

Nature and Dynamics of Happiness: Psychological View

Jose Mathews is a Senior Lecturer at the Gaeddu College of Business Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan.

Abstract

Happiness is understood from different perspectives including emotional, psychological, sociological, political and environmental processes. However, here an attempt is made to interpret the nature and dynamics of happiness from a psychological perspective. In the bottom-up approach to happiness, the general environmental factors like family, marriage, education and income that contribute to happiness are studied whereas in the top-down approach the intra-individual processes that determine happiness are emphasized. It has been found that the major sources of variance of happiness rest with the intra-individual processes. A model of happiness that underlines the importance of cognitive processes, personality processes, motivation and emotional processes are suggested. Distinctive cognitions, specific personality traits, distinctive motivational processes and emotional paths make the individual happy.

Keywords: Happiness, Psychological, Spiritual, Emotional well-being, Cognition

Introduction

The fundamental striving of human beings appears to be one of seeking happiness in life regardless of their race, gender, religion, language or nationality. Individuals everywhere and every time are moved by this zest for happiness. A person who enjoys full happiness can truly say that s/he has found meaning in life and that his/her life is at a pinnacle of achievement, a state of self-transcendence. However, happiness as a psychological process is not well studied. In the recent years there have been many attempts to study the nature and dynamics of happiness from different perspectives. It is also a matter of happiness that many numbers of researches are being done now in the area of happiness. Is happiness a matter? Even though happiness can be objectified, first and foremost happiness is a subjective experience that originates in the psyche of the individual. In this paper an attempt is made to understand the nature and dynamics of happiness from a purely psychological perspective.

Definition of Happiness

Happiness can be defined in several ways as the experience changes from person to person and also the same person can be happy for different reasons and at different times for the same reason. Just as different circumstances produce happiness, varying forms of happiness can be experienced by different individuals in the same circumstances. Even though researchers are able to arrive at some uniformity and consistency in the use of the term happiness, in actual life happiness is a malleable process.

There is a general agreement in the definition of happiness as a pleasant affective state. It can be defined in terms of frequent positive affect, high life satisfaction and infrequent negative affect, which becomes the components of subjective well-being, the scientific term for happiness. Diener has identified the separable components of subjective well-being as life satisfaction (global judgment of one's life), satisfaction with important domains of life (eg. work satisfaction, games and sports, etc.), positive affect (experiencing many pleasant emotions and moods and low-levels of negative affect (experiencing few unpleasant emotions and moods)).¹

Kitayama et.al. define happiness as a positive emotional state of general nature and not restricted to any specific circumstances.² Uchida et.al. considers happiness as an emotional concomitant to an overall cognitive appraisal of the quality of one's life.³ Accordingly happiness follows the interpretation and evaluation of one's life which means that happiness is an emotional experience largely rooted in the way life is lived.

Lu defines happiness as consisting of (a) mental state of satisfaction and contentment (b) positive feelings/ emotions (c) harmonious homeostasis (d) achievement and hope and (e) freedom from ill-being.⁴

In light of these considerations and varying views of happiness in its origin and experience, it is pertinent to state the three orientations to happiness and life satisfaction as suggested by Peterson et.al. under three forms: the hedonistic view, that is maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain; Aristotle's notion of eudemonia, that is being true to one's inner self and lastly the pursuit of engagement, that is the aftermath of the flow experience of engagement is happiness.⁵

The point to be noted is that the hedonism view and the pursuit of engagement view suggests the source of happiness outside the individual, that is the experience of happiness is consequent to the use of physical objects or engagement with the world whereas the eudemonia view traces the sources of happiness to inner psychic processes.

Accordingly the state of positive affect (PA) should also differ about which no conclusive results are available. However it can be stated that the quality of the

1 Diener E, "Subjective Well-being, The science of happiness and a proposal for a national Index", in *American Psychologist*, Vol. 55 (1), (2000), 34 -43.

2 Kitayam S, Markus H. R. and Matsumoto H., "Culture, Self and Emotion: a Cultural perspective on "self-conscious" Emotions", in J.P.Tangney and K.W. Fischer (eds.), *Self-conscious Emotions: The Psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment and pride*, New York, Guilford Press, 1995, pp. 439-464.

3 Uchida Y, Norasakkunkit V and Kitayama S, "Cultural Constructions of Happiness: Theory and Empirical Evidence", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 5, (2004), 223-239.

4 Lu L, "Understanding Happiness: A look into the Chinese folk Psychology", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 2, (2001), 407-432.

5 Peterson C, Park N and Seligman M E P, "Orientations to Happiness and Life Satisfaction: The full life versus the Empty", in *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 6, (2005), 25-41.

happiness experience differs. The state of happiness experienced can be thus described as object-based happiness and subject-based happiness.

