

# The Role of Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction on University Students

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## The Role of Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction on University Students' Engagement

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### Abstract

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Student engagement in academic and non-academic activities on campus is very important for student success in academic and social fields. Self-esteem and life satisfaction have a role in increasing student engagement. This research aims to determine the extent of the simultaneous role of self-esteem and life satisfaction in the student engagement of active university students in Bandung City. The respondents of this research were 397 active university students in Bandung City. The measurement tool used to measure student engagement was USEI (University Student Engagement Inventory). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used to measure self-esteem, while the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLWS) was used to measure life satisfaction. The statistical analysis technique used was Multiple Regression to calculate the simultaneous role of life satisfaction and self-esteem on student engagement. The data processing results showed that life satisfaction and self-esteem simultaneously or partially play a positive role in university students' engagement. When university students have self-esteem and life satisfaction together, their role in student engagement is greater than their respective roles in student engagement. Apart from that, self-esteem plays a bigger role than life satisfaction toward student engagement. Practically, parents and lecturers can provide experiences that support the development of university students' self-esteem and satisfaction with their lives so that it can increase student engagement.

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in supporting human life. The importance of education is written in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which states that education needs to be planned as well as possible to create a conducive atmosphere and learning process so that students can actively develop their potential. Through education, students are expected to be able to act actively in academic and non-academic learning activities designed by the teacher.

At the higher education level, learning activities are commonly known as lectures to form student competencies in accordance with the study program they choose. To be able to take lectures and cope with various demands in lectures well, university students

need to be willing to participate actively in all lecture activities. This is in line with what Arnett (2015) said regarding emerging adulthood. According to Arnett (2015), experimentation and exploration are the main characteristics of emerging adulthood. At this stage of development, many individuals are still exploring the career path they want to pursue and the identity they want to have. Active participation in lectures and student activities is a mean of exploration and experimentation to find their career path and identity as they enter adulthood.

University students' engagement has been studied by several researchers in Indonesia, including Sholeh (2019), who stated that university students' engagement is still in the low category; Sulastra and Handayani (2020), their research found that university students have high engagement in lectures; research by Qonita, Dahlan, and Damaianti (2021) found that 54.2% of university students had low engagement. This means that the levels of student engagement in several universities still vary. Abroad, research on student engagement has also been studied by several researchers. Other research examined university student engagement in several countries were also conducted. Heng (2014) conducted research in Cambodia; Glapaththi et al. (2019) in Sri Lanka; Salas-Pilco, Yang, and Zhang (2022) in Latin America.

Student engagement referres to school engagement. According to Fredricks et al. (2004), school engagement is a multidimensional construct. This construct is formed from three dimensions, namely behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. In the context of university students, instead of using term "student engagement", Fredericks prefers to used "student involvement", which includes lecture activities or academic and non-academic activities (including social and extracurricular activities). Behavior that includes behavioral engagement is positive student behavior (e.g. obeying the rules in class, participating in the learning process in class such as listening and asking questions, contributing to school assignments, and being active in student activities at the university level).

Emotional engagement refers to positive emotional reactions experienced by university students, lecturers, fellow students, assignments given, and the campus environment. Cognitive engagement is an investment or commitment given by students to master material by using certain strategies in learning. Frederick et al. (2004) state that students need to have student engagement because with engagement, apathy can be eliminated, and the quality of learning can also be developed. The importance of student engagement has been studied by several researchers. The findings of these studies showed that student engagement is important for increasing academic achievement (Heng, 2014 & Glapaththi et al., 2019), academic performance (Delfino, 2019), and university student competence (Ulum, Yanto & Widiyanto, 2017). Hu and Kuh (2002) revealed that university student engagement in studying is the most important factor in achieving student personal and academic development, so research to find out what can be done to increase student engagement needs to continue to be carried out.

