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# Survey of happiness in students of Iran University of Medical Sciences and its relationship with students' attitudes toward the field of education and the future of career

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## Abstract:

**BACKGROUND:** Happiness is one of the main components of mental health that plays an important role in promoting people's health. This study aimed to investigate the status of happiness in students of Iran University of Medical Sciences and its relationship with students' attitudes toward the field of education and the future of career in 2017.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:** This cross-sectional study was performed on 500 students of Iran University of Medical Sciences. The data collection tool was a questionnaire consisting of three parts: demographic information, Oxford Happiness Inventory; A questionnaire was used to measure students' attitudes about their career future, which was completed by students of Iran University of Medical Sciences. In order to analyze the data, SPSS software version 24 and descriptive and analytical statistics were used.

**RESULTS:** Findings showed that 72% of students had a good level of happiness. There is also a significant relationship between happiness and attitude toward the field of study. According to the results, there is a significant relationship between the career future and the amount of happiness. There was a significant relationship between gender and happiness.

**CONCLUSION:** The study findings show that, by planning correctly in determining the fields of education and ensuring the future of the job, happiness can be improved among students. Therefore, it is recommended that the authorities take the students with the correct needs assessment in the field of business education in the field of study.

## Keywords:

Career, happiness, students

## Introduction

Happiness is one of the essential concepts in the field of mental health and life values, which is associated with healthy behaviors in life.<sup>[1]</sup>

Happiness is a complex concept that can be defined in several ways. In general, happiness has been described as the

satisfaction and positive effect on life and a relative absence of negative affect.<sup>[2]</sup> Happy people have four constant characteristics: self-esteem, optimism, self-control, and extraversion<sup>[3-5]</sup>

According to an international study, Iran's happiness score was 5.29, which is very low compared to Denmark, with the highest

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score (8.2).<sup>[6]</sup> The presence of happiness in life plays an essential role in choosing the lifestyle including diet, physical activity, and weight control, all of which affect our mental and physical health.

In today's world, happiness is a factor in preventing diseases.<sup>[7]</sup> Happiness improves the functioning of the immune system and increases life expectancy among healthy people. Thus, increasing happiness can be implemented as a health promotion strategy in different societies.<sup>[8,9]</sup>

Studies have shown that happiness is affected by many factors such as family and social relationships, sports activities, recreational activities, religion<sup>[10]</sup> age, social conditions,<sup>[11,12]</sup> body mass index, marital status, career, level of education,<sup>[13]</sup> and smoking.<sup>[14]</sup> Identifying all of these factors helps governments make the necessary reforms to promote happiness in their communities.

One of the essential factors that affect people's happiness is the attitudes toward future careers and fields of study. A person's positive attitude toward his/her field of study is considered necessary and essential for useful and efficient employment.<sup>[15]</sup> If one is not interested in his field of study, it will be boring and even impossible to continue education and jobs. A positive attitude toward the future of the career will result in job motivation, which will also lead to job success.<sup>[16]</sup> However, worrying about the future of the career is not a matter for our country. There is concern about the future of a career in students of different fields,<sup>[17-20]</sup>

It is evident that conducting national and regional studies to be aware of students' attitudes toward their career prospects and fields of research can be useful.<sup>[21]</sup> Considering that one of the educational systems' goals is to provide the necessary conditions for maintaining and promoting mental health, happiness has a special place in this regard. This study aimed to investigate the happiness of students of Iran University of Medical Sciences and its relationship with students' attitudes toward fields of the study and career prospects to provide solutions to help officials create a vibrant educational environment. The results of this study are expected to develop a platform for designing programs to increase happiness, thereby improving young people's mental health.

## Materials and Methods

The present study is a descriptive study by examining correlation relationships. It was conducted to investigate the relationship between happiness and students' attitudes toward the field of research and career prospect on students of Iran University of Medical Sciences in the 2017–2018 academic year. The sample size was 484 with

alpha 0.05, accuracy (d) as 0.4, and standard deviation as 6, and it was determined as 500 considering the probability of sample drop.

Sampling was performed as a stratified classification method. Based on the number of students in each faculty, the sample size was considered, and the samples were selected using a simple random method. Inclusion criteria for the study included studying at least one semester at Iran University of Medical Sciences and be interested in participating in the study.

To the samples select, the necessary number of students of each faculty was provided to the researcher by making the required arrangements with the Deputy for Research and Education. By referring to the various faculties of Iran University of Medical Sciences, the researcher first explained the purpose of the study, and the way of completion of the questionnaire to the participants. He then assured them that the information received would be kept confidential, and the results will only be used for research purposes, and the results will be published in general. Written consent was obtained from the participants in the study.

The process of questionnaire completion was carefully monitored. The researcher then collected the completed questionnaires.

## Data collection tools

The tools used in this study include demographic specifications, the Oxford Happiness Inventory, Questionnaire of Attitude toward career Prospect, and field of study.