Researchers approach the state of happiness from two different dimensions, which are classified as bottom -up factors and top-down factors.⁶ Lyumbomirsty and Boehm have found that satisfaction of fundamental human motives leads to happiness and that favourable circumstances result in the creation of happiness.⁷ These findings boil down to the fact that the source of happiness can be predominantly internal or external. In other words, the nature of happiness can be plotted on a continuum of internality and externality where the influence of internality ranges from maximum influence to zero influence and similarly the influence of externality ranges from zero influence to maximum influence. If we plot these variables on a horizontal and vertical axis, four different forms of happiness can be derived (Fig.1).

Further elaborating upon the nature of happiness, researchers differentiate between the static and dynamic quality of happiness. In the flow state view, happiness is experienced as a continuous stream of uninterrupted state whereas in the categorical view, happiness is a transient state that appears and disappears in an interrupted manner. In the former, happiness is experienced as an unbounded state and in the latter happiness is a bounded state with limitations and which is mostly dependent on external circumstances. The unbounded state of happiness is characterized by transcendental features of divine consciousness, the permeation of spiritual energy/spiritual power and the divine experience of God in life. The bounded happiness on the other hand does not drastically differ much when compared to the unbounded except the duration and the ineffable quality. The unbounded happiness is more tilted towards the realm of supernatural level whereas bounded happiness is at the realm of engagement with the world.

6 Diener E, Such E M, Lucas R E and Smith H L, "Subjective well-being: Three decades of Progress", in *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol.125 (2), (1999), 276-302.

7 Lyubomirsky S and Boehm J K, "Human Motives, Happiness and the puzzle of Parenthood; Commentary on Kenrick et.al, in *Perspectives on Psychological Sciences*, Vol.5 (3), (2010), 327-334.

HIGH Influence of External Factors LOW	Sensory Happiness	Stable Happiness
	Transient Happiness	Transcendental Happiness
Influence of Internal Factors		
LOW		HIGH

Fig. 1. Different Forms of Happiness

Thus, it can be argued that happiness can be defined in continuous and discontinuous forms. In the continuous form of definition, happiness as a positive affect is experienced in a boundless stream at the deeper psycho-spiritual realm and that is less dependent upon external factors. In the discontinuous form, happiness as a positive affect is experienced in a time-bound, externally dependent way.

Considering that the distinctions are made, researchers on happiness describe four different forms of happiness in different situations - transient happiness, stable happiness, transcendental happiness and sensory happiness. In this investigation the focus is more on the stable form of happiness where the influence of internal and external factors is found to be high. In other words, the person- environment interaction is at a higher form and in an intensive manner. The stable form of happiness is produced when a rich environment interacts with an individual endowed with active and unique psychological processes of cognition, motivation, emotion and personality.

These considerations take us to the view that happiness is a multi-dimensional construct rather than a simple positive - pleasant affective state. Even though the PA state is an aftermath experience, this emotional experience is to be linked to the antecedent conditions in such a way that happiness has a composite character and that it has the constituents of emotional experiences, motivational states, cognitive processes and personality processes. The state of happiness now has a wholistic character that has the inputs from different and related psychological processes. That is, happiness acquires the stature of a pan-emotional state. Happiness= Emotion+Cognition+Motivation+Personality. In this composite character, the popular

term happiness must give way to other terms like subjective well-being, self-actualized state, fully functioning person and transcendent state.⁸

General Theories of Happiness

Drive-reduction theory

Needs are basic to human beings and they drive them to action in order to reduce the physical tension created. The tension created is a source of unhappiness and the tension reduced is a source of happiness.

Need-satisfaction theory

Human beings display an array of psychological needs like the need for status, recognition, money, power, achievement, etc. Not meeting or deficiency in meeting these needs brings in misery and sadness. The criterion is that individuals must find objects or states related to these needs and the consummation leads to happiness.

Social comparison theory

In this, the processes of comparing oneself with others, the individual can move to upward / downward position and the psychological comparison made results in happiness or unhappiness. Rather than the direction, what matters here is the comparison object. A normal individual comparing himself/herself with a person who experiences excruciating pain must move to a downward position in order to experience a state of well-being whereas a poor person comparing himself/herself with a rich person is likely to experience negative feelings because of the upward direction.

Social relations theory

Keeping good social and interpersonal relations is a source of happiness. Ability to weave a web of supportive caring and genuine relationships bring in happiness. Sincere social networks add charm to our lives thereby resulting in joyful moments.

Ecological theory

Living in a natural environment of beauty, hills, rivers and mountains generate happiness in the minds of human beings. Individuals living in such environments immediately get attuned to the nature and they become immersed in the nature resulting in the dissipation of all human concerns and worries.

Social exchange theory

Social exchanges involve transactions that are based on rewards and costs. Transactions can include even personal visits to the places of people and the costs like travel

⁸ Peterson C, Park N and Seligman M E P, "Orientations to Happiness and Life Satisfaction: The full life versus the Empty", in *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 6, (2005), 25-41.

expenses, time and other resources outweigh the rewards obtained, it happens to be not a happy situation. Social exchanges take place over a variety of situations that can be measured using rewards and costs criteria.

