



INSTANT GRATIFICATION, SELF-CONTROL AND IMPULSIVENESS: HOW ADULTS DEAL WITH IT?

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Abstract

The current study was aimed at exploring how young and middle-aged adults deal with instant gratification, self-control and impulsiveness in their everyday lives.

The present study was conducted on 65 adults (50 of which were young adults aged 22-34 years and the other 15 comprised of middle adults aged 35-44 years). Scales were administered to see the effects of age and gender on the aforementioned variables. Two questions in the demographic details assessed the age and sex of the person, respectively to categorize the collected data accordingly under separate age groups and gender divisions.

Appropriate statistical analysis revealed no significant differences between youth and middle-aged adults, or between males and females' in level of instant gratification, impulsiveness and self-control. Furthermore, there exists a favorable relationship between instant gratification and impulsiveness whereas a negative correlation exists between instant gratification and self-control and between impulsiveness and self-control.

Keywords: Instant gratification; self-control; impulsiveness, young adults, middle-aged adults

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INTRODUCTION

Instant gratification, self-control, and impulsiveness are all facets of human behavior that can have a significant impact on our lives. Adults can struggle with instant gratification, self-control, and impulsiveness in a variety of contexts, including academics, finances, personal relationships, decision-making processes, career, and health behaviors. While some individuals may be naturally more impulsive or struggle with self-control, these traits can also be influenced by environmental factors and past experiences.

For instance, those who prioritize instant gratification over delayed gratification may struggle with keeping impulsive actions at par, saving money, completing long-term projects, or maintaining healthy relationships. Individuals with high levels of self-control, on the other hand, maybe more likely to succeed in achieving objectives over the long term but may struggle with experiencing pleasure and enjoyment in the present moment.

Instant gratification

We are currently living in an Age of 'Now': or as we may call it - The Generation "now" - has it in them by default to satisfy their needs or desires right away without any delay or second thought. Although today's era of getting our immediate needs gratified instantly has a lot to do with advanced tech gadgets, social media applications with the taglines of 'instant messaging' or quick resort to entertainment through OTT applications, much of it is believed to be an innate trait of humans in order to survive. So, the physiological and basic needs that we humans indulge in such as food, sex, sleep - all provide us with instant pleasure. Hence, it is intertwined into our instincts since the very beginning and therefore we are more likely to incline towards receiving the same.

According to a research paper published in the journal "Current Directions in Psychological Science" (Mischel & Ayduk, 2011), instant gratification refers to the "tendency to choose smaller, more immediate rewards over larger, delayed rewards". According to the paper, this inclination is frequently caused by impulsive and emotionally charged decision-making processes, which might have detrimental long-term effects. The researchers claim that an array of behaviors, such as addiction, overeating, and overspending, are mostly influenced by the need for immediate pleasure. Additionally, they point out that learning to postpone gratification can result in better outcomes in a variety of spheres of life, including academic success, financial security, and general

wellbeing. In the context of psychological theories, Sigmund Freud was the first to elaborate on the role of 'Id' i.e.; the pleasure principle. The concept of the pleasure principle is to seek momentary pleasure and satisfaction by avoiding pain. Thus, Id- one of the most basic drives could be a rationale for instant gratification (Good Therapy, 2015). According to Pomerantz (2013), culture can encourage instant gratification behavior as well because the society may promote such behavior by rewarding people with trendy automobiles, faster technology, or luxurious getaways and vacations, which lower a person's stability and weaken their self-control, leading them to anticipate outcomes right away.

Our everyday life is so intertwined with immediately satisfying behaviours that they do not go unnoticed if we take a careful peek into our day-to-day activities. The activities can range from the very wake hours when we tend to snuggle into our warm comfy bed for another ten minutes, snoozing the alarm and refusing to kick-start our day, being aware that we need to attend to academic/work pressure, pending tasks and a pile of deadlines. It could also be observed in our routine habit of ordering food instead of making it since the latter can be tiresome and time-consuming; or in our usual custom of being hooked into our phones watching reels and scrolling through our feed while procrastinating and postponing important tasks- even if it is as important as sleeping at night on time. In each of these instances, we can see how humans inherently without any prior thoughts indulge in avoiding the physically or mentally exhausting tasks by giving into momentary pleasures or refreshments.

