

A STUDY OF THE COMPONENTS OF HAPPINESS AND THE ROLE OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AMONG THE STUDENTS AT KERMANSHAH UNIVERSITY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES

Parvin Abbasi¹, Mehnoosh Timareh², Arash Ziapour³, Neda Kianipour⁴

^{1,2} Department of Nursing, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah - Iran.

³ Research Center for Environmental Determinants of Health, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah - Iran.

⁴ Students Research Committee, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah - Iran.

Address for Correspondence:
Dr. Arash Ziapour

Research Center for Environmental Determinants of Health (RCEDH), Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah, Iran.

Email: Arashziapoor@gmail.com

Date Received: May 14, 2017

Date Revised: April 15, 2018

Date Accepted: April 22, 2018

ABSTRACT

Objective: To investigate the components of happiness and the role of demographic variables among the students at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences.

Methodology: This was a descriptive study. The study population consisted of 350 students of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacology Schools at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences in 2016. Sampling was done through simple random sampling. For data collection, a demographic questionnaire and the Argyle's revised Oxford happiness questionnaire (OHQ) were utilized. The data were analyzed through the descriptive (frequency, percentage frequency, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (ANOVA and t-test) in the statistics software, SPSS version 21.0.

Results: Out of 350 subjects, the male population accounted for 170 (48.6%) subjects. The mean age of subjects was 23.14 ± 4.70 years. A large proportion of the population, (n=315, 90%) were single, 306 (87.4%) subjects were from the urban areas and 129 (36.9%) of the subjects were residing in dormitories. Academically, 157 subjects (44.9%) were majoring in Medicine and 67 (19.1%) were in their second term. Self-esteem had the highest mean score (3.77 ± 0.19) as opposed to subjective well-being with the lowest mean score (1.73 ± 0.26). The mean score of students' happiness was 3.68 ± 0.13 . There were significant relationships between the total score of happiness and each of the demographic variables (gender, age, place of birth, marital status, mode of residence, academic term, and field of study) with p value < 0.05 .

Conclusion: The students' happiness at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences correlated with gender, age, place of birth, marital status, mode of residence, academic term and field of study.

Key Words: Happiness, University Students, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences

This article may be cited as: Abbasi P, Timareh M, Ziapour A, Kianipour N. A study of the components of happiness and the role of demographic variables among the students at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences. *J Postgrad Med Inst* 2018; 32(2): 173-8.

INTRODUCTION

Happiness is seen as one of the major mental needs of human beings that greatly affects people's lives. Vitality and joy are the basic and essential needs of human beings, and they can be considered as the major factors of the health of families and societies. In addition, hopefulness, efforts and progress can become possible within a happy life¹. Happiness is an important factor in life, whereby one always has a good sense about one's and others' lives and avoids feelings of hopelessness and accepts one's weaknesses².

According to Strack et al³, happy people are those who process and interpret data in such a way that leads to their happiness. Additionally, based on Ayzenk's theory, happiness is seen as a personality variable for which a biological basis can be considered⁴, and it gets complicated when this issue is discussed within a cultural framework^{5,6}. Research shows that happiness, as a complex multi-dimensional concept, is influenced by personal and cultural factors, thereby having a strong reflection on all aspects of human life^{7,8}. Happiness can also act as a catalyst and facilitator in the development of societies^{9,10}.

Given the significance of happiness in all aspects of life, many studies have been conducted about the effects of various factors on happiness among different walks of life. For instance, the results of a study performed by Khosravi et al¹¹ revealed that students' happiness correlated with their marital status, income and field of study as opposed to age, gender, place of origin (native or exotic). Moreover, the results of a study conducted by Siamian et al¹² on paramedics students at Mazandaran University, Iran, indicated that happiness and gender were not significantly related. In contrast, in a study done by Safari¹³ on students at Islamic Azad University of Azadshahr, Iran, showed that happiness and gender were related, but no significant differences were found between marital status and gender. Further, Abedi et al¹⁴ and Tavan et al¹⁵ found that the mean scores of happiness were average for students at Isfahan and Arak Universities of Medical Sciences, Iran, respectively. Furthermore, in a study conducted on Baqi-yatallah University of Medical Sciences, Iran, Purtaghi et al¹⁶ revealed that happiness significantly correlated with factors like marital status, age and education; and the mean score of happiness was average.

