

Studying the Relationship and Impact of Personality on Happiness among Successful Students and Other Students

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ABSTRACT

The aim of present research is to study the relationship between personality dimension and happiness among students. In this research, various aspects of students' personality and its relationship with happiness is studied by using Big-5 and MBTI models and Oxford random and ordered sample from 310 tests by T tests, correlation and regression analysis in SPSS16 software. The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between all personality dimension and happiness. Extraversion followed by neuroticism has the highest correlation with happiness. The results of regression analysis show that about 45% of happiness changes are predicted by personality dimensions and neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, feeling and judicative have the highest impact in forecasting students' happiness, respectively. However, three variables including agreeableness, openness and sensationism did not show a significant relation to depended variable. In the meantime, the results of t test show that students who are considered more successful in their education have less happiness than other students.

KEYWORDS: Happiness, personality, success.

INTRODUCTION

What is happiness? What does make life beautiful? What do we need to be happy?

It is more two thousand years that philosophers are thinking to such questions. Plato and Aristotle in the past and recently Marcus ad followers of Frankfort School are among the most important authors who have studied the philosophical history of happiness and the ways to achieve it (Galati and Manzano, 2008).

Aristotle believes that the most important prosperity of human is to enjoy a well and nice life; in a good community, all elements bless. Happiness is a modern term as the translation of Greek Eudemonia which is used to describe a good life (Gavin and Mason, 2004).

In his ethics, Aristotle links "good life" to "happiness" and says that good life is not only resulted from beauties and external goodness but also form human inner personality. Even, he describes beauty life on the basis of human inner traits.

According to Aristotle, happiness refers to individual's personality adaptation to his/her environment (Hornung, 2006).

Although there is long literature on happiness, psychological and social scientists have recently interested in this issue. The first scientific studies were conducted in 1960 and 1970s when several US distinguished psychologists and sociologists tried to identified happiness indicators by inspiration of matured ideas during Cultural Revolution (Galati and Manzano, 2008).

Recently, happiness is restudied by positive psychology. The aim of positive psychology movement is to help people to accept and enjoy human life. They attempt to help people to achieve actual happiness in their daily life (Gavin and Mason, 2004).

They say that looking for happiness is innate. This kind of psychology focuses on human character flexibility. It is generally accepted that although situational elements (age, income, health, marriage) impact on individuals' perception of happiness, happiness is finally an innate (mental) phenomenon along with inner feelings, opinions, perceptions and evaluations of situation which are more important than situation itself (Elliott and Coker, 2010).

However, the main question is that why some are people happier than others?

Along with certain reasons based on social networks, marital status, age, leisure, job, life style, political security and individual growth (Argyle, 1997), there are decisive evidences which show that individual differences on the extent of happiness and unhappiness can be used as sustainable inner indicators to predict; there are paramount studies which indicate that many people are happier and more satisfied than others irrespective of life conditions (Rammstedt, 2007). This realty that some people are happier than others show that temperament factors guarantees happiness experience (Duncan, 2010).

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Today, it is believed that personality traits predict happiness to 50%. It shows that 50% of personality traits are genetic. A study on 1000 twins proves this idea (Hosie, 2009). As Hans Eysenck emphasize, happiness is sustainable extraversion (Chamorro and Bennett, 2007).

Happiness meaning

Happiness meaning has changed over time and its translation to other languages is a complicated problem. Since 16 centuries ago, in previous registered samples in Oxford English dictionary, happiness is meant chance and success and desired feelings. In Webster encyclopedia, happiness is defined as: "happiness is a good chance tool fortunate, enjoy, satisfaction, compatibility, suitability and cheerfulness and well-being. The source of English term is "hap" which mean prosperity rooted in the Middle English term "happ". Happiness is the possibility to feel, express and perceive feelings fully (Barak, 2006).

Howard Mumford says: "happiness belongs to a group of terms which anyone knows their meaning but no one can define them; although happiness has different meanings for different people, there is concurrence that it is a broad term" (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006).

Mental well-being is defined as a set of positive internal experiences and as the highest satisfaction and "at most motivator" for all human behaviors which is fascinated by many psychologists during past decades (Lu and Kao, 2001).