Several researchers found that one of the predictors of student engagement is self-esteem. Pellas (2014) found that among students, self-esteem is a predictor of the three dimensions of student engagement. Artika, Sunawan, and Awalya (2021) also found that self-esteem has a significant effect on student engagement. According to Rosenberg et al. (1995), self-esteem is an individual's positive or negative attitude toward himself and the individual's overall evaluation of his thoughts and feelings. Rosenberg et al. (1995) state that self-esteem is an attitude and thought as the basis for perceptions regarding individual feelings, worth, and value as a human being.

<sup>2</sup> The importance of self-esteem for students is that students with high self-esteem are more able to respect themselves and are able to see positive things they can do for the success of their learning in the future. Self-esteem will provide the ability to see themselves, which can be transferred to how they engage with school (Virtanen et al., 2016). Self-esteem also contributes to student learning achievement (Adiputra, 2015; Hidayat, 2019) and to student learning motivation (Zulkarnain, Sari & Purwadi, 2019). The influence of self-esteem on university student engagement is that university students who can assess themselves positively will develop high self-esteem. The higher the self-esteem of the university students, the more motivated they will be to be involved in academic and non-academic lecture activities with high enthusiasm and perseverance. This is in line with research by Martin et al. (2021), which states that a positive evaluation of self-esteem will lead students to better responsibility and student motivation in the academic environment, which allows them to maintain enthusiasm and persistence even though there are problems in learning. In other words, by having high self-esteem, the enthusiasm owned by university students will help them to be more engaged in learning activities. Thus, university students need to have high self-esteem.

Another factor of student engagement predictor is life satisfaction (Antaramian & Lee, 2017; Rastogi et al., 2018; Akanni, 2022; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2017). Diener et al. (2017) define life satisfaction as an individual's cognitive assessment of their lives. Life satisfaction is one component of subjective well-being, sometimes also termed as happiness. University students in the emerging adulthood stage will make many decisions regarding education, career, or family to carry out their roles as adult individuals in the future. Life satisfaction during this period is important because it will increase positive psychological functions and prevent risky behavior that can endanger oneself, especially when individuals have to make important life decisions (Hollifield & Conger, 2014).

The benefits of life satisfaction in emerging adulthood in the academic field were also studied. Antaramian and Lee (2017) stated that students who are satisfied with their lives will have higher engagement than students who are dissatisfied. Akanni (2014) found that life satisfaction is a predictor of student engagement among university students in Nigeria. Upadyaya and Salmela-Aro's (2017) research revealed that, in Finland, life satisfaction can predict student engagement after transitioning from high school to college.

Life satisfaction can influence student engagement because university <sup>7</sup>students who are satisfied with their lives can also focus their attention on campus activities. Meanwhile, students who are dissatisfied with their lives will focus on efforts to fulfill their needs to be satisfied, so it is difficult to be expected to be actively involved in academic and non-academic activities on campus. This is in line with what was expressed by Wasklak et al. (in Ye et al., 2020), who said that when people are sad and afraid, their attention will be focused on their internal condition. On the other hand, students who are satisfied with their lives can focus more on developing themselves, including exploration efforts and actively involving themselves with academic and non-academic activities.

Apart from that, it was also found that life satisfaction and self-esteem are strongly related. The research results of Szcześniak et al. (2020) showed that there is a strong and positive relationship between life satisfaction and self-esteem. People with high life satisfaction will have high self-esteem, being aware of their strengths. On the other hand, low life satisfaction will rise to low self-esteem because they tend to lack appreciation for their abilities. Uram and Skalski (2022) also found the same thing, that life satisfaction has a significant influence on self-esteem.

Based on the research that has been revealed, both of self-esteem and life satisfaction have an important role in student engagement among university students. So far, there is still little research examining the role of self-esteem and life satisfaction in the context of university students, even though self-esteem and life satisfaction are components of "the self" that are necessary for positive individual development. Previous research still focuses on examining the role of each variable on student engagement. However, it has not been confirmed whether self-esteem and life satisfaction can simultaneously increase student engagement or cannot, especially for university students. In fact, there is also a significant relationship between life satisfaction and self-esteem. This research also answered whether self-esteem and life satisfaction together had a greater impact on increasing student engagement compared to their respective roles in the context of university students in Indonesia.

