

INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS HAVING INFLUENCE ON THE STUDENT'S HAPPINESS: A SURVEY BETWEEN STUDENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SHIRAZ

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Abstract

Undoubtedly, in order to have a developed society, the members of the society must be healthy both psychologically and physically. Happiness is one of the main effective variables which are of great importance during the period of adolescence. During such period, persons are able to make main decisions relative to their future life. Considering the importance of happiness of the youth, the purpose of this study is to investigate the factors having influence on the happiness degree. Population of the study included all secondary students of Shiraz among whom 447 ones were selected as the sample. Data was gathered by use of Oxford's questionnaire and then was analyzed using SPSS software. From the results, it became clear that there is a meaningful relationship between the students' happiness and the variables such as cultural activities, athletic experiences, religious and artistic activities. Moreover, there is no relationship between the students' happiness and variables such as the parents' educational degree and job and the students' pocket money. Finally, the results of multi – variable regression test revealed that being satisfied with leisure time and doing cultural activities are the two variables which have most influence on the students' happiness level as the dependent variable.

Keywords: Happiness, Family, Economy, Culture, Secondary School Student.

1. Introduction

Because of its remarkable influence on the human features and behaviors, psychological joy is usually investigated by the researchers. The human's positive emotions have been paid attention by the authors from the old times. Aflatoon makes reference to the elements such as reason, emotion and desire and argues that happiness refers to the correlation between such elements (Talebzadeh and Samkan, 2011: 4173). Happiness not only improves the physical health of the persons, but also effects on their psychological health. Since the persons' physical and psychological health is affected by happiness, researchers pay more attention to it in order to solve the problems of the modern world. Evidences show that happiness causes the persons to have peace of mind, make decisions better, increase their knowledge and creativity and create more social relations. Happiness causes persons to be satisfied with their partners. Happiness makes brisk political cooperation and increases the longevity (Furstenberg et al, 1983: 656).

On the other hand, depression weakens the immune system of the body. Lack of depression decreases weakness of immune system and improves its performance. Happiness plays a main role in the students' health because on the one hand it decreases their depression and anxiety and on the other hand, it increases their self – confidence and cooperative spirit. Moreover, the students who are happy can make better decisions. Happiness destroys jealousy and makes the life more pleasant. Lack of happiness aggravates bad features such as depression, pessimism, disinterestedness, conscienceless, addiction, social rudeness's and hostility (Argyle and Hills, 2000: 159).

2. Review of literature

There are several definitions for the word "happiness". Argyle (2004) & Car (2006) argues that happiness refers to the positive psychological conditions which become distinguished with total satisfaction from life and positive affection. Seligman (2005) believes that happiness causes persons to have better feeling. In reality, happiness is a main process by which persons take pleasure from their surrounding environment (Seligman, 2005:415).

On the one hand, happiness is a positive emotion achieved from the feeling of winning. Our life is beautiful when we have a positive emotion. Therefore, all negative events are affected by happiness. On the other hand, happiness encourages persons to engage in social activities. This

is to say that happiness looks like a glue by which all persons are in communication with each other (Valiant, 1993:449).

Presenting “happiness theory” Martin Seligman takes a big step toward the definition of word “happiness”. Arastoo argued that happiness is referred to characteristics such as been violence and Kindliness. Seligman defines happiness as the increase of playing working and having abilities. The first one includes all positive excitements. The second refers to the current pleasures and their refers to characteristics optimism and hopefulness. Reviewing the relationship between happiness and satisfaction with life, Seligman et al divided happiness into three parts:

- Satisfied social relations (social part);
- Permanent joyful situations (emotional part);
- Optimistic attitude toward the surrounding environment (recognition part) (Seligman, 2005:411-412).

Lin (2000) concluded that money increases anxieties and decreases happiness. Argil et al (1990) revealed that when persons are asked about happiness, they have different viewpoints. Some persons define it as the positive emotional actions and some others regard it as the feeling of being satisfied with life. Happiness, it seems, includes two parts: emotional part and recognition part. The first causes persons to experience a feeling of satisfaction. Such persons are cheerful and can easily be in communication with others. From recognition perspective, persons have a positive attitude to their surrounding world and are optimist toward the events Lane, (Lane, 2000: 105).