Layard defines happiness as "having a good feeling, enjoying the life and demanding the sustainability of such feeling" (Duncan, 2010). Hohler (1996) believes that happiness is the plausibility and compatibility with self existential conditions. This points out fully to inner aspect of happiness (Hornang, 2006).

However, a definition which is accepted more than other ones is provided by Diner et al. (1991). They preferred to use subjective well-being label for their definition. According to them, happiness is a combination of life satisfaction and a balance between positive and negative feelings (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006).

Happiness aspects

In analyzing happiness concept, theorists point further to affect and cognition. Affective theory emphasizes on moods and emotions more.

Six main affects are identified and defined by Ekman in 1992: anger, hate, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise and wonder. In cognitive theory, life satisfaction aspects are also more emphasized (Stewart and Watson, 2010). In this theory, it is believed that happy people experience the phenomena more desired and favorable than others. It means that they consider even neutral phenomena as very positive. In fact, people are able to increase their happiness by controlling their thoughts.

Overall, happiness consists of three main components: perceiving life satisfaction, positive feelings and non-negative feelings (Vitterso, 2001). The first components points out cognition and other two components emphasize on affects.

One can say that happiness is multidimensional structure. Some scales of happiness emphasize on affect and other on cognition. The remained ones are mixed and provide an overall scale of happiness. Regarding the mixed scale, Oxford scale is considered as the best one.

Happiness psychology

Central nervous system is not closed system and relates to both spatial and biological variables. Its correlation with well-being to determine two methods of favorable feelings is important: these two types of well-being are Eudemonic and Hedonic (Barak, 2006).

Eudemonic is in principle a concept of psycho and personal growth while Hedonic relates to such positive feelings as triumph and satisfaction. One can say that Eudemonic relates directly to happiness genetic determinants while hedonic shows objective social conditions further (Demir and Ozdemir, 2010). In present study, the focus is on eudemonic since the study has considered personality as a strong predictor for happiness.

Happiness models

Three conceptual models are proposed as the determinants of happiness: 1. Personality model, 2. a model based on assessing the impacts of life events, 3. Environment adaptive model.

Personality model considers happiness as a sustainable trait based on individual's personality and, on this basis, introduces various traits as happiness predictors.

Life events model states that the extent of individuals' happiness can be changed for some people overtime. Therefore, both negative and positive events play a vital role in changing the happiness. Adaptive model claims that people adopt with circumstances rapidly even with disastrous events which effect on happiness (Lu, 1997). A question arises is that which above models are considered as the best happiness determinants?

Regarding adaptive model, it is said agreeableness is an aspect of Big-5 model and agreeable people have such traits as philanthropy, adaptability, empathy, tendency to trust and avoiding conflicts (Tallman, 2008) which are introduced as the grounds for happy activities.

Personality, happiness and success

There are many evidences which show that one can categorize all personality dimensions as Big-5 model including neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness (Burke, 2006). Costa and McCrae (1986) point that such factors are used in many studies and are introduced as a broad scale (Berbner, 2001).

Along with Big-5 model, one of the most applicable tools to describe personality is MBTI which roots in Jung psychology. Carol Gustav Jung was a Swiss psychologist in the middle 20th century and generated an old psychological pattern theory which claims that people differ from each other; Jung's theory was paid attention by Myers and Briggs (Brown, 2008).

As mentioned, personality is introduced as one of the strongest happiness predictors. Paramount studies have tried to find that how personality impacts on happiness. Many researches (Cheng and Furham, 2003; Argyle, 1997; Lu Shih, 1997; Berbner, 2001; Vitterso, 2001; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005, 2008) show that extraversion and neuroticism are two personality traits which can create a significant variance on happiness.

After revising evidences, Argyle and Martin Lu (1995) concluded that extraverts are happier than other (Lu, 1997, 250). Extraverts control their social relations further and quicker and expand their positive feelings more than negative ones (Berbner, 2001). Researches show neuroticism decreases through soaring negative feelings. Also, findings indicate that neuroticism relates to mental health reduction while extraversion relates to health promotion (Lu, 1997).

In the meantime, in studies in which extraversion and emotional stability (versus neuroticism) is addressed as independent happiness predictor, the role of emotional stability is more important than extraversion. For example, in their paper, Costa and McCrae (1980) proposed a model on the relationship between positive/negative feelings and extraversion and neuroticism. Their researches show that after 10 years, neuroticism shows a high correlation with negative feelings while extraversion expresses a medium correlation with positive feeling (Vilterso, 2001).

