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Correlation between Fear of Happiness and Flourishing In Young Adults

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ABSTRACT: The present study titled “Correlation between Fear of Happiness and Flourishing in Young Adults” aims to find out the effect of an individual’s fear of happiness with respect to their level of flourishing. The hypothesis for the present work is that an individual’s fear of happiness will negatively affect their ability to flourish. For the purpose of this study 50 young adults aged between 18-23 years were selected through random sampling technique. The original English version of the Fear of Happiness Scale and Flourishing Scale were distributed exclusively to the respondents currently studying in Amity University Lucknow Campus, who were without any present history of mental illnesses. The analysis of data included the mean and standard deviations of the scores obtained from each questionnaire, suggesting higher levels in flourishing as compared to fear of happiness. Further analysis included finding out the Pearson’s Correlation. The correlation between fear of happiness and flourishing proved to be significant at 0.01 levels. After the analysis of data, the hypotheses were accepted, that is, there was indeed a negative effect of fear of happiness on one’s level of flourishing.

KEYWORDS: Fear of happiness, Flourishing, Young Adults, Correlation

I. INTRODUCTION

The present study has been conducted with the aim to explore the possible effect of an individual’s fear of happiness on their propensity to flourish in life. In the field of modern psychology happiness is described as subjective wellbeing, or “people’s evaluations of their lives and encompasses both cognitive judgments of satisfaction and affective appraisals of moods and emotions” (Kesebir & Diener, 2008, p. 118). Subjective well-being includes components of life satisfaction, satisfaction with respect to an important aspect of life (work, health, etc.), and existence of positive affect, along with low levels of negative affect.

Fear of Happiness: Fear of happiness, or cherophobia, is the phenomenon where individuals who are absolutely against to the idea of feeling happiness to any extent. The term comes from the Greek word ‘chairō’ which means ‘I rejoice’ (Holbrook, C. 2015, 2023). While cherophobia is presently recognized as a clinical disorder under the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), many researchers have started to validate its scientific existence (Joshnloo, 2014). The working definition of the term ‘fear of happiness’ is the feeling of anxiousness people feel in allowing themselves to feel positive (Gilbert et al. 2012). Therefore, the present analysis of fear of happiness is aimed at assessing the respondents’ level of anxiousness they experience when they feel positive.

Flourishing: In modern psychology, flourishing was coined by the founding father, Dr. Martin Seligman. According to Seligman, flourishing occurs when an individual pays careful attention towards the constructing and maintaining of the five aspects of the PERMA model. The PERMA model was coined by Seligman to explain what contributes to an individual’s sense of flourishing. The five factors covered in this model are- Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments (Seligman, 2001). According to Seligman (2011), to flourish is to find fulfilment in our lives, accomplishing meaningful and worthwhile tasks, and connecting with others at a deeper level- in essence, living the “good life”. The working definition of the term ‘flourishing’ is used synonymously with an individual’s subjective well-being, in the domains of relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism. Therefore, the

present analysis of flourishing is aimed at assessing the eudemonic dimensions of well-being, and consequently providing feedback for how to improve one's life, and stimulating the scope for self-improvement (Diener et al. 2010).

Young Adults: According to Kessler (2022), the term 'young adult' is defined differently in various disciplines of medicine, psychology, researches in science, various popular cultures, and literature. She further states that the age range for young adults could refer to people aged 12 to 18, or could be between the age of 18 and 30; and it all depends on the context in which it needs to be discussed. Based on Erikson works, individuals reach this stage between the ages of 19 and 39; but because people reach this stage at different ages due to varying factors, there isn't any absolute timeline for young adulthood, according to Erikson (Erikson. E. 1975). According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, 2018), young adulthood is generally defined as 18 to 22, or 18 to 25. For the purpose of this study, the population of choice was taken to be young adults ranging between the ages of 18 to 23, by taking the estimated age range given by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, 2018).

Rationale: The researcher was intrigued with the concept of fear of happiness, and how it plays a role in influencing an individual's level of flourishing in the long run. The existing review of literature revolving around the variable of fear of happiness and its association with flourishing is very limited. There also exists a significant gap in the literature with respect to the Indian context. The tools mentioned previously are majorly used on the American and the European population, with very little exposure to the Asian population. The present work was conducted to see if it incurs the desirable outcome of finding an individual's fear of happiness and its hypothesized influence on their level of flourishing.

