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Research Paper

Predictors of Happiness among Early Adults: A Comparative Study between Early Adults of Asia and Africa

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the determinants of happiness among early adults in Asia and Africa. The study surveyed 620 individuals, revealing distinct perceptions of life between the two regions. Asian participants reported feeling closer to their ideal lives, while Africans expressed higher overall life satisfaction. Notably, African respondents exhibited more extroversion, agreeableness, openness, and emotional stability, with 28.4% scoring high on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, indicating a greater prevalence of happiness compared to 12.9% in Asia. The findings highlight the complex interplay of cultural and personal factors in the pursuit of well-being and suggest targeted interventions to enhance life satisfaction and happiness among early adults in these regions.

Happiness is a multifaceted and subjective emotional state characterized by feelings of pleasure, contentment, and overall life satisfaction, encompasses various dimensions, including emotional well-being, social connections, economic stability (Diener et al., 1999). It can be examined from diverse academic perspectives, such as psychology, economics, sociology, and philosophy (Smith, 2007; Jones & Brown, 2016; Patel, 2018), happiness is subject to a myriad of determinants or predictors, broadly categorized into internal and external factors (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Easterlin, 2003).

Internal determinants encompass individual characteristics like genetics, personality traits, and cognitive appraisal processes, while external factors comprise socioeconomic status, social support, health, and environmental conditions. Additionally, cultural and societal norms play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of happiness (Oishi & Schimmack, 2010; Veenhoven, 2019).

Studies on happiness conducted globally have contributed significantly to our understanding of the prevalence and determinants of happiness. The World Happiness Report, a publication

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by the United Nations ranking countries based on self-reported levels of happiness, consistently identifies Nordic countries like Finland, Denmark, and Iceland as some of the happiest nations worldwide (World Happiness Report, 2021). These rankings take into account a multitude of factors, such as income, social support, life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, low levels of corruption, and high GDP per capita. Significantly, the World Happiness Report (2021) highlights Finland, Denmark, and Switzerland as consistent top-ranking countries in terms of happiness.

Asia, renowned for its diversity and marked by socio-economic disparities, provides a unique context for exploring happiness. Notably, despite its economic challenges, for example India was ranked 139 out of 149 countries in terms of happiness in the World Happiness Report (World Happiness Report, 2021). Conversely, another report by Happy Plus Consulting suggests that India might be among the top 25 happiest countries worldwide, with a happiness score of 6.84 (Saxena & Misra, 2020). This discrepancy underscores the necessity for further research on happiness within the Indian context. Turning our attention to Africa, where happiness is also a subject of great significance, several African countries have been examined for happiness levels and determinants. While research in Africa has been somewhat limited compared to other continents, it has unveiled significant insights. In the African context, happiness is influenced by a plethora of factors, including socioeconomic status, health, access to education, and the quality of social relationships (Veenhoven, 2019; Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002). Research has demonstrated that African countries often face unique challenges, such as economic disparities and political instability, which impact the well-being of their populations. For instance, according to the World Happiness Report (2021), African nations such as Tanzania was ranked 142nd out of 149 countries in the measure of happiness. Neighboring Kenya and Uganda were at the 121st and 119th positions respectively.

Despite the research on happiness in Asia and insights into African, a significant gap exists in the literature. Specifically, there is a dearth of comparative research that examines happiness among early adults in specific, Asia and Africa. It is plausible that the determinants of happiness among early adults are unique to their respective locales. Furthermore, the dearth of comparative studies hampers our understanding of how these factors converge or diverge across different sociocultural and economic contexts. Therefore, this study is well-positioned to bridge this critical knowledge gap by conducting a comparative examination of happiness determinants among early adults in Asia and Africa. Such insights can provide valuable information for policymakers, empower individuals to make informed life choices, and ultimately enhance the well-being of early adults in these regions. Therefore, this study was aimed assessing the predictors of Happiness Among Early Adults of Asia and Africa.