<sup>6</sup>University students who have high life satisfaction and high self-esteem have a positive evaluation of themselves, can accept their strengths and weaknesses, and appreciate their existence (Rosenberg, 1995). They also feel satisfied with themselves and the lives they are currently living (Diener, 2017). This condition makes them more motivated and able to focus on being involved in learning activities in lectures and student activities, which is a characteristic of students who have student engagement. On the other hand, students who have low life satisfaction and low self-esteem evaluate themselves negatively, do not accept themselves as they are, and feel less satisfied with their lives. Such as conditions which make them more focused on their unsatisfied needs and negative emotions (Waslak et al., in Ye et al., 2020). Thus, it will be difficult for them to concentrate and be involved in academic and non-academic activities on campus.

The hypothesis proposed in this research was "there is a simultaneous role of life satisfaction and self-esteem on university students' engagement." The results of this study will contribute to development of positive psychology studies in educational psychology.

## METHOD

### *Research design*

This research used three variables, namely, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and student engagement. The method used in this research is a quantitative method with a correlational research design. Graziano and Raulin (2014) stated that a strong correlation between variables shows the prediction of the value of one variable to the value of another variable, in which the value is expressed by a regression coefficient.

### *Participants*

The population was university students registered as active university students from the 2019-2022 academic year and aged 18-25 years in Bandung city. This research used a convenience sampling technique (Sugiyono, 2017). Sampling was carried out on an unknown population using an error rate of 5% so that a minimum sample size of 386 was obtained by referring to the Isaac and Michael table (Sugiyono, 2019).

### *Research procedure*

The questionnaire was distributed via Google form, which was begun with providing a letter of consent to ask for university students' willingness to become respondents of this research. If the students were willing, they could continue to fill out the questionnaire; if the students were not, they would not be given a questionnaire.

### *Research Instrument*

To measure student engagement, the researchers used <sup>2</sup> the University Student's Engagement Inventory (USEI) from Maroco et al. (2016). This questionnaire measures 3 dimensions of student engagement, namely cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement in university students. This measurement tool consists of 15 items, with 5 items representing the behavioral engagement component, 5 items representing the emotional engagement component, and 5 items representing the cognitive engagement component. There are 5 alternative answer categories, including: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, and 5 = always. An example of a USEI item for behavioral engagement is "I pay attention to lessons while studying in class." An example of an item for emotional engagement is "I am happy to be on campus. Moreover, the example of cognitive engagement is "I try to integrate material from various scientific disciplines into my general knowledge." The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient value is  $\alpha = 0.878$ . Validity was tested using Pearson correlation, and coefficients were obtained ranging from 0.341-0.710. According to Sugiyono (2019), an item will be declared valid if it has a correlation coefficient  $> 0.3$ . which means the USEI measuring tool is valid for measuring student engagement.



The questionnaire used to measure self-esteem is the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) from Rosenberg (1965). In this measurement tool, there are 10 items with 4 alternative answer choices, namely 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. An example of an RSES item is "Sometimes I think I am not good at all." The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient value is  $\alpha = 0.852$ . Validity was tested using Pearson correlation and obtained coefficients ranging from 0.390-0.756

Meanwhile, to measure life satisfaction, SWLS (Satisfaction with Life-Scale) from Diener et al. (2013) was used, which consists of 5 items with answer choices 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = not sure, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. An example of the SWLS item is "I am satisfied with my life." The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient value is  $\alpha = 0.811$ . To measure validity, Pearson correlation was used with coefficients ranging from 0.663 to 0.852.

