

Happiness: A Literature Review of Cross Cultural Implications.
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To explain happiness, what it means, where it stands in psychology and mental health, and what effects it, let us start with a study by Seligman. Seligman (1998) reports that for the treatment of an illness, just fixing the broken part is not sufficient. Rather, the inner parts have to be cared for to be able to go through a complete treatment process. In addition, he reports that the mission of psychology which is improving the lives of people and nurturing seems to have both been forgotten, instead, there seems to be too much focus on what he labels as victimology.

Mainstream psychology, with a variety of specialties, seem to have geared more toward dysfunction and problems rather than healthy emotions and well functioning. However, there are a few people in the area of psychology that are more concerned with human's prosperity and people feeling good or functioning well (Argyle, 1987; Bradburn, 1969).

Huppert (2005) reports that a detailed look at the reasons behind this neglect of the well being rather than the focus on dysfunction indicates that most parts of psychology seem to have been affected by the Western medical model of health which is the absence of disease and the definition that good functioning is the absence of dysfunction. Huppert (2005) further indicates that this view of dysfunction is even more obvious in neuropsychology which understands and defines normal functioning of the brain by studying the brain disorders. While there is no doubt that much can be learned by this approach but it can neglect the underlying mechanism of above average or exceptional performances. Likewise, in the field of mental health and psychology, research on negative emotions like fear, depression, and anger have little revealing information on positive emotions like love, happiness, and contentment.

To discuss what happiness is and why it is important, when it comes to feeling good, happiness comes more easily to the mind. Cohen (2002) reports that happiness is a constructive notion and is essential in upholding a healthy life style. Diener and Diener (2008) report eight recognized elements of true psychological wealth: Life contentment and happiness, spirituality and having a meaningful life, affirmative mind set and emotions, loving social relationships, taking on fulfilling activities and work, moral values and principals and having life goals to attain them, physical and mental health, and material satisfaction to meet needs.

To refer to the definition of happiness, happiness' predictors and definitions have been somehow neglected until recently (Argyle, 2001; Eysenck, 1990; Myers, 1992) even though the major symptoms of unhappiness which are depression and anxiety have been investigated intensely by researchers (Seligman, 1991). But one study that seem to be relevant to the subject of this research is that of Tatarikiewicz (1976) who defines happiness as a sense of overall satisfaction with one's whole life. Other definitions of happiness characterize it as a crucial motivator for humans and a positive internal experience (Lu et al., 2001). Perhaps one of more complete definitions of happiness is the one by Hills and Argyle (200) who reported happiness to be a multidimensional entity consisting of emotional and cognitive parts.

There are different models of defining happiness, but one that seems more relevant to this study may be that of Hayborn (2003) which explains happiness within the context of three points of views: Hedonism, life satisfaction, and affective state theory. Hayborn (2003) explains hedonism as the individual's ability to find mostly pleasure in life as a whole experience. He explains life satisfaction as a personal attitudes toward life in which positive attitude of the total experience of life creates more happiness and he explains the affective state of happiness in relation to the individual's overall emotional state.

Maslow (1970) seems to implicate that life satisfaction and the quality of life are inner connected. When the individual learns to satisfy his or her needs, which are hierarchically organized, and learns to move up the hierarchy, he or she may be able to experience more life satisfaction, better quality of life, and more happiness in life. To briefly refer to Maslow's hierarchy of needs it starts at the basic level of physiological needs (food, water etc), then safety needs (personal and social security related to finance and future), relationship needs (forming healthy relationships with surroundings), esteem needs (outer and inner), and self actualization needs. Maslow reports that gratification of higher needs give people more intense feeling of happiness than gratification of the lower ones.

When it comes to nature vs. nurture's explanation of happiness, studies seem to indicate a combination of both. While there are many studies indicating environment including relationships with caregiver and other surrounding factors to be influential in building happiness, there are other studies indicating the effects of genes. Lykken (2000) reports of twin studies which suggest genes may account for as much as 50% of the variation in happiness trait. It is worth noting, however, that these studies have been criticized in some ways. These criticisms range from the study's assumption that twins experience the same family environment to underestimating the effect of children's behavior on the parent's.

Research indicates that there is a relationship between personality traits and happiness, DeNeve and Cooper (1998) performed a study on a meta-analysis of 137 personality traits and subjective well being. They reported that repressive-defensiveness, emotional stability, locus of control, hardiness, positive affectivity, self-esteem and leisure are more closely related to happiness.

Other study discussing personality traits is that of Costa and McCare (1980) which reports fearfulness, hostility, and impulsivity to be related to lower degrees of happiness while extrovert personality traits like sociability and activity are related to higher degrees of happiness. In addition, Furnham and Cheng (1997) found personality traits like stability, extraversion, and conscientiousness to be significantly related to happiness while Headey, Glowacki, Holmstrom, and Wearing (1985) report that young individuals who are more extrovert are more headed for positive life events and well being.

