	-0.602	0.069	-8.70	<.001

Table 4.5 presents the regression coefficients for the model. The regression coefficient for Need for Approval was -0.602, and the relationship was statistically significant ($p < .001$). The negative coefficient indicates that as Need for Approval increases, Self-Concept Clarity tends to decrease.

The results suggest that individuals who strongly depend on external validation are more likely to experience uncertainty or instability in their self-concept. Conversely, individuals who rely less on approval from others tend to have a clearer and more stable sense of identity.

Overall, the regression analysis confirms that Need for Approval is a significant predictor of Self-Concept Clarity among young adults.

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity among young adults aged 18–30 years. Understanding this relationship is important because young adulthood represents a developmental period during which individuals actively construct their identity while also navigating social expectations and interpersonal relationships.

The results obtained from the statistical analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity. In addition, regression analysis indicated that Need for Approval significantly predicts Self-Concept Clarity. The following section discusses these findings in relation to previous research and relevant psychological theories.

5.2 Relationship Between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity

The correlation analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity ($r = -0.625, p < .001$). This finding suggests that individuals who demonstrate a stronger tendency to seek approval and validation from others tend to have lower levels of clarity in their self-beliefs.

One possible explanation for this relationship is that individuals who are highly concerned with others' evaluations often shape their behaviors, opinions, and self-perceptions according to external expectations. When a person's sense of self becomes dependent on social approval, their identity may become less stable and more influenced by situational feedback. As a result, they may struggle to maintain a consistent and clearly defined understanding of who they are.

These findings are consistent with the work of Campbell et al. (1996), who proposed that individuals with low self-concept clarity are more susceptible to external influences and social feedback. Similarly, Leary et al. (1995) suggested through Sociometer Theory that individuals constantly monitor their social acceptance, and excessive concern about others' opinions can influence self-esteem and self-perception. The findings also align with the research of Crocker and Wolfe (2001), who argued that when self-worth becomes contingent upon external validation, individuals may experience instability in their self-concept. In such cases, personal identity may fluctuate depending on others' reactions and approval.

5.3 Predictive Role of Need for Approval

The regression analysis indicated that Need for Approval significantly predicts Self-Concept Clarity, explaining approximately 39.1% of the variance in self-concept clarity. This suggests that approval-seeking tendencies play a substantial role in shaping the way individuals understand themselves.

This finding highlights the influence of social evaluation on identity formation during young adulthood. Individuals who frequently seek approval may rely more on others' opinions when evaluating themselves, which can weaken their internal sense of identity. Instead of forming beliefs based on personal experiences and values, they may depend on social feedback to define their self-worth.

From a developmental perspective, young adulthood is a period in which individuals attempt to establish autonomy and personal identity. However, when individuals become overly dependent on external validation, it may interfere with the development of an internally grounded self-concept.

5.4 Implications of the Findings

The findings of the present study have important psychological implications. They highlight the need to encourage individuals, particularly young adults, to develop a stronger internal sense of self rather than relying excessively on external validation.

Promoting self-awareness, self-acceptance, and confidence in personal beliefs may help individuals develop greater self-concept clarity. Educational institutions, counselors, and mental health professionals can play an important role in helping young adults build resilience and reduce excessive dependence on social approval.

Furthermore, understanding the relationship between approval-seeking and self-concept clarity can contribute to the development of psychological interventions aimed at improving self-esteem, identity stability, and overall well-being.

CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship between Need for Approval and Self-Concept Clarity among young adults aged 18–30 years. The results revealed a significant negative relationship between the two variables, indicating that individuals who demonstrate higher levels of approval-seeking tend to have lower levels of clarity in their self-concept.

The findings also showed that Need for Approval significantly predicts Self-Concept Clarity, suggesting that reliance on external validation plays an important role in shaping individuals' understanding of themselves. Young adults who frequently seek approval from others may find it more difficult to develop a stable and clearly defined sense of identity.

These results emphasize the importance of fostering self-awareness and internal confidence during young adulthood. When individuals learn to rely more on their own values, beliefs, and personal experiences rather than external validation, they are more likely to develop a clearer and more stable self-concept.

Overall, the study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the psychological relationship between approval-seeking tendencies and identity clarity among young adults. Future research can further explore additional factors that influence self-concept development, including cultural influences, personality traits, and social experiences.

REFERENCES

1. Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Lawrence Erlbaum.

2. Anthony, M. M., Swinson, R. P., & Antony, M. M. (2007). *Shyness and social anxiety workbook*. New Harbinger Publications.
3. Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469–480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469>
4. Baumeister, R. F. (1998). *The self*. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., pp. 680–740). McGraw-Hill.
5. Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529.
6. Beck, A. T. (1976). *Cognitive therapy and the emotional disorders*. International Universities Press.
7. Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. Basic Books.
8. Campbell, J. D., Trapnell, P. D., Heine, S. J., Katz, I. M., Lavallee, L. F., & Lehman, D. R. (1996). Self-concept clarity: Measurement and personality correlates. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(1), 141–156.
9. Campbell, J. D., Assanand, S., & Di Paula, A. (2003). The structure of the self-concept and its relation to psychological adjustment. *Journal of Personality*, 71(1), 115–140.
10. Chaudhary, N., & Shukla, A. (2021). Social support and psychological adjustment among Indian youth. *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 96(2), 145–158.
11. Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human nature and the social order*. Scribner's.
12. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
13. Crocker, J., & Wolfe, C. T. (2001). Contingencies of self-worth. *Psychological Review*, 108(3), 593–623.
14. Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. Norton.
15. Harter, S. (2012). *The construction of the self: Developmental and sociocultural foundations* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
16. James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology*. Holt.
17. Kaur, S., & Kaur, R. (2018). Approval-seeking behavior and self-confidence among young adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 6(3), 50–58.
18. Leary, M. R. (1983). A brief version of the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 9(3), 371–375.
19. Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (1995). *Social anxiety*. Guilford Press.
20. Leary, M. R., & Tangney, J. P. (2012). *Handbook of self and identity* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
21. Leary, M. R., Tambor, E. S., Terdal, S. K., & Downs, D. L. (1995). Self-esteem as an interpersonal monitor: The sociometer hypothesis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68(3), 518–530.
22. Markus, H., & Wurf, E. (1987). The dynamic self-concept. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 38, 299–337.
23. Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3(5), 551–558.
24. Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. University of Chicago Press.
25. Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). *Attachment in adulthood*. Guilford Press.
26. Raval, V. V., et al. (2015). Social pressure and emotional distress among Indian youth. *Journal of Adolescence*, 42, 1–10.

27. Saha, R., & Sen, A. (2016). Parental support and emotional well-being among Indian college students. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 7(5), 489–493.
28. Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism and collectivism*. Westview Press.
29. Vogel, E. A., Rose, J. P., Roberts, L. R., & Eckles, K. (2014). Social comparison and social media. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 3(4), 206–222.
30. World Medical Association. (2013). Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects