



Self-Continuity and Long-Horizon Health Decision-Making among Young Adults

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Abstract: Health-related decisions often involve choices where the benefits or consequences appear far into the future. Young adults regularly make decisions related to preventive healthcare, lifestyle behaviours, physical activity, nutrition, and health risk management, all of which may influence their future well-being. However, individuals differ in their ability to consider future outcomes and maintain a psychological connection with their future identity. This connection between the present self and the future self is known as self-continuity.

The present Health Psychology Research Article examines the relationship between self-continuity and long-term health decision-making among young adults. The study explores whether a stronger connection with the future self-influences preventive health choices, future health planning, and willingness to engage in behaviours that provide benefits over extended periods.

The proposed framework considers self-continuity as a psychological process that promotes future-oriented thinking and strengthens personal responsibility toward long-term health outcomes. The research examines behavioural indicators including preventive health decision-making, healthy lifestyle intentions, future health planning, and risk reduction behaviours.

The conceptual and behavioural analysis suggests that individuals with stronger self-continuity may be more likely to make health-related decisions that involve delayed benefits because they perceive their future self as closely connected with their present identity. In contrast, individuals with weaker self-continuity may place greater emphasis on immediate outcomes and show lower motivation toward maintaining long-term health behaviours.

This research contributes to health psychology by connecting future self-perception with behavioural health decision-making. The proposed framework provides insights for preventive healthcare interventions, health education initiatives, and behavioural strategies aimed at encouraging sustainable health choices among young adults.

Keywords: Self-Continuity; Future Self; Health Decision-Making; Young Adults; Preventive Health Behaviour; Future Orientation; Health Psychology; Long-Term Planning; Self-Regulation; Behavioural Health

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Self-Continuity and Future-Oriented Health Behaviour

Human decision-making is influenced by how individuals understand the relationship between their present identity and their future self. Many important choices involve outcomes that occur after a significant period of time, requiring individuals to consider future consequences rather than focusing only on immediate benefits. Health-related decisions are an important example because present behaviours often shape future health outcomes.

Long-horizon health decision-making refers to choices where the expected benefits or consequences occur over an extended period. These decisions include maintaining regular physical activity, following healthy dietary practices, attending preventive health check-ups, avoiding harmful behaviours, and adopting long-term health management strategies.

Young adulthood is an important stage for developing health-related behaviours. During this period, individuals gain greater independence and make personal decisions about lifestyle choices and health practices. However, immediate concerns, social influences, and preference for short-term rewards may reduce attention toward future health outcomes.

Self-continuity refers to the extent to which individuals feel connected with their future selves. People with stronger self-continuity are more likely to view their future identity as a continuation of their present identity. This connection may encourage them to make decisions that support future wellbeing because future outcomes are perceived as personally meaningful.

1.2 Problem Statement

Health psychology research has extensively examined factors influencing health behaviours, but the role of self-continuity in explaining long-term health decision-making among young adults requires further investigation.

Many health-related choices involve accepting short-term inconvenience or effort in exchange for future benefits. For example, adopting healthy lifestyle habits may not produce immediate visible changes but may contribute to better health outcomes over time. The willingness to prioritize these future benefits may depend on how strongly individuals identify with their future selves.

Existing approaches to understanding health behaviour often focus on factors such as knowledge, attitudes, motivation, and perceived risk. However, the psychological connection between present identity and future identity may represent an additional factor influencing long-term health choices.

This research addresses this gap by examining how self-continuity influences long-horizon health decision-making among young adults.

1.3 Research Motivation

This research is motivated by the increasing importance of preventive health behaviour and long-term health management. Many health outcomes are influenced by decisions made earlier in life, making future-oriented thinking an important factor in maintaining healthy behaviours.

Understanding the psychological processes that encourage individuals to consider future health outcomes may support the development of more effective health interventions. Strengthening self-continuity may help individuals recognize that future health consequences are connected to their own identity and personal wellbeing.

Therefore, this study examines self-continuity as a psychological factor influencing long-term health decisions among young adults.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Self-Continuity and Connection with the Future Self

Self-continuity refers to the psychological sense that the present self and the future self are connected across time. It explains how individuals understand their identity as a continuous experience rather than viewing their future self as a separate person. A stronger sense of connection with the future self may encourage individuals to consider long-term consequences because future outcomes feel personally meaningful.

