



Impact of Microaggression on Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction Among Generation Z

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Abstract: Microaggressions are subtle and often unintentional forms of discrimination that communicate negative or stereotypical messages toward individuals based on their social identities. While these experiences may appear minor, their cumulative effect may influence psychological well-being. The present study examined the relationship between microaggressions, self-esteem, and life satisfaction among Generation Z individuals. A quantitative correlational research design was employed using a sample of 100 participants aged 18–26 years. Data were collected using standardized measures including the BeLiv Microaggression Scale (BMS-27), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Pearson correlation and regression analyses were conducted to examine relationships among variables. The findings indicated a significant negative relationship between microaggressions and self-esteem, suggesting that higher exposure to subtle discrimination is associated with lower self-worth. A significant positive relationship was found between self-esteem and life satisfaction. However, no significant relationship was observed between microaggressions and life satisfaction. The results suggest that microaggressions may influence life satisfaction indirectly through their impact on self-esteem. These findings contribute to understanding how everyday social experiences affect psychological well-being among Generation Z and highlight the importance of addressing subtle forms of discrimination.

Keywords: *Microaggressions, Self-Esteem, Life Satisfaction, Generation Z, Psychological Well-Being*

1. Introduction

Microaggressions are subtle, everyday expressions of bias that may occur in verbal, behavioral, or environmental forms. The term was first introduced to describe indirect forms of discrimination and was later expanded to include a wide range of experiences related to identity-based bias. Although often unintentional, microaggressions communicate negative or dismissive messages that can affect individuals' psychological experiences.

Unlike overt discrimination, microaggressions are often ambiguous and difficult to identify. This ambiguity may lead individuals to question their own perceptions, resulting in internal conflict and emotional strain. Over time, repeated exposure to such experiences may influence how individuals perceive themselves and their social environment.

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their worth and value. It develops through social interactions and feedback from others and plays a crucial role in emotional regulation and psychological resilience. Individuals with higher self-esteem tend to demonstrate greater confidence and adaptability, whereas lower self-esteem is associated with vulnerability to stress and negative emotions.

Life satisfaction represents a broader cognitive evaluation of one's life as a whole. It reflects how individuals assess their overall quality of life based on personal standards and expectations. Unlike temporary emotional states, life satisfaction is relatively stable and influenced by multiple life domains such as relationships, achievements, and personal growth.

Generation Z individuals have grown up in a highly interconnected and digital environment characterized by constant social comparison and increased awareness of identity-related issues. As a result, they may be particularly sensitive to interpersonal experiences, including subtle forms of discrimination. Understanding how microaggressions influence their psychological well-being is therefore important.

While previous research has examined microaggressions, self-esteem, and life satisfaction independently, fewer studies have explored how these variables interact within a single framework. The present study aims to address this gap by examining the relationships among these constructs in a Generation Z sample.

2. Literature Review

Research on microaggressions has consistently demonstrated their association with negative psychological outcomes. Individuals who experience subtle discrimination often report increased stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced well-being. Even when individual

instances appear minor, their cumulative effect may contribute to significant psychological distress.

Self-esteem has been widely studied as a central component of psychological functioning. It is influenced by social feedback and plays a key role in shaping how individuals interpret their experiences. Positive self-esteem is associated with better coping strategies, emotional stability, and overall well-being.

Life satisfaction, as a component of subjective well-being, reflects an individual's evaluation of their life circumstances. Research indicates that self-esteem is strongly associated with life satisfaction, suggesting that individuals who perceive themselves positively are more likely to evaluate their lives favorably.

The relationship between microaggressions and self-esteem can be understood through the lens of social feedback. Repeated exposure to subtle invalidation may weaken an individual's sense of self-worth over time. This reduction in self-esteem may then influence broader evaluations of life quality.

However, life satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors beyond interpersonal experiences, including social support, personal achievements, and environmental conditions. This complexity suggests that the relationship between microaggressions and life satisfaction may not be direct.

The present study builds on existing literature by examining these relationships together within a Generation Z population, providing a more integrated understanding of how subtle discrimination affects psychological well-being.