Research has shown that instant gratification can have both positive and negative effects on individuals' well-being and decision-making processes. Various research studies reveal how consuming unhealthy food, not exercising and leading a sedentary lifestyle, using substances like alcohol, cigarettes or drugs are all directly linked to the effect of instant gratification on obesity, poor quality of life and serious health issues.

Self-control

Self-control is defined as a tendency to defer receiving an instant lesser reward in lieu of a greater one later. According to a research paper by Baumeister, self-control has also been defined as the capacity to manage one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions in order to achieve long-term objectives. It entails resisting urges and temptations that may arise promptly which hinder an individual from pursuing the intended goals in

favour of making judgements that correspond with one's priorities. In a longitudinal field study, higher self-control was found to be related to better impulse control. (Tangney et al., 2004). Self-control is seen as a crucial component of human functioning that supports the achievement of goals, healthy interpersonal interactions, and well-being as a whole. The research report also points out that self-control is a limited asset that can be exhausted via use and it differ from person to person in their ability to exercise self-control, which may be impacted by variables including heredity, environment, and unique experiences.

A rising amount of study has centred on the concept of self-control. According to studies, developing self-control as a young child can predict subsequent development of intellectual and self-control skills in teenagers (Shoda et al., 1990) as well as significant outcomes like mental and physical well-being (Moffitt et al., 2011). Self-control is associated with better lifestyles (Cheung et al., 2014; Hofmann et al., 2014), improved academic performance and grades (Tangney et al., 2004; Duckworth and Seligman, 2005), and improved interpersonal connections (Vohs et al., 2011). Inadequate self-control has been correlated with undesirable behaviours and repercussions which include procrastination (Tice and Baumeister, 1997), reckless spending (Baumeister, 2002), indebtedness (Gathergood, 2012) and poor dietary patterns (Elfhag and Morey, 2008).

Impulsiveness

Impulsive behaviour can be defined as "a pattern of behaviour characterized by a failure to inhibit or delay responding to impulses, resulting in actions that are often poorly conceived, prematurely expressed, unduly risky, or inappropriate to the situation and that often lead to negative outcomes" (Cyders & Coskunpinar, 2011). This concept emphasises the notion that an impulsive act includes both an inability to control current urges and a disregard for long-term repercussions. Impulsive behaviour may be a complicated concept that includes a number of subcategories, including impulsivity linked to cognition, motor activity, or attention. Aggressive behaviour, substance misuse, gambling issues, and other bad results are frequently linked to impulsive behaviour. A research paper published in the journal "Personality and Individual Differences" (Verdejo-García, Lawrence, & Clark, 2008), defined Impulsiveness as "a tendency to act on the spur of the moment, without due consideration of the consequences of one's actions, and without foresight and planning. "The study goes on to define impulsivity as a multifaceted concept that

includes both cognitive and behavioural elements, such as a lack of planning, an inability to put off pleasure, a propensity for taking risks, and a need for sensations. Impulsivity is frequently linked to a number of undesirable consequences, including drug misuse, unlawful conduct, and mediocre social and academic performance.

The aversion, relapse, and rehabilitation phases of drug abuse is all associated with impulsivity. According to Moeller et al. (2001), those who received a score highly on BIS were significantly more inclined to discontinue undergoing medical care for cocaine consumption. They also remained in therapy for a shorter period of time than those with low impulsivity scores. With regard to some studies, a significant percentage of people are satisfied with purchases they made on the spur of the moment (41% in a particular study), which can be justified by an emotional attachment that already exists and has a positive correlation with the probability of making the purchase. According to a longitudinal study of more than 400 London-born males, boys who were selected by teachers as being unfocused or fidgety, as being most adventurous or risk-taking, as well as those who scored the highest on psychomotor tests when they were between the ages of 8 and 10 tended to be convicted of crimes later in life. Subsequent self-report tests for impulsivity were likewise linked to criminal activity. Being daring and gutsy was consistently one of the most significant independent indicators of both official convictions and self-reported delinquency, along with poor focus and restlessness. (Farrington et al., 2010).

