

11-2022

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Alea Farmer
Lindenwood University

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Recommended Citation

Farmer, Alea (2022) "Perceptions of Happiness Through the Lens of Age and Gender," *Undergraduate Psychology Research Methods Journal*: Vol. 2: Iss. 1, Article 6.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/psych_journals/vol2/iss1/6


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Perceptions of Happiness Through the Lens of Age and Gender

Alea Farmer

Department of Psychology, Sociology, and Public Health, Lindenwood University

Author Note

Alea Farmer  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6971-5707>

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Alea Farmer, 209 S
Kingshighway St, St. Charles, MO, 63301. Email: af760@lindenwood.edu

Abstract

This paper intends to examine the possible relationship between demographic variables and perceptions of happiness. The demographic variables being studied are age and gender. Perceptions of happiness are measured by the Conceptions of Happiness Scale (Joshani, 2018) and represent one's overall idea of happiness. A survey was distributed to adults that were recruited via social media and flyer recruitment on the campus of Lindenwood University. The survey consisted of demographic questions as well as the Conceptions of Happiness Scale (Joshani, 2018) for participants to complete. Initial hypotheses predicted differences in perceptions of happiness amongst different age and gender groups. However, an inadequate amount of data collected resulted in an inability to conduct a one-way analysis of variance, as planned. Descriptive analyses were conducted and found a slightly higher sum of the scale scores for women and middle-aged participants in comparison to their counterparts. The study will remain open until adequate data is collected to continue data analysis and determine whether there are differences in the perceptions of happiness of people of different age and gender groups.

Keywords: happiness, well-being, perceptions, age, gender, adults

Perceptions of Happiness Through the Lens of Age and Gender

As a society, it seems as though happiness is something that everyone longs for. The ultimate goal in life is to be happy, it seems. I want to focus on how people view their happiness. It is safe to say that the concept of happiness is subjective, meaning everyone has their own definition. However, there could be some patterns in the perceptions of happiness amongst various groups. That is what my research intends to uncover.

I think there could be differences in the way that people in different demographics perceive happiness. Specifically, I think there could be substantial differences in perceptions of happiness amongst people of different age groups and genders. In this society, age is often associated with various factors such as whether one works or goes to school, if one is married, if one can drink, etc. Therefore, age can have a huge impact on what someone's idea of happiness is. Gender and gender roles are very prominent in our society as well. The traditional gender roles of men and women have often been associated with how people chose jobs, how much money they make, their skills, and more. More recently, genders outside of man and woman have been brought to attention which has challenged the idea of binary gender roles. All these aspects could greatly influence how an individual defines happiness. That is why I want to research if there are differences within these demographics.

Mohanty (2014) focused on how people determine happiness. By collecting information regarding the age of the participants for better understanding of the responses, results revealed that positive attitude was an important determinant of happiness (Mohanty, 2014). In another study, Schimmel (2009) researched perceptions of happiness and found that factors such as health, income, education did not lead to increased happiness. This study also revealed that perceptions of happiness varied amongst people who were from different country rankings

(Schimmel, 2009). Positive family relationships seem to be a predictor of happiness in both adults and children of families (Ramos et al., 2022). Morgan (2015) revealed that as people get older, they increasingly attend to positive information, so happiness may increase with age. Lastly, Lee et al. (2021) studied perceptions of happiness and found that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have impacted students' perceptions of happiness. These are just some examples of what researchers have found that may relate to how people perceive happiness.

To investigate the relationship between perceptions of happiness and age and gender, I distributed a survey to adult participants in order to collect and analyze their responses. The survey consisted of demographic variables that identified ones age and gender. Then, participants completed the Conceptions of Happiness Scale (Joshnloo, 2018) which provided insight into how the participants perceive happiness. I hypothesized that perceptions of happiness will vary amongst age and gender.

Method

Participants

A total of 19 participants completed the survey in its entirety. Participants were be composed of people of various age groups, genders, races, and occupations. Majority of the participants' ages fell within the young adulthood range (18-29 years old). This could have been due to a higher number of college students than non-college students because the flyer recruitment is being done on Lindenwood's campus. A total of four participants were middle aged (40-64 years old), and only one participant was considered an older adult (65 and older). A large majority of participants identified as female, with only three male-identifying participants completing the survey and one non-binary participant.

