Research Article

EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND LIFE ORIENTATION (OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM) STUDENTS OF FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF ISFAHAN

*Kiyanzad S.[1], Kajbaf MB.[2] and Phayazi M.[3]
[1]*Department of Clinical Psychology, University of Isfahan, Isfahan Science and Research Branch, Isfahan, Iran*
[2]*Department of Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Educational Science, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran*
[3]*Department of Clinical Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Neyshabur, Iran*
*Author for Correspondence

ABSTRACT
Several studies show that optimism and pessimism can be associated with different aspects of mental health. See new cognitive and positive psychology supports the importance of optimism and pessimism in different aspects of life, trying to relate these variables with different parameters to measure personality. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between happiness and pessimism. The present study is correlational. In this study, 200 students of Isfahan University were selected by cluster sampling method. The instruments used in this study were: Life Orientation Questionnaire (LOT) and Fordyce Happiness Inventory. Data correlation analysis and stepwise regression were used. The results showed that the correlation between the most significant components of the Fordyce with the direction of life. The results showed that the total score significantly to the prediction of happiness are happiness and life orientation account for about 12% of the variance.

Keywords: *Positive Psychology, Psychological Well-Being, Happiness, Life Orientation*

INTRODUCTION
In the last fifty years, a majority of clinical psychologists have focused on victomology and treatment of mental disabilities (Carver, 2006). In this regards, a variety of approaches such as psychoanalysis or cognitive-behavioral therapy and so forth have been developed and extended to understand and treat mental disorders. Yet, nowadays, emerging movement of positive psychology has grounded on this basis that the psychology has not just mentioned as focus on diseases and treatment has not just focused on disabilities (Seligman, 1998). Yet, psychology has more likely sought to increase happiness, mental health and scientific study on role of personal strengths and positive social systems in improving mental and physical health among individuals and communities (Carver, 2006). This area seeks scientific studies to understand the man's experiences from sense of loss, suffering, disease to prosperity, health, well-being and happiness of people (Estephan & Alex, 2006). For this, positive psychologists have specified a new characterization system named Character Strengths and Virtues versus Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders at six areas to detect and characterize the abilities which act against diseases in the man and have grounded different intervention approaches on it (Angle, 2004). Seligman *et al.,* (2005) started studying positive psychology as a complementary for deficit-based approach in psychology for the first time in the United States (Carver, 2006) and have conducted a variety studies on what are mental health and happiness and how they are developed and improved (Diener, 2000; Suh *et al.,* 1997; Horris & Lightsey, 2003). Diener (2000) examined concept of happiness and the structures related to it methodically and considered the term "mental well-being" as the substitute for happiness (Eid & Larsen, 2008). Mental well-being has two components of cognitive well-being and affective well-being (Philips, 2006). Mental well-being refers to a scientific name on how the individuals' assessment with their life is. This assessment is made based on general judgment about satisfaction with different aspects of life and/or based on individuals' affective states. Mental well-being has three major components including Life satisfaction, Positive Affect and Negative Affect, that is, the more life satisfaction and positive affect and the less negative affect, the mental well-being and satisfaction will

Research Article

increased in the person (Diener *et al.,* 1997). All people seek happiness for themselves and the people around them. Great scholars of ancient Greece such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle have known happiness correlated with health, wealth and ups and downs of life, which in their viewpoint happiness does not associate to a moment of life, but associates to all the life and/or life direction (Noddings, 2005). Concept of happiness might seem ambiguous, but Argyle (2004) believes that happiness implies being at happiness state or other positive affects. In other words, it implies being satisfied with your life and lack of the third component which is lack of depression, anxiety or other negative affects. He has considered the term "mental well-being" as an alternative for happiness. The individuals who gain high score at happiness scales are happy and optimistic, satisfied with their existence and knew their life valuable and kept peace in their connection with the world; in contrary, those who have gained less score are pessimistic and sad, remained hopeless (Aysink, 1990). Fordyce (2000) believed that happiness is just an affect. Happiness refers to a positive affect which is defined by means of prosperity, sense of well-being, satisfaction and etc. as there are a variety of meanings for happiness in literature review, it has different meanings among people. For instance, happiness can be assumed as the meaning of general positive mood, a general assessment about life satisfaction and spending a good life. Argyle (2004) believed in positive relationships with others, beginning purposive in life, personal growth and loving others as the components of happiness in addition to the components mentioned above. Diener (2004) associated happiness to how individuals assess their life. From his point of view, the assessment by a person from his life can be in two ways as follows:

1-Cognitive Assessment: This refers to that kind of assessment made by the person consciously about life or about the particular areas of life such as work, leisure, marriage and so on.