Quality of life theory

In the QL terms, the level of income, education, residence and dwelling areas, family life and the social milieu contribute to happiness. In a sense these become the primary factors of happiness.

The content and contextual theory of happiness

According to the content and contextual theory, happiness is an outcome consequent to the presence of content and contextual elements. Content factors include autonomy in life, responsibilities, freedom of thought and expression, self-confidence, assertiveness and feelings of superiority, whereas contextual factors refer to the general life situations that the individual comes to have.

Spiritual theory of happiness

As against religious practices and rituals, spiritual practices involve quieting the deeper realms of mind by meditation, contemplation and yogic practices. In both Eastern and Western religious thoughts, spiritual gurus have developed many methods and techniques to achieve inner happiness. The attempt to confront the divinity in the inner solitude of the mind is an undisputable path to happiness.

Sensory arousal theory of happiness

In this explanation of happiness, continuous and moderate arousal of sensory modalities generates pleasant emotions. In this situation, sensory pleasures like tasty food, sublime fragrance etc., are the lowest forms of happiness. Over and above the sensory pleasures are the perceptual pleasures where the individual experiences a deeper form of pleasure with inputs from the intellect.

General Happiness Model

The model given here represents the psychological processes that directly contribute to the state of happiness Fig.2. The psychological state and the psychological processes leading to the experience of happiness as it is generally understood in psychology are consequent to the genetic processes and the environmental conditions. The inherited genetic components exercise a major influence on the psychological systems of the individual. Genetics largely determine the entire psychological processes including the cognitions, emotions, motivations and personality. Genetic predisposition to happiness varies from individual to individual. Tellegen et.al. has shown that about 40 percent of the variance in positive emotionality is due to the action of genes,⁹ whereas

⁹ Tellegen A, Lykken D T, Bouchard T J, Wilcox K J, Segal N L and Rich S, "Personality Similarity in twins reared apart and together", in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, (1988), 1031-1039.

Lyken and Tellegen have shown that hereditary aspects of happiness may be as high as 80 percent.¹⁰

Personality and Happiness

As personality researchers study consistent factors in personality research, the happiness researchers obviously would search for the specific personality influences that lead to happiness. Stable personality factors are found to be exerting a long-term influence on happiness¹¹ and close relation between happiness and personality characteristics exist.¹² In contrast to the minimum influence that external factors exert on happiness, personality traits, stable factors and processes play an important role in happiness.¹³

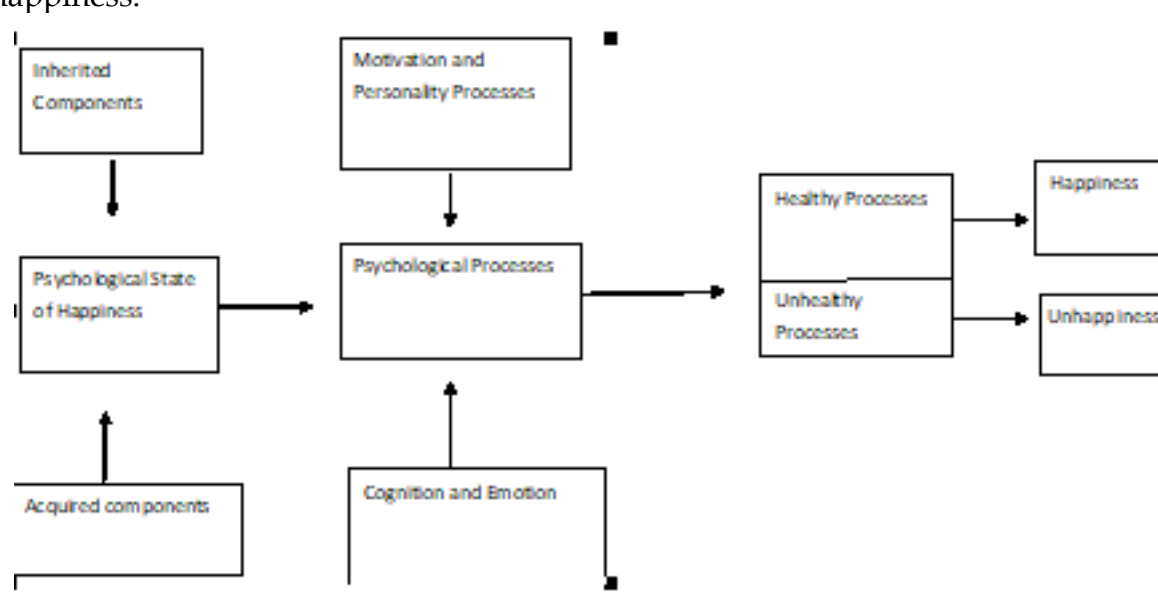


Fig.2. General Model of Happiness

Extroversion breeds happiness whereas introversion brings in misery.¹⁴ Fujita found that extroversion is correlated with pleasant affect as extroverted individuals indulge in more and more social activities.¹⁵ In their outward social orientation they seek out more and more interpersonal and social activities that are of enjoyable nature.

