

Happiness: does it transform with age?

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ABSTRACT

The ultimate goal of all our actions and desires is happiness. It is a pursuit that continues across the life span. But how does the experience of happiness vary as we age? This study aims to explore how the level of happiness varies across age and gender. A purposive sample of young adults, middle aged and old aged individuals were selected for the study. The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well Being (Waterman et al, 2010) and The Orientation to Happiness measure (Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2005) were administered as tools for data collection. The total sample comprised a total of 180 males and females. 3 x 2 factorial research design was applied in the present comparative and descriptive research study. Both Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson's Correlation were calculated to find the relationship between happiness and age. We found that with the increase in age, both orientations to meaning and pleasure increased, and this was supported by the finding that the young and old differed significantly with respect to meaning in life.

Keywords: *Happiness, Age, Meaning, Pleasure, Engagement*

Over centuries, the definition of happiness has come to be moulded in accordance to the perspectives of historians, philosophers, thinkers and psychologists. According to Oishi et al. (2013) most philosophers and historians corroborate to the centrality of good luck and fortune in the early conceptualisations of happiness.

Within the realm of psychology, happiness and well-being refer to positive feelings (such as joy, optimism) and positive states (such as flow) (Baumgardner, 2010). Subjective well-being, often used synonymously with the term happiness is described as the cumulative existence of positive affect, the absence or lack of negative affect along with life satisfaction (Diener, 1984). Wilson (1967) defined happiness as an amalgamation of positive affect along with educational, financial and social well-being. According to him, a happy person is a “young, healthy, well- educated, well-paid, extroverted, optimistic, worry-free, religious, married person with high self-esteem, job morale, modest aspirations, of either sex and of a wide range of intelligence.” Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005) also describe happiness as the long-term propensity to frequently experience positive emotions.

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Happiness is a concept that often comes to be defined in a subjective manner by people across different ages, gender, socio-economic status and cultures. Several factors impact and contribute to an individual's happiness quotient. While personality models account traits as responsible factors of happiness, it has also been found that happiness is sensitive to life changes (Veenhoven, 1994). Magnus and Diener (1991) examined the relationships between life events, personality and subjective well-being and found that certain personality traits like extraversion and neuroticism do have an impact on one's experience of positive and negative life events. In addition, they also reported that while an individual's happiness or subjective well-being is stable and long term, and that over a span of four years, life events did not impact the subjective well-being of the selected sample (Magnus & Diener, 1991). It can thus be corroborated that while traits are underlying predispositions to one's state of happiness, changes in one's life situations impact it as well.

Conceptualizations of Happiness

Happiness can be divided into two broad conceptualisations with respect to its manifest forms. These are hedonic and eudaimonic happiness. Originating from an Attic-Greek word (*hēdonē*) literally meaning 'pleasure', Hedonism is the view that the chief goal of life is the pursuit of happiness & pleasure (Baumgardner and Crothers, 2010). According to Moen (2015), *Cārvāka* is the earliest example of hedonism that belongs to ancient India. It is a materialist tradition that exists across Indian philosophy (5-6th century) in poetic and practical fragments, and directs the pursuit of pleasure in life. In the Vedas and Upanishads, people who adhere to this philosophy are looked down upon for being 'nastika' (Moen, 2015). Moen (2015) quotes that Aristippus was the "first hedonist whose arguments we know." According to Irwin (1991), Aristippus was a Greek moralist who held that happiness is a collection of particular pleasures. For Aristippus, the experience of pleasure was the end, and the basis for happiness. Chung (2016) explains Hobbes' 'psychological hedonism' as a form of self-interest, through which one aims to minimise pain and maximise pleasure. Ryan and Deci (2001) concluded that the conceptualisations of hedonistic happiness have diverged from a narrow focus on bodily pleasures to a broader one which comprises self-interest. Thus, the concept of pleasure remains consistent in the hedonistic view of happiness. But can happiness be limited to pleasure? The eudaemonic conceptualisation of happiness goes beyond the pursuit of pleasure as a means to attain happiness.