Materials and Procedure

Participants were recruited through flyers and social media. Materials needed for this recruitment consisted of physical flyers that were posted throughout multiple buildings on the campus of Lindenwood University. The same flyer was posted digitally on the social media platforms of Instagram and Twitter. See Appendix A for flyer details. This study met the ethical standards evaluated by the Lindenwood PPSRC and IRB.

This study was created and conducted using the online platform, Qualtrics. The first part of the survey was composed of two demographic questions that ask participants to identify their age and gender. The choice of age intervals included: young adulthood (18-29 years old), 30s (30-39 years old), middle age (40-64 years old), and older adulthood (65 and older). The choice of gender identity included: male, female, non-binary, other, and prefer not to say. The second part of the survey prompts participants to complete the Conceptions of Happiness Scale (Joshnloo et al., 2018). The scale lists 19 factors in life that could contribute to one's happiness. Participants are asked to rate on a scale of 1-9 the importance that each of the listed factors are to their happiness. This scale concluded the survey. I used IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28) to conduct descriptive data analyses. See Appendix B for more survey details.

Results

Due to the lack of abundance in participants of the survey, it was decided that a descriptive analysis would be the best option to analyze data. The survey will continue to stay open and one-way ANOVA tests will be conducted in the future upon the collection of an adequate amount of data. A total of 14 participants' ages fell within the young adult age interval (18-29 years old). There were only 4 middle-aged participants (40-64 years old) and 1 older adult (65 years old or older). A crosstabs descriptive analysis was conducted and the average sum of ratings from the Conceptions of Happiness Scale (Joshnloo, 2018) for young adult participants

was found, $M= 127.71$, $SD= 23.12$. The same analysis was done for the middle-aged participants, and found the average sum was slightly higher, $M= 133$, $SD= 5.83$. No descriptive analysis could be conducted on the other age groups due to a lack of participants.

The same crosstabs descriptive analysis was conducted on the different genders and scale scores. The sum of scores for the participants that identified as female was slightly higher than its counterpart, $M= 133.4$, $SD= 22.48$. The average sum of scores of the male participants was lower, $M= 121.67$, $SD= 26.08$. Final results of the survey will be analyzed through one-way ANOVA tests in order to test the hypotheses.

Discussion

I believe that there was a low number of participants for several reasons. The amount of time that data was collected was a very short window, less than a month. This can make it challenging to collect adequate data, especially when a large range of ages of participants was needed. I also believe I needed additional flyer recruitment at public locations in which a wide variety of people go to, such as libraries or coffee shops. This would have increased the odds of reaching a more diverse audience when it comes to gender and age. Allowing the survey to stay open until an adequate amount of data is collected will provide a better understanding of the differences in perceptions of happiness, if any. I anticipate completing the study by the Fall of 2022. This will allow plenty of time to adjust recruitment methods and collect more data.

References

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Appendix A

Perceptions of Happiness Through the Lens of Age and Gender

by: Alea Farmer

PLEASE
TAKE
THE
SURVEY
BELOW!



I am a student researcher who is conducting a study to assess if there are differences in people's ideas of happiness amongst age groups and genders. This information could benefit people in many ways, on both an individual and societal scale. I would love for you to be apart of this important research study by participating in the survey below! The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. Participants must be 18 years old or older. Thank you!

SCAN THE
QR CODE
NOW TO
TAKE THE
SURVEY-->

Please feel free to contact me at af760@lindenwood.edu with any questions or concerns.



Appendix B

Perceptions of Happiness Through the Lens of Age and Gender

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Survey Research Information Sheet

You are being asked to participate in a survey conducted by Alea Farmer and Dr. Michiko Nohara-LeClair at Lindenwood University. We are doing this study to understand more about how people of all ages and genders perceive happiness. We want to determine if there are differences in what people of different ages and genders believe contributes to their happiness. This survey consists of two demographic questions that will identify your age and gender identity. Then you will be asked to complete the Conceptions of Happiness Scale (Joshanloo, 2016), which asks you to rate the level of importance of certain factors when it comes to your happiness. It will take about less than 10 minutes to complete this survey.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time by simply not completing the survey or closing the browser window.

