



Flourishing During Emerging and Early Established Adulthood: Contributions of Satisfaction with Love, Education, Work, and Leisure



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Background

Flourishing, initially a core element of positive youth development, has been recognized as an indicator of emerging adult well-being (Brewer et al., 2018; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2017; Parr, 2020). Flourishing reflects a subjective sense of personal achievement, thriving, and positive assessment of one’s life (Diener et al., 2010). In the emerging adult context of unsettled lives (Arnett, 2014) and the established adult experience of the “career-family crunch” (Mehta et al., 2020), flourishing may be a particularly salient indicator of how well one is meeting the ongoing developmental challenges. Because the domains of love, education, work, and leisure are salient developmental contexts during emerging and established adulthood, satisfaction with those areas may contribute to flourishing.

Method

Emerging (18-29 years-old; *n* = 610) and established (30-35 years-old; *n* = 312) adults participated in the Identity Development During Emerging Adulthood (IDDEA) study. The IDDEA study was a cross-sectional survey with participants recruited via Qualtrics Panel Services (see Table 1 for sample demographics).

Participants completed the flourishing scale (8-items; Diener et al., 2010) and reported their satisfaction with their love life (5-items; Neto, 2005), education (2-items; Howard et al., 2010), work (3-items; Howard et al., 2010), and leisure (1-item).

Satisfaction with Developmental Domains and Flourishing.

	Full Sample (N = 922)	Emerging Adults (n = 610)	Established Adults (n = 312)
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Satisfaction with love life	4.83 (1.64)	4.76 (1.64)	4.96 (1.66)
Satisfaction with work life	3.41 (1.07)	3.38 (1.06)	3.46 (1.11)
Satisfaction with educational experiences	3.89 (0.91)	3.86 (0.92)	3.95 (0.910)
Satisfaction with leisure	5.29 (1.43)	5.25 (1.45)	5.36 (1.38)
Flourishing	5.53 (1.05)	5.47 (1.07)	5.64 (0.98)

Key Takeaways

Flourishing may be rooted, at least in part, in how emerging and established adults feel about their experiences in the salient developmental domains of love, education, work, and leisure.

Developmental stage (emerging vs. established adult) does not moderate any associations. Thus, satisfaction with each developmental domain appears equally important for emerging and established adults.

Associations between Satisfaction with Developmental Domains and Flourishing (N = 922).

	B	SE	β	p - value
Established adult	0.07	0.10	.03	.486
Satisfaction with love life	0.12	0.02	.19	< .001
Satisfaction with work life	0.21	0.03	.22	< .001
Satisfaction with educational experiences	0.31	0.03	.27	< .001
Satisfaction with leisure	0.18	0.02	.25	< .001
F(5, 900)	133.99			< .001
ΔR ²	.403			
Satisfaction with love life x established adult	0.01	0.04	.01	.751
Satisfaction with work life x established adult	0.08	0.06	.05	.201
Satisfaction with education x established adult	-0.17	0.07	-.08	.019
Satisfaction with leisure x established adult	-0.11	0.05	-.01	.819
F(4, 896)	1.51			.199
ΔR ²	.00			
Model controlled for age, gender, race/ethnicity, employment status, educational attainment, parent status, and current romantic involvement.				

Table 1. Participant Demographic and Descriptive Statistics.

	Full Sample (N = 922)	Emerging Adults (n = 610)	Established Adults (n = 312)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Gender			
Female	465 (50.4%)	300 (49.2%)	165 (52.9%)
Male	444 (48.2%)	298 (48.9%)	146 (46.8%)
Transgender or gender non-binary	13 (1.4%)	12 (1.9%)	1 (0.3%)
Sexual identity			
Bisexual	89 (9.7%)	67 (11.0%)	22 (7.1%)
Gay or lesbian	40 (4.3%)	33 (5.4%)	7 (2.2%)
Heterosexual	759 (82.3%)	485 (79.5%)	274 (87.8%)
Another sexual identity	34 (3.7%)	25 (4.1%)	9 (2.9%)
Race/ethnicity			
Asian non-Hispanic	82 (8.9%)	54 (8.9%)	28 (9.0%)
Black non-Hispanic	134 (14.5%)	100 (16.4%)	34 (10.9%)
Hispanic	100 (10.8%)	79 (13.0%)	21 (6.7%)
Multiracial	53 (5.7%)	41 (6.7%)	12 (3.8%)
White non-Hispanic	523 (56.7%)	321 (52.6%)	202 (64.7%)
Another race/ethnicity	16 (1.7%)	7 (1.1%)	9 (2.9%)
Employment			
Full-time employment	502 (54.4%)	293 (48.0%)	209 (67.0%)
Part-time employment	189 (20.5%)	149 (24.4%)	40 (12/8%)
Unemployed	151 (16.4%)	121(19.8%)	30 (9.6%)
Stay-at-home parent	45 (4.9%)	20 (3.3%)	25 (8.0%)
Another employment status	35 (3.8%)	27 (4.4%)	8 (2.6%)
Educational attainment			
High school diploma or less	176 (19.1%)	154 (25.2%)	23 (7.4%)
Some or current college student	171 (18.5%)	151 (24.8%)	20 (6.4%)
Vocational or Associates degree	94 (10.2%)	71 (11.6%)	23 (7.4%)
4-year college degree	337 (36.6%)	176 (28.9%)	161 (51.6%)
Professional or graduate degree	143 (15.5%)	58 (9.5%)	85 (27.2%)
Is a parent	301 (32.6%)	127 (20.8%)	174 (55.8%)
Romantic involvement			
Single	408 (44.3%)	313 (51.3%)	95 (30.4%)
Dating	51 (5.5%)	42 (6.9%)	9 (2.9%)
Romantic relationship	135 (14.6%)	103 (16.9%)	32 (10.3%)
Engaged	54 (5.9%0	38 (6.2%)	16 (5.1%)
Married	274 (29.7%)	114 (18.7%)	160 (51.3%)
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Age	26.65 (5.23)	23.62 (3.53)	32.57 (1.85)