Self Esteem and Social Support vs. Student Happiness

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine relationship between happiness, self esteem and received social support in high school students. 150 eighth grade girl students were selected among the entire population of 2008-2009 students in the city of Tehran using multistage cluster method. Oxford Happiness, Coopers-Smith Self Esteem and Wax social support questioners were used to obtain the needed data. The results of analysis of the data that was done in two levels of descriptive (means, standard deviation, correlation coefficient) and deductive (multi parameters regression) shows that a positive meaningful relation exists between self esteem and happiness at less than 0.001 level. A positive meaningful relation at less than 0.01 levels exists between self esteem and the small scale as well as the number of total social support. Furthermore the linear regression equation showed that to predict happiness self esteem and social support (in family scale) are important in the same order.

Keywords: happiness, self esteem, social support.

Introduction

Happiness is one of the important qualitative sides in human life that every one wishes to find it. Happiness is from the spectrum of the excitaments that its long term effect is freshness and youth. Happiness motivates social activities, strengthens human relations, renovates the sense of hope, and is also effective in letting go of worries and winning anxiety causing competitions. Furthermore, happy individuals are affectionate and help others more often, they work better and are better succeed in solving problems (Myers, 2000, as quoted by Yazdani, 2003).

When faced with satisfactory scenes, one senses a good feeling because of achieving what one wished and expected. This positive reaction is happiness (Beron, 2006).

Happiness is a free standing structure on three essential legs of good feelings, satisfaction of life and absence of negative excitaments like depression and anxiety. (Argyle, 1999, translated by Kalantari, et al., 2003).

There is a general believe among scientists that happiness increases the body’s defense mechanism. It is on this axiom that many rest homes and hospitals utilize various means like having jokers or playing comedy movies to generate the feeling of happiness in their patients. This causes exudation of “happiness hormones” which play a major role in arrival of more oxygen to the brain which in turn causes psychological and spiritual calmness and increases pain threshold (Soleimani, 2009).

Although there has been eye catching advances in technology, improved human living conditions and his security, his well being and happiness is yet to improve. All types abnormalities like depressions, anxieties, inabilities to solve living problems, loneliness, insecurity and many others are indicative of lack of the excitement of happiness in human daily living (Allen Carr, Positive Psychology, 2004, translated by Pasha Sharifi, Najafizand, and Sanai, 2006, Sokhan, Tehran).

Self esteem is one of the important psychological variables in creating and increasing happiness in individuals. Commendation, respect, satisfaction, and any value that one uses to describe oneself in a meaningful summary is called self esteem. “The person who has high self respect considers himself valuable, capable, and respectful” (Yaratan, Yucesoylu, 2010).

Self esteem is considered as one of the most abundant sources of joy. Satisfaction of work, school and life, Physical and psychological health, resistance against psychological pressures, social success,
positive attitude and low level of depression and concern for others comfort and well being are the benefits of high self esteem. Each of these factors play a considerable role to increase one’s happiness (Sapington, Andora, Psychological well being, 2001, Translated by Hosseini Shahi Baravati, 2003 Nakhosteen, Tehran). During his lifetime, man needs a sincere and friendly environment to protect him. Social Support is referred to feeling of belonging, acceptance, love and care that family, friends, coworkers, and others can provide. Social Support creates a secure relationship that the feeling of love and closeness are the main aspects of this relationship (Peterson, 2007).

Those who receive more social support bear less pain and become ill less often. Supporters can prevent effects of stress and heart failures. They can be effective in uplifting and rejuvenating ones morals (Myers, translated by Farahani, 2007).

It is in a group that one can show his or her internal feelings and affections towards others. And it is in a group that one can exchange sympathies, cry or laughter, praises and affection with his kind. From this view point, living in a group is quite helpful in achieving internal calamity and exhaustion of psychological excitements. Living in a sincere and friendly environment that supports one consistently results in ones understanding that one receives love and attention from others. This adds to ones sense of self esteem and value. In addition to imagine oneself being valuable, one knows that that one is approved by others as well. Consequently, one senses one has achieved calmness and happiness (Koenig, 1998, translated by Najafi, 2001).

