



Comparison of Happiness among Students of Different Fields in Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Iran

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Quantitative Study

Abstract

Background: Happiness is the most basic requirement of human mental health. The health of medical students who deal with the health of the community is very important. The aim of this study was to compare the happiness of students in different fields in Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

Methods: This descriptive-analytic study was performed on 100 medical, dental pharmacy, nursing, and health students in Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in 2019. The data were collected using the Iranian euphoria questionnaire.

Results: All students obtained an average happiness score. The highest level of happiness was related to dentistry and the lowest was related to nursing and health. There was no significant difference in the level of happiness among students in different disciplines, and it did not correlate with gender, marital status, educational status, place of birth and residence, mother's education, number of children in the family, and employment. There was a significant relationship between happiness and father's education ($P = 0.02$) and satisfaction with the field of study ($P = 0.003$).

Conclusion: Considering the moderate level of happiness observed in this study and the direct effect of students' happiness on the future of the society, in order to educate a more productive generation, it is necessary to take measures to increase happiness and determine the factors affecting it. Creating job opportunities and valuing different jobs can increase the happiness of these students, which requires further in-depth studies.

Keywords: Happiness, Students, University medical centers

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Introduction

Happiness is the most basic requirement of human mental health (Sanagoo, Jouybari, Rezaiean, Jafari, & Hosseini, 2011). Happiness is a good and pleasant emotional state with experiences like happiness, satisfaction with life, wellness, security, and enhappinessment.

A happy person feels good, enhappiness the activities of his life, has developed inner peace, has accepted his weaknesses, and is resilient in the face of difficulties (Jafari, Liaghatdar, & Abedi, 2004). In addition, happiness facilitates people's passion for social activity and social interaction and provides a positive attitude to life, positive self-concept, mental health and emotional balance, hope for the future, and better job-learning and decision-making (Zeinik & Nilsaz, 2012; Akkasheh, 2000; Dinener & Seligman, 2000).

Today, the world is heavily exposed to various developments. These various developments in the cultural, social, economic, and technological arena may cause distinctions and have unforeseen consequences, which may result in reduced happiness among people in communities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Young adults aged 18-25 years are at high risk of developing a mental illness, such as anxiety disorder. Mental illnesses are very rarely diagnosed at an early stage and the risk of late diagnosis is often accompanied by long-term medical resistance and long-term outcomes (Halgin & Whitbourne, 2004). A look at the state of happiness in countries around the world shows that Iran does not rank well in terms of happiness and the level of happiness in our country is low.

According to the World Happiness Report in 2015, Iran ranked 110th among the 158 countries surveyed, but its rank has risen compared to the 2013 report in which it ranked 115th. However, in general, compared to 2005, the level of happiness in Iran had decreased by 2012 (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2015).

Students in each community are considered as human resources and constructors of the future; therefore, their mental health is of great importance. Students of medical sciences and related disciplines dealing with human health, whose happiness can affect all levels of society, have attracted the attention of researchers (Sharifi, Sooky, Tagharrobi, & Akbari, 2010; Jouybari, Nodeh Sharifi, Sanagoo, Saeedi, Saeedi, & Kalantari, 2017). Poor mental health has a profound effect on students' academic performance; it can cause a drop in grades and sometimes dropping out of school and is the cause of behavioral problems in students (Kohoulat & Jowkar, 2012; Sadeghiniri, 2012; Hosseini & Kamalizadeh, 2012).

In addition, students endure multiple psychological pressures such as immigration, cultural changes, dormitory environment problems, and unwillingness to study, educational issues, high course load, and concerns about their occupational and educational future, which pose a threat to their mental health (Akkasheh, 2000).

Previous researches in other countries have investigated the state of happiness in different individuals and its impact on their mental health. Nevertheless, very few studies have been conducted in this area in our country. Therefore, this study aimed to compare the happiness of students in different disciplines in Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran, in 2019.

