Original Article

Happiness and its Effective Factors Among Students of the School of Health, Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract
Background: In recent years, there has been a great deal of attention to the subject of happiness. Happiness increases job and academic performance and maintains emotional, mental, and physical health. The aim of this study was to determine the status of happiness and its effective factors among students of the Department of Public Health at Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran, in 2021.
Methods: This study was a descriptive-analytical cross-sectional study. The information of 202 students were collected by census method. The Standard Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (online) was used to collect information. One-way ANOVA and chi-square test were used for analysis of data.
Results: The average age of the students was 25 ± 6.05 years, 79.7% were female, 80.7% were unmarried, and 55% were non-dormitory students. According to the data, 4.5% of the students had low levels of happiness and 19.8% and 75.8% had average and high happiness levels. The results showed that there was no statistically significant relationship between the state of happiness and the variables of age, academic grade, gender, level of education, marital status, and place of residence of the students (P value > 0.05). However, a statistically significant relationship was observed between students' happiness and their personal health (P value < 0.001).
Conclusion: The results of this study showed that the state of happiness among students of the Department of Public Health at Ahvaz University of Medical Sciences was good. As some students had a lower level of happiness, it seems necessary that more attention be given to these students.
Keywords: Happiness, Students, Universities

Introduction
Nowadays, much attention has been given to the topic of happiness in the fields of science and research (1). For human beings, happiness is considered as one of the most fundamental necessities of mental health (2). Happiness has several basic dimensions: the emotional dimension, i.e., whether the person is in a joyful and contented mood, the social dimension, i.e., whether the person has good social relations and can receive support from others, and finally, the cognitive dimension, whether the person processes and interprets information in a special way, ultimately feeling happy and optimistic. Therefore, in terms of happiness, people's evaluation of themselves and their lives can include cognitive aspects, such as their judgment on life and satisfaction, or emotional aspects,

such as their mood or feelings, in response to life events (3,4). Many factors in life affect people's happiness, including family, social environment, marital status, physical and mental health, education, gender, economic status, values, beliefs, self-esteem, and cultural, athletic, and social activities (5-7).

Feeling happy affects all aspects of a person's life, including making better and easier decisions, being more prepared to help others, increased self-confidence and hope for the future, increased productivity in work and academic performance, and maintaining emotional, physical, and mental health (8-10). Moreover, happiness in students increases their academic performance and productivity and makes them more willing to attend university classes. Not only will they put more effort into

acquiring science and knowledge, they will also honor the university's core values. Therefore, lack of or low levels of happiness will disrupt the health and development of the society (11,12).

According to the study conducted by Shahbazi et al, the happiness score of the whole country was 3.43 (out of 5), and the provinces of Zanjan (3.69) and Yazd (3.16) had the highest and lowest average happiness (out of 5), respectively. In this study the province of Khuzestan had a happiness score of 3.6 (out of 5) (13). Also, in the studies conducted on students across the country, the students of Golestan and Sabzevar universities of medical sciences had the highest average score of happiness, and the students of Ahvaz and Shiraz universities of medical sciences had the lowest average score of happiness (14-17). Also, the level of happiness in students of Yazd University of Medical Sciences was 64.8 %, which is a good level (18).

Various studies have been conducted on the factors affecting the students' level of happiness throughout the country. In one study, it was shown that feeling homesick has an inverse relationship with the score of happiness among students, i.e., happiness decreases as the students feel more homesick (19). Another study showed that having high emotional intelligence and searching for meaning in life increases happiness among nursing students (15). Furthermore, it has been shown that there is a direct relationship between happiness and spiritual health (20) and happiness and academic progress (17).

Considering that students are the capital and the builders of future society and that medical students are the ambassadors of health and the first line of health defense of society, knowing about their state of happiness is of utmost importance. Therefore, this research was conducted with the aim of determining the state of happiness and the factors affecting it in the students of the Department of Public Health at Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz. The results of this study can provide valuable insights into the factors affecting the state of happiness in students and help improve their overall well-being.