10 Lyken D and Tellegen A, "Happiness is a stochastic Phenomenon", in *Psychological Sciences*, 7, (1996), 186-189.

11 Diener E, Such E M, Lucas R E and Smith H L, "Subjective well-being: Three decades of Progress", in *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol.125 (2), (1999), 276-302.

12 Holder M D and Klassen A, "Temperament and Happiness in Children", in *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 11, (2010), 419-439.

13 Lucas R E, "Personality and the pursuit of Happiness", in *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, Vol.1(1), (2007), 168-182.

14 Cheng H and Furnham A, "Personality, self-esteem and demographic predictions of happiness and depression", in *Personality and Individual Differences*, 34, (2003), 921-942.

15 Fujita F, "An investigation of the relation between extroversion, neuroticism, positive affect, and negative affect", Unpublished Master's Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1991.

Emotional stability and emotional maturity prevents wide fluctuations in moods and emotions, and those individuals mostly maintain equilibrium in their experience.¹⁶ The absence of wide swings in emotions lends stability to emotional experiences. The maturity attained in the expression and experience of emotions means that there are no irrational emotions in the emotional repository. These individuals seldom show irrationally conditioned emotions and they have control over conditioned emotional reactions (CER). Emotional stability and emotional maturity predisposes the individual to happiness or rather it results in happiness.

Self-esteem as the individual's evaluation about himself/herself tends to permeate the entire functioning of the individual. Self-esteem is an individual's own judgments on the 'suitability' of the self in different situations and more importantly it is an evaluative reaction -an emotional experience that makes the person feels good or bad. High self-esteem indicates a positive evaluation about oneself and a low self-esteem indicates a negative evaluation. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to show more negative affect.¹⁷ A negative self-esteem cycle, once it gets started, is impervious to change and changing this at the root becomes the greatest challenge.¹⁸ High self-esteem affects the entire functioning, results in happiness that is a positive evaluation and leads to the build-up of the state of happiness.

Lefcourt has differentiated individuals on the basis of being influenced by two differentiated generalized expectancies of external control and internal control.¹⁹ The generalized expectancy of external control means that the locus of control of behaviour is external to the individual and it is controlled by environmental contingencies. The generalized expectancy of internal control in individuals places the locus of control of behaviour within themselves, their thoughts, will and efforts. DeNeve and Cooper have found that there exists a relationship between locus of control and happiness.²⁰ Individuals with internal locus of control are happier than individuals with external locus of control. The changing environmental contingencies are a source of unhappiness as many of the behaviours of the individual are constantly misaligned whereas an internal orientation results in the stability of behaviour.

Another personality construct that is predicated with happiness is self-efficacy. Bandura defined self-efficacy as an expectation that one can by personal effort master

16 Hills P and Argyle M, "Emotional Stability as a major Dimension of Happiness", in *Personality and Individual Differences*, 31, (2001), 1357-1364.

17 Orth U, Robins R W and Roberts B W, "Low Self-esteem Prospectivity Predicts Depression in Adolescence and Young Adulthood", in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol.95(3), (2008), 695-708.

18 Osborne R E, "Self-esteem", in F N Magill(ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of Psychology*, Vol.2, London, Fitzroy Dearborn, 1996, 1499-1501.

19 Lefcourt H M, "Locus of Control", in A.E. Kazdin (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Psychology*, Vol.5, New York, OUP, 2000.

20 De Neve K M and Cooper H, "The happy personality: A meta-analysis of 137 personality traits and subjective well-being", in *Psychological Bulletin*, 124, (1998), 193-229.

a situation and bring about a desired outcome.²¹ Bandura himself differentiated between an efficacy expectation and an outcome expectation. An efficacy expectation leads the individual to the enactment of behaviours or the individual himself/herself has the conviction that s/he can produce certain patterns of behaviour. An outcome expectation, a person's belief that a particular behaviour will result in a particular outcome, can also be a basis of efficacy expectation. High self-efficacy connotes greater behavioural flexibility and easiness of performance and low self-efficacy results in behavioural inhibition thereby closing the doors to the avenues of happiness and enjoyment. The absence of behavioural freedom can play havoc with happiness as happiness is consequent to the engagement with activities or the pursuit of a variety of activities. Perceived self-efficacy enhances and enriches performance attainments.²²

Scheier and Carver's theory of dispositional optimism qualifies happiness with optimism which is defined as a generalized tendency to expect favourable outcomes in one's life.²³ Optimism as a dispositional trait is underlined in the perceptions and thoughts of the individual and in the interactional pattern of thoughts and environment, the optimistic thoughts and expectations lead the individual to favourable circumstances that ultimately results in the creation of favourable outcomes. An optimist perceives the world in a positive and favourable manner and this bring about a positive framework. This positive action framework yields greater rewards.