To further discuss personality trait, Furnham and Cheng (2000a) performed a research with 230 young participants, they measured happiness and its predictors. The study found that optimism, contentment, self esteem, extraversion, and neuroticism were the predictors of happiness. But the emotional aspect of individuals and its relationship to happiness is not as clear cut as personality traits when it comes to studies. When it comes to any type of emotion, Manstead (1991) reports that general perspectives of emotions is that it is rooted in and influenced by social context. Manstead (1991) also reports that there is little research on this topic.

To discuss other predictors of happiness, there are yet other studies that indicate that extraversion is positively related to happiness while neuroticism is negatively related to it (Argyle & Lu, 1990; Furnham & Brewin, 1990; Furnham & Cheng, 1999). Another strong predictor of happiness is reported to be high self esteem (Wilson, 1967). Some researchers consider self esteem to be a component of happiness (Argyle, 2001). For example, Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) compared satisfaction with life satisfaction and reported that satisfaction with the self was the highest correlation with life satisfaction. However, Diener & Diener (1995) found that self esteem was a stronger predictor of life satisfaction in cultures that encourage individualistic traits.

Yet in another study done by Argyle (1987) it is reported that young individuals who are happy, have stronger relationships in their social networking and family relationships. In addition, Herz and Gullone (1999) state that parent-child relationship and the quality in which this relationship manifest itself is a significant influence on long term confidence, resilience and well being of individuals. It is also reported by Argyle and Lu (1990) that social activities are related to happiness.

Hills and Argyle (2001) did a study to find the relationship between happiness and extraversion and emotional stability and found out that happiness is more than one dimensional which consists of both emotional as well as cognitive elements. This study used the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI). The result indicated that emotional stability was more linked with happiness than with extraversion. In addition, the study concludes that emotional stability is related to most of the 29 items of the OHI and the singular predictor of happiness in younger generation. Furthermore, their study indicates people who are worried a lot and experience a lot of anxiety are less happy than people who tend to be calm and in control.

In a study performed by Webster (1998), 99 community living older adults completed a series of questions related to attachment styles (RQ), reminiscence functions (RFS), and happiness (MUNSH). Results of this study indicate that both age and attachment styles have a relationship with happiness. When it comes to age, the older the age, the higher the happiness. When it comes to attachment style, secure and dismissive attachments are related to happier states. Webster further indicate in this study that older adults with positive view of self are happier than those who have a negative view of themselves. One reason for this, according to Webster, may be that if one views attachment figures as supportive and loving and oneself as worthy of that kind of love, happiness is pre-disposed in that individual. Webster reports, "Feeling independent and in control may bolster self esteem and related concepts such as happiness" (p. 322). In addition, there are other studies that indicate a relationship with parents having a direct relationship with happiness (Cheng & Furnham, 2003).

Marin and Marin's study (1991) indicates attachment to family as a protector of individual against physical and emotional stress which leads to unhappiness. There are a number of studies supporting that there is a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and happiness Glenn, 1975; Glenn & Weaver, 1979a, 1979b; Glenn & Weaver, 1988; Hamilton & Wright, 1986).

Diener and Diener (2008) state that some studies indicate that married people report more happiness than single ones. However, the question of whether people profit from marriage depends largely on ones unique personality and the circumstances of life. Therefore, it is different for different individuals.

The impact of social status cannot be underestimated when considering any kind of emotions (Parkinson & Manstead, 1992) including happiness. An individual's ethnicity and social status among other things can influence how one experiences and expresses emotions while in the process of interacting with others. There also seems to be differences on how people of different cultures focus on an emotion. For example, studies of happiness performed cross culturally (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Triandis, Marin, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984) reported that Hispanic and European American cultures have a tendency to focus on good feelings. Heine et al (1999) further reports that people with these cultural backgrounds tend to participate in more self enhancing activities. Hispanics and European Americans tend to rate pleasant feelings as more attractive than unpleasant ones (Diener,

Scollon, Oishi, Dzokoto, & Suh, 2000; Diener & Suh, 1999). On the other hand, people from Asian cultures tend to focus on pleasant and unpleasant feelings equally (Diener & Suh, 1999).

When it comes to cultural difference and emotions and happiness, Christie, Scollon, Eiener, Oishi, & Biener (2004) also found that there are cultural differences in pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Furthermore, they found that European Americans and Hispanics indicated the highest rank of pleasant emotions and lowest of unpleasant ones while Asian Americans, Japanese, and Indians ranked lower in pleasant feelings and higher in unpleasant ones. The nature of why that was founded was not reported in this study.

In yet another study, Gundelach and Kreiner (2004) compared happiness with life satisfaction between nine industrialized countries. The study indicated a link between these two but also pointed out that these are not the same concepts. The study reported that contextual as well as individual variables are important factors in determining variations in these two concepts. Having a stable relationship with the country of residence, social capital, and country characteristics predicted happiness while feeling of control in the country of residence was related more to life satisfaction.

One of the arguments of happiness and life satisfaction is that while economy by itself is not a social goal but it is a mean for reaching other goals which ultimately contributes to a feeling of well being. Economy can allow individual and as a result the society to live a fuller life. With money hospitals can be built, schools can be developed and so on and so forth. Campbell, converse and Rodgers (1979) reported that despite the fact tht there has been economic growth, some countries like the United States of America are not lacking social problems as one may expect.