Methods

The present descriptive-analytic study was performed on 100 medical, dental, pharmacy, nursing, and health students of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in 2019. This article was part of a thesis with the ID p784.

In this study, with a precision of 5% and a 95% confidence interval, 117 students of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences who were studying in the spring of 1998 were selected and surveyed. Questionnaires in which less than 50% of

questions were answered were excluded from the study, and finally, 100 individuals were examined as the statistical population.

In this study, the Subjective Happiness Scale was used to collect information. This questionnaire was designed by Dr. Kambiz Abachizadeh and professors of the Social Medicine Department of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences to measure happiness in an Iranian population (Abachizadeh, 2015).

This questionnaire consists of 44 items that is more than the Oxford University Excellence Assessment Questionnaire. Some of the items are tailored to the cultural differences between Iranians and other nations, for example, "Sincere communication with God gives me a sense of happiness".

These items are scored on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5; 9 items (13, 14, 26, 27, 29, 33, 36, 38, and 42) are reverse scored.

The total number of points is divided by the total number of items and the number obtained represents the level of happiness of the individual. The highest score is 5 and the lowest score is 1 and the average total score of happiness was 97.6 in the community.

In this study, the relationship between happiness and other variables such as gender, place of residence, grade, marital status, and degree of satisfaction with the field of study, parents' education, and employment status were also studied.

The data gathered by the questionnaire was analyzed in SPSS software (version 15, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Qualitative variables are presented as frequency and

percentage, and quantitative variables as mean and standard deviation. For the purpose of inferential analysis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to examine the normal assumption. Independent t-test, analysis of variance, and non-normalization of Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were also used for data analysis.

Moreover, the significance of the relationship between variables was interpreted using Pearson's parametric tests (or in the absence of normal distribution of Spearman data).

In all tests, a P-value of 0.05 was considered as significant.

Results

In this study, 39 students (39%) were women and 61 (61%) were men.

The degree of happiness was classified into 3 categories, weak (score: 1.33-2), average (score: 2-3.66), and well (score: 3.66-5).

All disciplines ranked average in terms of happiness, and none of them ranked well. The highest level of happiness was related to dentistry students and the lowest was related to nursing and health students (Table 1). There was no significant difference in happiness between students of different disciplines ($P = 0.094$).

Table 2 shows the students' happiness rate in terms of other variables studied in the study. There was only a statistically significant relationship between the degree of happiness of the students, and the father's educational level ($P = 0.02$) and the degree of satisfaction with the field of study ($P = 0.003$).

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation and comparison of happiness rate of medical, dentistry, pharmacy, health, and nursing students

Field	Number	Max	Min	Standard deviation	Mean	P-value
Medical	23	4.59	2.68	0.45	3.39	0.094
Dentistry	23	4.45	2.07	0.4	3.4	
Pharmacy	20	4.14	1.61	0.51	3.25	
Health	12	3.57	2.95	0.17	3.2	
Nursing	19	3.55	2.18	0.30	3.2	
Other	3	4	2.07	1.11	2.71	
Total	100	4.59	1.61	0.43	3.29	

Table 2. Student satisfaction rate by gender, marital status, average, place of residence, parental education, student employment, and academic satisfaction

Variable		number	Standard deviation	Mean	P-value
Sexuality	Male	39	0.43	3.22	0.18
	Female	61	0.44	3.33	
Marital status	Single	72	0.45	3.31	0.67
	Divorced	3	0.37	3.22	
	Married	25	0.42	3.22	
Grade	Under 16	40	0.35	3.31	0.61
	16-20	60	0.49	3.27	
Housing	With family	42	0.44	3.23	0.31
	Independent	28	0.46	3.21	
	Dormitory	30	0.39	3.45	
Father's education	Pre-diploma and diploma	4	0.72	2.68	0.02
	Associate degree	29	0.39	3.24	
	BSc	41	0.41	3.28	
	MSc	13	0.32	3.19	
	PhD	13	0.50	3.48	
Mother's education	Pre-diploma and diploma	8	0.80	3.23	0.19
	Associate degree	40	0.35	3.28	
	BSc	40	0.45	3.24	
	MSc	8	0.34	3.65	
	PhD	4	0.18	3.29	
Employment	No	69	0.39	3.32	0.33
	Yes	31	0.53	3.22	
Satisfaction with the field of study	Very low	4	1.03	2.95	0.003
	Low	11	0.38	3.05	
	Medium	48	0.18	3.24	
	High	22	0.17	3.47	
	Very high	13	0.81	3.55	