Happiness, sadness, boldness, fear, self – confidence and self – interest are all features which take root from persons’ feelings. Such feelings act as a motivator for equilibrating the interactions between persons and surrounding environment. Under the influence of such feelings, our personality is shaped. On the other hand, we can make correct decisions and follow the path of success. The persons’ morale. Happiness is achieved when persons are satisfied with surrounding environment (Hills & Argyle,2001a: 598). Development of each society is based on its healthy human resource, because happy persons have more power and ability for doing positive actions. Happiness is one of the main factors on which persons’ mental health is measured. Happiness plays a main role in the youth’s life, because they make important decisions during such period. In other words, the youth’s future life depends on such decision – makings (Hills & Argyle, 2001b: 1359).

Ustalos et al’s study, “social factors affecting on children’s happiness and depression”, showed that there is no difference between males’ and females’ happiness degree, but the females

were more depressed than the males. Furthermore, there was a positive relationship between the children's happiness and their relations with the parents. In other words, there is a direct and positive relationship between children and parents. Results also revealed that the females are more sentimental than the male (Uusitalo and Juhani, 2012: 605).

Sharma et al (2010) investigated the relationship between socio – psychological factors and the level of happiness of the adults. The sample included 500 adult persons among the Urban and rural regions of India. Data was gathered using the happiness questionnaire. Due to the results, there is a meaningful relationship between happiness and factors such as extroversion, affection stability, religion and social support. It also became clear that in addition to personality – based factors, social factors effect on the persons' happiness.

In their study “concept and happiness”, Al –Negar et al (2010) concluded that the students consider that the students consider “Money” as the main factor affecting on happiness. To the students' opinion, the secondary factors include family relations, social stability and physical health (Al-Negar et al, 2010).

Holder et al (2007) investigated the effect of social relations on the children's happiness. They divided variables into two groups: positive and negative groups. The first included the positive relations between the subjects and the parents and the second included negative relations between them and the others. They found a meaningful relationship between the variables and the children's happiness. Moreover, results showed that there is a weak relationship between the happiness of the children and the variables such as demographic factors, the parents' age and so on (Holder and Colman, 2007)

In Falci's study “the effect of family structures and processes on the children's psychological health”, six family structures were studied. Falci (1997) concluded that only the children who are godson have weak morale (Falci, 1997:16).

3. Model of the research

Reviewing the literature, the research's meaningful model is as the following:



3.1 Research hypothesis

Main hypothesis

There is a meaningful relationship between economic and cultural factors of the family and happiness.

Sub hypothesis

Sub – h1: There is a meaningful relationship between the students' pocket money and their happiness.

Sub – h2: There is a meaningful relationship between the students' happiness and their fathers' job.

Sub – h3: There is a meaningful relationship between the students' happiness and their mothers' job.

Sub – 4: There is a meaningful relationship between the students' happiness and their mothers' educational degree.

Sub – h5: There is a meaningful relationship between the students' happiness and their fathers' educational degree.

Sub – h6: There is a meaningful relationship between the students' happiness and their religious activities.

Sub – h7: There is a meaningful relationship between the students' happiness and their athletic activities.

Sub – h8: There is a meaningful relationship between the students' happiness and their artistic activities.

Method and material

The population includes 80000 students of secondary schools of Shiraz, among whom 500 were randomly selected as the sample, using Lin Table. Data was gathered by use of Oxford's and demography questionnaires. Because the Chronbach's α is more than 0/7, the questionnaires are reliable. Furthermore, data was analyzed using SPSS software at descriptive and deductive levels. The methods used during the analysis included simple regression analysis, variance analysis, T- test and multi – variable regression test.

3.2 Data analysis

Descriptive analysis

In this part, frequency of variables such as gender, the parents' educational degree, the parents' job, pocket money and cultural activities is determined.