2- Affective Assessment refers to a kind of assessment made in form of feelings and affects such as the judgment about desirable affects (joy) or undesirable affects (depression) and feelings and affects that the person experiences in his interaction with his life. Eysenck (1990) defined happiness as maximum positive affect and minimum negative affect. Nowadays, in literature of psychology, the term "psychology of mental well-being" has been considered consistent with the term "happiness", believed that it outperforms other terms as it encompasses numerous concepts. Mental well-being refers to a scientific name on how the individuals assess their life (Diener *et al.,* 1997). Indeed, happiness refers to an assessment made by person about himself and his life and encompasses the factors such as life satisfaction, lack of depression and anxiety with different aspects in form of affects and recognitions (Diener *et al.,* 2002; Diener *et al.,* 1998). A variety of studies have been conducted about happiness and variables of personality that some are as follows. Lucas *et al.,* (1996) perceived that there is a significant relationship between optimism and scales of happiness such as life satisfaction and negative and positive affect. Further, results of research by Hills (2001) indicated that there is a significant relationship between optimism and happiness. Further, their results indicated that positivism predicts happiness significantly.

Carver & Scheier (1981) perceived that optimistic individuals have used problem-focused coping in exposure with problematic situations and have searched social support and also have focused on positive aspects of negative events, yet pessimistic individuals have used mechanism of denial. Optimism is the most substantial personality construct which has been developed from positive cognitions. Taylor and his colleague (1992) perceived that optimistic students compared to pessimistic students more likely believed in activity and coped with problems and experienced higher levels of adjustment. With regard to characteristics of happy individuals, Fordyce (1997) suggested the skills for increasing happiness in normal individuals. Fordyce (1983) called this program as the principles with fourteen principles. Although a variety of studies have been conducted about the relationship between happiness, optimism and pessimism, there have been numerous limitations including limited sample group, use of unauthentic instruments and lack of study on the relationship between the components of these variables regarding the investigations by the researcher, so that this has obliged the researcher to conduct this research same as the previous studies and modify the existing limitations in them in Iran. Therefore, this research intends to examine the relationship between life orientation questionnaire which measures optimism and pessimism and sixteen components of happiness.

Research Article

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Method

Descriptive and relational method has been used as the method used in this research. In the present research, the relationship between happiness and its components and life orientation is examined among students. The statistical population consists of all the students studying in university of Isfahan during 2010-2011, among which 200 students have been selected as the sample group via multistage clustering sampling method. The sample size was calculated via Cochran method to ensure about adequacy of sample size. The data used in this research included those data which have been obtained from implementation of two life and happiness orientation questionnaires.

Instruments

Life Orientation Test

The Life Orientation Test (LOT) was developed to assess individual differences in generalized optimism versus pessimism. This scale which consists of eight questions assess the individuals' expectations from life consequences, included four questions with positive term and four questions with negative term. Questions 1, 3, 4 and 7 have been positive and scored directly and questions 2, 5, 6 and 8 have been negative and scored inversely. The respondents should give response to four-item questions with degrees of totally agree, agree, disagree and totally disagree which encompass scores 1 to 4, that ultimately sum of obtained scores are summed with each other (Carver & Scheier, 1987). Mean of the scores of scale, standard deviation and reliability of scale have been obtained equal to 2.98 and 0.43 with Cronbach's alpha (0.85). In Iran, validity and reliability of this questionnaire has been confirmed by Arizi (2004), so that the results from their research have indicated that such questionnaire enjoys a suitable validity and reliability among Iranian sample group.

Fordyce Happiness Questionnaire

Happiness skills program has been largely used in different Research and counseling situations and educational workshops (Eysenck, 1990; Fordyce, 1985-1988; Seligman, 2002; Abedi, 2003; Jaffari *et al.,* 2004). Therefore, assessing these skills can have a huge effect on precise assessment of educational and research activities.