Happiness and joy can increase productivity among the youth, as the active force in societies¹⁷. Given that the university students are regarded as the future builders in any society, their happiness can play major roles in all aspects and levels of societies. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the components of happiness and the roles of demographic variables among the students at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences.

METHODOLOGY

This was a descriptive study. The study population consisted of all Ph.D. students of Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacology Schools at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences in the first term of the academic year 2016. According to Cochran's formula, 350 subjects were studied through simple random sampling technique. For data collection, a demographic questionnaire consisting of questions on gender, age, place of birth, marital status, mode of residence, academic term and field of study. The instrument utilized was the Argyle's revised Oxford happiness questionnaire (OHQ).

It was first introduced by Argyle & Lu in 1990 and is one of the most popular instruments in the field of self-evaluation, which has been used in most of studies on happiness¹⁸. This questionnaire consisted of 29 questions with four-point Likert scale (0=never, 1=rarely, 2=sometimes, 3=always) and five dimensions: satisfaction with life, self-esteem, subjective well-being, satisfaction and positive mood. The total score of the questionnaire was in the range of 0 to 87. A Cronbach's alpha of 93% and test-retest reliability coefficient of 92% were reported for this questionnaire¹⁹. In the pres-

ent study, the reliability of this questionnaire was 0.921. Moreover, the validity of this instrument was examined and approved by Argyle et al²⁰.

To commence the study, the required approvals were obtained from the institution for the Department of Research and Technology at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences and the selected colleges. The inclusion criteria were students agreement to participate in the research and studying in the academic year 2015-2016; whereas the incomplete questionnaires, university dropouts and those failing to return the questionnaires were excluded from the study. To analyze the data, the descriptive statistics (frequency, mean and standard deviation) were used and the statistical relationships between happiness and demographic variables (mode of residence, academic term and field of study) were examined using the t-test and ANOVA in the statistics software, SPSS version 21.0.

RESULTS

Out of 350 subjects under study, the male population accounted for 170 (48.6%) subjects. The mean age of subjects was 23.14 ± 4.70 years. Majority of the subjects, 210 (60%), belonged to the age group of >20 years. A large proportion of the population, (n=315, 90%) were single, 306 (87.4%) subjects were from the urban areas and 129 (36.9%) of the subjects were residing in dormitories. Regarding field of study, 157 subjects (44.9%) were majoring in Medicine and 67 (19.1%) subjects were in their second term. Baseline demographic variables are shown in Table 1.

Our results revealed that self-esteem had the highest mean score (3.77 ± 0.19) as opposed to subjective well-being with the lowest mean score (1.73 ± 0.26). Moreover, the results demonstrated that the mean score of students' happiness was 3.68 ± 0.13 (Table 2). There were significant relationships between the total score of happiness and each of the demographic variables (gender, age, place of birth, marital status, mode of residence, academic term, and field of study) with p value <0.05, as shown in Table 3.

DISCUSSION

In the present study the mean score of students' happiness was 3.68 ± 0.13 . This finding was consistent with the results of studies conducted by Tavan et al¹⁵, Purtaghi et al¹⁶, Pourmirza et al²¹ and Ebadi et al²². In terms of the mean score of happiness, the results of studies conducted by Sharifi et al²³ and Robbins et al²⁴ on university students demonstrated that the measured mean score of happiness was high, which was concurrent with the results of the present study.

