

Happiness, Gratitude, Life Satisfaction, and Life Orientation among Working and Non-working Individuals

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Abstract

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The study was conducted to find differences among working and non-working individuals regarding happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation. Convenient sampling technique was used to collect the data. The sample consisted of 300 individuals; 150 were working and 150 were non-working individuals. Out of 150 working participants, 75 participants were bankers and 75 were teachers. The non-working sample consisted of 75 males and 75 females. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, The Gratitude Questionnaire-six item form (GQ-6), Satisfaction with Life Scale and Life Orientation Test-Revised were used to measure happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation respectively. Correlation unveiled that happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation were positively correlated. Independent sample t-test showed that working individuals were happier, more grateful, and more satisfied with life as compared to non-working individuals while non-working females showed higher levels of gratitude, satisfaction, and positive life orientation than non-working men. Further independent sample t test indicated that bankers were happier than teachers. Multiple regression analysis showed that happiness and gratitude predict life satisfaction.

Keywords: Happiness, Gratitude, Life satisfaction, Life orientation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Happiness is defined as hedonia and eudemonia (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Hedonia means the presence of pleasant and the absence of unpleasant feelings. Eudemonia is defined as subjective feelings of personal fulfillment that arise when our actions have reflected the highest potentials (Dubner, 2013). Gratitude is a social emotion that arises when we realize that others' actions are favorable to us (Fox *et al.*, 2015).

Shin and Johnson (1978) argued that according to one's settled criteria for success, every individual's assessment of his or her quality of life on a global level is called life satisfaction. Life orientation (dispositional optimism and pessimism) is the degree of expectancy towards any positive or negative end result or event happening in our lives (Scheier and Carver, 1985). Both optimism and pessimism are heritable but literature suggests that certain environmental factors such as peer popularity, self-esteem (Fischer and Leitenberg, 1986), interaction with parents, parenting styles, (Scheier and Carver, 1993), teachers, media and socioeconomic status (Forgeard, and Seligman, 2012), family structure, familial relationships, and neuroticism play a special role in utilization of these tendencies (Bates, 2015).

One of the studies highlighted the value of optimism determining life satisfaction in students (Yalcin, 2011). The results of the study revealed that social support provided by family of students, faculty members, as well as optimism shown by students were strong predictors of life satisfaction. Research by Rathore *et al.* (2015) was conducted to find relationship among satisfaction of life and approach towards life (life-orientation) and its impact on doctors' well-being. Results indicated that psychological well-being among doctors was led by life orientation and life satisfaction. Optimism has been also found to increase physical well-being and improve mental health (Conversano *et al.*, 2010). Emmons and McCullough (2003) conducted research with the goal to find out the impact of practicing gratitude. The results showed that those who practiced gratitude experienced optimism in many areas of their life, especially health and exercise. Wood *et al.* (2008) wanted to see whether gratitude predict change in life satisfaction. The results of this study show that a positive correlation exists between gratitude and life satisfaction. Diaz *et al.* (2016) explored the topics of positive psychology such as practicing gratitude, showing satisfaction towards life, and providing aid/help to others. While controlling for financial satisfaction, researchers found a direct linkage among gratitude and life satisfaction. In the Mexican adult population researchers found that gratitude is directly related with life satisfaction and helping other

people at different income levels. Researchers also observed connections between prosperity shared by employees and business freedom on life satisfaction as indicated by self-employed people. The findings show that in countries with strong institutions offering business autonomy and an increase in shared prosperity, the self-employed people exhibit higher life satisfaction (Wolfe and Patel, 2018). The study by Matud *et al.* (2014) is governed to check whether self-identification in gender roles had any impact on life satisfaction of males and females. To predict life satisfaction of males, self-esteem plays an important role and to indicate life satisfaction of females, social support plays an important role. Men who possess high self-esteem have higher rate of life satisfaction and women who receive more social support are more satisfied with life. One study states that life satisfaction and optimism is higher in working class individuals (Sahai and Singh, 2017).

1.1. Goal of the study

Constructs such as happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation have been measured in western societies the most. The goal of current study is to measure happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation among working and non-working individuals of Pakistan. The major goal of this study is to find out whether the working class tends to be happier than non-working; also, we want to see whether there is difference between different categories of working-class participants regarding these constructs or not, such as bankers and teachers. Another goal of the study is to see whether any difference exists between non-working males and females with respect to happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation. After emergence of positive psychology, different researchers studied each attribute mentioned above as a whole or in different combinations but nowadays there is a strong wave to study four of them at the same time such as the impact of happiness and gratitude on life satisfaction and life-orientation and interconnection between the same factors.