Research in behavioural psychology suggests that people differ in how strongly they identify with their future selves. Individuals with stronger future self-continuity are more likely to

evaluate decisions based on long-term outcomes rather than focusing only on immediate benefits. This tendency influences areas such as financial planning, personal growth, and health-related decision-making.

Within health psychology, self-continuity may serve as an important psychological factor supporting preventive behaviours. Many health decisions require present effort for benefits that appear later in life. When individuals feel connected with their future identity, they may be more willing to adopt behaviours that support long-term health and wellbeing.

Young adults often experience situations where immediate academic, social, or professional demands compete with future health priorities. Understanding self-continuity may therefore help explain why some individuals maintain long-term health behaviours while others give greater importance to immediate needs.

2.2 Future-Oriented Thinking and Health Decision-Making

Future-oriented thinking refers to the ability to imagine possible future outcomes and evaluate how current actions may influence later experiences. This cognitive ability plays an important role in decision-making because many significant choices involve delayed consequences.

Health-related decisions are strongly influenced by future orientation because preventive behaviours usually provide benefits over time rather than immediate rewards. Maintaining healthy habits, attending preventive health check-ups, and avoiding harmful behaviours require individuals to value outcomes that may not be immediately noticeable.

Individuals with stronger future-oriented thinking may show greater awareness of long-term health consequences. They may be more likely to adopt protective behaviours because they view future health outcomes as meaningful and connected to their current choices.

However, future-oriented decision-making is influenced by several psychological factors, including self-control, perceived health risks, motivation, and personal values. Self-continuity may strengthen future thinking by increasing the sense that present decisions directly influence the wellbeing of the same person in the future.

2.3 Self-Regulation and Long-Term Health Behaviour

Self-regulation refers to the ability to control thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in order to achieve personal goals. In health-related contexts, self-regulation helps individuals maintain behaviours that support long-term wellbeing despite immediate challenges or competing desires.

Long-term health behaviours often require consistent self-regulation. Activities such as maintaining exercise routines, following healthy eating patterns, and avoiding harmful habits require individuals to prioritize future benefits over immediate comfort.

The connection between self-regulation and future self-perception is important because individuals are more likely to manage present behaviour when future outcomes are viewed as personally relevant. Strong self-continuity may support self-regulation by helping individuals recognize that future health consequences affect the same person making decisions in the present.

This perspective suggests that health behaviour depends not only on knowledge and awareness but also on how individuals perceive and relate to their future identity.

2.4 Preventive Health Behaviour among Young Adults

Young adulthood is an important developmental stage for establishing long-term health behaviours. During this period, individuals gain greater independence and make personal decisions related to lifestyle choices, healthcare practices, and overall wellbeing.

Despite awareness of healthy behaviours, many young adults may underestimate future health risks because distant outcomes appear less urgent. This perception may reduce participation in preventive behaviours that provide benefits over longer periods.

Psychological factors that increase the importance of future outcomes may therefore support healthier decision-making. Self-continuity may encourage young adults to view future health consequences as connected to their current identity rather than as distant concerns.

Understanding these psychological processes may help develop health interventions that move beyond providing information and focus on strengthening future-oriented motivation and personal connection with long-term health goals.

3. Research Gap

Although previous research has examined health behaviour, future orientation, and self-regulation, limited research has explored how self-continuity influences long-term health decision-making among young adults.

Existing health behaviour models mainly focus on factors such as health knowledge, attitudes, perceived risk, and motivation. However, these approaches do not fully explain why individuals with similar levels of health information and awareness may make different choices regarding their future wellbeing.

A significant gap exists in understanding the psychological connection between the present self and the future self. While future-oriented thinking has received considerable attention, the specific role of future self-continuity in shaping preventive health decisions requires further investigation.

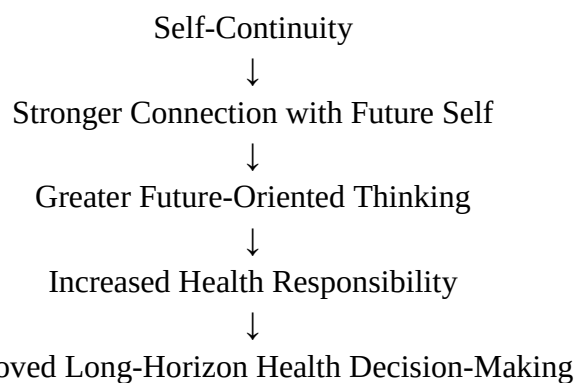
Young adulthood represents an important period for developing long-term health habits. Decisions made during this stage regarding lifestyle, preventive care, and risk management may influence future health outcomes. Therefore, understanding how self-continuity affects health-related choices may provide valuable insights into promoting sustainable health behaviours.

