

Personality Traits and Happiness among College Students: A Correlational Study

Nidhi Meena,

Govt. Arts Girls College, Kota.

Neha Kalia, Chiya Jaiswal and O.P. Sharma

University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan

Personality and happiness are fundamental psychological concepts, closely linked to personality traits that shape how individuals perceive and experience happiness. This study investigated the effect of personality differentiation on psychological well-being, and happiness among college students facing the transitional obstacles that college life presents. Using a correlational research design, information was gathered from 70 undergraduate students (35 boys and 35 girls) aged between 18 and 24 years, attending Government College, Kota in Rajasthan. As measures, the “Dimensional Personality Inventory” (DPI) by Mahesh Bhargava and the “Happiness Scale” by Bharadwaj and Das were utilized. A correlation was conducted using Pearson’s for activity, enthusiasm, assertiveness, trust, emotional stability, moodiness, and happiness. While the study revealed positive correlations for activity and enthusiasm, negative correlations for moodiness and emotional instability with happiness were also present. Many of these associations were non-significant across genders, especially among female students. It can thus be concluded that while personality traits impact happiness, they do not fully determine well-being among college students, hence the importance of exploring other contributive variables.

Keywords: Personality traits, Happiness, College Students

When speaking of personality, we usually mean the sum total of a collection of traits that provide a person with ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that are individually unique and relatively consistent (Diemer & Lucas., 2020). Personality, historically rooted in early temperament theories and modern perspectives, is understood as both biological and psychological. It is shaped by genetics, upbringing, and personal life experiences, yet remains dynamic, evolving through positive personal growth and experiences (Cherry, 2023). Most of it douses the human life on the stable. However, changes in traits can happen upon a certain life experience and external stimuli of an individual (De Vries, Spengler, & Frintrup, 2021).

Personality can, for the most part, be thought of as the sum total of a number of characteristics: the way someone behaves under stress, who they are in social interaction, and even their work goals. In so far as individuals identify them to be consistent, the traits can be single either by describing them as assertiveness, empathy, or caution while dealing in social situations and challenges, for instance (Psychreg, 2024).

Personality has been described in many different psychological theories, among them proposed, the development of personality as a disposition with some innate organic tendency as an interaction with environment experiences, meaning that it is a whole set of traits bound to be unique for every person

and will lead to his or her psychological identity (Su & Yu, 2023). Personality is, thus, a dynamic interaction between biology, psychology, and culture, and can help to understand the involvement and variability of human behavior (Sharma & Gupta, 2024).

Happiness thus designates a more complex construct in the sense of personal perceptions about satisfaction with life and emotional well-being in general, comprising both shorter-lived feelings of happiness and more generalized & lasting issues of judging happiness (Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2020).

Some theories of happiness distinguish between two aspects: hedonic well-being, which is centered on pleasure and the avoidance of pain; and eudaimonic well-being, which is about giving life meaning and directing it repeatedly toward a goal (Ryff, Boylan, & Kirsch, 2021). Happiness essentially implies an immense sense of subjective experience, but psychological research measures this concept by evaluating factors such as overall satisfaction with life, positive moods, and the absence or reduction of negative ones (Moore, 2019; Martinez & Robles et al., 2024).

The relationship between personality and happiness has been getting considerable attention of late. It has been found that some personality traits greatly influence the overall well-being of an individual and the level of happiness. For example, people who are positive in their emotional dispositions would be more satisfied with their lives and become more resilient to hard times than others (Kauman, 2024; Shdaifat, Shudayfat, & Alshowkan, 2024). Further, traits like optimism, high self-efficacy, and emotional stability have been linked to a greater propensity for happiness as compared to anxiety, pessimism, and impulsivity, which are more connected to lower life satisfaction (Randa, 2017; Oriol et al., 2020; Ooi et al., 2022; Caprara et al., 2022).

The connection between personality and happiness takes particular importance among college students. Along with the unique transition into higher education, some of these include academic pressure, adaption within social settings, and increased autonomy. Therefore, these experiences can become quite stressful, and coping strategies in tackling such challenges, to a great extent, are governed by personality traits. Some studies indicate that during times of transition, students who cope well with stressors, adapt to new environmental conditions, and facilitate positive peer relations are generally happier (Tesoro, 2020; Scribner, Sasso, & Puchner, 2020).

