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Savoring in Midlife Crisis: A Comparative Study

Anushree Gaur & Himangini Rathore

Abstract

The present study investigated the difference between individuals with no midlife crisis and those who reported midlife crisis in context of savoring. The sample consisted of working men and women (N= 60) belonging to the age group of 45- 65 years. The Mid-Life Transition Questionnaire (MTQ) was used to screen the sample and identify individuals suffering from mid-life crisis. The Savoring Belief Inventory (SBI) provided ratings on three types of savoring, i.e., anticipation, savoring the moment, and reminiscing. The t-test analysis showed statistical significant difference between both the groups with regard to the three types of savoring. The current research work opens avenues for considering the adaptive function of savoring, specifically, within the Indian context. Moreover, this research work directs immediate action towards enhancing individual positive capacity that may be helpful in dealing with transitions in life.

Keywords: anticipation; midlife crisis; reminiscing; savoring; savoring the moment

Introduction

Midlife, also known as middle age, represents a period of life between young age and old age, generally defined as one's early 40s to early 60s. Middle-aged people frequently experience significant changes in their interactions, employment, wellbeing, and appearance (www.psychology-today.com, 2021) and are frequently confronted with abrupt changes in life and they must adapt to such changes in order to survive and thrive. The changes can be classified as death of parents & encountering subsequent sadness, encouraging children to progress into adulthood, trying to adjust without children to home life (known as the empty nest), and accommodating with adult children who return home to live), having

grandchildren, delay in adulthood planning, working with elderly parents or partners as caregivers, sustaining the quality of life, and adapting to middle-age physiological changes (Lachman, 2004). It is in this phase that individuals reassess their past and make appropriate changes in the structure of life in terms of their marital connection and their profession. Midlife also involves the difficult task of reappraising the past, it may lead to 'de-illusionment', which is associated with disappointment or even pessimistic attitude towards life. This period of internal and external instability and transformation can be classified as 'midlife crisis', and it is an essential and significant step in attaining middle adulthood (Freund & Ritter 2009). Evidences suggest that during this phase of life individuals go to three fairly independent aspects known as (i) the severity of symptoms centered on changes in self-concept, (ii) mental maturity, and (iii) recognition of time passing and death (Oles, 1999). Individuals in the midst of a midlife crisis may experience challenges that induce stress, caused by conflicts during this phase of life. It is important to explore variables that could contribute in alleviating the challenges that may pose a threat towards healthy living during midlife. The concept of savoring may provide the necessary way forward in dealing with challenges during midlife. Chae and Kwon, (2020) concluded that wisdom, savoring belief, interpersonal harmony, and life pleasure were all negatively correlated with middle-aged crisis. Savoring is more than pleasure, it also involves mindfulness and "conscious attention to the experience of pleasure". Bryant presented the concept of savoring as being mindfully engaged and conscious during positive encounters, by being engaged one can amplify their happiness for short term and long term. Savoring is not simply the encounters of positive feelings but the thoughtful attempts to make positive encounters last. Evidence suggests that individuals have improved relationship satisfaction, subjective wellbeing (Singh & Tripathi, 2018), improvements in resilience, depressive symptoms, and happiness over time (Smith & Hanni, 2017). In the context of this study, savoring can be seen as an important construct of positive psychology and past research supports its use to enhance happiness (Jose, Lim & Bryant, 2012), dealing with negative emotions and psychological well-being (Smith & Hollinger-Smith, 2014).

Methods

Sample

The sample of present study comprised of 60 working individuals in middle age, ranging from 45-65years. The population was segregated into

two groups, each with 30 samples: group A (no midlife crisis) and group B (midlife crisis). Individuals who scored above the median in Mid- life transition questionnaire were selected in midlife crisis group. Subjects were drawn from various workplaces within municipal limits of Jaipur city. The selection of workplace sectors was purposive in nature.

Aims

To investigate the difference in three temporal beliefs of savoring (anticipation, savoring the moment and Reminiscing) and savoring with reference to the group A (no midlife crisis) and group B (midlife crisis) group.

Hypothesis

H1- There will be no significant difference between group A and group B with respect to: Anticipating savoring, Savoring the moment, Reminiscing savoring, Overall savoring.

Tools

The savoring beliefs inventory (sbi)

The savoring beliefs inventory (SBI) consisted of 24 statements that are used to determine an individual's ability to generate pleasure through anticipating upcoming positive events, savoring positive moments, and reminiscing about past positive experiences and total savoring belief score. This subscale has eight questions that range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (strongly agree). Higher scores suggest a stronger ability to savour the situation (Bryant, 2003).

Mid-life transition questionnaire (miq)

The 36-item mid-life transition questionnaire used (Kulska, Labuz, Mrugalskaand & Oles, 2016) was divided into three scales: positive life balance, crisis intensification, and re-evaluation.