II. RELATED WORK

Ramazan, Y. et al., in the year 2022, revealed that the coronavirus significantly predicted resilience, and the psychological resilience plays the role of a mediator in the relationship between fear and happiness associated with COVID-19 [18]. Lambert, L. et al., in the year 2022 concluded that happiness doesn't only appear to influence well-being, but concomitant behaviours as well [15]. Hans, O., in the year 2022, revealed each transgender/nonbinary/other gender, sexual minority, Asian-American, and multiracial students have lower chance of flourishing in contrast to their respective reference groups, whereas Black students have higher chances in flourishing [10]. Isgör, I. et al., in the year 2022, suggested that fear of happiness and ruminative thought contributed to the explanation of approximately 12% of the variance in individuals' resilience scores, and the presence of significant disturbance between individuals' psychological resilience and sub-domains regarding the self-perception of psychological resilience as per their gender [12]. Allison, R. et al., in the year 2019, signified that individuals who are happy might be more connected to their neighbourhoods [3]. Aaron, A. et al., in the year 2017, revealed levels of higher agreeableness and neuroticism reinforced the influence of fear of happiness on positive affect, whereas, high levels of extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience resulted in weakening the effect [2]. Carmel P. et al., in the year 2015, suggested that a more elaborate understanding of life satisfaction within the areas of hedonic and eudaimonic principles of happiness is important in the enhancement of one's overall understanding of well-being [5]. Katherine K., in the year 2013, indicated that individuals, who exhibit the lowest amount of EAC, tend to flourish the highest, and vice versa [13]. Manfred, D. et al., in the year 2011, show a positivity ratio, which also associated with mental health status in the hypothesized direction; along with a positive correlation between higher positivity ratio and mental health [16].

III. METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study is to explore the possible effect of an individual's fear of happiness on their propensity to flourish in life. The hypothesis states that an individual's fear of happiness will negatively affect their level of flourishing. The independent variable taken is fear of happiness, whereas the dependent variable is flourishing. The tools used are the Original English version of Fear of Happiness Scale, a uni-dimensional scale, developed by Gilbert and his colleagues (2012), and English translations of the original version of Flourishing Scale (FS) developed by Diener et al (2009) were used. For the purpose of this study 50 young adults aged between 18-23 years were selected through random sampling technique. The research design used is exploratory research.

For the procedure, the student researcher approached the young adults and took their consent for participation in the study, 50 respondents were randomly selected and were presented with the two scales one after the other, they were asked to pay attention to the instructions laid out in the beginning of the questionnaires before filling them, the respondents were requested to ask if they had any query or doubt.



IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

Table No. 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Fear of Happiness and Flourishing in Young Adults.

	Fear of Happiness	Flourishing
Mean	11.5600	42.8000
Standard Deviation	7.42077	7.56199

The above table highlights the mean and standard deviation of the scores of young adults, showing higher levels in flourishing as compared to fear of happiness.

Table No. 2: Pearson’s Correlation between Fear of Happiness and Flourishing in Young Adults.

Correlations			
		Fear of happiness	Flourishing
Fear of Happiness	Pearson Correlation	1	-418**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		0.001
	N	50	50
Flourishing	Pearson Correlation	-4.18**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.001	
	N	50	50

**** Correlation is significant at the .001 level.**

The above table highlights that the Pearson’s Correlation between fear of happiness and flourishing in young adults is significant at 0.01 level.

V. CONCLUSION

The present dissertation hypothesizes that an individual’s fear of happiness will negatively affect their ability to flourish. After the interpretation of the results, it can be concluded that the stated hypothesis were accepted and the correlation between fear of happiness and flourishing was found to be significant at 0.01 level. The correlation between fear of happiness and hope was found to be significant both at 0.01 and 0.05 levels respectively.

On the basis of the statistical analysis, it can be observed that there is indeed an increase in flourishing and hope as compared to fear of happiness, but there is significantly more increase in flourishing with respect to fear of happiness, than in hope with respect to fear of happiness.

Table No. 1 represents the mean and standard deviation of fear of happiness and flourishing in young adults. The results reveal that there is a higher mean value and standard deviation of scores of flourishing as compared to the fear of happiness. This shows that lower the level of fear of happiness, higher is the level of flourishing, thus supporting the hypothesis.

Table No. 2 represent the correlation between fear of happiness and flourishing obtained through Pearson’s Correlation. The results reveal that the correlations between the two variables are significant at 0.01 level.

Researches done by Hacer B. et al (2019), Siamak K (2013), and Katherine K. (2013) support the hypothesis that when there is a low level of fear of happiness, an individual’s sense flourishing escalates to a higher level. The literature pertaining to this theme reveals that one’s fear of happiness negatively affects their levels of flourishing.

Lambert, L. et al. (2022), in their study found that fear of happiness is related to low subjective well-being and other concomitant behaviours like physical activity and sleep.

This work was done to observe if the researches done on this theme were applicable in the Indian context. The result obtained through the current study does, in fact, incur the desirable outcomes and therefore support the hypotheses.

LIMITATION:

The existing review of literature revolving around the variable of fear of happiness and its association with flourishing is very limited. There exists large number of researches on the mentioned variables, but those are done either individually, or with respect to other factors like optimism, gender identity, sense of community, etc. There also exists a significant gap in the literature with respect to the Indian context. The tools mentioned previously are majorly used on the American and the European population, with very little exposure to the Asian population.

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