Aristotle went beyond the pursuit of pleasure. In his work 'Nicomachean Ethics' (340 BC), he first described happiness as the ultimate goal of human existence. According to him, all our actions are guided towards the result of obtaining happiness. He conceptualised happiness as an end in itself that is achieved not by temporary pleasures but measuring whether an individual has lived up to their full potential. In 'The Euthydemus (384 BC)', Socrates' views on happiness are presented by his student Plato. Socrates argues that happiness is the goal of our activities, and that it depends on the use, and not the mere existence of external things, thus countering the idea inherent in hedonistic philosophy. Unlike hedonistic happiness which is guided by pleasure, eudaemonic happiness is rooted in a search for meaning and the achievement of one's full potential. It has been quoted by Seligman (2002) as "authentic happiness". It is described as the "quality of life derived from the development of a person's best potentials and their application in the fulfilment of personally expressive, self-concordant goals" by Waterman and colleagues (2010). McMahan & Estes (2011) found that when it comes to self-reported well-being, it is better associated with eudaemonic dimensions than hedonic ones. This implies that when it comes to individual's own understanding of well-being, finding meaning weighs more. Waterman

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et al. (2010) asserted that investing time in honing the “unique potentials” of the “true self” can facilitate the development of one’s eudaemonic well-being.

Happiness is highly associated with positive life outcomes. Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade (2005) concluded that happy individuals likely appear as more flourishing people. A happy person is likely to accomplish more in terms of marriage (Mastekaasa, 1994), a comfortable income (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002), superior mental health (Koivumaa-Honkanen et al., 2004), and a long life (Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001). Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005) also concluded from their research that happy people are not only more successful, but also tend to accomplish more in their lives. Fredrickson’s (1998, 2001) research on the Broaden and Build theory suggests that positive affect has an impact on our thought-action repertoire; this implies that positive thoughts broaden one’s perspective and allow building of enduring personal resources. For example, the feeling of joy pushes one to expand their creative frontiers. These long-term enduring personal resources have adaptive importance as they equip an individual to deal with possible future threats.

Happiness and Age

Previous research is widely contrasting on whether happiness and age are related. According to the set point theory, individual levels of happiness do not change across lifespan; although they respond to a change in circumstances, they return to one’s ‘baseline level’ of happiness after these changes have occurred (Lucas, 2007). While Myers (1992) found that happiness is either flat/increases with age, other set of research has established that happiness is U-shaped across the lifespan, implying that it dips in the middle-age. Clark and Oswald (1994) used a 1991 cross-section of the British Household Panel Survey and the General Health Questionnaire and found that life-satisfaction reaches the minimum at the mid-30s. Blanchflower and Oswald (2004, 2008) also reported that happiness is U-shaped across the lifecycle, implying that individuals experience a dip in their levels of happiness during their midlife, i.e. mid-30s and early 50s. Frey and Stutzer (2002) controlled for demographic variables, regressed happiness on age and reported the level of life satisfaction to be the lowest between ages 30-35, findings consistent with earlier research (Clark and Oswald, 1994; Blanchflower and Oswald, 2004, 2008). Deaton (2008) after reviewing data from the Gallup poll (2006) concluded however, that the U-shape of life satisfaction was present only in certain rich countries of the world. Frijters and Beaten, (2012) looked for the existence of the U-shaped curve in data sets from Germany, Britain and Australia and found that the U-shape only became pronounced when socio-economic variables were taken into consideration. A recent enquiry into the U-shaped relationship of happiness and age by Graham and Pozuelo (2017) across people living in different countries consistently found the U-shaped hypothesis to be true for 44 out of 46 countries. According to their results, the U-shape did not hold for India. In contrast to the U-shape of life satisfaction, Mroczek and Kolarz (1998) reported that age and happiness were non-linear to each other, and the curve of their relationship accelerated towards a peak starting at the age of 35 to 65, hence concluding that older adults are happier than younger ones.

In Gallup’s World Report on happiness, 2015-2017, India obtained a low rank at number 133 out of 156 nations, with Finland, Norway and Denmark as the top three (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2018). Unfortunately, India’s rank dropped to 140th rank in the 2019 edition of the same (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2019). According to the report, India is one of the few countries that have experienced the largest drop in its life evaluations since 2005-2008. However, it was found by the World Value Survey 2010-2014, that 37.4% of the Indian sample reported that they were ‘Very Happy’, 50% reported that they were ‘Quite

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Happy', 10.8% were 'Not very happy' and 1.4% were 'Not at all happy.' This finding projects the majority of the Indian population as happy. Moreover, when bifurcated according to age, these statistics became even more descriptive. It was found by the survey that out of 37.4% of sample that reported to be 'very happy' 43.2% of the sample was aged up to 29 years, 36.3% was between 30-49 years while 33.5% were aged above 50. This implies that the large majority of sample that reported to be very happy were young adults while people aged above 50 were the least in number to report a high degree of happiness. Shockingly, the sample aged 50 and above had the majority (2.4%) in reporting that they were 'not at all happy' while only 1.3% of the middle-aged sample (30-49 years) and 0.5% of the younger sample (up to 29 years) reported they were unhappy. The current study was aimed towards studying the impact of age differences on happiness across three age groups.

