



A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF HAPPINESS AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND ADULTS

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Abstract: Happiness is a conceptual framework of positive affect that is a mixture of joy, cheerfulness and contentment. Happiness across the life span shows different thoughts across ages. Most college students recalled college life as compared to work life to be the best as it denoted less responsibility, more freedom and fun (Baumgardner, 1989, 2001). This study highlights the aspects of Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions (Barbara Fredrickson, 2001) that shows how positive emotions help in building physical, psychological and social resources. This further channelizes the thinking process and promotes well-being. The present study which aimed at finding out the perception of Happiness among Adolescents and Adults was conducted on a sample of 40 participants. Explorative questions were built on the hedonic and eudaimonic views with the application of the interview method and focus group discussion. The sessions revolved around ten modified happiness themes. The findings of the study indicate that differences in perspectives exist between the adolescents and adults with regard to materialistic and non-materialistic aspects, individualistic and collectivistic cultures, religion, internal and external happiness, relationships and autonomy.

Keywords: Happiness, Perception, Adolescence, Adults.

The term happiness is a subjective phenomenon. Certain human needs must be satisfied in order to achieve an emotional state that will further lead to a long term progress to happiness. Studies done in the field of positive psychology by Martin Seligman showed that humans experience happiness due to various reasons. First is pleasure that denotes to the accomplishment of anything that pleases any of the five senses. Second is the experience of an enjoyable and challenging activity like in terms of engagement. Third are relationships that carve our social ties in the environment. Fourth is the sense of belongingness to something that is greater than individuals that gives more meaning. And fifth is the sense of accomplishment of goal (Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006).

The environmental factors that contribute to happiness are the individual income, labour market status, health, family, social relationships, moral values, etc (Carr, 2004; Selim, 2008; Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2003). In the process of understanding happiness two main theoretical frameworks or

approaches that are explored are hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to happiness (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002). Hedonic wellbeing is based on the perspectives of increased pleasure and decreased pain that contributes to happiness that contains both the affective and the cognitive components. (Carruthers & Hood, 2004). Eudaimonic wellbeing relies on Maslow's ideas of self-actualization and Rogers concept of the fully functioning person and their personal wellbeing (Keyes et al., 2002; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Dr. Martin Seligman identified three types of happiness namely, a pleasant life that consist of positive emotions. Second is 'an engaged life' where people are soaked in their experiences, strengths, work, leisure and relationships. Third is 'a meaningful life' that denotes the purpose and use of all the strengths we have. The PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) was also introduced by Seligman that highlighted the five core elements of happiness like positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. Positive emotions

highlight the strengths of optimism, pleasure and enjoyment.

One component of 'positive emotions' in happiness plays a dominant role as explained by Barbara Fredrickson in the 'Broaden-and Build Theory'. This theory highlights the mechanisms behind positive emotions and the evolutionary reasons behind it. She hypothesized on the broadening effect on the momentary thought-action repertoire and further discards autonomic responses for new ways of functioning and acting. Thus based on this broadening aspect we tend to build lasting physical, psychological and social resources that are needed for our survival.

Twenge, Sheman and Lyubomirsky (2010) explored on the indicators of happiness and came up with a finding that adolescents reported greater views of happiness and life satisfaction than their predecessors. Adults over 30 years were less happy in recent years. Adolescent's happiness is dependent upon fulfilment of the developmental task that is subjected to each age.

According to a study by Sharma and Jasleen (2017) two predictors of happiness was explored, one was resilience and the other was parent adolescent attachment and found that most of the adolescents perceived average level of happiness and they also showed that resilience was positively correlated with happiness. Demir (2010) stated that relationship experiences with mother and best friend were predictors of happiness for those without romantic partners. While for those sharing a bond with a romantic partner revealed three factors, namely, mother-child relationship quality, romantic relationship quality and conflict were predictors of happiness. Lewis, Maltby and Day (2005) found that religiosity is related to happiness and psychological well-being. Khan and Khan (2017) found that grit, life satisfaction and happiness was positively related among adults.

The present study has been taken up to explore the different perceptions of happiness with respect to adolescents and adults. The aim of the study was to determine the perception of Happiness

among Adolescents and Adults of Bangalore. With the help of literature reviews, some of these questions were framed that sketches the current research and efficiently discriminates the variables.