Table 1: data frequency based on gender

Gender	Frequency	Frequency percent
Male	126	27.5
Female	321	72.5
Total	447	100

Table 2: Frequency of father's educational degree

Father's educational degree	Frequency	Frequency percent
Illiterate	11	2.5
Elementary	27	6
Guidance school	56	12.5
Diploma	159	35.6
Associate of arts, bachelor of arts	151	33.8
Master of arts	43	9.6
Total	447	100

Table 3: Frequency of mother's educational degree

Mother's educational degree	Frequency	Frequency percent
Illiterate	16	3.6
Elementary	40	8.9
Guidance school	85	19
Diploma	182	40.7
Associate of arts, bachelor of arts	108	24.2
Master of arts	16	3.6
Total	447	100

Table 4: Frequency of father's job

Job type	Frequency	Percent
Free job	204	55.6
Employee	156	34.9
Worker	25	5.6
Unemployed	7	1.6
Retired	54	12.1
Total	446	100

Table 5: Frequency of mother's job

Job type	Frequency	Percent
Employed	103	23
Housekeeper	328	73.4
Retired	16	3.6
Total	447	100

Table 6: Frequency based on pocket money

Sum	Frequency	Percent
0-5	83	18.6
6-10	151	33.8
11-20	124	27.7
21-50	74	16.6
50	14	3.3
Total	447	100

Table 7: Frequency based on various activities

Activity	Zero Time	1-3 hour	4-6 hour	Up to 6 hour
Religious	19.9	18.8	12.5	2.9
Athletic	20.6	47.9	18.8	12.7
Artistic	35.3	44.1	7.6	12.9
Cultural	25.5	39.6	17	17.9

Deductive statistic

Main hypothesis test: There is a meaningful relationship between economic and cultural factors of family and happiness degree.

Table 8: The relationship between economic and cultural aspects and happiness degree.

Happiness		
sig(2- tail)	Correlation	Variables
0.471	0.623	Economical aspect
00.57	0.358	Cultural aspect

As shown above, there is no meaningful relationship between economic aspect and happiness, but there is a meaningful relationship between cultural aspect and happiness and happiness when $P \leq 0/05$

Sub – hypothesis test

There is a meaningful relationship between pocket money of students and their happiness degree.

Table 9: The relationship between the students' pocket money and their happiness

Variable	T –value	Meaningful level
Pocket money and happiness	0.48	0.312

As revealed above, the relationship between the students' pocket money and their happiness was investigated using person's correlation coefficient. It becomes clear that pocket money as an economical variable has no influence on the happiness of the persons. Therefore, such hypothesis is rejected.

There is a meaningful relationship between the father's job and students' happiness.

Table 10: The relation between fathers' job and student's happiness.

Father's job	Average	F – value	Meaningful level	
Happiness	Free job	2.49	0.987	0.425
	Employee	2.42		
	Worker	2.32		
	Unemployed	2.14		
	retired	2.45		

The father's job is regarded as a variable by which the social and economic condition of the family is investigated. The above table shows the examination of such hypothesis by use of biased variance analysis. Because P-value is 0/425, there is no meaningful relationship between the two variables. Therefore, such hypothesis is not confirmed.

There is a meaningful relationship between the mother's job and the students' happiness

Table 11: The relationship between the mothers' job and the students' happiness.

Mother's job	Average	F – value	Meaningful level
Happiness	Employee	0.271	0.896
	Housekeeper		
	retired		

From the above table, this is to say that there is no meaningful relationship between the two variables and such hypothesis is rejected.

There is a meaningful relationship between the fathers' educational degree and students' happiness.

Table 12: The relationship between the fathers' educational degree and the students' happiness.

Variable	Correlation	Meaningful level
Father's educational – happiness	0.001	0.978

Table 13: The relationship between the father's educational degree and the students' happiness.

Variable	t- value	Meaningful level
Mother's educational degree – happiness	0.018	0.706

As shown in the above, there is no meaningful relationship between such variables because meaningfulness level is 0/978. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. There is a meaningful relationship between the mother's educational degree and the students' happiness.

