

Investigating the relationship between mental health indicators and self-actualization levels in students

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ABSTRACT

It was aimed to investigate the relationship between psychological health indicators and levels of self-actualization in students. In the study, the self-assessment method used in the diagnosis of psychological states according to Ayzenk and S. Sostrom's SAT method were used to examine the indicators of psychological health. The study included 170 undergraduate students. As a result of the research, it was determined that there is a negative correlation between the psychological health indicators of the students and the level of self-actualization. Moreover, there was a bidirectional relationship between psychological health (frustration) and self-actualization. In other words, the relationship between various indicators of psychological health and self-actualization is bidirectional. According to this result, as the level of self-actualization increases, the level of psychological health indicators (frustration) decreases. Clearly, there is a negative relationship between the adequate level of self-actualization and indicators of psychological health. The research has shown that the higher the level of self-actualization in students, the lower the level of psychological health indicators, leading to problems such as stress and various conflicts, stress, emotional exhaustion and self-criticism. These results emphasize the importance of support mechanisms to improve students' psychological health.

Introduction

In the modern world, mental health problems have become a growing concern, especially among young people and students. In addition, one of the most current issues in psychology is self-actualization. In general, there has been more emphasis on discussing and raising these issues among psychologists in recent times, but in the past self-actualization has been one of the topical issues in psychology with psychological health.

Self-actualization is important for every individual. As Maslow expressed in his hierarchical theory of needs, in this book the concept of self-actualization is stated as the highest level human need. (Maslow, A. H. 1954)

The link between each individual's psychological well-being and self-actualization has always been considered. In different periods, psychologists have investigated the relationship between psychological well-being and self-actualization. Rogers, C. R. (1961) emphasized the importance of personal development and self-expression for psychological well-being and explained the concept of self-actualization in terms of humanistic psychology.

Ryff, C. D. (1989) wrote an article discussing how various components of psychological well-being are related to psychological health by exploring different dimensions of psychological well-being.

Schwartz, S. J., Zamboanga, B. L., Weisskirch, R. S., & Rodriguez, L. (2009) examined the relationship between psychological health and self-actualization in students and wrote an article on this subject. In this article, they examined the relationship between personality and cultural identity with psychological health in students and evaluated the psychological effects of students' self-actualization efforts (Schwartz et al., 2009).

Waterman, A. S. (1993) explained the relationships between a meaningful life and self-actualization by comparing the conceptions of eudaimonia and hedonic pleasure (Waterman, 1993).

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000) evaluated the relationship of personal goals to psychological health and students' self-actualization efforts based on self-motivation theory.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011), in his book based on well-being theory, discussed the effects of personal development and self-actualization on human well-being and psychological health.

Tangney, J. P., Baumeister, R. F., & Boone, A. L. (2004) wrote an article in which they addressed the link between psychological health and the need for self-actualization among students (Campbell & Lavalley, 1993). By examining the relationship between self-actualization and the pursuit of life meaning and achievement, she addressed issues of psychological well-being and self-confidence in students.

Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). In her article, she evaluated the negative emotional effects of self-actualization efforts, offering strategies to improve students' well-being (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; jabbarov,2017; jabbarov 2020).

Literature review

Psychological health issues, especially among students, have become one of the most important issues in modern society. Educational and career pressures, family and social expectations, and the desire to achieve individual goals negatively affect the psychological state of students. The increase of mental health problems among students also affects their level of self-expression and development, therefore, it is of great importance to understand the relationship between self-actualization and mental health issues among students.

The hierarchy of needs theory proposed by Maslow (1954) emphasizes that the need for self-actualization is one of the highest level needs of human beings. Maslow's theory draws attention to the importance of individuals' efforts to realize their personal potential for their psychological well-being. According to the theory, the psychological well-being of individuals is achieved not only by meeting basic needs, but also by living in accordance with personal goals and values. Although Maslow's research argues that increasing the level of self-actualization will increase an individual's inner satisfaction, the desire to achieve this level of goals can also lead to psychological pressures.

Ryff (1989), who examined the relationship between self-actualization and psychological health, emphasized that there is a multidimensional relationship between psychological health and self-actualization by defining different dimensions of psychological well-being. Ryff's model of psychological well-being includes elements such as personality development, autonomy, meaning in life and living in accordance with personal values. His research shows that while these elements are fundamental factors of psychological well-being, the need for high levels of self-actualization can sometimes lead to psychological pressures. For example, students who place a high value on self-actualization create higher expectations of themselves, which can lead them to experience stress, anxiety and self-criticism.