A possible risk of this study is that participants may become distressed when reflecting on what factors in life are important to their happiness. This risk will be minimized by thoroughly informing you of the purpose of the study so that you will better understand why this risk is being posed. We will not collect any information that may identify you. A direct benefit of this study is that you will be able to contribute your data to this important research study! If you feel the need to contact the Lindenwood Student Counseling and Resource Center upon completing the survey, the office can be reached at 314-949-4522. Non-Lindenwood students should contact their nearest mental health practice if they feel the need to do so.

WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Alea Farmer, af760@lindenwood.edu

Dr. Michiko Nohara-LeClair, mnohara-leclair@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

By clicking the link below, I confirm that I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be required to do, and the risks involved. I understand that I can discontinue participation at any time by closing the survey browser. My consent also indicates that I am at least 18 years of age.

You can withdraw from this study at any time by simply closing the browser window. Please feel free to print a copy of this information sheet.

Please click agree or disagree to continue with the survey.

Agree (1)

Disagree (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Please click agree or disagree to continue with the survey. = Disagree

Page Break

Q1 How old are you? Please choose the interval that includes you age.

- Young adulthood (18-29 yrs) (1)
 - Thirties (30-39 yrs) (2)
 - Middle Age (40-64 yrs) (3)
 - Older adulthood (65 & older) (4)
-

Q2 What is your gender identity?

- Male (1)
 - Female (2)
 - Non-binary (3)
 - Other: (4) _____
 - Prefer not to say (5)
-

Page Break

Q3 Please use the sliders to indicate in your opinion how important each of the factors below is in determining your overall happiness, with 1 being not at all important and 9 being very important. A short definition or explanation of each factor is given.

1 2 3 4 5 5 6 7 8 9

Freedom of Thought (Freedom to cultivate one's own ideas and abilities) ()	
Freedom of Action (Freedom to determine one's own actions) ()	
Stimulation (Excitement, novelty, new experiences, and change) ()	
Hedonism (Pleasure; Having a good time and fun) ()	
Achievement (Being successful and ambitious) ()	
Dominance (Power through exercising control over people; Being influential) ()	
Resources (Power through wealth and status) ()	
Face (Being dignified and respected by others; maintaining one's public image) ()	
Personal security (Safety; security and orderliness of one's immediate environment) ()	
Societal security (Safety and stability in the wider society; absence of external threats) ()	
Tradition (Maintaining and preserving cultural, family or religious traditions) ()	
Obeying the rules (Compliance with rules, laws, and formal obligations) ()	
Interpersonal conformity (Avoidance of upsetting, annoying, or harming other people) ()	
Humility (Being humble; Trying not to draw attention to oneself; Accepting one's portion in life) ()	
Dependability (Being reliable and trustworthy to those close to us) ()	
Being caring (Devotion to the welfare of those close to us; Helping those close to us) ()	
Concern for all people (Commitment to equality, justice, and protection of all people) ()	
Concern for nature (Preservation of the natural environment) ()	
Tolerance (Acceptance and understanding of those who are different from oneself) ()	

Page Break

Thank you for completing this survey! Your responses will contribute to this important study on perceptions of happiness amongst adults of various age groups and genders. This study is important because it will provide a better understanding of what factors are important in

determining one's happiness as well as differences in these perceptions between age and gender groups, if any. Employers, institutions, psychologists, individuals, and more could benefit from this information and use it in many important ways. I hypothesize that there will be a difference in the perception of happiness amongst adults of the different age and gender groups.

If you feel the need to contact the Lindenwood Student Counseling and Resource Center upon completing the survey, the office can be reached at 314-949-4522. Non-Lindenwood students should contact their nearest mental health practice if they feel the need to do so. If you are interested in learning the results of the overall study, please reach out to Alea Farmer at af760@lindenwood.edu, or Dr. Michiko Nohara-LeClair at mnohara-leclair@lindenwood.edu, and you will be sent the final results via email when they are available. Have a great day!

End of Block: Default Question Block
