

Subjective Happiness and Adjustment among Mizo Adolescents

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Abstract:

The present study is an analysis of the psychological variables of Subjective Happiness and Adjustment, comparing these variables among Male and Female Mizo adolescents. Sample consist of 200 Mizo adolescents (attending schools) ranging in age from 14 to 16 years from the city of Aizawl selected through purposive random sampling. For the purpose of the study, necessary information was gathered through the use of Subjective Happiness Scale (SHC) and Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS). Psychometric adequacy and parametric statistic assumptions were checked for the selected population. Pearson correlation and One-Way ANOVA were applied to find out relationships and significant group differences. The result revealed significant gender differences and significant correlations between the variables. The present study contributes to an emerging understanding of the underlying process between the different psychological variables.

Keywords: Subjective Happiness, Emotional Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Educational Adjustment, Adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents, Subjective Happiness, Adjustment, Gender.

I. INTRODUCTION

From early in human history, happiness has been one of man's most important subjects, Coan (1977) [1] traces the discourse of happiness to Socrates and Aristotle who wrote of the triumphant human capacity for reason and rationality. Aristotle considered what constitutes the good life and concluded that happiness depends upon ourselves. Happiness and well-being have recently received increased attention from researchers and policy makers alike (Diener, 2006) [2]. Through the centuries people have been talking and thinking about happiness; great thinkers and scientist alike.

Individuals might give different answers to the question "what is happiness?" or "what defines a satisfying life?", but most would agree that the word happiness should be high on a list for what constitutes a good life. Subjective well-being is defined as life satisfaction, the presence of positive affect, and a relative absence of negative affect. These three components are often referred to as happiness (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2010) [3]. Lyubomirsky (2008) [4] reveals in her book that set point determines just 50% of happiness while 10% can be attributed to differences in life circumstances or situations. This leaves a startling 40% of one's ability for happiness within ones power to change. Bentham (1789/1996) [5] defined happiness as "the sum of pleasures and pains". Argyle (2001) [6] argues that people's happiness is probably going to increase with age. He also confirms that money cannot buy you happiness and suggests that social relationships may be the greatest single cause of happiness. Fredrickson (1998) [7] has found that happiness is related to creativity and solution focus and Lyubomirsky, King & Diener (2005) [8] concluded that happiness leads to good relationships, better health and longer life.

In their study on very happy people, Diener and Seligman (2002) [9] found that very happy people were highly social, had stronger romantic and other social relationships than less happy groups. The happy people were also more extroverted,

more agreeable, and less neurotic. Compared with the less happy groups, the happiest respondents did not exercise substantially more, participate in religious activities significantly more, or experience more objectively defined good events. Adolescents' and children's happiness has been less studied than that of adults. Variables concerning family conditions such as marital status of parents, age of parents and family size have been weakly associated with adolescents' happiness. The results showed that social relationships were found to correlate significantly with measures of happiness. The findings suggest that predictors of children's and adolescents' happiness were parallel to findings from studies with adults (Holder & Coleman, 2009) [10].

At the time of adolescence, the challenges and burdens that girls and boys face start to differ increasingly. A great deal of research shows higher rates of psychosomatic disorders, emotional disturbances, depression, and anxiety among adolescent girls as compared to boys leading to many adjustment problems (e.g., Angold, Costello, Erkali, & Worthman, 1999; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1994)[11][12]. Mahon and Yarskei (2005) [13] found no gender difference between 14-18 years old boys and girls regarding happiness. Also Francis (1998) [14] reported no gender differences in happiness, as measured by the Oxford Happiness Inventory, in 456 men and women in Wales However, in other studies, women consistently report more negative emotions than men (Costa et al., 2001, Feingold, 1994) [15][16]. Women have higher rates of negative affect and depression and poorer subjective health than men. As females may have been socialized to believe that negative emotional expression is socially undesirable (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) [17], this could increase their likelihood to inhibit the expression of contemptuous thoughts and feelings than males. It may also be highlighted that well adjusted adolescents are likely to have more subjective happiness than the poorly adjusted.

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The term adjustment is often used as a synonym for accommodation and adaptation. Strictly speaking, the term denotes the results of equilibrium, which may be affected by either of these processes (Monroe, 1990) [18]. It is used to emphasize the individual's struggle to survive in his or her social and physical environment. Good (1959) [19] states that adjustment is the process of finding and adopting modes of behaviour suitable to the environment or the changes in the environment. Kulshrestha (1979) [20] explained that the adjustment process is a way in which the individual attempts to deal with stress, tensions, conflicts etc., and meet his or her needs. In this process, the individual also makes efforts to maintain harmonious relationships with the environment.

