

Happiness and Self esteem among College Students**Jaisri.M*****Research Scholar, Department of psychology,
Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Kerala.****Abstract**

Happiness refers to a state of well being, one of the most cherished goals which individuals as well as societies strive for. Happiness has been associated with a number of individual and societal factors, self esteem being one of the prominent individual factors. The present study investigated happiness and self esteem among college students pursuing different streams of study, including professional courses. The participants (N=500) were selected randomly from different colleges in Trichur and Ernakulam districts of Kerala, and were administered the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. The obtained data were analysed using 't' test, ANOVA and correlation. The results revealed significant differences in happiness between the male and the female students as well as among students pursuing different courses of study. The male students were happier than the females, the students pursuing commerce/management courses had higher happiness levels than the other students while the nursing students reported the lowest level of happiness. Happiness was found to have moderate significant positive correlation with self esteem .

Keywords: Happiness, Self esteem, College students.

Happiness is a mental or emotional state of well being characterised by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. It is a lifelong pursuit and one of the most cherished goals in life. Every individual longs for a happy and contented life. As proposed by Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005), a person's chronic happiness level is governed by three major factors: a genetically determined set point for happiness, happiness-relevant circumstantial factors, and happiness-relevant activities and practices. Wilson (1967) found both personality and demographic factors to be correlated significantly with happiness. He stated that the happy person of is a "young , healthy, well-educated, well paid, extroverted, optimistic, worry free, religious, married individual, having high self esteem, job morale, modest aspirations, and a wide range of intelligence. Cultural differences also make a profound difference in what makes people happy. Diener and Diener 's(1995) study on cultural differences in the relation between subjective well-being and self esteem found stronger relation for people living in individualistic cultures compared to collectivistic cultures. Twenty first century scholars brings out more refined views on happiness, in which there is a blending of eastern philosophy along with wisdom of the western world by focusing research attention on factors such as genetics, neurobiology, contentment, peace, and happiness (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade,2005). Happiness is often defined empirically by direct rating of the people's happiness, long –term balance of positive and negative affect, or life satisfaction(Lyubomirsky,2001).

Self esteem is one of the prominent predictors of happiness. It has a high relation to one's happiness and is often used as an index of global happiness or psychological wellbeing (Baruch & Barnet, 1986). Self esteem is a disposition that a person has, which represents his/her judgment of own worthiness (Olsen, Breckler, & Wiggins, 2008). It exists as a consequence of the implicit judgment that every person has the ability to face life's challenges, to understand and solve problems, and the right to achieve happiness, and to gain respect. The person who has high self respect considers himself valuable, capable, and respectful (Yaratan &Yucesoylu, 2010). In everyday experience, people who feel good about themselves are happy and successful than those who lack self worth and self respect. Empirical evidence reveals moderate to high correlations between measures of happiness and self esteem (Schimmack et al., 2004). Life satisfaction, happiness, healthy behavioural practices, perceived efficacy, and academic success and adjustment have been associated with having high levels of self esteem (Michaels, Barr, Roosa , & Knight, 2007).

Many researchers state that people are happier in their youth and old happier than in middle age. There are changes inside of the individual with age that affect happiness. This could be due to

various reasons, the major role being played by the psychological, social and biological changes that come with age. Midlife crisis faces a drop in happiness during the average human's life. Erol and Orth (2011) found that self esteem increases moderately through adolescence and continue to increase in young adulthood though at a slower rate. Diener (2008) in his various cross cultural studies has noted that college students all over the world rated happiness and life satisfaction as very important . Attaining happiness in life appeared to be an almost universal human goal. Yan, Su and Zhu (2012) reported an association between core self- evaluation, life satisfaction and subjective happiness in Chinese college students. Jones, You and Furlong (2013), in their study on positive psychological correlates among college students, observed various positive psychology constructs like optimism, self-efficacy, gratitude, and life satisfaction to be positively associated with optimal human functioning and negatively associated with mental illness. Though there has been numerous studies on happiness and its correlates among different life stages in the west, few studies have been undertaken in this area in eastern countries, especially in underdeveloped countries. The present study focuses on happiness and self esteem among college students pursuing different educational programmes, including professional courses and non professional.