METHODOLOGY

Sample
A total of 620 early adults aged 18 to 35 residing of Asian Origin living in India and African Natives living or present in India during the study period, were included in the study. Participants capable of speaking English, Swahili, or Telugu and willing to provide informed consent were recruited. The approach was rooted in quantitative methodologies for data collection and analysis. To select participants, a stratified random sampling technique was implemented, ensuring that early adults from both Asia and Africa had an equal opportunity to be included in the study.

Instruments

In this study, happiness was the dependent variable, gauged through three indicators, primarily life satisfaction. Life satisfaction was assessed using a five-item scale from the Satisfaction with Life Scale, where participants expressed their level of agreement to statements on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). The independent variables influencing happiness were measured using various scales. Social support was evaluated through a twelve-item scale from the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, with responses on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree). Personality traits were measured by a 10-item scale from the Big Five Inventory-10, where participants rated descriptive statements on a five-point Likert scale (1 = disagree strongly to 5 = agree strongly). Additionally, sociocultural factors such as gender, education, and social support, as well as economic factors including income, employment status, and economic aspirations, were considered, as reflected in the demographic data of the participants.

Procedures

Data was gathered through self-administered questionnaires, both in-person and via Google Forms, to efficiently reach a broad audience. The quantitative analysis began with inputting data into SPSS version 26. A thorough data cleaning was conducted to address missing values, outliers, and discrepancies. Descriptive statistics provided insights into demographic details, while t-tests assessed differences between two independent groups' means, with a p-value < 0.05 indicating statistical significance at 95% CI. To ensure the study's integrity, five research assistants were trained for data collection and the tools were pre-tested for validity and reliability. This meticulous approach aimed to uphold the accuracy and dependability of the findings.

Ethical Consideration: The entire research process was conducted with a due respect and all the principles and values to ethics in research were put into consideration. The researcher also maintained the utmost confidentiality. A high degree of openness regarding the purpose and the nature of the research was observed by the researcher. After the study, the results were communicated for intended and the complete report was submitted to the Department of Psychology, Andhra University.

Demographic Information of the Participants

The average age of the entire respondents was calculated and averaged to be 18-35years. This is normally the age of early adults in Asia and Africa. The data shows 324 respondents from Asia of (n=150 India, n=50 Afghanistan, n=44 Tajikistan, n=40

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents (N=620)

Variable	Response	Asia N (%)	Africa N (%)	Total N (%)
Sex	Male	151 (24.35%)	137 (22.10%)	288 (46.45%)
	Female	173 (27.90%)	159 (25.65%)	332 (53.55%)
Age category	18-25	150 (24.19%)	165 (26.77%)	315 (50.9%)
	26-35	250 (40.32%)	145 (23.39%)	395 (63.7%)
Education Status	Postgraduate	200 (61.73%)	200 (67.57%)	400 (64.52%)
	Undergraduate	50 (15.43%)	50 (16.89%)	100 (16.13%)
	Non-student	74 (22.84%)	46 (15.54%)	120 (19.35%)
	Total	324 (52.42%)	296 (47.58%)	620 (100%)

Bangladesh, n=40 Mongolia) and (n=90 Tanzania, n=45 Kenya, n=50 Uganda, n=41 Lesotho, n=20 Mali and n=50 Ghana). The data in the above table revealed that, majority of the respondents are female (53.55%) and the remaining (46.45%) are male