While instant gratification and impulsiveness can be detrimental to our long-term goals and well-being, exercising self-control is an essential skill for achieving success and happiness in life. Developing self-control can help us resist immediate impulses and make more thoughtful, deliberate decisions that lead to greater satisfaction and fulfilment in the long run.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives

- a) To assess age differences in instant gratification, self-control and impulsiveness among adults
- b) To explore gender differences in instant gratification, self-control and impulsiveness among adults
- c) To investigate the relationship between instant gratification, self-control and impulsiveness among adults

Hypotheses

- i) There will be age differences in instant gratification, self-control and impulsiveness among adults
- ii) There will be gender differences in instant gratification, self-control and impulsiveness among adults
- iii) There will be a correlation between instant gratification, self-control and impulsiveness among adults

Sample

In the present study, a total of 65 participants were involved who were divided into two age group of 22-34years i.e., young adults and 35-44years i.e., middle-aged adults with 50 responses from the age group of young adults and 15 responses from that of middle-aged adults respectively. The respondents for the present study were selected using purposive sampling.

The criteria for inclusion and exclusion that were used to select the sample:

Inclusion Criteria

- Individuals aged between 22-34 years and 35-44 years.
- Minimum educational qualification- Pursuing Graduation
- Residence- Urban or sub-urban

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals with history of significant physical illness
- Individuals with history of significant mental illness

Research Design

In this study, survey method with the help of structured questionnaires was used.

Measures

Delayed Gratification Inventory (DGI-35) assesses the inclination to seek for quick gains above those that come later and are more substantial. Participants are asked to rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale. It was reversely scored to measure Instant Gratification.

Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS) shorter version of the 36-item Self-Control Scale (SCS) is a broadly utilised indicator of general trait self-control (TSC), which is characterised as “the self’s capacity to override or change one’s inner responses, as well as to interrupt undesired behavioural tendencies and to refrain from acting on them”. The behavioural components of self-control, such as quitting unhealthy behavioural

patterns or being persistent throughout an activity, are the primary focus of BSCS.

Barratt Impulsiveness Scale Revised: The 21-item (BIS-R-21) is the revised edition and is used to determine impulsiveness. BIS-11 can be distinguished by satisfactory or good validity and reliability indices. BIS-R-21 is a self-report measure wherein the items are scored on a 4-point Likert scale.

DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the collected data, descriptive and inferential statistics were carried out using statistical software SPSS (version 25.0). The statistical techniques comprised of mean, standard deviation, t-test and correlation. t-test was done to see the group differences for age and gender separately for each of the dependent variables (instant gratification, self-control and impulsiveness).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted with 80 participants [50 young adults and 30 middle adults]. However, 15 of the middle-aged participants responded inaccurately hence these responses were omitted based on the data, and the study's total sample size is 65. Among those who took part were: 50 young adults and 15 middle-aged adults of which 28 were males and 37 were females as shown in table 1 and table 2 below, respectively.