- a. Demographic questionnaire including age, gender, marital status, and grade
- b. Oxford happiness inventory

The questionnaire was developed in 1989 by Argyle, Martin, and Crossland. The questionnaire comprises 29 items, each involving the selection of one of four options, and each option is scored from 0 to 3. The sum of the scores of the 29 items makes up the total score of the scale. The total score of the subjects varies from 0 to 87. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been investigated in several studies. Since happiness is considered to have three parts: positive affect, satisfaction, and absence of negative affect, the correlation between Oxford Inventory and Bradburn's positive affect scale was 0.32, with the Argyle's Life Satisfaction Index, was 0.57, and with the Beck's Depression Inventory was 0.52.<sup>[22]</sup> In Iran, the questionnaire's reliability and validity were examined on 101 students (62 women and 39 men). While confirming the validity, the questionnaire items' internal consistency showed that all 29 items were correlated with the total score. Cronbach's alpha was 0.93.<sup>[23]</sup>

c. Questionnaire of attitude toward career prospect and field of study.

The data collection tool was a questionnaire used by the University of Minnesota, USA, used in Samadi's study, and its validity and reliability were confirmed.<sup>[19]</sup> This questionnaire included nine items about the field of research and five items about students' future careers from the students' point of view. The scale for measuring each item was a 5-point Likert scale ranging from completely agree (five), agree (four), had no idea (three), disagree (two), and completely disagree (one). The score five was considered to show the highest tendency to the field of study and the career prospect, and the scores of each person were obtained in the attitude to the field of study at nine-45 range and in the attitude to the career prospect at Five-25 range. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire in this study was 0.84. To determine the validity of the questionnaires in this study, the content validity and the face validity were quantified. To validate the questionnaires, it was provided to ten professors of health psychology (seven people) and health education specialists (three people). All questionnaire items were approved. Cronbach's alpha method was used to investigate the reliability of the questionnaires using the internal consistency method. Its score was 0.92 for happiness, 0.74 for attitude toward career prospects, and 0.85 for attitude toward the field of study.

After the data collection, the information was entered into SPSS 24 software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) on a Microsoft Windows-based computer. Initially, the normality of the data was tested using Kolmogorov-Smirnov, and it was found that the data had a normal distribution. Descriptive and analytical statistics including tables of distribution of frequency, mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation coefficient, independent t, ANOVA, and multiple linear regression model were used to analyze the data. The confidence interval was 0.95%.

### Results

The results of this study showed that the average age of the participants was 23.29, with a minimum age of 17, and the maximum age of participants was 45. The study included 332 female participants and 168 male participants. Other demographic specifications are reported in Table 1.

Findings from determining the relationship between demographic variables and happiness showed that there is no significant relationship between gender, marital status, and academic level with happiness ( $P < 0.05$ ) [Table 1].

In the present study, the average score of happiness is  $69.46 \pm 14.15$ , the average score of attitude to the field of study is  $22.69 \pm 5.62$ , and the average score of attitude to career prospect is  $14.25 \pm 3.87$ .

According to Table 2, the correlation matrix of happiness and attitude toward the field of study and attitude toward the career prospects, using Pearson correlation coefficient, shows that happiness has a significant positive correlation with the attitude toward the field of research and attitude toward the career prospects ( $P < 0.001$ ), while no significant relationship between age and happiness was observed [Table 2].

According to the results of regression analysis, the variable of attitude towards the field of study predicts happiness [Table 3]. It is found that attitude toward

**Table 1: Investigating the relationship between demographic variables and happiness**

Variable	n	Happiness, mean±SD	Statistics	P
Gender				
Male	168	70.98±14.53	T=1.498	0.135
Female	332	68.89±14.10		
Marital status				
Single	420	69.26±14.13	T=-0.728	0.467
Married	80	70.60±14.41		
Education level				
BA	121	70.76±13.17	F=0.536	0.709
MA	182	68.92±16.6		
General medicine doctorate	133	69.06±12.82		
Doctor of medicine	43	71.14±13.60		

SD=Standard deviation

**Table 2: Correlation between age, attitudes toward career prospects, attitudes toward the field of study**

Variable	Happiness	Attitudes towards career prospect	Attitude towards the field of study	Age
Happiness	1			
Attitudes towards career prospect	R=0.277 P<0.001	1		
Attitude towards the field of study	R=0.447 P<0.001	R=0.504 P<0.001	1	
Age	R=-0.013 P=0.789	R=-0.016 P=0.722	R=-0.019 P=0.689	1

**Table 3: The regression equation coefficients based on the attitude towards career prospects and the attitude towards the field of study in predicting happiness**

Variable	B	SD	β	t	P
Constant	96.454	2.645	-	36.467	-
Attitudes towards career prospect	0.220	0.173	-0.060	1.273	0.204
Attitude towards the field of study	1.047	0.119	-0.416	8.802	<0.001

SD=Standard deviation

career prospects has a significant relationship with happiness ( $P < 0.05$ ), and regression coefficients of attitude toward career prospects show that they can significantly describe the variance of happiness variable ( $P < 0.05$ ).