In adjustment, the two crucial factors are individual and the environment. In the study of the individual, the considerations are the heredity and biological factors, the psychological factors, and the quality of socialization given to him or her. Whereas, the environment includes all the social factors. Life is a continuous series of change and challenges and everyone is facing such situations for his survival or growth. Different persons use different ways to satisfy these needs. The strategy used by the individual to manage this is called adjustment. Sometimes, the efforts of the individual are successful and satisfying, and then it is a case of good adjustment. But if a person meets frustration in his efforts continuously, the personality adjustment may not be proper, and then it might be a case of maladjustment. A sequence of adjustment begins when a need is felt and ends when it is satisfied. In general, the adjustment process involves four parts: (1) a need or motive in the form of a strong persistent stimulus, (2) the thwarting or no fulfilment of this need, (3) varied activity, or exploratory behaviour accompanied by problem solving, and (4) some response that removes or at least reduces the initiating stimulus and completes the adjustment. Social and cultural adjustments are similar to physiological adjustments. People strive to be comfortable in their surroundings and to have their psychological needs (such as love or affirmation) met through the social networks they inhabit. When needs arise, especially in new or changed surroundings, they impel interpersonal activity meant to satisfy those needs. In this way, people increase their familiarity and comfort with their environments, and they come to expect that their needs will be met in the future through their social networks. Ongoing difficulties in social and cultural adjustment may be accompanied by anxiety or depression. Adjustment plays a pivotal role in the development of an individual. It is adjustment which is responsible for the organization of behaviour to life situations in every sphere.

Singh (2006)[21] examined the effects of socio, emotional and socio emotional climate of the school and sex on the adjustment of students along with their interaction effects. Boys were significantly better than girls in their health adjustment at different levels of socio-emotional climate of the school. Gira (2012)[22] conducted a study to know the adjustment of secondary school students of Gandhi Nagar district. On the basis of results that there is significant difference in total adjustment between male and female of higher secondary students. Agarwal (2003)[23] conducted a comparative study of adolescent's level of adjustment in relation to the academic success and failure. It was found that

successful adolescents were significantly superior in their social emotions and educational adjustment in comparison to unsuccessful adolescents.

Happiness is the one thing that every man yearns for and searches for in order to have a healthy mental start; happiness plays an important role in our daily life. Adolescents have to make many adjustments especially emotional, social as well as educational adjustments growing up. Adjustment plays a vital role in the well-being and happiness of a person. The present study will try to highlight the adjustment and happiness level of adolescents and the relationship of these psychological variables that may contribute to a better understanding of the theoretical constructs and throw some light on the adjustment and happiness level of Mizoram adolescents.

The present study aims to explore the relationship of subjective happiness and adjustment and gender differences in these variables among adolescents living in Mizoram. The findings of this study are expected to satisfy academic interest, for in-depth understanding and importance of subjective happiness and adjustment among the general population

Objectives:

Based on the theoretical foundations, the following objectives were framed for the present study:

1. Examine the gender differences and its effect on Subjective happiness and adjustment among the samples
2. Examine the relationship between the psychological variables (Subjective happiness and adjustment).

Hypotheses:

Given the theoretical foundations, the following hypotheses have been formulated for the present study:

1. It is expected that there will be Gender (male and female) differences on psychological variables among the samples.
2. It is expected that Gender will have significant effect on Subjective happiness and the sub-scales of adjustment among the samples.
3. It is expected that there will be significant relationship between the psychological variables.

II. METHODOLOGY

Sample: 200 (adolescents) from Aizawl City (males and females) was sampled using purposive random sampling procedure. Their age ranges between 14 to 16 years.

Design: The sample incorporates 100 males and 100 females for the comparison of gender on dependent variables.

Psychological Tools:

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS), Lyubomirsky, S., & Lepper, H., 1999[24]:

A 4-item scale designed to measure subjective happiness. Each of these items is completed by choosing one of 7 options that finish a given sentence fragment. The options are different for each of the four questions. To score the scale,

reverse code the 4th item (i.e., turn a 7 into a 1, a 6 into a 2, a 5 into a 3, a 3 into a 5, a 2 into a 6, and a 1 into a 7), and compute the mean of the 4 items.

Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS), A.K.P. Sinha and R.P. Singh, 2005[25]:

60 items equally distributed on 3 sub-scales Emotional adjustment (A- E), Social adjustment (A- S) and Educational adjustment (A- Ed). The inventory consists of 60 items, 20 items for each area of adjustment. For any answer indicative of good adjustment a score of zero is given, otherwise a score of one is awarded. The total score on adjustment is obtained by summing the individual domain scores that indicates the general adjustment status. Scores greater than 11 on the emotional domain indicate unstable emotions while low scores indicate stable emotions. Individuals with scores greater than 11, on the social adjustment domain indicate that they are submissive and revering. Scores greater than 11 or above on the educational domain indicate that adolescents are poorly adjusted with their curricular and co-curricular programs while low scores indicative that they have interest in school programs.

Statistical Analyses: Descriptive statistics such as Means, standard deviations and reliability were calculated. Pearson’s Correlation was used to assess the relationship between the variables. One-Way ANOVA was also done to assess mean differences of the groups on the psychological variables.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Subject-wise scores on the specific items of the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) and Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS) were analyzed. Results are shown under the following table:-

Table 1: Mean scores of ‘Gender- male and female’ of the whole sample on the psychological variables.