Other reports done by Lane (2000) and Frey and Stutzer (2002) indicate that happiness is not related to rising economy and income in rich countries. In sum, Lane (2000) and Frey and Stutzer (2002) obtained identical results in their study. These studies looked at happiness as a subjective well being. While Argyle (1999) indicated that happiness is positively related to socioeconomic status in ethnic minorities living in USA. He further indicated that age and happiness are related.

It has been stated that culture is an important component of happiness (Lu & Shih, 1997). Lu et al., in press performed a study comparing the East and the West and their culture dependent and culture general effects on happiness. They found that social integration and human heartedness led to happiness in Chinese but not for British. In the meantime, both cultures found work related values as related to happiness. Therefore, it could be possible that there are other variables influencing happiness in a collectivist culture system.

Looking more into the cross cultural viewpoint and the concept of self esteem which was explained before, Marku and Kitayam (1991, 1994) report that people from diverse cultures have a variety of views of the self, of others, and the relationship that exist between this self, other, the society they live in. These researchers classify this relationship into independent and interdependent views of self. An independent view of the self is rooted within a belief in the wholeness and separateness of each individual's pattern of inner characteristics. This explanation places more importance on self actualization, self realization, each individual being unique when it comes to satisfying one's needs, and unleashing ones potentials. This is a typical Western definition of the self which places focus within the individual. An interdependent view of the self is rooted in individual being connected with others and being interdependent. This view places more importance on fitting in, being a part of, fulfilling obligations to others, part of a social unit. This view is more typical of the Easter view of the self which focuses more on

social relationships rather than individual's inner unique characteristics. It is also worth mentioning that these two systems can co exist in many individuals. For example, Mishra (1994) reported that Indians who were young, highly educated tended to be less collectivist and more individualistic than the norm of the population

Again, when it comes to cross cultural definition of happiness, Diener and Diener (2008) report that college students from around the globe including Brazil, Turkey, USA, Iran, India, Japan, and China report happiness to be very important. They further report that Iranian college students report happiness to be 7.8 on a scale of 9 in which 1 is not important and 9 is extremely important. For the Iranian college student, love seems to be the most important value with 8.1 points, following by happiness with 7.8 points, then heaven with 7.9 points, wealth with 7.0 points, and looks with 6 points.

Another study indicating culture and happiness is performed by Oishi (in press) which seems to suggest that when it comes to happiness Asians may favor composed and contented happiness, while Westerner favor more stimulated and activated happiness.

A report by Gallup Organization and Gallup World Survey (2006) reported that on a scale of 0 to 10 for life satisfaction, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Belgium, and Sweden had the highest scores ranging in order from 8 to 7.4. And Togo, Chad, Benin, Georgia, Cambodia, Zimbabwe, Haiti, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Ethiopia had the lowest scores ranging from 3.2 to 3.8 in order.

Diener and Diener (2008) report that low income; political instability, major health concerns, government corruption, and human right problems may contribute greatly to people's unhappiness. These researchers report that supportive societies and governments are crucial for individual's happiness.

Diener and Marissa (1995) did a study that indicated self esteem to be more important in cultures that have a more individualistic view than in others. Suh, Diener, Updegraff (In press) reported that the activities that direct one toward happiness seem to differ in different cultures. And yet in another study performed by Tsai, Miao and Seppala (2006) it was indicated that for some cultures happiness may mean being calm and in control whereas in others it may mean being more excited and joyful.

Related to school and happiness, a study conducted by Natvig et al. (2003) looks at the relationship between happiness and school stress in addition to personal and social factors. They conducted their study with 887 Norwegian school adolescents and report that low level of stress and high level of social support and support from teachers are all related to happiness. Natvig et al. (2003) did a study with adolescents who reported a relationship between happiness and stress in school.

When it comes to religion and happiness, Diener and Diener (2008) report individuals who are raised as children in an environment with religious background and beliefs seem to benefit from these in relation to happiness. This could be due to the sense of community, building a moral foundation, family unity, and social support that the individual can experience being in a religious environment.

Related to spirituality and positive emotions, Diener and Diener (2008) report that college campuses seem to be feeling more comfortable with spirituality than religion. Spirituality seems to be a belief in some higher power that connects all things, an experience of the divine. They seem to see religion more as institutionalized practices and spirituality more related to self growth. They further report that a sense of spirituality helps connect people more

to others, nature, society, and universe and brings more affirmative ways of life. Therefore, spirituality seems to bring more happiness.

A Study performed by Emmons (2008) indicate that people who are more grateful are happiest perhaps due to the fact that being grateful makes people see more positive. In another study, meditation is related to a sense of happiness. This study performed by Davidson (2005) examines the power of meditation from a scientific perspective and reports that that the left prefrontal cortex of individuals who do regular meditation is highly active. This area of the brain is also associated with happiness.

When it comes to the question of having a perfect score of happiness, Diener and Diener (2008) report that happiness is not a set point but more of a range. While some people may have genetic predisposition to being more happy than others, everyone can make a change to get happier in life. It just needs determination and modification of certain thinking pattern and behavior.