



UNDERSTANDING HAPPINESS IN UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES

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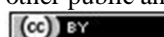
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Abstract

The current study explores the dimensions of happiness in a sample of university employees. It was assumed that type of employment, designation and nature of grade affects being happy. The current research was designed to test these hypotheses. A total of 104 employees (teaching = 44, non-teaching = 60) of all designations belonging to gazetted and non-gazetted grades were recruited through random sampling from the teaching faculties, constituent colleges and administrative departments of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur in Pakistan. Explicit permission was taken by the departmental ethics committee and written informed consent was obtained from all the participants. The study employed a cross sectional, survey, and mixed methods research design. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews consisting of four questions. The first three of these questions were open ended while the fourth question was closed ended. The data were analysed by using NVIVO 12 and SPSS v20. The first question asked participants whether they were happy. Eighty-eight participants reported being happy currently. These themes were recorded in response to the second question asking them to describe their concept of happiness: (a) Internal Satisfaction (b) Internal Feelings (c) Permanent Job (d) Flourishing Life (e) Work (f) Pleasant Memories. The third question asked participants to narrate instances in their lives which make them happy. These themes were recorded: (a) Prayer (b) Spending time with family (c) Good food and outing (d) Good relationships. The fourth question asked participants to rate their current level of happiness on a scale of zero to ten. Thirty-two teaching participants scored 7 or above on happiness scale compared with forty-three non-teaching participants. There was no statistically significant difference between happiness score among teaching and non-teaching employees of different grades and designation as calculated by t statistics and one-way ANOVA. The study is significant as it explores the dimensions of happiness across employees of the university on basis of their grades, designation and teaching or non-teaching type. The study helps us understand the real state of happiness in employees of different grades and cadres. Similar studies need to be conducted on employees of the other public and private sector institutions.

Keywords

Happiness, Dimensions of Happiness, Happiness and University Employees



1. Introduction

There has been an increase in the interest to study different aspects of happiness in recent years (Gilbert, 2006; Helliwell, Layard & Sachs, 2012; McMahon, 2006). Many theoretical and conceptual reviews, and empirical studies are now being conducted with an aim to comprehend the concept and sources of happiness (Dolan, Peasgood & White, 2008; Kahneman & Krueger, 2006). This is so because the goal of human existence is to attain happiness and to minimize sufferings and pain (Veenhoven, 2012). Some studies maintain that happiness is relative across nations and cultures. There are no universal set criteria or source of happiness in the modern world. The concept of happiness is subjective in nature. Everyone defines happiness uniquely. The concept of happiness is often used interchangeably with concepts like well-being, life satisfaction and quality of life. The determinants and sources of happiness are also similar with well-being, life satisfaction and quality of life (Tsuladze, Chitashvili, Bendeliani & Arutinovi, 2013). There have been efforts to understand and define the concepts of subjective well-being and happiness since 1984 (Diener, 1984) but it has been only recently that we have gathered some empirical knowledge about happiness (Wierzbicka, 2004). Diener (1984) preferred to use the term subjective well-being because of ambiguities associated with the term happiness. The concept of happiness always carried connotations of good luck and fortune until recently where modern-day people view happiness as something one can develop, pursue and control (Kesebir & Diener, 2008; McMahon, 2006; Oishi, 2012). Socrates also

maintained the view that happiness is a state or condition upon which one has control (McMahon, 2006). Aristotle also shared the Socratic view of happiness; it was Aristotle who gave the idea of external factors of happiness like friends, health and resources. Later, the Enlightenment movement of the 18th century changed the concept of happiness, making it worldlier with a focus on how could one be happy? (McMahon, 2006). These shifts in concepts of happiness span from Ancient China and Greece to modern USA. The concept of happiness varies considerably across cultures and nations. For instance, the concept of being lucky associated with happiness is part of German, French, Polish, Russian, Japanese and Chinese cultures (Wierzbicka, 2004). The concept of luck associated with being happy was part of most cultures but it was totally absent from the USA, Spain, Argentina, and Kenya cultures where the concept of happiness is based on positive inner feelings (McMahon, 2006, Oishi, 2012). The meanings of happiness are known to everyone but no one knows the definition of happiness (Mohanty, 2014). Happiness can be defined in many ways. One way to define happiness is the degree to which a person judges his/her overall quality of life favourably (Veenhoven, 2012). It is the subjective well-being of a person with his/her life. Happiness is not defined by the material gains, rather it is a self-fulfilling experience (Mohanty, 2014). Lyubomirsky (2001) succinctly defines happiness as an experience including a calm, joyful and contented state of mind combined with the understanding that life is good, meaningful and worthwhile. Happiness is an enduring feeling of being satisfied and