As the records of above studies on personality and happiness show, all conducted researches have been based on Big-5 model. Present study attempts to provide a fuller model on evaluating students' personality as a strong happiness predictor by a mixed scale from above model and Myers and Briggs model.

As mentioned, happy people are gregarious, extravert, have positive feelings about themselves, and are self-dominated with high emotional stability, dynamic, energetic and less neuroticism. Such attitudes can lead into self-efflorescence and cause that happy people experience more positive events and have more fruitful social relations which all guarantee their success (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).

Many researches show that happy people are successful in various aspects of life such as marriage, friendship, education, income, job performance and health. Now, this question arises that why does happiness relate to success?

Lyubomirsky et al. (2006) believe that the reason is not only the fact that success creates happiness but also is the fact that positive feelings and happiness cause success.

Affects, mental status and feelings motivate people to think, feel and behave in a manner which both establishes resources for them and also achieves their aims (Boehm and Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Diner et al. (1991) found that happy people often experience positive mental feelings and moods. In fact, it seems those people who report high happiness level enjoy high positive feelings. For example, in a study by Diner including international sample of 7,000 students in 41 nationalities, it was found that those people who have said that they were happy in their life feel success and enjoyment in more than a half of their life. One of the most important reasons of happy individuals' propensity to continuous positive feelings is that happiness relates to sensitivity to spatial incentives. In means that they possess a more reactive behavioral approach system and, more likely, they move toward such incentive condition rather than moving away such conditions (fascination law) (Lyubomirsky, 2005). Successfulness means to perform works that are valuable in individual's culture and such values are introduced based on a set of goals devised by individual's community. In present study, students' success indices are introduced by Science Ministry. According to Ministry's definition, a successful student is someone who is superior to other students in terms of scientific and cultural traits as well as respecting students' requirements. Scientific traits include training and research activities. Cultural traits include all social, political, athletic, artistic and literal activities. Students' requirements are to respect ethical law and rules as well religious beliefs.

Research objective

1. Studying the relationship between personality aspects and happiness among students
2. Measuring happiness among successful and other students
3. Measuring happiness among male and female students
4. Studying the happiness impact on students' happiness

METHODOLOGY

This is a periodical study and it is an applied research in terms of its goal and is descriptive and survey one in term of methodology.

Its population include all undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate students in University of Tehran (Pardis Qom) in five training groups namely laws, management, theology, Arab literature/languages and philosophy during 2010 - 2011 educational year. Therefore, the sample includes 310 male and female students of this university. The sample volume is determined by Cohen's sample volume decision-making model and Krejcie and Morgan as well as random sampling method among all educational levels (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample Volume Model

Gender Educational level	Female	Male	Total
Undergraduate	137	70	207
Graduate	34	44	78
Postgraduate	4	21	25
Total	175	135	310

Research tools: to investigate personality aspects, mixed scale from two Big-5 and MBTI models is used which measure neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, feelings and affects, sensationism and judgment.

The validity of the questionnaire is confirmed by opinions of 12 elites. The reliability of the questionnaire was computed as 85% by using alpha test and distributing it among 30 students.

Oxford's happiness questionnaire was used to measure the happiness extent. Answers were categorized in Likert scale from a little happy to very happy.

Oxford's happiness questionnaire is devised to measure individuals' overall happiness and supports Bek's depression questionnaire. It uses some options reversely and some supplementary options to measures mental well-being and inner happiness. Higher grades in this questionnaire show more happiness. This questionnaire is broadly used in UK and USA as an intercultural comparison. There are many translations of this questionnaire and the results indicate its high validity and reliability (Stewart and Watson, 2010).

In present research, the study used the opinions of 12 elites to measure the reliability of questionnaire which indicate high validity. To determine reliability, the questionnaire was distributed among 30 students of all educational levels. Its alpha chronbach was 90% which showed high reliability of the questionnaire.

RESULTS

Based on the initial aim of present study, "studying the relationship between personality aspects and happiness among students" was conducted by Pearson's correlation test and SPSS16 software. Table 2 indicates that the correlation between all aspects of personality and happiness is significant ($\alpha < 5\%$). Among personality aspects, extraversion by a correlation coefficient (0.507) has the highest correlation with happiness followed by neuroticism (0.484) in negative direction. Conscientiousness is another personality aspect with a high correlation coefficient (0.514) to students' happiness.