Need-Hierarchy Model of Happiness

Motivation is generally understood as an inner urge, need, drive or psychological desire to make an effort.²⁴ Psychological motives create deprivation or tension or drive in order to meet those motives with relevant stimuli. Motivation is generally associated with three psychological processes of an arousal component, a directional component and an intensity component.²⁵

Motivational factors/processes are linked to happiness and both the lower and higher orders motives encourage individuals to seek happiness.²⁶ The activation arousal, directionality and intensity of motives are overlapped with happiness which means that all human motives have the fundamental goal of seeking different forms of happiness through different and specific motivational mechanisms. Lyubomirsky

21 Hall C S, Lindzey J B and Campbell G C, *Theories of Personality*, (4th edn.), New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1998.

22 Bandura A and Locke E A, "Negative self-efficacy and Goal effects Revisited", in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(1), (2003), 87-99.

23 Schier M F and Carver C S, "Optimism, Coping and Health: Assessment and Implications of generalized outcome Expectancies, in *Health Psychology*, 4, (1985), 219-247.

24 Mitchell T R and Daniels D "Motivation", in W.C. Borman, D.R. Ilogan and R.J. Klimoski (eds.), *Handbook of Psychology*, Vol.12, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 2003, pp.225-254.

25 *Ibid.*

26 Lyubomirsky S, Sheldon K M and Schkad D, *Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change*, UC, Riverside Post Prints, 2005.

and Boehm have observed that individual will feel happy after realizing fundamental human motives.²⁷ The view that all motives are interspersed with seeking happiness is supported by the general understanding of happiness stated earlier. In line with this a motivation-happiness cycle may be drawn Fig.3.

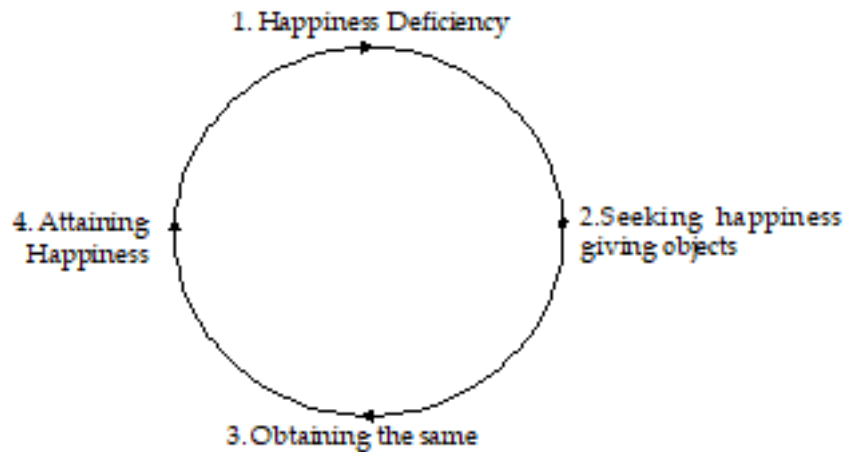


Fig. 3 Happiness-Motivation Cycle

It is evident that this cycle closely parallels the motivational cycle. The deficiency of happiness or lack of contentment stirs up the individual to engage in relevant activities that will reduce unhappiness and create happiness in the psycho-physiological system. Seligman's orientation to happiness is very much evident here as individuals pursue engagement with activities in order to attain happiness.²⁸ Further, Kitayama and his colleagues make distinctions in the nature of engagement with activities. That is, individuals experience interpersonally engaging positive emotions of intimacy, belongingness, gregariousness, companionship, friendship and related positive emotions. A second form of pursuit is through interpersonal disengagement - emotions/positive affect from engagement with self-enhancing or achievement oriented activities. Thus in the motivational analysis of happiness, it is observed that happiness deprived individuals seek/engage in happiness giving activities so as to become a fully functioning or contented individual.

Following Maslow's model of motivation, where needs are arranged in a hierarchy, starting from basic physiological needs and going through safety and security, love and belongingness, self-esteem and finally self-actualization needs. Needs are arranged in a hierarchy because the activation of needs take place in the order and only when a lower-level needs are satisfied, individuals can move upward.

27 Lyubomirsky S and Boehm J K, "Human Motives, Happiness and the puzzle of Parenthood; Commentary on Kenrick et.al, in *Perspectives on Psychological Sciences*, Vol.5 (3), (2010), 327-334.

