

Happiness, Life Satisfaction and Mental Health among Elderly People

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the happiness, life satisfaction and mental health of elderly people. For this purpose the sample of 98 elderly people living in their own homes as well as old age homes were selected through sample random technique in Tamil Nadu state. For the assessment of participants happiness, life satisfaction and mental health, Subjective happiness scale by Lyubomirskys and Lepper (1999), Satisfaction with life scale by Diener *et al.* (1995) and Mental health inventory by Veit and Ware were used. The obtained data were statistically analyzed by applying Independent t-test and correlation method through SPSS 20.0 version. The findings show that participant's happiness, life satisfaction and mental health not differs with respect to their age and gender. However all the three variables (happiness, life satisfaction and mental health) significantly differ with respect to home type. Further findings also divulge that happiness is positively related with life satisfaction but negatively correlated with mental health. It is also found that there is negative relationship between life satisfaction and mental health.

Key Words : Happiness, Life Satisfaction, Mental Health, Age, Gender and Home type

INTRODUCTION

The family is culturally the best place for the elderly at their post retirement life in India. They prefer their living arrangement with children and grand children which is significant for Happiness. But globalization and urbanization have brought changes in this cultural system with an effect of socioeconomic and political condition, the elderly population cases to be functional, they are considered as a burden upon the family and ending up in an old age home joint family system turns into nuclear family. There is limit living space of the elderly in this type of family in urban or rural India. Consequently they are shift to old aged home where they only cont their end days of life. In their old age home they suffer by various psychosocial and environmental problems including feeling of neglect, loss of importance in the family, loneliness, and feeling of unwantedness in family as well as society feeling of inadequacy and of social skills, education and expertise.

The pattern of family life, established in old age, starts to change with the onset of middle age these changes are made more pronounced by retirement with the accompanying reduced income or by the death of spouse in old age. Old age often brings a deterioration of circumstances in some

ways, but a decline in happiness appears to be avoidable. Social isolation tends to increase, partly due to the end of working life or the loss of a spouse or close friends (Lelkes, 2010). Ageing may imply a mental decline or a loss of cognitive capacity (Rohwedder and Willis, 2010) subjective well being also declines on average.

To be well adjusted in old age men and women must be able to satisfy their personal needs and live up to the expectations of others within the framework of life provided for them. The more old friendship the elderly are able to retain, the better adjusted and happier they will be moving to other areas or outliving their friends militates against this. Attitudes of grown children toward their elderly parent and frequent associations with them contribute to good personal and social adjustment on the part of the elderly. A resistant attitude toward aging and to adjustment to changes in aging brings a serious obstacle to successful adjustment in old age.

When they feel that they are neglected by their grown children or other family member when they develop a “nobody loves me” complex, it is inevitable that they would be unhappy (Hurlock, 2002) of social class sex or any other demographic character, certain conditions can be counted on to contribute to subjective happiness in old age. Even though all these conditions contribute to happiness in old age, it is not essential that they all be present in order for the elderly person to be happy. Old age is the fading period of life cycle. It is a period when people move away from the heyday of life, full of power, vitality and happiness.

Researchers reported that happy people are more positive and optimistic toward others (Seligman, 2002), they enjoy better physical, emotional, as well as mental health, and cope effectively with daily stressors than their counterparts (Vaillant, 2000). Dar and Wani (2017) reported that significant gender difference in respect to optimism, happiness, and self-esteem. Research also revealed that there is a positive correlation between optimism, happiness, and self-esteem respectively. Research by Mir and Wani (2016) shows significant differences in wellbeing of male and female, rich and poor old people. Further, Pandey, Tiwari and Singh (2012) revealed that majority of the inhabitants of old age homes are having psychiatric morbidity. They also found that (37.7%) inhabitants are living with depression, (13.3%) with anxiety disorders and (11.1%) are having dementia. Synchronically, Ahmadi and Etemadi (2009) found that signs of depression and somatization disorders were the most common ones among the elderly in elderly homes. Further it is also investigated that the rate of psychological symptoms was more among women than men. Singh *et al.* (2012) found that mood disorders were the most common psychiatric disorders among the people living in old age homes. Shukla and Kiran (2013) reported that subjective happiness of male elderly staying in nuclear families is higher than those elderly staying in joint families. Further Priyanka and Mishra (2010) revealed that there were significant differences in health satisfaction, family satisfaction, financial satisfaction and life satisfaction among elderly males and females. Gold *et al.* (2002); Murtagh and Hubert (2004) also found gender differences in level of life satisfaction. Simultaneously, Lewinsohn *et al.* (1988) examined the nature of the relationship between life satisfaction and psychosocial variables; they reported that most of the psychosocial variables were significantly correlated with life satisfaction. Therefore on the basis of present literature review researchers try to find the happiness, life satisfaction and mental health among elderly people in Tamil Nadu state of India.

Objective of the Study :

1. To find the level of happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health among elderly people.

2. To examine the significant differences in happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health among elderly with respect to their age, gender and home type.
3. To find the significant relationship between happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health.

