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A Statistical Evidence on How Happiness Alters in Different Stages of Life According to the Hamburger Model of Happiness

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Abstract: The science of happiness has been an interesting research topic over the past decades. Chief among others is the hamburger model of happiness proposed by Tal Ben-Shahar which portrays four different types of people who deal with pain and pleasure differently: hedonism (live for the present enjoyment), rat race (live for the future), nihilism (live in the past sorrow), and happiness (live with a well-balanced goal). The objectives of this quantitative study are twofold. First, it aimed to provide statistical support for the theoretical perspective of the model. Second, it developed a questionnaire to survey how people in different educational backgrounds: school students, university students, and professionals, perceive the four types of happiness. Thus, an online survey using the 5-Likert scale with 151 respondents was carried out. A correlational analysis revealed statistical support for the model that there were negative correlations between rat racers and hedonists, and between happiness and nihilists, while positive correlations between rat racing and happiness, and between hedonism and nihilism, existed. In addition, descriptive statistics showed that the respondents across the three educational backgrounds are prone to hold the stance of happiness, followed by rat race, hedonism and nihilism, respectively. Last but not least, it is interesting to see that the level of rat race (lives with no pain no gain motto) becomes more intensified statistically when they are in a profession, whereas, this is the lowest among student respondents. This study therefore recommends the use of this model to explore how people perceive happiness by offering additional evidence to its validity from a statistical perspective and suggests the usefulness of the model in explaining how happiness alters in different stages of life.

Keywords: Hamburger model, Happiness, Hedonism, Rat racing, Nihilism

Introduction

It does not seem uncommon that happiness is one of the essential characteristics of individuals to live a life during the 21st century with a feeling of joy, satisfaction, contentment, and fulfillment driven by positive emotions and life satisfaction (Argyle, 2013). That aforementioned emotional state has been adopted in the psychological field as various theoretical methods to change subjectivity more objectively. Traditionally, an exceptional psychology framework is the hamburger model of happiness which depicts four different types of people who have clear different attitudes and behaviour (Tal Ben-Shahar, 2007). Little curiosity has been made to find how people perceive the level of happiness in the sense of age's experiences based on a theoretical point of view. Likewise, there is a shortage of empirical evidence to support this interrelationship between types of happiness in this psychological framework. Therefore, there are two aims in this quantitative exploration. First and foremost, it investigates how different educational backgrounds alter the level of happiness; the context being focused on school students, university students, and professionals, and how they develop happiness through the ages and educational backgrounds. Second, it seeks to provide numerical support for the hamburger model of happiness that types of happiness are associated with both theoretically and statistically.

Besides the discussion of theory, correlational tests were adopted to provide empirical evidence that types of happiness have correlated to each other as well as t-tests were used to reveal the attitude of happiness in three

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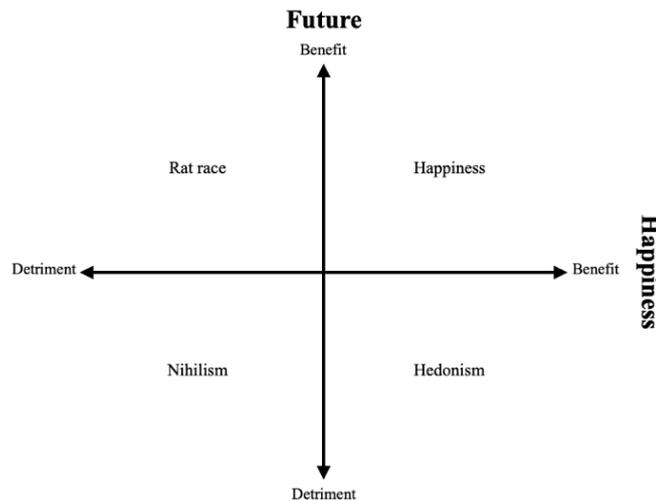
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educational backgrounds if there were significant differences between the two of them. Results from this investigation raise awareness that in every stage of life, it is essential; people should be pleased with their things, not only the destination but progression also.

