

Generational differences in Affectionate Communication & Subjective Well-Being

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to explore the generational differences in the nature of the relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being (SWB). The results of this study suggested that there was a statistically significant strong positive relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being among middle-aged adults, there was a statistically significant strong positive relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being among young adults, there was a significant difference between young adults and middle-aged adults on the basis of affectionate communication, there was a significant difference between young adults and middle-aged adults on the basis of the community connectedness and future security domains of subjective well-being. And lastly, there was a significant difference between young adults and middle-aged adults on the basis of the nonverbal domain of affectionate communication.

Keywords. Affectionate communication, Subjective well-being

Introduction

It is universal that pleasant experiences are perceived as desirable and valuable and therefore, a person who has more pleasant experiences is likely to perceive their lives and themselves positively (Diener, 1994). Subjective well-being (SWB) is the degree to which individuals judge the value of their life as a whole in a positive way (Diener E., 1994). Emotions play a very important role in the subjective well-being of an individual. Positive emotions are important for the well-being of an individual as it leads to individuals interpreting the events in their lives in a desirable way. People experiencing positive emotions are more likely to initiate conversation with others (Cunningham, 1988b). According to Whitener (2018), openly and constructively expressing emotions helps in building relationships based on trust and respect. Expressing emotions, especially affection, is central to the communicative process of personal relationships. Affection can be understood as an inner state of positive and often deep regard for another individual. Affectionate communication is done through behaviors like “smiling, laughing, kissing, hugging and affectionate words expressing love, praise, and friendship” (Floyd & Morman, 1998; Twardosz, Schwartz, Fox, & Cunningham, 1979).

Thus, happiness and affectionate communication are closely associated with each other. However, affectionate communication as understood in present literature represents overt expression of affection in certain ways which may not be the same for various cultures. In Indian context the affection is often not communicated directly, especially with romantic partners and spouses. However, there is a shift in this behavior as a result of the influence from the West. Therefore, it would be interesting to see how the relationship between affectionate communication and SWB plays out in different generations with different ways of expressing affection towards their romantic partners.

Several studies have demonstrated associations between affectionate behavior and general mental well-being. In a four-week intervention, Clipman (1999) found that increasing interpersonal hugging increased subjective wellness. Similarly, Debrot et al. (2013) used an experience sampling method to identify a significant positive correlation between affectionate touch and subjective well-being. Other studies have demonstrated that people with higher trait levels of affectionate behavior—those more prone to express affection across their personal relationships—are at reduced susceptibility to mental wellness deficits, including anxiety and depression (Floyd, Hess et al., 2005), psychological stress (Floyd, 2002), loneliness (Floyd, 2014; Mansson, 2014), and alexithymia (Hesse & Floyd, 2008). Affectionate behavior has also been linked to autism spectrum disorder (Andrews et al., 2013), alcohol abuse (Shuntich et al., 1998), and self-esteem (Roberts & Bengtson, 199

Objectives

1. To assess the relationship between affectionate communication and SWB among young adults.
2. To assess the relationship between affectionate communication and SWB among middle aged adults.
3. To assess generational differences in
 - a. Affectionate communication
 - b. Subjective well-being
 - c. Relationship between affectionate communication and SWB

Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant relationship between affectionate communication and SWB for
 - a. Young adults
 - b. Middle aged adults
2. There will be a significant difference between generations with respect to
 - a. Affectionate communication
 - b. Subjective well-being
3. There will be a difference between generations with respect to the relationship between affectionate communication and SWB.

Method

Participants

A sample of 105 participants was selected using purposive sampling, with the inclusion criteria of having a romantic partner/spouse. Out of the total participants, 56 were in the category of young adults (20-35 years) and 49 were middle-aged adults (35-50 years).

