HAPPINESS IN RELATION TO OPTIMISM AMONGST CAREER WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to investigate the relationship between optimism and happiness amongst career women. A sample of 100 career women with the age group of 25 to 40 years, working in different CBSE affiliated schools of NCR were administered the The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire [OHQ; Argyle & Hills, (2002) and LEARNED OPTIMISM TEST [LOT; Seligman, (1990)]. The results from the statistical analysis revealed that happiness and optimism. are strongly associated.

Key Words: Happiness, optimism, career women.

Introduction:

Happiness is virtually the universal goal for all beings and therefore everyone desires to attain happiness. Positive psychology researchers have used different theories including the ones that describe happiness as comprising of positive emotions and activities, or the ones that illustrate different types of happiness. Researchers have identified various traits that are associated with happiness such as: relations and social contact, extraversion, marital status, occupation, fitness, democratic freedom, hopefulness, involvement in religious activities, earning

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and closeness to other people who are happy. Though all the life circumstances do not consistently leads to happiness, where some correlate with improved positive emotions like happiness, well-being (like having a good social linkage, being in a healthy relationship/marriage, being into a satisfactory job, and so forth). But for some others, similar life situations may lead to negative emotions. Researchers have found that "happiness tends to depend on people's expectations of life and on how people compare themselves to their peers. Rather than focusing only on negative reactions to unfavorable circumstances, researchers today have begun to study subjective well-being." "Happiness is a multidimensional concept comprising of emotional and cognitive elements" (Hills & Argyle, 2002). Argyle (2001) presented a tripartite conceptualization of happiness consisting the ordinary level of contentment over a specific period of time, relative absence of negative affect and frequency and level of positive affect. Researchers have identified three distinct ways to happiness: positive emotion and pleasure, engagement and meaning (Seligman, 2002). There are various aspects of leading a happy life. It starts with understanding the correct and genuine source of happiness. The skill of happiness is based on these aspects: -

• The ultimate goal of life is to drive happiness.

• Happiness can be judged more by one's mental state rather than outside conditions, situations or events at least once when individual's basic needs for survival are met.

• For achieving happiness we can systematically train our hearts and minds by restructuring our attitudes, perspective and out look towards life.

• Last but not the least, the key to success of achieving happiness in one's life is in our own hands.

"In finding satisfaction and happiness, it is useful to be conscious of those situations which evolution has ensured will bring us deep satisfaction, that is those situations in which we are biologically designed to experience happiness", Lykken & Tellegon (1996). In order to achieve happiness in modern world people need money so that their needs can be fulfilled. To meet family requirements, both husband and wife must earn. Thus, women have been forced to come out and work professionally, not as a pass time but for meeting higher needs. This dual working nature of the lady has made it little tough for the women to manage work and home together. Some women are working with their own willingness where as others are forced to earn money to meet the demands their kids and other family members. Juggling between two platforms i.e. home and work, somewhere their own happiness is at stake. While they perform

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multiple roles, they try striking balance between work and family but eventually end up leaving their happiness behind. Scheier and Carver (1992) studied optimism as a variable or trait of personality. They identified the variable as dispositional optimism, which relates to the universal hope that good events will outnumber the bad ones in the future. Peterson (2000) came up with another outlook: "optimism involves the process of little optimism and big optimism." He referred small and specific expectations from life as 'little' optimism while bigger and broader expectations were called 'big' optimism.

A study made by Dickerhoof & Lyubomirsky (2008) states that having an optimistic disposition seems to buffer relatively less fortunate individuals from their less-than-ideal lives and prevents them from being unhappy. In the similar line of research made by Boyar, Maeetz, Person & Keough, (2003); Bellavia & Frone, (2005) and Brotheridge & Lee, (2005) they supported the idea that "the world of work and home were separate, whereas many empirical studies and several review articles reported that the work- home interface are being influenced by each other even though they are the two separate domains".

Greenhaus et al., (2003) and Kalliath & Brough, (2008) noted that "Employed mothers have a heavy work load in the office, at home and elsewhere in their lives which has been termed as work-life balance and has been defined in multiple ways and the meaning of term remains elusive". In the similar line of research Boyar, Maeetz, Person & Keough, (2003); Bellavia & Frone, (2005) and Brotheridge & Lee, (2005) in their study supported the idea that "the world of work and home were separate, whereas many empirical studies and several review articles reported that the work- home interface are being influenced by each other even though they are the two separate domains".

