

The Relationship between Life Satisfaction and Happiness: The Mediating Role of Resiliency

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Abstract

The present research investigates the mediating role of resiliency in the relationship to life satisfaction and happiness. The study uses correlation and the research population consisted of 241 female students from the University of Tehran who were chosen with the simple random sampling method to answer the questionnaires. To measure the variables of the research, the scale of life satisfaction proposed by Diener et al. (1985), the resiliency of Conner and Davidson (2003), and Oxford happiness (1989) were utilized. The results which were attained using the method of structural equation modeling demonstrated that the exogenous variable of life satisfaction has a significant direct effect on happiness. In addition, according to the results, the relationship between life satisfaction and happiness is mediated by resiliency. In this pattern, all the regression weights were significant from a statistical perspective, and in general, the results show that life satisfaction affects happiness directly and via the mediation of resiliency.

Keywords: life satisfaction, happiness, resiliency, structural equation modeling

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the advent of positive psychology, variables like happiness, resiliency, and the effects that these features have on people's life and compatibility are being studied more than before, and various researches on them are being conducted (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Happiness is a multi-dimensional concept which consists of several fundamental parts; in the emotional part, the happy individual has a happy and glad disposition; from the social aspect, the happy individual has good social relations with others and can attain social support from them; finally, from a cognitive aspect, the happy person processes and interprets information with a special method so that in the end, he or she can have a feeling of happiness and optimism (Valois et al., 2004).

Therefore, in happiness, people's evaluation of themselves and their lives can include cognitive aspects like judgments regarding contentment with life or emotional aspects including disposition or feelings in reaction to life's events (Valois et al., 2004).

Life satisfaction refers to a judgmental and cognitive process (Diene, Emmons, & Larsan, 1985) in which people evaluate the quality of their life based on a series of criteria. Life satisfaction is the individual perspective, general evaluation of the totality of one's life or some aspects of life, such as family life and educational experience; life satisfaction is the reflection of balance between individual wishes and the present state of the individual. In other words, the greater the gap between the level of individual wishes and the present state of the person, the lower the satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Diener & Diener, 2009). Resiliency or the ability to recover and bounce back to the initial state when confronted with unwholesome conditions in life has been one of the subjects investigated in the theories of psychology in the past five decades (Prince-Embury, Saklofske, & Vesely, 2014). This construct is a set of individual and process features which help people to achieve successful compatibility in unfavorable life circumstances (Langer, 2004). Some scholars consider resiliency a dynamic process which changes with regard to opportunities in the process of life and from one time to another, and they

believe that resiliency has a flexible and varying quality; in fact, positive resiliency is in the confrontation of unwholesome conditions (Waller, 2001).

Resiliency is not passive resistance against harms or threatening circumstances; on the contrary, the resilient person is an active participant and the constructor of his or her surrounding milieu. Resiliency is the person's capability in achieving biological-psychological-spiritual balance when confronted with endangering circumstances (Conner & Davidson, 2003). Researches indicate that some resilient individuals, after facing difficult life situations, return to their normal functioning level, while some other people, after facing failures, catastrophes, or difficulties, improve with regard to the past, and this state can be affected by cognition and individuals' positive evaluation of life quality. Kumpfer (1996) believes that resiliency has an important role in returning to the initial balance or reaching a higher level of balance, and thus, it leads to positive compatibility and life satisfaction. Positive compatibility and life satisfaction can be considered the consequences of resiliency and, as motivators, can also lead to a higher level of resiliency; this issue is due to the complexity of definition and the process perspective towards resiliency.

There is evidence that the degree of satisfaction with life standards is a factor for attaining happiness (Borooah, 2006). In addition, there exists a significant relationship between self-esteem and happiness. On the other hand, disposition and temperamental features (being extroverted or neurosis), social relations (not being lonely, satisfaction with friends, and having a goal in life), and general satisfaction with life are the best predictors of happiness (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006). As well as this, health and marital status are strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction.

