

ARE PRONENESS TO HAPPINESS AND GRATITUDE ASSOCIATED WITH LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG TEACHING PERSONNEL?

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Abstract

Happiness and gratitude are associated with several indicators of a good life (e.g., health, pro-social behaviour, and relationships). Watkins (2014) states that the relationship of happiness and gratitude more specifically with life satisfaction, should not be taken lightly and deserves to be extensively studied. Human beings are quick to adapt to new circumstances. A quality that has helped us to survive and thrive. But it also means that the positive things that initially makes us happier soon become our new normal and we return to our old happiness baseline. However, researchers in the field of positive psychology have found that one can genuinely increase happiness and gratitude with overall satisfaction with life. The aim of the current study is to examine the relationship of happiness and gratitude with life satisfaction. The study involved N =150 school teachers between 25 and 55 years of age. For the measurement of psychological variables the following research tools were used: Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, Gratitude Questionnaire and Satisfaction with Life Scale. The results showed that happiness does not show significant relationship with life satisfaction and gratitude shows significant relationship with life satisfaction at 0.05 respectively. Further happiness can be studied through mediation analysis to check if happiness is moderating the impact. The findings yield practical implications for teaching personnels. By improving working conditions and other related factors, teachers will feel more happy and grateful, thereby reinforcing life satisfaction and allowing an upward spiral in human wellness. There is evidence that certain character strengths may serve as protective factors against the negative effects which will enable to function for school's success (Park, 2004).

Keywords: happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, teaching personnel.

INTRODUCTION

Positive emotions are a prime indicator of flourishing and they can be cultivated or learned to improve wellbeing (Fredrickson, 2001). When individuals can explore, savor and integrate positive emotions into daily life (and visualizations of future life), it improves habitual thinking and acting. Positive emotions can undo the harmful effects of negative emotions and promote resilience (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Happiness is commonly understood how much one likes the life, or more formally, the degree to which one evaluates one's life as a whole positively (Veenhoven, 2009). Lucas and Diener (2008) stated that the balance of positive to negative emotions is a powerful determinant of happiness. Happiness is a remarkable trait for people and affects mental health status and is influenced by the integrity of mental capabilities (Fowler & Christakis, 2008). Happiness is a key factor of human daily life and was introduced as a main component of health by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009). Seligman employs a morally-neutral definition of happiness. Thus, in measuring happiness levels he relies on self-reports about levels of overall satisfaction (Seligman, 2002 a). In developing a theory to address this, Seligman (2012) selected five components that people pursue because they are intrinsically motivating and they contribute to wellbeing. These elements are pursued for their own sake and are defined and measured independently of each other (Seligman, 2012). Additionally, the five components includes both eudaimonic and hedonic components, setting well being theory (WBT) apart from other theories of wellbeing. These five elements or components (PERMA; Seligman, 2012) are: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishments. The PERMA model makes up WBT, where each dimension works in concert to give rise to a higher order construct that predicts the flourishing of groups, communities, organizations, and nations (Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern, & Seligman, 2011). Research has shown significant positive associations between each of the PERMA components and physical health, vitality, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and commitment within organizations (Kern, Waters, Alder, & White, 2014). PERMA is also a better predictor of psychological distress than previous reports of distress (Forgeard et al., 2011). This means that proactively working on the components of PERMA not only increases aspects of wellbeing, but also decreases psychological distress. Happiness and life satisfaction matter to individuals. Happiness is most closely associated with

emotions, feelings or moods (Gustafsson, Johansson, & Palmer, 2009; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Life satisfaction is concerned with people's judgments about the quality of their life, which might include evaluations of their work or personal relationships (Brickman & Campbell, 1971; Coburn, 2004; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

By reviewing the present literature, it has been observed that happiness in relation to life satisfaction have not yet been researched enough especially among the teaching personnel. Over the past two decades scientists have made great strides toward understanding the biological roots of gratitude, the various benefits that accompany gratitude, and the ways that people can cultivate feelings of gratitude in their day-to-day lives. Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough define gratitude as a two-step process:

a) recognizing that one has obtained a positive outcome and b) recognizing that there is an external source for this positive outcome. While most of these positive benefits come from other people hence gratitude's reputation as an "other-oriented" emotion, people can also experience gratitude toward God, fate, nature, etc. Life satisfaction and gratitude are important for living a good life. The benefits of both constructs have been extensively documented. They include, for instance, better mental and physical health, more pro-social behaviour, high-quality relationships, and more meaningful lives (Wood et al., 2010; Diener and Tay, 2017). Life satisfaction (Diener, 1984) is a key predictor of well-being (Helliwell et al., 2013) and a fundamental construct for advising on public policies (Diener et al., 2009); the OECD, e.g., has used life satisfaction to assess the progress of the nations through the Better Life Index (OECD, n.d.). Gratitude, a tendency to appreciate the good and positive, is an equally essential nutrient for people flourishing (Wood et al., 2010).

