

Adolescents' Happiness: Hedonic or Eudaimonic?

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ABSTRACT

Recently happiness has gained increased consideration from both researchers and decision-makers. Thus, the present study aimed to explore the factors influencing adolescents' happiness and discuss future recommendations. A sample of 250 adolescents (Boys=122 and Girls=128) aged 13 to 18 were selected using purposive sampling from different schools situated in Punjab, India. The adolescents were asked to answer 'happiness' questions, and the content analysis was performed to analyze open-ended responses to the questions "What is happiness?" and "What makes you happy"? The most recurrent themes obtained were: leisure time, friends, family, the satisfaction of wants, helping others, sharing joyful moments, & Religiosity. The findings thus indicated that adolescent's happiness is an amalgam of hedonic and eudaimonic conceptions. The analysis also showed significant differences in sex with girls considering leisure time and relationships (Friends and Family) to predict happiness. In boys, Leisure time, Friends, and the satisfaction of wants takes primacy over the family for predicting happiness. It is a significant study for policymakers, educators, administrators, and parents to focus on the strategies like co-curricular and extracurricular endeavors, especially promoting hobby clubs, socially-focused approaches, and mindful activities for adolescents that can be an effective way to boost their happiness.

Keywords: *Happiness, Hedonic, Eudaimonic, Adolescents, Content analysis*

Happiness is considered the ultimate blessing of life, and so, the primary goal of human beings is to pursue happiness (Larsen & Eid, 2008). Recognizing happiness to be the universal aspiration of human beings, the United Nations General Assembly approved March 20 as the International Day of Happiness, which we are celebrating since 2013. Nowadays, the term happiness often appears in public discourse. In recent years remarkable progress has been made in government policies fostering happiness. Day after day, many policies are announced by the Indian government, including the Delhi Government's happiness curriculum, the Madhya Pradesh Government's Happiness Calendar and Happiness Department, the Andhra Pradesh Department of Happiness Index, and the provision of online certificate courses on happiness by IIT's. The happiness industry is flourishing with the rising trend of self-help books and CDs promising a fulfilling life (Ahmed, 2007).

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Due to the growing desire for happiness (Veenhoven, 2012), it has become one of the researchers' preferred subjects (Haller & Hadler, 2006). Nevertheless, most of the studies on happiness mainly focused on the developed nations (Addai, Opoku-Agyeman, & Amanfu, 2014). However, existing studies on happiness are indispensable in the theoretical underpinning of the nature of happiness, inadequate information is available concerning the factors of happiness (Datu & Valdez, 2012) for adolescents (Fogle and Laughlin, 2002; Funk, Huebner and Valois, 2006; van de Wetering, van Exel and Brouwer, 2010), particularly in the developing and collectivist nation like India (Chadda and Deb, 2013; Gupta and Shukla, 2019; Kinsky et al., 2000).

Since people's happiness varies with a given culture (Abolmaali, Ghafari, & Ajilchi, 2014), it is vital to investigate the factors shaping adolescents' happiness (van de Wetering et al., 2010) in the Indian context. Moreover, happiness being the number one goal of adolescents' lives (Gabriele, 2008), study in this domain will help develop strategies for boosting the happiness of Indian adolescents, who make up the world's largest population (Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2017).

Happiness: An overview

Happiness has remained a controversial topic for many centuries. Ancient Greeks were the first to argue on the construct of happiness, which they consider is obtainable through wisdom and virtue (White, 1996), highlighting happiness's eudaimonic viewpoint. In contrast to this, Aristippus, another Greek philosopher from the fourth-century, regarded happiness as the sum of all hedonic moments (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Over time, people started observing happiness as the "sum of pleasurable sensations." (McMahon, 2017), but the eastern concept of happiness invariably remained eudaimonistic (Joshiloo, 2013).