METHOD

Objectives

The following objectives were determined for the research:

- To study the relationship between age and happiness.
- To study the impact of age on the level of happiness of three age groups.
- To study the impact of gender on the level of happiness of three age groups.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were determined for the research:

- There will be a significant relationship between age and happiness.
- There will be a significant impact of age on happiness of the three age groups.
- There will be a significant impact of gender on the level of happiness of the three age groups.

Sample

The sample was selected on the basis of age. Three age groups were chosen as sample for the purpose of the research: 20-25 years, 45-50 years and 60-90 years. The age group 20-25 years of age completed the questionnaire online, while for the latter two age groups, data was collected offline. A total of 180 people participated. Two measures were administered for this purpose: The Orientations to Happiness scale and the Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-being.

Measures

The Orientation to Happiness Scale (Peterson et al, 2005): The Orientation to Happiness Scale was designed by Peterson, Park and Seligman (2005). It consists of 18 items that measure an individual's orientation to happiness on the basis of three dimensions, i.e., whether they live a life of meaning, pleasure or engagement. The respondents were required to select their responses from a 5-point Likert-type scale, with options ranging from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 5 (*very much like me*). The scores on the sub-scales are obtained by adding the respective items from each dimension. In the dimension of 'life of meaning' items. A higher score on a particular subscale indicate higher orientation towards it. Peterson et al. (2005) reported good structural validity and internal consistency (1/4 0.82 for Pleasure orientation; 1/4 0.72 for Engagement orientation; 1/4 0.82 for Meaning orientation), as well as convergent validity via correlations of each approach with life satisfaction. The reliability of each domain during scale development was .82 for pleasure, .72 for meaning, and .82 for engagement (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005). The scale has been shown to be reliable

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over both the three and six-month periods (r_s all $\geq .63$; Ruch, Harzer, Proyer, Park, & Peterson, 2010).

The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-being (Waterman et al, 2010): The Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-being (QEWB) is a 21-item questionnaire that assesses well-being in accordance to the eudaemonic conceptualisations. It examines the six aspects of eudaemonic well-being, including self-discovery, perceived development of one's best potentials, a sense of purpose and meaning in life, intense involvement in activities, investment of significant effort, and enjoyment of activities as personally expressive. The respondents were required to select their responses from a 5-point Likert-type scale, with options ranging from 0 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly Agree*). There were fourteen items written affirmatively, and seven negatively. The affirmative statements combining to form a high score indicated a high level of eudaemonic well-being, while the negative items (item 3, 7, 11, 12, 16, 19, 20) were reverse scored.

Design

The current study is both descriptive and inferential in nature, with a 3 x 2 factorial research design. It aims to assess the relationship between age and happiness. A purposive sample responded to The Orientation to Happiness and Questionnaire of Eudaimonic Well-Being Scale which were rated using a Likert-scale that ranged from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me) and 0 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) respectively. The scoring was done by adding up the responses marked by the respondents along with those that had to be reverse scored. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to find the relationship between age and happiness. The difference between the three age groups with respect to happiness was analysed using ANOVA. A 2x2 factorial design was applied to obtain the interaction effects between age and gender. The three assumptions of ANOVA constitute that the sample must be drawn from a normal distribution of population, common variance of each group, and independence of samples. Due to inequality of the sample size among the three groups, the Brown-Forsyth test of unequal variances was applied to the data such that all the assumptions of ANOVA could be met and statistical analysis carried out.

Analysis

Univariate analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential methods in order to obtain the results of this study. The sample was classified into three age groups. The independent variables were age and gender while the dependent variables of the study comprised the Orientations to Happiness (meaning, pleasure and engagement) and Eudaimonic well-being. The descriptive statistics, i.e., mean and standard deviation of the sample were obtained. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was utilised to calculate correlation as the relationship between happiness and age was to be assessed. A 2x2 factorial design was performed in order to obtain the effect of age and gender on happiness.