Furnham and Chanje (2000) have shown that six fundamental factors constitute the reasons for happiness. Mental power and personality qualities, personal advantages, advancement and freedom in life and work, social support, self esteem, security, and positive thinking and satisfaction include those six factors. For example, two factors of social support and self esteem which means having sincere friend and loving parents and high level of self esteem are important reasons for happiness. Argyle, Furnham (1983), Cambell (1976) and Larsen (1978) found that social network (friends and family) account for main resources for human happiness. Cambell(1976) concluded that more than any other factor self satisfaction (high self esteem) related to mental wellbeing (Argyle, 1990).

Considering that self esteem and social support determined the vision of one about oneself and one’s surroundings and happiness is one of important and positive capacities of any person, the main question in this research is formed as whether there exist any relationship between social support, self esteem, and happiness.

Method

In this research the statistical population included all of the 9th grade(3rd grade middle school) girl students attending Tehran public schools during 2009-2010 scholastic year. The sampling population included 150 of those students majoring in math and physics, experimental sciences, and humanities. To select the individuals in the sampling population multi stage cluster sampling method was used as follows: Among all of educational districts numbers 6 and 10 were selected. Two schools from each district and two classes from each school were selected at random. I this study correlation between “Self Esteem” and “Social Support” (as predicting variables) and “Happiness” (as the reference variable) was evaluated.

The following tools were used to collect the data:

a. Oxford OHI happiness questioner: This questioner was developed by Argyle and Low in 1990. Since Beck’s measure has been one of the most successful scales to measure depression, Argyle tried to develop the Happiness Scale by invering Bect’s Depression Scale. St first 21 items were prepared. Then, 11 more items were added to consider other aspects of happiness. But after testing this scale on their students some of the items were dropped and three new items were added (Alipoor, 1387). In this study the Persian version of the questioner as prepared and normalized by Alipoor and Noor in1387 was used. Oxford Happiness Questioner has 29 four choice items. Each item is numbered zero to three in the same order as appear in the questioner. For example, first choice is numbered zero and the last choice is numbered 3. The total of the numbers chosen in the questioner may vary between zero and 87. In the preliminary studies the mean of all of measured items was 45.8. Kronbach Alfa Factor in this scale is 0.90 and its open revaluation stability after 7 weeks has been 0.78. In order to evaluate the internal homogeneity of the questions, Kronbach alfa factor for all of the questions was calculated to be 0.885 which indicates very good internal homogeneity of happiness test.

b. Social Support Questioner: The perceived scale of this questioner is based on Social Support definition of Cobb, 1976. He defined social support according to the amount of affection, help, and
attention one receives from family, friends and others. This scale has 23 items that three of them relates to family, friends and others. Sub scale of family has 8 items including questions 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 18 and 22. Sub scale of friends has seven items including questions 1, 6, 10, 15, 16, 19 and 23. Ebrahimi Ghavam, 1991, used five student samples and five social minority groups to determine the traceability and accuracy factors. The total evaluation of social support scale and the sub scales of family and friends enjoy internal stability between samples. Kronbach alfa factor for these scales in the same order are 0.90, 0.80 and 0.84 among the five student samples. This factor has been 0.90, 0.81, and 0.94 among five social minority groups. Correlation of family and friend sub scales in both student groups were 0.51. Correlation for minority social groups for each sub scale has been 0.52. For Iranian university student sampling repeatability factor for sub scales of family, friends and others were 0.55, 0.63, and 0.54 in the same order. The internal stability factor for overall Social Support for Iranian university student samples is 0.90. The internal stability factor for overall Social Support for samples of Iranian high school students is 0.70. For high school student repeatability factors for sub scales of family, friends and others are 0.50, 0.50 and 0.60 in the same order. Correlation between repeating of the entire scale after 6 weeks is -0.81. The repeatability factors and retesting of sub scales of family, friends and others in the same order are 0.84, 0.72 and 0.51. In this study, To evaluate the internal homogeneity of questions for Social Support Test Kronbach Alfa Factors for every sub scale as well as overall questions were calculated separately. These factors in the same order were 0.796, 0.752, 0.691 and 0.853.