A review of the research literature related to the variables of happiness, resiliency, and life satisfaction in Iran and other cultures shows that these variables have mutual and positive effects upon one another. In Iran, for example, the investigation and comparison of the relationship between life quality, hope, and happiness with life satisfaction among ordinary and war-wounded individuals demonstrate that the variables of life quality, hope, and happiness can significantly predict life satisfaction in the wives of war-wounded as well as ordinary individuals (Heydari, 2012). Concerning the consequences of resiliency, a few researches have referred to the enhancement of psychological health level and life satisfaction and have indicated that there exists a positive relationship between resiliency and life satisfaction; in addition, there is a difference between men and women concerning life satisfaction, but no difference concerning resiliency (Khal'atbari & Bahari, 2010). The mediating role of psychological health in the relationship between resiliency and life satisfaction also shows that resiliency is very effective in the enhancement of psychological health and life satisfaction (Poorsardar, Abbaspoor, Abdi Zarrin, & Sangari, 2012). In addition, resiliency is the direct and mediating predictor of life satisfaction too (Jowkar, 2007).

Ifeagwazi, Chukwuorgi, and Zacchaeus (2014) have shown that the relationship between the feeling of alienation and psychological well-being is determined through the mediation of resiliency; in addition, resiliency has been shown to have a mediating role in the relationship between political-economical alienation and psychological sorrow.

In a meta-analysis research (Hu, Zhang, & Wang, 2014), the relationship between resiliency and psychological health was investigated, and the mediating variables such as age, gender, and difficulty in this regard were studied. 60 studies and 111 effects were analyzed and these results were found: (1) Resiliency has a negative relationship with the negative signs of psychological health and a positive relationship with the positive signs of psychological health. (2) The variable of age has a mediating role in the relationship between resiliency and the negative signs of psychological health (especially in adults and young people). (3) Gender has a mediating role in the relationship between resiliency and psychological health. (4) Difficulty is also a mediating variable in the relationship between resiliency and psychological health, and the amount of influence in this variable has a considerable significance with regard to the other variables.

People in different levels of social and economical situations are confronted with certain problems when they experience life challenges. On these occasions, the individuals' happiness or life satisfaction might be negatively affected; the period when a person is a university student, which usually covers the ages between 18 and 30 in Iran, is a period in which the happiness and life satisfaction of these individuals are met with life challenges due to the demands of education, perseverance to succeed in the educational sphere, and attaining higher levels or obtaining a job or a suitable spouse. Therefore, the study of the mediating role of resiliency in the relationship between students' life satisfaction and happiness can be an important research issue considering the complex nature of these variables. These relationships have been affirmed from a theoretical dimension.

In Sahin and Karatas (2015) studies, the results obtained from the research indicate that perceived social support and life satisfaction significantly predict resilience, whereas depression is not a significant predictor of resilience.

Moreover, the resilience of students does not express a significant difference based on gender. The resilience levels of students who live with their parents and whose parents are together was found to be higher when compared to other students.

Ogulmus (2001) stated that the level of resilience and protective factors in high school students whose parents are together is higher than those whose parents are divorced.

Sipahioglu (2008) found that the resilience of adolescents in different risk groups differed based on the variables of poverty (with his/her family), living with a single parent, gender and type of school. Onat (2010) stated that the levels of resilience of first-grade high school students who perceive their parents democratically are significantly higher.

Savi-Cakar and Karatas (2011) found that the social support perceived by adolescents predicts their level of resilience significantly.

In most researches, the variable of life satisfaction has been considered as the consequence of the variable of resilience; since the concept of resiliency is very complex, this variable can be considered the forerunner of resiliency, as well. Because of the importance of life satisfaction in happiness, we should look for mediating variables in this relationship; therefore, our aim in this research is the investigation of the relationship between life satisfaction and happiness with the mediating role of resiliency. The results of the present research will help to expand or modify the theoretical and experimental perspectives towards the variables of life satisfaction, happiness, and resilience.