Methods

This study was a cross-sectional and descriptive-analytical research that investigated the level of happiness in the medical students of Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences in Ahvaz in 2021. When this study was conducted, about 260 students were studying in the Department of Public Health, of which about 202 students agreed to participate in the study (the response rate was about 78%). The inclusion criterion for this study was studying in one of the health care fields in the Department of Public Health. The exclusion criterion was unwillingness to participate in the study. In order to collect data, the standard Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was used.

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was prepared by Argyle Velo in 1990 and was used to measure happiness. In our country, this test was translated by Alipour and Nourbala and was tested and evaluated on the students of Tehran University. Its face validity was confirmed by 10 experts. The reliability of the test was 0.92 using the split-half method and 0.93 using internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha. According to the analysis, five factors from the 29 extracted test questions explain 57.1% of the total variance (8). This questionnaire has 29 questions measured on the Likert scale from 0 to 3 (never, rarely, sometimes, and always). The scoring of this questionnaire is such that scores below 22 represent low happiness, scores between 22 and 44 represent average happiness, scores between 44 and 68 represent high happiness, and scores between 68 and 87 represent very high happiness. In general, the higher the score you get in this test, the happier you are (21).

In this study, in order to collect the questionnaire's information, a web-based questionnaire was first prepared, and after approving the proposal and obtaining a code of ethics from the Research Vice-Chancellor of Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, the Department of Public Health was contacted and the telephone numbers of the representatives of the bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degree class groups in all fields of study were obtained. The representatives were then contacted and informed about the objectives of the study. Then, the questionnaire was sent to the representatives online, and they were asked to upload the questionnaire to their online study groups and ask the students to fill it out and send it back. In this study, all students of the Department of Public Health at the bachelor's, master's, and doctorate levels in all fields of study and all entries were included in the research using the census method.

Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were used. Analytical statistics, including one-way analysis of variance and chi-square test, were also used. One-way analysis of variance was used to compare the average of quantitative variables between different levels of happiness, and the chi-square test was used to compare the distribution of qualitative variables in different levels of happiness. The analysis was done using SPSS software version 20, and the significance level was $P < 0.05$.

Results

In this study, the average age of the students was 25 ± 6.05 years. The grade point average (GPA) of the students in this study was 17.20 ± 1.3. Of the participants, 79.7% were female, 80.7% were single, and 55% were non-dormitory students. Also, the results of this study showed that 57.4% of the students were studying in the field of public or environmental health, and the rest of the students

were studying in the fields of occupational health, health service management, medical entomology and vector control, health education, and biostatistics and ergonomics. Students in the fourth semester and lower comprised 66.3% of the participants, and the rest were in higher semesters (Table 1).

Regarding the state of happiness of the students, the results of this study showed that 4.5% of students had low happiness, 19.8% had average happiness, and 75.8% had high and very high happiness. Also, 6.4% of students were dissatisfied with their personal health, and 76.2% of students were satisfied and very satisfied with their personal health (Table 1).

According to Table 2, the average age of the students who had high and very high levels of happiness was not significantly higher than the rest of the students. Also, students who had very high, high, and average levels of happiness had almost the same average GPA as the students who had lower levels of happiness. Furthermore, the students of biostatistics, medical entomology and vector control, environmental health, occupational health, and public health had the highest prevalence of high and very high happiness levels, and the students of health education and ergonomics had the lowest prevalence of high and very high happiness levels (70% and higher against 50%).

High and very high levels of happiness were more

Table 1. Demographic profile of students of the Department of Public Health, Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, in 2021

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	41	20.3
	Female	161	79.7
Marital status	Single	163	80.7
	Married	39	19.3
Place of residence	Non-dormitory	111	55.0
	Dormitory	91	45.0
Ethnicity	Fars	77	38.1
	Non-Fars	125	61.9
Degree	Bachelor's	147	82.8
	Master's	46	22.8
	Doctorate	9	4.5
Field of study	Public and environmental health	120	57.4
	Other	82	42.6
Semester	Fourth semester and lower	134	66.3
	Higher than fourth semester	68	33.7
Level of happiness	Low	9	4.5
	Average	40	19.8
	High and very high	153	75.8
Personal health status	Dissatisfied	13	6.4
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	35	17.3
	Satisfied and very satisfied	154	76.2

prevalent in male students than in female students. In addition, high and very high levels of happiness were more prevalent in married students compared to single students and lower in non-dormitory students than in dormitory students. Finally, high and very high levels of happiness were slightly more prevalent in non-Fars students than in Fars students (Table 2).