Design

The study was based on a cross-sectional correlational design, and it was also a cross-sectional comparative study to explore the generational differences in the nature of the relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being (SWB)

Sample and Tools

The present study was a quantitative comparative study which aimed to explore the generational differences in the nature of the relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being (SWB). For this a sample of 105 using purposive sampling. Data was collected using Personal Well-Being Index-Adult Scale by International Well-being group (2013), and Affectionate Communication Index (ACI) by Floyd & Morman (1998). Research ethics were taken into consideration. All the participants were well informed that their participation was completely voluntary. Informed consent was provided and they were ensured that anonymity and confidentiality will be taken care of. For analysing the final data IBM SPSS statistics software was used. Correlational analysis was done for analysing the relationship between affectionate communication and SWB among young as middle-aged adults. Independent t-tests were done to analyse the generational differences concerning affectionate communication and subjective well-being and to explore generational differences with respect to the relationship between affectionate communication and SWB.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1.

Mean and standard deviation among young adults

Variables	Mean	SD	N
1. Affectionate Communication	104.57	14.90	56
2. Subjective Well-Being	7.34	1.716	56

Note. SD = standard deviation; N = sample size.

The above table displays the mean and standard deviation of the two variables; Affectionate communication and subjective well-being among young adults (N= 56). Affection and communication was of maximum mean value 104.57 with a (SD =14.90) whereas, the mean value of Subjective well-being was 7.34 with a (SD = 1.716). Higher mean value indicates that the data is more spread out.

Table 2.*Mean and standard deviation among middle-aged adults*

Variables	Mean	SD	N
1. Affectionate Communication	95.77	22.23	49
2. Subjective Well-Being	7.83	1.77	49

Note. SD = standard deviation; N = sample size.

From the above table we can infer the mean and standard deviation of Affectionate communication and subjective well-being among middle-aged adults (N = 49). Affectionate communication showed the maximum mean value 9.77 with a (SD = 22.23) whereas, Subjective well-being showed the minimum mean value 7.83 with a (SD = 1.77).

Inferential Statistics

Table 3

Correlation between Affectionate Communication and Subjective Well-Being among young adults (N = 56)

Variables	1	2
1. Affectionate Communication	1	-
2. Subjective Well-Being	.615**	1

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

To test the hypothesis, the Pearson correlation test was employed. As demonstrated in table 3, the results indicated that there was a statistically significant strong positive relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being among young adults. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported.

Table 4

Correlation between Affectionate Communication and Subjective Well-Being among middle-aged adults (N = 49)

Variables	1	2
1. Affectionate Communication	1	-
2. Subjective Well-Being	.621**	1

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

From table 4, the results indicated that there was a statistically significant strong positive relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being among middle-aged adults. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported.

Table 5

Difference between Young Adults and Middle Aged adults based on Affectionate Communication and Subjective Well Being (Ny=56, Nm=49)

Variables	Middle Aged Adults		Young Adults		t value	Level of Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Affectionate communication	95.77	22.23	104.57	14.90	-2.407*	.018
Subjective Well Being	7.83	1.77	7.34	1.71	1.41	.161

*Significant at 0.05 level, **significant at .01 level

Using Independent samples t test it can be observed that there was a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis of affectionate communication at $p < 0.05$ level, with young adults scoring higher on affectionate communication. However, there was not a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis of subjective well being.

Table 6

Difference Between Young Adults and Middle Aged Adults on the Basis of Scores on Subjective Well Being Domains. (Ny=56, Nm=49)

Variables	Young Adults		Middle Aged Adults		t value	Level of Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Standard of Living	7.96	1.66	7.85	2.34	-.273	.786
Health	7.08	2.09	7.00	2.44	-.2.02	.840
Achieving in Life	6.64	2.19	7.32	2.32	1.55	.124
Relationships	7.89	2.26	8.14	2.01	.595	.553
Safety	7.76	2.26	8.53	2.02	1.810	0.73
Community Connectedness	7.21	2.25	8.10	1.80	2.206	0.030*
Future Security	6.87	2.32	7.85	2.43	2.112	0.037*

*Significant at 0.05 level, **significant at .01 level

Using Independent samples t test it can be observed that there was not a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis following domains of subjective wellbeing: standard of living, health, achieving in life, relationships and safety. However, there was a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis of the community connectedness and future security domains of subjective well being at $p < 0.05$

level, with middle aged adults scoring higher on both domains.