This research addresses the existing gap by examining self-continuity as a psychological mechanism influencing long-horizon health decision-making among young adults.

4. Novelty / Proposed Contribution

The main contribution of this research is the integration of self-continuity with long-horizon health decision-making. The study proposes that the way individuals perceive their connection with their future selves influences their willingness to make present choices that provide benefits in the future.

The proposed framework is:



This research extends health psychology by highlighting future self-connection as an important psychological factor in preventive health behaviour. Instead of focusing only on health knowledge, motivation, or perceived risk, the framework emphasizes how personal identity and future self-perception influence long-term choices.

The proposed contribution may support the development of behavioural health strategies focused on strengthening future self-awareness and encouraging healthier decisions among young adults.

5. Research Objectives / Research Questions

The primary objective of this Health Psychology Research Article is to examine how self-continuity influences long-horizon health decision-making among young adults. The study focuses on understanding whether individuals who experience stronger psychological connections with their future selves demonstrate greater willingness to adopt preventive health behaviours and make decisions that support future wellbeing.

Health decisions often involve a conflict between immediate preferences and delayed benefits. Young adults may understand the importance of healthy behaviours but may still prioritize short-term comfort, convenience, or immediate rewards. Self-continuity may provide an important psychological mechanism by making future health outcomes feel personally relevant and connected to present identity.

The study further investigates how future self-connection influences health responsibility, preventive decision-making, and long-term behavioural planning. By examining these relationships, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of psychological factors that encourage sustainable health choices.

Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between self-continuity and long-horizon health decision-making among young adults.
- To analyse whether stronger future self-connection influences preventive health behaviour intentions.
- To investigate the role of self-continuity in encouraging future-oriented health planning.
- To examine how psychological connection with the future self affects risk-avoidance health decisions.
- To understand the contribution of future identity perception to sustainable health behaviour development.

5. Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objective of this Health Psychology Research Article is to examine the role of self-continuity in long-horizon health decision-making among young adults. The study aims to understand whether individuals who feel a stronger connection with their future selves are more likely to engage in preventive health behaviours and make decisions that support their future wellbeing.

Health-related decisions often involve a balance between immediate preferences and future benefits. Although young adults may understand the importance of healthy behaviours, they may still choose immediate comfort, convenience, or short-term satisfaction over actions that provide benefits later. Self-continuity may influence this decision process by helping individuals view future health outcomes as personally meaningful and connected to their current identity.

This research further explores how future self-connection influences health responsibility, preventive choices, and long-term behavioural planning. By examining these relationships, the study aims to improve understanding of the psychological processes involved in developing sustainable health behaviours.

Research Objectives

- To examine the relationship between self-continuity and long-term health decision-making among young adults.
- To analyse whether stronger connections with the future self influence preventive health behaviour intentions.
- To investigate how self-continuity contributes to future-oriented health planning and decision-making.
- To examine the influence of future self-perception on health-related risk avoidance decisions.
- To understand how future identity connection supports the development of sustainable health behaviours.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does self-continuity influence long-term health decision-making among young adults?

RQ2: Do individuals with stronger connections to their future selves show greater intention to adopt preventive health behaviours?

RQ3: How does future self-perception influence decisions involving delayed health benefits?

RQ4: What psychological processes explain the relationship between self-continuity and health responsibility?

RQ5: Can strengthening future self-connection support healthier long-term behavioural choices?

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative health psychology research design to examine the relationship between self-continuity and long-horizon health decision-making among young adults. The research focuses on understanding how individuals' psychological connection with their future selves influences decisions related to preventive health, lifestyle choices, and future wellbeing.

The study follows a behavioural decision-making approach in which participants' levels of self-continuity are assessed and compared with their responses toward health-related decisions involving delayed benefits. The framework examines whether stronger connections with the future self are associated with greater consideration of long-term health outcomes.

