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## Happiness Level of Accounting Students at University of Mashhad

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**Abstract.** The purpose of present study was to investigate the happiness level undergraduate students at University of Mashhad. In the recent years, concerns on well being, happiness, and life satisfaction have become a central issue to researchers. Happiness is internal, but it can be recognized by individuals in themselves. The results of the study revealed that 10.09 per cent of the participants had lower level of happiness; this level of happiness as depression. So, majority of accounting students were in accepted level of happiness according to the results of this survey. Further, the results of current study revealed that there were no significant differences between happiness status and gender.

**Keywords:** Happiness, Accounting Student, Oxford Happiness Inventory, Iran.

### 1 Introduction

Happiness means pleasure, worryless, joyful, and living happily; also, it means that gladness, rejoicing, cheerfulness. Although happiness has different meaning, Matlin, Gawron (1979), Aegyle et al. (1995), Crossland (1987), in their evaluation of the effect of excitement on happiness, they defined happiness as positive excitement, satisfaction of life and the refuse of Negative excitement such as depression and stress. Cheerfulness and mental joy of human being always is being studied by researchers, because it has significant effects on all aspects of his characteristics and his different behavior appearance. For most of the people, "a good life is a happy life". Besides this statement, it is fair to claim if quality of life is dependent on how happy one person is (Brülde, 2006, p. 1). Martin (2005) argues that happiness is a mental state composed by tree different elements: Pleasure (pleasant emotions and spiritual feelings like pleasure, joy, contentment exaltation or affection), "lack of un-pleasure" (lack of or no unpleasant emotions and spiritual feelings like, anxiety, fear, rage, guilt, envy or shame) and satisfaction (satisfaction with life or with some particular aspects of one's life – personal connections, work, physical performance). According to pure affective view, happiness is a kind of affective state—"to be happy is (roughly) to feel happy" (Brülde, 2006, p. 9). Regarding to this, "happiness has no cognitive component" (so, it doesn't involve any evaluation of one's life as a whole). We assume that "the quality of a person's life is wholly dependent on the person's mental state and not at all on the state of the world (Brülde, 2006, p. 10).

It is widely agreed that happiness plays a central role on quality of life. From this point of view, happiness is one of the most important "prudential value" (Brülde, 2006, p. 1). Happiness is a subjective measurement of well-being (SWB). The effect of age on happiness is found to be inconsistent. Some studies found a positive relationship while other studies found a negative relationship. However, it is clear that the young and the old seem to be happier than the middle aged, controlling for health and other factors (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). Regarding marital status, several studies found that married people, on average, are happier than unmarried people (Diener et al. 1999; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). The impact of gender has also been studied.

It has been found that women seem to be happier than men, but the difference is not substantial (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). Education and happiness appear to be unrelated (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). However, it has been argued that the influence of education on happiness depends on the operational definition of education (Michalos, 2007). If education is operated as not only formal education (with certificates) but lifelong learning for the whole lifespan of individuals, education will have an enormous impact. Physical healths, social environments, physical and economic security, are also proposed as determinants of happiness (Gough & Doyal, 1991). Neighborhood quality is found to be a powerful factor determining happiness in previous studies (Borooah, 2006; Chan and Lee, 2006). However, it has been found that an increase in income is not necessary lead to a higher level of happiness (Janakarajan and Seabright, 1999; Moller, 2005). This is likely to be due to other predictors of happiness. One of them may be the ability to control one's mood or spirit as argued by Layard (2005).

The importance of the issue happened is that some of the past researchers as Sligman (2000) believed that it is better to have a considerable attention on happiness instead of depression.

This emphasizes make different researchers to study the effective factor and the ways of its promotion too.



## 2 Background of the Study

Aristotle reinforced the idea that happiness is the highest aim for human being. For this Greek philosopher, nobody asks for happiness as a mean for something more.