being in contentment (Mohanty, 2014). Luo and Jian (1997) define happiness as a joyful state or being satisfied with life. Generally, happiness is a general joyful and peaceful mental experience which may have internal or external sources. The World Happiness Report (Helliwell, Layard & Sachs, 2012) divides determinants of happiness into external and internal factors or sources. External factors consist of income, job, community, and religion whereas the internal factors consist of mental and physical health, family, education and age. It was assumed that both objective (external) and subjective (internal) factors were important for making one happy but recently, the role of external or objective factors in making one happy is considered less important (Mohanty, 2014). It is considered that if taken together, these factors constitute only 15% of variance in happiness outcome (Diener & Seligman, 2004). There are many ways to assess happiness. The best way is to pose subjective questions to people in order to know their state of happiness. Happiness is feeling fine and good about life without specifying what is good (Bergsma & Ardel, 2012). Veenhoven (2004) on the other hand, describes four qualities of life in order to be classified happy. Those four qualities can be external and internal life qualities. External qualities are environmental adjustment and mastery whereas internal qualities are life satisfaction and well-being. There are different theories that attempt to describe what happiness is. Both Veenhoven (2006) and Seligman (2003) have listed three theories of happiness. First of Veenhoven theories is set point theory. It maintains that happiness is like a set program of a computer; it cannot be altered by any internal

or external factor. Set point theory focuses on genetic makeup of an individual as the source of happiness, one's personality traits, and homeostatic maintenance of happiness, which make it possible for people to assess their happiness at seven or eight on a scale of zero to ten in the same manner as we maintain our body temperature (Cummins & Nistico, 2002). The second theory is cognitive theory of happiness which describes happiness as a product of thinking. Happiness is the difference between what is real and what should be. The cognitive theory is based on social comparison. The third theory is affective theory which states that feeling fine or good equals being happy. We infer happiness according to affective theory. The affective theory best explains the concept of happiness according to Veenhoven (2006). Seligman's first theory is hedonistic theory which tells that happiness is to enhance pleasure and decrease pain in life. The second theory is desire theory which maintains that happiness is achieved when one experiences a fulfilment of desires. The third theory is objective list theory which posits that happiness comes by achieving objectives or goals in life like a job, marriage, or a high position. Accordingly, if anyone achieves these conditions, he/she is said to have authentic happiness (Seligman, 2002). There are many sources of happiness. The eastern studies especially conducted in Indonesia and Bhutan refute the income-happiness nexus called Easterlin Paradox (Income Paradox). There is a critical level where income does not always lead to happiness. At that point, other non-income factors need to be enhanced (Tian & Yang, 2007). Research studies now support the contention that it is not only the income but

other factors that determine happiness in individuals (Rahayu & MSI, 2016; Drakopoulos & Karayiannis, 2007; Layard, 2005). These other factors are quality of income source (Clark, Frijters & Shields, 2008), comparison of one's income with others (Clark & Senik, 2011), one's wishes about income (Stutzer & Frey, 2010) and psychosocial aspects of subjective well-being (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). It is now a known fact that human beings need social recognition, interpersonal social relationships, self-esteem and self-actualization (Diener & Seligman, 2004; Kesebir & Diener, 2008).

Although, the income does not always lead to happiness, but there is a positive correlation between income and happiness. This is so as income brings convenience and luxuries, thereby increasing happiness (Easterlin, 2001; Frey & Stutzer, 2002; Pouwels et al., 2008; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2008). Besides these factors, happiness has other sources too. One is education. Being highly educated make it possible to secure a better job which results in increased income and happiness for some people (Chen, 2012; Cunado & Garcia, 2012). Being healthy is associated with being happy. Religious people have been found to be happier than non-religious people. The people with liberal religious beliefs have healthy life, with less mental health problems (Green & Elliot, 2010). Being religious increases social support network, which is a protective factor against psychological problems, hence, people experience little to no mental health problems and enhanced happiness (Lim & Putnam, 2010). The European Barometer study identifies broader categories as the determinants or sources of happiness. These categories are from

