

ORIGINAL ARTICLE**HAPPINESS PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS: AN APPLICATION IN THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES IN KONYA**S. Didem Kaya¹, Yusuf Y. Ileri¹, Aydan Yuceler¹¹Konya NecmettinErbakan University, Health Management, Health Sciences Faculty, Konya, Turkey
dkaya@konya.edu.tr**ABSTRACT**

Happiness has been investigated in various ways in the literature. It has been studied by many researchers from different aspects. The aim of the research is to determine the happiness scores of university students and relation of their socio-demographic characteristics. The population of our research is consisted of students (health management, social services, nursing departments) of Konya NecmettinErbakan University, Faculty of Health Sciences studying in the academic year 2014-2015. A total of 176 (84%) questionnaires, from the students who agreed to participate in the research, were included for analysis. Questionnaire technique has been used in our research. The survey consisted of 9 questions determining the socio demographic characteristics of students and 8 questions of Oxford Happiness Questionnaire-Short Form (OHQ- SF). The findings obtained in this study have been assessed using SPSS statistical software. Descriptive statistical methods (frequency, mean, standard deviation), T-test and OnewayAnova tests were used in comparison of quantitative data. The results were evaluated at 95% confidence range and significance at $p < 0.05$ level. When results were examined, statistically significant findings were achieved between the socio-demographic characteristics and total happiness scores of students. In the study, statistically no significant difference was found when the happiness scores of students were compared as per their parents' educational levels and departments. The happiness average of the students in the second class was higher than students in the first class. There was no relationship between the income status perceptions and happiness scores of students. The highest happiness score belonged to health management students. It was found that the average happiness scores of students whose parents are illiterate and primary school graduates are higher than the students whose parents are high school and university graduates.

Keywords: Happiness, Students, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire-Short Form

INTRODUCTION

A trend begun after the 1980s for positive psychology and surveys have become widespread on topics such as happiness, life satisfaction, optimism, job satisfaction, job involvement, marriage satisfaction¹. Happiness is a term of which definition is spread over a quite broad perspective. The root happiness in the Oxford English Dictionary is "happen" and "happence" which means "coincidence"². In the literature, happiness is also expressed using many different terms³ such as; well-being, life satisfaction, quality of life (QOL) etc. These terms are used synonymously in different surveys of different studies³. Regarding the general definitions of happiness, we come across with especially being pleased and well-being, and in daily life, some other words are also used such as joy, peace, excitement and pleasure. These words may seem to reflect the meaning of happiness; however, they do not meet the concept of happiness fully². Happiness reflects a more emotional, situational and subjective state of well-being and its mental aspect may be exposed to more volatile and short-term fluctuations⁴. People may be happy in different situations. The factors that make us happy one day, may not make us happy another day². From this point, many different definitions of happiness is an understandable situation.

Happiness has been investigated in various ways in the literature. It has been studied by many researchers from different aspects; such as macro and micro economy^{5,6}, political evaluations⁷, age, gender, marital status and employment status. The researches demonstrate that the earnings of employees who are happy with their current lives is also positively affected^{8,9}. It was found out that the incomes of employees are directly and indirectly affected by the happiness levels of them¹⁰. Factors such as being in a positive attitude and self-esteem also affect happiness in a positive manner¹⁰. Real optimism, one of the most important indicators of happiness about life, indicates the external appearance of person's internal positive state¹⁰. While longer education, full-time jobs¹¹, getting married, buying house, having children increase happiness, it is observed that getting older decreases happiness, and women are generally happier than men¹². It was also found out that employees spending time with their colleagues and free to make their own choices are happier¹³.