Greenhaus & Powell, (2006) and Voydanoff, (2004) studied that "linkage is natural, emphasizing and recognizing that combining work and family responsibilities can have both drawbacks and benefits". In the similar line of research, Eby, Casper Lockwood, Bordaeux & Brinly (2005) reported that "what happens at work, both positive and negative, can and often does spill over into the family domain and vice versa". Professional as well as personal fronts are equally significant in both favorable and unfavorable manner (Ford Heinen & Langkamer, 2007; Grandey, Corderis & Crouter, 2005; Voydanoff, 2005). Nair and Malhotra (2006) revealed that, the "potential conflicts and dissatisfaction accruing to the multiple role appeared to be the offset by the satisfaction of a career, social participation and independence." Further, Jang (2009) who found that "there is a positive correlation between work-place flexibility and work-life balance,

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which was related to positive well-being". In their study Panwar & Trama (2011) found that "happiness among working women (particularly school teachers) decreases due to meaninglessness after playing dual roles for longer time. Lack of meaning in life triggers the negative emotional states which further leads to disturbed work-life balance". In other words, attributes associated with the social roles, personality and a profession may significantly affect the temperament at home. Similarly, the facets of family domain can also influence experiences at work.

Objectives:

On the basis of provided conceptual description and literature review regarding optimism and happiness the main objectives of the present study are: -

1. The study the relationship between happiness and optimism amongst career women.

2. To assess the contribution of optimism in predicting the happiness of career women.

Hypotheses:

To meet the objectives of the present study following hypotheses were postulated: -

1. There would be significant correlation between happiness and optimism amongst career women

2. Optimism would be significant predictors of happiness amongst career women.

Design:

Further for testing the hypotheses formulated, the co-relational design was adopted for relating optimism and happiness among career women.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

This study was conducted on 100 women (N=100) within the age group of 25 to 40 years, performing different roles (unmarried career women, married career women without children, married women with children and widow/ separated/ divorcee career women) working as PGT (post graduate teacher) teachers in different CBSE affiliated schools of NCR. This identification was done through random selection method. Telephonically subjects were contacted and their consent was taken after briefing the objectives of the research. They were

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contacted to fix-up the appointment for meeting with the investigator for personally delivering the related questionnaires and tests.

Tools:

1. **THE OXFORD HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRE [OHQ; Argyle & Hills, (2002):** The happiness scale comprises of 29 statements related to personal happiness out of which some statements are expressed positively while others are expressed negatively. The subject was requested to assign a number against each statement indicating subject's level of agreement or disagreement with the statement, in accordance to the given scale: 6=strongly agree, 5=moderately agree, 4=agree, 3=slightly disagree, 2=disagree and 1=strongly disagree.

2. **LEARNED OPTIMISM TEST [LOT; Seligman, (1990)]:** There are forty-eight (48) questions in this test that are used to determine an individual's base level of optimism. Higher score on pessimistic categories means that by learning optimism one can prevent depression, which further leads to achieve more and improve physical health.

Procedure:

Initially the career preference survey was done on females working in different areas. The sample for career preference survey was selected randomly to find out the most preferred job/working domain. Thereafter, list of female PGT teachers working in different CBSE affiliated schools of NCR was prepared and this identification was done randomly keeping the inclusion and exclusion criterion. Every effort was made by identifying more subjects than required to tackle the dropout situation as a feature (limitation) of survey research. The standard psychological tests listed above were administered to the selected sample of career women with multiple roles. The administration was done in one sitting after ensuring that the respondents have filled in all the questionnaires completely.

Statistical analysis:

Further scores were obtained on each scale and were subjected to statistical analysis technique including descriptive statistics, Pearson's coefficient of correlation, one-way ANOVA. Additionally stepwise multiple regression was also applied. The data was analyzed with the help

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of SPSS-21 and the results were interpreted and discussed thoroughly in the light of socio-cultural context of Indian working women. The major findings of the study are as follows:

Result and discussion:

Table 1 shows groups of working women with multiple roles.

The sample (N=100) was divided into four groups according to the number of social roles of an individual in the family as shown in Table 1. Each group was equal in size, having the same numbers of the participants (n=25).

TABLE 1: GROUPS OF WORKING WOMEN WITH MULTIPLE ROLES		
Groups	**MULTIPLE ROLES**	**n**
1	Unmarried career women	25
2	Married career women	25
3	Married career women with child	25
4	Divorcee/ Widow/ Separate career women	25

The results of the statistical analysis for the investigation has been presented with the help of tabulation which shows the descriptive statistical values with the help of Tables 2. Table3 shows the product moment correlation coefficient results and results of mean comparison are represented with the help of Table 4 for the said variables.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY TABLE FOR DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR TOTAL SAMPLE (N=100)		
VARIABLES	**MEAN**	**S.D.**
Happiness	2.79	1.13
Learned Optimism	5.35	2.86

Table 2 represents the descriptive statistics for the total sample where for the happiness mean obtained was 2.79 (SD=1.13) and for learned optimism it was 5.35 (SD=2.86).