RESULTS

Table 1 Total Dimension-Wise Descriptive Data

	Age	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Meaning	Total	Female	129	22.4419	4.21290
		Male	51	23.3529	3.82007
		Total	180	22.7000	4.11551
Pleasure	Total	Female	129	22.5271	4.59463
		Male	51	22.2549	4.25602
		Total	180	22.4500	4.49118

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	Age	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Engagement	Total	Female	129	10.8217	2.06704
		Male	51	11.1765	2.13266
		Total	180	10.9222	2.08602
EWB	Total	Female	129	56.7054	10.87816
		Male	51	57.0784	9.88705
		Total	180	56.8111	10.58078

Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 show the descriptive statistics of the sample. As shown in table 1, the total sample size was 180. With respect to the dimension of meaning, the mean of the total female sample (N=129) was 22.44 while the standard deviation was 4.21. The mean and standard deviation values for the male sample (N=51) were 23.35 and 3.82 respectively. For the dimension of pleasure, the mean of the total female sample (N=129) was 22.52 while the standard deviation was 4.59. For the total male sample (N=51), the mean and standard deviation values were 22.25 and 4.25 respectively. For the engagement dimension, the total

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Age Group 20-25 years

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Meaning	Female	80	21.9750	4.35737
	Male	24	22.7917	3.97797
	Total	104	22.1635	4.26799
Pleasure	Female	80	22.5375	4.72790
	Male	24	22.2500	4.27582
	Total	104	22.4712	4.60889
Engagement	Female	80	10.5500	1.96101
	Male	24	10.7083	2.05319
	Total	104	10.5865	1.97366
EWB	Female	80	55.2500	10.64918
	Male	24	58.7083	7.98629
	Total	104	56.0481	10.16694

female sample mean was 10.82 and standard deviation was 2.06; whereas for the total male sample, the mean and standard deviation were found to be 11.17 and 213 respectively. With respect to eudaemonic well-being, the mean score for the total female sample was 56.70 and the standard deviation was 10.87 while for the total male sample, the mean was found to be 57.07 and the standard deviation 9.88.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Age Group 45-50 years

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Meaning	Female	30	22.4000	4.05650
	Male	19	22.6316	3.41907
	Total	49	22.4898	3.78661
Pleasure	Female	30	22.2000	4.72995
	Male	19	22.3158	4.11032
	Total	49	22.2449	4.45594
Engagement	Female	30	11.1000	1.93605
	Male	19	11.5263	2.09148

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	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Total	49	11.2653	1.98720
EWB	Female	30	57.3667	11.69286
	Male	19	54.0000	10.60922
	Total	49	56.0612	11.29419

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of Age Group 60-90 years

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Meaning	Female	19	24.4737	3.32279
	Male	8	26.7500	2.54951
	Total	27	25.1481	3.24279
Pleasure	Female	19	23.0000	3.94405
	Male	8	22.1250	5.08324
	Total	27	22.7407	4.22986
Engagement	Female	19	11.5263	2.54664
	Male	8	11.7500	2.43487
	Total	27	11.5926	2.46918
EWB	Female	19	61.7895	9.27709
	Male	8	59.5000	12.55843
	Total	27	61.1111	10.15773

Table 5 Correlations between Age and Happiness

Variables	Meaning	Engagement	EWB	Pleasure	Age
Meaning	1	.191*	.423**	.299**	.223**
Engagement	.191*	1	.355**	.438**	.193**
EWB	.423**	.355**	1	.300**	0.113
Pleasure	.299**	.438**	.300**	1	0.006
Age	.223**	.193**	0.113	0.006	1

Table 5 shows the correlations between age and happiness. Age was found to be positively correlated with both meaning ($r=0.223$) and engagement ($r=0.193$) dimensions of happiness. However, it was not found to have a correlation with pleasure ($r=0.006$). Eudaimonic Well-Being (EWB) was found to be correlated with all the Orientations of Happiness, i.e., the dimensions of meaning ($r=0.423$), engagement ($r=0.355$), and pleasure ($r=0.300$). However, EWB was not correlated with age ($r=0.113$). In addition, the dimensions of happiness were also found to be correlated with each other. A positive correlation was found between meaning and engagement ($r=0.191$), meaning and pleasure ($r=0.299$).

Table 6 Impact of Age and Gender on Orientations to Happiness and Eudaimonic Well-Being

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	df	F	Sig.
Age	meaning	2	5.975	0.003*
	pleasure	2	0.035	0.965
	engagement	2	2.782	0.065
	EWB	2	1.721	0.182
Gender	meaning	1	2.165	0.143

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Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	df	F	Sig.
Age * Gender	pleasure	1	0.167	0.684
	engagement	1	0.479	0.490
	EWB	1	0.139	0.710
	meaning	2	0.495	0.610
	pleasure	2	0.091	0.913
	engagement	2	0.061	0.941
	EWB	2	1.726	0.181

Table 6 represents the interaction impact of age and gender on the variables meaning, pleasure, engagement, and eudaemonic well-being. With respect to meaning, the three age groups were found to have a significant difference ($F=5.97$; $Sig.=0.003$) from each other. According to the Post Hoc Analysis (Table 4), it can be observed that group 1 (20-25 years) was found to be significantly different from group 3 (60-90 years). In contrast, no significant impact of age could be found on the variables of pleasure ($F=0.035$; $Sig.=0.965$), engagement ($F=2.78$; $Sig.=0.065$) and EWB ($F=1.721$; $Sig.=0.182$). However, there were no gender differences with respect to the orientations of happiness and eudaemonic well-being.