The major objectives of the study were:

- To find out whether there are significant genders differences in happiness and self esteem among college students.
- To find out whether there are significant differences in happiness and self esteem among college students pursuing different educational programmes.
- To examine the relationship between happiness and self esteem among college students.

Method

Participants

The participants for the study consisted of college students (N=500) undergoing different undergraduate and postgraduate educational programmes in medicine, engineering, nursing, arts / science, and commerce / management (100 participants from each programme). They were randomly selected from various colleges in Trichur and Ernakulam districts of Kerala state. The age of the students ranged from 17 to 25 years.

Tools*Personal Data Sheet*

A personal data sheet was used to collect information on relevant socio- demographic characteristics of the participants like age, participation in co-curricular activities, course of study, and the like.

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ)

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire developed by Hills and Argyle (2002) was used to measure the happiness of the students. This is a 29 item questionnaire measuring the general psychological causes of happiness including its main components like achievement and satisfaction, enjoyment, vigour and health. Each item is responded on a six- point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The sum of the item scores is an overall measure of happiness, a higher score indicating greater happiness. It has a test- retest reliability coefficient of .79 and an alpha of .93. It also has good construct validities as demonstrated in various studies.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSE)

The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale developed by Rosenberg (1965) was used to measure the self esteem of the students. It is a self report measure of global self esteem. The 10- items scale is answered on a four- point likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The items 3,5,8,9,10 have reverse scores. The score ranges from 0-30, a higher score indicating higher self esteem. The scale has high reliability coefficients; test-retest correlations are in the range .82 to .88, and Cronbach's alpha for various samples are in the range of .77 to .88. The scale is reported to have high criterion and construct validities.

Procedure

The randomly selected students were met individually and after getting their informed consent, the tools were given to them and were allowed to complete the questionnaires at leisure. The collected data were analyzed using the statistical techniques of 't' test, one -way ANOVA, Duncan multiple range test and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Results and Discussion

The mean and the standard deviation of the scores obtained by the male and the female college students in happiness and self esteem, and the corresponding 't' values are given in Table 1. From the table, it can be seen that there is significant difference between the male and the female college students in happiness, the male students being happier than their female counterparts. Though there is a change in the present youth culture, the traditional values are deep rooted. Indian parents reserve the freedom of girl children especially college going children as compared to the boys. Despite the advancements and changes that have occurred in our socio-cultural milieu, women often feel insecure in the present society. Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) observed that, by many objective measures the lives of women in the United States have improved over the past 35 years, yet the measures of subjective well-being indicate that women's happiness has declined both absolutely and relatively to men. Bitsika, Sharpley, and Melhamv (2010) in an investigation of 200 university students in Austria found that symptoms of fatigue, anxiety and insomnia were more prevalent among female students than in male students. Women are more likely than men to fulfil their goals earlier in life, increasing their life satisfaction and overall happiness. However, later in life, men fulfil their goals, are more satisfied with family life and financial situations and, as a result their overall happiness surpasses that of women (Plagnol & Easterlin,2008).

Table 1

The mean and the standard deviation of the scores obtained by the male and female college students in happiness and self esteem and the corresponding 't' values

Variables	Male (N=180)		Female (N=320)		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Happiness	117.81	12.46	115.39	11.97	2.11*
Self esteem	20.82	4.18	20.49	3.61	.884

*P<.05

In the case of self esteem, there is no significant difference between the male and the female college students, indicating that the overall orientation towards oneself or one's value and worth does not differ gender wise. The study by Slavko and Dean (1991) reported similar results wherein the graduate and the post graduate students did not differ gender wise on self esteem. Merlene and Thomas (2009) also found that self esteem of students is independent of their gender.

Students pursuing different streams of courses may have differences in their personality, aptitude, interests, values and aspirations. Naturally these may have reflections on their levels of happiness and self esteem. In the present study the differences among the five groups of students in happiness and self esteem have been tested by computing one-way analysis of variance, and in cases where significant differences were obtained, multiple comparisons of the mean scores were further made using Duncan's multiple range test.