Table 1: Represents Frequency Table w.r.t. age

	Frequency	Percent
Young Adults	50	76.9
Middle-aged Adults	15	23.1
Total	65	100.0

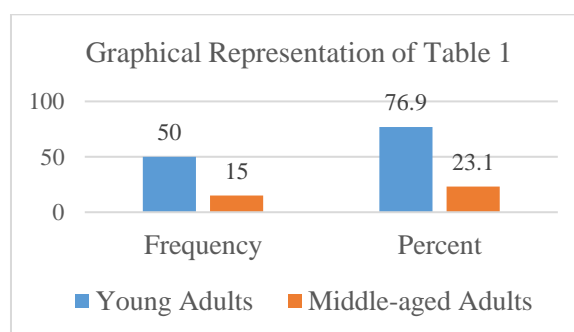


Table 2: Represents Frequency Table w.r.t. sex

	Frequency	Percent
Males	28	43.1
Females	37	56.9
Total	65	100.0

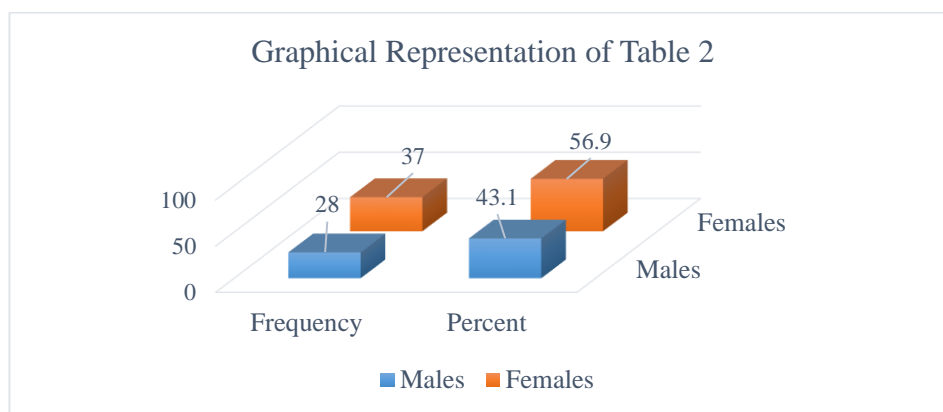


Table 3: Represents difference between age Mean, SD, t scores of young adults and middle-aged adults on Instant Gratification, Impulsiveness and Self-Control

Group Statistics		t-test					
	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)	Remarks
Instant Gratification	Young Adults	50	77.12	16.16	-1.67	.100	Not Significant
	Middle-aged Adults	15	85.06	16.17			
Impulsiveness	Young Adults	50	40.04	7.86	-.54	.59	Not Significant
	Middle-aged Adults	15	41.3	8.73			
Self-Control	Young Adults	50	45.36	7.21	.22	.82	Not Significant
	Middle-aged Adults	15	44.86	8.39			

Table 3 represents t-test scores of young-adults and middle-aged adults in accordance with age. The mean value of young adults and middle-aged adults for Instant Gratification has been found to be 77.12 and 85.06 respectively; that of Impulsiveness for young-adults and middle-aged adults is found to be 40.04 and 41.3 respectively. Lastly, the mean of young-adults and middle-aged adults for Self-control is 45.36 and 44.86 respectively. The above table further states the SD of young-adults and middle-aged adults for Instant Gratification to be 16.16 and 16.17 respectively; that of Impulsiveness for young-adults and middle-aged adults is found to be 7.86 and 8.73 respectively. Lastly, the SD of young-adults and middle-aged adults for Self-control is 7.21 and 8.39 respectively. The t value as obtained in the table above for the three variables - Instant Gratification, Impulsiveness and Self-Control was not found significant at 0.05 level which suggests that the hypothesis "There will be age differences in instant gratification, self-control and impulsiveness

among adults" is not supported. Hence, no age differences exist on Instant Gratification, Impulsiveness and Self-Control among young and middle-aged adults.

The findings of the present study were supported by a recent research study, Chen et al. (2017) found that Delay discounting did not differ significantly between young and middle-aged adults.; a branch of other research literature reported no significant differences in the ability to delay gratification between adolescents and adults, suggesting that there may not be significant differences in instant gratification between young and older adults(Mischel & Ebbesen 1970).Another study by Steel and König (2006) found showed there were no statistically significant differences in self-control between young people and middle-aged adults. A study by Reynolds and Schiffbauer (2004) there were no statistically significant variations in impulsiveness between adults who were young and middle-aged.