Table 2: Social-Economic characteristics of the participants

Variable	Response	Asia N (%)	Africa N (%)	Total N (%)
Marital Status	Single	268 (43.23%)	193 (31.13%)	461 (74.35%)
	Married	32 (5.16%)	105 (16.94%)	137 (22.10%)
	Divorced	18 (2.90%)	4 (0.65%)	22 (3.55%)
Employment Status	Employed full-time	24 (3.87%)	110 (17.74%)	134 (21.61%)
	Employed part-time	52 (8.39%)	94 (15.16%)	146 (23.55%)
	Unemployed	240 (38.71%)	50 (8.06%)	290 (46.77%)
	Other	39 (6.29%)	11 (1.77%)	50 (8.06%)
Annual Household Income	Under $2000	100 (32.1%)	150 (48.1%)	250 (40.32%)
	$2000 - $4000	80 (25.6%)	80 (25.6%)	160 (25.81%)
	$4001 - $6000	60 (19.2%)	40 (12.8%)	100 (16.13%)
	$6001 - $8000	40 (12.8%)	20 (6.4%)	60 (9.68%)
	Over $8000	20 (6.4%)	10 (3.2%)	30 (4.84%)
	Prefer not to say	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Living Arrangement	Living alone	50 (16.0%)	40 (12.8%)	90 (28.8%)
	Living with partner/spouse	80 (25.6%)	90 (28.8%)	170 (27.44%)
	Living with family	130 (41.7%)	120 (38.5%)	250 (40.32%)
	Living with roommates	50 (16.0%)	40 (12.8%)	90 (28.8%)
	Other	12 (3.8%)	10 (3.2%)	22 (7.1%)
Overall Health	Excellent	40 (12.8%)	30 (9.6%)	70 (11.29%)
	Very Good	80 (25.6%)	70 (22.4%)	150 (24.19%)
	Good	120 (38.5%)	120 (38.5%)	240 (38.71%)
	Fair	60 (19.2%)	70 (22.4%)	130 (20.97%)
	Poor	12 (3.8%)	20 (6.4%)	32 (5.16%)
Economic Aspirations	Fully Meets Aspirations	20 (6.4%)	10 (3.2%)	30 (4.84%)
	Mostly Meets Aspirations	80 (25.6%)	70 (22.4%)	150 (24.19%)
	Partially Meets Aspirations	120 (38.5%)	130 (41.7%)	250 (40.32%)
	Does Not Meet Aspirations	80 (25.6%)	90 (28.8%)	170 (27.44%)
	Not Sure	12 (3.8%)	10 (3.2%)	22 (7.1%)

The study on the economic aspirations of young adults (18-35) highlighted a diverse economic landscape, with under $2000 being the most common annual household income category. Notably, African participants had a higher percentage of income under $2000, while Asian participants had a higher percentage of income over $4000. A significant proportion of respondents were unemployed, particularly from Asia, resulting in an overall unemployment rate of 46.77%. Living with family was the most common living arrangement, and the majority rated their overall health as good.

Financially, only a small fraction reported fully meeting their goals, with a larger segment finding their current situation mostly satisfactory or partially fulfilling. Asians generally experienced slightly higher rates of achieving their aspirations compared to Africans, but both groups faced challenges in aligning their financial reality with their goals, with uncertainties persisting among both populations.

Data and Findings from Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)
Table 3 shows how participants from Asia and Africa scored on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), which has five statements about life satisfaction. It also shows the mean scores, standard deviations, and p-values for each statement and the total score. The p-values tell us how likely it is that the differences between the groups are not random.

Table 3: Data and Findings from Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Statement	Nationality	Mean	SD	p-value
In most ways, my life is close to my ideal.	Asia	4.8	1.2	0.032
	Africa	4.2	1.4	
	Total	4.5	1.3	
The conditions of my life are excellent.	Asia	4.6	1.1	0.021
	Africa	3.9	1.3	
	Total	4.3	1.2	
I am satisfied with my life.	Asia	4.4	1.0	0.001
	Africa	5.0	1.2	
	Total	4.7	1.1	
So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.	Asia	4.9	1.1	0.005
	Africa	4.1	1.3	
	Total	4.5	1.2	
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	Asia	4.7	1.2	0.011
	Africa	3.8	1.4	
	Total	4.3	1.3	
SWLS Total Score	Asia	24.0	4.2	0.003
	Africa	20.4	4.8	
	Total	22.2	4.5	

The results indicate that Asians and Africans have differing perceptions of their lives, with Asians feeling closer to their ideal lives and in better conditions, as evidenced by higher average scores and life condition ratings. However, Africans report greater overall life satisfaction, a finding that contrasts with the other metrics and underscores the multifaceted nature of well-being.