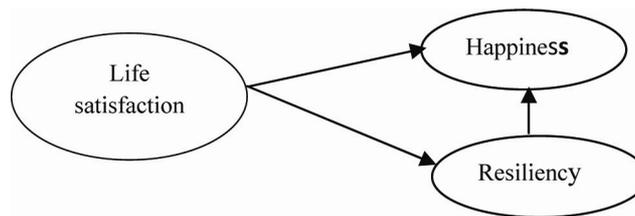


Figure 1. The relationship between life satisfaction, happiness, and resilience

2. Method

The present study is non-experimental, and its design is correlational based on structural equation modeling.

2.1 Statistical Population and Sampling

The statistical population of the study are all female students from university of Tehran, A capital of Iran, aged 19-30 years old, out of whom 300 individuals were selected with the simple random sampling method; then, after the incomplete questionnaires were laid aside, 240 individuals were analyzed with the structural equation modeling.

2.2 Research Instruments

2.2.1 Life Satisfaction Scale Diener (1985)

This five-question scale was invented by Diener et al. (1985) when studying 176 students of the University of Illinois; it was then translated into Persian by Savari and Borna (2007) and applied on the students of the University of Ahwaz. The scale assesses the overall life satisfaction, and it has been used as a parameter for happiness in researches (Currer, 2004). Diener et al. have reported a validity (with the convergent, differential method) and reliability (Cronbach's alpha: 0.89) for this scale. In front of each question, a 5-score Likert scale from *I totally agree* (score 1) to *I totally disagree* (score 5) was provided. This scale has been modified for use in Iran by Khayyer and Samani (2004), and evidence has shown that its validity and reliability are satisfactory. The questions of this scale are designed so as to be congenial to the life of adolescents and adults. In the present research, Cronbach's alpha has been calculated 0.89. In addition, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in

order to identify and confirm the factors for measuring the construct of life satisfaction and the parameters of $GFI=0.98$, $AGFI=0.94$, and $SRMR=0.020$ showed the agreeable fitting of the model.

2.2.2 Oxford Happiness Argyle (1990)

In order to measure happiness, the Oxford happiness scale was used. This instrument has been made in 1990 by Argyle and Lu, based on the theory of Argyle and Crossland concerning the feeling of happiness as well as the views of Beck concerning depression. This 29-part questionnaire has four options, and its options are scored from 0 to 3. The sum of all the 29 factors makes up the entire scale. The total score of the participant oscillates from 0 to 87. Argyle et al. reported the alpha coefficient of 0.90 for 347 participants. In one study, Haghghi et al. (2006) calculated Cronbach's alpha 0.92, and again 0.92 with the split-half method. In addition, the validity of the scale with the correlation of the score of happiness with the scores of self-esteem, optimism, and general health in all the participants was calculated respectively 0.64, 0.51, and 0.56 (according to Haghghi et al., 2006). Alipoor and Noorbala have shown in their study that all the 29 factors of the test have a high correlation with the total score, and Cronbach's alpha and the reliability of splitting the test were reported to be 0.93 and 0.92 respectively. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated 0.85 and the parameters $GFI=0.93$, $AGFI=0.85$, and $SRMR=0.049$ indicate the important and significant role of each question in measuring the factor of happiness.

2.2.3 Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale

This scale consists of 25 questions and has been created by Connor and Davidson (2003) in order to measure the power of resistance against force and threat. For each question, a range of five options (totally incorrect to always correct) has been designed which is scored from zero (totally incorrect) to 4 (always correct). Although this scale assesses the different dimensions of resilience, it has one total score. The validity (with the method of factor analysis and convergent and divergent validity) and reliability (with the method of test-retest and Cronbach's alpha) of the scale have been confirmed by the inventors of the test in various groups (ordinary and endangered). In order to use the test in Iran, the process of translation was fulfilled, and after the confirmation of the inventors of the scale, permission for its utilization was obtained. Afterwards, in order to affirm the reliability and to determine the validity, Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis were used respectively. The reliability of the scale equaled 0.93 which was exactly equivalent to the reliability reported by the inventors of the scale. In Iran, Mohammadi (2005) has calculated the reliability of this scale 0.89 and its validity between 0.14 and 0.64. In the present research, the reliability of the scale was calculated 0.80. In addition, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in order to identify and confirm the factors of measuring resilience, and the parameters $GFI=1$, $AGFI=0.98$, and $SRMR=0.01$ showed the complete fittingness of the model.