However, there are different instruments to assess extent of general happiness including Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle, 1383), Balanced Affect Measure (Bradburn, 1969), Index of General affect and so forth, no one has assessed happiness skills. The questionnaire used in this research has been formulated based on fourteen principles of Fordyce's scale and studies by Jaffari *et al.,* (2004) and normalized by Liaghatdar *et al.,* (2006) assessing fifteen skills in addition to general happiness, in which the component of expression of feelings as an effective skill in happiness has been added to fourteen principles of Fordyce's scale regarding studies by Jaffari *et al.,* (2004). Fordyce happiness questionnaire consists of 48 items with 10 points that their points are scored from 0 to 10. Each of three questions assesses one of happiness skills which three questions have been also considered to assess general happiness. With regard to findings of research by Abedi (2003) and Jaffari *et al.,* (2004), the questions have been adjusted with Iranian culture, developed the present questionnaire. Content validity of instruments was confirmed by five experts at the field of behavioral sciences and reliability of instruments have been calculated via Cronbach's alpha in a sample group consisting of 200 students in university of Isfahan (92%); further validity of retest has been obtained equal to 0.7 after two month in a group consisting of 50 students (normalization of Fordyce happiness questionnaire, Liaghatdar, 2006).

Data Analysis

Correlation analysis and regression analysis have been used to analyze data and test hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Findings to test hypotheses have been represented in two sections that their results have been represented in tables 2 and 3.
Correlation coefficients

Research Article

Correlation coefficients between life orientation and happiness components have been represented in table 1.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum and Maximum of Happiness Components

Happiness Components	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Total Score of Happiness	18/53	4/65	8	30
Activity	17/20	6/09	2	30
Social Relationships	18/52	6/20	1	30
Removal of Negative Affects	19/20	6/23	7	30
Optimism	20/66	6/30	4	30
Expression of Feeling	18/37	5/50	8	29
Low Expectation Level	12/88	6/07	0	28
Oneself	28/80	5/67	2	30
Intimacy	20/55	5/16	3	30
Planning	19/33	5/91	2	30
Attention to Present Language	17/91	6/35	3	30
Give Priority to Happiness	20/54	8/88	0	30
Creativity	20/90	5/57	7	30
Avoidance from Anxiety	18/68	6/28	0	29
Nurture Healthy Personality	20/71	4/65	9	30
Nurture Social Personality	28/77	5/35	3	30

Table 2: Correlation Coefficients between the Life Orientation Test (LOT) and Score of Happiness and Components of Fordyce Happiness Questionnaire

Total Score of Happiness	0/25 *	Attention to Present Language	0/24*
Activity	0/48 **	Give Priority to Happiness	0/34**
Social Relationships	0/36 **	Creativity	0/35**
Removal of Negative Affects	0/35 **	Avoidance from Anxiety	-0/39**
Optimism	0/54 **	Nurture Healthy Personality	0/28**
Expression of Feeling	0/23 *	Nurture Social Personality	0/29**
Low Expectation Level	0/28*		
Oneself	0/25*		
Intimacy	0/25*		
Planning	0/25*		

According to table, except for avoidance from anxiety which has had an inverse relationship with life orientation, other components have a positive direct relationship with life orientation. Most of correlation coefficients have been estimated in range of low to average, but they have been significant. The highest relationship exists between life orientation and optimism and then activity. Optimism has an average relationship with life orientation, such that 54% of changes in life orientation depend on components of optimism and pessimism.

In table 3, suitable fits have been proposed to estimate life orientation using some components of happiness. It should be noted that the model is neglected to be represented in case components of happiness have no significant effect in regression model. In each attribute, the most suitable model with the highest determination coefficient has been proposed.

Research Article

Table 3: Regression Coefficients of Happiness and its Components to Predict Life Orientation

Independent Variable	Type of Model	B_0	B_1	B_2	B_3	Sig	R^2
Total Score of Happiness	Cubic	38/08	-2/46	0/119	-0/002	0/009	0/113
Activity	Linear	18/706	0/275	-	-	0/0001	0/23
Social Relationships	Cubic	18/215	0/965	0/069	0/002	0/0001	0/182
Removal of Negative Affects	Linear	18/97	0/23	-	-	0/0001	0/12
Optimism	Linear	17/284	0/297	-	-	0/0001	0/30
Give Priority to Happiness	Linear	19/351	0/199	-	-	0/001	0/12
Creativity	Linear	18/842	0/22	-	-	0/0001	0/12
Avoidance from Anxiety	Cubic	28/353	0/933	0/052	-0/001	0/0001	0/19

As observed, despite significance of fitted models, determination coefficients of models are at low limit. The highest determination coefficient to estimate life orientation was estimated using the feature of giving priority to happiness (R^2=0.30). Extent of activity with determination coefficient (0.23) can estimate about 27% of the changes in life orientation.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present research intends to examine the relationship between components of happiness and life orientation. In general, findings of this research indicate that the correlation between most of components and life orientation is at average level. Results from this study are consistent with the results proposed by Lucas *et al.,* (1996) and Hills *et al.,* (2001). There is an inverse relationship between life orientation and avoidance from anxiety. To elaborate this relationship, it can say that happiness can influenced different aspects of life, mentioned as follow. Studies indicate that satisfied individuals are those one who develop their life at three orientations: 1-positive affect and joy, 2- enthusiasm with life, 3-seeking meaning in life, among which seeking meaning in life has more effect on happiness (Seligman *et al.,* 2005).