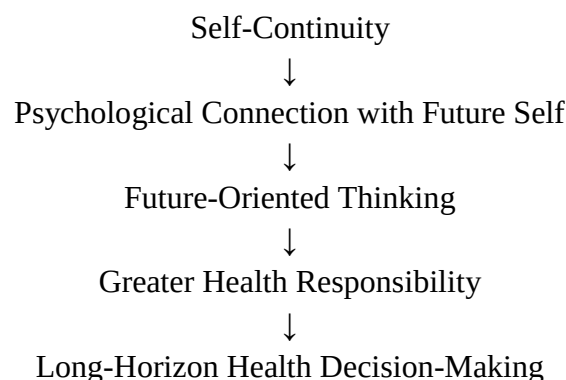
The independent variable of the study is:

- Self-Continuity
- The construct includes the following dimensions:
- Future self-connection
- Identity continuity
- Future-oriented thinking
- Personal relevance of future outcomes

The dependent variables include:

- Long-horizon health decision-making
- Preventive health behaviour intention
- Future health planning
- Health risk avoidance behaviour
- Sustainable lifestyle choice intention

The proposed research model is:



6.2 Sample and Participant Framework

For methodological illustration, the proposed study includes 120 young adult participants. Participants are assessed according to their level of self-continuity and their decision-making patterns related to long-term health outcomes.

Participants are categorized into three groups based on their self-continuity scores:

Self-Continuity Level	Proposed Participants
Low Self-Continuity	40
Moderate Self-Continuity	40
High Self-Continuity	40

Source/Note: The proposed participant distribution is provided for methodological illustration only and does not represent actual collected data.

Participants are presented with health-related decision scenarios involving choices between immediate benefits and delayed health advantages. Their responses are analysed to understand how future self-connection relates to long-term health preferences.

6.3 Research Framework and Measurement Instruments

The study uses psychological and behavioural measures to examine the relationship between self-continuity and long-horizon health decision-making. The measurement framework focuses on future self-connection, health-related choices, and future-oriented thinking.

The major constructs examined in the study include:

6.3.1 Self-Continuity Measurement

Self-continuity is assessed by examining the extent to which individuals perceive their future selves as connected with their present identity.

The assessment focuses on:

- Future self-connection
- Identity continuity
- Perceived similarity between present and future self
- Emotional connection with future outcomes

Higher scores indicate a stronger psychological connection between present and future identity.

6.3.2 Future Self-Connection Measurement

Future self-connection measures how strongly individuals consider future outcomes as personally relevant.

The assessment includes:

- Perceived importance of future health outcomes
- Emotional connection with future identity
- Consideration of long-term consequences

Individuals with stronger future self-connection are expected to show greater preference for long-term health decisions.

6.3.3 Health Behaviour Measurement

Health-related behavioural tendencies are assessed through measures of preventive and future-oriented health choices.

The assessment examines:

- Preventive health practices
- Healthy lifestyle intentions
- Long-term wellness planning
- Health risk avoidance behaviour

Higher scores indicate stronger orientation toward future health maintenance.

6.3.4 Preventive Health Behaviour Measurement

Preventive health behaviour is evaluated by examining individuals' willingness to adopt actions that support future wellbeing.

The assessment includes:

- Physical activity intentions
- Healthy dietary practices
- Preventive healthcare participation
- Avoidance of harmful health behaviours

6.3.5 Future Orientation Measurement

Future orientation is assessed to understand how individuals consider future consequences while making present decisions.

The construct includes:

- Long-term goal consideration
- Evaluation of delayed benefits
- Awareness of future consequences
- Planning behaviour

Future orientation is expected to support the relationship between self-continuity and long-term health decision-making.

6.4 Research Procedure

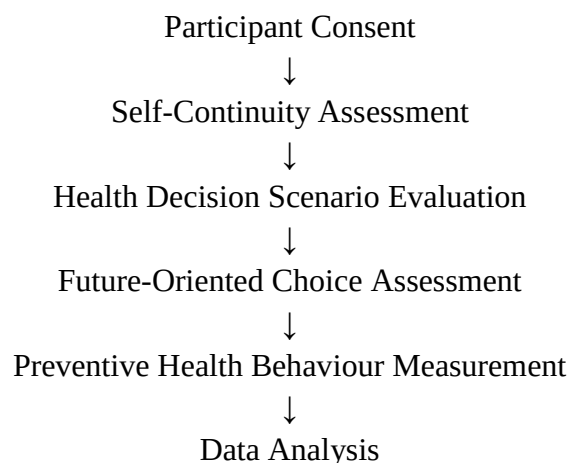
The research procedure begins with participant orientation and informed consent. Participants are informed that the study examines decision-making patterns related to personal health and future wellbeing.