most influential to least influential (Eurobarometer Qualitative Studies, 2011). Some of those categories are: health, family, employment, financial situation of oneself, housing, personal freedom, friends, job satisfaction, education, one's cultural life, neighbourhood, social interaction and religion. The first nine of these sources are considered most influential in determining happiness. In a qualitative study conducted to find out the sources of happiness in Taiwan (Luo & Jian, 1997), the researchers found 180 reported sources of happiness. Those were divided in nine broader categories or themes. Those categories were need for self-respect, smooth interpersonal relationships, fulfilment of material needs, work achievement, being at ease with life, self-control and self-actualization, positive affect, and health. It was found that Taiwanese and Chinese concepts of happiness are different from those of Western nations. Similarly, Jaafar et al., (2012) enumerated the sources or determinants of happiness among Malaysians and Indonesians. The prominent themes were family, career, interpersonal relationships, self-growth and esteem, wealth, recreation, absence from negative feelings, national prosperity, and religion. This study's results are parallel to other studies conducted in Eastern cultures. There is now more focus on maintaining a positive attitude about life and its events. This is an extension of positive thinking. Positive attitude not only keeps negativity away but makes one see life through positive and optimistic lens. Positive attitude leads to experience happiness in general (Mohanty, 2014). One can inculcate and change his/her attitude to make them more

positive (Diener & Seligman, 2004). The positive attitude can be taught by value-education or by behavioural training. There is a direct link between positive attitude and employment. Employment is indirectly linked with happiness. Therefore, it is assumed that positive attitude through economic means leads to happiness. On the other hand, attitude itself is also affected by happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2001).

1.1 Rationale of the Study

Most of the studies relating to happiness have been conducted by researchers from Western nations and in the area of subjective well-being (Jaafar et al., 2012). The studies on happiness in Eastern countries have been conducted in Korea (Kim et al., 2007); Japan (Inoguchi & Fujii, 2009; Kan, Karasawa, & Kitayama, 2009; Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000; Uchida & Kitayama, 2009); Taiwan (Su & Lu, 2009); China (Cheng & Chan, 2005; Ku, Fox & McKenna, 2008; Lam & Boey, 2005; Monk-Turner & Turner, 2009); Singapore (Tan, Kau, & Tambyah, 2009); Thailand (Ingersoll Dayton et al., 2004; Yiengprugsawan et al., 2009); Turkey (Eryilmaz, 2010); and Pakistan (Suhail & Chaudhry, 2004). Each of these studies demonstrates the distinctive features of happiness found only in Eastern cultures, mostly Chinese and Japanese (Jaafar et al., 2012). But there is scant research available on the sources of happiness in Pakistani adults. The study conducted by Suhail and Chaudhry (2004) is centred around subjective well-being. The current study is focused on several issues. First, despite growing interest and research in positive psychology, still researchers have not agreed upon the definition of happiness (Gilbert, 2006;

2. Method

Kahneman & Krueger, 2006). Second, the perceptions and meanings of happiness as per common man's viewpoint have not been added to literature yet which is the real essence of any happiness study (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick & Wissing, 2011). The lack of real data on understanding happiness is a vital gap in literature (Hone et al., 2014). Blanchflower and Oswald (2004) have rightly pointed out that we cannot understand what happiness really is without listening to what people say about happiness. The current study covers this gap.

1.2 Objectives

The study was designed with the following objectives:

- To know the percentage of employees who are happy.
- To know about the concept of happiness according to university employees.
- To know about the determinants and sources of happiness in teaching and non-teaching employees of the university.
- To know about the determinants and sources of happiness in gazetted and non-gazetted employees of the university.
- To know about the level of happiness of university employees.

1.3 Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that:

- There is a difference in happiness among teaching and non-teaching employees.
- There is a difference in happiness among gazetted and non-gazetted employees.
- There is a difference in happiness score among different designations of university employees.

2.1 Participants

A total of 104 employees from the administrative departments, teaching faculties and constituent colleges of a public-sector university named The Islamia University of Bahawalpur in Pakistan participated in the study. They were chosen by random sampling technique. Forty-four of them were teachers and sixty were non-teaching employees. All of them belonged to different grades and designations. They were categorized into gazetted and non-gazetted employees on the basis of grades and into professor, associate professor, lecturer, assistant registrar, office assistant, clerical staff and class four servants on the basis of their designation in the university.

2.2 Measures and Research Design

The current study employed a cross sectional, survey, and mixed methods research design. The mixed methods research design was chosen to allow full interpretation of data. Data were obtained through semi structured interviews consisting of four questions. The first three questions were open ended and the fourth question was closed ended. The first question asked: “Are you happy”? The second question asked: “What is happiness to you”? The third

question asked: “What makes you happy”? The fourth question asked participants to rate themselves on a scale of zero to ten where ten was maximum happiness and zero was no happiness. These questions were developed based on literature review on happiness.