Based on the results of post hoc test, there was a statistically significant relationship between the degree of happiness of students and the father's education level, undergraduate and postgraduate education ($P = 0.03$), and sub-diploma and PhD ($P = 0.01$).

Based on post hoc test results, there was a statistically significant relationship between the degree of students' happiness and low and high levels of satisfaction with the field of study ($P = 0.036$) and low and very low levels ($P = 0.023$).

Discussion

Happiness is an emotional state that can be considered the basis of human tranquility. Evidently, finding the exact definition for happiness remains one of the greatest philosophical challenges (Hoggard, 2005). The factors affecting happiness are many, including family, marital satisfaction, beliefs,

physical and mental health, social environment, occupation, and education (Zohour & Fekri, 2004). Some psychologists have designed questionnaires to measure some of these dimensions and elements or all of them, and the results of researches indicate that the questionnaires have been largely coordinated and consistent (Stewart, Watson, Clark, Ebmeier, & Deary, 2010; Martin, 2006).

In this study, all students obtained an average happiness score and none obtained a good score. In various studies conducted in recent years on medical students with the aim of evaluating the amount of happiness and the factors affecting it, the mean score of happiness varied from 42.6 to 46.7% in students (Sharifi et al., 2010; Jouybari et al., 2017) which indicates the inappropriate state of happiness among students.

A study conducted by Akkasheh (2000) in medical students of Kashan University of Medical Sciences, Iran, showed that 28% of

newly born students do not have mental health. Moreover, in a study examining some academic factors affecting the sense of happiness, Hemmati (2019) has shown that students' sense of happiness is slightly higher than the average. Sherina, Rampal, and Kaneson (2004) in their study in Malaysia reported that psychosocial stress is common among medical students and has a significant relationship with depression. In a study conducted in England, Firth (1986) showed that the average number of stresses was higher in students than in the general population, and that stress should be taken seriously in medical students and measures should be taken to eliminate it.

In this study, the highest level of happiness was related to dentistry students and the lowest level of happiness was related to nursing and health students. Based on the results of this study, no significant difference was found in terms of happiness between medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, and health students.

The lower level of happiness in the mentioned disciplines may be due to the difficulty of work or the disproportionate valuation of the type of job related to the type of degree; this requires extensive research in larger statistical populations for better comparison.

In the study by Jouybari et al. (2017), the highest average happiness score was observed in laboratory sciences students. The study by Karami also showed that the field of study, and living with the family have a significant role in students' well-being and satisfaction (Mocrie, Mohammadifar, & Yazdani, 2002).

In this study, there was no significant relationship between students' gender and happiness. Khodarahimi (2011), in a research on adolescents and young people, also rejected the influence of gender on the interplay between happiness and concern. There was no significant difference in happiness between men and women in the study by Shayan and AhmadiGatab (2012) in

Babol University of Medical Sciences, Iran. In the study by Omid, the results showed a higher level of happiness in women. However, in this study, the statistical community, unlike our study, was not specific to medical students.

In the present study, there was no significant relationship between marital status and happiness in students, which was similar to the findings of Jouybari et al. (2017). Nevertheless, Sharifi et al. (2010) reported a statistically significant correlation between vitality and the marital status of students. This difference in findings may be due to the different data collection tools used. In the present study, Oxford standard test was used to evaluate happiness and to investigate the factors related to vitality; however, Sharifi et al. (2010) used a 31-item researcher-made questionnaire.