The three instruments were initially in English. Then, the instrument translation procedure was carried out. Two translators translated the instruments into the Indonesian language. After that, the translation results were formulated, and two translators carried out the back translation process. After two experts assessed the back translation results, the researchers reformulated the assessment results to determine the final item revision that would be used. Next, the process of testing the measuring instrument was carried out using validity and reliability tests.

#### **Data Analysis Technique**

The analysis technique used in this research was the multiple regression analysis technique (Field, 2017). The aim of this research is to see the contribution of self-esteem and life satisfaction to student engagement among university students. Regarding the data analysis, research must meet the requirements of the classical assumption test, that is the data is normally distributed and there is no multicollinearity, autocorrelation, and heteroscedasticity.

## **RESULTS**

Based on the research results, the distribution of demographic data from the 397 respondents can be seen in Table 1. Based on Table 1, most respondents are females of eighth semester.

**Table 1**  
*Gender and Semester*

<b>Demography</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender		
Male	154	38.8%
Female	243	61.2%
Total	397	100%
Semester		
2	117	29.55%
4	35	8.8%
6	91	22.9%
8	154	38.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100%</b>

The classical assumption test requirements were first carried out before carrying out a regression test. The results of the classical assumption test were that the data met the requirements for the regression test, namely that the data was normally distributed with the significance value obtained of 0.200, meaning  $0.200 > 0.05$ . Next, multicollinearity testing was carried out, and the results showed that there was no multicollinearity in this study, as seen from the tolerance value of 0.538, meaning  $0.538 > 0.10$ . Then the VIF value is 1.860, namely  $1.860 < 10.00$ . Then, an autocorrelation test was carried out, and the results showed no autocorrelation. Meanwhile, the results of the heteroscedasticity test did not show a clear pattern (wavy, wide, and narrow). Furthermore, points were spread above and below the number 0 on the Y-axis. Therefore, there is no heteroscedasticity in this research data. Next, an intercorrelation matrix table between dimensions and variables is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2***Intercorrelation Matrix*

	BE	EE	CE	SA	SR	LS	S.Eng	S.Est	LS
BE	1	0.538**	0.584**	0.364**	0.366**	0.317**			
EE		1	0.485**	0.549**	0.539**	0.583**			
CE			1	0.324**	0.354**	0.275**			
SA				1	0.756**	0.668**			
SR					1	0.598**			
S.Eng							1	0.536**	0.475**
S.Est								1	0.680**
LS									1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In Table 2, it can be seen that the variables are significantly correlated with each other at the 0.01 level. SE (self-esteem) correlates 0.680 with S.Eng (student engagement), while LS (life satisfaction) correlates 0.475 with S.Eng. S.Eng also correlates significantly with S.E, as well as with LS. Next are the results of the simultaneous regression of life satisfaction and self-esteem on student engagement.

**Table 3***Simultaneous Regression Results*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.556 <sup>a</sup>	0.310	0.306	6.932

a. Predictors: (constant) *Life Satisfaction, Self-Esteem*

From Table 3, it appears that the simultaneous contribution of life satisfaction and self-esteem to student engagement is 31%; the remainder is influenced by other factors not measured in this study (p-value of 0.000). From the results of the significance test, a p-value of 0.000 was obtained, which means that life satisfaction and self-esteem simultaneously contribute significantly to student engagement.



The following is a partial significance test for each life satisfaction and self-esteem on student engagement. Table 4 shows that life satisfaction and self-esteem contribute significantly to student engagement (p-value of 0.000). Based on the partial test, the regression coefficient value for self-esteem is 0.608, which means that if self-esteem increases by 1%, student engagement will increase by 0.608. Meanwhile, for life satisfaction, which has a regression coefficient of 0.294, every 1% increase will have an impact on increasing student engagement by 0.294.