The results of the present study revealed that happiness correlated with gender, age, place of birth, mar-

ital status, mode of residence, academic term and field of study. Tavan et al¹⁵ showed that university students' happiness did not correlate with their age, gender, mode of residence, marital status, and field of study. Similarly, Purtaghi et al¹⁶, demonstrated that happiness significantly correlated with variables such as age, education and field of study. However, their marital status and gender were not significantly different. In addition, Nosttinezhad et al²⁵, showed that there were significant relationships between happiness and age as well as marital status, while no relationship was found between happiness and each of gender and education. The results of a study conducted by Khosravi et al¹¹ indicated that marital status and field of study could affect hap-

piness, while age and gender could not. Rafiei et al²⁶ showed that age, gender, place of residence and field of study did not significantly correlate with students' happiness. Sheikhmoonesi et al²⁷ showed that happiness was not related to gender, marital status, mode of residence and education. Similarly, Sharifi et al²³ found out that there were no significant relationships between happiness and each of the mode of residence, age, marital status, education and faculty. Furthermore, Mehrdadi et al²⁷ showed that there were no significant relationships between happiness and each of gender, marital status and education.

The results of the present study revealed that there was a significant relationship between happiness and mar

Table 1: Baseline characteristics of the study samples (n=350)

Variables	Groups	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	170 (48.6)
	Female	180 (51.4)
Marital Status	Single	315 (90)
	Married	35 (10)
Place of Birth	City	306 (87.4)
	Countryside	44 (12.6)
Age (in years)	20 <	140 (40)
	20 ≤	210 (60)
Mode of Residence	Dormitory	129 (36.9)
	Rental	93 (26.6)
	Personal	128 (36.6)
Academic Term	1st	27 (7.7)
	2nd	67 (19.1)
	3rd	48 (13.7)
	4th	62 (17.7)
	5th	61 (17.4)
	6th	50 (14.3)
	7th	35 (10)
Field of Study	Medicine	157 (44.9)
	Dentistry	96 (27.4)
	Pharmacology	97 (27.7)

Table 2: Mean scores of various dimensions of happiness among the students

Dimensions of Happiness	SD ± Mean
Self-esteem	3.77 ± 0.19
Satisfaction	3.73 ± 0.32
Satisfaction with Life	3.70 ± 0.23
Positive Mood	3.68 ± 0.33
Subjective Well-being	3.54 ± 0.36
Total Score of Happiness	3.68 ± 0.13

Table 3: Comparison of Students' Happiness and demographic variables

Demographic Variables		SD ± Mean	Significance (2-tailed)
Gender	Male	3.67 ±0.14	P=0.000
	Female	3.69 ±0.13	
Marital Status	Single	3.68 (0.14)	P=0.000
	Married	3.70 (0.12)	
Place of Birth	City	3.69 (0.13)	P=0.000
	Countryside	3.65 (0.15)	
Age (in years)	20 <	3.68 (0.14)	P=0.000
	20 ≤	3.69 (0.13)	
Mode of Residence	Dormitory	3.68 (0.14)	P=0.000
	Rental	3.68 (0.13)	
	Personal	3.69 (0.13)	
Academic Term	1st	3.62 (0.16)	P=0.000
	2nd	3.64 (0.13)	
	3rd	3.67 (0.11)	
	4th	3.69 (0.13)	
	5th	3.71 (0.13)	
	6th	3.73 (0.14)	
	7th	3.69 (0.14)	
Field of Study	Medicine	3.68 (0.13)	P=0.000
	Dentistry	3.68 (0.14)	
	Pharmacology	3.69 (0.13)	

riage, which was consistent with the results of studies conducted by Abedi et al¹⁴ and Mastekaasa²⁹.

It was reported that the married students had higher levels of happiness compared to the single ones. In addition, the results of the present study showed that the level of happiness was higher among older and married students compared to younger and single students. Age has been mentioned in many studies as one of the factors related to happiness^{30,31}. The results of a study performed by Walton et al³² demonstrated that students with higher happiness levels had better status in terms of health and academic achievement compared to others. Success and progress in education can lead to the satisfaction and happiness of university students. On the other hand, a student with suitable levels of happiness and peace of mind is better able to progress in education^{33,34}.