To determine the predictors of happiness, the multiple regression model was fitted, the results of which are shown in Table 3. Attitudes toward career prospects have a significant effect on happiness.

## Discussion

The current study was conducted to investigate the relationship between happiness and attitude toward the field of education and career prospects among the students of Iran University of Medical Sciences.

The present study's findings show that the level of happiness in students is  $96.64 \pm 14.15$ . In the conclusions of Mehrdadi *et al.*, the happiness rate of students was obtained as 39.35, which is lower than the happiness rate of the present study. This difference may be due to the difference in statistical population because, in Mehrdadi's research, young people and the present study, students include the statistical community, so the difference in participants' level of education can be considered as an influential factor in the difference in happiness.<sup>[24]</sup> Recent studies in Turkey with similar tools to the present study show that students are more desirable than the present study,<sup>[25]</sup> which shows the effect of cultural differences including lifestyle and economic and social conditions on students' happiness.

Findings of the present study showed that factors such as gender, age, marriage, and education did not have a significant relationship with happiness. The results of this study are consistent with Mehrdadi *et al.*'s research. The results showed that there is no significant relationship between gender, marital status, level of education, and happiness.<sup>[24]</sup>

Furthermore, in a study by Jongbloed *et al.*, they examined the effect of higher education on health and operationalized happiness by comparing one-dimensional and multi-dimensional models. They concluded that happiness rates did not differ significantly between men and women in higher education,<sup>[26]</sup> consistent with the results of the present study.

Contrary to the results of this study, a study entitled "Gender Differences in Happiness and Life Satisfaction among Adolescents in Hong Kong found that gender was significantly associated with happiness. The rate of happiness was higher in educated men than in educated women.<sup>[27]</sup> The resulting discrepancy can be attributed

to the difference in the ratio of men and women in the study. Because in this study, men make up about a third of the statistical population.

In the study of Morgan *et al.*, a significant relationship between age and happiness has been reported,<sup>[28]</sup> while in the present study, age has no significant relationship with happiness. Being in the age group does not make a person have characteristics that affect happiness. As mentioned earlier, improving the level of education does not improve the state of happiness, which can be confirmed by the lack of relationship between age and happiness.

The research findings also show that happiness is positively and significantly associated with attitudes toward career prospects and attitudes toward the field of the study. In Paige Williams' research, the findings suggest that changing attitudes toward jobs can increase happiness.<sup>[29]</sup> The results are consistent with the results of the present study.

The study by Karavdic *et al.* showed that job attitudes and socioeconomic status influence happiness, and there is a positive and significant relationship.<sup>[30]</sup> Students interested in their field of the study and have a positive attitude toward their future careers will experience a greater degree of happiness. Of course, we have to admit that happiness and attitude toward the field of study have a mutual effect. That is, as we expect that the field of study's attitude causes the student happiness and satisfaction, it should also be considered that a student with an acceptable level of happiness has a better attitude toward issues related to the field of study and future job. A similar study showed that a bright career future and confidence in it increase students' levels of happiness.<sup>[31]</sup>

The results of this study, in a predictive model, show the attitude toward the field of education as a predictor for students' happiness. In other words, people's judgment about the field of education created a positive attitude and, as a result, happiness. In the study of McIlveen *et al.*, which developed the relationships between variables in a structural model, this correlation was observed. It was found that increasing the positive attitude toward the career prospect increases the level of happiness in students.<sup>[32]</sup> Another study shows that happiness has a positive and significant relationship with job adjustment.<sup>[33]</sup> An effective and desirable mindset workplace leads to an adjustment of individuals with careers conditions and mental health. Therefore, the relationship between happiness and attitude toward the career prospect is not far from expectation and is in line with the present study.

Therefore, the field of study should be carefully selected. One's interests should be prioritized because a proper



assessment or estimate of one's field of study can lead to a positive attitude toward one's future job.

One of the main limitations of this study, its cross-sectional nature, which does not allow the study of causal relationships and interpretation of results should be done considering the cross-sectional research. Besides, the only data collection tool in this study was a questionnaire that has a self-reporting aspect. Behavioral observations and other clinical indicators have not been used to confirm self-reporting scales that can be considered for future research purposes.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of the present study, there is a significant correlation between attitude toward the field of study and attitude toward the career prospect with happiness. Given the impact of happiness on quality of life and human health, this study's results can be considered a basis for designing appropriate interventions to improve students' lifestyles and for the use of policymakers.

Besides, due to the importance of the impact of attitudes toward the field of study and career prospects on student happiness, this issue needs officials' attention to improve the career prospect of students for increasing the level of happiness among students and creating a dynamic educational system.

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## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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