

## Exploring Gender Differences in Level of Happiness among University Students

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### Abstract

*The aim of the current research was to examine the level of happiness among university students. The sample (N = 160) of the study comprised of male (n = 80) and female (n = 80) students. Convenient sampling technique was used for selecting students with an age range of 17-30, from Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University (SBKWU) and University of Balochistan (UoB) Quetta, Pakistan. Happiness was measured by using Urdu version of Oxford Happiness Scale (Argyle & Hills, 2002) after translating/adapting it into Urdu Language and its alpha reliability was  $\alpha = .85$ . Findings of the study, as hypothesized, indicated significant gender differences in level of happiness ( $t = 3.057, p < .003$ ) among male and female students.*

**Keywords:** Happiness; Gender: Balochistan.

### Introduction

Happiness has been defined as "an individual's level of optimism, self-regard and subjective love of life" (Martin, 2012; Seligman, 2002). "The degree to which a person judges the overall quality of one's life as a whole favorably" (Veenhoven, 1984). According to Kozma et al. (1991), as cited by Bekhet et al, (2008), several terms have been used interchangeably with happiness, which include quality of life, flow, peak experiences, life satisfaction and wellbeing.

Different perspectives have approached to study happiness. Each perspective is different giving a different concept for happiness, so this makes difference in achieving happiness. (Mahon & Yarcheski, 2002). According to Haybron (2003), happiness has three basic views: Hedonism reduces happiness to the individual's balance of pleasure and displeasure (experiencing almost all of pleasure is the happiness). The second one is life satisfaction view, in which happiness is identified by the attitude of an individual towards his/her life (to

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be happy an individual must have a positive and favorable attitude toward his/her life either completely or for some time). The third view of happiness is affective state theory that determines the happiness from the emotional state of individual either whole or some parts. The most popular view is affective state theory in empirical researches, but this is not clearly distinct from the hedonism view.

According to Carr (2004) happiness is understandable that is based on appropriate concepts of positive feelings like enjoyment and happiness. All people can't express their happiness in a single or special way rather happiness can be expressed with different experiences which include different feelings like success, coordination, warm internal feelings or calmness, joyful time and when the life problems are decreased.

The current study examined differences among students on the basis of gender. Though there have been many studies on happiness, but hardly there has been a study conducted with population of Balochistan and specifically with university students. These findings would help the organizations, teachers and the researchers to find out the additional factors related to experience of happiness among students.

## **Literature Review**

Numerous researches have been carried out on happiness. A study conducted on Malaysian public university students to see the differences between male and female and it was found that there was significant gender difference in happiness level such as male students experienced higher happiness (Ading, Seok, Hashmi & Maakip, 2012). Another study by Kamthan et al. (2018) has also reported that male medical students were happier than female students. Jaisri (2015) has reported in his study that male were happier than female students.

A comparative study was conducted by Cavalcanti et al (2009) among college students to examine level of happiness. The sample was taken from two countries America (Purdue University) and Brazil (Universidade Federal de Pernambuco). In the study significant gender differences were found. In Brazil men were happier than female although in America female were happier than men. A study conducted in Kuwait suggested that self-rating mean score of happiness was significantly higher in males than females (Khalek, 2006)

A study conducted in Gujrat, Pakistan, on happiness among university students reported that there was no gender difference (Shafiq et al., 2015). A study on university students of Punjab, Pakistan, reported that there were non-significant gender related differences in level of happiness (Malik, 2013).

Some Studies have also found that the gender is significant regarding happiness in the context of social class as poor girls experience higher level of

happiness than boys (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003). A study by Abbassi et al. (2018) investigated the relationship between happiness and factors for instance marital status, age, gender. The study had found that gender was significant factor that influenced happiness and female reported greater level of happiness than male. Similarly, in study of Sharma and Gulati (2015) female adolescents perceived significantly more happiness than male.

### **Research Design and Sample**

The research was descriptive with cross-sectional design.

### **Objective of the Study**

To explore gender differences in level of happiness.

### **Hypothesis**

Male students experience greater level of happiness as compared to female students.

### **Operational definition of happiness**

High scores on the Oxford Happiness Scale indicate higher level of happiness and low scores indicate low level of happiness

### **Sample**

Convenient sampling technique was used for data collection from 160 students. The sample comprised of male ( $n = 80$ ) and female ( $n = 80$ ) students. The participants were recruited from the University of Balochistan, and Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University. The students were enrolled in science and arts faculties who consented to participate in this study. The sample age ranged from 17-30 years ( $M = 21.47$ ,  $SD = 2.467$ ).