Table 7 *Difference Between Young Adults and Middle Aged Adults on the basis of Affectionate Communication domains. (Ny=56, Nm=49)*

Variables	Middle Aged Adults		Young Adults		t value	Level of Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Verbal	25.40	8.67	27.53	6.53	-1.42	.156
Non verbal	39.04	11.75	44.62	9.27	-2.71	.008*
Social support	31.32	4.94	32.41	2.58	-1.43	.155

*Significant at 0.05 level, **significant at .01 level

Using Independent samples t test it can be observed that there was not a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis following domains of affectionate communication: verbal and social support. However, there was a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis of the non verbal domain of affectionate communication at $p < 0.05$ level, with young adults scoring higher on the domains.

Discussion

The aim of the study was to explore the generational differences in the nature of the relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being (SWB). The study was based on a cross-sectional correlational design, and it was also a cross-sectional comparative study to explore the generational differences in the nature of the relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being (SWB). A sample of 105 participants was selected using purposive sampling, with the inclusion criteria of having a romantic partner/spouse. Out of the total participants, 56 were in the category of young adults (20-35 years) and 49 were middle-aged adults (35-50 years). The objectives set for this study

were to assess the relationship between affectionate communication and SWB among young adults, to assess the relationship between affectionate communication and SWB among middle aged adults and to assess generational differences in affectionate communication, subjective well-being and relationship between affectionate communication and SWB. The hypotheses for this study were that there will be a significant relationship between affectionate communication and SWB for young adults and middle aged adults. There will be a significant difference between generations with respect to affectionate communication and subjective well-being. And there will be a difference between generations with respect to the relationship between affectionate communication and SWB. As we can see in table 3, the results indicated that there was a statistically significant strong positive relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being among young adults. Hence, the hypothesis was supported. Therefore, an increase in affectionate communication will show an increase in subjective well-being. From table 4, the results indicated that there was a statistically significant strong positive relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being among middle-aged adults. Hence, the hypothesis was supported. Therefore, an increase in affectionate communication will show an increase in subjective well-being among middle-aged adults. From table 5, it can be observed that there was a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis of affectionate communication at $p < 0.05$ level, with young adults scoring higher on affectionate communication. However, there was not a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis of subjective well-being. The results show that both mothers and children perceived the family subsystem outside of their direct experience as more affectionate when they reported higher levels of affectionate communication with the father. In addition, affectionate communication with the father was linked to both family and life satisfaction for mothers and children (Curran & Yoshimura, 2016). From table 6, it can be observed that there was not a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis following domains of subjective wellbeing: standard of living, health, achievement in life, relationships and safety. However, there was a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis of the community connectedness and future security domains of subjective well being at $p < 0.05$ level, with middle aged adults scoring higher on both domains. Parental confirmation and affection partially mediates the effects of conversation orientations, and fully mediates the effects of conformity orientations, on young adult children's

self-esteem and perceived stress (Schrodt, P., Ledbetter, A. M., & Ohrt, J. K. , 2007). From table 7, it can be observed that there was not a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis following domains of affectionate communication: verbal and social support. However, there was a significant difference between young adults and middle aged adults on the basis of the non verbal domain of affectionate communication at $p < 0.05$ level, with young adults scoring higher on the domains.

Conclusion

The study examined generational disparities in affectionate communication and subjective well-being. The cross-sectional correlational and comparative study examined age variations in emotional communication and subjective well-being (SWB). This study found a statistically significant strong positive relationship between affectionate communication and subjective well-being in middle-aged adults, young adults, and middle-aged adults. There was also a significant difference between young adults and middle-aged adults in affectionate communication. However, community connectivity and future security areas of subjective well-being differed significantly between young and middle-aged persons. Finally, affectionate communication areas verbal and social support did not differ between young and middle-aged persons. The nonverbal domain of affectionate communication differed significantly between young and middle-aged adults.

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