Table 7 Post Hoc Analysis

Dependent Variable	(I) age	(J) age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Meaning	1	2	-.3263	.69456	.639
		3	-2.9847*	.86579	.001*
	2	1	.3263	.69456	.639
		3	-2.6584*	.96073	.006
	3	1	2.9847*	.86579	.001
		2	2.6584*	.96073	.006
Pleasure	1	2	.2263	.78817	.774
		3	-.2696	.98248	.784
	2	1	-.2263	.78817	.774
		3	-.4958	1.09022	.650
	3	1	.2696	.98248	.784
		2	.4958	1.09022	.650
Engagement	1	2	-.6788	.35888	.060
		3	-1.0061*	.44736	.026
	2	1	.6788	.35888	.060
		3	-.3273	.49642	.511
	3	1	1.0061*	.44736	.026
		2	.3273	.49642	.511
EWB	1	2	-.0131	1.81398	.994
		3	-5.0630*	2.26120	.026
	2	1	.0131	1.81398	.994
		3	-5.0499*	2.50916	.046
	3	1	5.0630*	2.26120	.026
		2	5.0499*	2.50916	.046

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As shown in table 7, the post hoc analysis only found a significant difference between the first and third age groups, i.e. 20-25 and 60-90 years. No significant differences were found between any other combinations of age groups.

DISCUSSION

Mahatma Gandhi said, “Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do when you are in harmony.” Happiness is an important element in human lives, and majority of our actions and activities are centred around our pursuit of happiness. While there is little agreement on an established definition of happiness, a number of researchers have offered their perspectives on the same (Diener, 1984; Wilson, 1967; Lyubomirsky, King and Diener, 2005). Cumulatively, it can be noted that the term ‘happiness’ largely reflects the presence of positive affect in one’s life. The term is also synonymous with ‘subjective well-being’ (Snyder and Lopez, 2007). A large amount of research has yielded varied perspectives on how an individual’s level of happiness changes over time as they age (Myers, 1992; Clark and Oswald, 1994; Blanchflower and Oswald, 2004; Graham and Pozuelo, 2016) however, a definitive stance is yet to be confirmed. While several studies (Clark and Oswald, 1994, Graham, 2009) have validated Blanchflower and Oswald’s (2004) seminal work on the U-shaped hypothesis, stating that happiness acquires a sudden dip in one’s middle age, others (Myers, 1992; Frijters and Beaten, 2008) have found inconsistencies. Analysing the relationship between happiness and age across 46 countries, Graham and Pozuelo (2016) found that the U-curve held in 44 of those countries, however, India was one of the few where the shape did not hold. Taking these irregularities into consideration and putting them to test in the Indian context was necessary to uncover any potential and unique relationships between happiness and age, which could further help extend research into how one’s level of happiness can be enhanced keeping in consideration their age.

In the current research, we collected data from three groups classified on the basis of age, i.e., 20-25 years, 45-50 years, and 60-90 years. The age groups were chosen on the basis of three stages in life such that considerable differences could be explored. The sample responded to the Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-Being and Orientation to Happiness Scale. The analysis was done by calculating Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation and ANOVA in order to find the relationship between happiness and age and also to understand the intergroup differences in happiness with respect to age.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant relationship between happiness and age.

Previous research has found a relationship between the variables of happiness and age, but it is disputed at the nature of the same. Our study found that two dimensions of happiness had a significant relationship with age, i.e., meaning and engagement. However, pleasure and eudaemonic well-being were not significantly related to age.