Table 2. Pearson's correlation coefficient.

	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Conscientiousness	Agreeableness	Openness	Feelings and affects	Sensationism	Judgment	Happiness
Neuroticism	1								
Extraversion	-0.372	1							
Conscientiousness	-0.172	0.369	1						
Agreeableness	-0.085	0.462	0.351	1					
Openness	-0.249	0.496	0.361	0.361	1				
Feelings and affects	-0.030	0.275	0.248	0.296	0.176	1			
Sensationism	-0.0126	0.400	0.382	0.328	0.352	0.215	1		
Judgment	-0.152	0.272	0.268	0.257	0.35	0.192	0.324	1	
Happiness	-0.484	0.507	0.415	0.265	0.318	0.271	0.329	0.332	1

All coefficients are significant in confidence level 0.95

In which testing groups does happiness fall and is there a significant difference on these variables between two successful and other students? Results indicate that happiness average among successful students (2.3534) is less than other students (2.7306). The results of t test show that the difference between successful students and other students is significant in $\alpha < \%5$ (sig = 0.000). One can say that other students are happier than successful ones. The results of the third aim of the research namely to study the impact of gender on students' happiness indicate that happiness average in female students (2.4667) is higher than males (2.3882). This is a trivial difference. The result of t test showed that in $\alpha < \%5$, there is no significance difference between male and female students. Therefore, one can judge that there is a relationship between gender and happiness.

A linear regression test was used to study the impacts of personality aspects on students' happiness.

According to Table 3, almost 45% of happiness changes are predicted by personality aspect and remained 55% is affected by factors such as health, age, social networks, marital status, political security, personal growth and other factors in the literature which are out of our regression equation.

Table 3. Model description.

Model	Correlation coefficient	Determination coefficient	Mitigated coefficient	correlation	Standard error of estimate
1	0.669	0.447	0.430		0.40086

ANOVA table is drawn to examine the certainty of a linear relationship between personality and happiness. As Table 4 shows, significant is less than 5%. Therefore, the assumption of the linear relationship between personality variables and happiness is confirmed. It shows that regression model has been able to enounce the changes in happiness dependant variable.

Table 4. ANOVA.

Model	Squares total	Squares average	F	Sig
Regression	2.294	4.162		
Remained	41.136	0.161	25.900	0.000
Total	74.430			

Coefficient table shows that based on t test significance level, agreeableness, openness and sensationism do not have a significant relationship with depended variable and are eliminated from the equation. As seen in table 5, emotional stability versus neuroticism has the highest impact on students' happiness followed by extraversion, conscientiousness, affects and judgment.

Table 5. The Impacts on students' happiness

Model	Sub-standardized changes		standardized changes	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	0.618	0.151		4.084	0.000
Neuroticism	0.212	0.032	- 0.340	6.613	0.000
conscientiousness	0.147	0.044	0.184	3.330	0.001
Agreeableness	- 0.022	0.055	- 0.022	- 0.403	0.687
Openness to experience	- 0.016	0.038	- 0.024	- 0.429	0.668
Affects and feelings	0.131	0.051	0.130	2.592	0.010
Sensationism	0.062	0.049	0.070	1.280	0.202
Judgment	0.091	0.041	0.116	2.239	0.026
Extraversion	0.184	0.048	0.241	3.859	0.000

Conclusion

The results of statistical analysis by Pearson correlation test show that there is a correlation between all aspects of personality and happiness. It confirms our first hypothesis. The results of regression analysis show that almost 45% of happiness changes are predicted by personality traits mentioned in this research. This result is fully consonant with previous studies. In regression model, the most significant happiness predictor is affect (against neuroticism) followed by extraversion, conscientiousness, affects and judgment. Agreeableness, openness to experience and sensationism are no so significant happiness predictors.

Conducted analyses on comparing successful students with other students show that happiness average among successful students is less than other students. T test shows this difference as significant. Thus, the hypothesis that successful students are happier would be rejected. In studying the impact of gender on happiness, results indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female students even though comparing the happiness average between male and female students shows that happiness average among female students is higher than male ones.

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