Due to the table above, the relationship between the mother's educational degree and the students' happiness has been investigated. Results show that there is no meaningful relationship between the two variables. Therefore, such hypothesis is rejected.

There is a meaningful relationship between the artistic activities and the students' happiness.

Table 14: The relationship between the artistic activities and the students' happiness.

Variable	t- value	Meaningful level
Artistic activities and happiness	0.977	0.042

As revealed in the above table, there is a positive and meaningful relation between the two variables. In other words, the students are more happy when they do more artistic activities.

There is a meaningful relationship between athletic activities and the students' happiness

Table 15: The relation between doing athletic activities and the students' happiness.

Variable	t- value	Meaningful level
Athletic value – happiness	0.789	0.023

As shown in the table above, there is a meaningful and positive relationship between the two variables. In other words, the students are more happy when they do more athletic activities. Therefore, such hypothesis is accepted.

There is a meaningful relationship between religious activities and the students' happiness.

Table 16. The relationship between religious activities and the students' happiness.

Variable	t- value	Meaningful level
Religious activities – happiness	0.089	0.044

As revealed in the table, there is a positive and meaningful relationship between the two variables. In other words, students are more happy when they do more religious activities. Therefore, such hypothesis is accepted.

There is a meaningful relationship between gender and the students' happiness

Table 17: The relationship between gender and the students' happiness

Gender	Average	Standard deviation	t- value	Meaningful level
happiness	Male	2.51	0.208	0.000
	Female	2.42		

Based on the above table, there is a meaningful difference between the two variables. In other words, the males are more happy in comparison to the females.

Therefore, such hypothesis is accepted.

4. Conclusion

Descriptive results relative to the examination of happiness revealed that about %50 of the students enjoyed from acceptable happiness, about %45 were extremely happy and %5 had low degree of happiness.

Gender is a demographic variable investigated in all scientific researches, because although the social, economical and cultural conditions relative to both the males and the females are the same, there is always a difference between them. Due to the results, the male students are always happier than the females and it is because of some socio cultural reasons. Ostalo concluded that the female's students are usually depressed.

The parents' educational degree is one of the main socio cultural variables related to the students' happiness, but results show that the students' happiness is not affected by such variable. In reality, it is hypothesized that the parents having higher educational degree can prepare better situations in which their children are happy; but such hypothesis was not accepted. Religion is another cultural variable which can influence on the human life. In other words, the persons' life is usually affected by their religion. But it became clear that there is no meaningful relationship between the two variables. Sharm & Keshavarz argued that religion affects on the persons' happiness.

The parents' job is another main variable which affects on the students' socio economical life. Due to the results, the students whose fathers are jobless are always depressed. On the other hand, those having employed mothers are always happy. Economic variable or economic capital is the key elements which has influence on the quality of life. Regarding the role of pocket money, it is necessary to investigate its effect on the persons' happiness. According to the results, there is no meaningful relationship between the two variables. Today, researchers pay attention to how the students expend their leisure time. Researchers have divided the way of expending leisure time into 4 types: (a) cultural activities (e.g. studying), (b) artistic activities, (c) religious activities and (d) athletic activities. Results show that about %20 of the students do none of such activities. Undoubtedly, doing athletic activities influences mainly on the psychological and physical health. Therefore, it is necessary to make clear which factors cause

the persons to abandon such activities. Furthermore, there is a positive and meaningful relationship between doing such activities and the students' happiness.

In this study, the persons were asked to what extent they were satisfied with their leisure time. Results showed that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between the two variables. In other words, the more satisfaction from leisure time, the more students will be happy. Results of regression test revealed that doing cultural activities has most influence on the students' happiness.

Suggestion

- About half of the world's population is women. The women play a key role in the development of the society. Since the results of the study show that the girls are less happy than the boys, it is important to make clear the factors affecting on.
- Due to the results, athletic, cultural, religious and artistic activities affect positively on the students' happiness. Unfortunately, about %20 of the students do none of these activities. In other words, such issue should be clearly studied in order to plan the youth's leisure time.

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