The importance and relevance of meaning in human life has been highlighted across history by various people. Viktor Frankl in his book ‘A Man’s Search for Meaning’ communicated that once a man knows the ‘why’ to his existence, he will be able to bear almost any ‘how.’ Moreover, according to Harold S. Kushner, a prominent American rabbi, “You don’t become happy by pursuing happiness. You become happy by living a life that means something.” Meaning is thus, the essence of life. Studies conducted by Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, and Garbinsky (2013) delved into isolating the concepts of meaning and happiness. As a result of surveying 397 adults, they found that a meaningful life was future oriented, constituted self-expression and engagement in sociocultural activities. It was established that while the satisfaction of needs and wants, money, good health, emotions and good feelings

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are all crucial to happiness, they hold little importance in one's ability to find meaning. More importantly, they concluded that meaning was a product of giving and happiness a product of receiving. Meaning is also an important and necessary dimension of successful aging (Wong, 1998) and can be a source of life satisfaction and personal growth later in life (Schulz, 1986). We found a low positive correlation between age and meaning, indicating that as age increases, the meaningfulness of life also grows. This finding implicates that as one ages, their ability to search for meaning, or the degree to which they comprehend their life to be significant and purposeful increases. Some causes can be attributed to this finding. Old age is the pinnacle of identity consolidation, settlement of family and overall stability which are factors that contribute towards the realisation of one's purpose in life. It is a stage wherein an individual, having accomplished all their major life goals are able to look back at their lives and find satisfaction in their existence. This finding also implies that there is a relative lack of the ability to find meaning among the younger age groups. This may spring from the fact that early adult and middle life is rife with the exploration of one's identity, educational pressure and financial instability- conditions which may not allow the deep reflections which the search for meaning warrants. Previously, Steger, Oishi and Kashdan (2009) also reported higher levels of meaning in older adults when compared to younger adults.

Pleasure, our second dimension, is the main component of hedonism, which promotes of the immediate gratification of needs and avoidance of pain. The pursuit of pleasure is underscored in ancient Greek philosophy, as Democritus is known to quote, 'The best thing for a man will be to live his life with as much joy as possible and as little grief.' It has been previously found that pleasure predicts life satisfaction (Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2005) and leads to an increased positive affect (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 2009). However, when compared to meaning and engagement, pleasure has been found to be the weakest dimension for predicting life satisfaction (Grimm, 2013). In our study, no correlation existed between pleasure and age. This implies that the age of an individual is not related to their orientation towards pleasure and that the pursuit of pleasure is rather a lifelong process. Earlier, Pheonix and Orr (2014) brought forth a research that highlighted pleasure as an important and multi-dimensional aspect of physical activity in old age that can be used towards health advantages. Moreover, experiencing activities that bring pleasure has been linked to improvements in sleep and enhanced physiological functions during old age (Pressman et al, 2009). But while the pursuit of pleasure can have beneficial ramifications, it may have negative implications as well. In isolation from orientations towards meaning and engagement, an individual's pleasure orientation does not contribute towards a 'full life' (Seligman, 2002; Schueller and Seligman, 2010). It only yields short term satisfaction with life (Oishi, Schimmack, & Diener, 2001) and can hamper one's level of educational and occupational achievement (Schueller and Seligman, 2010). More importantly, individuals with an orientation to pleasure have been found to report lower subjective well-being when compared to individuals with orientations towards meaning and engagement (Schueller and Seligman, 2010).

The third dimension was engagement. Engagement encompasses the basic sense of 'being present' and in the moment. The logic and importance of engagement in life has been highlighted in Cziksentmihalyi's concept flow. Flow refers to a state of intense engagement in an activity that occurs when one's level of skills match the task's level of difficulty, hence focusing an individual's entire psychic energy on the task without leaving any residue to get siphoned off onto stray thoughts (Cziksentmihalyi, 1990). High engagement or flow entails focused attention, a loss of sense of time and results in an experience that feels extremely

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rewarding. According to Rowe & Kahn (1998) active engagement with life, along with low probability of disease and disease related disability, and high cognitive and physical functional capacity are the three main components that contribute towards successful ageing. Moreover, a life of engagement also found to predict life satisfaction (Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2005) and high well-being (Ross, 2016). A low but significantly positive correlation was found between age and engagement, indicating that with the increase of age, an individual's ability to become engaged with their life also enhances. Engagement in life is both important and necessary in later age, research has found. Rowe and Kahn (1997) found that engagement in daily activities is a characteristic ingredient for successful ageing. Collins, Sarkisian and Winner (2008) found that high quality flow experiences contributed towards happiness ("high arousal positive affect") and are linked to life satisfaction in older adults. In a time when the concerned age group is grappling with retirement and search for new meaning in life, finding engagement in daily life activities may become a challenge. Flow can be experienced in any activity where one finds their skills and the challenge of the activity in equilibrium, for example playing golf, or even doing housework (Csikszentmihalyi 1988, 1990), but Lawton (1989) demonstrated that older adults experience flow in activities in which challenge slightly surpasses the skill. Moreover, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), flow is the result of deliberate cultivation and control over one's inner experience, and the finding that engagement increases with age is a proof that upholds that flow is a result of careful tillage over time. Yet, a study of 12 older adults in nursing homes found that their flow experiences are constituted by low challenge and skill when compared to those of typical adolescents or adults (Voelkl, 1990). The short size and unique context of the sample makes these results hard to generalise. It is pertinent that a less challenging environment posed by the nursing home is the cause of concern. It can be collated that while there was a positive significant correlation between both meaning and engagement with age, no correlation between age and pleasure existed.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant impact of age on happiness of the three age groups.

