

# Correlations between Self-Esteem, Subjective Happiness and Grateful Disposition of High-School Students

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**Abstract.** *In high school, you experience many physical and psychological difficulties in deciding your career and preparing for college. A variety of strategies are needed to help minimize these difficulties and help them cope positively. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between self-esteem, subjective happiness and grateful disposition of high-school students. A convenience-sampled 105 high-school students self-report questionnaire employing three scales: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Subjective Happiness Scale, and Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6). Data were collected from November 2017 to December 2017. For the degree of self-esteem according to general characteristics, there was a significant difference according to family types ( $F=3.192, p=.030$ ). Subjective happiness was significantly different according to the perceived economic status of the subjects ( $F=4.381, p=.003$ ). Self-esteem and subjective happiness ( $r=.487, p<.001$ ), subjective happiness and grateful disposition ( $r=.421, p<.001$ ), self-esteem and grateful disposition ( $r=.572, p<.001$ ) were statistically positively correlated, respectively. Specific management strategies are needed for the happy lives of high school students in important developmental stages of personal maturity. For example, a program that promotes self-esteem and improves an individual's sense of well-being through a program that enhances self-esteem and helps them navigate their careers aggressively is needed.*

**Keywords:** *Adolescence, Self-esteem, Happiness, Education, Student*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transition to adulthood. Adolescents are exposed to various stressors related to career along with rapid physical and psychological changes. In particular, the mental health of high school students in Korea is more vulnerable than middle school students because of the test stress and mental pressure related to college entrance [1]. And It is known to be more stressful than ever, with no opportunity to satisfy personal desires due to excessive academic pressure [2].

Adolescents are adapting to these stressors and coping effectively with their problems, but developmental and psychological immaturity make them difficult to cope effectively. Unless appropriate management is provided for this transition period, adolescents will experience confusion, trial-and-error, and negative experiences because of the loss of direction and problems in establishing individual independence and identity [3].

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Self-esteem is an important function of youth development and subsequent adaptive life by positively or negatively assessing their attitude to their abilities [4]. This sense of self-esteem emphasizes the importance of being able to properly control the sense of confusion by providing positive effects on academic performance in high school, school adaptation and interpersonal relationships [5] during puberty.

Regardless of sex, race, religion and age, human beings pursue happiness. Happiness is what all humans really want to gain in life, but also because everyone pursues happiness, the desire for happiness tended to think as if it were happening naturally.

This study of happiness has only recently begun to draw attention to negative emotions and emotions such as depression and anxiety [6]. A happy person is more active and energetic than a person who is not [7]. Negative emotions cannot produce positive emotions, but positive emotions are known to reduce the impact of negative emotions, promote human strength and adaptability, expand thinking, and enable flexibility and creative thinking and behavior [8]. This sense of happiness can vary from individual to individual, depending on environmental factors such as friends, economy, family, health, and leisure [9].

Audit tendencies are the propensity to recognize others' good intentions and respond to positive emotions from their positive experiences and results [10]. People recognize other people's contributions from their positive experiences and generalize their gratitude for their emotional state. Those who are more appreciative are happier, more positive, and more well-known in the case of adolescents as they experience and express gratitude at a higher level and frequency in their daily lives [11, 12]. In other words, audit tendencies are believed to be positive factors that can positively affect human development, which can serve as a protective factor to protect young Koreans from academic anxiety and pressure.

The average life span of the world is increasing and there is a growing interest in healing and well-being [13]. Adolescents will be prepared for adulthood by establishing their values amid recognition of their abilities and support and influence from the surrounding environment. Mental health at this time greatly affects the happiness and satisfaction of their lives in the future [14]. Therefore, it should provide assistance in the development process so that teenagers, especially high school students, in the nation's admission-oriented curriculum,



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can form a healthy self-esteem and be thankful for a happy adolescence.

This study was attempted to provide basic data on effective emotional management programs by identifying high school students' self-esteem, subjective happiness, and level of gratitude.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. Research design

High school students were conveniently recruited in Gyeonggi province of South Korea. Participants were included if they were (1) able to read and answer the questionnaire, and (2) not diagnosed with physical and mental health problems that could affect self-report.

### 2.2. Data collection

Data Collection as for the study subjects, the appropriate number of samples was estimated by means of G\*Power 3.7. Program: The significance level was .05, the median effect size was .25, and testing power ( $1-\beta$ ) was 0.8. The estimated number was 107. Among them, those who understood the purpose of this study, agreed to participate in this study, and obtained approvals of their parents and homeroom teachers, totaling to 105, who participated in the final analysis.

### 2.3. Instruments

#### 2.3.1. Self-esteem

For the measurement of self-esteem, this study used 10 questions that were revised by Jon [15] from Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale developed by Rosenberg [16]. Self-esteem scale used a 5-point Likert scale comprised of 1 point (Not at all) and 5 points (Very so). In this study, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of self-esteem was .83.

#### 2.3.2. Subjective Happiness

This study used 5 questions that were revised by Kim [17] from Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper [18] in order to measure happiness. The 7-point Likert scale consisting of 1 point (Not at all) and 7 points (Very so) for each question was used. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  in this study was .70.