The results of one-way analysis of variance showed that there was no statistically significant relationship between the level of happiness and the variables of students' age and their GPA ($P > 0.05$). In addition, based on the chi-square test, different levels of happiness did not have any statistically significant relationship with the variables of gender, field of study, semester, degree, martial status, ethnicity, and place of residence ($P > 0.05$). However, a statistically significant relationship was observed between students' level of happiness and their personal health status ($P < 0.001$), i.e., the high and very high levels of happiness were more prevalent in students who were satisfied or very satisfied with their personal health (Table 2).

Discussion

The present study was conducted with the aim of determining the happiness status of students of the Department of Public Health, Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, and factors influencing it. The results showed that most students had a high level of happiness. In this regard, Delavar and colleagues' study showed that the students of the Islamic Azad University of Tehran had a good level of happiness (22). However, other studies have shown that the level of happiness among students is not at a desirable level, e.g., the study of Molakhalili et al showed that the average level of happiness of students in Isfahan was lower than average (23). Furthermore, the study of Tamanaeifar et al showed that the level of happiness among university students was low (12). The study conducted by Bahadori Khosroshahi et al also showed that the level of happiness among university students was low (24). The different results of these studies can be due to the difference in the methods of measuring happiness or the questionnaires used for the evaluation of happiness, the difference in time of conducting the study, and the difference in culture and the way people of different cities and provinces treat the students. Because the people of Ahvaz are very friendly, warm, and easy to interact with, the students do not feel alienated in that city.

In addition, the results of this study showed that there was no statistically significant relationship between different levels of happiness and the variables of age, gender, marital status, place of residence, ethnicity, degree, semester, field of study, and GPA. However, a statistically significant correlation between students' level of happiness and their personal health status was

Table 2. levels of happiness according to demographic variables among students of Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, 2021

Variable		Low happiness	Average happiness	High and very high happiness	P value
Age, mean±SD		22.6±3.3	24.8±5.8	25.26±6.4	0.19
Gender, No. (%)	Male	0 (0)	5 (12.2)	36 (87.8)	0.14
	Female	9 (5.6)	35 (21.7)	117 (72.6)	
Marital status, No. (%)	Single	9 (5.5)	34 (20.9)	120 (73.6)	0.37
	Married	0 (0)	6 (15.4)	33 (84.6)	
Grade, mean±SD		16.6±2.5	17.2±1.3	17.2±1.2	0.36
Place of residence, No. (%)	Non-dormitory	2 (1.8)	26 (23.4)	83 (74.8)	0.05
	Dormitory	7 (7.7)	14 (15.4)	70 (77)	
Ethnicity, No. (%)	Persian	5 (6.5)	15 (19.5)	57 (74)	0.67
	Non	4 (3.2)	25 (20)	93 (76.8)	
Degree, No. (%)	Bachelor's	8 (5.4)	29 (19.7)	110 (74.9)	0.35
	Master's	1 (2.2)	9 (19.6)	36 (78.3)	
	Doctorate	0 (0)	2 (22.2)	7 (77.8)	
Field of study, No. (%)	Health education and ergonomics	0 (0)	3 (50)	3 (50)	0.71
	Other	9 (4.7)	31 (16.3)	150 (79)	
Semester, No. (%)	Fourth semester or lower	7 (5.2)	26 (19.4)	101 (75.4)	0.45
	Higher than fourth semester	2 (2.9)	14 (20.6)	52 (76.5)	
Personal health status, No. (%)	Dissatisfied	3 (23.1)	7 (53.8)	3 (23.1)	<0.001
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4 (11.4)	17 (48.6)	14 (40)	
	Satisfied	2 (1.9)	14 (13.6)	87 (84.4)	
	Very satisfied	0 (0)	2 (3.9)	49 (96.1)	