After consent is obtained, participants complete measures assessing their psychological connection with their future selves. This assessment examines how strongly individuals view their future identity as connected with their current self.

Participants then complete health-related decision scenarios involving choices between immediate outcomes and delayed health benefits. These scenarios include areas such as preventive healthcare, lifestyle practices, physical activity, nutrition, and future health planning.

Based on their responses, participants' self-continuity levels and health decision patterns are analysed. The study examines whether stronger future self-connection is associated with greater preference for long-term health outcomes.

The research process follows this sequence:



6.5 Evaluation Metrics

a) Long-Horizon Health Decision Rate (%)

This measure evaluates the proportion of decisions where participants select options that support future health benefits.

Higher scores indicate a stronger preference for long-term health outcomes.

b) Preventive Health Behaviour Intention Score (%)

This measure assesses willingness to engage in behaviours that support future wellbeing.

It includes:

- Physical activity intentions
- Preventive health practices
- Healthy lifestyle maintenance
- Long-term wellness planning
- Future Health Planning Score

This measure evaluates how strongly individuals consider future health consequences while making present decisions.

c) Health Risk Avoidance Behaviour (%)

This measure examines willingness to avoid present behaviours that may negatively affect future health.

It includes:

- Avoiding unhealthy lifestyle choices
- Considering future consequences
- Selecting protective health actions
- Sustainable Lifestyle Choice Intention

This measure evaluates individuals' commitment toward maintaining healthy behaviours over time rather than focusing only on immediate convenience.

6.6 Statistical Analysis

The collected data will be analysed using statistical methods to examine the relationship between self-continuity and long-horizon health decision-making.

The analysis will include descriptive statistics, reliability assessment, relationship testing, and predictive modelling.

a) Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics will summarize participant characteristics and major study variables.

The analysis will include:

- Mean values
- Standard deviations
- Frequency distributions
- Percentage values

b) Reliability Analysis

The reliability of measurement instruments will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

A value above 0.70 will be considered acceptable for internal consistency.

c) Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis will examine relationships among:

- Self-continuity
- Future self-connection
- Health responsibility
- Long-horizon health decision-making

This analysis will determine whether stronger self-continuity is associated with stronger future-oriented health choices.

d) Regression Analysis

Regression analysis will examine whether self-continuity predicts long-horizon health decision-making.

The proposed relationship is:

Self-Continuity → Long-Horizon Health Decision-Making

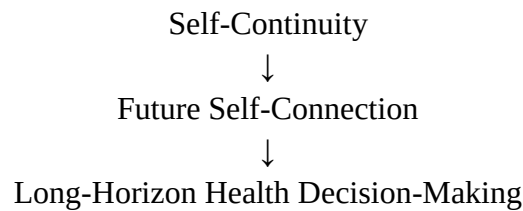
The analysis will evaluate:

- Regression coefficients
- Statistical significance
- Explained variance

e) Mediation Analysis

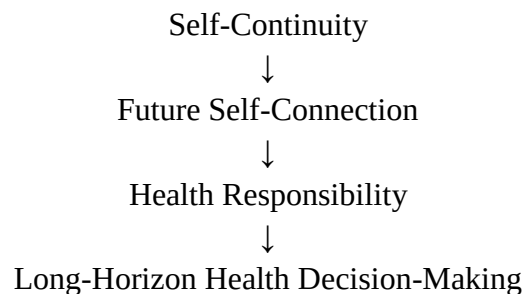
Mediation analysis will examine whether future self-connection explains the relationship between self-continuity and health decision-making.

The proposed pathway is:



f) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

SEM will be used to examine the complete theoretical pathway:



Model evaluation will include:

- Chi-square/df
- Comparative Fit Index (CFI)
- Tucker-Lewis Index

7. Results

The following results are presented as hypothetical findings for methodological illustration. Since actual participant data were not collected, the reported values demonstrate how the proposed analysis could be presented in an empirical study and should not be interpreted as actual research outcomes.