28 Seligman M E P, *Authentic Happiness*, New York, Free Press, 2002.

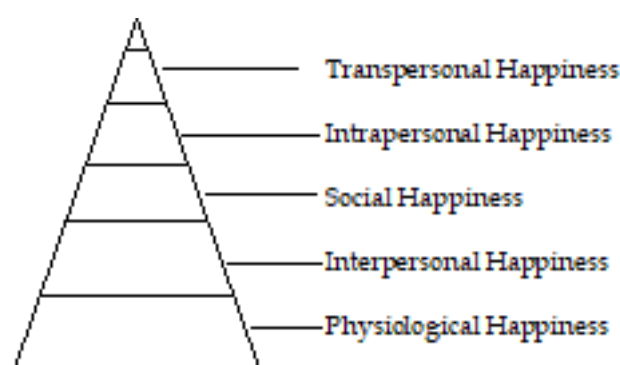


Fig.4. Need-Hierarchy Model of Happiness

As the above figure indicates, needs are arranged in a hierarchical order starting with lower-level physiological needs and culminating in trans-personal needs. The activation of needs and the pursuit of engagement results in the experience of happiness. The nature of needs can be interpreted with the source of happiness that is internal and/or external. Sensory happiness comes first in the order of hierarchy; that is happiness experienced through the use of sense modalities. The pleasure theory of happiness becomes relevant here; that is, individuals who can satisfy the hunger, thirst, sexual needs, comfort motives are generally happy. According to the hedonism view, indulgence in sensory pleasures is the route to general happiness. Individuals who are able to satisfy their basic needs need no other activity to be happy at the sensory level.

Inter-personal happiness is embedded at the interpersonal relations that start with parental interactions and extends to neighbourhood, school and closely-knit communities where the individual has an identity and recognition. Friendly and intimate relations provide the individual with an experience of happiness. The need to affiliate and belong to worthy and identifiable groups is a human motive and it finds its expression in interactions with primary and secondary groups.

Social happiness finds its expression as the individual moves out of primary and secondary groups and starts holding leadership and other positions in which s/he comes into contact with larger social settings. An employee as part of an organization too derives social happiness as s/he has an identity in a larger social context. The happiness becomes real and authentic when the individual is able to hold on to his/her individuality and uniqueness.

Intra-personal happiness becomes predominant and active in the individual when there is the expression of intra-personal needs like autonomy, personal growth, creativity, uniqueness, self-expression, self-regard, self-discovery and self-exploration. In this level, the individual starts fathoming their inner psychological processes and tries to express it in inimitable ways. The deeper and underlying psychological

potentialities are brought forward and the individual starts finding deeper meanings of life, especially one's own life.

Trans-personal happiness has its roots in at the spiritual and supernatural realm. Few minds are elevated to this exalted and ineffable state of happiness. It is the unleashing of the divine energy within the individual that is the base of happiness. It is really the realm where the individual encounters the Divine and the individual transcends the mundane. The transcendental state of happiness is the zenith of happiness for a mortal.

The need-hierarchy model follows the principles given below:

1. The simultaneous activation of two or more levels of needs happen in the lives of individuals.
2. The ordering of the needs is important as far as the levels signify growth correspondence, which means that biological and social growth activates the need.
3. The ordering of needs does not changedrastically as it is growth dependent.
4. The experience of happiness is embedded with all the pursuits of engagement.
5. The principle of adaptation is operative here, which means that individual (quickly) loses out happiness to the existing state of engagement and they are motivated to seek the next level of engagement.

Emotional Processes and Happiness

In a systemic perspective, emotionality represents the amalgamation of external/internal stimuli, cognitive appraisals, conscious and unconscious processes, physiological changes and interaction with the environment. It means that emotional experience is not as simple as it is 'felt' or 'thought'. Emotion is a complex state and researchers have made much progress in the study of its processes and dynamics. A modified form of the emotional dynamics as explained by Horung is given in Fig.5.²⁹ Emotions enter into consciousness as affectively interpreted by Fernandez-Dols and Russell.³⁰ Emotional experiences follow two paths - an affective interpretation of the external world of objects, events and persons and affective interpretations of the internal world of cognitions and bodily states.

With regard to the organization of emotions, researchers take a categorical approach and a dimensional approach.³¹ In the categorical approach emotions can be arranged

29 Horung B R, "Happiness and the pursuit of Happiness: A Socio-cybernetic Approach", in *Kybernetes*, 35 (3/4), (2006), 323-346.

30 Fernandez-Dols J M and Russell J A, "Emotion, affect and Mood in social judgments", in T.Millon and M.J. Lerner (eds.), *Handbook of Psychology: Pessonality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 5, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 2004.

31 Averill J R, "The Emotions: An Integrative Approach", in R. Hogan, J. Johnson and S. Briggs (eds.), *Handbook of*

into relatively homogeneous categories and in the dimensional approach emotions are not discrete categories but “shade imperceptibly” into one another. Using the dimensional approach the two dimensions of positive and negative affect result in the emotional states of joy, peace, love, calm and distress, disquiet, hatred and disturbed.