Results

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation and standard error mean of midlife crisis and no midlife crisis group

	MIDLIFE CRISIS	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. Error Mean
Anticipating	NO crisis	30	8.73	6.18	1.12
	crisis	30	1.36	5.34	.97
Savoring the Moment	NO crisis	30	10.36	6.89	1.25
	Crisis	30	1.20	5.59	1.02
Reminiscing	NO crisis	30	9.30	7.41	1.35
	Crisis	30	3.83	5.98	1.09
SBITOTAL	NO crisis	30	28.40	17.78	3.24
	crisis	30	6.40	15.08	2.75

Table 1 describes the mean and standard deviations of groups with and without midlife crisis on three temporal beliefs of savoring (anticipation, savoring the moment and Reminiscing) as well as overall savoring scores.

Table 2- independent t- test

		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Anticipating	Equal variances assumed	1.85	.178	4.93	58	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			4.93	56.82	.000
Savoring the Moment	Equal variances assumed	3.56	.064	5.65	58	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			5.65	55.64	.000
Reminiscing	Equal variances assumed	4.43	.040	3.14	58	.003
	Equal variances not assumed			3.14	55.52	.003

SBITOTAL	Equal variances assumed	2.23	.140	5.16	58	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			5.16	56.50	.000

In Anticipating savoring, mean difference was statistically significant, $t(58) = 4.93, p < .001$; in savoring the moment, there was a significant difference in the scores for individuals with no midlife crisis ($M=10.37, SD = 6.89$) and with midlife crisis ($M=1.20, SD = 5.59$). This difference was statistically significant, $t(58) = 5.65, p < .001$. For the variable, reminiscing savoring, there was a significant difference in the scores for individuals with no midlife crisis ($M=9.30, SD = 7.42$) and with midlife crisis ($M=3.83, SD = 5.98$). This difference was statistically significant, $t(58) = 3.14, p = .003$. Overall savoring belief, there was a significant difference in the scores for individuals with no midlife crisis ($M=28.40, SD = 17.78$) and with midlife crisis ($M= 6.40, SD = 15.0$). This difference was statistically significant, $t(58) = 5.16, p < .001$.

Discussion

The present study has been carried out to investigate the difference between the three temporal beliefs of savoring (Anticipation, Savoring the moment and Reminiscing) with reference to the individuals who reported no midlife crisis and individuals with midlife crisis. The two groups consisted of 30 individuals each. The hypothesis H1a stated that there will be no significant difference between group A and group B with respect to the variable of Anticipating savoring. The results demonstrate a significant difference between group A (no midlife crisis) and group B (midlife crisis) in terms of anticipation savoring. The result states that individuals who do not report a midlife crisis show higher anticipatory savoring, indicating that they have a high ability to relish in the sense of looking forward to a pleasant event that is approaching. The possible reasons that may be helpful in interpreting the results of this study can be that since the mean ($M= 8.73$) of anticipating savoring of individuals belonging to no midlife crisis is much higher than those who have reported midlife crisis ($M= 1.36$). As early as 1987, Loewenstein used the term 'savoring' when referring to 'positive utility' that is derived from anticipation of events that may be for consumption in the future. By creating an event entirely by fantasy, these individuals are able to construct pleasurable moments in their mind. Savoring through anticipation, therefore enables individuals to transcend towards delight before the upcoming event and result in enhancing the

savoring of the present moment. The transition towards midlife may take a toll on certain individual and limit their capacities to appreciate the positive experiences in their lives. Elliot (Menon, 2001) claimed that midlife crisis in human growth is a significant phase that happens when adult individuals acknowledge that they are mortals. The midlife crisis is a challenging transition which takes about age of 40. This phase of crisis involves fast alterations in personality. Person in middle-age encounter emotions they are not ready to face, sort of undesirable, tension regarding how they see their own future, doubled feeling of past regrets, disappointment, losses and evaluation and assessment of accomplishments, finding a new purpose and meaning of life could be considered another mark in this phase.

Considering the other aspects of savoring, it was hypothesized (H1b) that there will be no significant difference between group A and group B with respect to the variable savoring the moment. The transition towards midlife may take a toll on certain individual and limit their capacities to appreciate the positive experiences in their lives. Through the results of the current research work, it can be assumed that individual who have high levels of savoring the moment as well as have been classified as having transitioned into healthy midlife stage are able to extract joy out of ongoing experiences. Individuals who unfortunately struggle in this significant phase of their lives, may encounter undesirable emotions, tension, and possible short comings of accomplishments in life. Recent research work indicate indirect significant association between age and savoring (Ramsey & Gentzer, 2014) as an individual ages, there is decrease in hedonic motivations and experience of high arousal positive affect thereby influencing the capacity of savoring (Palmer & Gentzter, 2019). In context of techniques that individuals can deploy to counter midlife crisis, they can set aside a small amount of time to savor the moment, it can assist people minimize emotional challenges as evidences suggests that, savoring the moment can help individuals to significantly decreases in self-reported depressive symptoms and negative affect (Hurley & Kwon, 2011) and may reduce depression symptoms in individuals with low positive affectivity and high negative affectivity (Kahrilas et al., 2020). Midlife brings with it the pressure of multiple responsibilities that might leave people feeling lost, anxious, and unable to deal with challenges. Individuals going through a midlife crisis may confront issues such as persistent sorrow, greatly reduced or increased ambition, irritability, surprising rage, exhaustion, boredom, or dissatisfaction with life or a lifestyle (including other people and things) that formerly gave fulfilment adding activities that involve reminiscing of the moments for instance, thinking