2. METHOD

2.1. Objective

To examine happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation among working and non-working individuals.

2.2. Hypotheses

1. Working individuals are happier, they pay more gratitude, experience more life satisfaction, and have a positive life orientation than non-working individuals.
2. Bankers experience more happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation than teachers.
3. There is a positive correlation between happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation.
 1. Happiness and gratitude predict life satisfaction.

2.3. Research Design

Cross-sectional research design was utilized in the study.

2.4. Sample

Convenient sampling technique was used to collect data. The sample consisted of 300 (N=300) individuals from Islamabad; 150 (n=150) were working individuals and 150 (n=150) were non-working individuals, age ranged from 30-40 years. Out of 150 working individuals 75 participants were bankers; (men=37, women=38) and 75 were teachers (men=38, women=37). Criteria for non-working individuals consisted of those participants who were educated but not employed in any government or private organization. Non-working criteria consisted of 75 men and 75 women with age ranges from 30-40 years.

2.5. Instruments

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills and Argyle, 2002) was used to measure happiness. It consists of 29 items and has a 6-point rating scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 6= strongly agree. It is a compact instrument and easy to administer. Its reliability is .81. By dividing total obtained score with total number of items, the raw score is achieved which is in the range of 1-6. Scores lying between 1-2 show that one is not happy, 2-3 shows one is somewhat unhappy, 3-4 shows not particularly happy, 4 indicates somewhat happy or moderately happy, 4-5 shows rather happy or pretty happy, 5-6 shows one is very happy, and 6 indicates that one is exceptionally happy.

The Gratitude Questionnaire-six item form (GQ-6). The Gratitude Questionnaire-six item form (GQ-6) (McCullough, Emmons and Tsang, 2002) was used to measure gratitude. The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six-Item Form (GQ-6) is a six-item self-report questionnaire developed to measure individual

differences in the willingness to experience gratitude in daily life. It is a 7-point likert rating scale (where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). The value of Cronbach's alpha estimates for this scale is .84, proposing that the scale has a moderate level of internal consistency.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Satisfaction with Life Scale Pavot and Diener (2013) was used to measure life satisfaction among working and non-working individuals. The SWLS is a short 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life. It is used to measure the life satisfaction component of subjective well-being. The SWLS is a 7-point likert style response scale. The coefficient alpha for the scale is .89, showing that the scale has high internal consistency.

Life Orientation Test (Revised). Life Orientation Test-Revised as Scheier, Carver and Bridges (1994) was used to measure life orientation. The Life Orientation Test (LOT) was built to see individual differences in generalized optimism versus pessimism. The LOT-R is a brief and easy-to-use measure. It is comprised of 6 items. The value of Cronbach's alpha for the entire of the scale was .78, proposing the scale has moderate level of internal consistency.

2.6. Procedure

To conduct the present study, different banks and universities of Islamabad were visited. Bank managers were approached and asked for their permission to let the employees fill the questionnaires. Data was collected from 8-10 banks. When different universities of Islamabad were visited, permission was taken from administration department to perform the test/questionnaires. Participants were handed over booklet of questionnaires including Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, The Gratitude Questionnaire-six item form (GQ-6), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Life Orientation Test (Revised) in order to assess their happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation. Consent of participants was taken beforehand and confidentiality of their names and responses were kept intact. Verbal instructions were also provided to respondents along with written directions to respond to questionnaires.

3. DATA ANALYTIC PLAN

By using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25), descriptive and inferential statistics of the data were analyzed. Psychometric properties (i.e., reliability coefficient of instruments) and descriptive properties

(i.e., means and standard deviations) were calculated. Inferential statistics (i.e., bivariate correlation, regression analysis and t-test analysis) were used to measure correlation, regression, and mean differences.

4. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the alpha coefficients, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. Findings also show good reliability estimates, suggesting that all the scales are internally consistent.

Table 2 shows that life satisfaction is significantly positively associated with happiness, gratitude, and life orientation. Life orientation is significantly positively correlated with gratitude and happiness while gratitude has a significant positive correlation with happiness.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Happiness, Gratitude, Life satisfaction and Life Orientation (N=300)

Variables	<i>N</i>	α	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Min-Max	Skew	Kurt
Happiness	29	.89	98.56 (8.89)	29-174	-.18	-.73
Gratitude	06	.78	29.12 (3.26)	06-42	-.32	-.46
Life satisfaction	05	.82	21.34 (6.35)	05-35	-.19	-.85
Life orientation	06	.85	17.91 (8.44)	06-30	.13	.13

Table 2. Inter-Correlation among Study Variables (N=300).

