

Happiness among social work practitioners: A cross sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Happiness is an important aspect of psychological well-being. The objective of the current study is to assess levels of happiness among Social Work practitioners and to assess difference across genders and working and pursuing the higher studies. **Method:** A sample of 50 respondents was taken for the study. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) was administered and some basic demographic information was gathered. **Results:** Happiness levels across gender (male, female), age (less than 30 years, more than 30), and present place of residence (urban, rural) does not differ significantly. For respondents who are studying or working or both, most of them fall in the category of average level of happiness. **Conclusion:** Sports and yoga are most preferred forms of leisure activities undertaken by people to keep themselves healthy.

Keywords: Happiness, well-being, social work practitioner, health

INTRODUCTION

Social Work is a profession aimed at helping people at individual, group and community level. Social workers are employed in various governmental, non-governmental, industrial and other agencies formed for a particular purpose. They occupy positions at different levels such as- counsellors, welfare officers, project managers, etc. involved in working at micro (individuals, families, small groups), mezzo (small communities, social service agencies), and macro levels (regional, national and international organisations and agencies). It becomes necessary to look into happiness levels of practitioners and students in the field of Social Work as they are constantly involved in helping out and providing for solutions for individual's problems and thereby ignoring their own health and problems that they face in their day-to-day lives.

People desire many valuable things in their life, but-more than anything else-they want happiness.¹ The sense of happiness has been

conceptualised as people's experienced well-being in both thoughts and feelings.^{1,2} Indeed, research on well-being suggests that the resources valued by society, such as mental health³ and a long life,⁴ associate with high happiness levels.

Rath⁵ in their study "Effect of Locus of Control and Gender on Happiness among Indian Adolescents" have examined the effect of locus of control and gender on happiness level among Indian adolescents. Using an online cross-sectional survey, 400 adolescents (200 boys and 200 girls) between the ages of 17 and 19 were randomly selected from five different educational institutions from the city of Cuttack, Odisha. Based on the responses of the participants to Rotter's Locus of Control Scale, extreme group analysis was conducted to select 200 adolescents (100 boys & 100 girls) with extreme (low and high) scores. Subsequently, the shortlisted subjects were administered the Oxford's Happiness Questionnaire, and the scores obtained were analysed using a between-

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subjects ANOVA. The effect of locus of control was significant, indicating that internal control adolescents reported a higher level of happiness than external control adolescents. Similarly, the effect of gender was significant, indicating that the mean happiness score of girls was significantly higher than those of boys. The interaction effect (locus of control x gender) was not significant. The results suggest that the orientation of the locus of control (internal or external) and gender moderates happiness among adolescents.⁵

Wani and Dar⁶ in their study examined the level of optimism, happiness, and self-esteem among university students. The study consisted of a sample of 60 University students with equal number of male and female participants, selected through purposive sampling technique. The life orientation test revised (LOT-R) by Scheier, Carver, and Bridges⁷, Oxford happiness questionnaire (OHQ) developed by Hills and Argyle⁸ and Self-esteem Scale constructed by Rosenberg⁹ were used to measure optimism, happiness, and self-esteem respectively. The results revealed that male and 20-24 years old students have high level of optimism, happiness, and self-esteem than female and 25-28 years old students. Significant difference was found between the mean scores of male and female students in respect to their optimism, happiness, and self-esteem, whereas insignificant difference was found between the mean scores of 20-24 years old and 25-28 years old students in respect to their optimism, happiness, and self-esteem. Further results also revealed that there is positively significant correlation between optimism, happiness, and self-esteem. Concurrently, gender is negatively significant correlated with optimism, happiness, and self-esteem, whereas age was found negatively insignificant correlated with optimism, happiness, and self-esteem respectively.

Hemaraajeswari and Gupta¹⁰ in their study examined the relationship between gratitude, psychological well-being and happiness. The study was conducted on a sample of 200 college students. Participants were randomly selected and the sample consisted of both male ($n = 67$) and female ($n = 133$). Measures included The Gratitude Questionnaire, Ryff's¹¹ Psychological Well-being Scale, and The

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ).⁸ Findings suggest that there is a positive association among Gratitude, Psychological well-being, its dimensions and Happiness.

Peltzer and Pengpid¹² aimed to establish the associations between health behaviours and happiness among Indian population. In a cross-sectional survey, happiness and health behaviour were assessed among a sample of 800 randomly selected university students taking undergraduate courses in Visakhapatnam, India. The students were 541 (67.6%) males and 259 (32.4%) females in the age range of 17 to 20 years (M age = 18.2 years, $SD = 1.0$). Multivariate analysis was done and it was found that better social support, better personal mastery, normal sleep duration, no current tobacco use, and eating breakfast daily or almost daily were associated with happiness. The findings partially confirmed the association between happiness and several health behaviours mediated by social factors.

Sarkar¹³ in their study inspected gender differences in the happiness of college students. A sample of 60 students (30 males and 30 females) was drawn from Gwalior, India within the age range of 18-24 years. Random sampling technique was used. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire⁸ was individually administered to the participants. The outcomes proposed that the male students reported significantly larger amount of happiness when contrasted with the female college students.

Objectives

- To assess levels of happiness of Social Work practitioners among different genders.
- To assess levels of happiness among different working groups as compared to those who are currently studying

METHODOLOGY

It was a cross sectional descriptive study and purposive sampling method was used. The participants for this study were students who have completed Master of Social Work from any college/university in India. A total of 52 responses were recorded through google forms but 2 responses were not considered as these did not fulfil the criteria. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ)⁸ was administered along

with some basic demographic information was gathered.