In the last years, several studies on topics such as life satisfaction and happiness have had an important contribution to the growth of the knowledge about subjective well being. Well-being is the field of behavioral sciences in which people's evaluations of their lives are studied (Diener et al. 2003, p. 188). Happiness is nowadays a topic of growing interest for philosophers, policy makers, poets and economists. The interest of this is mainly due to the interest at large extent from economics (Osvald & Powdthavee, 2006) and positive psychology (Diener, 2000). The increasing importance of subjective well-being in comparison to other measures has been reviewed by Diener and Subh (1997, p. 189), who concluded, "Subjective well-being measures are necessary to evaluate a society, and add value to the economic indicators that are now favored by policy makers".

The pursuit of happiness is becoming ever more global, as people seek to realize the promises of capitalism and political freedom (Freedman, 1978, Diener et al. 1995). According to Coleta & Coleta (2006) it was during the last two decades that literature on subjective well being, happiness and life satisfaction has spread. From this multidisciplinary point of view, the central concern of academic research on these topics, is to know how and why persons conduct their lives in a positive way ( Snyder & Lopez, 2001). The researches related to the happiness have the ascending tread since 1970. Tinonil (1970) has conducted a research entitled the study of some factors which has related to happiness on the students of Register University in the United States. He utilized a questionnaire of 10 degree which distributed among 581 students. The results of his study represented that the male students had the least level of happiness in their initial years of their education. But after four years, the level of happiness among male students has increased and among female has decreased.

A comparison between 34 nations in the early 1990s in quality of life in individualistic society was carried out by Veenhoven (1999). The data show a clear positive relationship: the more individualized the nation, the more citizens enjoy their life. This relationship appears to be contingent to the level of education and economic prosperity. Michalos (1991) carried out a large-scale survey among university students in 39 nations (N=18,032) to study life satisfaction and happiness. The range of scores on both variables (questions) can range from the minimum of 1 to the maximum of 7. Among students, the averages are 4.63 and 4.81, respectively. Differences across nations were predicted and actually found. Scores on the happiness item vary between 4.02 (Cameroon) and 5.27 (USA). The actual range is thus 21% of the maximally possible range. Average scores on the life-satisfaction item vary between 4.09 (Japan) and 5.44 (Finland). Here the actual range is 22% of the theoretical range (quoted from Veenhoven, 1995, p. 52). Francis et al. (2003) conducted a research among the students of Dorezberg University and they distributed the happiness questionnaire among 311 students of male and female. The results represented that there is significant difference between male and female's happiness and the average score of male's happiness was 41.60 and female's degree was 43.10. Francis et al. (1998) compared the degree of happiness among the students of United States, British, Canada, and Australia. The results showed that the average score of happiness among these students were between 36 unto 42.

The research which conducted by Alipoor and Norbala (1998) showed that the mean score of happiness among the female students and males of Allameh Tabatabai and Shahed Universities in Iran were 45.26 and 45.53 respectively, which means that there is significant difference between two groups.

Another survey conducted by Farhadi et al. (2004) regarding to the degree of happiness and its relationship with self-confidence among the students of Medical University in Iran; they distributed a questionnaire among the 150 students. The responses of the questionnaires showed that the level of happiness among the 19.30 per cent of student is low, and the 62 per cent of them have accepted degree and 18.70 per cent of them have the high level of happiness.

## 3 Need of Study

It is safe to say that, the university students are considered as the human power and also future potentials of that country can draw the developmental trend of that country based on the scientific and technical improvements of those students. Therefore the mental health of the student is at the high level of importance. In this case, recognition of problems and challenges of the students is very vital. In such condition the Accounting students are many important because they have deal with the most different *methods of accounting*. Also, there are some factors which can have negative effect, on the student's *happiness such as the employment of and their behavior with student in class, the reflection of negative*



energy. On the other hand, the universities fees which are the most important issue that can busy the student's minds and also, it cause to student's failures in their education and affect their degree of happiness. So, the feel of happiness and living happily can solve most of the mental problems of Accounting Students and also it can create the additional motivation in the works and educational affective people in the society and it hoped that the enactive units cooperate and affix to have a better situation, so that student's level of manta health is promoted. In this study, the researchers try to investigate the degree of Accounting Student's happiness in Mashhad University.