Variable	1	2	3	4
1 Life satisfaction	-	.03**	.37**	.32**
2 Life orientation	-	-	.26**	.10**
3 Gratitude	-	-	-	.08**
4 Happiness	-	-	-	-

** $p < .01$.

Table 3 shows significant difference between working and non-working individuals on life satisfaction, life-orientation, gratitude, and happiness. It is indicated from the mean column that employed people are happier ($M=4.04$, $SD=.67$), they practice more gratitude (5.12 , $SD=1.09$), are more life oriented ($M=2.59$, $SD=.69$) and experience more satisfaction ($M=4.76$, $SD=1.42$) as compared to non-working individuals who score low on happiness ($M=3.76$, $SD=.51$), gratitude ($M=4.78$, $SD=.80$), life orientation ($M=2.51$, $SD=.59$) and life-satisfaction ($M=4.06$, $SD=1.22$).

Table 3. Mean, Standard deviation and t-value of Working and Non-working Individuals on Study Variable (N=300).

Variables	Working (n=150)		Non-working (n=150)		t (298)	p	95%CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Life Satisfaction	4.76	1.42	4.06	1.22	4.56	.00	.39	1.00	.39
Life Orientation	2.59	.69	2.51	.59	1.03		.06	.22	.00
Gratitude	5.12	1.09	4.78	.80	3.00	.00	.11	.55	.35
Happiness	4.04	.67	3.76	.51	4.05	.00	.14	.41	.78

Note: LL= Lower Limit, UL= Upper Limit, CI= Confidence Interval.

Table 4. Means, Standard deviation, t-test value of Bankers and Teachers on Study Variable (N=150).

Variables	Bankers n=75		Teachers n=75		t (148)	p	95%CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
	Life Satisfaction	4.70	1.44	4.81			1.40	.48	
Life Orientation	2.54	.70	2.63	.67	.76	.44	-.31	.13	0.04
Gratitude	5.20	1.15	5.04	1.03	.86	.38	-.19	.51	0.14
Happiness	4.23	.80	3.85	.43	3.5	.00	.17	.58	0.59

Note: LL= Lower Limit, UL= Upper Limit, CI= Confidence Interval.

Table 4 reveals non-significant differences between bankers and teachers on life satisfaction, life orientation, and gratitude. There is also a significant difference among bankers and teachers on happiness. It is evident from the mean column that bankers feel more happiness (M=4.23, SD=.80) as compared to teachers (M=3.85, SD=.43).

Table 5. Linear Regression Analysis showing Happiness and Gratitude as Predictor Variables of Life Satisfaction (N=300).

Predictor variable	B	SE	B	T	p
Happiness	.41	.13	.18	3.06	.002
Gratitude	.39	.08	.28	4.60	.000

R=.40, R²=.16, F (2, 297) =29.19, p<0.05.

Table 5 shows that happiness and gratitude significantly predict life satisfaction. There is 16% change in the life satisfaction by happiness and gratitude, F (2, 297) = 29.19, p< 0.05, R² =.16.

Table 6. Means, Standard deviation, t-test value of Non-working Male and Female for study variable. (N=150)

Variables	Male n=75		Female n=75		t (148)	P	95%CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Life Satisfaction	3.56	1.04	4.56	1.19	5.45	.00	-1.35	-.63	0.89
Life Orientation	2.34	.522	2.68	.611	3.73	.00	.11	.45	0.52
Gratitude	4.51	.79	5.06	.72	4.45	.00	-.79	-.30	0.72
Happiness	3.68	.47	3.83	.54	1.74	.08	-.30	.01	0.28

Note: LL= lower limit, UL= upper limit, CI= confidence interval.

Table 6 shows significant difference between non-working male and female on life-satisfaction, life-orientation, and gratitude. It is evident from the mean column that non-working females experience more life satisfaction (M=4.56, SD=1.19), positive life-orientation (M=2.68, SD=.61) and gratitude (M=5.06, SD=.72) as compared to non-working males who have less life satisfaction (M=3.56, SD=1.04), orientation towards life is passive (M=2.34, SD=.52) and are less grateful (M=4.51, SD=.79).