Nevertheless, eudaimonism constitutes one side of the coin of happiness. Contemporary society solicits for something else to complete both sides of the coin. That 'something else' is nothing but hedonism. Hedonism increases positive emotions, consequently reducing stress, whereas eudaimonism furnishes meaning to life. (Henderson, Knight, & Richardson, 2013). Besides, hedonic happiness appears to fulfill physiological and physical needs, whereas eudaimonic happiness gratifies psychological needs (Veenhoven, 2019). Thus, hedonic and eudaimonic behaviors contribute equally to happiness in different ways and are necessary to maximize happiness; hence, they complement each other (Huta, 2015).

Studies on happiness have recognized different factors related to happiness, including age and gender (López-Pérez, Sánchez, & Gummerum, 2016), place of origin (Diener, 2006), and cultural values (Lu, Gilmour and Kao, 2001). Lu and Gilmour (2004) found that Asian people viewed happiness as social instead of individual happiness for Euro-Americans. As far as gender is concerned, for girls, happiness is attainable through positive feelings, whereas for boys, recreation is the source of happiness (Giacomoni, Souza, & Hutz, 2014).

In a qualitative study, Lu and Shih (1997) reported gratification of need for respect, a harmony of interpersonal relationships, satisfaction of material needs, achievement at work, being at ease with life, taking pleasure at others' expense, sense of self-control, and self-actualization, pleasure and positive affect, and health as the indispensable sources of happiness.

Thus, the comprehension of happiness oscillates between eudaimonic and hedonic traditions during its development (Nawijn & Veenhoven, 2013).

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The Current Study

The study's foremost aim is to identify the best influencers of happiness of Indian adolescents, as perceptions are usually circumscribed by one's culture (Bruner, 1990). The second objective is to determine the differences in the factors influencing boy's and girl's happiness. The study's ultimate aim is to determine the approach of happiness preferred by the selected Indian adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample comprised of two hundred fifty adolescent students (122 boys, 128 girls) selected purposively. Participants were between 13 to 18 years studying in different schools of Punjab (India).

Procedure

Due to the exploratory nature of the present study, a qualitative approach was adopted. Two open-ended questions, "What is 'happiness?'" and "What makes you happy?" were asked from the participants. No time limit was set, and all the ethical guidelines were followed. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of information. Verbal consent from the participants was taken. After collecting the responses, possible happiness themes were extracted before analyzing them (Kvale *et al.*, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In response to the questions- "What is happiness?" and "What makes you happy?" Adolescents described happiness in terms of hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives. Seven categories were obtained, which determine the happiness of adolescents, are presented below.

Table No. 1 Factor of Happiness (N=250)

Category	No. of Respondents			Percentage of Total Respondents			Examples of Responses	Orientation	Characteristics
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total			
Leisure time	96	81	177	78.7	63.3	70.8	Engaging in fun activities of their choice, relaxation, listening to music, playing games on computer and mobiles, watching television and sports activities	Hedonic	Concrete
Friends	49	59	108	40.2	46	43.2	Being with friends, playing, chatting & going out with them.	Hedonic	Concrete
Family	28	55	83	22.9	42.9	33.2	Being with family, parents	Hedonic	Concrete
Satisfaction	38	31	69	31.1	24.2	27.6	Including fulfillment of needs, sense of achievement, being praised and doing whatever we want	Hedonic	Concrete
Helping Others (Altruism)	22	13	35	18	10.1	14	Serving others/needy/poor	Eudaimonic	Abstract
Sharing	13	17	30	10.7	13.3	12	Sharing happy	Eudaimonic	Abstract

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Category	No. of Respondents			Percentage of Total Respondents			Examples of Responses	Orientation	Characteristics
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total			
joyful moments							moments and positive experiences with parents and friends		
Religiosity	6	10	16	4.9	7.8	6.4	Faith and worship and hoping for the fulfillment of wishes and desires	Eudaimonic	Abstract

* Total number and percentage of respondents is greater than 250 or 100% because most respondents gave more than one answer.

Theme One: "Leisure time."