#### 4 Method

**Sample:** The sample is selected by using random sampling method. The sample consisted of undergraduate students. The participants were (270 female and 190 male) 460 students. The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 25 years, with the mean age of 22 years. The participants were studying in different semester at Ferdowsi university of Mashhad.

##### Instruments used

###### *Oxford Happiness Inventory*

The research instrument is Oxford Happiness Inventory which used questionnaire. The Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle, et al. 1989) is a 29-item multiple choice instrument. Each item contains four options, constructed to reflect incremental steps defined as: unhappy or mildly depressed, a low level of happiness, a high level of happiness, and mania. The respondents were asked to "pick out the one statement in each group which best describes the way you have been feeling over the past week, including today." Information about internal consistency, reliability, and construct validity of the Persian translation of the instrument is provided by Alipour and Nor-bala (1999).

###### *Fordyce Happiness Inventory*

The Fordyce Happiness Inventory (Eysenck, 1990). This inventory was developed by Eysenck (1990) based on the work of Fordyce (1983). It comprises 45 items and has proved to have a high correlation with the degree of happiness in Abedi's study (2002). The items are divided into 15 sections, each with 3 items. Each of them is related to a cognitive or a behavioral variable. In fact, the Inventory assesses 14 behavioral and cognitive variables. Three items of the inventory measure happiness in general. The variable "expressing feelings" was added as a sixteenth variable. Thus, the inventory measured 15 cognitive and behavioral variables. They were as follows: be more active and keep busy, spend more time. Socializing, be productive at meaningful work, get better organized, stop worrying, lower expectations and aspirations, develop positive optimistic thinking, be present-oriented, work on a healthy personality, develop an outgoing social personality, be yourself, eliminate negative feelings and problems, close relationships, value happiness, and expressing feeling.

Therefore, the Farsi version of Fordyce Happiness Inventory has 48 items, and the scores range between 0 and 10 (maximum score = 480, minimum = 0).

In a research study, the Farsi version of Fordyce Happiness Inventory was used by Abedi (2002) and its content validity was approved by five university professors.

Abedi (2002) found that the Fordyce Inventory was adequate to differentiate depressed and normal students. The validity and reliability of the Farsi version was calculated by Jafari, et al. (2004). Content validity of the inventory was approved by ten university professors. Internal reliability, using Cronbach's alpha in a sample of university students ( $n=200$ ) was .92 and an 8-week test-retest reliability in sample of 50 participants was 0.70 (Jafari et al. 2004).

##### Procedure

Permission was obtained from the departments of Accounting University of Mashhad to collect necessary data. The instruments- both Oxford Happiness Inventory scale and Fordyce Happiness Inventory were distributed individually to the students in their respective department, where the participants were informed that filling out the questionnaire was voluntary and the information would be kept confidential. Sufficient time was given to the participants to fill up the questionnaire and later the researcher collected them back. The average time taken to answer both questionnaires was approximately 30 minutes. The data collection was done during the month of March 2009. All the statistical calculations were done through SPSS for windows (version 16).

## 5 Results

The findings of this study represented that 58.70 per cent of students were female and 41.30 per cent were male; 67.40 per cent of them were single and 32.60 per cent were married; the average age of the students were 22.91. Table 1 also shows that 84.80 per cent of participants were native and 15.20 per cent were non-native. Of the whole, 15.20 per cent of participants were lived in non-dormitory and 84.80 per cent of them were lived in dormitory.

Table 1. General Information of Participants

Variables	Type	Number	Percent		
				Upper 70	Mean Score
Gender	Female	270	58.70	Upper 70	69.60
	Male	190	41.30	Under 70	30.40
Marital Status	Single	310	67.40	Upper 25 years	13.00
	Married	150	32.60	Under 25 years	87.00
Living Condition	Native	390	84.80	Non-Dormitories	15.20
	Non-native	70	15.20	Dormitories	84.80
Status of dwelling	Dormitories	390	84.80	Upper 70	13.00
	Non-Dormitories	70	15.20	Under 70	87.00
Age	Upper 25 years	60	13.00	Upper 70	30.40
	Under 25 years	400	87.00	Under 70	69.60

The analyze of data showed that 10.90 per cent of students had lower level of happiness, 71.70 per cent had accepted level of happiness, and 17.40 per cent of students had of the best level of happiness. Also 10.90 percent of them had student job (part-time job at university) and the other had no job and just they were student (89.10 per cent).