Table 2

Results of the one way ANOVA for happiness and self esteem among the five student groups

Educational programmes					
Variables		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Happiness	Between Groups	3352.792	4	838.198	5.85**
	Within Groups	70898.360	495	143.229	
	Total	74251.152	499		
Self esteem	Between Groups	57.58	4	14.397	.983
	Within Groups	7253.140	495	14.653	
	Total	7310.728	499		

**P<.01

The results of the one-way ANOVA for happiness by the college students undergoing different educational programmes is presented in Table 2. From the table, it is clear that there are significant differences between the five groups of students in happiness. This indicates that the students pursuing different educational programmes differ in their levels of happiness. This may be due to the influence of the nature of the course, the institutional environment, student's attitude, aptitude or interests and other precipitating factors. To know which group differs significantly from the others on happiness, multiple comparisons of the mean scores of the groups were made (Table3).

Table 3

Duncan's test for happiness and educational programmes

Educational Programmes	N	1	2	3
Nursing	100	111.77		
Bachelors/Masters of Arts	100		115.51	
Engineering	100		116.77	116.77
Medicine	100		117.84	117.84
Bachelor/Master of commerce	100			119.43
Sig		1.000	.196	.139

The results of the multiple comparisons (Table 3) show that the commerce/management students have the highest level of happiness followed by the medical, engineering, arts and nursing students. The nursing students have the lowest level of happiness which is significantly different from that of all the other groups. There are significant differences between the commerce, arts, and nursing students also. However, the difference of the engineering and medical students with that of the arts and commerce students are not significant. This indicates that the nature of the study program or course,

may be due to their inherent stress and demands, do influence the happiness experienced by the students. The nursing students have significantly lower levels of happiness than all the other student groups. This may be due to the special nature of their training programme, which largely involves providing care for the ailing people. They have to encounter people in pain and distress, often being the first to attend to them. Their constant interaction with ailing, distressed and even dying patients may hinder their feelings of happiness. Shojaei, Ebrahimi, Yekta and Nasrababi (2012) in their study on happiness and mental health in nursing students found only 12 percent of students happy and senior nursing students were less cheerful. Jafari (2004) ,in an investigation of the amount of happiness and the elements affecting among students of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences found that 78 percent of students had high amount of happiness and the rest of students had medium amount of happiness. Abedini , Dava , Sahbaei , Mahmoudi , and Safa (2007) in an investigation of depression prevalence in 190 nursing and medical students of Hormozgan Medical University showed that depression prevalence in nursing students was 60 percent and in medical students was 49.5 percent.

The results with regard to self esteem indicated no significant difference among the five groups of students. The students on the whole do not lack self esteem and are content with what they are doing. It could be because they are young and energetic, having sufficient support and have to face relatively less difficulties in life. Their attention and focus is currently on academic accomplishments which them a feeling of high self esteem.

The coefficient of correlation obtained between happiness and self esteem for the whole group of students, revealed moderate significant positive correlation ($r=.22$, $P<.05$). The students having high self worth and self respect are happier than those lacking self worth and self value or vice versa. High self esteem and self worth increases academic achievement which increases student motivation to attain their goals. It is only when students engage in personally meaningful endeavours for which they can be proud of that self confidence grows and this growing self-assurance, in turn, triggers further achievement and happiness (Timothy , Sheldon , & Norman, 2001). Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs (2003) also found that high self esteem correlates highly with self- reported happiness . Ryff(1989) concluded that the most recurrent criterion for positive well-being has been the individual's sense of self acceptance or self esteem, and self esteem is often used as an index of global happiness.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study clearly reveals the impact of self esteem on happiness, this implies the need for enriching the esteem of the youth which ultimately brings happiness in them. The difference in happiness among youth pursuing different educational programmes call for attention towards the need for designing programmes that may help to alleviate the adverse impacts of the various stresses encountered by them, especially in professions like nursing. Comparatively lower levels of happiness among the female students, points to the need for taking societal measures for boosting happiness in our young women adults.

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