5. DISCUSSION

In everyone's life many factors affect their emotions such as happiness and satisfaction with their life. Some people, despite being unhappy with their lives, are optimistic; on the other hand, many people have blessings but are unaware of them and somehow feel empty and are ignorant of their good fortune. People who are happy not necessarily opt to pay gratitude and it is not necessary for them to have a positive orientation towards life. But many people are happy and satisfied with life even though their lives are far from perfection. One cannot say that people become happy with wealth, status, age or satisfaction in life. But some factors which could affect their life and overall well-being are socioeconomic status, age, gender, religion, education, to name a few. Some of these factors are investigated through this research such as status (working or non-working). The effects of these demographic variables are seen on some areas of an individual's life such as happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation.

There is a positive correlation between happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation. A Mexican study noticed the influence of gratitude on satisfaction of Mexican adults (Diaz, Meixueiro and Bench, 2016). Another research sprouts that more happiness leads to more satisfaction in life (Martin, Perles and Canto, 2010).

It was suggested that happiness and gratitude influence life satisfaction. Results show the prediction of life satisfaction by happiness and gratitude. Happiness and gratitude significantly predict life satisfaction and correlated positively with life satisfaction, Froh *et al.* (2008) also reported the positive relationship between happiness, gratitude, and life satisfaction.

It was assumed that the working class is happier; exhibit more gratitude, are more satisfied with life and have better orientation towards life than non-working participants. Results revealed significant differences between working and non-working class and showed that working individuals are happier and practice more gratitude than non-working individuals. Happiness and gratitude are inter-dependent and neither can be achieved alone; hence, if people practice more gratitude in their lives, they find more sources to make themselves happy. A study also revealed that the more gratitude showed by people, the more they are satisfied and judge their lives in positive aspects (Wood, *et. al.* 2008). Results also show that working individuals are more satisfied with their lives than non-working individuals. Sahai and Singh (2017) argued that employees working in different institutes of India are more satisfied with their lives than unemployed individuals.

It was also assumed that bankers experience more happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation than teachers. Results indicated that bankers scored higher on happiness than teachers. One of the reasons behind such result might be that working in banks would be less preferable by some parents so they would prefer a safe job in terms of job environment especially for their daughters such as teaching, here we can also assume that bankers have much more autonomy and are most likely to do this job because they are happy to do so rather than being forced or as an option. They have a more sophisticated and soothing environment to work in which affects their mood and level of happiness; on the other hand, most teachers do not enjoy the luxuries such as air conditioners (AC) or heating system in their rooms and offices. Another reason might be the differences in nature of both jobs. Teachers are more realistic and honest and want to portray what is truth to society whereas bankers might have given favourable answers because factors such as social desirability might have played a role in their responses. Another reason might be that bankers are only responsible for a job they are being assigned to, whereas teachers also participate in extracurricular activities with students. There must be some other factors which would have led to such responses from teachers as well as bankers that need to be addressed in the future.

Table 6 revealed notable differences in life satisfaction, gratitude, and life orientation. It was noticed that females although non-working individuals, are more satisfied with their lives, they pay more gratitude and have a positive orientation towards life. In the west, it has been uncovered by Powell and Craig (2015). that non-working females will more likely to suffer than non-working males. Our results show a cross cultural difference here. In Pakistan, females are likely to be dependent on their male family members. Such females know that they will get a share even if they do not work and when they are given facilities, they pay gratitude as their requirements get fulfilled. Religion may also play an important role in affecting the results. In Quran Allah says “Men are caretakers of women, since Allah has made some of them excel the others, and because of the wealth they have spent. So, the righteous women are obedient, (and) guard (the property and honor of their husbands) in (their) absence with the protection given by Allah.” No matter what and they (men) are most likely to be the one working outside. This somehow puts women at ease and makes them feel satisfied. It was reported by the interviewees themselves so, the difference being shown in this section provides other factors that can also affect happiness, gratitude, life satisfaction, and life orientation of non-working males and females in Pakistan.

6. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

- The responses might be biased due to the factor of social desirability and participants might have given those responses that are more acceptable in society while hiding their inner tendencies. Effect of social desirability and biases of responses can be minimized by conducting a qualitative research in which in-depth information can be taken by asking indirect questions.
- Data was collected through convenient sampling technique so it might be possible that each member of population did not get an equal chance to be selected as a part of sample. The data should be collected through random sampling so that each and every member of population can get an equal chance to be selected as a part of sample.

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