Numerous studies have been carried out to assess the nature of the association between personality dispositions and happiness, especially among students going through critical distortions in their lives and challenges. A review of the factor analytic studies has noted different perspectives considering the association of activity, passivity, and happiness. For example, a study of personality and pleasurable emotions found a link between extraversion, including action-oriented traits, and higher levels of enthusiasm and vigor (Berenbaum, & Chow et al., 2016). In addition, there are studies on personality and academic achievement indicating conscientiousness, where active involvement is a part, consistently predicts academic success and well-being (Andersen, & Gensowski, et al., 2020).

Enthusiasm as an emotional well-being dimension studied such a relationship with academic achievements and happiness. The tracking study of mature students through their first semester in university suggested that enthusiasm could predict how actively students engaged in learning and their success in that semester (Geertshuis, 2018).

The relation between assertiveness with happiness was studied. Mediation analysis using a bifactor model suggested that assertiveness and related traits like activity, and sensation-seeking have a limited effect on subjective happiness, with positivity playing a key mediating role (Lauriola & Lani, 2017). This tends to suggest that whereas assertiveness might not have a direct influence on happiness, it influences the general feel-good factor, which culminates in well-being.

The dimension of suspiciousness and trustfulness has sometimes received neglect in the view of a happiness-carrying disposition. Studies have often characterized the mold as an association between schizotypal personality traits and emotional instability among Chinese students. Some of these traits-their flagrant suspiciousness-appear correlated with emotional instability leading to decreased happiness (Liu, & Yang, et al., 2021).

Depressive traits affect happiness negatively. A study on hedonic and eudaimonic motives among urban college students showed that participants motivated by eudaimonic reasons, which are usually related to non-depressive traits, reported lower levels of internal depression and stress, thus affecting their overall happiness (Kryza-Lacombe, Tanzini, & O'Neill, 2018). This study suggested that neuroticism, which was often associated with the features of depression, served as a general factor of negative emotionality and also downplayed subjective happiness (Lauriola & Lani, 2017). The results of a study confirmed that emotional stability correlates positively with happiness among college students. Studies suggest that emotionally stable adolescents assume a more favorable degree of happiness while reporting lower symptoms of depression and anxiety (Diaconu-Gherasim, & Mardari, 2021).

Research done on art vocational and technical college students during the period of epidemic prevention and control found an important link between emotional stability and mental health. One thing that the study revealed is that emotional awareness plays an important mediating role between neuroticism and mental health (Chen, 2023). Another study indicates that emotional stability consistently predicts academic performance and overall well-being during both childhood and adolescence (Andersen, & Gensowski, et al., 2020).

Objectives

1. To explore how the Activity-Passivity trait is associated with Happiness in college students.
2. To examine the connection between Enthusiastic and Non-Enthusiastic traits and levels of Happiness among college students.
3. To assess the link between Assertive and Submissive personality traits and Happiness in college students.
4. To investigate how Suspicious and Trusting traits influence Happiness among college students.
5. To analyze the association between Depressive and Non-Depressive traits and Happiness in college students.
6. To study the impact of Emotional Instability versus Stability on Happiness in college students.

Hypotheses

1. There would be a significant relationship between Activity-Passivity traits and happiness among college students.
2. There would be a significant relationship between Enthusiastic-Non-Enthusiastic traits and happiness among college students.

3. There would be a significant relationship between Assertive-Submissive traits and happiness among college students.
4. There would be a significant relationship between Suspicious-Trusting traits and happiness among college students.
5. There would be a significant relationship between Depressive-Non-Depressive traits and happiness among college students.
6. There would be a significant relationship between Emotional Instability-Emotional Stability traits and happiness among college students.

Method

Sample

The study was conducted with 70 college-going students (35 boys and 35 girls), aged 18-24 years, who were drawn from a Government College, in Kota, Rajasthan. Purposive sampling was employed while selecting participants as per the research aims. All participants provided informed consent before entering the study. Some demographic details, like age, gender, and the year of study, were recorded to ensure student variance.

Psychological Measures

The Dimensional Personality Inventory (DPI), developed by Mahesh Bhargava in 2006: It has been constructed to investigate six key parameters of personality. These parameters include: 1. Activity versus Passivity; 2. Enthusiastic versus non-enthusiastic; 3. Assertive versus submissive; 4. Suspicious versus trusting; 5. Depressive versus non-depressive; 6. Emotional instability versus emotional stability. The instrument contains 60 items, while each dimension has 10 items. The respondents answer each item by choosing one of three

options: Yes, unsure, and No, scoring two, one, and zero respectively. Thus, the total score can theoretically range anywhere between zero and 120. Reliability coefficients for the dimensions are considered: activity and passivity (0.74), enthusiastic and non-enthusiastic (0.69), assertive and submissive (0.79), suspicious and trusting (0.82), depressive and non-depressive (0.66), and emotional instability and emotional stability (0.84).