Research has extensively shown a positive link between gratitude and life satisfaction (Froh et al., 2009; Wood et al., 2010; Alkozei et al., 2018). However, how both constructs relate to each other over time has remained unknown until now. Previous studies have only explored the link from gratitude to life satisfaction, whereas the reverse association has not been tested yet. Drawing on Watkins (2004) seminal article, we theorized a reciprocal relationship between both constructs and thus a "circle of virtue". Gratitude has been conceptualized from different perspectives (McCullough et al., 2002). The most comprehensive approach—and the one we used in this paper—defines gratitude as a life orientation (Wood et al., 2010). From this perspective, people may feel grateful because they are alive, because they are able to walk in a beautiful park, or just from the appreciations of their abilities (Wood et al., 2010). Research has found that higher gratitude is associated with a better life, indexed as higher positive affect, self-esteem, positive emotions, optimism, autonomy, environmental mastery, relationships, personal growth, meaning in life, and self-acceptance. Gratitude has also been associated with lower ill-being in terms of negative affect, depression, anxiety, phobia, bulimia, addictions, negative emotions, dysfunctions, anger, and hostility. Gratitude allows the accessibility and recollection of pleasant life events. Seidlitz and Diener (1993) states that a key aspect of happiness is the accessibility of positive memories. Following this argument, Watkins (2004) argues that gratitude should enhance the retrievability of positive experiences by increasing elaboration of positive information. Further, the increased availability of positive life events should lead to more positive judgments of people's lives and thus to higher life satisfaction. Gratitude is significantly associated with better social relationships (Wood et al., 2010). Social relationships are strongly associated with higher life satisfaction (Unanue et al., 2014). Gratitude increases life satisfaction through the prevention of depressive episodes. Research has shown that depression has a strong inverse association with gratitude. Because of that, it has been argued that the lack of gratitude may be a vulnerability factor for depression and thus of lower life satisfaction. When people feel grateful for a situation, especially when the situation is seen as a gift, they are more likely to feel positive emotions and this in turn protects them from a variety of mental disorders and increases their life satisfaction and happiness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). This process then produces an upward spiral in human wellness (Fredrickson, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Objective: To examine the relationship of happiness and gratitude with life satisfaction.

Hypothesis

To understand the relationship between happiness and life satisfaction.

To understand the relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction.

Happiness and gratitude will be predictor of life satisfaction.

A sample of N=150 school teachers were collected ranging from 25 to 55 years of age. The respondents were both male & female. The scales used in the study were gratitude questionnaire (GQ 6) McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. (2002), Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills) and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

The Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) is a 6-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess individual differences in the proneness to experience gratitude in daily life. Each item is answered using a 7-point scale ranging from "1 as strongly disagree" to "7 as strongly agree".

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire is developed by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills. Each item is answered using an 6-point scale which ranges from “1” strongly disagree to “6” strongly agree. The 29-item Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) is a widely-used scale for assessment of personal happiness. While its psychometric properties are acknowledged to be acceptable, it presents scores on an ordinal scale. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a 5-item measure of a respondent’s level of life satisfaction. Each item is answered using an 7-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

DATA ANALYSIS

SPSS was used for the statistical analysis. Correlation and regression analysis was computed to determine the associations of happiness and gratitude with life satisfaction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Mean and SD

Variables	Mean	SD	N
Happiness	4.5667	1.05	150
Gratitude	26.5200	5.82	150
Life Satisfaction	17.6000	3.67	150

The above table shows Mean, SD and N for happiness, gratitude and life satisfaction among teaching personnels.

Table 2: shows correlation of happiness, gratitude and life satisfaction.

	Happiness	Gratitude	Life Satisfaction
Happiness Pearson Correlation	1	.709**	.050
N	150	150	150
Gratitude Pearson Correlation		1	.187*
N	150	150	150
Life Satisfaction Pearson Correlation			1
N	150	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

From the above table, it is understood that happiness does not show a significant relationship with life satisfaction and gratitude shows significant relationship with life satisfaction at 0.05 respectively.

Table 3: Shows details of coefficients.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	sig
	B	Std. Error			
(constant)	15.144	1.457		10.397	.000
1 Happiness	-.578	.399	-.165	-1.450	.149
Gratitude	.192	.072	.304	2.668	.008

Linear regression analysis was carried. The above table indicates that Happiness is not a predictor of life satisfaction but Gratitude predicts life satisfaction. The statistical value given in the table indicates is $t = -1.450$ and 2.668 . The partial correlations are $r = -.165$ and $.304$. The hypothesis stating that there will be a relationship between happiness and life satisfaction shows no relationship between the two variables. Happiness is predicted mostly by intrinsic stimuli, leading for life satisfaction are the extrinsic, followed by intrinsic stimuli. Some strategies that can be used to increase happiness are setting meaningful goals for oneself that provide structure and purpose, giving a sense of identity and increases self esteem. Building intrinsic motivation, rather than just relying upon doing things to please others, seeking healthy challenges, stretching ones abilities beyond ones comfort zones to realize their potential and appreciating what one already has rather than focusing only upon what one desires to have.

The other hypothesis stating that there will be a relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction showed a strong relationship between the two variables. Gratitude is defined as a life orientation (Wood et al., 2010). From this perspective, people may feel grateful because they are alive, because they are able to walk in a beautiful park, or just from the appreciations of their abilities (Wood et al., 2010). Cross-sectional studies have given strong support for the relationships between gratitude and life satisfaction. Watkins (2004) offered several suggestions about which psychological mechanisms are involved in the prospective link from gratitude to life satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

We come to know that gratitude plays a vital role in satisfaction with life. Happiness needs to be explored more. We the researchers and practitioners should help in building these positive emotions. However, other methodologies like experimental study can be done to determine the capacity of happiness and gratitude to see its impact on one's life.

LIMITATIONS

There were less male participants as compared to female participants. Data was collected only from private schools. The results of the study only focus on teaching personnel, but needs to be studied across other sectors.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Other positive emotions can be studied to see its impact across individuals and in different sectors. Mediation analysis can be further done to explore happiness. It may be found that being high on gratitude may lead to happiness. Happiness being happy can lead to more satisfaction with life. Happiness may be moderating the impact.

IMPLICATION

The results have important implications to research regarding the understanding of happiness and gratitude in one's life. Mental health professionals and researchers should try different ways to enhance mood, satisfaction with relationships, achieve goals and self-perceived ability to cope with one's daily life.

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