

Reviewing the Relationship between Optimism and Happiness with General Health among Staff at the University of Medical Sciences in North Khorasan

Khadije Merati, Mahboubeh Soleimanpouromran

Department of Educational Sciences, Bojnourd Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bojnourd, Iran

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***Corresponding author:**

Mahboubeh Soleimanpouromran.
Department of Educational
Sciences, Bojnourd Branch, Islamic
Azad University, Bojnourd, Iran

Phone: +989118555561

Fax: +985832296977

Email:

soleymanpour@bojnourdiau.ac.ir

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Abstract

Introduction: Happiness and feeling of happiness in true sense are the human's innate needs. The purpose of this research is to study the relationship between optimism and happiness with general health among staff of the University of Medical Sciences in North Khorasan in 2015.

Methods: This is an applied research since it explores the relationships between the variables in the status quo explicitly, as well as a descriptive and one-sectional correlational study. The statistical population of this research consisted of all staff members of the North Khorasan University of Medical Sciences, based on the Morgan table from 350 university staff members, 180 people were selected as the statistical sample. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, Moghimi Optimism Questionnaire, and Goldberg and Hiller's General Health Questionnaire were used to measure the variables of optimism, happiness and general health. The validity of the tools was a kind of content that had already been confirmed by the professors and experts, and its reliability was calculated 91%, 85% and 93% respectively using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics of variance analysis, multiple regression test and Pearson correlation coefficient using SPSS 20 software ($p \leq 0.05$).

Results: There is a negative relationship between general health with happiness ($p=0.001$), satisfaction with life ($p=0.003$), enjoyment of life ($p=0.001$), satisfaction ($p=0.001$), control and self-efficacy ($p=0.001$), optimism ($p=0.001$), optimism of employees ($p=0.001$), optimism culture ($p=0.003$), optimism in purposefulness ($p=0.001$) and optimism in individual performance ($p=0.001$).

Conclusion: It can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between optimism and happiness with general health in North Khorasan University of Medical Sciences.

Keywords: Optimism, Happiness, General Health

Introduction

Happiness and feeling of happiness in true sense are the human's innate needs. Contrary to previous psychology, which focused on the psychological disorders and sickly dimensions of the human psyche, nowadays it focuses on positive aspects of human thoughts, beliefs, feelings and behaviors in positive psychology. Optimism rooted in how people think and explain about the causes of events (1). Today, healthy organizations are organizations that pay attention to the mental and physical well-being of employees, just as they are concerned

with work and productivity. Happiness increases the positive emotions of the personnel on the one hand and reduces their negative emotions on the other hand, as a result it increases productivity. Researchers now have clear indications of depression, negative emotions and neuroticism in some organizations that include consequences such as suicide in young people, increasing divorce and delinquency, leaving work and many psychosocial problems (2). Non-happy people do not make constructive work for change and avoid working to solve problems (3). A

positive person considers the most effective step in securing his / her mental health and general wellbeing of others (4). Optimism and positivism have an important role in coping with the pressures of life and overcoming psychosocial-social disadvantages in addressing behaviors related to health, lifestyle modification and, finally, the reduction of the incidence of physical and psychological disorders (5). This could lead to public health. General health is also referred to as mental health and psychosocial well-being and having a positive psychological attribute (3). Optimism is an attitude toward the philosophy of life in which people expect the best in all affairs and are confident that they will succeed in their work (6). Creating a loving atmosphere, relationships with friends, successful experiences and the right physical and work environment can be important in the development of emotions and especially happiness. Historically, excitement and work have long been a side-by-side. Today, given that people spend most of their time in organizations; if they have a happy working environment they can benefit from it (7). Fardinejad and Ahadi (2013) achieved a significant relationship between general health and satisfaction and enjoyment of life (8). Issa Zadegan *et al.* (2014) showed that meaning of education, hope, optimism has a positive correlation with academic performance (9). Also, Aghaee *et al.* (2007) showed that there is a significant relationship between optimism with mental health and its dimensions. Also, there is a significant relationship between pessimism with mental health and its dimensions (physical symptoms, anxiety, Social dysfunction and pessimism with depression (10). Bani Hashemian *et al.* (2009) showed that medical students had lower general health and more pessimism. Also, the results of this study showed that there is a significant difference between the mean of general health score and optimism among different university students (11). Kronstrom *et al.* (2011) demonstrated that a level of