Studies show that as people get experienced, achieving their goals is increasing their happiness¹⁴. Natural environment and nature, since not accommodating negative factors affecting human health, have positive effect on physical and mental health, and thus on happiness¹⁵. Social communication and relationships, besides natural habitat, physical

exercise and renewal, increase the happiness of people¹⁶. According to the study conducted in 2013 by MacKerron and Morato, people are happier in their homes than in their workplaces, are happier in a sunny weather than in rainy or foggy one, are happier in open air than being at home or inside a car¹⁵. The college students are the guarantee of the future of the communities; thus, it is a very important goal to make them happy with their lives. This study is an important step to demonstrate demographic determinants of their happiness. The aim of the research is to determine the happiness perception scores of students of Konya NecmettinErbakan University, Faculty of Health Sciences, one of the largest universities of Turkey and to compare with their socio-demographic characteristics.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

The population of our research is consisted of students of Konya NecmettinErbakan University, Faculty of Health Sciences studying in the academic year 2014-2015. Since the enrollment to faculty started in 2013-2014 academic year, it consists of health management (1st and 2nd class), social work (1st class) and nursing (1st and 2nd class) students. In calculating the population of the study, it was aimed to reach all students. A total of 209 students are enrolled in the faculty. A total of 176 (84%) questionnaires, from the students who agreed to participate in the research, were included in the evaluation.

Data Collection Tool

Questionnaire technique has been used in our research. The survey consisted of 9 questions determining the socio demographic characteristics of students and 8 questions of Oxford Happiness Questionnaire-Short Form (OHQ- SF). Socio-demographic characteristics questions consist of questions such as gender, department, age, class, parents' educational level, income status.

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire-Short Form (OHQ- SF) is an 8-item, 6-point Likert type scale developed by Hills and Argyle¹⁷ in order to

assess the level of happiness. In a Turkish adaptation study carried out by Doğan and Çötök¹, item total correlation value has been observed to be lower than .30 (.17) and 4th item has been excluded from the scale; and the Turkish version of the scale consisted of 7 items. In addition, the answer options in the Turkish form of the scale have been designed to be five-point likert [strongly disagree (1) - fully agree (5)]. 1st and 7th items of the scale are encoded in reverse order. These items are scored as "strongly disagree" (5) and "completely agree" (1). The lowest score to be taken from the scale is 7 and the highest score is 35. High scores indicate higher levels of happiness. As the scores obtained from the scale increases, the level of happiness increases. Cronbach's alpha reliability of OHQ- SF is calculated as 0.70 for this study.

The findings obtained in this study have been assessed using SPSS 21.0 statistical software. In the evaluation of findings, besides the descriptive statistical methods (frequency, mean, standard deviation), T-test, OnewayAnova tests have been used in comparison of quantitative data. The results were evaluated at 95% confidence range and significance at $p < 0.05$ level.

Ethical Clearance

We have obtained ethical approval from the dean of Faculty of Health Sciences, NecmettinErbakan University and verbal consent from the participants.

RESULTS

The socio-demographic characteristics of participants are shown in Table 1. As seen in Table 1, 47.7% of respondents are nursing students. 59.7% of respondents are first year students. 60.2%'s father and 67.6%'s mother are primary school graduates. According to the table, the income status of 80.1% of respondents is moderate. 79.5%'s father and 9.7%'s mother is working. As seen in the table, 48.9% of participants are living in city. The average age of students is 19,50 (Min 17-Max 25).

Table 1: Demographic Variables of Participants

Variable	Groups	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	36	20.2
	Female	142	79.8
Department	Health Management	64	36.4
	Nursing	84	47.7
	Social Services	28	15.9
Class	FirstClass	105	59.7
	SecondClass	71	40.3
Education Level of Father	Illiteracy	2	1.1
	Elementary-Secondary School Graduate	106	60.2
	High School Graduate	46	26.1
	University Graduate	22	12.5
Education Level of Mother	Illiteracy	19	10.8
	Elementary School Graduate	119	67.6
	Secondary School Graduate	21	11.9
	High School Graduate	13	7.4
	University Graduate	4	2.3
Income Status	High	30	17.0
	Average	141	80.1
	Low	5	2.8
Father Occupied	Yes	140	79.5
	No	36	20.5
Mother Occupied	Yes	17	9.7
	No	159	90.3
Place Of Residence	Village	34	19.3
	Country	56	31.8
	City	86	48.9

Table 2: The Average Score of Happiness Levels

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
(OHQ- SF) Total	176	11,00	35,00	25,93	4,47