2.3 Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Formal permission was taken from the research ethics committee of the department of Applied Psychology at The Islamia University of Bahawalpur in Pakistan. Written informed consent was taken from all the participants. All the participants were informed that their responses and identity would remain confidential. The random sampling procedure was used to collect data from the individual participants. Data were obtained by asking four questions from each participant. The participants responded to all four questions in written form. Data were analysed by qualitative data analysis software NVIVO 12 and Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20.

3. Results and Findings

3.1 Quantitative Analysis

Table 3.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

		<i>Grade</i>	<i>EmpType</i>	<i>HappiScore</i>	<i>Desig</i>	<i>GradeCat</i>
N	Valid	104	104	104	104	104
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		12.221	1.5769	7.3269	5.6635	1.4808
Std. Deviation		7.3629	.49644	2.05951	2.68982	.50205
Minimum		2.0	1.00	.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		21.0	2.00	10.00	9.00	2.00

The Table 3.1.1 gives the descriptive statistics of variables in the study. There was n=104 employees. They belonged to Grade 2 (Non-Gazetted) to Grade 21 (Gazetted). They were

categorized in nine categories based on their designation in the university from class four servants to professors. The happiness score ranged from zero to ten.

Table 3.1.2 Frequencies of All Variables

<i>Type</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Grade		
2-14	50	48
16-21	54	52
Grade Category		
Gazetted	54	52
Non-Gazetted	50	48
Employee Type		
Teaching	44	42
Non-Teaching	60	58
Happiness Score		
0-6	29	28
7-10	75	72

The Table 3.1.2 gives the frequencies of variables included in the study. There were 48% of non-gazetted and 52% of gazetted employees who participated in the study. There were 42% teaching and 58% non-teaching employees of

the university. Seventy two percent of employees scored 7 or above on happiness scale compared with only 28% who scored below 7 on scale of happiness.

- The *t* statistics were computed to assess the first hypothesis. There was not a statistical significant difference in happiness among teaching (M = 7.14, SD = 2.36) and non-teaching (M = 7.46, SD = 1.82) employees of the university, $t(102) = -0.81, p = 0.42$.
- The *t* statistics were computed to assess the second hypothesis. There was not a statistical significant difference in happiness among

gazetted (M = 7.39, SD = 2.27) and non-gazetted (M = 7.26, SD = 1.84) employees of the university, $t(102) = 0.317, p = 0.75$.

- The one-way ANOVA statistics were computed for the third hypothesis. The analysis of one-way ANOVA showed no statistical significant difference among different designations of employees in happiness scores, $F(8, 95) = 1.08, p = 0.38$.
- In response to the first question, eighty-eight participants (85%) reported being happy currently.

3.2 Qualitative Analysis

Table 3.2.1 Themes and Codes Generated from Responses on Q 2

<i>Question 2</i>	<i>What is Happiness to You?</i>	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Internal Satisfaction	Life satisfaction	Happiness is about satisfaction in life.
	Satisfaction	Happiness is satisfaction
	Mental Satisfaction	Mental calm and satisfaction makes you happy.

Internal Feelings	Inner feelings	Inner feelings are important for happiness.
	Feelings	My feelings are my happiness.
	Personal Feelings	Happiness is what you feel personally.
	Emotional feelings	Happiness is name of stable emotions.
Permanent Job	Work	One who works is happy.
	Job work	Job and work make one happy.
	Work place	When I go to workplace, I am happy.
	Getting job	Job is cause of happiness.
Flourishing Life	Content state	Happiness is being calm and contented.
	Satisfied life	A satisfied life is happy life.
	Daily life matters	If one is good in daily matters, one is happy.
Work	Work and life	Work is important for happiness.
	Personal work	Personal work gives one happiness.
	Work satisfaction	Satisfaction with work defines happiness.
Pleasant Memories	Memories	My memories are happiness for me.
	Pleasant state	I am in a pleasant state of happiness when remember pleasant memories.