The Hamburger Model of Happiness

Tal Ben-Shahar's happiness model emphasizes that one's alternatives will bring direct pleasure. Ben-Shahar connects 'hamburger' with delicious and pleasure and identifies four types of 'hamburgers.' The Hamburger Model demonstrates how we fluctuate between nutritious-harmful alternatives. The Hamburger Model divides the four practices to deal with pleasure.

Figure 1: The four types of people according to the Happiness model



A 'hedonist' is someone who tries to increase pleasure and decrease pain. It has resembled the 'junk food burger' which is delicious but harmful. Hedonism people relatively habitually think of a life filled only with present pleasure without any pain. Hedonism is a way of life described by directness to pleasurable understanding (Veenhoven, 2003). To consider pleasure from a hedonistic perspective, they focus on being pleased in the present while overlooking the negative future outcomes of their behaviors. Additionally, they choose to do whatever their feelings desire to get their pleasure each day. For example, 'hedonist' people gain pleasure from relaxing on the sofa, enjoying a delicious meal, or partying like a rock star. They prefer to enjoy short-term satisfying activities that do not have an advantage over long-term goals. 'Hedonist' people only think about what is good for them, which maintains most pleasure over pain (Weijers, 2012).

'Rat race' who always live their life arrangement for the future. It is the same as the 'vegetarian burger' which is nutritious but not delicious. 'Rat race' people who start to think that pleasure is something they can only accomplish in the future, and they possibly would not appreciate it during the method of working as they sacrifice their present pleasure and expect wealth and all achievements will come. 'Rat race' people might participate like rat racers for higher incomes due to the rivalry for relative standing and overlooking the environmental disturbance effects (Ng, 2002). The 'rat race' is profoundly disappointed and unsure where this goal ends, as there is continually the next goal to achieve.

A 'Nihilist' is someone who believes that their life has no meaning and all systems are bad, as they already have given up on pleasure. It is similar to the 'worst burger' which is both absolutely tasteless and unhealthy. This type regularly gives up on the present and the future and stays in their present sadness, and assumes the end to be just the same. They have no control over their own lives. Most of them become committed to their past catastrophes and generalize these failures to the present and future. They think that nothing they can do will make them pleased. 'Nihilism' people understand that all the pleasure has been pulled out of life. They do not look at the goal because they hold on to the misleading belief that pleasure cannot be faced.

'Happiness' who always believes that present actions provide pleasure, while they put the basis for a satisfying and significant future. The last burger is the 'ideal burger' which is both delicious and nutritious as well as provides us with numerous advantages. 'Happiness' people have made achievements and goals in their life. Tal Ben-Shahar identifies 'happiness' as the understanding of pleasure, and a 'happiness' person appreciates positive emotions. 'Happiness' people realize both present value as well as future value (Tal Ben-Shahar, 2009). 'Happiness' people are learning a life strategy and cannot be an accurate way. They have often been perceived as the good and habitually seem to have been involved with developing a fundamental value (Chekola, 1974). The correlational tests are used to prove the hamburger model of happiness from the theoretical perspectives. Also, those descriptive statistics provide empirical evidence that four types of people are correlated with each type statistically. What are statistical correlations between the four types of happiness according to the Hamburger Model? What are the differences in happiness among the participants who have different educational backgrounds?

Methodology

A self-filling online questionnaire was distributed through social media in Thailand. All 151 responses were received which divided people into three educational backgrounds consisting of school students (44.4%), university students (10.6%) followed by professionals (35.8%), and 9.3% was the remaining number of people who were excluded from these three types of educational backgrounds. The method of recruiting people was a convenience sampling method that took information from those who appreciated and were willing to participate in this self-filling online questionnaire between March 14, 2021 and April 1, 2021. Also, participants took no longer than 5 minutes to fill in the questions anonymously. They were informed about the purpose of this study before the procedure of filling the form so that their assumed consent could be implied.