As seen in Table 2, the average score of happiness level of the respondents is (25,93 ± 4,47). Table 3 shows the average happiness scores and standard deviations related to the department variables. As a result of the one-way

analysis of variance, there was no significant difference between the groups ($p > 0.05$). The highest happiness averages were respectively health management students ($X = 26,47$), nursing ($X = 25,80$) and social works ($X = 25,11$)

Table 3: Happiness Scores and Standard Deviations Related To Department Variables

Departments(OHQ- SF)	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Health Management	64	26,47	4,39	,98	0.38
Nursing	84	25,80	4,46		
Social Work	28	25,11	4,69		
Total	176	25,93	4,47		

The average score of students' happiness level and standard deviation related to the socio-demographic variables are seen in Table 4. As shown in the table, a significant difference was found between first class ($x = 25,10$) and second class ($x = 27,17$) students ($p < 0.05$) according to the t test carried out in terms of happiness scores. When the average scores of the groups are examined, the happiness scores of the

second class students were found to be higher than the first-class students.

Table 4 shows the average scores and standard deviations of the students whose income levels are poor and medium ($x = 25,95$) and good ($x = 25,87$), and results of t test analysis as well. There was no significant difference between groups as per the analysis of t test ($p > 0.05$). As

presented in Table 4, there is no difference between groups according to t test when the happiness scores of students are compared as per their mothers' working status ($p > 0.05$). Moreover, average happiness scores and standard

deviations according to the education levels of students' parents are shown in Table 4. As seen in the table, there is no difference between the groups as per the result of t-test ($p > 0.05$).

Table4: Happiness Scores of the Students Related To Socio-Demographic Variables

	Class	N	Mean	SD	T	p
(OHQ- SF) Total	1st Class	105	25,10	4,39	-3,10	0,002
	2nd Class	71	27,17	4,33		
	Mother's Working Condition	N	Mean	SD	T	p
	Yes	17	25,53	4,73	-0,39	0,7
	No	159	25,97	4,45		
	Income Status	N	Mean	SD	T	p
	Good	30	25,87	5,00	-0,87	0,93
	Poor and Medium	146	25,95	4,37		
	Education Level of Father	N	Mean	SD	T	p
	Illiteracy- Elementary School	108,00	26,11	4,31	1,77	0,08
	High School and University	68	25,65	4,73		
	Education Level of Mother	N	Mean	SD	T	p
	Illiteracy- Elementary School	159	26,13	4,45	0,67	0,51
	High School and University	17	24,12	4,37		
Total	176	25,93	4,47			

DISCUSSION

Happiness is a concept for which human nature is in constant pursuit. Therefore, it is possible to come across many studies in this area. In our study, happiness scores of university students have been compared with their socio demographic characteristics. Statistically no significant difference has been found when the happiness scores of students are compared as per their parents' educational levels and departments.

The happiness average of the students in the second class was higher than students in the first class. A study of Gulcan¹⁸ on students shows that the average happiness scores of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th classes are higher than the preparatory classes. The socio-economic status of students is expected to affect their happiness scores. However, it is found that there is no relationship between the income status perceptions and happiness scores of students. In fact, students evaluating their income as "poor" and "medium" had higher happiness scores compared to other variables.

When the happiness scores are evaluated according to the department variable, the highest score belonged to health management students. When the happiness scores are evaluated according to the education levels of students' parents, it is observed that the average happiness scores of students whose parents are illiterate and primary school graduates are

higher than the students whose parents are high school and university graduates.

Happiness should be in every moment of a person's life. In order to be happy in their lives, students should first recognize themselves and then determine their purposes in life. The academicians also have major responsibilities in order to determine which variable is more effective on happiness levels of students, what their psychological needs are and how strong they are in psychological sense. The universities should carry on preventive and developing studies in this sense.

CONCLUSION

We have found that there is no relationship between the income status perceptions and happiness scores of students. Even though students reporting their income as "poor" or "medium" had same happiness scores compared to who has higher income. According to the students' happiness scores and education levels of parents, it is found that the average happiness scores of students whose parents were illiterate and primary school graduates are higher than the students whose parents are higher school and university graduates but statistically there is no significant difference. The average happiness score of students in the second class was higher than the first class students. Of course these findings cannot be representative all Turkish students' happiness scores due to small number

of study population. We suggest further study should conduct different area of the country.

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