CONCLUSION

The students' happiness at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences correlated with gender, age, place of birth, marital status, mode of residence, academic term and field of study. Careful planning regarding development of a vibrant environment to enhance the university students' happiness is suggested.

LIMITATIONS

The present study had several limitations. Firstly, the data were collected through the self-reporting methods, possibly affecting the accuracy of the results. Secondly, because of the individual differences of the research samples, the generalizability of the results may be affected. Further studies need to be carried out in this regard.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present article was based on the findings of the research project (No. IR.KUMS.REC. 1396.720), supported by the Vice Chancellery for Research & Technology of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences. In the end, our grateful thanks go to Imam Khomeini and Mohammad Kermanshahi Clinical Research & Development Departments and all students for their kind support and cooperation.

REFERENCES

1. Montazeri N, Kianipour N, Nazari B, Ziapour A, Bakhshi S. Health Promoting Behaviors among University Students: A Case-Sectional Study of Ker-

- manshah University of Medical Sciences. *Int J Pediatr* 2017; 5:5091-9.
2. Hills P, Argyle M. Happiness, introversion–extraversion and happy introverts. *Pers Individ Differ* 2001; 30:595-608.
 3. Strack F, Argyle M, Schwarz N. *Subjective well-being: An interdisciplinary perspective*: Pergamon Press; 1991:1-298.
 4. Tobgay T, Dophu U, Torres CE, Na-Bangchang K. Health and Gross National Happiness: review of current status in Bhutan. *J Multidiscip Healthc* 2011; 4:293-8.
 5. Delle Fave A, Brdar I, Freire T, Vella-Brodrick D, Wissing M. The eudaimonic and hedonic components of happiness: Qualitative and quantitative findings. *Soc Indic Res* 2011; 100:185-207.
 6. Rigi Kootesh B, Raisi M, Ziapour A. Investigation of relationship between internet addict with mental health and quality sleep in students. *Acta Med Mediterr* 2016; 32:1921-5.
 7. Koffman J, Morgan M, Edmonds P, Speck P, Siegert R, Higginson IJ. Meanings of happiness among two ethnic groups living with advanced cancer in south London: a qualitative study. *Psychooncology* 2013; 22:1096-103.
 8. Jalilian N, Ziapour A, Mokari Z, Kianipour N. A study of the relationship between the components of spiritual health and happiness of students at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences in 2016. *Ann Trop Med Pub Health* 2017; 10:1010-4.
 9. Chalabi M, Musavi SM. Consideration of sociology and effective factors on happiness at micro and macro levels. *Iran J Soc* 2009; 9:34-57.
 10. Ziapour A, Zokaei A, Kahrizy F. A Theoretical Study of the Standing of Social Investment in the Health Sector. *Soc Sci* 2016; 11:3682-7.
 11. Khosravi S, Ghomrani A, Bardideh M. Factors affecting happiness among students of Firouzabad Azad University. *Sch Consultant Dev* 2010; 6:8-14.
 12. Siamian H, Naeimi OB, Shahrabi A, Hassanzadeh R, Abazari MR, Khademloo M et al. The status of happiness and its association with demographic variables among the paramedical students. *J Mazandaran Univ Med Sci* 2012; 21:159-66.
 13. Safari S. Happiness and its relationship with university students' demographic factors. *J Mod Indust/Organ Psychol* 2010; 1:79-86.
 14. Abedi MR, Syed EMJ, Liaghat Dar M. Standardization of the oxford happiness inventory in students of isfahan university. *Iran J Psychiatr Clin Psychol* 2006; 45:95-100.
 15. Tavan B, Jahani F, Rafeei M. The Relationship between Self-esteem and Happiness among Students of Arak University of Medical Sciences. *Iran J Med Educ* 2014; 14:474-82.
 16. Saffari M, Sanaeinasab H, Jahan HR, Purtaghi G, Pakpour A. Happiness, self-efficacy and academic achievement among students of baqiyatallah university of medical sciences. *Med Educ Dev* 2014; 7:45-56.
 17. Veenhoven R. Greater happiness for a greater number. *J happiness stud* 2010; 11:605-29.
 18. Argyle M, Lu L. The happiness of extraverts. *Pers Individ Diff* 1990; 11:1011-7.
 19. Alipur A, Noorbala A. Preliminary reliability and validity of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire on students at Tehran University. *J Thought Behav* 2008; 5:55-64.
 20. Argyle M, Martin M, Crossland J. Happiness as a function of personality and social encounters. In: Forgas JP, Innes MJ (Eds). *Recent advances in social psychology*: Int pers North-Holland, Elsevier Sci Pub; 1989:189-247.
 21. Pourmirza Kalhori R, Ziapour A, Kianipour N, Foroughinia A. A study of the relationship between lifestyle and happiness of students at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences over 2015–2016. *Ann Trop Med Public Health* 2017; 10:1004-9.
 22. Ebadi BN, Hosseini MA, Rahgoi A, Fallahi Khoshknab M, Biglarian A. The Relationship Between Spiritual Health and Happiness Among Nursing Students. *J Nurs Edu* 2016; 5:23-30.
 23. Sharifi K, Sooky Z, Tagharrobi Z, Akbari H. Happiness and its related factors among the students of Kashan university of medical sciences in 2006-7. *J Kashan Univ Med Sci* 2010; 14:62-9.
 24. Robbins M, Francis LJ, Edwards B. Happiness as stable extraversion: internal consistency reliability and construct validity of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire among undergraduate students. *Curr Psychol* 2010; 29:89-94.
 25. Nosrtinezhad F, Sakhaie A, Sharifi H. The relationship between social capital of young people and their happiness. *Q J Soc - Cultural Develop Stud* 2015; 4:143-67.
 26. Rafiei M, Mosavipour S, Aghanajafi M. Happiness, mental health, and their relationship among the students at Arak University of Medical Sciences in 2010. *Arak Med Uni J* 2012; 15:15-25.