Happiness Scale developed by Dr. R.L. Bharadwaj and Dr. Poonam R. Das (2017): This scale comprises 28 items of the following five types: Greater Happiness, High Happiness, Average, Less Happiness, and Unhappiness. This scale aims to identify those persons who might benefit from psychodiagnostic assistance and whose state of happiness is quite low. Subject responses are indicated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 constituting the best score, but several stimulus items are reversed (6, 9, 10, and 14). Testing can be done individually or in groups, thus enhancing the scale's flexibility, which implicitly allows for rapid responses. Reliability is ensured with the test-retest ($r = .71$) and split-half ($r = .74$ to $.79$) methods, while the validity ranges from $.84$ to $.88$.

Statistical Analysis

The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as mean scores and standard deviations, offered a summarization of the performance of the Dimensional Personality Inventory (DPI) and the Happiness Scale (H-scale). Correlation analyses based on the Pearson correlation coefficient analyzed the relationships between personality traits and scores of happiness. Insights into these relationships were shared regarding the strength of the relationship and direction of the association between some specified personality traits of college students influencing levels of happiness.

Results

Descriptive Statistics: The descriptive statistics for the variables under study, including the Happiness Scale and the Dimensional Personality Inventory (DPI), are summarized in Table 1. This table provides a detailed comparison of the mean scores, standard deviations, and other relevant measures for female and male students, highlighting potential differences between the two groups:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Females		Males	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Personality I	14.46	2.89	16.49	2.72
Traits II	13.60	3.67	14.89	3.57
III	10.34	3.98	10.34	3.06
IV	7.31	4.78	5.17	4.72
V	7.69	4.50	4.34	5.10
VI	11.66	4.95	7.23	3.75
Happiness	120.29	17.36	113.31	10.91

Correlation Coefficient: The Correlation coefficient between Happiness and Personality Traits among Female and Male students is shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Correlation Analysis Between Personality Traits and Happiness among Female and Male Students

Variable	Happiness Correlation Coefficient	
	Females	Males
Personality I	0.29*	-0.04*
Traits II	0.10*	0.22*
III	-0.11*	0.24*
IV	0.09*	0.21*
V	-0.27*	-0.06*
VI	-0.19*	-0.04*

*Not Significant

Discussion

The relationship between personality traits and happiness has received considerable attention, especially concerning college students, where both developmental and psychological factors play an essential role. Personality characteristics shape how individuals perceive and experience happiness, with distinct differences often linked to gender and personal attributes. This study sought to investigate the connections between specific personality traits – Activity versus Passivity, Enthusiasm versus Non-enthusiasm, Assertiveness versus Submissiveness, Suspiciousness versus Trust, Depressive versus Non-depressive traits, and Emotional Stability versus Instability – and levels of happiness among college students. The research posited that there would be significant correlations between these traits and overall happiness levels. The results revealed noticeable gender disparities in both happiness scores and associated personality traits; consequently, the outcomes yielded a combination of validated theories along with some ambiguous findings concerning the initial hypotheses.

When examining happiness scores more closely, it was found that both male and female students generally fell into the “Greater Happiness” category; however, variations were evident in their percentile distributions. Males scoring 125 ranked in the 95th percentile while females with the same score positioned in the 80th percentile yet remained within this “Greater Happiness” classification. Male students tended to cluster at higher levels of reported happiness compared to female students who displayed a wider range across different percentiles. Specifically, approximately 70% of males scoring from 110 to 112 qualified for the “High Happiness” category; conversely, females achieving around a score of 119 also fit within this same range. Regarding individuals

classified as having "Average Happiness," scores for both genders appeared similar; nevertheless, there were typically more female representatives situated mostly within the 40th to 60th percentile. In terms of those categorized under "Less Happiness" or "Unhappiness," declines in reported joy occurred for both genders but manifested similarly throughout the lower percentiles ranging from 10th to 20th.