about positive events (Lyubomirsky, Sousa, & Dickerhoof, 2006), Positive reminiscence (Bryant, Smart, & King, 2005) and Three good things ,can help individuals to deal with difficulties as evidence suggests that positive reminiscence has been shown to predict an individual's perceived ability to enjoy life and enhanced happiness (Bryant et al., 2005). positive relation to relationship satisfaction (Lenger, & Gordon, 2019) and it can be for the purpose of promoting happy self-feelings has been connected to physical health and has a substantial impact on one's well-being (Cappeliez & O'Rourke, 2006). Using savoring intervention on a regular basis might boost one's optimism and hope for the future. interventions like positive imagination (Quoidbach, Wood, & Hansenne, 2009), which is visualizing four positive occurrences that are likely to occur tomorrow every day for two weeks, might boost positive affect, and thinking on the impermanence of a positive occurrence (O'Brien & Ellsworth, 2012) can increase the savoring experience and bring about higher levels of positive feelings. Previous evidences also demonstrates that anticipation savoring positively related to relationship satisfaction and above and beyond memory and present-moment features of savoring, anticipation was the only factor that predicted relationship satisfaction (Lenger, & Gordon, 2019). A research investigated changes in perceived savoring abilities and their relationships with perceived health in older adults. At baseline and two and half years later, older adults (N=131) reported on their beliefs about savoring and perceived health. From baseline to follow-up, perceived anticipation (savoring the future) and reminiscing (savoring the past) abilities decreased. Better perceived health at the outset predicted better perceived reminiscing and anticipatory abilities at the follow-up. At baseline, greater perceived ability to savour the present moment predicted better perceived health at follow-up (Geiger et al., 2017).

Further, the results of the study (H1c) demonstrate significant difference between group A and group B with respect to the variable Reminiscing savoring. The results depicts that individuals with no midlife crisis reported high ability remember memories in order to relive and so appreciate pleasurable emotions in comparison to individuals with midlife crisis (Bryant et al., 2005). Midlife is a transition of identity and self confidence in middle aged individuals , savoring (particularly reminiscing) provides an opportunity for individuals to turn to their past and experience a sense of gratification. In light of the results obtained in this study, it can be concluded that, individuals with no midlife crisis are able to successfully engage in life, provide themselves with sources of positive experiences that generate pleasure and enjoyment (Hughston & Merrian, 1983). Individuals with no midlife crisis, through reminiscing savour the way they feel

in context of the memory of the past experience. Reminiscing serves an adaptive function and contributes towards stronger savoring beliefs. It is beneficial to reminiscence positive events as recalling positive past events has the ability to stimulate the same positive emotions associated with those original life experience (Speer, Bhanji, & Delgado, 2014).

The overall results of (H1d) of the study clearly indicate that savoring as a capacity based variable enables individuals to effectively cope with crisis that may arise due to middle-life stage. Considering that individuals who have reported higher levels of savoring are not classified as suffering from midlife crisis, it can be concluded that savoring offers substantial advantages, evidence suggests that those who report high levels of savoring have better resilience, psychological well-being (Smith & Hanni, 2019), positive emotions (Yu et al., 2020), couple relationship satisfaction, and subjective wellbeing (Singh & Tripathi, 2018). Over time, they also experience a decline in depressed symptoms and an enhancement in contentment (Smith & Hanni, 2017), reduced stress levels (Smith, 2016). Given the numerous benefits of this practice, it's probable that practicing savoring as a daily activity may enable people to approach their middle years with a much more positive outlook, resulting in a much better outcome and a lower chance of crisis. Despite the fact that this stage of life is frequently overlooked, many people in today's world experience a midlife crisis at some point in their lives. No mention of midlife crisis within the Indian context, and its physiological and psychological health related issues have not being highlighted yet. Midlife crisis poses multiple challenges, through this research work it may be possible to prompt cognizance towards problem associated with such crisis. The research work also lends itself in providing a helping hand through the findings savoring as a technique provides scope for employing skills that provide for healthy and contended life. Savoring is an emotion management technique that has a number of physiological and psychological advantages.

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