- Six themes were generated from different codes in response to second question. Those themes are:
 (a) Internal Satisfaction (b) Internal Feelings (c) Permanent Job (d) Flourishing Life (e) Work (f) Pleasant Memories

Table 3.2.2 Themes and Codes Generated from Response on Q 3

<i>Question 3</i>		
<i>What makes You Happy?</i>		
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Prayer	Saying prayer	Prayer is the great source of happiness.
	Spending time in prayer	I get happy when offer prayer five times a day.
	Prayer thanks	I should thank God, then I will be happy.
Spending time with family	Family time with parents	Spending time with my parents makes me happy.
	Family time with children	Children are making me happy all the time.
	Time with wife, children and parents	Private time with my family and I am happy.
	Family members	Family makes me happy.
Good food and outing	Fast food and chocolate	Eating my favorite food makes me happy.
	Outing and dinning	Dinner out and I am happy.
	Outing, shopping and food	Shopping and dinner out is source of happiness for me.
	Eating out and friends	Time with friends on dinner makes me happy.

Good relationships	Satisfied relationships	Satisfied relationship with my wife and friends keep me happy.
	Family relationships	Quality time with family makes me happy.
	Relationships with friends and family	My relationship with my family and friends is my happiness.

- Four themes were generated in response to third question. Those are:
 (a) Prayer (b) Spending time with family (c) Good food and outing (d) Good relationships
- Thirty-two (31%) teaching participants compared with forty-three

3. Discussion

A vast majority of university employees reported themselves to be happy currently. This shows that the university employees of all grades and designation are happier people as assessed by this study. The UN Happiness Report of 2018 ranks Pakistan ahead among its neighbouring countries. Pakistan ahead of all its neighbours including India (58 points), China (11 points), Iran (31 points), and Afghanistan (70 points) (World Happiness Report, 2018). The university employees defined happiness using concepts like internal satisfaction, feelings, pleasant memories and a permanent job. The terms life satisfaction or internal satisfaction and happiness were used synonymously by the university employees. The happiness was defined as a permanent job which is a kind of happiness. These concepts are consistent with Western concepts of life satisfaction and happiness. The study highlights the idea of previous studies to consider happiness as a direct outcome of job or money (Mohanty, 2014). The researchers assumed that both employment and income lead to happiness

(41%) non-teaching participants scored 7 or high on happiness score. But this difference was not statistically significant as expressed by t statistics. Overall, 72% of the participants scored 7 or above on happiness scale.

(Easterlin, 2001; Frey & Stutzer, 2002; Pouwels et al., 2008; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2008). This is so because income is associated with comfort and luxuries which results in increased happiness (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). The university employees attributed happiness to things like offering prayer, spending time with family and friends, good relationships and good food combined with outing. Pakistan is a collectivistic culture where religion has an important place in peoples' lives; therefore, most of the respondents associated happiness as directly coming from being able to offer prayers or fulfilling religious obligations. Being religious has been positively correlated with being happy in previous studies (Green & Elliot, 2010; Lim & Putnam, 2010). Pakistan has group culture and group cohesiveness. People generally interact, make decisions or spend lives in groups, either family, friends, relatives, co-workers or some other kind of group. Therefore, the main source of happiness is spending time with family and friends after being able to offer prayers. This finding is consistent with research findings from Asian countries, most of which

share a collectivistic culture (Jaafar et al., 2012). Most of the university employees (72% overall including 31% teaching employees and 41% non-teaching employees) reported themselves to be happy in 7 to 10 range on a scale of zero to ten. A majority of employees reported their happiness in upper percentile. This is consistent with finding of first question that 85% of employees reported being happy currently. Only 13% employees scored on happiness scale on a range of 1 to 6 on a scale of zero to ten. It is worth mentioning that there is no statistical significant difference in happiness score on a scale of zero to ten among teaching and non-teaching, gazetted and non-gazetted employees of the university. Similarly, there is no statistical significant difference among various designations of university employees like professor, associate professor, lecturer, assistant registrar, office assistant, clerical staff and class four servants. This clearly demonstrates the fact that high position, high status and more money are not directly related to increased happiness (Tian & Yang, 2007). Being in a better occupational group or grade does not make

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oneself to be happier or vice versa rather happiness is based on internal or subjective factors experienced by the individual (Diener & Seligman, 2004).

4.1 Conclusion & Implications

It is concluded that people living in Pakistan define and view happiness in the same manner as viewed by many Western nations. There is a difference in sources or determinants of happiness. Pakistani people place more emphasis on religious obligations and keeping a close relationship with one's closed group whether it be family, relatives or friends (Suhail & Chaudhry, 2004). The majority of university employees is happier and score high on a scale of happiness. The study lacks inclusion of demographic variables like age, gender, and rural or urban background. The more studies need to be conducted with a larger population sample and on longitudinal basis so that more precise data may be gathered. The findings are an addition to the existing literature of happiness especially in Pakistan. They help us comprehend the concept and sources of happiness among Pakistani people.

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