Schwartz & Strack (1999) believed that happy individuals are those who have bias in process information for happiness and optimism, that is, they process and interpret information in a way to lead to happiness.

Haller (2006) in a research entitled "how social relationships and structures can cause misery and happiness: a comparative analysis" examined extent of mental well-being with questions about happiness and life satisfaction. The central core of this research has lied on this fact that happiness and life satisfaction must be understood as an outcome of interactive processes between individuals characteristics on one hand and distress, social relationships and large social structures on the other hand. The research has centered on determination of small and large social structures in happiness and life satisfaction. It has been assumed that suitable social relationships and success and sociocultural conditions such as religion and altruistic behaviors affect life satisfaction and happiness; further it is trust that higher levels of economic successes likewise social structures such as welfare and social democracy affect these two variables. A comparison of results from regression analysis of happiness among 41 countries indicated that both major hypotheses and secondary hypotheses are confirmed; further it is much clear that happiness and life satisfaction are two separate concepts. Findings indicated that small social structures and sociocultural factors raise integration and unity in rise of more happiness. Despite previous research, this research specified that factor of large social structure like economic status and wealth of communities, distribution of wealth, rate and state of welfare and political liberties associate to levels of

Research Article

life satisfaction. In this regards, the ability for coping with life is what must be examined which includes mental health, financial satisfaction, social communications and economic attitude of individuals towards future which must be paid into attention at both individual and social levels; these factors increase by means of large social entities and structures such as equal distribution, democracy and large social entities.

In a research by Moore *et al.,* (2005), general level of life satisfaction and perception from mental well-being was examined among 227 Chinese citizens. Results indicated that there is an average degree of life satisfaction among this group; further it was specified that social communications and desirable communications play a major role in evaluation of individuals' perception from mental well-being. Demographic variables indicated that adults have higher life satisfaction level than youth. Munoz &Lopez (2005) conducted a study to examine the relationship between mental profile of depressed patients and their depression and life quality in Latin America, for which the study was conducted on 988 patients with depression. Results indicated that physical symptoms have a significant effect on quality of life; further greater severity of physical symptoms are followed by increase in severity of depression and decrease in quality of life.

Thus, two emotional and physical symptoms must be drawn into attention to treat depression, and the mental measurement of quality of life must be given a priority as an important outcome in treatment in new psychiatric treatment. Leonardi *et al.,* (2005) in a research aiming at examining top-down and bottom-up outlook in mental well-being of individuals during 1995-2000 specified that concept of life satisfaction is more likely influenced of top-down rather than bottom-up outlook. This implies that general life satisfaction is a stronger predictor for life satisfaction rather than bottom factors such as feeling of competition at work, marriage and so forth. In a study by Suldo and his colleague (2008) entitled "Looking beyond psychopathology: The dual- factor model of mental health in youth", positive indices of health such as mental well-being were examined with negative indices of disease such as psychopathology in continuum of mental health.

In sample size (349), findings supported significance of two-factor model in mental health, which these two factors were shown as two sides of continuum. Rest of findings specified that high mental well-being has a high importance in optimal function at adulthood such as having a total mental health (high internal well-being and low mental pathology). Further, this factor associates to better social support at family, less physical health and social health than group exposed to vulnerability with clinical levels of mental pathology. To sum up, with regard to findings of present research, it can conclude that happiness and prosperity have a positive significant relationship with life orientation and quality of life among individuals and these findings are consistent with the studies mentioned above. As mentioned in the studies, numerous social and individual reasons have contributed in mental well-being and happiness of individuals that such factors can directly and indirectly affect life orientation of individuals through the variables such as happiness. The limitations of the present research include limited research to population of students and low sample size. It is suggested to conduct the present research in other samples with larger sample size; if possible it is suggested to use structural equation methods to propose model in this context so as to display direct and indirect relationships.