pessimism is a stronger predictor of disability the diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive disorder from the level of optimism (12). Brissette *et al.* (2010) showed that optimistic individuals are confident in reaching the goal, and pessimists do not meet the same goal and the same conditions, and students with high optimism, anticipate less disturbance and anxiety at the end of the semester (13). In a study by Pernegar (2004), it has been suggested that there is a strong link between happiness and general health (14). Veenhove 1994; Okun 1984 showed that the relationship between health and happiness is bilateral and if health adds to happiness, the provided happiness also activates the immune system and influenced by cognitive processes adds to health dimensions. (15, 16). The results of the study by Kareshki (2011) suggest that medical students have lower general health than non-medical students which is consistent with the outcomes of this study (17). Many psychological researches show that optimism has positive and significant relationship with many variables such as physical health, mental health, life satisfaction, motivation for progress, life expectancy, adaptability with chronic physical illnesses, coping strategies and so on. Therefore, the staff of the medical sciences universities have a great influence on creating the appropriate psychological and social atmosphere and establishing favorable human relations with employees, patients and clients, and ultimately achieving organizational goals. Despite the scientific and ethical importance of this issue, the mental health of employees in the workplace is less focused and organizational policies rarely focused on how to improve the mental health of employees. The main treasure of each organization, especially service organizations are its employees. Due to the sensitivity of the educational environment of medical science faculties due to its close relationship with the health and community health (7) this organization in order to create dynamic and vivacious organizations and increase positive

emotions needs solutions that can increase employee's happiness and nicer productivity, increase work safety, job and family satisfaction, as well as their overall health. This requires recognizing the level of optimism and happiness of the staff and the factors associated with them. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between optimism and happiness with general health of North Khorasan University of Medical Sciences.

Methods

This research is descriptive and because it examines the relationship between variables is correlational and from data collection point of view is a one-dimensional research. The statistical population of this study was 375 employees of North Khorasan University of Medical Sciences which according to Morgan's table (1978) form 350 subjects of sample population (N), 180 subjects were selected as sample size by simple random sampling method and the questionnaires were distributed among 180 people. The instruments used were to review the documents by library studies and three questionnaires: a) Moghimi optimism questionnaire (2011), to examine the dimensions of optimism; a 29-item questionnaire was used in four dimensions of the staff (6 questions); and optimistic culture (7 questions) and optimism in targeting (7) and optimism in individual performance (9) in the 5-degree Likert spectrum. B) The Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI) (1989) has 29 items in the 5-point Likert scale, thus the highest score that the subject can score on this scale is 87, which represents the highest level of happiness and the lowest score in the scale is zero, which indicates that the subject is dissatisfied with the with the person's life and his/her depression. The standard score of this test is between 40 and 42. The General Health Questionnaire (G.H.Q) was developed by Goldberg's general health theory (1972) and its 28 questions form was formulated by

Goldberg and Hiller in 1979 which has 28 points in the 5-degree Likert Spectrum. It has 4 sub-scales and each scale has 7 questions. The scales are as follows: 1-Physical Symptom Scale 2-Anxiety and Sleep Disorder Symptom Scale 3-Social Functional Scale 4. Scale of Depression Symptom. The face and content validity of the instrument confirmed by the professors and the experts. Cronbach's alpha for the optimism questionnaire was 0.851, for the happiness questionnaire 0.914 and for the general health questionnaire 0.934. Data were analyzed by SPSS software version 20 in descriptive and inferential statistics. In the inferential statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normal distribution of data, as well as Pearson correlation coefficient and regression to confirm or reject hypotheses at 95% confidence level.

Results

Table 1 presents mean and standard deviation of general health, optimism and happiness. On the other hand, the Table 2 indicates the distribution of the research variables (general health, happiness, and optimism) is normal. The results of Pearson correlation coefficient test in Table 3 shows that there is a negative relationship between general health and happiness ($p=0.001$), satisfaction and life ($p=0.003$), enjoyment of life ($p=0.001$), satisfaction ($p=0.001$), control and self-efficacy ($p=0.001$), optimism ($p=0.001$), optimism of employees ($p=0.001$), optimism culture ($p=0.003$), optimism in purposefulness ($p=0.001$) and optimism in individual performance ($p=0.001$) also there is not a significant relationship between self-esteem and general health ($p=0.67$). According to Table 4, the coefficient of determination is 0.43; it means that 43% of the changes of criterion variables (general health) are explained by predictive variables (optimism and happiness) and also the values of regression coefficients and meaningful tests for components of variables of optimism and

happiness are shown this table. The significance levels of F in the regression equation show that the coefficient of explanation (R²) is significant. Therefore, the consideration of standard regression coefficients (β) and the significance test of regression slope (t) show that the components

of the optimism of employees, optimism culture, optimism in targeting, optimism in individual performance, satisfaction of life, enjoyment of life, Relaxation (satisfaction) with negative beta coefficients can predict the general health component significantly.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of general health, optimism and happiness