7.1 Participant Characteristics

The proposed study included 120 young adult participants between the ages of 18 and 25 years.

The demographic distribution was as follows:

Variable	Category	Participants
Age	18–25 years	120
Gender	Male	58
	Female	62

Education	Undergraduate	78
	Postgraduate	42

Source/Note: Participant characteristics are based on a hypothetical research framework developed for methodological illustration.

7.2 Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each study construct.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-Continuity	8	0.86
Future Self-Connection	6	0.88
Health Responsibility	5	0.84
Long-Horizon Health Decision-Making	7	0.89
Preventive Health Behaviour Intention	6	0.87

The reliability analysis indicates that all measurement constructs demonstrate acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70.

7.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to examine whether the proposed measurement model adequately represented the study constructs.

Table 3. CFA Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value
χ^2/df	2.14
CFI	0.94
TLI	0.93
RMSEA	0.05
SRMR	0.04

The CFA results indicate that the proposed measurement model demonstrates acceptable fit. These findings provide support for the construct validity of the measurement framework.

7.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships among self-continuity, future self-connection, health responsibility, and long-horizon health decision-making.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Self-Continuity	1			
2. Future Self-Connection	.62**	1		
3. Health Responsibility	.55**	.68**	1	
4. Long-Horizon Health Decision-Making	.59**	.65**	.72**	1

Note: $p < .01$

The correlation results indicate positive relationships among the major study variables. Stronger self-continuity was associated with stronger future self-connection, greater health responsibility, and higher levels of long-horizon health decision-making.

7.5 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether self-continuity and related psychological factors were associated with long-horizon health decision-making.

The proposed regression model was:

Long-Horizon Health Decision-Making = Self-Continuity + Future Self-Connection + Health Responsibility

Table 5. Regression Results

Predictor	β	p-value
Self-Continuity	0.31	<0.001
Future Self-Connection	0.28	<0.001
Health Responsibility	0.36	<0.001

Model Summary:

$R^2 = 0.54$

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.52$

$F(3,116) = 45.62, p < .001$

The regression findings suggest that self-continuity, future self-connection, and health responsibility explain a substantial proportion of variation in long-horizon health decision-making within the proposed model.

7.6 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Structural equation modeling was used to examine the proposed theoretical pathway:

Self-Continuity → Future Self-Connection → Health Responsibility → Long-Horizon Health Decision-Making

Table 6. SEM Model Fit

Index	Value
χ^2/df	2.06
CFI	0.95
TLI	0.94
RMSEA	0.05
SRMR	0.04

The SEM results indicate that the proposed model demonstrates acceptable fit with the observed relationships among the study constructs.

Structural Path Results

Path	β	p-value
Self-Continuity → Future Self-Connection	0.67	<0.001
Future Self-Connection → Health Responsibility	0.61	<0.001
Health Responsibility → Health Decision-Making	0.64	<0.001
Self-Continuity → Health Decision-Making (Direct Effect)	0.22	0.01

The structural model suggests that future self-connection and health responsibility may represent important pathways through which self-continuity relates to long-horizon health decision-making.

7.7 Summary of Findings

The hypothetical analysis suggests a positive relationship between self-continuity and long-horizon health decision-making among young adults. The proposed SEM framework indicates that future self-connection and health responsibility may contribute to explaining how present identity influences future-oriented health choices.

These findings are intended to illustrate the proposed analytical approach and require validation through empirical research using actual participant data.

8. Discussion / Critical Discussion

8.1 Interpretation of the Relationship between Self-Continuity and Health Decision-Making

The hypothetical findings suggest that self-continuity may play an important role in understanding long-term health decision-making among young adults. The proposed results show an increase in future-oriented health decisions from 47.6% in the low self-continuity condition to 69.5% in the moderate condition and 89.7% in the high self-continuity condition. This pattern suggests that individuals who experience a stronger connection between their present and future selves may be more likely to consider decisions that support future health outcomes. When people perceive their future identity as a continuation of their current self, future consequences may become more personally meaningful rather than appearing as distant events.