Previous research on the relationship between age and happiness is split between the validation of the U-shaped hypothesis and research findings opposing it. Age has been found to be related to determining the level of one's happiness during the life cycle. The foundation of the U-shaped hypothesis was laid by Blanchflower and Oswald's (2004) research that established empirical evidence supporting that both happiness and life-satisfaction were the lowest at the age of 40 in samples from the US and Britain, and hence U-shaped. A later study by the same authors extended this enquiry to European and Asian countries and found the results consistent with their own previous findings (Blanchflower and Oswald, 2008). This finding has been confirmed by several other studies (Clark and Oswald, 1994; Frijters and Beaten, 2008; Lelkes, 2008; Graham and Pozuelo, 2016). Evidence supporting the U-shaped hypothesis thus upholds that happiness achieves a dip in one's middle age, and is higher during young and old age. Conversely, Mroczek and Kolarz (1998) found that the relationship between age and happiness was non-linear, and constituted of an accelerating curve that rose to a peak beyond the age 35.

Moreover, while youth has been purported as a determinant of happiness (Wilson, 1967), several studies have consistently placed older adults as the happiest group (Mroczek and Kolarz, 1998; Carstensen and colleagues, 2000). Isaacowitz and Smith (2003) found no impact of age on positive affect when but found that extraversion in both young and old samples predicted positive affect overall. Argyle (2001) reasoned that happiness increased

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with age fostered by the realization of the reality of one's life and the need for more realistic goals in old age compared to young.

Our results found that age had a significant impact on an individual's orientation to meaning and not on the orientation towards pleasure and engagement. The post hoc analysis also revealed a significant difference between the means of group 1 (age group 20-25 years) and group 3 (age group 60-90 years). Age was thus found to impact a dimension of happiness, i.e., orientation to meaning, and older adults had a higher orientation towards meaning when compared to younger adults. This implies that age is a variable that impacts an individual's orientation towards happiness. The mean difference also indicates that the meaning orientation of the older group was greater than the younger group, reflecting that older adults have lives that constitute of more meaning when compared to young adults. Earlier research has also reported findings that corroborate with our results (Schulz, 1986; Steger, Oishi and Kashdan, 2009). Older adults have been found to have happier (Mroczek and Kolarz, 1998; Argyle, 2001) and meaningful (Steger, Oishi and Kashdan, 2009) lives. Carstensen and colleagues (2000) also found older adults were more likely to remain in positive affect over time than younger adults. Hupkens, Machielse, Goumans and Drx (2016) found that older adults obtain more meaning from family, social relatedness, nature and religion compared to younger adults, who find personal achievement meaningful.

This period in life is constituted by retirement, loss of spouse or friends, deteriorating health and major changes. Significant causes as to why the orientation towards meaning increases in the older age constitute religion and spirituality, both of which are concepts one begins to focus on increasingly with age. Old age is a time when one comes face to face with the brevity of life, and falls back on the concept of religion for solace. Religion provides an individual with answers that calm the overbearing existential anxiety that arrives with age. Moreover, religion helps shift one's attention from death anxiety, and offers the antidotes of the conceptual afterlife, immortality and the existence of heaven (Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994). According to Erikson's (1963) theory, people in older adulthood (65 and up) experience the critical psychological conflict of integrity versus despair in which they reflect back on their lives and question whether it was meaningful or not. Acceptance of their life as meaningful and acknowledgement of the inevitability of death can contribute towards integrity, while feeling bitter about one's past and the inability to feel fulfilled can cause despair. Thus, meaning holds a pivotal role in an individual's ability to feel fulfilled by their lives in old age.

An integrative literature review of meaning in life of older adults by Hupkens, Machielse, Goumans and Drx (2016) listed social relations, health, leisure time, self-realization, values, spirituality, religion and nature as the sources of meaning. Moreover, they also reported that meaning can be created as well as discovered, and while some studies found older adults to do this through silence and contemplation, others reported that meaning is also found in daily, commonplace activities (Tornstam, 2005; Moore et al, 2006).