c. The Self Esteem Questioner: To measure self esteem Cooper Smith’s questioner was used. Cooper Smith developed and documented his self esteem questioner based on his 1967 revision of Rogers and Diamond (1954) scale. This scale has 58 items with yes and no answers of which are lie detectors (6, 13, 20, 27, 34, 41, 48, and 55) and bear no points. In total five of the items are divided between sub scales of family self esteem, social self esteem and educational self esteem. The credentials of this questioner has been confirmed by Smith in 1971, Beiger in 1967, Campbell in 1956, Hersen in 1965, Vaife in 1968 and Mours in 1971. The method of grading is 1 for yes and zero for no in questions 2, 4, 5, 10, 11, 14, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32, 36, 45, 47, 57. For the remaining questions the grading is reversed. In this questioner the minimum grade is zero and the maximum is 50 points. Higher grade indicates higher self esteem. Yuni in 1363 translated Cooper Smit’s questioner and he calculated its credential and reference factors. The credential level with retesting method was found to be 0.92 for girls and 0.90 for boys that are acceptable and high factors. The reference factors in correlation with the students end of the year grade point averages were found to be -0.96 for boys and 0.71 for girls. In 1371, in a study by Poorsheafe by using “two half method” in a group of thirty and by calculating Pearson’s correlation factor and correcting it with Spearman Brown method the Reliability factor was found to be 0.83 which statistically is meaningful. Confirmation of ten other psychology experts about measurability of self esteem by this questioner is another is further credit to the questioner in Poorsheafe’s study. (Hashemi Nasreh Abad, 1994).

To calculate the internal homogeneity of Cooper Smit’s Self Esteem questions Kronbach Alfa Factor for all of the questions was calculated to be 0.874 which is a very good indicator of homogeneity of the questions of this test.

Implementing the Tests

To gather the needed information for Wax’s Social Support, Cooper Smit’s Self Esteem and Oxford’s Happiness questioners were distributed between the students. Before starting to answer Research briefly explained how to answers the questions. The test was given to the group in a classroom and the time to answer questioners was 25-30 minutes. The researcher was present during the entire time.

Results

Hypotheses number 1: There is a positive relationship between Self Esteem and Happiness. Pearson correlation factor between self esteem points and happiness was calculated. The results are presented in Table 1.
Table 1. Pearson Co-relation between Self Esteem and Happiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Samples</th>
<th>Correlation Coef.</th>
<th>Meaningful Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem-Happiness</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.639</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of table 1 shows there exists a positive meaningful relation between self esteem and happiness in a level at less than 0.001 such that by increase of self esteem happiness increases and visa versa. Therefore hypotheses 1 under study is confirmed.

Hypotheses 2: There is a positive relation between Social Support and Happiness. Pearson correlation factor between social support points and happiness was calculated. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson Co-relation between Social Support and Happiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Samples</th>
<th>Co-relation Factor</th>
<th>Meaningful Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Support-Happiness</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others Support-Happiness</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends Support-Happiness</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Social Support-Happiness</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.471</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows there is a positive meaningful relation exists between all of social support sub scales and overall social support vs. happiness at a level less than 0.01. As a result hypotheses 2 is confirmed. Comparing Co-relation Factors shows that sub scale Family support has the highest co-relation with happiness ($r=0.451$) while friends support sub scale has the lowest level of co-relation with happiness ($r=0.229$).