Table 4: Represents difference between male and female Mean, SD, t scores of young adults and middle-aged adults on Instant Gratification, Impulsiveness and Self-Control

Group Statistics		t-test					
	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)	Remarks
Instant Gratification	Males	28	84.96	15.28	2.69	.009	Not Significant
	Females	37	74.40	15.91			
Impulsiveness	Males	28	41.32	8.64	.85	.394	Not Significant
	Females	37	39.59	7.55			
Self-Control	Males	28	43.21	8.17	-1.95	.055	Not Significant
	Females	37	46.78	6.52			

Table 4 represents t-test scores of young-adults and middle-aged adults in accordance with sex. The mean value of males and females among adults for Instant Gratification has been found to be 84.96 and 74.40 respectively; that of Impulsiveness for males and females is found to be 41.32 and 39.59 respectively. Lastly, the mean of males and females for Self-control is 43.21 and 46.78 respectively. The above table further states the SD of males and females for Instant Gratification to be 15.28 and 15.91 respectively; that of Impulsiveness for males and females is found to be 8.64 and 7.55 respectively. Lastly, the SD of males and females is 8.17 and 6.52 respectively. The t value as obtained in the table above for the three variables - Instant Gratification, Impulsiveness and Self-Control was not found significant at 0.05 level

which suggests that the hypothesis "There will be gender differences in instant gratification, self-control and impulsiveness among adults" is not accepted. Hence, no gender differences exist on Instant Gratification, Impulsiveness and Self-Control among young and middle-aged adults.

In support of the present study, Wilson and colleagues (2016) found no significant gender differences in instant gratification, self-control, or impulsiveness among young adults and middle-aged adults. Contradictory finding in a meta-analysis conducted by Cross and colleagues (2011) found mixed results stating no significant gender differences in impulsiveness, but females scored higher in self-control and males scored higher in instant gratification.

Table 5: Indicates Correlation between Instant Gratification, Impulsiveness and Self-Control among young adults and middle-aged adults

Correlations		Instant Gratification	Impulsiveness	Self-Control
Instant Gratification	Pearson Correlation	1	.674**	-.710**
	N	65	65	65
Impulsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.674**	1	-.693**
	N	65	65	65
Self-Control	Pearson Correlation	-.710**	-.693**	1
	N	65	65	65

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

Table 5 represents the Correlation between Instant Gratification, Impulsiveness and Self-Control among young adults and middle-aged adults. Findings suggest a positive correlation ($r = 0.674$) between Instant Gratification and Impulsiveness and negative correlation between Instant Gratification and Self-Control ($r = -0.710$) as well as between Impulsiveness and Self-Control ($r = -0.693$)

Similar finding was reported by Hoerger et al. (2011) in which Individuals who reported greater levels of instant gratification were observed to be inclined to engage in unhealthy impulsive behaviours like smoking and overeating. Another study by Juhl, Routledge, Arndt, Sedikides, and Wildschut (2010) explored the relationship between instant gratification and impulsiveness and found that individuals who had a higher tendency to seek out instant gratification tended to be more impulsive and were more likely to engage in risky behaviors - thus indicating a positive correlation between the constructs. In context of negative correlation between the aforementioned variables, a study by Magen and Gross (2010) found that individuals with high levels of self-control were better able to resist the temptation of

instant gratification. Additionally, a study by DeWall et al. (2011) discovered that people with a lot of self-control were less inclined to be impulsive and were more likely to have a conscientious personality, whereas individuals with low self-control were more likely to have an impulsive and sensation-seeking personality. Another study by Bornovalova et al. (2010) found that People who lacked self-control were more likely to engage in impulsive practises such as gambling and substance abuse.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed at determining how adults deal with instant gratification, impulsiveness and self-control. In conclusion, the present study comprising of 65 sample demonstrates no significant differences on Instant Gratification, Impulsiveness and Self-Control among young adults and middle-aged adults with respect to age and gender. However, from the data analysis and interpretation, It is clear that there is a positive association between Instant Gratification and Impulsiveness, as well as an adverse relationship between Impulsiveness and Self-Control.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The present study throws light upon the attitudes of young adults and middle-aged adults in terms of Instant gratification, impulsiveness and self-control. Other interrelated variables could be incorporated in future research works to probe deeper into the individual differences among varied age groups in the adult population.

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