1. What is the importance of happiness among adolescents and adults?
2. How does the perception of happiness vary across the developmental ages?
3. What are factors which may lead to happiness according to adolescents and adults?
4. Is there any difference in perception of happiness among adolescents and adults?

Hypothesis

There is significant difference in the perception of happiness among adults and adolescents.

Method

A representative sample of 40 individuals was selected from two groups namely adolescents and adults included individuals by using purposive sampling technique. For the present study a semi-structured interview was formulated. Explorative questions were built on the hedonic and eudaimonic views with the application of the interview method and focus group discussion. The sessions revolved around ten modified happiness themes. The themes are designed to understand the differences in perception of happiness among adults and adolescence

Qualitative Analysis- Focus Group Discussion

The aim of focus group discussion was an attempt to do a qualitative analysis of the newer perceptions, thoughts, stereotypes, moral reasoning, opinions, and attitudes of participants that represent the sample group. A group of twenty participants from two sample sections (each) of adults and adolescents were taken to facilitate an open discussion about the perspectives of happiness in the Indian context. Disclosure was nurtured in an open and spontaneous format by the researcher. The goal was to generate different ideas and opinions from varied participants in the allotted time. Here every individualistic idea will cultivate in the thinking of other members in the group.

Some of the views that emerged in the Focus group discussion in terms to happiness are developed. The themes that emerged in the focus group discussion by adolescents and adults were elaborated as follows:

Materialistic or non-materialistic aspects of happiness

Adolescents stressed on the materialistic aspects that lead to happiness. It's the achievement of newer gadgets and more pocket money. Also in terms of grades and part time money that boosts their self confidence of achieving more academically.

Adults viewed happiness to be non-materialistic that contains insightful experiences. They stressed on bringing a balance in their lives by dividing their attention in work and family.

Specific resources that contributes to happiness:

Adolescents spoke about the physicality of individuals around. This helps them to challenge themselves in terms of reaching the peak of being healthy. External aspects of happiness have been greatly stressed. Adolescents believed in a balance between happiness being more mechanical as everything comes with a condition and nothing is free and unconditional in the sense that a parent's love is more unconditional.

While adults revealed the importance of internal quality like believing in courtship, spirituality, love and at the same time being practical in life and this reveals their happiness. It comes from one's attitude and zeal in life.

Happiness in the context of individualistic or collectivist cultures

Adolescents believed in collectively working towards one central goal. They revealed the importance of participation in activities that would bring about a change in relationships and also build self-confidence.

While adults believed in individualistic work where each person gets to know their own capacity and strengths and weaknesses. It helped them get an achievement of self satisfaction and build healthy relationships.

External and internal happiness

Adolescents stressed on the external aspects of happiness and are more open about their lifestyles and also the source from where its availability occurs is stressed on.

Adult group spoke about the internal aspects to happiness. The practice of yoga and meditation would bring in more insights to life and increase the power of relaxation into the mind.

Real and unreal things that qualifies happiness

Adolescents viewed happiness here to be unreal as whenever any situations that is challenging cropped up, it made them believe in miracles to happen. They believed that when in a stressful situation sometimes everything become all right. This is due to the miracles which they feel will happen again.

Adults stressed on the concept of sexual comfort that qualifies happiness. Some of them spoke about changing partners and this releases a thought in their minds as to "stress is relieved".

Relationships and Happiness

Adolescents viewed happiness to come from friendly accomplishments and relationships also start with this. They feel friends are beings who are pure and they help their peers by being there when needed.

While adults spoke about relationships in the family that is woven with commitment and intimacy. They spoke again about multiple relationships and how easy it is to move on because they do not expect any kind of material or non-material things. Exploring with multiple partners is not a crime but it leads to knowing different kinds of people.

Hence, hypothesis that "There is significant difference in the perception of happiness among adults and adolescents" is accepted.

Conclusion

To conclude happiness as per adolescents is more collectivistic, materialistic, mostly the stress is on the external aspects and also they find happiness in unreal things on the other hand adults perception of happiness is more self centred, individualistic, non-material and they give more importance to the

internal aspects of happiness and are more realistic than the adolescent group.

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