

FIT and Life Engagement

People construct their lives differently and interact accordingly within the worlds they make. But what determines the different activities and interests that people have and the satisfaction they get from engaging in them? Some people lead very simple lives in the small worlds they create for themselves, but others lead very rich lives pushing their boundaries in many areas. Most people act within the familiarity and safety of their 'comfort zones' even when they stay fixed in a narrow world that damages them, or one which they do not find congenial. Yet others seem to explore the richness of life and experience and to be always extending their comfort zones. FIT Science deals with this variability between people and suggests that both Inner and Outer FIT variables predict these broader ways in which people live their lives. This FIT Report investigates this in the context of life engagement – the degree to which people have narrow or broader interests and the span of their engagement generally.

Although there are a host of external factors (such as talents, money, situational factors) that limit the span and nature of a person's engagement in different life activities, FIT Science suggests that the biggest determinant is the individual themselves and their reluctance to go outside of their comfort zone. This has important implications. If FIT Science can predict the degree to which people engage in life's opportunities, then it is potentially tapping core human factors that play a role in all aspects of functioning and well-being. Professor Fletcher predicted this was so in his book '(Inner) FITness and The FIT Corporation'. The study reported here presents another test of this idea.

According to the FIT framework, both Inner (cognitive) FITness and Outer (behavioural) FITness describe a core of a person's architecture. FIT factors are major determinants of how a person functions and whether they behave appropriately and efficiently in a range of different situations. The extent of their Comfort Zones will be determined by FIT factors. It is predicted, therefore, that the higher a person scores on a range of FIT variables, the larger will be their world, and the more likely they are to engage in a wider range of life activities without apprehension and difficulty.

This FIT Report explores these predictions by investigating the relationship between FIT and life engagement. It explores this in a sample of mainly young people from a UK University since this is a population one may consider to have fewer external and life constraints.

Participants

134 predominantly young people, 36% males 64% females, took part in the study. They were aged between 18 and 79 years (mean age = 22 years) and from a broad range of ethnic backgrounds (65% White, 13% Indian, 7% mixed-race, 6% Bangladeshi/Pakistani, 3% Chinese, 6% other).

Measures

The *Life Engagement Questionnaire (LEQ)* and *The FIT Profiler* were completed at their own pace and were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their data.

The LEQ assessed how frequently the person engaged in a whole range of different activities and how many different interests they had.

Outcomes

The relationship between FITness and life engagement was explored using Pearson's correlation coefficient (a measure of the strength of an association). The statistically significant data are presented in Table 1. This confirms the prediction that FITter individuals have higher levels of life engagement. The FITter a person is the more likely they are to engage in a variety of different activities and have a broader range of interests and life experiences. Five of the FIT variables showed strong relationships with life-engagement, these included both Inner FIT (Fearlessness and Self-Responsibility) and Outer FIT dimensions (Behavioural Flexibility), in addition to the composite measures of Overall FITness and FIT Integrity.

Table 1: Relationships between FIT variables and Life Engagement scores.

| FIT variable | Correlation (r) | Probability (p value) | Variance accounted for |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Overall FITness | 0.23 | 0.006 | 5.3% |
| FIT Integrity | 0.26 | 0.003 | 6.7% |
| Fearlessness | 0.27 | 0.001 | 7.3% |
| Self-Responsibility | 0.25 | 0.003 | 6.2% |
| Behavioural Flexibility | 0.19 | 0.03 | 3.6% |

(r= the Pearson correlation; the 'p' value is level of statistical significance, or the likelihood that the observed relationship is due to chance; 'variance accounted for' measures how much of the change in one score can be predicted from the other)

To explore the magnitude of effect of FIT on life engagement, participants were categorised according to their FIT scores and a comparison of life engagement was made between participant groups. Participants with FIT scores equal to or below the mean on each FIT variable were categorised into the 'low FIT' group and participants with FIT scores above the relevant mean score were categorised into the 'high FIT' group. The results are displayed in Table 2 below.

The maximum life engagement score was 100. The mean life engagement scores were higher for participants in the high FIT group across all FIT variables. The differences in scores were large enough to reach significance ($p < 0.05$) for 5 of the FIT variables (Overall FIT, Integrity, Fearlessness, Self-Responsibility and Behavioural-Flexibility). Thus, FIT has a substantial influence on an individual's engagement with different life experiences, activities and interests.

Table 2: Life engagement scores for high and low FIT groups.

| FIT variable | FIT group | Number of participants | Mean life engagement score | SD |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Overall FITness | Low | 72 | 56 | 8.66 |
| | High | 62 | 59 | 6.95 |
| Integrity | Low | 69 | 55 | 7.43 |
| | High | 65 | 59 | 8.38 |
| Fearlessness | Low | 69 | 55 | 7.43 |
| | High | 65 | 60 | 8.09 |
| Self-Responsibility | Low | 75 | 55 | 7.95 |
| | High | 59 | 60 | 7.58 |
| Behavioural | Low | 74 | 56 | 8.65 |
| Flexibility | High | 60 | 59 | 6.96 |

Aside to the main findings, the relationship between psychological wellbeing (anxiety and depression) and life engagement was also explored. The relationships were negative indicating that higher levels of anxiety and depression associated with lower levels of life engagement. People who were more anxious and depressed engaged in fewer life activities and interests. Furthermore, FITter individuals had lower anxiety and depression levels and this confirms the results documented in previous FIT reports.

Conclusions

FITter individuals lead a more enriched life and one that contains more activities, interests and life experiences and less emotional tumult. The life of a FIT person has greater enrichment and this is protective against swings in affect. A disturbance in one area of a FIT person's life therefore only causes a small setback because of the greater number aspects overall. In addition, the FIT person who is behaviourally flexible is also

better equipped to deal with a range of different situations and therefore disturbances are less likely.

This report has shown how FITness can have a substantial influence upon an individual's life engagement and the wellbeing derived from this. FIT provides a lever from which all individuals can improve their life and psychological wellbeing. By developing FITness — which is easily trainable — all individuals have the opportunity to lead enriched lives which are satisfying and psychologically healthy.