On the other hand, Schwartz and colleagues (2009) examined psychological health issues in students and showed that self-actualization increases social pressures in some cases. According

to the research, students experience a sense of social isolation due to high performance expectations, which has a negative impact on psychological health. Research shows that when the desire for self-actualization is strong, students are forced to differentiate in the social environment, leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Such pressures are detrimental to psychological well-being and predispose students to develop anxiety, depression and other psychological problems (Aliyeva et al, 2021).

Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) emphasized the positive effects of self-actualization on psychological well-being as well as its negative effects. According to their research, although self-actualization efforts increase an individual's psychological well-being and life satisfaction, the individual is likely to experience negative emotional states in this process. The researchers noted that students who want to achieve self-actualization goals may feel psychological pressure to hide their inner deficiencies and to be recognized as a stronger individual in society. This can lead to internal conflicts, emotional burnout and self-criticism, with negative effects on psychological health.

Students' higher levels of self-actualization and its effects on psychological health are in some cases associated with the social context. For example, Demand and Hagen (2019) argue that students' self-actualization efforts lead them to exhibit individualistic behavior and in this case they face social pressures. Society's expectations of achievement and differentiation create additional pressures on students, which negatively impact their psychological well-being. Such social and academic pressures can lead to psychological disorders, stress and emotional burnout in students.

Overall, literature reviews suggest that the relationships between self-actualization and psychological health in students are complex and multidimensional. While the theoretical approaches of Maslow and Ryff have helped to better understand these relationships, researchers such as Schwartz, Sheldon and Demand have particularly emphasized the pressure of self-actualization on psychological health in students. Therefore, it is important to develop new approaches and explore ways to support students' self-actualization efforts, taking into account their impact on psychological health.

These theoretical approaches and research suggest that students need individual, social and academic support to better manage the psychological problems they face in their self-actualization efforts. Future research may provide recommendations for creating a healthier social and academic environment for students by examining the relationships between students' self-actualization efforts and psychological health problems in more depth.

Methodology

The main purpose of the article was to determine the relationship between students' mental health and self-actualization levels. For this purpose, quantitative and qualitative samples were used. Rigorously tested experimental methods were used in this study. The methodological approach aims to determine self-actualization and mental health. Measurement of these levels serves as a criterion for selection of students studying in different faculties. This study was conducted among 170 students from different faculties of Baku State University. The participants included 114 females and 56 males. Of the students of both genders who regularly attended school, 96% attended classes. All students in the study were informed and participated voluntarily. Selection was randomized.

The following methods were used in the study:

- "Scholastic Aptitude Test" (SAT) (Schostrom, 1926)
- "Diagnostic self-assessment of psychological states" methodology (Eysenck)

The adapted version of A. Shostrom's SAT questionnaire (Scholastic Aptitude Test) was used in the study. The test consists of 15 questions, each of which corresponds to a specific characteristic of the self-actualizing personality. The instruction of the "Scholastic Aptitude

Test" is as follows: You are given 15 questions. You have to answer 'yes', 'no' and 'sometimes'. "A 'yes' answer is worth 2 points, a 'no' answer 0 points and a 'sometimes' answer 1 point. At the end, the scores are calculated and the level of self-actualization is determined accordingly. At the same time, for the study of mental health we applied the diagnostic self-assessment of psychological states. This test helps us to examine students' mental health from 4 aspects (anxiety, frustration, aggression, rigidity). The Eysenck test consists of 40 questions and students answer these questions with 3 answers: "fits", "does not fit" and "fits but very little". The answer "fits" is evaluated with 2 points, "fits but very little" with 1 point and "does not fit" with 0 point. The first 10 questions assess students' anxiety level, 10-20 questions assess frustration, 20-30 questions assess aggression and 30-40 questions assess rigidity. According to the answers given to these questions, an evaluation is made for each aspect with 0-7 points as low level, 8-14 points as medium level and 15-20 points as high level.

We tried to clarify the indicators of students' mental state through informal methods such as observation and conversation. Mathematical statistical methods such as r-Spearman rank correlation coefficient were used for statistical processing of empirical research results. Quantitative data processing was carried out using SPSS Statistics 27 software. The results of the analysis were clearly presented and interpreted in tables. The researcher contacted the higher education institution in accordance with the purpose of the study and obtained appropriate permissions. The study objectives, interview procedures and methods were explained to the students, including confidentiality issues. Each participant was informed and consent was obtained.

