

Research on Orientation to Happiness and Life Satisfaction: Comparative Analysis between Students and Working Adults

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Abstract

Happiness and Life satisfaction are affective and cognitive components of subjective well-being, and influence and enhance various aspects of our life. This study aims to understand the relationship between orientations to happiness and life satisfaction in both students and working adults. Orientation to Happiness Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale and Students' Life Satisfaction Scale were administered on 85 students and 87 working adults (N=172) through google forms. Pearson's correlation analysis showed a statistically significant positive correlation between orientations to happiness and life satisfaction in working adults, however, a negative to slightly positive relationship was observed in case of students, which was not statistically significant. A statistically significant difference of correlation between orientation to happiness and life satisfaction between students and working adults was observed. These findings highlight the differences in students and working adults.

Keywords: Orientation to Happiness, Life Satisfaction

Introduction

Psychology is traditionally more focused on mental disorders and their treatment. Positive psychology emerged as a response to it and is gaining prominence in today's world. It is based on the search for and study of internal, psychological personality resources, the influence of the optimistic way of thinking, of one's belief that he or she is able to live through and cope with the most difficult circumstances of their life.

In the opinion of experts, a positive mindset causes people to choose more promising adaptation strategies that allow them to cope with stress in their lives and lead to higher achievements and a better perception of their prospects (Taylor, 1989, Zeligman, 1997, Aranson, 1998, Stefanenko, 2002).

Positive psychology focuses on the following areas (a) positive subjective experiences, (b) positive individual traits, and (c) positive institutions (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Contrary to traditional psychology, positive psychology is primarily concerned with positive aspects of life such as life satisfaction, happiness, gratitude, and resilience rather than psychological deficits (Seligman ME, Steen TA, Park N, Peterson C., 2005).

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a psychological construct associated with how people think about and feel about what they have and what happens to them (Maddux, J. E., 2018). It has two components:- cognitive and affective components (Diener, E.; Suh, E.M.; Lucas, R.E.; Smith, H.L., 1999; Pavot, W.; Diener, E., 1978). Life satisfaction is considered as the cognitive component as it is a judgment process in which people assess their quality of life based on a personal unique set of criteria (Shin, D.C.; Johnson, D.M., 1978; Veenhoven, R., 2012). Happiness is regarded as the affective component as it is an emotional appraisal of the degree of intensity and the content of positive personal experiences of the happy moments in a person's life (Veenhoven, R., 2012; Magen, Z., 1996).

Although life satisfaction and happiness are a broad and non-specific perception, they are important contributors to subjective well-being (Diener E., 1984) and understanding their relationship is an important area within the field of positive psychology.

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction refers to a judgmental and cognitive process (Diene, Emmons, & Larsan, 1985). It is the individual perspective, general evaluation of the totality of one's life or some aspects of life, such as family life and educational experience; life satisfaction is the reflection of balance between individual wishes and the present state of the individual. It is a subjective well-being measure that reflects positive and negative emotions. In other words, the greater the gap between the level of individual wishes and the present state of the person, the lower the satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Diener & Diener, 2009). Enkvist, et al., (2012) defined life satisfaction as an Individual's cognitive judgment about his own life. Veenhoven (2012) stated that mostly "life-satisfaction is used as overall happiness", and can be used synonymously with containment. Dockery (2003) described happiness, wellbeing and life satisfaction as similar constructs.

Among various factors that may be associated with high life satisfaction, income, job satisfaction, needs satisfaction, resilience, and social relationships and support have been

identified as positive predictors, whereas unemployment, stress, anxiety, and depression have been shown to decrease life satisfaction (Rogowska, A. M., Ochnik, D., et al., 2021).

Research has shown life satisfaction as a very important indicator of successful adaptation to life, and its beneficially impact on health, longevity, and social relationships (Diener E., 2012; López-Ortega M, Torres-Castro S, Rosas-Carrasco O., 2016). Some researchers consider life satisfaction as a reflection of mental and physical health. (Badri, M. A., Alkhaili, M., Aldhaheri, H., Yang, G., Albahar, M., & Alrashdi, A., 2022)

Job satisfaction is defined as the individual's positive mindset, which is reflected in the employee's opinion of the work or atmosphere at work (Mincu, 2015). Previous research studies have shown that there is a close relationship between job and life satisfaction (Saari & Judge, 2004), as in the job satisfaction affects life satisfaction, as well as life satisfaction affects job satisfaction (Saari & Judge, 2004). Zhang and Howell (2011) found job satisfaction as a key indicator of the overall life satisfaction amongst employees because it climaxes when jobs meet people's expectations.