### 2.3.3. Grateful Disposition

We used the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) developed by Kwon, Kim and Lee [19], which was developed by McCullough et al. This instrument is a 7-point Likert scale of 6 items that assess the experience and expression of appreciation in everyday life. The higher the score, the higher the audit tendency. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .85 in Lee [19] and .78 in this study.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was done using the SPSS window program 22.0 version (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA)

The general characteristics of the subjects were numbers and percentages, and the differences in self-esteem, subjective happiness, and grateful disposition according to general characteristics were analyzed by mean and standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA and Scheffe.

The correlation between self-esteem, subjective happiness, and grateful disposition were analyzed based on Pearson's coefficient.

## III. RESULTS

### 3.1. Differences of self-esteem, subjective happiness, and grateful disposition according to participant characteristics

The general characteristics of the subject and Differences of self-esteem, subjective happiness, and grateful disposition according to General characteristics are the same as Table 1

As a result of analyzing the difference of degree of self-esteem according to general characteristics, there was a significant difference according to family type ( $F=3.192$ ,  $p=.030$ ). Subjective happiness was significantly different according to the perceived economic status of the subjects ( $F=4.381$ ,  $p=.003$ ). The subjects who perceived subjective economic status as 'upper' showed higher subjective happiness than those who perceived as 'middle'. There was no statistically significant difference in grateful disposition according to general characteristics [Table 1].

**Table 1. . Differences of self-esteem, happiness, and grateful disposition according to General characteristics (N=105)**

Characteristics		n(%)	Self-esteem	Subjective Happiness	Grateful disposition
			Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD
Gender	Male	55(52.4)	3.48±.62	4.54±1.01	4.81±1.04
	Female	50(47.6)	3.45±.65	4.33±.84	4.81±1.10
	t/F (p)		.223(.810)	1.029(.313)	.006(.996)
Major	natural sciences	56(53.3)	3.54±.64	4.44±.91	4.99±.960
	liberal arts	49(46.7)	3.36±.60	4.35±.62	4.61±1.15
	t/F (p)		1.449(.146)	.939(.313)	1.799(.075)
Presence of brother	Yes	89(84.7)	3.45±.67	4.49±.79	4.79±1.08
	No	17(16.2)	3.38±.50	4.22±1.15	4.90±.970
	t/F (p)		.551(.578)	.972(.343)	-.338(.736)
Economic condition	Upper <sup>a</sup>	18(17.1)	3.54±.54	5.11±.90	5.23±1.07
	Middle-high <sup>b</sup>	13(12.4)	3.66±.47	4.89±.53	4.94±.61
	Middle <sup>c</sup>	60(57.1)	3.41±.67	4.27±.89	4.73±1.03
	Middle-low <sup>d</sup>	11(10.5)	3.31±.98	4.12±.91	4.63±1.60



	Lower <sup>e</sup>	3(3.0)	3.10±.11	4.24±.34	4.05±.090
	t/F (p)		.972(.411)	4.381(.003) a>c	1.247(.296)
Residence type	With parents	102(97.1)	3.42±.59	4.45±.93	4.80±1.06
	Etc.	3(2.9)	3.41±.31	4.49±.72	5.25±1.76
	t/F (p)		.012(.890)	-.056(.914)	-.581(.562)
Family type	General	79(75.2)	3.51±.54	4.53±.91	4.88±1.10
	Remarriage	3(2.9)	3.8929	4.40±.32	5.08±.11
	Single-parent	21(20.0)	3.10±.69	4.01±.99	4.41±.89
	Etc.	2(1.9)	3.6924	4.68±.39	5.91±.82
	t/F (p)		3.192(.030)	2.032(.103)	1.816(.149)
Number of Friends	None	2(1.9)	2.63±.25	5.18±1.62	3.58±.58
	1~2	10(9.5)	3.27±.93	3.93±1.01	4.77±1.34
	3 or more	93(88.6)	3.46±.52	4.42±.88	4.84±1.04
	t/F (p)		2.131(.114)	1.826(.123)	1.376(.257)

### 3.2. Self-esteem, subjective happiness, and grateful disposition of subjects

As subjects' recognized self-esteem, subjective happiness, and grateful disposition were analyzed, it turned out that the average value of self-esteem was 3.43±.59 points and that of subjective happiness value was 4.41±.91 points and grateful disposition was 4.81±1.06 points respectively [Table 2].

**Table 2. Self-esteem, subjective happiness, and grateful disposition of subjects (N=105)**

	Range of score	Mean ±SD	Range of score	Mean ±SD
Self-esteem	10~50	34.15±6.13	1~5	3.43±.59
Subjective happiness	5~45	22.19±4.52	1~7	4.41±.91
grateful disposition	6~42	22.88±6.41	1~7	4.81±1.06

### 3.3. Correlation between self-esteem, subjective happiness, and grateful disposition

Self-esteem and subjective happiness ( $r=.487$ ,  $p<.001$ ), subjective happiness and grateful disposition ( $r=.421$ ,  $p<.001$ ), self-esteem and grateful disposition ( $r=.572$ ,  $p<.001$ ) were positive statistically correlated respectively as Table 3.