observed, i.e., healthier students were happier. In this regard, the study of Vahabi et al showed that there was a positive and significant correlation between happiness and spiritual health (20). In addition, the study of Moeini et al found a significant relationship between happiness and health status (19). Sahaghi's study showed that there was a significant positive correlation between mental health and academic progress and between happiness and academic progress (17). It seems that people who have sufficient health in all aspects, including physical, mental, spiritual etc., perform more successfully. On the other hand, happy people have more energy, active information processing, and cognitive flexibility, which in turn increases their motivation to succeed, gain the confidence to deal with problems and perform tasks at a desired level, and, as a result, improve their performance (25).

The findings of this study showed that students with a high average age had high levels of happiness, but there was no statistically significant correlation between happiness and age. In this regard, Hosseini Kasnavieh and colleagues' study (18), Shahbazi and colleagues' study (13), and Siamian and colleagues' study (26) also found no significant correlation between the level of happiness and the age of students. It seems that the age of students does not affect whether they are happy or not. Another factor that can be effective in the non-significance of age in this study is that the studied students were not very

different in age and were in the same age range.

Furthermore, although this study showed that male students had a higher level of happiness than female students, there was no statistically significant relationship between happiness and gender. The studies of Siamian et al (26), Omidian et al (27), and Rafiei et al (28) did not show a significant correlation between the level of happiness and the gender of the subjects either. Diener's explanation in this regard is that women experience more positive and negative emotions, and the outcome of these two emotions balances the happiness of men and women (29). However, in the study done by Barati et al, the average happiness score of boys was significantly higher than that of girls (30), and in Tagharobi and colleagues' study, the average happiness score of men was significantly higher than women as well (31). The difference in the results seems to be because women report higher levels of negative emotions and depression compared to men. In other words, women acknowledge their negative emotions much better than men, while men deny having such emotions (18).

Furthermore, the results of this study showed that dormitory students had a higher level of happiness compared to non-dormitory students, and there was no statistically significant correlation between the place of residence and level of happiness. On this subject, the studies of Siamian et al (32), Khosravi et al (33), and Abedi et al (34) also found no significant relationship

between happiness and place of residence. Hence, it can be said that the place of residence had no effect on students' happiness.

The results of this study showed that married students had a higher level of happiness compared to single students, but there was no statistically significant correlation between different levels of happiness and marital status. In this regard, the studies of Jouybari et al (14), Siamian et al (32), and Khosravi et al (33) also found no significant relationship between happiness and marital status. However, in the study of Abedi et al (34) a significant correlation between happiness and marital status was observed. The difference in the results of various studies can be because marriage acts as a defensive barrier against life's difficulties and provides emotional and economic support and creates a positive mood. Marriage has the strongest effect on happiness and mental and physical health, and being deprived of it is very frustrating (35). However, in this study, only a small percentage of students were married, which can explain the insignificance of the results.

One of the limitations of this study was that its results cannot be generalized to all students of Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz. However, by conducting this research, all the questions and hypotheses of the study were answered. It is recommended that similar studies be carried out in future on a larger sample size and on students of different faculties. Another limitation of this study was the use of a cross-sectional study method because in cross-sectional studies, it is not possible to accurately evaluate cause and effect relationships.

Conclusion
The results of this study showed that the state of happiness among the students of the Department of Public Health, Ahvaz University of Medical Sciences is good, but there were some students who had a lower level of happiness. Thus, it seems necessary to pay more attention to these students.

Authors' Contribution
Conceptualization: Ebtesam Savari.
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Formal analysis: Maryam Dastoorpoor.
Funding acquisition: Ebtesam Savari.
Investigation: Ebtesam Savari, Khodabakhsh Karami.
Methodology: Maryam Dastoorpoor.
Project administration: Ebtesam Savari.
Resources: Khodabakhsh Karami.
Software: Maryam Dastoorpoor.
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