The analysis of personality traits demonstrated clearer gender differences. Female students displayed higher levels of Activity and Enthusiasm, with 60.1% and 65.7%, respectively, compared to 33% and over 52% of males. Passivity among males was shown to dominate within several traits, 60% of males in Trait V showing "High" or "Very-Most" passivity, contrasting with a more balanced distribution among females. This pattern indicates that among those traits in which both sexes scored similarly, females tend to be more active and enthusiastic, as male students lean more towards passivity and submissiveness.

Correlation analysis of happiness and personality traits resulted in positive and negative associations across gender. Among male students the Activity-Passivity trait showed a moderate positive relationship to happiness ($r = 0.2875$), hence supporting the first hypothesis that higher levels of Activity would correlate positively with happiness. Hypothesis one is accepted for males at a moderate strength of association. Conversely, the second hypothesis, concerning the Enthusiasm-Non-enthusiastic trait, was not supported as strongly as the correlation was weak ($r = 0.0998$), implying a very small effect on happiness. The third hypothesis, which looked at the Assertiveness-Submissiveness dimension, had slight support with a small negative correlation ($r = -0.1091$). Similarly, the Suspiciousness-Trust trait correlated weakly with happiness ($r = 0.0925$), indicating that

there was a minimal connection and that the fourth hypothesis should be rejected. The fifth hypothesis stating that higher levels on the Depressive-Non-depressive dimension correlate with lower levels of happiness was, therefore, proved to be correct with a quite strong negative correlation of -0.2766 among male students. Finally, emotional instability showed a moderate negative correlation of -0.1952 verifying the sixth hypothesis, although this was not as strong as could be expected.

The female students displayed positive coefficients for Enthusiastic-Non-enthusiastic, Assertive-Submissive, and Suspicious-Trusting to be 0.222, 0.244, and 0.216, respectively. However, the anticipated positive relations between the traits of enthusiasm, assertiveness, and trust in relationship to happiness did not approach statistical significance either at the 0.05 or 0.01 level. This implies that while there are suggestive positive relationships, they did not attain the level of sufficient strength needed to unambiguously support the first three hypotheses.

On the other hand, the attributes Activity-Passivity, Depressive-Non-depressive, and Emotional Instability-Stability yielded negative correlation coefficients of -0.044 , -0.068 , and -0.037 , respectively. Negative values indicate two things: firstly, the frequent inclination of the person with these traits to depressive behavior, activity, or emotional instability, and secondly, and similar to the above traits, these correlations have yet to prove statistically significant.

In sum, the hypothesis does not hold normative and scientifically significant relationships between traits on one hand, and happiness on the other hand, and therefore it does not hold with regard to the neatness and neatness so often assumed in this population. There are other conceptual variables that most likely play stronger roles

than subjective personality traits in causing happiness amongst college students, and this opens up a whole new area of interesting investigation on the interplay of various psychological and environmental variables with well-being.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The present study holds several limitations. The sample size may not be large enough to truly be representative of the characteristics of the whole student population. Furthermore, the use of self-reported measures may potentially introduce some biases in the data. The research's cross-sectional nature further restricts conclusions about the causal relationships between personality traits and happiness. These shortcomings should be addressed in future studies meant to extend to larger, more heterogeneous samples, and long-term methodologies, and introduce external influences, such as social support and stress. Exploring the sociocultural and socioeconomic differences will afford yet a deeper understanding. Experimental studies targeting interventions specific to certain personality traits may yield invaluable information in enhancing student well-being.

Conclusion

In summary, the research emphasizes the complex relationship between personality patterns and happiness in college students and focuses on the main differences determined by gender. Whilst some traits, for instance, Enthusiasm and Assertiveness, had positive relations to happiness, such as Depression and Emotional Instability traits were negatively related. Most male students are likely more passive and more unhappy with traits of submissiveness and emotional instability, whereas female students show high activity and enthusiasm, which have been more positively correlated to happiness. Such findings suggest that personality traits

are actually factors that have correlations to happiness but certainly, they are not the sole factors, and there might also be other elements at play concerning the general welfare of college students.

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Nidhi Meena, Associate Professor, Psychology, Govt. Arts Girls College, Kota. 324001
nidhimina@gmail.com

Neha Kalia, Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan, 302004. nkkalia99@gmail.com

Chiya Jaiswal, Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan. 302004.studypsychologywithchiya@gmail.com

O.P. Sharma, Head & Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan. 302004. opbrd65@gmail.com