**Table 3. Correlation between self-esteem, subjective happiness and grateful disposition (N=105)**

	Subjective Happiness $r(p)$	Self-esteem $r(p)$	Grateful disposition $r(p)$
Subjective happiness	1	.487(<.001)	.421(<.001)
Self-esteem			.572(<.001)

## IV. DISCUSSION

The study was designed to identify the degree of self-esteem, subjective happiness and gratitude among Korean teenagers attending high school and to examine the correlation between self-esteem and subjective happiness and appreciation.

Rosenberg [20] described self-esteem as a positive or negative attitude to self as part of the self-concept that determines one's abilities by comparing it to human

expectations or internal standards. Positive self-esteem created during adolescence can lead to more positive feelings about life and help develop positive relationships such as responsibility and honesty [21]. In the study, the level of self-esteem of high school students was 34.35 points (score range 10-50), which was higher than the median. This is similar to 121.57 points (score range of 38-190 points) of Song and Park [22] who measured self-esteem in high school student. High school students should maintain and improve their health while appropriately coping with developmental situational stress. High self-esteem can increase adaptability to society [23], consideration for others, and affect empathy to alleviate aggression [24]. Self-esteem is also close to psychological issues such as depression, suicide and flight behavior. In other words, self-esteem not only acts as a positive factor in emotional and behavioral development, including academic development, but also affects the mitigation of maladjustment. Therefore, based on the results of previous studies, practical programs for maintaining and improving self-esteem of high school students should be provided.

Youth happiness means 'happy, hopeful, and under-stress' [25] feeling happy. Adolescents are more subjective in terms of their developmental characteristics, and tend to be judged by the positive and negative feelings about the present. In this context, the concept of subjective well-being and subjective quality of life has been mixed in the youth sector [26].

In the study, the subjective happiness of students was 22.30, which was lower than the median. This is similar to that of Kim [17] who measured the subjective well-being of high school students using the same instrument. In addition, high school students who responded that the home economics status was 'high' showed higher happiness than those who answered 'middle', indicating that the happiness of adolescence is related to the economic level of the family. This is in the same vein as Park & Lee [27] found in their study that the higher the family economy, the happier it is. It is also the result of some support for Mo & Lee's argument that parent-relationship and family-relationship variations have an effect on subjective well-being [28].



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Adolescence is a period of more physical and psychological changes than other life cycles. Unfortunately, the nation's youth happiness index is consistently reported as the lowest among OECD members [19]. For everyone, happiness is the ultimate purpose of life. Adopting to physical and psychological changes, preparing for social adaptation, and exposing teenagers to various stress factors such as career decisions and entrance exams have the right to enjoy happiness. Therefore, it will be necessary for them to develop an emotional program that can provide a variety of support at the educational scene, as well as careful and sincere application that reflects the level of the household economy.

Appreciative mind is the desirable aspect of human nature and social life as a basis for human nature and social life, such as appreciation of life, looking at life in frustration, and imagining the future and thanking someone in life [29]. In the study, high school students' appreciation was 22.88 (6-42 points), higher than the median value. It was difficult to compare directly with Lim et al. [30] because he did not use the same tools, but the results were lower than the audit propensity measured for high school students. And it was even lower than Kim's [31] study of university students using similar tools.

Ham, Byeon, and Cheon [32] said that people with a high level of gratitude are optimistic about life, high satisfaction with life, and low depression and stress. This means that in negative situations, a positive aspect can be found within it and reinterpret it in a way that is beneficial to you [33]. In this regard, I believe that gratitude is a positive emotion that should be nurtured for the nation's youth who are facing a high stress situation.

In this study, the self-esteem, subjective happiness and appreciation of adolescents all showed positive correlation. This is in the same vein as Kim and Son [34]'s claim that youth self-esteem and happiness are correlated. The self-esteem that develops in adolescence also affects emotional, social development and cognitive performance, affecting individual lives through various paths in the future [35]. Happiness is a subjective sentiment of the individual who experiences it according to the circumstances in everyday life, and it is recognized as a stable positive emotion with appreciation. In other words, we need an emotional support program to guarantee subjective happiness amid the solid development of self-esteem that plays a supportive role in the lives of individuals. The present study also supports prior research suggesting that audit tendencies can be happier than they are now and can be happier by controlling negative emotions such as depression and anxiety [29, 36]. In a study of high school students, Ham, Byeon, and Cheon [32] found that teenagers' appreciation improves psychological well-being. This means the nation's high school students need to develop and apply emotional support programs to help them cope with stress in Korea's unique educational environment. This will help promote positive development by achieving positive psychology of gratitude, and by making the mind feel more satisfied with its safety and relationship in various stress situations.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, we think that it is necessary to review the problem behavior of adolescents in the future and to prepare a comprehensive review and intervention plan to improve the happiness of adolescents.

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