HAPPINESS SKILLS IN IRANIAN STUDENTS OF ISFAHAN UNIVERSITY[#]

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The purpose of the present study was to investigate the Happiness Skills among students of universities in Isfahan city. In order to carry out the research, 727 students were randomly selected from the University of Isfahan, University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan University of Technology and Isfahan University of Arts. They were tested via Farsi version of Oxford Happiness Inventory (Alipour & Nor-bala, 1999) and Farsi version of Fordyce Happiness Inventory (Abedi, 2002). The data was analyzed by using t- test. Findings indicated that women were significantly higher than men on subscales of Socializing, Expressing feelings, Value happiness and Develop an outgoing social personality. Non significant differences were found between men and women on Oxford Happiness Inventory.

Personal happiness is generally held to be the most important goal in life. Despite the obvious importance of this basic human concern, for many years, 'happiness' was the forgotten topic of psychological research (Fordyce, 1977, 1981; Veenhoven, 1984). Historically, it all began, with a pioneering study by Watson (1930) entitled 'Happiness among Adult Students of Education'. Yet, after Watson's study, happiness research fell asleep until the late 1950s, when a few more isolated studies about happiness were published. Then in the 1960s, several booklength research reports on happiness appeared (see, for example, Cuntril, 1965; Gurin, Veroff, & Feld, 1960; Wessman & Ricks, 1966). It was only in the 1970s that happiness research really came into its own. Currently much is known regarding the nature of happiness, the factors which contribute to it, and the attributes of happy individuals (Fordyce, 1988).

Lyubomirsky (2001) found no relationship between gender and happiness. This finding was supported by many studies (see, for example, Argyle & Lu, 1990; Francis, 1999; Francis, Ziebertz, & Lewis, 2003). Using the known characteristics of happy individuals as a base, Fordyce (1977) developed program of happiness-increasing

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techniques developed and used to successfully enhance the personal happiness of normal community college students. The program called the "14 Fundamentals for Happiness" (Fordyce, 1983). According to Fordyce (1983) the program is a training-course in happiness as well. This Program includes skills which has been significantly found to boost the happiness levels of normal individuals (Fordyce, 1977, 1983, 1985; Lichter, Kaye, & Kammann, 1980). It is based on literature and employs a variety of cognitive and behavioral techniques to help average individuals better understand and increase their own personal happiness.

Currently, the Happiness Skills Program (HSP) is receiving wide use in a variety of research, educational counseling settings and workshops (Abedi, 2002; Argyle, 2001; Jafari, Abedi, & Liaghatdar, 2004). Happiness skills based on Fordyce program were as follows: Be More Active and Keep Busy; Spend More Time Socialising; Eliminate Negative Feelings and Problems; and Develop Positive Optimistic Thinking; Lower Expectations and Aspirations; Be Yourself; Close Relationships; Get Better Organised; Be Present-oriented; Value Happiness; Be Productive at Meaningful Work; Stop Worrying; Work on a Healthy Personality; Develop an Outgoing Social Personality. Researches by Abedi (2002), and Jafari et al. (2004) indicated that 'Expressing Feeling' was the most important dimension of happiness. Hence, Express of Feeling added to Fordyce's fourteen skills. Based on their findings, the domain expressing feelings was added to Fordyce's fourteen skills in the present study.

Moreover, a series of studies employing the Oxford Happiness Inventory showed other happiness skills. For example positive predictors of happiness have been identified as skills such as social competence (Argyle & Lu, 1990a), social skills, and cooperativeness (Lu & Argyle, 1991) satisfaction with relationship with people from whom support had been received (Lu & Argyle, 1992) and engagement in serious leisure activity (Lu & Argyle, 1994).

The purpose of the present research was to examine happiness skills in students of Isfahan University and to investigate the gender differences.

METHOD

Sample

The sample in the present study consisted of 727 students (403 women, 324 men). The respondents were selected by using stratified random sampling from Isfahan Universities. These Universities included: The University of Isfahan, Isfahan University of Medical

Sciences, Isfahan University of Technology and Isfahan University of Arts.

Instruments

The following instruments were used to collect the data:

The Oxford Happiness Inventory

The Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle, Matin, & Crossland, 1989) is a 29-item multiple choice instrument. Each item contains four options, constructed to reflect incremental steps defined as: unhappy or mildly depressed, a low level of happiness, a high level of happiness, and mania, thus for these four steps scores of 0, 1, 2, and 3 is given. The respondents were asked to "pick out the one statement in each group which best describes the way they have been feeling over the past week, including today".

Argyle et al. (1989) reported an internal reliability of 0.9 using Cronbach alpha and a 7-week test-retest reliability of 0. 78. In the present study, Farsi version of Oxford Happiness Inventory (Alipour & Nor-bala, 1999) was used.