**Table 4**  
*Test of Significance for Partial Regression*

Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	Constant	30,116	1,800		16,729	0,000
	SE	0.608	0.088	0.396	6,936	0,000
	LS	0.294	0.082	0.205	3,598	0,000

Next, the effective contribution of each predictor to student engagement will be shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
*Effective Contribution of Each Predictor*

Predictor	Effective Contribution	R square
Self-esteem	21.3%	31%
Life satisfaction	9.7%	

From Table 5, self-esteem has an effective contribution to student engagement of 21.3%, greater than the contribution of life satisfaction to student engagement, which is only 9.7%. This means that the role of self-esteem in student engagement is more dominant than life satisfaction.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the multiple regression test in Tables 2 and 3, it appears that self-esteem and life satisfaction simultaneously contribute to student engagement. This means that university students' self-esteem and the life satisfaction experienced by them can play a role in increasing student engagement in campus activities. University students who are satisfied with their lives and have high self-esteem will be able to build their engagement on campus. On the other hand, if university students are dissatisfied with their lives and feel worthless, their engagement on campus will also be low. An explanation of this can be seen in Table 2, which shows that life satisfaction and self-esteem are strongly and significantly correlated ( $r = 0.680^{**}$ ). This means that the more satisfied university students feel with their lives, the higher the self-esteem they have.

This is supported by the results of research by Szcześniak et al. (2020) which showed that there is a strong and positive relationship between life satisfaction and self-esteem. Uram and Skalski's (2022) research also shows that life satisfaction significantly influences self-esteem. University students with high life satisfaction will have high self-

esteem and be aware of their strengths. On the other hand, university students with low life satisfaction tend to have low self-esteem because they tend to value their abilities less. The strong correlation between these two variables is what allows these two variables to contribute simultaneously to university students' engagement.

University students who have high life satisfaction and high self-esteem feel satisfied with the life they are currently living and have a positive assessment of themselves. They can accept their strengths and weaknesses (self-acceptance) and appreciate their existence (self-respect). This condition makes them more motivated and able to focus on learning activities in lectures and university student activities, which is a characteristic of students who have student engagement. On the other hand, university students with low life satisfaction and low self-esteem evaluate themselves negatively, do not accept themselves as they are, and feel less satisfied with their lives so far. Such conditions will make them more focused on their unsatisfied needs and negative emotions (Waslak et al., in Ye et al., 2020). As a result, they can focus less on involving themselves in campus activities, so they have low student engagement.

Apart from being simultaneous, life satisfaction and self-esteem contribute to student engagement. Self-esteem contributes significantly to student engagement. This means that if students have high self-esteem, then this condition plays a role in increasing their engagement on campus. The effective contribution of self-esteem to student engagement is 21.3%. Students who can evaluate themselves positively will develop high self-esteem and be more involved in activities on campus. This finding is in line with the research results of Artika et al. (2021). They found that self-esteem can predict student engagement. Research finding conducted by Zhao, Zheng, Pan, and Zhou (2021) showed that self-esteem can increase student engagement with academic self-efficacy as a mediator, with contribution of 73.91%. These findings explain how teenagers' positive evaluation of their self-worth will increase their self-esteem in carrying out academic assignments, motivating students to carry out learning activities on campus.

Student engagement will be stronger if students have good self-esteem during the learning process. According to Pellas (2014), self-esteem is a significant predictor of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement, which are dimensions of student engagement. However, the higher self-esteem, the lower behavioral engagement is found. This research findings also supports research by Virtanen (2016), who found that self-esteem is positively related to emotional and cognitive engagement.

Then, life satisfaction contributes significantly to student engagement, which means that university students' life satisfaction plays a role in increasing their engagement on campus. The effective contribution of life satisfaction to student engagement is 9.7%. The results of this research are in line with Antaramian's (2017) findings that if university students are satisfied with their lives, they will have higher engagement than students who are dissatisfied.