Hypothesis 3: There exists a positive relation between Social Support and Self Esteem. To verify this hypothesis, Pearson co-relation factor was calculated between social support and self esteem grades of the students. The results are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Pearson Co-relation between Social Support and Self Esteem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Samples</th>
<th>Co-relation Factor</th>
<th>Meaningful Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Support-Self Esteem</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others Support-Self Esteem</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends Support-Self Esteem</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Social Support-Self Esteem</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.596</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows there exists a positive meaningful relation between all of social support sub scales and also overall social support vs. self esteem at a level less than 0.001. This means by increasing of Social Support, self esteem is increased or vise versa. As a result hypotheses 3 is confirmed. Comparing Co-relation Factors shows that sub scale Others support has the highest co-relation with self esteem ($r=0.505$) while friends support sub scale has the lowest level of co-relation with self esteem ($r=0.322$).

Considering the existing of meaningful relation between social self esteem, social support and happiness the following research question was posed and examined.

Question: what is the share of self esteem and social support in predicting happiness?

Step by step multi variable regression analysis technique was used to predict happiness dependability on self esteem and social support. The results are summarized in table 4.

Considering that R2 is percentage of covariance of the predicting variables of self esteem and social support that predict happiness and keeping in light the results summarized in table 4, in the first step of regression self esteem alone predicts 41% of happiness variance. In the second step of regression, self esteem and family social support together predict 43% of the happiness variance. Considering that calculated value of F in both steps of regression model are less than meaningful level of 0.001, then the linear regression is meaningful. Therefore, the predicting variables of self esteem and family social support have meaningful linear relation in predicting happiness.
Table 4. Summary of meaningful results of regression model to predict happiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Source of changes</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degree of Freedom</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Meaningful level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Step (Self Esteem)</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>9448.30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.639</td>
<td>0.408</td>
<td>101.92</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remainder</td>
<td>13719.94</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>23168.24</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Step (Self Esteem Family Support)</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>10065.23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.659</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td>56.46</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remainder</td>
<td>13103.01</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>23168.24</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the meaningful relation between predicting variables (self esteem and social support) and reference variable the results of evaluation of meaningful model are presented in regression factors table number 5.

Table 5. Summary of Regression Factors Table for Predicting Happiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>Scale error</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T statistics</th>
<th>Meaningful level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Step</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>12.818</td>
<td>2.673</td>
<td>4.461</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>0.931</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>0.639</td>
<td>10.096</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>4.761</td>
<td>4.162</td>
<td>1.144</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>0.800</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td>0.549</td>
<td>7.742</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Step</td>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>0.520</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>2.631</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of table 5 shows that among all of predicting variables self esteem and family social support are able to predict student’s happiness. The meaningful t-test in the 2nd regression step for self esteem and family support at a level less than 0.001 are meaningful. Considering calculated regression factors in the 2nd step are nor standard, self esteem has more share (0.80) in predicting happiness relative to family support (0.520). Both factors are positive which indicates positive relation of self esteem and family support with happiness. In light of non standard regression factors, the regression equation for predicting happiness depending on predicting variables of self esteem and family support in the 2nd step is:

\[ \text{Happiness} = 4.76 + 0.80 \times \text{self esteem} + 0.52 \times \text{family support} \]

Discussion

The study shows that there is a positive meaningful relation between self esteem and happiness. This means as self esteem increases so does happiness. Happiness is evaluations that individuals make of themselves and their lives. These evaluations could have cognitive aspect like judgments that are made about satisfaction of life or may have emotional aspects that include reactions and excitements that appear in reaction to life happenings. Therefore this happiness is made of satisfaction of life, positive emotions and excitements, the good sight if positive attitude, self esteem, feeling of blossoming and absence of negative emotions and excitements. The happy person is lively, healthy and clever, extravagant, positive, free of worries, religious, having high self esteem, with professional ethics and humility and clever tendencies (Diner, 2002). As argyle, too, considers self esteem as one most abundant source joy and believes self esteem is closely related to happiness. By the same token this conclusion is unidirectional with similar findings. Cambel (1976) as well as Furnham and Chench (2000) stated that self satisfaction (high self esteem) is , more than any other factor, strongly co-related to happiness.