Also Jafari et al. (2004) determined Validity and reliability of translated version in Isfahan universities, Internal reliability using alpha was .85 and a 6-week test-retest reliability in the same sample was .73.

Fordyce Happiness Inventory

This Inventory developed by Eysenck, (1990) comprises 45 items. These items are divided to 15 sections. It means that every section has three items. Each of them is related to a cognitive or behavioral variable. In fact, the Inventory assesses 14 behavioral and cognitive variables. Three items of the Inventory measure happiness in general. The variable "expressing feelings" is added as fifteenth variable. This inventory proved to have a high correlation with the degree of happiness in Abedi's study (2002). Thus, the Inventory measured 15 cognitive and behavioral variables. They were as follows: Be more active and keep busy; Spend more time socialising; Eliminate negative feelings and problems; Develop positive optimistic thinking; Expressing feeling; Lower expectations and aspirations; Be yourself; Close relationships; Get better organised; Be present-oriented; Value happiness; Be productive at meaningful work; Stop worrying; Work on a healthy personality; Develop an outgoing social personality.

This Inventory was made by Eysenck (1990) based on Fordyce view. In the present research Farsi version of Fordyce Happiness

Inventory (Abedi, 2002) was used. Its alpha reliability was 0.92 as reported by Jafari et al. (2004).

The Farsi version of Fordyce Happiness Inventory has 48 items, and the range of the scores of each item is between 0 to 10. Therefore, each participant can get the highest and lowest scores of 480 and 0 respectively. Higher scores indicate higher level of happiness skill.

Procedure

The Oxford Happiness Inventory (Farsi version) and Fordyce Happiness Inventory (Farsi version) were administered to a sample of 727 students. Data were analyised by the SPSS statistical package.

RESULTS

The results indicated that mean scores of Oxford Happiness Inventory came out to be 44.38. Table 1 shows differences between men and women on Happiness Skills.

Table 1

Difference between Men and Women on Happiness Skills (N = 727)

Skills	Men (n = 324)		Women (n = 403)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
More Active	16.39	7	16.11	7.33	.25	.611
Socializing	18.78	7.09	21	13.34	7.26	.007
Eliminate Negative Feelings	19.32	6.29	18.95	6.52	.59	.440
Positive Optimistic Thinking	19.70	6.91	20.29	6.79	1.32	.249
Expressing of feelings	16.60	5.95	18.75	7.02	19.24	.000
Lower Expectations	13.31	6.62	14.14	6.88	2.71	.100
Be Yourself	21.51	6.51	22.06	8.49	.92	.338
Close Relationships	21.63	6.05	22.016	5.99	1.35	.245
Get Better Organized	17.87	5.73	18.62	8.43	1.86	.172
Be Present-Oriented	18.15	12.08	18.08	7.53	.00.	.927
Value Happiness	20.46	6.82	21.74	6.32	6.81	.009
Be Productive at Meaningful work	22.31	6.01	21.62	6.43	2.19	.139

Stop Worrying	15.24	7.51	15.65	7.96	.49	.482
Healthy Personality	19.72	6	20.77	8.13	3.77	.052
Develop an Outgoing Social Personality	20.25	6.52	21.28	6.40	4.56	.033
Oxford Inventory	44.28	13.46	44.46	13.33	.03	.853

$df = 725$

Table 1 show that women scored significantly higher as compared to men on the domains of socializing, expression of feelings, value happiness, and develop an outgoing social personality. The differences between men and women are non-significant on Oxford Happiness Inventory Scores.

DISCUSSION

The results of the current research indicated that there was significant difference between men and women on subscales of "socializing," "Expressing of Feelings," "Value Happiness" and "Develop an Outgoing Social Personality and women scored higher significantly on these domains" as compared to men.

Overall mean for the Oxford Happiness Inventory came out to be 44.38 which shows that in Isfahan Universities mean of happiness scores using the Oxford Happiness Inventory was not different from other University students. For example, Francis, et al. (2003) found that the mean of happiness for men and women students were 41.6 and 43.1 respectively. In Iran, a research which was carried out by Alipour and Nor-bala (1999) indicated that the means of happiness among female and male undergraduate students were 45.96 and 45.53, respectively. So, the results of the present study are in accord with previous researches.

Also, the present findings show non significant gender difference in happiness scores in our Farsi speaking samples of Isfahan universities on Oxford Happiness Inventory which is in accordance with many researches (see, for example, Argyle & Lu, 1990b; Furnham & Berwin, 1990; Francis et al., 2003).

In the light of present research it is accordance suggested that it is necessary to train university students by using Happiness Skills Program.

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