In turn, unemployment reduces life satisfaction (D. Štreimikienė, D. Grundey, 2009). A review supported that life satisfaction was stable across different stages of the lifespan (Diener, E.; Suh, E.M.; Lucas, R.E.; Smith, H.L., 1999) whereas another study showed an inverted U relationship between age and life satisfaction, with a lower life satisfaction during emerging and older adulthood and a higher life satisfaction during young and middle-aged adulthood (Maher, J.P.; Pincus, A.L.; Ram, N.; Conroy, D.E., 2015).

Happiness

Happiness is a subject of the human fascination since long. It is an abstract yet an omnipresent aspect of our lives. Happiness is a sense of well-being, joy, or pleasure. It is related to an individual's subjective well-being (Angner, Hullett, & Allison, 2011; Jiang, Lu, & Sato, 2012) and life satisfaction (Van Praag, Romanov, & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2010), and is universal to people in all culture (Aydin, 2012; Fisher. 2010), even proposed as an indicator of national well-being (Diener, 2000; Diener, Kesebir, & Lucas, 2008; Thinley, 1998).

Some researchers have described happiness as the universal evaluation of an individual's life satisfaction (Pulakos, Dorsey, & White, 2006), while some describe happiness as a subjective measure of quality of life in all domains of life (Lakshmanasamy, T., 2022). Nemat and

Maralan (2016) addressed happiness as a multi-dimensional construct made up of several significant factors of emotional, social relations with others, cognitive aspects, physical activities, and optimism.

Likewise, Cloninger and Zohar (2011), and Saricam (2015) proposed that happiness may arise from a combination of factors, including other positive emotions and subjective well-being (Badri, M. A., Alkhaili, M., Aldhaheeri, H., Yang, G., Albahar, M., & Alrashdi, A., 2022).

Positive cognitions and emotions have been shown to be strong predictors of happiness that alleviate automatic negative thoughts that can lead to depression (Lightsey OR., 1994), suggesting that higher levels of happiness may have a protective effect on depression.

Happy employees, instead of behaving like “paid workers”, virtually act as “volunteers” enjoying the work that they perceive meaningful and for which they are truly passionate about (Ajay Bhatia, Dr. Farhat Mohsin, 2020). In general, researchers believe that happy employees are better employees who contribute more to organizations (Ed Diener & Seligman, 2002; Leung, Chiang, Chui, Lee, & Mak, 2011; Warr, 2011).

Martin Seligman, the father of positive psychology, along with Christopher Peterson and Nansook Park (2002), gave Authentic Happiness Theory, suggesting various routes/orientations to happiness. These are - life of pleasure (via hedonism), life of engagement (via flow-related experiences) and life of meaning (via eudaimonia).

One route to happiness is through pleasure orientation, embodied in the doctrine of hedonism: maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain (Watson, 1895), also called Epicurean principle of pleasure-seeking and pain-avoidance. Greek philosopher Aristippus (435–360 BCE), proposed pleasure as the basis of a fulfilling life. hedonism, identifies happiness as the good or pleasurable life (Brülde, 2007; Veenhoven, 2003). A second way to be happy entails the engaged life route, which involves being engaged in the activities one does and pursuing flow experiences. Identified as zest, enthusiasm, or passion, engagement in the business of life shows itself as commitment, perseverance, and the sense that one has been called to do what one does (Amiot, Vallerand, & Blanchard, 2006; Hersey, 1955; Jamison, 2004; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997).

One of the mechanisms involved is the habitual experience of the psychological state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow was defined as the state of becoming absorbed in an activity

and losing track of time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990). Flow is when people's attention is focused on the task itself, they are completely absorbed with the activity. It has stated that flow is rather non-emotional and non-conscious in the moment. Flow occurs when there is an optimal balance between skill and challenge (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). During flow, time passes quickly for the engaged individual. Flow is described as highly and intrinsically enjoyable.

The third route to happiness is through a life of meaning and purpose (Frankl, 1963). A meaningful life refers to a life where individual feels connected to something larger than themselves. This definition echoes previous discussions that relate meaning to external goals and self-transcendence (Antonovsky, 1979; Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003; Emmons, 1986; Wong, 1998).

The theory of eudemonia associated with the meaning orientation, on the other hand, also has a long tradition stemming from Aristotle's notion according to which happiness is achieved by identifying one's virtues and developing them (Seligman, 2002). According to Ryff (1989), it refers to a feeling of excellence and perfection in one's abilities that guides the meaning and direction of his or her life. It also results from individuals' using their signature strengths (i.e., morally positively valued traits; see Peterson and Seligman, 2004) to serve something larger than themselves (akin to the pursuit of eudaimonia). Identifying and cultivating one's strengths, virtues and living in accordance with them for the service of greater goods is what leads to happiness (Aristotle, 2000).