### **Instrument**

**Oxford Happiness Inventory.** It was developed by Argyle and Hills (2002) and it was translated by the researcher for the current study. It has 29 items. It has also reverse coded items which are 1,5,6,10,13,14,19,23,24,27,28,29. The scale includes subscales of positive affect, negative affect, and general satisfaction towards life. The response options were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, from *strongly agree* (5) to *strongly disagree* (0). Higher score on the scale indicates higher level of happiness and low score indicates low level of happiness. Possible maximum and minimum score range from 29 to 145 on this scale. Its alpha reliability was .85.

### **Procedure**

Permission was obtained from the concerned authorities of the Universities for collection of the data. After that each department was visited personally by the researcher. In each department before distributing the questionnaires, students were ensured that their privacy would be respected.

Most of the questionnaires were collected back on the spot and the remaining were collected later. In the end, they were thanked for their participation.

Tables File

Table 1. *Demographic description of the sample (N = 160)*

<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Age	17-20 years	61	38.1
	21-25 years	89	55.6
	26-30 years	10	6.3
Gender	Male	80	50
	Female	80	50
Ethnicity			
	Pashto	64	36.5
	Baloch	35	21.9
	Punjabi	12	7.5
	Urdu	18	11.3
	Persian	16	10
	Others	15	9.4

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics on study variable (N = 160)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>	<i>α</i>
OHI	93.18	23.08	-.570	.559	.85

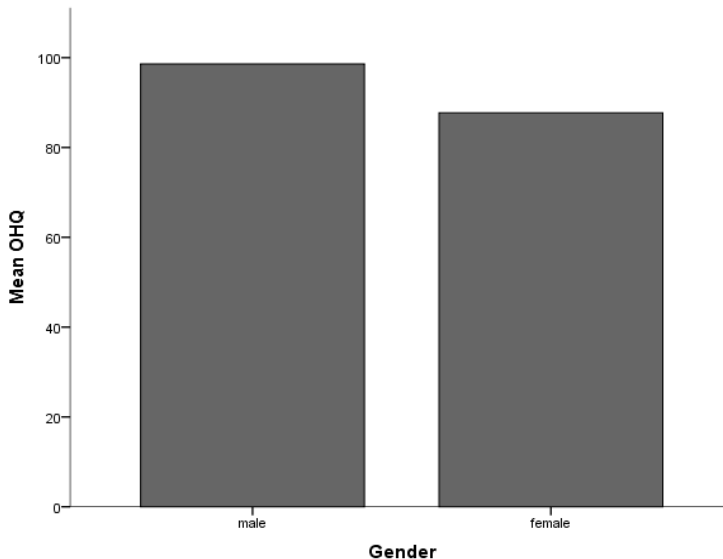
*Note. OHI=Oxford Happiness Inventory*

Table 3. *Gender Differences on Perception of Happiness (N = 160)*

Variables	Male students (n=80)		Female students (n=80)		CI 95%				
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
OHI	98.61	20.79	87.74	24.08	3.057	.003	3.850	17.900	0.4832

*Note. CI = Confidence interval, LL =Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit*

*Figure1.* Mean differences on male and female students



## Results

Table 1 shows characteristics and frequencies of the sample of the study. Table 2 shows descriptive description of the sample which shows that skewness and kurtosis were both reasonable and alpha reliability of the scale was very good. Independent sample t-test was run on the data to see the differences in level of happiness among male and female students. Results obtained through t-test (Table 3) show Mean differences which indicate significant gender differences with moderate effect size in level of happiness between male and female university students.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate gender differences on happiness. It was hypothesized that male students experience greater happiness as compared to their female counterpart. The result of this study supported the hypothesis. These findings are in line with those of Ading, Seok, Hashmi & Maakip, (2012), who found in their study that male university students happiness score was higher as compared to female. Findings of the current study study also match with the results of a study by Abdel khalek (2006), which has reported that men experienced higher level of happiness than female. However, other researches (Sharma & Gulati 2015; Csikszentmihalyi &

Hunter, 2003) have reported that female experience greater happiness than male. Whereas, studies such as Malik, (2013) and Shafiq et al., (2015) have even reported that there are no gender differences on happiness.

Though findings of the current study and some evidence from the literature show that male students experience greater level of happiness but still there are evidences in literature in favor of female experiencing greater level of happiness and even some studies report no gender differences. These contradictory findings necessitate the importance of further empirical studies which may further elaborate the factors that account for these contradictory findings regarding gender differences in happiness.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in happiness among university students based on their gender. The findings showed that male experience higher level of happiness compared to female students and this difference is significant and it endorses the findings reported in some of the previous studies on happiness.

### **Limitations and Suggestions**

The students who participated in the present study were only from universities. It is suggested that college and school students should also be included in future researches in order to see happiness level gender differences among students with a more inclusive picture. This research was cross-sectional and quantitative in nature; Future researches can adopt a longitudinal approach to examine changes in level of happiness at different stages of life among students.

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