2.1 Research Gap

Although existing literature highlights the impact of discrimination on psychological well-being, several gaps remain. Most studies have focused on overt discrimination rather than subtle, everyday microaggressions. Furthermore, research examining microaggressions, self-esteem, and life satisfaction within a single framework is limited.

Additionally, there is a lack of research specifically focusing on Generation Z populations, particularly within the Indian context. Given the unique social and technological environment experienced by this generation, it is important to explore how subtle discrimination influences their psychological outcomes.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining the relationships among microaggressions, self-esteem, and life satisfaction in a Generation Z sample.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationships among microaggressions, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. This design allows for the analysis of naturally occurring variables without manipulation.

3.2 Participants

The sample consisted of 100 participants aged between 18 and 26 years. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling through online platforms. The sample represented Generation Z individuals from diverse backgrounds.

3.3 Measures

Microaggressions were assessed using the BeLiv Microaggression Scale (BMS-27), which measures the frequency of subtle discriminatory experiences. Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), a widely used instrument assessing global self-worth. Life satisfaction was assessed using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), which evaluates overall life evaluation.

3.4 Procedure

Data were collected through an online survey platform. Participants were provided with information about the study and gave informed consent before participation. The survey included demographic questions followed by the standardized measures.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained. No identifying information was collected, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for psychological research.

3.6 Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. A significance level of $p < .05$ was used to determine statistical significance.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Findings

Participants reported moderate levels of microaggressions, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. Variability in responses suggests differences in individual experiences of subtle discrimination and psychological well-being.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 100)*

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Microaggression	100	16	89	41.69	15.20
Self-esteem	100	3	29	16.40	4.5
Life Satisfaction	100	5	34	19.56	5.99

The results of a study that looked at how microaggressions affected Generation Z members' self-esteem and life happiness are presented in this chapter. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and simple linear regression to understand patterns, relationships, and predictive effects among the variables (Field, 2018). The final analysis included responses from 100 participants who were eligible for inclusion.

Interpretation and Explanation

The mean score for microaggression ($M = 41.69$, $SD = 15.20$) indicates that participants experienced a moderate level of subtle discrimination. The higher standard deviation shows noticeable differences among individuals, suggesting that some reported more frequent experiences than others.

The mean self-esteem score ($M = 16.40$, $SD = 4.15$) reflects a moderate level of perceived self-worth, while the mean life satisfaction score ($M = 19.56$, $SD = 5.99$) suggests an average level of overall life satisfaction. Overall, participants generally reported moderate levels across all three variables, with variability particularly evident in experiences of microaggression.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The direction and intensity of the relationships between microaggression, self-esteem, and life satisfaction were evaluated using Pearson's product-moment correlation.

Table 2. *Correlation Matrix of Study Variables (N = 100)*

Variables	Microaggression	Self-Esteem	Life Satisfaction
Microaggression	1	-3.51	0.61
Self-Esteem	-3.51	1	356
Life Satisfaction	0.61	3.56	1

Note. $p < .01$

Relationship between Microaggression and Self-Esteem

Microaggression and self-esteem showed a statistically significant negative connection ($r = -.351$, $p < .001$).

Interpretation and Explanation

The results show a somewhat unfavorable correlation between self-esteem and microaggressions. This indicates that self-esteem tends to decline as microaggressions are experienced more frequently.

The connection between life satisfaction and microaggressions

The results showed that microaggression and life satisfaction did not have a statistically significant association ($r = .016$, $p = .875$).

In simple terms, this means that, in the present study, experiencing microaggressions was not directly connected to how satisfied participants felt about their overall lives.

Although microaggressions were linked to lower self-esteem, they did not show a direct influence on life satisfaction. This may be because life satisfaction reflects a broad evaluation of one's life and is shaped by many different factors. Elements such as family support, close friendships, academic or personal achievements, future aspirations, and effective coping strategies can all contribute to how satisfied a person feels. These positive influences may help reduce or balance the negative effects of subtle discriminatory experiences.

The relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction

The results demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship between life satisfaction and self-esteem ($r = .356$, $p < .001$). This implies that the two variables have a somewhat positive association. Individuals with greater self-esteem were more likely to be content with their lives.

In other words, individuals who feel confident, capable, and secure in their self-worth tend to view their lives more positively. A strong and healthy sense of self appears to play an important role in shaping overall life satisfaction.

4.3 Regression Analysis***Impact of Microaggression on Self-Esteem***

To further examine the predictive role of microaggression, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether microaggression significantly predicts self-esteem.

Table 3. Regression Analysis Predicting Self-Esteem from Microaggression ($N = 100$)

Model R	R Square	Adj R Square	b	t	f	Sig
1	.351a	.123		0.006	1.157	
	.875	3.906				
Microaggression-Self Esteem	.351	.123	13.797	<.001		

Microaggression was a significant predictor of self-esteem, according to the regression coefficient ($\beta = -.351, p < .001$).

$F(1, 98) = 13.797, p < .001$, indicated that the model was statistically significant. 12.3% of the variation in self-esteem was explained by microaggression.

Interpretation and Explanation

Self-esteem is significantly negatively correlated with microaggression. Thus, a higher frequency of microaggressions results in a lower level of self-esteem among Gen Z. Even though it does not explain all the changes in self-esteem, it has a meaningful impact.

Impact of Microaggression on Life Satisfaction

A regression analysis was conducted to examine whether microaggression predicts life satisfaction.

Table 4. *Regression Analysis Predicting Life Satisfaction from Microaggression (N = 100)*

Model	R	R Square	F	P
Microaggression – Life Satisfaction	0.16	.000	0.025	.875

The model was not statistically significant, $F(1, 98) = 0.025, p = .875$.

Interpretation and Explanation

Microaggression does not significantly predict life satisfaction. This suggests that microaggression does not directly influence overall life satisfaction among Gen Z in this sample.

Relationship Between Microaggression and Self-Esteem

A significant negative relationship was found between microaggressions and self-esteem. This indicates that individuals who reported higher levels of microaggressions also reported lower self-esteem.

This finding suggests that repeated exposure to subtle discrimination may gradually influence self-perception. Even in the absence of overt discrimination, these experiences may communicate negative messages that affect self-worth.

Relationship Between Microaggression and Life Satisfaction

No significant relationship was found between microaggressions and life satisfaction. This suggests that microaggressions do not directly influence how individuals evaluate their overall life.

Life satisfaction is shaped by multiple factors, including relationships, achievements, and support systems. These factors may buffer the impact of subtle discrimination on overall life evaluation.

Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Life Satisfaction

A significant positive relationship was observed between self-esteem and life satisfaction. Individuals with higher self-esteem were more likely to report greater life satisfaction.

This finding highlights the importance of self-esteem as a psychological resource that supports positive life evaluation. Individuals with a strong sense of self-worth are more likely to interpret their experiences positively.

Integrated Interpretation

The findings suggest that microaggressions may influence life satisfaction indirectly through their impact on self-esteem. While microaggressions do not directly affect life satisfaction, they contribute to changes in self-perception, which in turn influence overall well-being.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The study examined the relationship between microaggressions, self-esteem, and life satisfaction among Generation Z individuals. The findings indicate that microaggressions are significantly associated with lower self-esteem but do not directly influence life satisfaction.

Self-esteem was found to be positively associated with life satisfaction, suggesting that it plays a crucial role in overall well-being. The results highlight the importance of addressing subtle forms of discrimination and promoting self-esteem to improve psychological outcomes.

From a practical perspective, the findings emphasize the need for increased awareness of microaggressions and their impact. Educational institutions and mental health professionals can play an important role in promoting inclusive environments and supporting individuals affected by subtle discrimination.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study is limited by its relatively small sample size and use of convenience sampling, which may affect generalizability. The use of self-report measures may also introduce response bias.

Future research may explore these relationships using larger and more diverse samples. Longitudinal studies may provide a better understanding of how microaggressions influence psychological outcomes over time. Additionally, examining other factors such as coping strategies and social support may provide further insights.

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