

Free essay about what is happiness

[Psychology](#), [Personality](#)



Is the Experience of Happiness Gender Dependent? An Examination of Personality Traits, Happiness, and Gender

Abstract

The concept of happiness is a complex one, which can be influenced by a plethora of variables, and according to some, can be subjective to the individual or even unattainable. Since personality traits are thought to influence the level of happiness one experience, the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Abbreviated was used to assess the levels of neuroticism, extraversion, and psychoticism among participants, with the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short Form used to measure happiness. While females traditionally report higher levels of happiness, the sample in the current study did not mimic the typical results found by other researchers. However, the personality traits of neuroticism and extraversion did yield significant results in predicting happiness.

Is the Experience of Happiness Gender Dependent? An Examination of Personality Traits, Happiness, and Gender

If there were a formula for happiness, antidepressant manufacturers would go out of business. However, fortunately for them, humans are complex individuals that derive happiness from a variety of sources. Several studies have attempted to pinpoint the cause of happiness, but due to the diversity that exists among the population, such an endeavor has been a challenge. Another contributing factor in the difficult task of studying happiness can be found in trying to define what happiness is, as even researchers in the field of psychology have not agreed on one unified definition. How is one supposed to study what brings happiness to individuals if we don't know

what exactly it is? Fortunately, studies into the very topic have revealed some insightful and valuable information that has sparked more research in the area.

There is a variety of definitions as to what exactly is and leads to happiness. According to Diener (1984), it is subjective in nature, which is only able to be defined by the individual. However, according to ancient history, happiness is not able to be achieved by an individual, but instead it occurs due to either chance or is god-given (Bruhin & Winkelmann, 2009). One of the key researchers in the area of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, proposes that happiness is “achieved upon identifying and cultivating one’s signature strengths daily in work, love, and play” (Seligman, 2002).

Carl Jung proposed his own elements that help to facilitate happiness. They consist of good physical and mental health; good personal and intimate relationships; the ability to perceive beauty in one’s surroundings; sufficient standards of living and enjoyable work; and either a philosophic or religious influence that assists in coping with life’s stress (Rubin, 2012).

Although the aforementioned theories of what happiness consists of and how one obtains the often elusive emotion, researchers have discovered that it is measurable. Studies into happiness have revealed that several factors contribute to a feeling of happiness; these variables consist of health, wealth, poverty, age, job status, faith, friends, family, retirement status, amenities, and geography to name a few (Florida Times Union, 2010).

Personality Traits and Happiness

Carl Jung was among the first in the field of psychology to hypothesize that there may be a link between certain personality traits and the level of happiness individuals experience. The Five Factor Model of personality traits breaks personality down into five distinct categories: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Research suggests that the various personality traits can account for 46 percent of the variance in happiness and are relatively stable over the course of one's life (Warner & Vroman, 2011). One of the personality traits that have been linked to happiness is extraversion/introversion, with extraverts comprising the majority of the population (an estimated 50-74 percent) (Buettner, 2012). It is thought that extraverts are more “cheerful and high-spirited” when compared to their introvert counterparts (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998), which may be due extraverts being more likely to engage in stereotypical happiness inducing behaviors (Warner & Vroman, 2011). Other personality traits that are thought to be associated with happiness include neuroticism and agreeableness (De Neve & Cooper, 1998).

Gender and Happiness

Research into the role gender plays in personality and happiness suggests that women are more apt to report higher levels of happiness which they obtain through stereotypical gender-appropriate methods such as nurturing social relationships, learning to forgive, and practicing acts of kindness (Huszczo & Endres, 2013). However, the differences between the happiness reported by men and women may not be based solely on the gender of the

individual, as some studies suggest that it may instead be a combination of personality traits and gender (Huszczo & Endres, 2013).

Goal of Current Study

Upon considering the previous research that has occurred in the pursuit of understanding the factors that contribute to happiness, the current study will aim to identify if happiness is related to gender and personality traits.

Specifically, that the personality trait of extraversion will be a positive predicting factor for happiness; psychoticism will be a negative predicting factor for happiness; and that female participants will report a higher level of happiness when compared to male participants.

Method

Participants

The sample of the present study consisted of 77 students from a variety of educational backgrounds, both full and part-time students. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 48 years and included 54 females (70. 1%) and 23 males (29. 9%).

Measures

Procedure

Upon reading and signing the informed consent form, participants were instructed to complete both the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Abbreviated and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short Form online. Participants were informed that if at any time they didn't wish to continue, they could stop answering the questions without risk of repercussions. The average time for completion for both questionnaires was 20 minutes.

Results

Upon conducting a Pearson's r to check for correlations between happiness and personality trait variables, Pearson's r was negative and significant for Neuroticism ($r(75) = -.37, p < .05$) and Extraversion ($r(75) = .28, p < .05$). In this case, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected as the higher the level of neuroticism, the lesser the level of happiness. Psychoticism did not provide significant predictability in regards to happiness, despite also being negatively correlated ($r(75) = -.23, p > .05$). Neuroticism received the highest score among both male (mean = 3.00, sd = 1.97) and female (mean = 3.33, sd = 1.92) participants.

On the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Abbreviated, the personality traits of neuroticism and extraversion had a maximum score of 6 (mean = 3.23, sd = 1.93; mean 3.09, sd = 1.99), while psychoticism had a maximum of 4 (mean = 1.90, sd = 1.07). More males reported higher levels of psychoticism (mean = 2.08, sd = 1.04) compared to females (mean = 1.81, sd = 1.08). On the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short Form, the scores ranged from 12 to 46 (mean 32.49, sd = 6.71), with females reporting slightly lower levels of happiness (mean = 32.39, sd = 6.88) when compared to males (mean = 32.74, sd = 6.44).

Discussion

Although happiness is a complex phenomenon, due to the tireless work of researchers in the field, we are able to measure it with tools such as the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Prior research suggested that females would report higher levels of happiness, however, that hypothesis was not supported by the current study, as male students had higher happiness

scores. The differences between the genders in regard to the levels of happiness reported were not significant and may be explained by the large number of female participants (70%) when compared to the number of male participants (30%). Although measures were taken to ensure a representative sample, the gender breakdown may not have been sufficient to represent the population of interest accurately. Both personality traits of neuroticism and extraversion produced significant results in regards to predicting the likelihood of happiness, which supported the hypotheses of the current study and was in line with previous research that assessed the role personality traits had in the experience of happiness.

While research suggests that extraverts may report higher levels of happiness, which is also supported by the current study, there are some shortcomings in the manner the data was gathered. Some in the field of psychology suggests that the measurement of happiness may be skewed towards extraverts and their version of happiness (socializing and interacting with others), which are activities that introverts may not enjoy (Buettner, 2012). There may also be cultural influences when it comes to the level of happiness reported, as Western cultures tend to be more outgoing and extroverted when compared to the majority of Eastern cultures (Buettner, 2012). While the cultural backgrounds of the participants were not gathered in the current study, there is a possibility that it could have influenced the data.

Research has suggested that happiness is associated with a better outlook in life and may contribute to better physical health, including a lower risk of coronary heart disease (HSPH, 2011). Such a finding would suggest that

happiness is not just an emotion, but an experience that is necessary and beneficial to one's life. Further research would benefit from examining the methods of happiness seeking behavior utilized by introverts, assessing a more representative sample, and conducting follow-up interviews with participants to evaluate the relationship between personality, happiness, and health.

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