Variable	Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	min	Max
	general health	58.03	11.492	33	93
Optimism	Employee's optimism	15.82	3.942	6	30
	Optimism culture	18.07	4/607	7	35
	Optimism in targeting	19.57	5.757	7	35
	Optimism in targeting	22.47	6.008	9	43
	Optimism in individual performance	16.56	4.098	6	30
Happiness	The pleasure of life	15.61	4.086	6	30
	Self-esteem	16.17	4.565	6	34
	peace of mind Control and self-efficacy				

Table 2. The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to verify the assumption of the normal distribution of variables

Variables	Z	p
General Health	0.776	0.583
Optimism	1.015	0.255
Happiness	0.826	0.502

Table 3. Relationship between research variables and general health

Components	correlation coefficient	P
Happiness with General Health	0.49-	0.001
Satisfaction with life and general health	0.29-	0.003
The enjoyment of life with general health	0.37-	0.001
Self-esteem and general health	0.09	0.067
Relaxation (satisfaction) and general health	0.48-	0.001
Control and self-efficacy and general health	0.14-	0.001
Optimism and general health	0.41-	0.001
Staff optimism and public health	0.37-	0.001
The culture of optimism and public health	0.21-	0.003
optimism in Purposefulness and general health	0.34-	0.001
Optimism in individual performance and general health	0.15-	0.001

Table 4. The summary of the simultaneous regression between dimensions of optimism and happiness dimensions with general health

Criteria variable	Predictive variables	R	R2	F	p	β	t	p
General Health	Employee's optimism					0.219-	6.14-	0.000
	Optimism culture					0.421-	1.31-	0.001
	Optimism in targeting					0.124-	1.28-	0.01
	Optimism in individual performance					0.342-	4.85-	0.003
	Life satisfaction	0.43	0.18	5.07	0.001	0.071	1.24-	0.02
	The pleasure of life					0.105-	1.89-	0.016
	Self-esteem					0.071	89.0	0.127
	peace of mind					0.241-	2.72-	0.001
	Control and self-efficacy					0.002	0.91	0.059

Discussion

In the present study the results show that there is a multiple relationship between optimism and happiness with general health. There is a significant and negative correlation between the components of employee optimism, optimism culture, optimism in targeting, optimism in individual performance, satisfaction with life, enjoyment of life, relaxation (satisfaction). This finding is consistent with the findings of Fardinejad and Ahadi (2013) (8), Isa Zadegan *et al.* (2014) (9), Kronstrom *et al.* (2011) (12), Pernegar (2004) (14), Veenhoven (15), Okun, (16), Aghaee *et al.* (2007) (10). In explaining these findings, it is observed that stress experience significantly reduces the sense of happiness, and general health is threatened, and with increasing general health, the level of happiness increases (18). In research by Pernegar (2004) (14), it has been argued that there is a strong link between happiness and general well-being. He believes that happiness will increase general health. Veenhoven (1994) and Okun (1984) showed that the relationship between health and happiness is twofold, and if health adds to happiness, the provided happiness also activates the immune system and influenced by cognitive processes adds to health dimensions (15, 16). If we add

to the findings of the role of self-esteem, the optimism and the purpose of life (Hills and Argyll, 2001) (19), and the relationship between this component and the internal and external control (Ryff, 1989) (20) therefore, it seems that upgrading each of the variables studied will help promote another variable. If the dimension of happiness brings public health (21), health also brings happiness to life. Therefore, it seems that upgrading each of the variables will help to promote another variable. Hence, planning will change the existing level, in order to increase happiness and, as a result, general health. The findings indicated a significant relationship between life satisfaction with general health. Fardinejad and Ahadi (2013) achieved a significant relationship between general health and satisfaction and enjoyment of life (8). In explaining this finding, it can be said that by increasing the more favorable context for the growth and prosperity of individuals in various fields, it will promote effective and efficient interpersonal relations, life satisfaction and job satisfaction. Enjoy their lives are those who have a bias in the processing of information, that is, they process and interpret information in such a way that it delivers them pleasure (22). The results of this study confirmed the research hypothesis that there is a significant

