

Research Paper

Correlation of Fear of Happiness with Flourishing and Hope in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The present study titled “Correlation of Fear of Happiness with Flourishing and Hope in Young Adults” aims to find out the effect of an individual’s fear of happiness with respect to their level of flourishing and hope. Hypotheses for the present work are a) An individual’s fear of happiness will negatively affect their ability to flourish, and b) an individual’s fear of happiness will negatively affect their level of hope. For the purpose of this study 50 young adults aged between 18-23 years were selected through random sampling technique. The original English version of the Fear of Happiness Scale, Flourishing Scale, and the Adult State Hope Scale were distributed exclusively to the respondents currently studying in Amity University Lucknow Campus, who were without any present history of mental illnesses. The analysis of data included the mean and standard deviations of the scores obtained from each questionnaire, suggesting higher levels in flourishing and hope as compared to fear of happiness. Further analysis included finding out the Pearson’s Correlation and Spearman’s rho respectively. The correlation between fear of happiness and flourishing proved to be significant at 0.01 levels for both. The correlation between fear of happiness and hope proved to be significant at 0.05 level in Pearson’s Correlation, and 0.01 level in Spearman’s rho. After the analysis of data, the hypotheses were accepted, that is, there was indeed a negative effect of fear of happiness on one’s level of flourishing and hope.

Keywords: *Fear of happiness, Flourishing, Hope, Young Adults, Correlation*

The present study has been conducted with the aim to explore the possible effect of an individual’s fear of happiness on their propensity to flourish in life, and their goal-directed thinking at any given moment in life, that is, their level of hope. In the field of modern psychology happiness is described as subjective wellbeing, or “people’s evaluations of their lives and encompasses both cognitive judgments of satisfaction and affective appraisals of moods and emotions” (Kesebir & Diener, 2008, p. 118). Subjective well-being includes components of life satisfaction, satisfaction with respect to an important aspect of life (work, health, etc.), and existence of positive affect, along with low levels of negative affect.

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Received: May 07, 2023; Revision Received: November 15, 2023; Accepted: November 19, 2023

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Fear of Happiness: Fear of happiness, or cherophobia, is the phenomenon where individuals who are absolutely against the idea of feeling happiness to any extent. The term comes from the Greek word 'chairo' which means 'I rejoice' (Holbrook, C. 2015, 2023). While cherophobia is presently recognized as a clinical disorder under the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), many researches have started to validate its scientific existence (Joshanloo, 2014). The working definition of the term 'fear of happiness' is the feeling of anxiousness people feel in allowing themselves to feel positive (Gilbert et al. 2012). Therefore, the present analysis of fear of happiness is aimed at assessing the respondents' level of anxiousness they experience when they feel positive.

Flourishing: In modern psychology, flourishing was coined by the founding father, Dr. Martin Seligman. According to Seligman, flourishing occurs when an individual pays careful attention towards the constructing and maintaining of the five aspects of the PERMA model. The PERMA model was coined by Seligman to explain what contributes to an individual's sense of flourishing. The five factors covered in this model are- Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments (Seligman, 2001). According to Seligman (2011), to flourish is to find fulfilment in our lives, accomplishing meaningful and worthwhile tasks, and connecting with others at a deeper level- in essence, living the "good life". The working definition of the term 'flourishing' is used synonymously with an individual's subjective well-being, in the domains of relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism. Therefore, the present analysis of flourishing is aimed at assessing the eudemonic dimensions of well-being, and consequently providing feedback for how to improve one's life, and stimulating the scope for self-improvement (Diener et al. 2010).

Hope: In psychological literature, psychologists and psychoanalysts have systematically investigated hope since the 1950s (Frank, 1968; Gallagher et al. 2020). In most studies, hope was seen as a cognitive process of directing agency that rests on the perception of an outcome as important for an agent to achieve and as having a certain probability (Stotland, 1969). In current times, Charles Snyder's hope theory has given major contribution to the psychological approach to hope, where he defines hope as a goal-setting framework comprising of two interrelated elements, which are- (a) agencies- which refer to a sense of successful purpose in meeting goals in the past, present, and future, and (b) pathways- refers to the hypothesis that hope is influenced by the perceived availability of successful pathways related to goals (Snyder et al. 1991:570). The working definition of the term 'hope' is an individual's goal-directed thinking in any given moment or situation (Lopez et al., 2000) that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals) (Snyder et al. 1991).

Young Adults: According to Kessler (2022), the term 'young adult' is defined differently in various disciplines of medicine, psychology, researches in science, various popular cultures, and literature. She further states that the age range for young adults could refer to people aged 12 to 18, or could be between the age of 18 and 30; and it all depends on the context in which it needs to be discussed. In the field of psychology, Erik Erikson defined young adulthood as a crucial stage that begins after adolescence. This stage is characterized by one of the most prominent and delicate process of an individual's life, called "identity formation". Based on Erikson works, individuals reach this stage between the ages of 19 and 39; but because people reach this stage at different ages due to varying factors, there isn't any absolute timeline for young adulthood, according to Erikson (Erikson. E. 1975). According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, 2018), young adulthood is

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generally defined as 18 to 22, or 18 to 25. Researchers have pinpointed young adulthood as an essential time period, biologically. When individuals enter this stage in life, they start developing greater thinking capacities, capability for better emotional regulation, and enhanced interpersonal skills. Therefore, a lot of growth takes place in young adults to parallel that which occurs in their childhood and adolescence. For the purpose of this study, the population of choice was taken to be young adults ranging between the ages of 18 to 23, by taking the estimated age range given by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, 2018).