The data suggest that participation in leisure time activities is the most salient theme that emerged from this study. 71% of the respondents reported themes relating to leisure time. Happiness means leisure for adolescents, explicitly engaging in fun activities of their preference, relaxation, listening to music, playing games, sports, and many more. Argyle (2001) documented that leisure activities such as music, exercise, and reading significantly contribute to happiness. This category was also identified in defining happiness by the previous research with children and adolescents (Giacomini, Souza and Hutz, 2014).

The sport was featured prominently in the participants' responses on 'happiness.' The data set contained statements such as, *"Playing cricket is happiness for me."* *"Kite flying gives me happiness."* Many participants mentioned technological entertainment when they considered 'happiness' in their lives, which mainly included playing games on the computer, watching television, and listening to music, especially on their mobile phones. Excerpts from the data are, *"Playing games on a computer is happiness,"* *"Listening to music on a mobile phone,"* *"Watching television Programs."* The participants also mentioned activities like cooking, reading as determiners of happiness. Studies have shown that leisure activities' involvement produces flow experiences (Davis & Csikszentmihalyi, 1977), leading to enduring happiness. Leisure activities have also been an imperative indicator of leisure satisfaction (Ragheb & Tate, 1993) and happiness (Spiers & Walker, 2009).

Theme Two: "Friends"

Likewise, "Friends," the second most cited category by both the genders, where 43% of the respondents stated that happiness is being with friends. These results align with those of other studies (Demir and Weitekamp, 2007; Goswami, 2012). The participants responded in the following ways: *"Spending maximum time with friends at school,"* *"Travelling with Friends,"* *"Chatting with school friends."* *"Studying with Friends in groups,"* *"Playing games with friends."* The relationship of adolescents with their friends is the most satisfying of all the relations (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). Spending time with friends is a rewarding and mood enhancer for adolescents (Masten, Telzer, Fuligni, Lieberman, & Eisenberger, 2012). Moreover, healthy friendship fulfill needs like self-esteem, security, sociability, affection, and happiness (Brown, 2013)

Theme Three: "Family"

The family was the third major category mentioned by 33% respondents that included being with or spending time with family. Many participants echoed this view that *"Happiness is spending time with parents and siblings."* *"Going on an outing with family members"* was also mentioned. 5% of girls responded that they love to spend time with their mother.

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Attachment theory also emphasized the importance of the relationship between a mother and a child (Bowlby, 1988). Boys did not state any particular parent but regarded family as a source of happiness for them. Children tend to detach themselves from their parents as they become more oriented toward their peers (Fulgini & Eccles, 1993). Participants mentioned family as a factor for their happiness. Consistent with this definition, the participants verbalized: "*Spending time with my mother is happiness*" *Spending time with my brother is happiness for me,*" *"I love to be with my sister."* Some also revealed, "Happiness is to be at home with my parents." Happiness was also linked to specific activities with family members, such as "*Travelling with my family.*" "*Eating food made by mother.*"

Theme Four: "Satisfaction of wants."

Happiness is conceived by 28% of participants in terms of satisfaction. Participants defined happiness in terms of a sense of achievement and appreciation as a defining feature of happiness, which leads to satisfaction. "*Happiness is the achievement of the top position in the class,*" "*Happiness is being appreciated for achievement from parents and teachers,*" "*getting new clothes, gifts, items of one's choice*" were also shared by the participants. Some even mentioned that eating their favorite food made them happy.

Theme Five: "Helping Others"

14% of the participants viewed happiness as helping others. To support this theme, participants mentioned: "*Happiness is helping the people in the time of need,*" "*Helping the poor and needy is happiness.*" Previous researches have shown that helping others boosts happiness (Post, 2005) by reducing stress (Midlarsky, 1991) and diminishing depression rates in adolescents (Kline, 2007). Martela and Ryan (2016) posit that helping others satisfy adolescents' need for autonomy, relatedness, and competence as mentioned by Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1980).

Theme Six: "Sharing joyful moments."

