



Analysis of Cultural and Social Factors of Happiness in Iranian Students

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Dear Editor-in-Chief

Happiness is a significant concept in recent psychological and philosophical discussions. The majority of philosophical discussions in this regard focus on ethical principles and few deal with epistemological issues (1). Happiness is a subjective feeling and depends on social and cultural contexts as well as individuals' lives. In the history of philosophical thought, this concept has been explored under various titles and from different perspectives (2). Researchers in the field of personality have focused their attention on theoretical and empirical study and measurement of individuals' irrational beliefs about happiness (3, 4). Although a number of studies have been conducted in this area, yet each of them has explored merely one dimension of the subject. One-dimensional conceptualization of irrational belief was developed in happiness and argued that happiness favors certain individuals on the one end of spectrum whereas random luck is on the other end of spectrum. To develop this conceptualization, they developed a 12-item Belief in Good Luck scale (5). Nevertheless, they realized that their scale was not capable of distinguishing between individuals who considered themselves as

lucky or unlucky (7), and after analyzing the factors, they introduced a multidimensional solution instead of a one-dimensional one (5).

In addition, an 18-item happiness scale was designed which, according to Maltby et al (8), included only some of the beliefs regarding good luck that are contained in Darke and Freeman's scale. To measure this construct, they developed a 22-item scale and empirically supported a four-dimensional model. These four dimensions include general belief in good luck, rejection of good luck, being lucky, and being unlucky. However, they recognized that their four-dimensional model provides "only a reasonable fit to the data", forming two pairs that are conceptually related and may be attributable to incorrect scoring (8, 9).

From an educational perspective, happiness is a key concept in shaping the educational goals of educational systems because right and wrong beliefs can shape individuals' different activities. The scope of this study was to construct and validate a happiness scale using an exploratory mixed-method design. The study population consisted of all students of Tehran schools in 2019,



out of which 248 students were enrolled in the construction phase through the purposive sampling method and 330 students were chosen in the validation phase through the stratified random sampling method with equal proportions.

Parents of all students signed the consent form and declared their agreement with their children's participation in the research.

In the first phase, the five components of personal competence, family support, family status, social capital, and general health were identified based on the theoretical approach and within the framework of the qualitative phenomenological research method. In the second phase, using the indicators obtained in the first phase, the tool was validated using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The findings of this phase of the research indicated that after conducting exploratory factor analysis on the correlation coefficient matrix using principal factors extraction method and varimax rotation while considering minimum factor loading value of 0.4, the scale was saturated with five factors which had the highest consistency with the theoretical structure chosen to construct the scale. These five factors with eigenvalues of more than 1, on the whole, explained 75.247% of the total variance of the scale.

The five obtained factors were consistent with the results of the qualitative phase. Since the aim of the researchers was to design a relatively brief research tool to evaluate this construct, among all the items under each of the components, items which, on the whole, had the most appropriate psychometric properties and the highest factor loadings were selected. Therefore, the final scale consisted of 16 items. The validity of the items, components, and the whole scale in the calibration group showed that all the components had appropriate internal consistency coefficients, ranging from 0.74 to 0.88. On the other hand, the whole scale had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 90%, indicating good reliability of the factors. Then, by selecting another sample from the population, confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the validation group data. Overall, the modified measurement model had better fit than the initial measurement model, and one of

the questions that was not statistically significant was omitted. The validity of the items indicated that all sub-scales had appropriate homogeneity (ranging from 0.58 to 0.77).

In general, the scale of happiness consisting of 5 factors and 16 questions had desirable psychometric properties for measuring the construct.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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