Research consistently links the presence of meaning to well-being. Individuals with a sense of purpose report greater life satisfaction, more positive affect, higher levels of optimism, better self-esteem, and even better physical health (e.g., Compton, Smith, Cornish, & Qualls, 1996; Sone et al., 2008; Zika & Chamberlain, 1987). They are less likely to have psychological problems (e.g., Battista & Almond, 1973; Newcomb & Harlow, 1986; Weinstein & Cleanthous, 1996).

While two of the three orientations have long-standing roots in philosophy (hedonism and eudaimonia), while engaged life has its roots in psychology (flow experiences) (Tandler, N., Krauss, A., & Proyer, R. T., 2020).

Hence, pleasure, meaning, and engagement are primary ways in which people might seek happiness (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005). Peterson et al. (2005) suggested that people living a full life are those who pursue all three orientations to happiness at one time. They created a self report questionnaire to measure the endorsement of pleasure, engagement, and meaning as ways to achieve happiness. Their initial research showed that measures of these three ways to seek happiness were empirically distinguishable yet each positively associated with life satisfaction. However, orientations to engagement and to meaning were more strongly correlated with life satisfaction than was an orientation to pleasure.

This study focuses on understanding the relationship between life satisfaction and happiness, specifically, the orientation to happiness routes mentioned in Martin Seligman's Authentic Happiness theory, analyzing the variation between students and working adults.

Literature Review

An extensive research is present showing the positive relationship between happiness and life satisfaction. Seligman et al. (2005) contended that individual's orientation to happiness predicts life satisfaction.

Most researchers assert a positive link between life satisfaction and happiness. (Badri, M. A., Alkhaili, M., Aldhaheri, H., Yang, G., Albahar, M., & Alrashdi, A., 2022) some of which are mentioned below.

"Orientations to happiness and life satisfaction in twenty-seven nations" was explored by Nansook Park, Christopher Peterson and Willibald Ruch (2009). Across all nations, all three orientations predicted life satisfaction, although orientations to engagement and to meaning were more robustly associated with life satisfaction than was an orientation to pleasure.

Davender, V. N. Yadav and Pratibha, Subodh Kumar, Satish Kumar, Kuldeep Nara (2012) studied the correlation between happiness and life satisfaction and concluded that there exists positive and strong correlation between happiness and life satisfaction.

Nemati and Maralani (2016) explored the relationship between happiness and life satisfaction to understand the mediating role of resiliency. The results concluded that life satisfaction affects happiness directly and via the mediation of resiliency.

Conceptions of happiness and life satisfaction: An exploratory study in 14 national groups (2016) showed that self-transcendence and conservation predicted life satisfaction positively and significantly. In addition, we found that self-directed hedonism and self-enhancement interacted in their effects on life satisfaction.

M. Jaisri (2016) studied “Happiness and satisfaction with life among adults” and found notable relationship between happiness and life satisfaction. He also discovered that the late young adults had highest life satisfaction while the early young adults had the least life satisfaction.

Hofmann et al. (2018) researched the relation between the orientations to happiness and life satisfaction across occupations and they found that people in more highly skilled occupations reported higher life satisfaction and a lower orientation to pleasure than those in less skilled occupations.

Kanica Bhutoria and Himangini Hooja (2018) found significant relationship between positive affect and orientation to happiness, positive between pleasure and meaning to positive affect while the correlation negative affect and orientation to happiness was not significant.

Eun Hyun Seo, Seung-Gon Kim, Sang Hoon Kim, Jung Ho Kim, Jung Hyun Park and Hyung-Jun Yoon (2018) explored the association of life satisfaction and happiness with depressive symptoms among university students showed that life satisfaction and happiness are associated with a lower risk of depression, suggesting that improvement in life satisfaction and happiness can help in the prevention and management of depression.

Sheelam Jain (2019) explored the role of self-esteem and life satisfaction in predicting happiness and found that higher self- esteem and better life satisfaction in an individuals leads to happiness.

Sibnath Deb, et. Al. (2019), found association of spirituality with happiness, meaning, and life satisfaction in university students a positively significant relation.

Nancy Tandler, Annette Krauss, and René T. Proyer (2020) explored “Authentic Happiness at Work: Self and Peer-Rated Orientations to Happiness, Work Satisfaction, and Stress Coping,” and the results showed that life of engagement and meaning are related to work satisfaction while life of pleasure is related to less work stress and indicated that employees’ orientations to happiness are important for well-being at work.