3. Results

The findings are related to the relationship between life satisfaction, happiness, and resilience. As can be seen in Table 1, all the observed variables have correlation. The factors of life satisfaction, happiness, and resilience are the hidden variables of the proposed pattern in the present research. The factor of life happiness has 5 indicators, happiness has 3 indicators, and resilience has 4 indicators. All the indicators related to the hidden constructs of the pattern showed coefficients of the upwards path. The order of the coefficients in the pattern for the factor of life satisfaction was calculated 0.70 to 0.86, happiness from 0.68 to 0.91, and resilience from 0.67 to 0.72.

Each of these parameters cannot singly be considered to a reason for fittingness, and they should be interpreted together. Therefore, some of the most important parameters of fittingness in the curve show that the pattern has an appropriate fittingness with the data. After estimating the parameters, the fittingness of the model is assessed. Out of the statistics of the fittingness, the five measurement statistics of GFI , $AGFI$, $SRMR$, Chi-squared test, and the relationship between Chi-square and degree of freedom have more importance.

Table 1. The correlation matrix of research variables

| Variables | resilience | happiness | life satisfaction |
|-------------------|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| life satisfaction | | | 1 |
| Happiness | | 1 | 0.55** |
| Resilience | 1 | 0.19** | 0.21** |

Note. * $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$

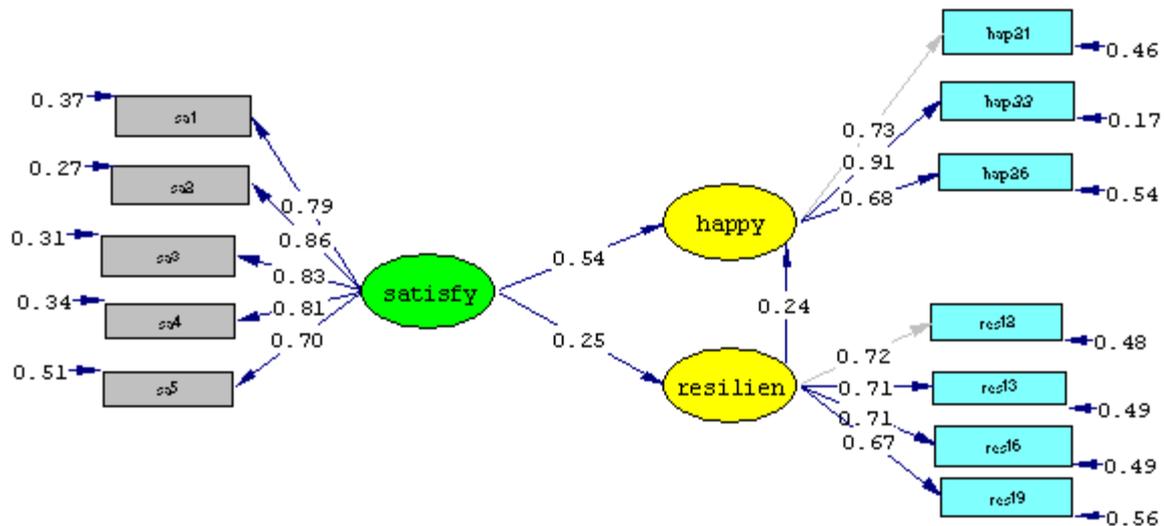


Figure 2. The causal model of life satisfaction, happiness, and resilience

Table 2. Good of fitness indexes

| AGFI | GFI | CFI | RMSEA | χ^2/df | Df | χ^2 |
|------|------|------|-------|-------------|----|----------|
| 0.92 | 0.95 | 0.99 | 0.04 | 1.46 | 51 | 74.38 |

The closer the two parameters of AGFI and GFI are, the more they demonstrate the complete fittingness of the model, and the lower amount of SRMR=0.04 indicates the agreeableness of the model’s fittingness. If the numerical value of Chi-square is with a degree of freedom lower than 3, then the fittingness of the data with the model is confirmed (Kline, 2011). By considering all the parameters, we conclude that the data are in full harmony with the presumed model.