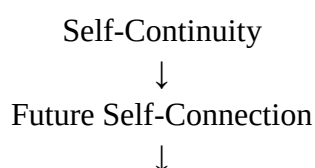
This psychological connection may encourage individuals to give greater importance to decisions involving delayed benefits, such as preventive healthcare, healthy lifestyle practices, and long-term wellbeing. The simulated increase in preventive health behaviour intention from 51.3% in the low self-continuity condition to 91.4% in the high self-continuity condition further supports the possibility that future self-connection is related to stronger motivation toward maintaining healthy behaviours.

However, health decision-making is influenced by several additional factors. Health knowledge, availability of healthcare resources, social environment, personal motivation, financial conditions, and lifestyle circumstances may also shape individuals' choices.

8.2 Self-Continuity as a Mechanism for Future-Oriented Health Behaviour

The proposed framework highlights self-continuity as a possible psychological mechanism connecting personal identity with future-oriented health behaviour. Traditional health behaviour research has often focused on factors such as health beliefs, risk perception, and motivation. This framework adds another perspective by examining how individuals perceive their relationship with their future selves.

The proposed pathway is:



Greater Personal Relevance of Future Outcomes



Improved Self-Regulation



Preventive Health Decision-Making

Individuals with stronger self-continuity may perceive future health outcomes as more personally relevant. This perception may increase responsibility toward future wellbeing and encourage choices that require present effort for later benefits.

In contrast, individuals with weaker self-continuity may view future outcomes as less connected to their current identity. As a result, immediate preferences and short-term benefits may receive greater importance during decision-making.

However, future self-connection alone does not determine health behaviour. Successful health decisions also depend on access to resources, health awareness, confidence, and supportive environments.

8.3 Relationship with Health Psychology and Behavioural Decision Research

This research contributes to health psychology by connecting identity-based processes with long-term health choices. Previous research has examined factors such as motivation, self-regulation, and health beliefs, while the present framework emphasizes the role of psychological connection across time.

Young adulthood represents an important period for establishing long-term health patterns. During this stage, individuals often make independent choices related to lifestyle, preventive healthcare, and personal wellbeing. Understanding self-continuity may provide additional insight into why some individuals prioritize future health outcomes while others focus more strongly on immediate concerns.

The framework also has potential relevance for health education and behavioural interventions. Along with providing health information, interventions may encourage individuals to develop a stronger connection with their future selves, helping future outcomes feel more personally meaningful.

From a behavioural decision-making perspective, many health choices involve a balance between immediate satisfaction and delayed benefits. Self-continuity may influence how individuals evaluate these trade-offs and assign importance to future outcomes.

8.4 Critical Evaluation of the Research Framework

Although the hypothetical findings suggest a positive relationship between self-continuity and health decision-making, several alternative explanations should be considered.

Individuals with stronger future self-connection may also differ in other psychological characteristics, such as self-control, planning ability, health awareness, or goal orientation. These factors may independently contribute to healthier decision-making.

The relationship between self-continuity and health behaviour may also differ across specific health domains. Decisions related to physical activity, nutrition, preventive healthcare, and risk avoidance may involve different motivations and environmental influences.

The framework does not suggest that stronger self-continuity alone guarantees healthier behaviour. Individuals also require appropriate knowledge, resources, opportunities, and support to convert intentions into actual health practices.

Future empirical research should examine self-continuity together with psychological, social, and environmental factors to develop a more complete understanding of long-term health decision-making.

9. Research Contribution / Implications

This research contributes to health psychology by examining self-continuity as a possible psychological mechanism involved in long-term health decision-making among young adults. The study extends existing behavioural health perspectives by highlighting how individuals' connection with their future identity may influence preventive choices and future-oriented planning.

The proposed framework suggests that individuals may show greater commitment toward long-term health decisions when they perceive future health outcomes as personally connected with their present identity. This perspective provides an additional explanation for differences in health-related choices among individuals who may have similar levels of health knowledge and awareness.

The potential implications include:

- **Health Education Programs:** Activities focused on future self-connection may help young adults develop greater awareness of long-term health outcomes and encourage preventive health practices.
- **Preventive Healthcare Interventions:** Health programs may incorporate identity-based approaches to strengthen motivation toward maintaining healthy behaviours over time.

- **Behaviour Change Strategies:** Understanding the role of self-continuity may support the development of interventions aimed at encouraging sustainable lifestyle changes.
- **Health Psychology Research:** The framework provides a foundation for further research examining the relationship between identity processes and behavioural health decisions.