Hypotheses of the study :

1. There will be a significant difference found in happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health with respect to participant's age.
2. There will be a significant difference found in happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health with respect to participant's gender.
3. There will be a significant difference found in happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health with respect to participant's home type.
4. Significant relationship would be found between happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health.

METHODOLOGY

Variables :

The psychology variables in the study are happiness, life satisfaction, and mental health, however age, gender and house type was taken as demographical variables in the study.

Samples :

In the present study 98 elder people selected through random sampling technique were selected in Tamil Nadu state. Among them 64 (64.3%) was male and 34 (34.7%) were females.

Tool used :

The 4 itemed subjective happiness scale constructed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) was used to measure participant's happiness. Their life satisfaction was measured by satisfaction with life scale developed by Diener, Larsen and Griffin (1985). The scale consists five items designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction. The 38 items mental health inventory (MHI) standardized by Veit and Ware was administrated to measure the mental health of participants.

Procedure :

The present research was conducted in Tamil Nadu State, India. The data was collected from 98 elderly subjects through random sampling technique by using three different psychological instruments namely subjective happiness scale, satisfaction with life scale, and mental health inventory. Before the administration of tools proper rapport was established with each subject and were informed about the meeting and were given the instruction regarding each tool, after that questionnaires were distributed among them and were asked to note down their responses therefore the data were collected. After that the collected data was systematically arranged and were analyzed by statistical tools through SPSS 20.0 Version. The findings of the study are giving in tables in the result section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study affirmed that happiness, life satisfaction and mental health of elderly people with respect to their age and gender. Whereas, participants happiness, life satisfaction

and mental health level differs with respect to their home type. Results revealed that average level of happiness and life satisfaction were found more among above 71 years old participants than below 70 years old participants. Findings also show that below 70 years old participants are having better mental health than above 71 year old participants. The obtained t-value (Table 1) of happiness ($t = .19$), life satisfaction ($t = 1.09$), and mental health ($t = 2.69$) were found not significant at 0.05 level. Therefore on the basis of these findings that first hypothesis is rejected.

	Age	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t- value
Happiness	Below 70 years	49	18.78	4.99	.71	96	.19
	Above 71 years	49	19.00	6.41	.91		
Life Satisfaction	Below 70 years	49	19.69	10.79	1.54	96	1.09
	Above 71 years	49	22.00	10.13	1.45		
Mental Health	Below 70 years	49	119.90	21.28	3.04	96	2.69
	Above 71 years	49	108.31	21.42	3.06		

It is also revealed that female participants are more happy and life satisfaction than male participants; however the mental health of male participants is better than female participants. It is found in the Table 2 that the obtained t-value of happiness ($t = .44$), life satisfaction ($t = .30$), and mental health ($t = .25$) were also found less than tabulation value at 0.05 level, therefore the second hypothesis is also rejected.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t-value
Happiness	Male	64	18.70	5.80	.72	96	.44
	Female	34	19.24	5.61	.96		
Life Satisfaction	Male	64	20.61	10.54	1.32	96	.30
	Female	34	21.29	10.48	1.79		
Mental Health	Male	64	114.52	22.18	2.77	96	.25
	Female	34	113.32	22.04	3.78		

Results also divulge that participants living in their own homes are happier and satisfy in their life than those of living in old age homes. Simultaneously, it is also found that inhabitants of old age home are having better mental health than those living in their own homes. The significant t-value

	Home type	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t-value
Happiness	Own home	49	23.69	2.31	.330	96	15.52**
	Old age home	49	14.08	3.67	.524		
Life Satisfaction	Own home	49	30.69	4.76	.680	96	28.30**
	Old age home	49	11.00	1.02	.146		
Mental Health	Own home	49	95.33	14.29	2.04	96	16.28**
	Old age home	49	132.88	7.50	1.07		

** Significant at 0.01 level

of happiness ($t=15.52$), life satisfaction ($t=28.30$), and mental health ($t=16.28$) shows that participants happy, life satisfaction and mental health differs by their home types, hence the third hypothesis is accepted (Table 3).

Table 4 : Relationship between the variables

	Happiness	Life Satisfaction	Mental Health
Happiness	1	.797**	-.706**
Life Satisfaction		1	-.802**
Mental Health			1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results also affirmed happiness is positively related with life satisfaction, but negatively correlated with mental health. It is also found that there is negative relationship between life satisfaction and mental health (Table 4).

Conclusion :

On the basis of the findings of the present study it is concluded that above 71 years old, female and those participants living in their own homes are happier than below 70 years old, male and those participants living in old age homes. Simultaneously, above 71 years old, female and those participants living in their own homes are more satisfy in their life than below 70 years old, male and those participants living in old age homes.

Further participants below 70 years, male and those living in old age homes are having better mental health than above 71 years old, female and those participants living in their own homes respectively. There is positive relationship between happiness and life satisfaction, simultaneously happiness and life satisfaction are negatively correlated with mental health.

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