REFERENCES
Argyle M (2004). *Psychology of Happiness*, translated by Masoud Gohari Anaraki and colleagues, second edition, (Isfahan: University Jihad Publication, Isfahan Branch).
Jaffari E, Abedi MR and Liaghatdar MJ (2004). *Evaluation of Happiness among University Students and its Related Factors*. (University of Isfahan, Isfahan)
Abedi MR (2003). Cognitive-behavioral Fordyce training on happiness, anxiety, depression and social relations of the students. Abstract of week study, University of Isfahan 17-15.
Abedi MJ and Jafari MR (2007). Standardization of Happiness - list of the students.
Angla L (2004). *Positive Psychology in Clinical Practice,* Published online review in Advance on December17. (Positive Psychology Center, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Research Article

Aspinwall LG & Taylor SE (1992). Modeling cognitive adaptation: Alongitudinal hnvestigation of the impact of individual. Taylor- differences and coping college adjustment and performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **63** 989-1003.

Bradburn NM (1969). *The Structure of Psychological Well- Being*, (Chicago Aldine).

Carver CS & Scheier MF (1981). *Attention and Self- Regulation:* A Control-Theory Approach to Human Behavior, (New York: Springer- Verlag).

Diener E & Suh EM (1998). Subjective well-being and age: An international analysis. In K. W. Schaie & M. P, Lawton (edition). *Annual Review of Gerontology and Geriatrics,* (New York: Springer).

Diener E & Seligman MEP (2004). Beyond money: Toward and economy of well- being. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* **5** 1-31.

Diener E & Biswas- Diener R (2002). Will money increases subjective wellbeing? *Social Indicators Research* **57** 119-69.

Diener E & Oishi S (2000). Money and happiness: Income and subjective well- being across nations. In. E. Diener & E. M. Suh (edition), *Culture and Subjective Well- Being* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press) **1** 85-218.

Diener E, Suh E and Oishi S (1997). Recent finding on subjective well-being. *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology* **24**(1) 25-41.

Eid M & Larson RJ (2008). *The Science of Subjective Well-Being*, (New York, Guilford Press).

Eysink M (1990). *Happiness: Facts and Myths,* (Hove, East Sussex, UK: Erlbaum).

Fordyce MW (2000). *Human Happiness*. Available: http://www.gethappy.net.

Fordyce M (1977). Development of a program to increase personal happiness. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* **24**(6) 511-521.

Fordyce M (1983). A program to increase happiness: Further studies. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* **30**(4) 483-493.

Fordyce MW (1988). Areriew of research on the happiness measures: A sixty second hndex of happiness and mental health. *Social Indicator Research* **20** 355-381.

Haller M and Adler M (2006). How social relations and structures con produce happiness and unhappiness: *An International Comparative Analysis* **2** 75- 169.

Harries PR & Lightsey OW (2003). Constructive thinking as a mediator of the relationship between extraversion, neuroticism and subjective wellbeing. *European Journal of Personality* **19** 409-426.

Hills P & Argyle M (2001). Happiness, introversion-extraversion. And happy hntrovert. *Personality and Individual Differences* **30** 595-608.

Leonardi F, Spazzafumo L & Marcellini F (2005). Subjective well- being: The constructionist point of view. A longitudinal study to verify the predictive power of Top- Down effects and Bottom- Up processes. *Social Indicators Research* **7** 53-77

Lucas RE, Diener E & Such E (1996). Discriminate validity of well- being measures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **71** 616-628.

Munoz RA & Lopez CG (2005). Major depressive disorder in Latin American: The relationship between depression, Severity, Painful somatic symptoms and Quality of life. *Journal of Affective Disorder* **86**(1) 93-98.

Noddings N (2005). *Happines & Education.* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press).

Phillips D (2006). *Quality of Life: Concept, Policy and Practice*, (London: Routledge Press).

Scheier MF & Carver CS (1985). Optimism, coping, and health Assessment-and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology* **4** 219-247.

Scheier MF & Carver CS (1987). Dispoitional optimism and physical well-being the influence of generalized out com expectancies on health. *Journal of Personality* **55** 169-210.

Schwarz N & Strack F (1999). Reports of subjective well- being: judgmental processes and their method logical implications. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener and N. Schwarz (edition), *Well- Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology* 61-84, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation).

Research Article

Seligman ME (2002). *Authentic Happiness,* (New York: Free Press).

Seligman ME (1998). *What is the Good Life*? *American Psychology Association* **29**(12).

Seligman MEP, Tracy AS & Peterson C (2005). Positive psychology, progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist* **60**(5) 410-421.

Stephen J & Alex (2006). *Positive Therapy*, (Routledye: London and New work Press).

Suh E, Diener E, Oishi S & Tiandis H (1997). The shifting of life satisfaction judgment across cultures: affects versus norms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **74** 482-93.

Suldo SM & Shaffer E (2008). Looking beyond psychopathology: The dual- factor model of mental health in youth. *School Psychology Review* **37**(1) 52-68