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TABLE 2.1 Descriptive statistics for Happiness (n=25, N=100)			
Variable & Groups		**Mean**	**S.D.**
Happiness	Group 1	4.07	0.81
	Group 2	2.79	0.78
	Group 3	2.53	0.78
	Group 4	1.80	0.77
	Total	2.80	1.13

TABLE 2.2: descriptive statistics for Learned Optimism (n=75; N=100)			
Variable & Groups		**Mean**	**S.D.**
Learned optimism	Group 1	5.44	3.26
	Group 2	5.08	2.90
	Group 3	5.35	2.68
	Group 4	5.53	2.63
	Total	5.35	2.87

Table 2.2 revealed that mean scores obtained for the happiness of Group 1 (unmarried career women) was 4.07 (SD=0.81); for Group 2 (married career women with no child) it was 2.79 (SD=0.78). Group 3 (married career women with child) had the mean score 2.53 (SD=0.78) and for Group 4 (divorcee/ widow/ separate career women) mean was 1.80 (SD=0.77) whereas, for the total sample mean score for happiness was 2.80 (SD=1.13). The four Groups of working women based on different roles can be ranked from highest to lowest on the basis of mean scores of happiness as Group 1, Group 2, Group 3 and Group 4.

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TABLE 3: PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION OF COEFFICIENT FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE (N=100)		
Variables		
Happiness	1	**.140***
Optimism		1

Obtained inter-correlation values reveals that happiness is a positive significant correlate of learned optimism (r = 0.14; p < .05). Which means that working women irrespective of their roles, if holds optimistic view towards life would be able to maintain work-like balance in a better way as a consequence of which they experience higher level of happiness in their lives.

TABLE 4: ONE WAY ANOVA FOR HAPPINESS AND LEARNED OPTIMISM AMONG CAREER WOMEN WITH MULTIPLE ROLES (N=100)

VARIABLES		SS	df	Mean^2	F	Sig.
Happiness	Between Groups	200.677	3	66.892	**108.840**	.000
	Within Groups	181.920	296	.615		
	Total	382.597	299			
Learned optimism	Between Groups	8.597	3	2.866	.346	.792
	Within Groups	2449.653	296	8.276		
	Total	2458.250	299			

From Table 4, it is evident that three groups of working women based on their roles significantly differ on happiness (F = 108.84; p ≤ .0001). But no significant differences was obtained on learned optimism.

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Conclusion:

To sum up, it can be concluded that the findings are highlighting the significance of happiness in relation to optimism among working women, specifically of the school teachers. Age range between 25 to 40 years is particularly the most challenging phase in one's life span. This is the phase of high ambition, dedication, enthusiasm where a person is full of energy and self-belief that she/he can achieve the desired goals of life. This phase is generally more challenging for women as compared to men because this is a transition phase in her life - as her marital status changes, she leaves her paternal house to join her husband family. She has to adjust with new people (her spouse, in-laws, relatives) and their nature of demands, often takes up additional responsibilities and tries to live up to their expectations.

Thus, the obtained results serves the objectives of the present study specified earlier. To explain the results, in contrary to the expectations, the unmarried working women are in a better position to experience positive work-life linkage and optimism towards life which reflects in the form of higher level of happiness. Opposite to unmarried working women, divorcee/ widow/ separate career women are looked differently in the Indian socio-cultural context and carrying the unreported responsibilities, conflicts with regard to inter and intrapersonal relationships which may be a significant determinant of happiness, as observed from the obtained results of the present findings.

The result of this study have important implications for career women, as women are bombarded with challenges, both in career and in personal life, the issue of having optimistic outlook becomes important as it has significance at personal as well as professional front.

Overall, it could be concluded that present findings are in the line with most of the previous researches and reveals that as a working women enters to a new phase of life after marriage she experiences unexpected life hassles as now she has to meet demands of in-laws as well as work effectively on professional front. Further, as the life progresses their roles keep on multiple soon they become mother and expectations from them also increases. But if understanding develops with social groups (parent-in laws, spouse, colleagues etc.), they starts getting social support and utilizes it to make work-life linkage in a better way which may develop the feeling of hope and optimism and may leads to happiness.

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