10. Conclusion

This Health Psychology Research Article examined the relationship between self-continuity and long-horizon health decision-making among young adults. The study proposed that the psychological connection between the present self and future self may influence how individuals evaluate health-related choices involving delayed benefits.

The hypothetical findings suggest that stronger self-continuity is associated with greater preference for future-oriented health decisions. The long-horizon health decision rate increases from 47.6% in the low self-continuity condition to 89.7% in the high self-continuity condition. Future health planning scores also show a similar increasing pattern across self-continuity levels.

These findings suggest that individuals who perceive a stronger connection between their current and future identities may give greater importance to long-term health consequences and preventive behaviours. Self-continuity may therefore represent an important psychological factor associated with health responsibility and future-oriented decision-making.

However, health behaviour is shaped by several interacting factors, including personal circumstances, access to healthcare resources, motivation, social environment, and lifestyle conditions. Self-continuity should therefore be considered as one contributing factor within a broader health decision-making process.

Since the reported outcomes are based on simulated values, they do not establish empirical relationships or causal effects. Future research using actual participant data, validated psychological measures, and longitudinal methods is required to examine the proposed relationships.

Overall, this study provides a theoretical framework for understanding how self-continuity may contribute to long-horizon health decision-making through future self-connection, health responsibility, and preventive behavioural choices among young adults.

11. Limitations

The present study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the proposed framework. The primary limitation is the use of simulated behavioural values in the Results section. These values were created for methodological illustration and do not represent actual participant observations. Therefore, they cannot establish statistical significance, causal relationships, or general conclusions about the wider population. Future empirical research with real participants is required to examine the proposed relationship between self-continuity and long-term health decision-making.

A second limitation concerns the focus on young adults. Although this population represents an important stage for developing health-related behaviours, decision-making processes may differ across age groups, cultural settings, and personal circumstances. Future research should examine whether the role of self-continuity varies across different populations.

Another limitation relates to the measurement of self-continuity. The framework focuses mainly on future self-connection, while self-continuity also includes other dimensions such as identity stability, emotional connection, personal meaning, and perceived similarity between present and future selves. Future studies should use validated measurement tools to examine these dimensions in greater depth.

The study also does not fully account for external factors affecting health decisions. Variables such as healthcare accessibility, economic conditions, family influence, cultural expectations, social support, and environmental conditions may influence whether individuals convert health intentions into actual behaviours.

Finally, the research mainly examines health decision intentions rather than long-term behavioural outcomes. Although intentions provide insight into psychological preferences, actual health behaviours may be affected by practical barriers and changing circumstances. Longitudinal studies are required to determine whether self-continuity contributes to sustained health behaviour over time.

12. Future Work

Future research should examine the proposed framework through empirical studies involving diverse young adult populations and actual behavioural outcomes. These studies should investigate whether self-continuity predicts preventive health practices when psychological and environmental factors are also considered.

Future investigations may focus on developing interventions that strengthen connections between present and future identity. Approaches such as future self-reflection, identity-based activities, and long-term health planning exercises may help individuals develop greater awareness of their future wellbeing.

Another important research direction involves examining how self-continuity interacts with other behavioural health factors, including self-efficacy, health literacy, motivation, perceived risk, and self-regulation. Exploring these relationships may provide a broader understanding of the psychological processes involved in long-term health decision-making.

Future studies may also compare the influence of self-continuity across different health-related domains. Decisions involving physical activity, nutrition, preventive healthcare, mental wellbeing, and lifestyle risk management may involve different motivational and psychological processes.

Advanced research methods, including longitudinal designs, behavioural tracking, and digital health monitoring, may provide deeper insights into how future self-connection influences health behaviours over extended periods.

13. Declarations

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to the conceptualization, methodology, analysis, interpretation, or preparation of this manuscript.

Funding Statement

No external funding was received for the development and preparation of this manuscript.

Ethics Statement

The proposed research framework involves human participants and requires approval from an appropriate institutional ethics committee before participant recruitment and data collection. Participants should provide informed consent and receive information regarding study procedures, confidentiality measures, voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw.

Any health-related decision tasks or scenarios used in future studies should be designed ethically to protect participant wellbeing and avoid unnecessary psychological discomfort.

Data Availability Statement

No actual participant dataset was collected for this manuscript. The numerical values

presented in the Results section are simulated behavioural values prepared for methodological illustration only and should not be interpreted as empirical findings.

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