27. Sheikhmoonesi F, Zarghami M, Khademloo M, Alimohammadi MM. Happiness and associated demographic factors among medical students of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences, 2010. *J Mazandaran Univ Med Sci* 2013; 22:132-7.
28. Mehrdadi A, Sadeghian S, Direkvand-Moghadam A, Hashemian A. Factors Affecting Happiness: A Cross-Sectional Study in the Iranian Youth. *J Clin Diagn Res* 2016; 10:1-3.
29. Mastekaasa A. Marital status, distress, and well-being: An international comparison. *J Compar Family Stud* 1994; 25:183-205.
30. Røysamb E, Tambs K, Reichborn-Kjennerud T, Neale MC, Harris JR. Happiness and health: environmental and genetic contributions to the relationship between subjective well-being, perceived health, and somatic illness. *J Pers soc Psychol* 2003; 85:1136.
31. Wei M, Liao KY, Ku TY, Shaffer PA. Attachment, self-compassion, empathy, and subjective well-being among college students and community adults. *J Pers* 2011; 79:191-221.
32. Walton GM, Cohen GL. A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students. *Science* 2011; 331:1447-51.
33. McManus IC, Iqbal S, Chandrarajan A, Ferguson E, Leaviss J. Unhappiness and dissatisfaction in doctors cannot be predicted by selectors from medical school application forms: A prospective, longitudinal study. *BMC Med Edu* 2005; 5:38-45.
34. Ziapour A, Kianipour N. Health-related Quality of Life among University Students: The Role of Demographic Variables. *J Clin Diagn Res* 2018; 12:JC01-4.

CONTRIBUTORS

PA conceived the idea, planned the study, and drafted the manuscript. MT and NK helped acquisition of data, did literature search and statistical analysis. AZ drafted and critically revised the manuscript. All authors contributed significantly to the submitted manuscript.