A study examining the structural relationships of well-being, leisure satisfaction, life satisfaction, and happiness by Yalcun Tukel, Abdullah Sencer Temel (2020) concluded that perceived freedom in leisure has a positive impact on the life satisfaction and happiness.

A study survey by Ranjit Kumar Dehury, Padmaja Gadiraju, Punam Singh, C. Vanlalhrui, Parthasarathi Dehury, Kadari Devaraju, Sangita Behera (2024) on assessment of self-satisfaction, happiness, and quality of life (QoL) among adults showed low scores on self-satisfaction, QoL, and above-average scores for happiness but a positive relationship between Self-satisfaction, Happiness, and QoL.

Objectives

- To understand the relationship between orientation to happiness and life satisfaction in students and working adults.
- To find, examine, and compare orientation to happiness and life satisfaction and its relationship between students and working adults of the given sample.

Hypothesis

H₁: There is a positive correlation between all orientations to happiness and life satisfaction in students.

H₂: There is a positive correlation between all orientations to happiness and life satisfaction in working adults.

H₃: There is significant difference in correlation of orientations to happiness and life satisfaction in students and working adults.

Methodology

Sample

The sample size of the present study was 172 individuals, 49.4% (N=85) were students in the age range of 15-22, while 50.5% (N=87) were working adults in the age range of 19-56. The sampling method was convenience sample as the sample included those who fulfilled the criteria of students/working adults and were willing to participate in the study. Confidentiality was ensured. Consent was obtained by virtue of online survey form completion. However,

research has shown that data collected online are comparable to those collected in conventional ways (Gosling et al., 2004).

Instruments

- Orientations to Happiness Scale (OTH) (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005) is a scale developed to measure an individual's orientations to happiness, whether it is pleasure, engagement or meaning. The scale has a total of 18 items: six items each for the three ways to seek happiness. A 5-point Likert scale is used, 1 for 'not like me at all' through 5 for 'very much like me.' Subscale scores are formed by averaging the relevant responses to yield scores reflecting the endorsement of engagement, pleasure, and meaning as routes to happiness. The reliability and validity of the scale on Indian population was seen Nimisha Beri and Amita Sharma (2020). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for OTH is 0.854.
- Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) measures general life satisfaction. It has five items and a 7-point Likert scale. Responses are aggregated to provide a total life satisfaction score. This scale is among the most widely used scales of subjective well-being. Its validity and reliability have been supported across various cultural contexts (Diener et al., 2013). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for SWLS is 0.841.
- Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS) (Huebner, E. S., 1991) is a scale measuring student's life satisfaction. It has seven items and a 6-point Likert scale. Responses are summed to find the life satisfaction score. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for SLSS is 0.775.

Procedure

This study aims to analyze the relationship between Orientation to Happiness and Life Satisfaction. To accomplish this, a Google form was created which contained Orientation to Happiness scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale and Students' Life Satisfaction Scale. The google form was shared through social media platforms with individuals who met the criteria for the present study. Responses from the participants were recorded via google forms. To increase participation, confidentiality was maintained and those who wished to know their happiness

orientation and life satisfaction were asked to fill their email address and the results were send to them. The data was scored according to the scoring guidelines in the respective manuals. Obtained data was analyzed with Correlational analysis.

data analysis

In this study, both descriptive and inferential statistics are used to analyze the data. To check the normality of data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test was used which confirmed the normal distribution of all variables. Descriptive statistics included mean and standard deviations (SD), while Pearson-Product Moment Correlation was applied for inferential statistics. To find the difference between the correlation of students and working adults, Fisher's r-to-z transformation was also applied.

Results

The present study is undertaken to assess the relationship between orientation to happiness and life satisfaction. Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis of the data, and Table 2 shows the correlation between the various orientation to happiness and life satisfaction.

TABLE 1

Variable	Mean and SD	Students (N=85)	Working Adults (N=87)
Pleasure	Mean	21.4	22
	SD	4.47	5.14
Engagement	Mean	20.6	21.3
	SD	3.23	4.52
Meaning	Mean	21.8	23
	SD	3.92	5.26
Life Satisfaction	Mean	26.1	22.9
	SD	6.76	6.49

The analysis of mean values show that students have almost equal scores on all orientations of happiness - pleasure, engagement and meaning, in working adults, meaning mean scores are slightly greater than the other orientations to happiness. Life satisfaction mean score of students are in moderate range, while for working adults, they are in slightly satisfied range.

