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**Studying the Happiness Level among Medical Students of Shiraz
Medical Sciences University in 2010**

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Abstract

Introduction: Medical students are less happy compared to other students in University because of specific education and work conditions. As happy and healthy personality people are responsible ones, we evaluated the happiness of Medical students and its relationship with age, gender, marital status and life style.

Methods and Material: This study was performed by using Oxford happiness questionnaire to evaluate happiness in 210 medical students of Shiraz Medical Sciences University. In various studies carried out in different countries, Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire was ranging 0.87 to 0.92 and the re-test reliability was ranging 0.78 to 0.81. The data were analyzed after collection by SPSS software and variance analysis test.

Results: The average happiness score was 52.7 ± 8.9 . There was a significant difference between happiness level of the students and gender (girls are happier than boys), marriage (married students are happier than single students) and living status (the students who live with their families at their home are happier than the students living in dormitory).

Conclusion: The lowest happiness level was observed among age group of 21. It was due to the start of clinical part of medical period and hard work in the hospital. But

marital status can decrease the pressure of life by increasing the happiness level and increases the life happiness. Living with the family and receiving their support increase the happiness compared to living in dormitory.

Keywords: Happiness; Medical students; Life satisfaction

Introduction

In psychology, happiness is recognized as "emotion". Emotion is divided into "negative emotion" and "positive emotion". Happiness has important effect on the success of people. Happy people have optimistic attitude to the events and instead of negative attitudes to the events, they try to use these events. Happy people are responsible and good citizens.(1) The studies showed that in 100 years period of scientific psychology, mostly the negative aspects are considered. One reason is that negative emotions can affect our life seriously.(2) For example, according to the investigation of "Psychology abstract" defined that during 1887 to 2000, the number of the papers about anger, anxiety and depression were 8072, 57800 and 70865, respectively while there were less than 8000 articles regarding the enjoyment, happiness, life satisfaction and happiness.(3) The review of the papers by Myers (1993) showed that the subjects of happiness are increased such that the published papers regarding the happiness is in-

creased from 150 articles in 1979 during a decade to 780 articles.(4)

Psychologists believe that three main components of happiness are as follows: The relative existence of positive emotion, the lack of negative emotions and life satisfaction.(5) The studies showed that positive relations with others, purpose of life, personal development, loving others and nature are the components of happiness. Indeed, happy people consider the world a safe place, make decision easier, find their favorite jobs, they have collaboration feeling and process the data as leading into their happiness.(1)

The effective factors of happiness are divided into external and internal factors. External factors are family, social environment, income, education, job opportunities. Internal factors are gender, age, personality characteristics, intelligence, values, beliefs, motivations, and knowledge and life skills.(6-11)

Medical field is one of the fields that due to the clinical period and the pressures of hospitals and stressful environment have considerable effects on

happiness and their job performance. Various studies showed that age, gender, education, income, marital status and relation with other are effective on positive emotions and happiness level.(12-17)

Thus, in this study the medical students were selected as statistical population. Because medical field is one of the fields that due to the clinical period and the pressures of hospitals and stressful environment have considerable effects on happiness and their job performance. In the current study, the age, gender, living and marital status of medical students on happiness were studied.

Subjects and Methods

In this cross section study, the samples were selected by random sampling among medical students during first to seventh years of study in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences (210 people (105 girl students and 105 boy students). For data collection, a 29-item questionnaire (multiple choices) was used and its elements were made of reversing the sentences of Beck depression test.(18) The choices of each item were scored of zero to 3. The sum of the 29-item elements range from zero to 87. In various studies performed in various countries, Cronbach's alpha

of this questionnaire was ranging 0.87 to 0.92 and re-test reliability of the questionnaire after 4 months was 0.78 to 0.81.(18) In the study performed in students community of Allameh Tabataba'i in 1999, Cronbach's alpha was 0.93, split half reliability 0.92 and the reliability of retest of the current questionnaire was 0.79 (after three weeks).(4)

The questionnaires were submitted to the students after the oral explanation of the procedures and policy of the study.