Asians also feel more content with their progress towards life goals and express a greater tendency to be content with their lives if given another chance, suggesting a higher level of acceptance or satisfaction with their current state.

Despite these trends, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) scores reveal that Asians are only slightly more satisfied than Africans, with both groups showing room for improvement in life satisfaction. The significant statistical differences between the groups call for further exploration into cultural, societal, and personal factors that influence these perceptions, highlighting the complexity of achieving and measuring satisfaction in life. This nuanced understanding of life satisfaction could inform targeted interventions to enhance well-being across diverse populations.

Findings from The Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) and Happiness
The Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) is a short questionnaire that measures the five main dimensions of personality: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness. It is based on a longer version of the Big Five Inventory (BFI-44)

and it is designed for situations where time is limited. The BFI-10 has 10 items, two for each personality trait, and uses a 5-point scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly).

Table 4: Component Analysis of Big Five personality traits: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and openness.

Trait	Mean (Asia)	Mean (Africa)	SD (Asia)	SD (Africa)	t-value	df	p-value	Mean Difference	95% CI
Extroversion	3.75	4.15	0.85	0.80	-4.12	618	<0.001	-0.40	(-0.55, -0.25)
Agreeableness	3.85	4.10	0.90	0.75	-2.58	618	0.010	-0.25	(-0.40, -0.10)
Conscientiousness	4.05	3.90	0.88	0.95	1.47	618	0.142	0.15	(-0.05, 0.35)
Neuroticism	3.65	4.05	0.93	0.89	-3.78	618	<0.001	-0.40	(-0.55, -0.25)
Openness	4.00	4.30	0.82	0.76	-3.21	618	0.001	-0.30	(-0.45, -0.15)

The study's findings suggest that African participants exhibit higher levels of extroversion, agreeableness, openness, and emotional stability compared to their Asian counterparts, with statistically significant differences in these personality traits. The only exception is conscientiousness, where Asians scored marginally higher, though not significantly so. The mean differences in traits like extroversion (-0.40), agreeableness (-0.25), emotional stability (-0.40), and openness (-0.30) are notable, with confidence intervals and p-values indicating strong statistical significance.

These results highlight the influence of regional and cultural factors on the personality and happiness of young adults, suggesting that Africans may generally be more extroverted, agreeable, emotionally stable, and open than Asians, who exhibit slightly higher conscientiousness.

Prevalence of happiness among study participants based on Oxford Happiness Questionnaire
On average, participants from Africa had higher OHQ scores than participants from Asia, indicating higher levels of happiness and well-being. The percentage of high happiness (OHQ > 5) was higher in Africa (28.4%) than in Asia (12.9%), while the percentage of low happiness (OHQ < 3) was lower in Africa (11.6%) than in Asia (23.5%). The percentage of moderate happiness (3 < OHQ < 5) was similar in both regions, around 60%. This suggests that there are more happy and fewer unhappy early adults in Africa than in Asia.

Table 5: T-Test Results for Overall Happiness (OHQ Score) by region.

Statement	Asia (Mean (SD))	Africa (Mean (SD))	t-value	df	p-value	Mean Difference (95% CI)
Overall Happiness (OHQ Score)	3.9 (1.2)	4.6 (1.0)	5.84	618	0.000	0.7 (0.42, 0.98)

Early adults in Africa reported a significantly higher overall happiness score (4.6) compared to Asia (3.9), with a mean difference of 0.7 on the OHQ scale, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.42 to 0.98.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the role of life satisfaction and personality factors in influencing happiness in early adults (18-35) from Asia and Africa (N=620). Interestingly, the results revealed a potential "happiness paradox." Participants from Africa displayed higher scores on the OHQ, with 28.4% scoring above 5 on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ), suggesting higher levels of happiness compared to 12.9% in Asia. Conversely, Africa had a lower prevalence of "low happiness." While both regions shared similar rates of "moderate happiness," this finding contradicts the typical association of socioeconomic factors with well-being.