In a lump sum, the results of this study shows there is a meaningful positive relation between social support sub scales (family, others, friends) as well as overall grade of social support and happiness.

But, in the final analysis it is the family that can act as a powerful force, trusting and concern to protect the youth against change, problems and hard times. Even if the need for independence weakens the relations of youth with parents, but never their support is eliminated (Sharifi Daramadi, 2001).

On the other hand, in the recent years and more than the past do families take steps to fulfill their children’s needs and demands and provide them with greater support. In the same light, the role of 1912
education through public media, schools, credible books and so on about training and interacting with children should not be overlooked. This, undoubtedly can have major effect in the effectiveness of family support among other supporting sources.

Mentioning the fact that during the third year of high school, because of preoccupation with university entrance exam, the students have less time to intermix with their friends and spend most of their time with the family is somehow important.

The results of the study also revealed that there is a positive meaningful relation between every subscale of social support as well as the total points of social support with self esteem. This means, as social support is increased so does self esteem and vice versa. As a result, hypothesis 3 is confirmed.

Comparing correlation factors shows that the subscale “others” has the highest correlation with self esteem \(r=0.505\) while the subscale “friends” has the lowest correlation with self esteem \(r = 0.322\). This result is unidirectional with the findings of Odonnel(1976), Kladston (1979), King, Kesler, et.,al.(1985), Hoffman (1987), Yari (2007) and Akbari Avarzaman (2004).

Human needs for help and support of others from birth to last minutes of life is undeniable. Man gains the first experience of social support at home. As he grows, these experiences spread to friends, associates, organizations, and teachers. The support works is offered through social support network. This causes the individual to consider himself as a valuable and capable person which in turn boosts his self esteem security (Biabangard, 2003).

Cooper Smith (1967) also points out that power and being important are sources of self esteem. Power means the ability to influence others to accomplish his goals well which raises his self esteem. Being important is when one finds out that he is important and plays a role in others life which also increases his self esteem.

Self esteem and family social support are capable of predicting happiness. Self esteem has a higher share\(r = 0.80\) while family social support has less share \(r=0.52\) in predicting happiness. These findings are in the same vain with findings of Argyle and Furnham (1983), Kambel (1976) Larson (1978), Furnham and Chench (2000), Larson (1990), Berkman and Saim (1979).

The close relation of self esteem and family social support could stem from the satisfaction from fulfillment of needs associated with self esteem and social needs, because human is a social being. It is in the society that the individual within a person finds its meaning and from comparing himself with others find out about his differences. And thousands of questions may form in his mind like am I attractive, bright, beautiful, loveable, hated, popular, ugly and...

Undoubtedly reaction he sees from his surroundings has an undeniable effect on the answers to these questions. This may lead him to a self evaluation like unmatched, extraordinary, good, fair or bad. Similarly, the supports he receives from friends, family, age group, organizations, others and...can be one of the most important sources of answering those questions. Obviously, those individuals who always receive respect, care, importance, applaud, admirations, attention, love, help and ... from others find a better and more positive image of themselves. This, undoubtedly, leaves a considerable effect on their self esteem and results in a sense of joy and happiness. This also improves their communication and their social skills that help them to better enjoy their free time, refreshing activities, studying, income, social, family and work relationships. This alone increases their sense of happiness on daily bases (Gallagher,Vella-Brodrick, 2008).

In the mentioned research, the family support dimension has more influence on predicting the sense of happiness. The family serves its member as: an information source about the world; a source of ideology; a guide and a middleman in solving problems, a safe place to rest and rehabilitate, a problem solver during emergency decision times and a shield against environmental stresses. This supporter reassures the individual that he or she shall be always reaccepted. In this way the support work is accomplished (Sharifi Daeamadi, 2001).

Limitations and Shortcomings: The following may be pointed out as the limiting factors of this research: Physical and psychological preparedness of the tested population during the test; lack of information on other variables like social situation, family states, economical conditions, intelligence measures, etc., and limited statistical population which was limit to only the 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade girl students in Tehran high schools.

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