In the appraisal theories of emotion, it is the cognitive evaluation of the stimulus event that patterns the type of emotions that are experienced. The way the appraisal, evaluation or interpretation is made determines the nature of emotions. Accordingly, appraisal determines which situations elicit which emotions and further appraisal shows individual differences in the stimulus-response link.³²

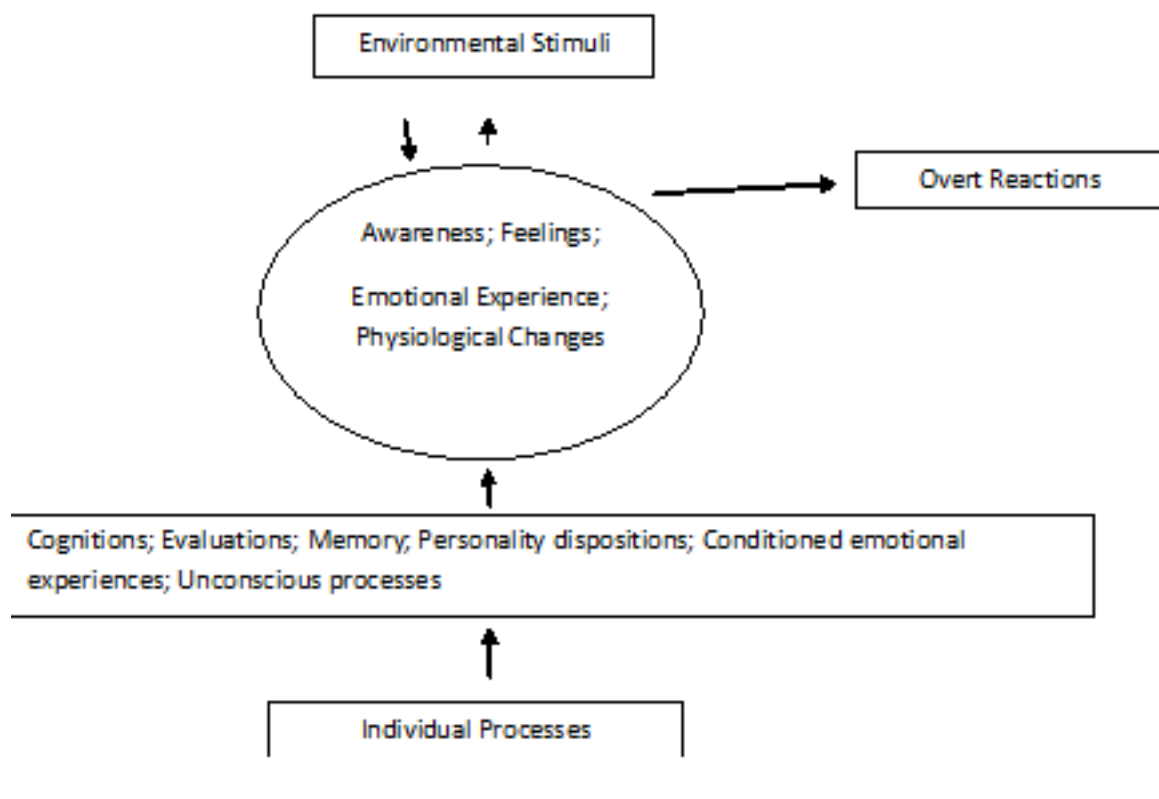


Fig. 5. The Nature of Emotional Dynamics

Individual differences largely account for the experience of emotions. In a given situation, two persons may come to experience two different emotions of happiness and unhappiness. In other words, what matters here, according to appraisal theory, are the individual's own distinctive processes. The appraisal mechanisms are influenced by personality dispositions, cognitive processes and the learning history of the individual. As such, individuals can be differentiated on this construct of appraisal style. Individuals are understood to be having either a positive appraisal style or a

Personality Psychology, New York, Academic Press, 1997.

32 Fernandez-Dols, J.M. and Russell, J.A., "Emotion, affect and Mood in Social judgments", in T. Millon and M.J. Lerner (eds.), *Handbook of Psychology: Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 5, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 2004.

negative appraisal style, and happiness differs accordingly. Further, it is to be pointed out that the situational quality also differs; that is individuals come across situations with explicit favourableness and unfavourableness and implicit favourableness and unfavourableness. The way the appraisal style and situational favourableness interacts leading to different degrees of happiness can be understood from the figure Fig.6.