The data were analyzed after data collection by SPSS (version 15), ANOVA and T-test. Spearman and Pearson tests were applied to compute the correlation coefficient between happiness and other variables. As the cut-off points were not definite in this test, like other studies all over the world, in this study the average of the scores were used in the analyses.

Results

In our study 105 girls and 105 boys were included. Based on the findings of data analysis, the single and married students were 159 (75.7 %) and 51 (24.3 %), respectively, the number of the students living in dormitory was 91 (43.4%) and the students who were

living with the family and in personal house was 119 (56.6%).

The studied students were divided into 8 age groups and the frequency of people in each of the age groups was shown in Table 1.

Table1. Frequency of people with separate age groups

The average happiness scores among girls and boys were 55 ± 8.6 and 50 ± 9.3 , respectively. The difference was significant ($P < 0.001$). The correlation coefficient between happiness and gender was $R = 0.257$ that was significant statistically.

The students living in their personal house and with the family had high happiness level compared to the students living in dormitory and it was significant ($P < 0.05$). The correlation coefficient between happiness and living status was $R = 0.164$, that was significant.

Happiness level in married students was higher compared to the single students. The average happiness scores

among married and single students were 55.11 ± 6.5 and 51.94 ± 9.9 respectively. The difference was observed and the correlation coefficient between happiness and marital status was significant ($P < 0.05$, $R = 0.167$). The happiness scores are shown in Table 2.

Table2. Happiness scores based on the study variables

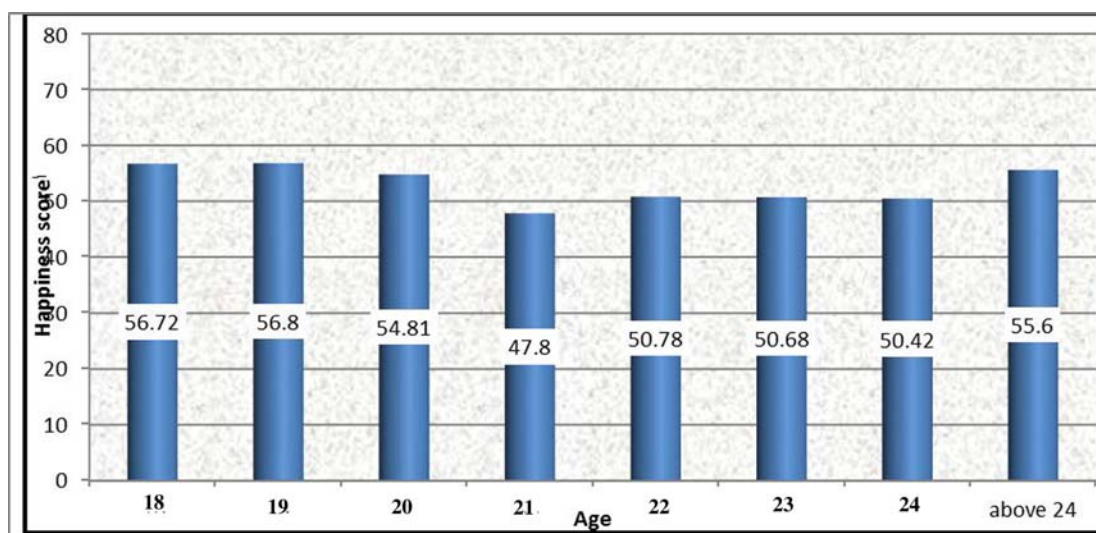
Chart 1. The average happiness scores of the students according to age. This chart shows happiness score based on age and the maximum happiness score was dedicated to 19 years old and the minimum score was for the age of 21 and the difference between age of 21 and other classes are significant. The correlation coefficient was $R = -0.206$ that was significant. It meant that by the increase of age, the happiness is reduced.