The results of the study showed that there is no significant difference between the level of happiness and variables such as gender, marital status, living place, the type of activity, age, the number of family member, and terms of education (Table 2).

Table 2. The Results of the Tests

Score happiness variable		Number (percent)	Type of test
Gender	Female	58.70	P=0.650 Double T Test
	Male	41.30	P=22.77 df=45
Marital Status	Single	67.40	P=0.297 Double T test
	Married	32.60	P=23.10 df=45
Place	Native	84.80	P=0.132 Double T test
	Non-native	15.20	P=22.163 df=45
Status of dwelling	Dormitories	84.80	P=0.005 Double T test
	Non-dormitories	15.20	P=1.125 A7.0VA F=1/125
Activity	University student	89.10	P=0.373 one-way F=1/125 A7.0VA
	Student job	0.90	P=0.120 df=11
The number of family members	<3	37.00	P=2.095 df=36
	3-5	43.50	P=0.193 df=8
Mean score	>16	30.40	P=1.49
	14-16	39.20	P=0.193 df=8
Term of study		17.40	P=0.193 df=8

Analyze of data represented that there is a significant relationship between the level of happiness and the status of dwelling (Table 2).



## 6 Discussion

The results of the study represented that 10.09 per cent of the participants had lower level of happiness; this level of happiness as depression. So, majority of accounting students were in accepted level of happiness according to the results of this survey. In current study, there were no significant difference between happiness statue and gender. This result is in harmony with Fruncis et al. (2003).

In this study there is no significant difference between happiness and living place and marital statue. However, the results of the study represented that the level of happiness among single students is higher than the married ones. Also there is no significant study between happiness and the term of study, but there is significant difference between living statue and happiness. There is reason for this latter issue, because 84.80 per cent of students are native and they don't live in dormitory. It is necessary to say that it must be more researches in this area.

## 7 Conclusion

Universities are social labs of the most importance to develop competences knowledge and values. These will be decisive for thousands of young people who dedicate some years of their lives to the prosecution of a personal development project in these institutions. Findings from Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) revealed that happy people gain tangible benefits in many different life domains from their positive state of mind, including larger social rewards: higher odds of marriage and lower odds of divorce, more friends, stronger support, and richer social interactions (Harker & Keltner, 2001), superior work outcomes: greater creativity, increased productivity, higher quality of work (Staw, Sutton and Pelled, 1995), and more activity, energy, and flow (Csikszentmihalyi and Wong, 1991). Happy people are more likely to evidence greater self-control and self-regulatory and coping abilities (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002), to have a bolstered immune system (Dillon, et al. 1985) and even to live a longer life (Danner, et al. 2001). The literature suggests that happy persons tend to be relatively more cooperative, pro-social, charitable and "other-centered" (Isen, 1970). A happy person is likely to have low levels of fear, hostility, tension, anxiety, guilt and anger; high degrees of energy, vitality and activity; a high level of self-esteem and an emotionally stable personality; a strong social orientation; healthy, satisfying, warm love and social relationships; an active lifestyle with meaningful work; and to be relatively optimistic, worry-free, present-oriented and well-directed. Although one would be hard-pressed to condemn the life of someone with this sort of psychological profile, it is just that, a psychological profile.

The results of this study showed that there is no much as mush happiness among the accounting students. In general, based on the current research results 10.90 per cent had lower level of happiness and 71.70 per cent had accepted level of happiness and 17.40 per cent had the best level of happiness. So it is necessary to test the students' mental health in their entry to university. Also it is suggested that there should be introducing session before students entry in to university and the communicative skills session and the methods of problem solving is better to introduced in the first and second terms of the students study so that the level of educational fairs and the appearance of depression symbols can be protected.

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