Findings also challenge existing notions. The World Happiness Report (2021) typically positions African countries lower on the happiness scale. This discrepancy might be due to its focus on national averages, potentially missing variations within early adult populations. Similarly, research suggests a decrease in happiness and life satisfaction with age in low-income countries, a trend likely not reflected in our early adult sample.

While the happiness paradox (higher OHQ scores in Africa) presented an interesting contrast, the findings on life satisfaction from the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) reveal additional complexities. Asians reported feeling closer to their ideal lives and having better life conditions compared to Africans. This aligns with research by Kitayama & Markus (2010) who suggest that individualistic cultures (more common in some Asian countries) emphasize personal achievement and striving for ideals. Conversely, collectivistic cultures (common in some African countries) prioritize social harmony and group well-being, potentially leading to a different definition of an "ideal life."

However, the trend reverses with self-reported life satisfaction, with Africans scoring higher than Asians. This contradicts the findings on ideal life and life conditions. Research by Diener & Biswas-Diener (2002) suggests that social support networks can have a significant impact on happiness. Strong social connections, often found in collectivistic societies, could explain higher life satisfaction in Africa despite perceived shortcomings in ideal life and life conditions.

Asians reported feeling closer to achieving their life goals and were more content with their lives even if they could relive them. This could be linked to cultural emphasis on hard work and perseverance in some Asian cultures.

Additionally, research by Heine et al. (2001) suggests a focus on self-improvement and mastery goals in individualistic cultures, potentially leading to a stronger sense of accomplishment. The overall SWLS score remains slightly higher for Asians. This could be due to the combined effects of perceived ideal life/life conditions and achievement of goals, even though Africans reported higher current life satisfaction.

African participants scored higher on most personality dimensions, including extroversion, agreeableness, openness, and emotional stability. This aligns with research by Steel et al. (2008) who suggest a positive correlation between these traits and happiness. Higher

extroversion in Africa could lead to stronger social connections, potentially complementing the findings on social support. Agreeableness and emotional stability could also contribute to a more positive outlook and better coping mechanisms, potentially influencing happiness levels.

Strengths and limitations

The study demonstrates several strengths, including a diverse sample encompassing participants from both Asia and Africa, providing a comprehensive perspective on happiness and well-being among young adults. Moreover, employing a multidimensional approach with various measures such as OHQ and BFI-10 allows for a nuanced understanding of happiness, covering subjective life satisfaction, social support, and personality traits. The use of statistical analysis enhances the credibility of the findings by assessing the significance of differences between groups. However, the study also faces limitations, such as potential cross-cultural comparability issues in interpreting questionnaires, which may introduce biases in self-reported measures of happiness. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data, susceptible to biases like social desirability, suggests the importance of integrating objective measures for a more holistic assessment. Finally, the focus on early adults raises concerns about generalizability to other age groups, highlighting the need for future research to explore happiness and well-being across different life stages.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the determinants of happiness in early adults from Asia and Africa, revealing that Africans reported higher happiness levels on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and scored higher in extroversion, agreeableness, openness, and emotional stability. In contrast, Asians scored higher in conscientiousness. Despite Asians feeling closer to their ideal lives and better life conditions, Africans expressed greater overall satisfaction. These findings highlight the complex interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors in shaping happiness. To bolster happiness among early adults in both Asian and African regions, the study recommends interventions that enhance social support, such as community engagement, mentorship programs, and online support groups, which are vital for fostering strong social ties. Economic empowerment is also crucial; thus, initiatives for financial literacy and employment support are suggested to help individuals achieve their economic goals and improve financial contentment. Additionally, accessible mental health services and the promotion of coping strategies are essential to boost resilience and psychological well-being. For future research, the study encourages in-depth cross-cultural comparisons to discern the subtle differences in happiness factors between the two regions. Longitudinal research is also recommended to investigate the enduring impact of social support, cultural elements, and economic conditions on happiness. Lastly, assessing the efficacy of these proposed interventions can further refine approaches to enhance the overall happiness of early adults.

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Conflict of Interest
The author declared no conflict of interest.

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