The direct effect of life satisfaction on resilience was calculated 0.25, on happiness 0.54, and the direct effect of resilience on happiness 0.24. In addition, the indirect effect of life satisfaction on happiness was calculated 0.06 and the total effect 0.60.

4. Discussion

In this study, the effect of life satisfaction on happiness with the mediation of resilience was investigated. Structural equation modeling analysis confirmed the hypothesis of the research concerning the relationship between life satisfaction and happiness with the mediation of resilience. Thus, it is observed that the students who are satisfied with their lives have a high resilience. Although in most researches life satisfaction has been considered to be the consequence of resilience, in this research, this variable is the forerunner of resilience, and resilience has a mediating role in the relationship between life satisfaction and happiness. Challenges of college life confront individuals with various psychological reactions like sorrow, fear, and stress (Collins, 2009). These challenges are various; in this regard, research evidence shows that when individuals face life challenges, they show negative or positive reactions like resilience, and these positive reactions provide the basis for compatibility and the way of dealing with problems (Wald et al., 2006). In Iran, apart from natural disasters like earthquake, flood, and a high rate of road accidents, college students face socio-economical problems like addiction, estrangement from loved ones, migration to large cities for education, finding part-time jobs to earn a living, and marriage. However, in the present research, the variable of resilience can be predicted by life satisfaction and have a significant role in students’ happiness that is according to sahin and karatas (2015) research, in which, resilience can be predicted by life satisfaction.

Cultural considerations in investigating research findings have a special significance in most cultures in the field of psychology. With regard to the present findings and the variable of resilience, a review of the researches as well as the texts related to the culture of Iran demonstrates that religious maxims and wise sayings concerning the confrontation of difficulties and life’s challenges have apparently helped students to overcome these

challenges. In this regard, the concept of patience is one of the most familiar methods of resistance against the difficulties of life, and God has instructed people to be patient in many verses of the Holy Quran:

- (1) Truly we found him full of patience and constancy. How excellent in our service ever did he turn to Us (38:44).
- (2) They stained his shirt with false blood. He said: “nay, but your minds have made up a tale (that may pass) with you, (for me) patience is most fitting: against that which ye assert, it is Allah (alone) whose help can be sought” (12:18).
- (3) And (remember) Isma’il, Idris, and Zul-kifl, all (men) of constancy and patience (21:85).
- (4) The other said: “Verily thou wilt not be able to have patience with me!” (18:67).
- (5) Those who were convinced that they must meet Allah, said: “How oft, by Allah’s will, Hath a small force vanquished a big one? Allah is with those who steadfastly persevere” (2:249).
- (6) Therefore patiently persevere, as did (all) messengers of inflexible purpose; and be in no haste about the (unbelievers). On the Day that they see the (punishment) promised them, (it will be) as if they had not tarried more than an hour in a single day (46:35).
- (7) Therefore do thou hold Patience, a Patience of beautiful (contentment) (70:5).
- (8) O ye who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy; vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and fear Allah; that ye may prosper (3:200).
- (9) O ye who believe! seek help with patient perseverance and prayer; for Allah is with those who patiently persevere (2:153).

Individuals’ perception of happiness and life satisfaction is a cognitive issue which results from individuals’ interpretation of life situations. It seems that there exists a mutual relationship between resilience, happiness, and life satisfaction: a positive interpretation of life’s events and acknowledging the fact that human beings always face problems and challenges, create cognitive processes and psychological efforts including resilience, which help people including college students to deal with life difficulties. Considering the obtained results, it is suggested that the criteria of life satisfaction and the reasons of individuals’ dissatisfaction with life be investigated and appropriate measures be taken, because life satisfaction can affect individuals’ happiness by influencing resilience. Since the population of this research included only a number of female students of the University of Tehran, any generalization should be done with caution. It is suggested that in future researches, the model of the research be repeated with a more extensive population so that the results may be generalized with more confidence.

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