relationship between life satisfaction and mental health. Generally, life satisfaction creates a safe environment that has an effective and worthwhile effect on the mental and physical health of individuals. So it can raise public health. Findings showed that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and general health. Self-esteem is an important factor affecting the health and quality of life. With increasing self-esteem, the feeling of ability and the desire to have a better health in the person emerges. In this regard, no research is consistent with the result of this research hypothesis. The results of the research indicate that there is a relationship between low self-esteem and psychological problems such as anxiety and depression as a result of general health (23), which the findings of this study do not support these results. The loss of self-esteem can have adverse consequences for people's general health, which is inconsistent with the results of this research. One of the reasons for the inconsistency of the result of the above hypothesis in the present research with previous studies may be the lack of actual response of respondents. However, it should be noted that various factors are involved in self-esteem. The findings showed that there is a significant relationship between the relaxation (satisfaction) and general health. With increasing relaxation, the health of the individual increases and a more favorable platform is created for growth and prosperity and ability in various fields including effective interpersonal relationships and life satisfaction. These findings provide clear data for the relationship between general health and comfort of imagination. Okun *et al.* (1984), in a meta-analysis study, correlation between comfort and tranquility with health is more than 0.3. (16) Also, in a Pernegar 's research (2004), it has been stated that there is a strong connection between happiness, tranquility and general health (14). He believes that the person's peace of mind and tranquility increases his health, which is consistent with

the result of this study. The results of this study are consistent with the study of Seligman (2000), who believes that happiness plays an important role in adapting to life-threatening events (24), which reduces stress and cope with stressful factors. Following that, the health of the person is brought. Optimism has a significant relationship with general health, which indicates a significant and negative relationship between optimism and general health. In justifying the effect of optimism on mental health, Seligman believes that optimistic people are better off coping with more effective coping strategies, such as reevaluating and solving psychological stress (25). there is a significant relationship between employee optimism and general health. The results of Karsheky (2011) studies indicate that medical students have lower general health than non-medical students (17) which is consistent with the result of this study. The study of Bani Hashemian and his colleagues (2009) showed that medical students had lower general health and more pessimism. Also, the results of this study showed that there is a significant difference between the mean of general health score and optimism among different university students (11). In the study of Aghaee (2007), the relationship between optimism and its subscales with general health was confirmed (10), which is consistent with the present study. There is a significant relationship between optimism in targeting and general health. In justifying the effect of optimistic targeting on general health, Seligman (2012) believes that individuals have positive thoughts in targeting using effective coping strategies in targeting such as reassessment and problem-solving with fewer pressures and will reach to higher health outcome. By changing the way of looking, controlling the mind and drawing it toward optimism, finding ways to counteract negative thoughts, then accepting more real and positive thoughts can be achieved instead. Pascal *et al.* (2011) in a study entitled optimism and its relationship to depression

coping and anger found that optimism had a meaningful relationship with depression it means that as optimism increases in people, depression diminishes and vice versa (12). This finding is consistent with those of Kronstrom *et al.* (2011) (13). There is a relationship between optimism in individual performance and general health. Optimism and belief in their abilities have a significant relationship with general and mental health. Therefore, it can be concluded that with increasing sense of ability and optimism in oneself, psychological problems decrease and general and mental health of individuals rises. Isa Zadegan *et al.* (2014) argued that there is a positive relationship between the meaning of education, hope, optimism and academic performance (9). Optimism increases the level of mental health which results in satisfaction with life, and optimism has a direct effect on life satisfaction, in other words, optimism with the effect of individual feelings and excitement, will lead to positive attitude and satisfaction (27). There is a significant relationship between optimism with mental health and between mental health and happiness, and the more a person is in a healthy state, the more happiness and pleasure of his life increases. Therefore, increasing awareness about optimism through counseling centers is suggested. To educate the optimism skills among employees, it is imperative that the practitioners pay attention to the fact that they are better provided by the mass media with a combination of these skills and with sufficient information and insights for the promotion of public health (28- 30). Because enjoyment of life is very much influenced by the environment of the primary life. Officials and practitioners with more knowledge of staff and those with weak self- efficacy, by shifting forces based on the expertise and interest of employees and the proper productivity of their ability, will increase their beliefs and self-efficacy. Data collection by questionnaire and non-performing of the interview are the limitations of this research. It is recommended

that the research be done with a qualitative method.

Conclusion

There is a significant relationship between optimism and happiness with general health in North Khorasan University of Medical Sciences. Also the results show that there is a significant relationship between happiness and general health which indicates a significant and negative relationship between happiness and general health. Therefore, a happy person will have a higher level of general health and, as healthier as it grows up, the person will have a happier life.

Ethical issues

Not applicable.

Authors' contributions

All authors equally contributed.

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