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant impact of gender on the level of happiness of the three age groups.

It is a common stereotype that women are more emotional than men, and this is mirrored in the finding that more women than men experience depression (Kessler 2003). While society has produced stereotypes over time, research has also produced several findings on whether happiness is experienced differently by the genders. Yue et al. (2017) reported that women expressed significantly higher levels of happiness than men (Helliwell et al., 2015).

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Khodarahimi (2013) also found Iranian men to outperform women in terms of happiness, regardless of age. Although women were found to be happier than men in the older age groups (Plagnol and Easterlin, 2008), over the span of thirty years, their happiness has found to have declined significantly, indicating that men are happier (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009). González-Carrasco et al. (2016) also found that the levels of subjective well-being decreased more sharply in girls than boys when they responded to the same SWB measures within the gap of a year. Moreover, regardless of whether cumulative happiness in an industrialized nation is rising, falling or flat, the levels of happiness among females have been decreasing since the 1970s, balancing more towards men than women (Stevenson and Wolfers, 2009). This is now being known as the Happiness Gender Gap.

According to our findings, gender did not significantly influence an individual's level of happiness (Mahon, Yarcheski, & Yarcheski, 2005). This explains how both groups may experience happiness equally regardless of their gender that is largely socially construed. In a previous study that explored gendered differences of psychological well-being, men and women did not significantly differ from each other in terms of experience of affect, but differences were found with respect to expression of affect (Fabes and Martin, 1991; Roothman, Kirsten and Wissing, 2003). A study by Plant, Hyde, Keltner and Devine (2000) corroborated by finding that women experienced and expressed happiness, fear, love, distress, guilt and sympathy more than men while men experienced more anger and pride than women. More difference was found between the two genders pertaining to expression of emotion rather than the experience itself. This highlights the possibility that while gender may not impact happiness significantly, it may impact the way emotions relating to happiness are displayed. The difference in this mode of expression underscores the dominant hand of cultural and societal expectations the two genders are trusted to comply with.

It has been previously found that while employment is a cause of happiness for men, education, marital status and frequency of social meetings are determinants of a woman's level of happiness (Cesare & Amori, 2006). These determinants uphold the dominant gender roles in our society that require men to be the breadwinners and for women to be smart, well-married and social. However, with time, these dualities have merged and the lines that separate the roles of men and women as separate genders have begun to disappear. This likely contributes to the way both the genders experience happiness and hence to the lack of differences in the experience of happiness as found by our research. Moreover, other factors such as health (AhmadiGatab, Shayan & Taheri, 2011), income (Schnittker, 2008), and education (Nikolaev and Rusakov, 2015), may also take precedence over gender in impacting one's levels of happiness.

This research is not without its limitations. The sample size undermines the generalizability of this study as the number of participants per age group are less than a hundred. Secondly, the inequality of the number of participants in each age group amounted to problems of variance when the groups were compared. The age groups taken into consideration were also discontinuous in nature. With respect to the third age group, the upper limit had to be increased due to paucity of subjects. The data could also not be collected equally from males and females. Thirdly, the quantitative nature of the data collection questionnaires put severe restrictions on the older age group to respond properly.

It is imperative for future research to expand on the relationship between happiness and age using more qualitative procedures like interviews or focus group discussions such that the

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true nature of a concept as abstract as happiness can be explored comfortably with all age groups.

CONCLUSION

The research was an attempt to explore the relationship between happiness and age, and it can be ascertained from the results that the dimensions of meaning and pleasure had a significantly positive correlation with age, and meaning in life was significantly different when younger age group was compared to the oldest age group.

Application of Research

The findings from this research can have a range of application in the field of positive psychology. As a cross-sectional research that studied the variables of meaning, pleasure and engagement in life, this study yielded important insights as to how each of these dimensions change, or do not change with age.

This research can be taken as groundwork for further, more comprehensive research into this area, i.e., understanding whether age and happiness have a more in-depth and nuanced connection. It can be utilized for understanding how the extent of meaning changes considerably over the lifespan, along with one's approach to pleasure, as was found in this study.

In addition, it can also be utilized to guide real world applications. Positive psychotherapy is a fairly new therapeutic intervention approach that aims to ameliorate clinical symptoms through its emphasis on individual strengths and positive dimensions such as meaning, pleasure and engagement in life. Understanding how each section of the population experiences happiness can be helpful in directing and inventing such positive psychotherapeutic approaches as well.

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Conflict of Interest

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