Rationale:

The researcher was intrigued with the concept of fear of happiness, and how it plays a role in influencing an individual's level of flourishing and hope in the long run. The existing review of literature revolving around the variable of fear of happiness and its association with flourishing and hope is very limited. There also exists a significant gap in the literature with respect to the Indian context. The tools mentioned previously are majorly used on the American and the European population, with very little exposure to the Asian population. The present work was conducted to see if it incurs the desirable outcome of finding an individual's fear of happiness and its hypothesized influence of their level of flourishing and hope.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ramazan, Y. et al., in the year 2022, revealed that the coronavirus significantly predicted resilience, and the psychological resilience plays the role of a mediator in the relationship between fear and happiness associated with COVID-19. Lambert, L. et al., in the year 2022 concluded that happiness doesn't only appear to influence well-being, but concomitant behaviours as well. Hans, O., in the year 2022, revealed each transgender/nonbinary/other gender, sexual minority, Asian-American, and multiracial students have lower chance of flourishing in contrast to their respective reference groups, whereas Black students have higher chances in flourishing. Isgör, I. et al., in the year 2022, suggested that fear of happiness and ruminative thought contributed to the explanation of approximately 12% of the variance in individuals' resilience scores, and the presence of significant disturbance between individuals' psychological resilience and sub-domains regarding the self-perception of psychological resilience as per their gender. Gökmen, A., in the year 2021, suggested that fear and externalities of happiness are essential factors which explain the relationship between maltreatment of childhood psyche and the psychological well-being amongst young adults. Emel G. et al., in the year 2021, **highlighted the role of hope and optimism as potential indicators to justify the reason to how coronavirus stress is associated to an individual's subjective well-being.** Rebecca A. et al., in the year 2020, suggested that hope plays a similar role in the association between fear of happiness and depression over a period of time. Hacer, B. et al., in the year 2019, suggested that experiencing less fear when it comes to engaging in beliefs related to happiness increases the levels of motivation in order to achieve desired goals (agency) and perceive the ability to produce the resources towards achievement of such life goals (pathways), which in turn increase the levels of flourishing. Allison, R. et al., in the year 2019, signified that individuals who are happy might be more connected to their neighbourhoods. Aaron, A. et al., in the year 2017, revealed levels of higher agreeableness and neuroticism reinforced the influence of fear of happiness on positive affect, whereas, high levels of extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience resulted in weakening the effect. Carmel P. et al., in the year 2015, suggested that a more elaborate understanding of life satisfaction within the areas of hedonic and eudaimonic principles of happiness is important in the enhancement of one's overall

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understanding of well-being. Siamak K., in the year 2013, indicated the significant role of the level on education on one's flourishing and state hope. Katherine K., in the year 2013, indicated that individuals, who exhibit the lowest amount of EAC, tend to flourish the highest, and vice versa. Manfred, D. et al., in the year 2011, show a positivity ratio, which also associated with mental health status in the hypothesized direction; along with a positive correlation between higher positivity ratio and mental health.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives: a) to explore the possible effect of an individual's fear of happiness on their propensity to flourish in life, and b) to explore individual's goal-directed thinking at any given moment in life, that is, the level of hope they exhibit. **Hypotheses:** a) An individual's fear of happiness will negatively affect their level of hope, and b) An individual's fear of happiness will negatively affect their overall ability to flourish. **Variables:** a) Independent Variable- Fear of happiness, b) Dependent Variables- Flourishing and Hope. **Tools:** Original English version of **Fear of Happiness Scale**, a uni-dimensional scale, developed by Gilbert and his colleagues (2012), English translation of the original version of **Flourishing Scale (FS)** developed by Diener et al (2009), and **The Adult State Hope Scale (ASHS)** developed by Snyder et al. (1996) were used. **Sample:** a) sample population consisted of young adults (18-23 years), b) sample size consisted of 50 respondents, and c) sample technique used was random sampling. **Inclusion Criteria:** a) young adults with age between 18-23 years, and b) young adults studying in Amity University Lucknow Campus. **Exclusion Criteria:** a) young adults studying in any other educational institutions other than Amity University Lucknow Campus, and b) young adults with any present history of mental illnesses. **Research Design-** exploratory research.

Procedure

the student researcher approached the young adults and took their consent for participation in the study, 50 respondents were randomly selected and were presented with the three scales one after the other, they were asked to pay attention to the instructions laid out in the beginning of the questionnaires before filling them, the respondents were requested to ask if they had any query or doubt.

Data Analysis

Table No. 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Fear of Happiness, Flourishing, and Hope in Young Adults.