TABLE 2

Variable	Students		Working Adults	
	r	Significance	r	Significance
Pleasure	-0.230	$p < 0.05$	0.518	$p < 0.001$
Engagement	-0.051	--	0.476	$p < 0.001$
Meaning	0.167	--	0.610	$p < 0.001$

While all the three orientation of happiness were positively and significantly correlated with life satisfaction in working adults, in case of students, pleasure and engagement are negatively correlated with life satisfaction, while only meaning is positively correlated with life satisfaction, which is not statistically significant.

Using the Fisher r-to-z transformation, value of z was calculated and applied to assess the significance of the difference between two correlation coefficients, r_a (working adults) and r_b (students), found in two independent samples - students and working adults). The correlation coefficients are significantly different from each other, indicated by the probability value of less than 0.05, shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Variable	z value	p value
Pleasure	5.21	$p < 0.05$
Engagement	3.67	$p < 0.05$
Meaning	3.48	$p < 0.05$

The values suggest that the correlation coefficients of both groups - students and working adults - are significantly different as well as statistically significant.

Interpretation And Discussion

The main aim of this study was to establish the relationship between orientation to happiness and life satisfaction. The hypothesis was that a positive correlation between orientation to happiness and life satisfaction in students as well as working adults exists.

While the results showed that indeed a positive correlation exists between all the orientations to happiness and life satisfaction in working adults, in accordance with the hypothesis (H_2), in students, positive correlation wasn't observed in all the orientation to happiness and life satisfaction in students, rejecting our hypothesis (H_1).

The sample size of the study is $N = 173$, hence it is necessary to mention that confounding variables like age, gender, personality traits and other variables also have an impact on the results, especially age, since the age range of the study was quite large.

From the data presented (see Table 1), the mean scores of both students and working adults are similar with regard to orientation to happiness, while difference in observed in life satisfaction scores, with can be accounted to different life satisfaction scales used (SWLS & SSLS), however, both scores are in the satisfied range.

A strong positive correlation is observed between meaning and life satisfaction ($r = 0.610$), and engagement and life satisfaction ($r = 0.476$), in line with many previous researches (Park, N., Peterson, C., & Ruch, W., 2009; Proyer et al., 2012; Swart and Rothmann, 2012; Martínez-Martí and Ruch, 2017; Tandler, N., Krauss, A., & Proyer, R. T., 2020).

Peterson et al. (2005) had stated that people living a full life are those who pursue all three orientations to happiness at one time. This is observed in the study, as in the people who scored equal scores in all the three orientation to happiness, also were satisfied with their life.

Seligman et al. (2005) also suggested that people simultaneously low on all three orientations reported especially low life satisfaction, however, it wasn't completely observed in the study, as many participants scored high in orientation to happiness scale but low in life satisfaction scale.

While the research by Jesús San Martín, Fabiola Perles, and Jesús María Canto (2010) on Life Satisfaction and Perception of Happiness among University Students showed that most used kind of orientation towards happiness is pleasure, followed by meaning, and finally engagement in university students, our study showed that the most used kind of orientation towards happiness is meaning, followed by meaning and finally engagement.

A comparison of the correlation coefficients of students and working adults will show a significant difference in the association of orientations to happiness and life satisfaction in both

groups, which is supported by Fisher r-to-z transformation, showing the result to be statistically significant, supporting the hypothesis that there is significant difference in the correlation of orientations to happiness and life satisfaction among students and working adults.

Limitations

Some limitations should be considered when interpreting the results of the study. Convenience sampling method and the collection of data involved only certain individuals in certain schools, universities, and organizations. Future studies can be undertaken in categorical and strategic manner, involving a larger group and included sufficient population from each group so that we can expand the scope of the research for further studies in future.

Confounding variables may have an impact on the results, and self-reported data is vulnerable to response bias.

Furthermore, the cross sectional - nature of the study renders as unable to understand the relationship between orientations to happiness and life satisfaction over a long period of time. Longitudinal studies in future can help in understanding the long-term nature of the relationship between orientations to happiness and life satisfaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has confirmed the positive relationship between orientation to happiness and life satisfaction in working adults. The strong correlation between engagement and meaning with life satisfaction stated in the previous researches was reaffirmed, while pleasure also shared a strong positive correlation with life satisfaction.

However, a negative to slightly positive correlation between orientation to happiness and life satisfaction in students, which wasn't statistically significant. This can be explored by further researches to understand the nature of relationship between orientation to happiness and life satisfaction, with a focus on other confounding variables. A longitudinal study will help in understanding the subject matter deeply.

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