In this study, the relationship between academic performance and happiness was not significant. In the study by Jouybari et al. (2017), the relationship between happiness and mean grade was also not significant. Abdulghani, Alkanhal, Mahmoud, Ponnamparuma, and Alfari (2011), in their study in Saudi Arabia, also found no significant relationship between academic grades and stress levels. However, in the study by Sharifi et al. (2010), there was a significant correlation between vitality and student's average. Furthermore, Mohebian, Dadashi, Motamed, and Safdarian (2017) found that fear of failing in exams was a major stressor for students.

In the present study, there was no significant relationship between students' happiness and their current location. In their study on dental students in Zanjan University of Medical Sciences, Iran, Mohebian et al. (2017) also showed that there was no significant difference in the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress in terms of place of residence, although distance from the family was reported by students as a significant stressor. Sharifi et al. (2010) also found no statistically significant relationship

between native or non-native and current students' living conditions. Karami explained in his study that living in a student dormitory, due to being away from the family, assuming different responsibilities for life, experiencing different cultures, and adapting to new conditions, requires energy and special power so that students can achieve inner satisfaction and happiness (Mocrie, Mohammadifar, & Yazdani, 2002).

In the present study, there was no statistically significant relationship between employment rate while studying and the level of happiness of the students. However, Peterson, Park, and Seligman (2005) stated that the happiness of individuals depended on three factors, enhancement in life, work and activity, and purpose in life.

In our study, there was a significant relationship between happiness and satisfaction with the field of study ($P = 0.003$). This finding was similar to that of Sharifi et al. (2010) in Kashan University of Medical Sciences. Hemmati (2019) also found that self-efficacy and satisfaction with the field of study directly affect the student's sense of happiness.

This study showed that there was a significant relationship between the rate of happiness and father's education ($P = 0.02$). However, there was no significant relationship between mother's education and happiness. Farzianpour, Eshraghian, Emami, Hosseini, Hosseini, and Farhud (2011) reported a significant relationship between the amount of happiness and the economic, educational, and cultural conditions of the family. However, contrary to the present study, Farzianpour et al. (2011) studied different groups of students.

Considering the direct impact of students on the future of each society, it is necessary to plan for a happier and more productive future generation of the society, take measures to increase the amount of happiness and reduce stress, and to investigate the relationship between multiple factors affecting the amount of happiness in

students. Solhi and Irandoost (2017) explained that consideration of the social aspect of achieving happiness and the impact of the welfare state on it is of particular importance, and appropriate education policies and plans for students and efforts to improve their economic conditions are necessary to increase happiness.

Abedi (2001) conducted the Fordyce Happiness Program and concluded that the program could enhance student happiness, in addition to reducing anxiety and depression. The results of the interventional study by Shayan and AhmadiGatab (2012) showed a significant difference in the happiness level before and after the social skills training program. Thus, it can be said that social skills training can increase the level of happiness.

Suggestions: Considering the direct impact of students on the future of each society, it is necessary to take measures to increase the level of happiness and reduce stress and risky behaviors in students in order to educate a happier and more productive generation in the society.

It is also recommended that more studies with larger sample size be undertaken at a more appropriate time after creating the correct culture of filling the questionnaire, which requires continuous cooperation between the university authorities and the Ministry of Health.

Conclusion

The results of this study illustrated that all students had an average happiness score and none had a good score. The highest happiness score was related to dentistry and the lowest to the fields of nursing and health, although it did not significantly differ among students of different disciplines.

It seems that meaningfulness and appreciation of field-related jobs and the creation of appropriate job opportunities can increase the happiness of these students, which require further in-depth studies.

Moreover, the rate of happiness did not correlate with student gender, marital status,

and academic performance, place of residence, mother's education, and employment during their studies. However, there was a significant relationship between happiness and satisfaction with the field of study and the degree of education of the father.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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