Gender	Stats	Happiness	Emotional Adjustment	Social Adjustment	Educational Adjustment
Male	Mean	19.6	6.17	8.8	6.6
	SD	2.68	2.8	2.26	3.16
Female	Mean	18	4.63	7.37	9.37
	SD	2.9	2.56	3.04	2.39
Total	Mean	18.8	5.4	8.6	7.98
	SD	2.9	2.78	2.66	3.116

Observation of Table-1 shows mean differences of the two groups (males and females) on the psychological variables. Result shows that Males scored higher on subjective happiness (M=19.6), emotional adjustment (M=6.17) and social adjustment (M=8.8) whereas Females scored higher on educational adjustment (M=9.37).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics - Reliability (alpha), skewness and kurtosis of the psychological variables.

Variables	Alpha	Skewness	Kurtosis
Happiness	.56	-0.09	-0.75
Emotional Adjustment	.86	0.09	-0.63
Social Adjustment	.88	0.03	-0.6
Educational Adjustment	.83	0.01	-0.77

In Table-2, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) was computed on the behavioural measures. Results revealed substantial item-total coefficient of correlation for the scales/sub-scales and order of reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha was .56 for subjective happiness and for Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS) subscales was .86 for emotional adjustment (AE), .88 for social adjustment (AS) and .83 for educational adjustment (A-Ed). Skewness and Kurtosis results highlighted the normal distribution of the sample.

Table 3: Correlation matrix of the psychological variables (Pearson Correlation) for the whole sample.

Variables	Happiness	Emotional Adjustment	Social Adjustment	Educational Adjustment
Happiness	1	-0.01	-0.10	.26*
Emotional Adjustment		1	0.15	.300*
Social Adjustment			1	0.17
Educational Adjustment				1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.
 * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

The Pearson Correlation (Table-3) revealed significant positive relationship between Subjective Happiness and Educational Adjustment (r = .26; p< .05) as well as Emotional Adjustment and Educational Adjustment (r = .30; p< .05). The Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances (Table-4) revealed insignificant results, allowing us to proceed on to the analysis of variance.

Table 4: Levene’s Variance

Variables	Happiness	Emotional Adjustment	Social Adjustment	Educational Adjustment
Sig.	.46	.47	.06	.15

Table 5: One-Way Analysis of Variance for the whole sample

Variables	Sources of variation	F	Sig.	Eta ²
Happiness	Gender	4.83	.03	.07
Emotional Adjustment		4.86	0.03	.07
Social Adjustment		0.45	0.50	.02
Educational Adjustment		14.53	0.00	.20

One-Way ANOVA (Table- 5) indicated significant effects of gender on Subjective Happiness (SHS) and the subscales of AISS – Emotional and Educational Adjustment. The mean difference on Subjective Happiness, Emotional adjustment and Educational adjustment of the two gender groups were found to be statistically significant – SHS ($F=4.83$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.07$), AISS-Emotional ($F=4.86$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.07$) and AISS-Educational ($F=14.53$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.20$) and indicating a significant variance in participants' Subjective Happiness, Emotional and Educational Adjustment and caused by Gender differences.

IV. CONCLUSION

Findings of this research show gender differences in the psychological variables. Male participants exhibit greater subjective happiness, emotional adjustment and social adjustment than female participants. Result also shows Female participants exhibit greater educational adjustment than male participants. This is in consistent with other findings showing gender differences in subjective happiness e.g., Mrocek and Kolarz (1998)[26] found that “women appear to be less happy, and this seems to persist across all age groups”. The Pearson Correlation shows significant positive relationship between Subjective Happiness and Educational Adjustment as well as Emotional Adjustment and Educational Adjustment which states that effect of one will lead to impact on another. The analysis of variance shows significant effects of gender on subjective happiness, emotional adjustment and educational adjustment with effect size of 7%, 7% and 20% simultaneously. This implies that there are significant group differences and effects of gender among groups on the psychological variables.

Gender differences in subjective happiness and adjustment are important because of the many efforts being made in contemporary society to empower all individuals to achieve self-actualization and utilise their full potential. The current findings may be informative to intervention research efforts seeking to further understand and specify the mechanisms involved in the relationship between subjective happiness and adjustment.

The present study is limited in terms of capacity for drawing causal inferences. Thus, it cannot provide any simple answers as to what causes adolescents' happiness. However, the results do provide very important information on which factors are associated with young individuals' perceived happiness and well-being. With further research on adolescents' happiness more information can be gathered on the actual effects on their happiness which in turn can provide tools for intervention and preventative measures on a policy basis. As earlier research has indicated (Costa et al., 1986)[27] a young adolescent's personality is not fully developed and, therefore, may be more prone to responding to intervention than older individuals in terms of procedures for increasing happiness and adjustment in a particular population.

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