Inclusion criteria consisted of (i) respondents who have completed Master of Social Work, and (ii) respondents who were less than 50 years of age. Exclusion criteria consisted of (i) respondents who did not provide complete information.

Data Analysis: The data obtained was analysed using SPSS software. Weighted mean and chi-square test was applied on the data to assess the relationship among different variables under the study.

RESULTS

From above table 1, it can be seen that 20 males (40%) and 30 females (60%) were covered under this study. 27 respondents (54%) were of less than 30 years of age and 23 respondents (46%) aged more than 30 years. Comparing the present place of residence, 42 respondents (84%) belonged to urban area whereas only 8 respondents (16%) belonged to rural areas.

Table 1- Demographic details

Variables		f	%
Gender	Male	20	40.0
	Female	30	60.0
Age	<30	27	54.0
	>=30	23	46.0
Residence	Urban	42	84.0
	Rural	8	16.0
Pursuing any PG diploma?	Yes	8	16.0
	No	42	84.0
studying or working?	Studying	7	14.0
	Working	31	62.0
	Both	7	14.0
	None	5	10.0
Means to keep yourself healthy?	Music	8	16.0
	Spiritual	7	14.0
	Sports	10	20.0
	Yoga	5	10.0
	Other	13	26.0
	None	7	14.0

It was found that 7 respondents (14%) were studying currently, 31 respondents (62%) were working, 7 respondents (14%) were studying and working simultaneously, 5 respondents (10%) were neither studying nor working. For the respondents who were working, 10 respondents (20%) are engaged in working with

NGOs in India and abroad, 2 respondents (4%) are availing fellowships offered by different agencies, 12 respondents (24%) are working in government settings, 2 respondents (4%) are teaching faculties at university level, 4 respondents (8%) are engaged in other professions such as freelancing, industry, etc.

OHQ statements & mean

The recorded responses on statements of Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) and their mean was analysed. Some of the statements showed high levels of agreement and disagreement. For instance, 36% of the

Variables	Happiness						χ ²	P value	
	Low		Average		High				
	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Gender	Male	2	10.0	16	80.0	2	10.0		
	Female	1	3.3	22	73.3	7	23.3		
Age	<30	2	7.4	18	66.7	7	25.9	2.915	0.233
	≥30	1	4.3	20	87.0	2	8.7		
Residence	Urban	3	7.1	33	78.6	6	14.3	2.812	0.245
	Rural	0	0.0	5	62.5	3	37.5		
Pursuing any PG diploma?	Yes	0	0.0	7	87.5	1	12.5	.897	0.639
	No	3	7.1	31	73.8	8	19.0		
studying or working?	Studying	1	14.3	6	85.7	0	0.0	3.399	0.757
	Working	2	6.5	23	74.2	6	19.4		
	Both	0	0.0	5	71.4	2	28.6		
	None	0	0.0	4	80.0	1	20.0		
Means to keep yourself healthy?	Music	0	0.0	7	87.5	1	12.5	6.330	0.787
	Spiritual	1	14.3	4	57.1	2	28.6		
	Sports	0	0.0	7	70.0	3	30.0		
	Yoga	0	0.0	5	100.0	0	0.0		
	Other	1	7.7	10	76.9	2	15.4		
	None	1	14.3	5	71.4	1	14.3		

respondents reported that they disagree to not being particularly optimistic about their future, and 46% of the respondents shared that they disagree to the statement which says that the world is not a good place. 62% of the respondents disagree to the statement that they don't look attractive. 42% of the respondents felt that they are fully mentally alert and 44% of them experienced joy and elation. On the other hand, 44% of the respondents disagreed to not having a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life and 66% of them again disagreed to not having particularly happy memories of the past. The above interpretations point out to the fact that people see the good and positive things in life and tend to ignore the negative aspects, which is related to their happiness in general.

Table 2- Happiness levels with reference to demographic data

From the above table 2, it found that there is no significant association between the demographic factors- gender, age, and place of residence. It can be attributed to the similar values of variables across one factor.

DISCUSSION

The study found that if the happiness levels are put in three categories-low, average and high, majority of the respondents i.e., 38 (76%) experience average levels of happiness as compared to 3 respondents (6%) who experience low levels of happiness and 9 respondents (18%) who experience high levels of happiness in their routine lives. Happiness levels across gender (male, female), age (less than 30, more than 30), and present place of residence (urban, rural) does not differ significantly.

Social workers work for different vulnerable sections of the society. It is very important for them that they maintain their own level of happiness because firstly, they have to deal and work with people and if they themselves are not happy with the job that they are doing, they will not be able to help the people in need in an efficient manner and secondly, to reduce their own burnout levels and absenteeism so that they are able to cope effectively in all the situations that arise. While dealing with all the clients, they have to keep the principle of controlled emotional involvement in consideration. For respondents who are studying or working or both, most of them lie in the category of average level of happiness. Sports and yoga are most preferred forms of leisure activities undertaken by people to keep themselves healthy. With people putting focus on Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Intelligence Quotient (IQ) in general, the concept of Happiness Quotient (HQ) is relatively new in developing countries like India, which ranks 139th out of 149 countries evaluated for the same. Research studies for assessing happiness levels are being conducted to in various domains of education and research.

CONCLUSION

It is important to understand that with the fastly changing world, social workers face tremendous challenges while dealing with

clients. With newer challenges, social workers have to equip themselves mentally to remain happy. The levels of happiness in the professional life affect both personal and professional development. The levels of happiness of social workers can directly affect the relationship with their clients.

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