Results

Modern students need, first of all, the activity of self-realization, self-affirmation. Moreover, the development of professional qualities in students exposed to aggression, anxiety, frustration and trauma in situations in the education system is not enough to adapt to modern conditions. Factors that negatively affect students' self-realization - including frustration and aggression, traumas, etc. - create obstacles to the creation of conditions that form the basis for successful self-realization of students, prevent adequate self-affirmation. With this in mind, we conducted an experimental-psychological study to find out the degree of influence of these factors on students. In this study, Pearson correlation test was conducted to assess the relationship between self-actualization and mental health in students. The results of the Pearson correlation test are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Indicators of the relationship between self-actualization and mental health indicators in students

Spiritual health indicators	Self-actualization	
	Pearson	Sig (2 way)
Disappointment	-.216**	.000
Anxiety	-.098**	.205
Aggression	-0.110**	.153
Hardness	-0.039**	.639

Table 1 shows the results of the correlation test between the self-actualization variable and the mental health indicators dimension variable. The results of the correlation test between self-actualization and frustration show a correlation coefficient of -.216 from a p-value

significance of 0.000, which means $p < 0.05$. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there is a negative relationship between self-actualization and frustration dimension. The correlation test between anxiety and the self-actualization measure shows a correlation coefficient value of -0.098 with a significance value of $p < 0.01$, which gives a significance value of 0.000. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there is no relationship between self-actualization and anxiety dimension.

The correlation test between self-actualization and aggression measure shows a correlation coefficient value of -0.110 with a significance value of $p < 0.01$, which means 0.000. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there is no relationship between self-actualization and aggression dimension. The correlation test between self-actualization and rigidity dimension shows a correlation coefficient value of -0.039 with a significance value of $p < 0.01$. Therefore, it can be interpreted that there is no significant correlation between self-actualization and rigidity dimension.

Table 2. Indicators of the relationship between age and course indicators and self-actualization

	Age(r)	Course (r)
Self-actualization	0.130	0.189

The significance of the p value between self-actualization and age dimension shows a correlation coefficient value of 0.130. This means that there is no statistically significant relationship between age and self-actualization.

The significance of the p value between self-actualization and course size shows a correlation coefficient value of 0.189. This result shows that there is a significant positive correlation between course size and self-actualization, i.e. the higher the course size, the higher the level of self-actualization. In general, the results show that stress (frustration) decreases self-actualization, while the course increases it. Other mental health indicators do not show a significant relationship with self-actualization.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study show that there is a relationship between self-actualization and mental health. The results show that an increase in frustration has a negative effect on the level of self-actualization. One reason for this is that frustration is common among students today. Nowadays, students get disappointed and frustrated whenever they face any challenge or situation. These situations also lead to a decrease in self-actualization in students. This indicates that students who experience high levels of frustration have difficulty in realizing their potential and face problems in achieving their personal goals. Frustration is a very common experience among students today.

A stressful situation affects students' learning. Nowadays students face academic pressures, constant challenges or obstacles in their studies as they are more and more frustrated. These situations lead to mental stress, lack of motivation, low self-esteem and low academic achievement among students. (Nandita Chitrakar, Dr. Nisanth P.M. 2023; Aliyeva et al,2021)

One of the causes of frustration is stress. According to Suzuki and Tomoda, early life stress in children due to neglect and maltreatment reduces the child's self-actualization and secure attachment with parents, and the child is likely to develop depression in the future (Suzuki & Tomoda, 2015). According to Fernández-González and others, self-actualization appears to be

related to emotion-related stressors (Fernández-González, González-Hernández, & Trianes-Torres, 2015). In particular, in a study by Jocelyn Smith Carter and Judy Garber, low self-esteem and low self-worth are associated with stress and depression. Both constitute risk factors for the emergence of depression because people are unable to control and cope with stressful life events (Carter & Garber, 2011).

Furthermore, in another study by Ali Al Nima and colleagues, successfully coping with anxiety, depression and stressful situations can lead to higher levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. The results of the current study suggest that anxiety partially mediates the effects of both stress and self-actualization on depression (Nima, Rosenberg, Archer, & Garcia, 2013; Jabbarov, 2017; Jabbarov, 2020).

Students with high self-esteem experience less stress than those with low self-esteem and high stress (Reilly et al., 2014). Students who receive more stress management support may be more successful in the process of self-actualization. In educational institutions, we can organize programs related to stress management and developing determination to protect students' mental health and support their self-actualization. This will help students not only to achieve academic success but also to build a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

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