Table 1 .Frequency of People with Separate Age Groups

Age (years old)	Frequency
18	25
19	30
20	32
21	26
22	32
23	29
24	28
More than 24	8

Table 2 .Happiness Scores Based on the Study Variables

Variables		Happiness scores
Sex	Male	50
	Female	55
living status	Personal house with family	54.05
	Dormitory	50.96
Marital statue	Married	55.11
	Unmarried	51.94

**Chart 1.**The average happiness scores of the students according to age

Discussion

The data of the study showed that the girls were happier compared to the boys and this may be due to the more concern of the boys to their future job. The students who were living in their own house and with their families were significantly happier compared to students living in dormitory. Because being with the family and their supports and strong social network can play an

important role in improving the satisfaction of the students. Marital status and marriage was another factor that made the students happier and finally by the increase of the age, the happiness was reduced.

In this study, the average happiness score of the total students was 52 ± 9.3 and it was significantly different with the average happiness score of the non medical students of other Universities

of Iran (42 ± 14).⁽¹⁹⁾ This issue shows the stressful nature of medical science. In this study, happiness level among women was significantly more than that of men. This difference was reported in other studies but it was not significant.^(4, 19, 20) It was in line with the results of the study of happiness among old women and men.⁽²¹⁾ Some previous studies indicated that there is no relation between happiness and gender.⁽²²⁾ In terms of age, the maximum happiness score was dedicated to 18, 19 years old students and the minimum score was dedicated to 21 years old students who were in the fourth grade of medical school. This group started clinical education in hospital recently and one of the reasons of the low level of happiness in this group is hard practical works and working conditions in hospital after taking three years of theoretical classes. Although in next age groups, the happiness is increased, it doesn't reach the happiness of first and second year students. In this study, we can say that happiness is reduced by the increase of age. This can be because of the working conditions in the hospital and hard conditions of physicians. It is assumed that happiness or the lack of happiness is related to a definite period of age con-

ditions (adolescence, youth and old age). Many international studies showed that we cannot attribute a definite age period to the happiness and the lack of happiness. In a study carried out in 1980s, in 16 various countries, this issue is proved. Although the predicting factors of happiness change with the age, for example satisfaction with social relations and body health are important in higher age or despite the adulthood, in adolescence, there are various fluctuations of happiness states.⁽²³⁾ The results of some of the studies about the association of age and happiness are mixed.⁽²⁴⁾ In another study performed on the students of Iran University, there was no significant difference among age groups and happiness.⁽²⁵⁾

In current study, the students who were living in their personal house beside the family were happy significantly than the students living in dormitory. These results were despite the results of the studies performed on the students of Iran University. It can be analyzed that being beside the family and their supports and strong social network can play an important role in improving the satisfaction of these students.⁽²⁵⁾ Kusha and Mohseni (2004) in their study showed that among Iranian women, marital status, employ-

ment, good experiences and high education were associated with life satisfaction.(3) They were in line with the results of this study. Various studies were performed regarding the relationship between marital status and happiness and they found that: The couples are happier compared to single or widow students namely the divorced people. The investigation in USA showed that less than 25% of single students and more than 40% of the married people introduced themselves as happy.(26) The results of various studies regarding the marital status satisfaction and mental health showed that there was an association between these two variables. The pressures of couple life were associated with mental problems, depression, anxiety disorder and physical problems.(27) Another study regarding the role of marriage on happiness defined that: IN stressful and unsuccessful marriages, the women suffer more than men. The marriage in these families doesn't help to reduce the mental problems, addictions and suicide of women.

In Conclusion, while investigating the role of marriage in the happiness level, that women are more satisfied with the marriage than men. Vandrud believed that if women are faced with positive friendly relations, enjoy more than

men.(28) Based on the above items, the hypothesis can be raised that the people who are in higher happiness level are more inclined to marriage.

Finally, it should be considered that happiness is the cause of various factors that are not limited to the factors studied in this study. One of the limitations of the current study was that the study was done only in Shiraz. The study of the graduated physicians and working students can provide useful information about this field and happiness level in medical job.

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