Life satisfaction in early adulthood is important because it can improve positive psychological functions and prevent risky behavior that can harm oneself, especially when, as a university student, individuals have to make important decisions in their lives (Hollifield & Conger, 2014); for example, career decisions and the decision to establish a relationship with a life partner. In addition, Akanni's (2014) research on university students in Nigeria found that life satisfaction is a predictor of student engagement. Upadyaya and Salmela-Aro's (2017) research also found that in Finland, life satisfaction can predict student engagement after transitioning from high school to college. The results of research conducted by Lewis, Hubner, Malone, and Valois (2011) showed that life satisfaction is related to cognitive engagement but not to emotional and behavioral engagement.

Based on Table 5 regarding the magnitude of the effective contribution of each predictor, compared to the simultaneous contribution, it appears that after both predictors are present simultaneously, the contribution is greater ( $R^2 = 31\%$ ) compared to when each predictor plays a role alone (the effective contribution of self-esteem is 21.3% and the effective contribution of life satisfaction is 9.7%). This means that if a university student has high self-esteem and is satisfied with his life, his engagement on campus will be higher than if he only has one high variable (high self-esteem or life satisfaction). On the contrary, if a university student has low self-esteem and is dissatisfied with his life, then he/she will be less engaged on campus, compared to if only one of the variables is low (self-esteem or life satisfaction).

This research has an impact on how important it is to increase self-esteem and life satisfaction in university students so that it can make a greater contribution to increasing student engagement. The simultaneous presence of both can play a big role. The research results of Szcześniak et al. (2020) stated that there is a strong and positive relationship between life satisfaction and self-esteem. High life satisfaction will increase self-esteem by realizing one's strengths. On the other hand, low life satisfaction will also reduce self-esteem because university students tend to lack appreciation for their abilities.

This study found that the effective contribution of self-esteem was greater than life satisfaction. According to Chung et al. (2014) and Sánchez-Queija (2017), during emerging adulthood (18-25 years old), self-esteem tends to increase, and it is related to their role as university students. In the first year, university students experience a transition from high school to college. They experience the top dog phenomenon (Santrock, 2018), namely when they are in high school, the individual has the role of senior in the highest class before graduating, then when entering college, they become a junior with the role of a new university student. Self-esteem slightly decreases during the transition from high school to university. After that, in the following college years, self-esteem will increase.

According to the results shown in Table 1, the respondents in this study were mostly 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>-semester students, which means that they were experiencing an increase

in self-esteem. Increasing self-esteem during emerging adulthood is indeed related to the acquisition of competence and academic achievement, as well as relationships with peers during college (Chung et al., 2014; Sánchez-Queija, 2017). This increase in self-esteem is also related to university student's life on campus. Therefore, the increase in self-esteem during emerging adulthood is thought to have an influence on the large contribution of self-esteem to student engagement. In contrast to life satisfaction, which is related to global life satisfaction (Diener, 2017), it is not solely related to the academic area. Although life satisfaction is also important and plays a role in student engagement, its contribution is not as big as self-esteem.

The limitation of this research is that this research did not measure the role of life satisfaction and self-esteem in the three dimensions of student engagement. A more detailed examination of each dimension will provide a richer picture and help leaders develop strategies for developing university students' engagement on campus.

## CONCLUSION

The research results confirm that self-esteem and life satisfaction simultaneously play a role in university student's engagement, and their roles are greater than their respective roles in student engagement. Besides, self-esteem and life satisfaction also have a role in student engagement. However, the role of self-esteem is more dominant than life satisfaction, especially in the context of university students' lives. From this research, it appears that it is important to develop self-esteem and life satisfaction simultaneously in university students so that if both are possessed, it is hoped that student engagement will also increase. In order to increase self-esteem and life satisfaction, university students can be given training on self-knowledge and self-esteem. Moreover, counseling can also be provided for university students with low life satisfaction levels. By increasing university students' self-esteem and life satisfaction, it is hoped that student engagement can also increase. For further research, examining the role of self-esteem and life satisfaction on each dimension of student engagement is recommended.

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