	Fear of Happiness	Flourishing	Hope
Mean	11.5600	42.8000	13.1400
Standard Deviation	7.42077	7.56199	6.37601

The above table highlights the mean and standard deviation of the scores of young adults, showing higher levels in flourishing and hope as compared to fear of happiness.

Table No. 2: Pearson's Correlation between Fear of Happiness and Flourishing in Young Adults.

Correlations			
		Fear of happiness	Flourishing
Fear of Happiness	Pearson Correlation	1	-.418**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		0.001
	N	50	50
Flourishing	Pearson Correlation	-.418**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.001	
	N	50	50

** Correlation is significant at the .001 level.

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The above table highlights that the Pearson's Correlation between fear of happiness and flourishing in young adults is significant at 0.01 level.

Table No. 3: Spearman's rho correlation between Fear of Happiness and Flourishing in Young Adults.

Correlations					
			Fear of happiness	Flourishing	
Spearman's rho	Fear of happiness	Correlation Coefficient	1	-0.402**	
		Sig. (1-tailed)		0.002	
		N	50	50	
	Flourishing	Correlation Coefficient	-0.402**	1	
		Sig. (1-tailed)	0.002		
		N	50	50	

** Correlation is significant at the .001 level.

The above table highlights that the Spearman's Correlation between fear of happiness and flourishing in young adults is significant at 0.01 level.

Table No. 4: Pearson's Correlation between Fear of Happiness and Hope in Young Adults.

Correlations			
		Fear of happiness	Hope
Fear of Happiness	Pearson Correlation	1	-.321*
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.011
	N	50	50
Hope	Pearson Correlation	-.312*	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.011	
	N	50	50

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

The above table highlights that the Pearson's Correlation between fear of happiness and hope in young adults is significant at 0.05 level.

Table No. 5: Spearman's rho between Fear of Happiness and Hope in Young Adults.

Correlations					
			Fear of happiness	Hope	
Spearman's rho	Fear of happiness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.331**	
		Sig. (1-tailed)		.009	
		N	50	50	
	Hope	Correlation Coefficient	-.331**	1.000	
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.009		
		N	50	50	

** Correlation is significant at the .001 level.

The above table highlights that the Spearman's Correlation between fear of happiness and hope in young adults is significant at 0.01 level.

DISCUSSION

The present dissertation hypothesizes that an individual's fear of happiness will negatively affect their ability to flourish, as well as their level of hope. After the interpretation of the results, it can be concluded that the stated hypotheses were accepted and the correlation between fear of happiness and flourishing was found to be significant at 0.01 level. The correlation between fear of happiness and hope was found to be significant both at 0.01 and 0.05 levels respectively.

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On the basis of the statistical analysis, it can be observed that there is indeed an increase in flourishing and hope as compared to fear of happiness, but there is significantly more increase in flourishing with respect to fear of happiness, than in hope with respect to fear of happiness.

Table No. 1 represents the mean and standard deviation of fear of happiness, flourishing, and hope in young adults. The results reveal that there is a higher mean value and standard deviation of scores of flourishing and hope, as compared to the fear of happiness. This shows that lower the level of fear of happiness, higher is the level of flourishing and hope, thus supporting the hypotheses.

Table No. 2 and 3 represent the correlation between fear of happiness and flourishing obtained through both Pearson's Correlation and Spearman's rho. The results reveal that the correlations between the two variables are significant at 0.01 level.

Table No. 4 and 5 represent the correlation between fear of happiness and hope obtained through both Pearson's Correlation and Spearman's rho. The results reveal that the Pearson's Correlation between the two variables is significant at 0.05 level, and the Spearman's rho is significant at 0.01 level.

Researches done by Hacer B. et al (2019), Siamak K (2013), and Katherine K. (2013) support the hypotheses that when there is a low level of fear of happiness, an individual's sense flourishing and hope escalates to a higher level. The literature pertaining to this theme reveals that one's fear of happiness negatively affects their levels of flourishing and hope.

Lambert, L. et al. (2022), in their study found that fear of happiness is related to low subjective well-being and other concomitant behaviours like physical activity and sleep.

Rebecca A. et al. (2020), in their study, contributed significantly towards finding the relationship between individuals' aversion to happiness and depressive symptoms. Their study aimed at finding out the relationship between these two factors and how hope plays a mediating role in moderating the relationship between them. The findings from their study revealed that development of hope does play an important role in disrupting the relationship between an individual's aversion to happiness and their depressive symptoms.

This work was done to observe if the researches done on this theme were applicable in the Indian context. The result obtained through the current study does, in fact, incur the desirable outcomes and therefore support the hypotheses.

Limitation

The existing review of literature revolving around the variable of fear of happiness and its association with flourishing and hope is very limited. There exists large number of researches on the mentioned variables, but those are done either individually, or with respect to other factors like optimism, gender identity, sense of community, etc. There also exists a significant gap in the literature with respect to the Indian context. The tools mentioned previously are majorly used on the American and the European population, with very little exposure to the Asian population.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Chakraborty, R. & Pandey, N. (2023). Correlation of Fear of Happiness with Flourishing and Hope in Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(4), 1466-1473. DIP:18.01.131.20231104, DOI:10.25215/1104.131