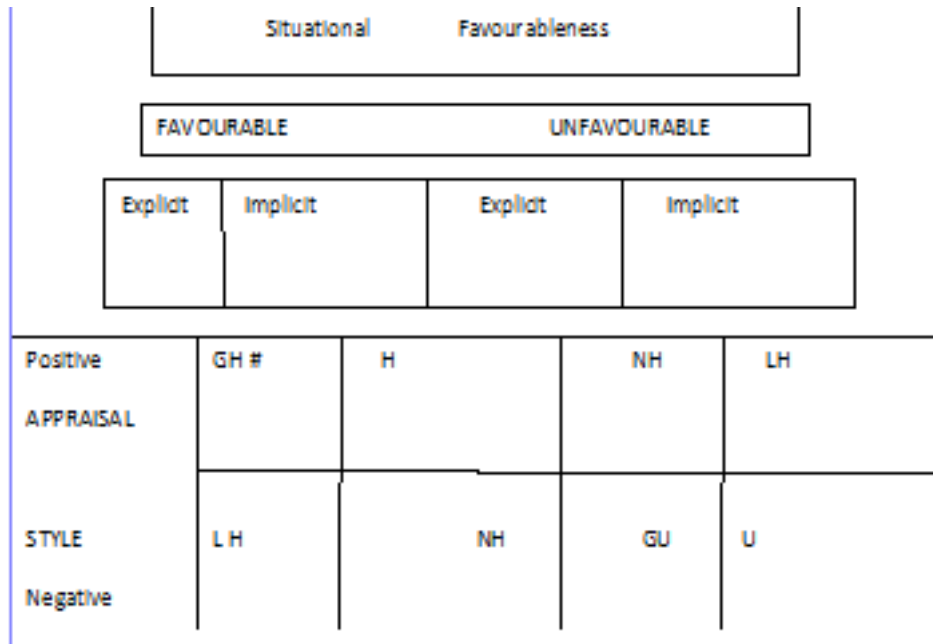


Fig. 6. Appraisal Style and Situational Interaction of Happiness

GH-Greater Happiness, H -Happiness, NH-Not Happy, LH-Lesser Happy, GU-Greater Unhappiness U-Unhappiness

Cognitive Explanation of Happiness

As happiness is linked to the cognitive evaluations made by the individual, the way cognitive processes take place within the individual is to be understood. Cognitive psychology studies the cognitive or mental processes involved in the acquisition, storage and transformation/utilization of knowledge and the important cognitive processes are memory, problem solving, decision-making, reasoning, thinking and related processes. Thus, cognition is a complex mental act and as such understanding and explaining the cognitive processes that result in happiness/unhappiness is a difficult task.

The cognitive processes analyses and evaluates environmental stimuli - physical, social, cultural, inter-personal and organizational-fortheir emotional significance and it results in the experience of an emotion. Emotions typically have high cognitive involvement and loading. The cognitive involvement implies the use of stored data for interpreting stimulus that have emotional significance. Cognitions are found to be

critical and it has the role of mediation between the onset of a stimulus event and the experience of emotion.³³

Emotional experiences are mediated through cognitive structures which are composed of a system of values on different dimensions.³⁴ It means that the two types of cognition that are significant to emotion are knowledge structures and appraisal systems.³⁵ In other words, the colouring of the knowledge structures means the emotional experience for the person. Some of the commonly used cognitive dimensions in the experience of emotions are given in Fig.7

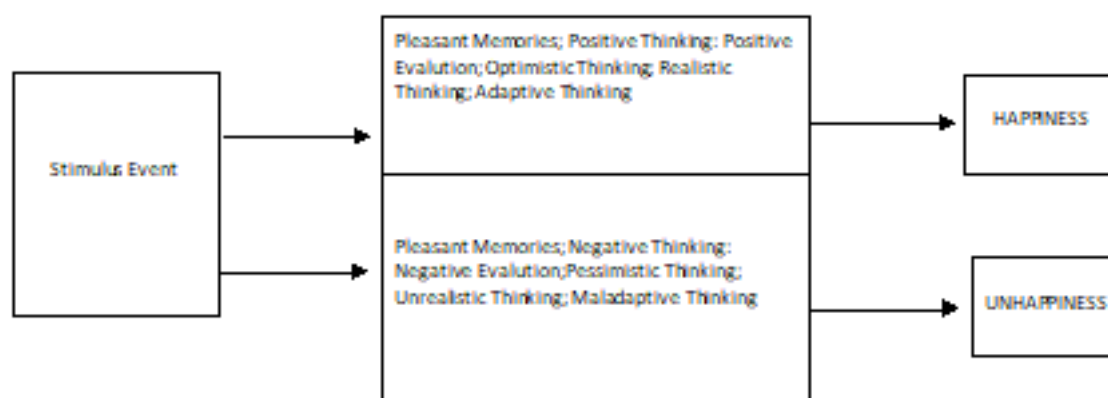


Fig. 7. Cognitive Dimensions of Happiness and Unhappiness

Individuals differ in the presence and use of cognitive dimensions. These dimensions contain both knowledge and appraisal or value components and emotional experience turns out to be based on the combined effect of the use of knowledge stored and value-based judgments.

Conclusion

Happiness is experienced at the psychological processes of emotion, personality, motivation and cognition. Happiness is not a simple emotional experience as emotional dynamics of individuals differ vastly. The personality components show greater variability among happy and unhappy individuals. Researchers have identified an array of personality constructs that differentially affect happiness. Motivation as an internal process has its roots in psycho-physiological mechanisms. Individuals are found to be seeking happiness in different situations that have different motivational

33 Teachman B A and Saporito J, "I am going to gag: Disgust Cognitions in Spider and blood-injury-injection fears", in *Cognition and Emotion*, Vol.23 (2), (2009), 399-414.

34 Ortony A, Clore G L S and Collins A, *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

35 Lazarus R S and Smith C A, "Knowledge and Appraisal in the Cognition-emotion Relationship", in *Cognition and Emotion*, Vol.2 (4), (1998), 281-300.

relevance and significance. The relation between cognition and emotion is well established and as such the nature of cognitive processes affects happiness in different and predictable ways.