12% of the respondents mentioned happiness as 'sharing of happy moments and positive experiences with the family and friends' and also 'bringing a smile to the faces of their loved ones.' Some participants stressed, "*For me, happiness is when I share my happiness with others.*" Others mentioned, "*Happiness is sharing of positive moments with my friends and my brother, sister, and parents.*" The goal behind sharing positive emotions with others is 'savoring' (Bryant, 1989), that is, to enjoy the taste of a happy moment to the fullest to make it memorable and significant (Langston, 1994).

Theme Seven: "Religiosity"

6.4 % of adolescents stated God and religion as the determiners of happiness. Faith in God is placed for providing direction to meet future challenges of life (Huuskens, Heaven, Ciarrochi, Parker, & Caltabiano, 2016) apart from providing with an ability to cope with stress (Ellison, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which positively contributes to happiness (Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Abdel-Khalek and Lester, 2007; Abdel-Khalek and Naceur, 2007; Abdel-Khalek and Thorson, 2006; Eryilmaz, 2015). As one participant specified: "*With God near me, I feel relieved from the burden of anxiety and stress.*" Others elaborated this view as; "*My Religion is happiness for me as it feeds in me some power; thus, I feel a sense of security while practicing some religious activities.*" Some introduced happiness as a fulfillment of needs by God and said, for example, that: "*God fulfills all my wishes, thus making me happy.*" These findings supported previous studies (Manusov, Carr, Rowane, Beatty, & Nadeau, 1995). The higher level of Religiosity is linked to happiness and lower rates of suicide across nations (Diener & Seligman, 2004); (Helliwell, 2007). Adolescence is

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the phase of identity confusion (Erikson, 1968), so adolescents took the sustenance from religion, for getting answers to their major life quandaries (King & Benson, 2006) and for exploring their identity (Hill et al., 2000). Many researchers have recognized the relation between Religion/God and Happiness (Huuskes et al., 2016; Yonker, Schnabelrauch and DeHaan, 2012).

Thus, the present study results suggest seven components that determine adolescents' happiness: Leisure time activities, friends, family, the satisfaction of wants, helping others, sharing joyful moments, and Religiosity.

Limitations and Future Directions

Some limitations are found with the present study, which could be addressed in future research; firstly, the purposive sampling technique adopted for selecting the sample may interfere with the results' generalization. Thus, future research should use a random sampling technique. Secondly, the present study considered only school-going adolescents. Future research could study the factors of happiness among uneducated/dropouts adolescents also. Conducting such studies allows us to confirm the seven factors determining adolescents' happiness in the present research and identifying new factors. Moreover, the result can be valuable for the policymakers, educators, administrators, and parents to focus on the strategies like co-curricular and extracurricular endeavors, especially promoting hobby clubs, socially-focused approaches, and mindful activities for adolescents that can be an effective way to boost their happiness.

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the factors of adolescents' happiness and explores that adolescents' happiness is a blend of hedonic and eudaimonic aspects. Based on the responses to the open-ended questions, it is clear that adolescents consider interpersonal relationships, the satisfaction of needs and wants, serving others, and religion as important determinants of happiness. Happiness is deciphered as a state influenced by an individual's leisure time activities, being with friends and family, the satisfaction of wants, sharing joyful experiences, helping others, and Religiosity

Whereas the past literature suggests that adolescents consider happiness more in abstract terms (eudaimonic) than the concrete ones (hedonic), the current study participants' depictions of happiness indicate otherwise. Adolescents from the present study consider happiness dominantly in hedonic (concrete) terms, which contrasts with the previous findings wherein adolescents from the collectivistic culture perceive happiness dominantly in eudaimonic terms (Kim, Kim, Cha, & Lim, 2007). However, due consideration is also given to eudaimonic happiness.

Therefore, if aiming to make adolescents happy in life, targeting both hedonic and eudaimonic activities may be more effective in this regard. Thus, we can say that both hedonic and eudaimonic activities more or less contribute to complete happiness among adolescents.

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Conflict of Interest

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