This survey included 14 questionnaires consisting of 2 multiple-choice questions that were asked about their educational backgrounds and 12 questionnaire statements measured by a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (scale 1) to strongly agree (scale 5). The statements were divided into four categories (three for each), Rat race, Happiness, Nihilism and Hedonism. The order of these statements was shuffled due to preventing memorisation of characteristics format that had been produced. In the procedure of filling the form, participants will be able to choose only one out of five choices that present the level of strength of an attitude.

The online survey was closed when the number of respondents reached 151. The data that had been collected were used in the analysing process. Before analysing the data, the complete data was prepared by checking for the missing data and outliers. Pearson's correlation coefficients, mean scores, standard deviation and T-tests were the statistical method that was used to analyse the data. The statements that belong to the same category were averaged using mean scores which enabled correlation between types of happiness to be analysed, as well as enabled t-tests used to determine if there was a significant difference between the means of two types out of four different educational backgrounds. To determine the values, a 95% level of significance could be assumed (Kim, 2012).

The interpretation of correlation coefficients was based on Mukaka (2012) in which values between 0.3 and 0.5, 0.5 and 0.7, 0.7 and 0.9, and those values above 0.9 represent weak, moderate, strong, and very strong correlations, respectively; whereas, those below 0.3 are considered negligible correlation. However, where appropriate, this study points out a possible tendency of related variables, even though the values are lower than 0.3 for the purpose of discussion, without having intention to generalise the findings.

Results and Discussion

According to Table 1, statistical tests to reveal the strength of association presented a weak negative correlation between Rat race and Hedonism ($r = -0.1$) and between Happiness and Nihilism ($r = -0.2$). These statistical findings interestingly relate to the theoretical perspective of the hamburger model of Happiness. To be more precise, all of Rat race and Hedonism as well as Happiness and Nihilism, are located in the exact opposite quadrant which mean they are completely different in the definition. Likewise, the analysis revealed that there was a weak positive correlation between Rat race and Happiness ($r = 0.4$), between Rat race and Nihilism ($r = 0.3$), and between Hedonism and Nihilism ($r = 0.5$). The rationale behind this is that they are located in the adjacent quadrant, which means they have some matching characteristics.

Table 1. Correlation coefficients between types of happiness based on the hamburger model of happiness

Types of happiness	Hedonism	Happiness	Nihilism
Rat race	-0.1	0.4	0.3
Hedonism		-0.2	0.5
Happiness			-0.2

A piece of ample evidence to support this justification is Rat race and Happiness, according to the definition, even if they have different attitudes of the progression to reach the goal but both are seeking for the future benefits and their destination have to be achieved. Similarly, the identical characteristic of Rat race and Nihilism is found in present detriment because both have no seeking happiness at a present moment; Hedonism and Nihilism are also matching in future detriment. However, the last unpredicted correlation between Happiness and Hedonism show a weak negative correlation; the assumption underlying this is that their present benefits of these two types are obviously different; while the present action of Happiness is for their future benefits, Hedonism, however, their present benefits could lead to negative consequences in the future. For example, Happiness person who is studying for a doctorate, tries to adopt a work-life balance during his study; this would provide future benefits in terms of reducing stress as well as being more relaxed from his studies (Lockwood, Nancy R, 2003). In contrast, a hedonist who seeks pleasure and avoids pain, having tobacco used to increase a feeling of pleasure for a moment and not consider its disadvantages would have detrimental repercussions in the long run (Bergström et al., 1994).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics results based on three educational backgrounds and types of happiness

Category	Rat race		Hedonism		Happiness		Nihilism	
	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.
School	3.15	0.85	2.83	0.74	4.20	0.74	2.16	0.86
University	3.58	0.76	2.92	1.06	4.33	0.75	2.56	1.12
Professional	3.62	0.73	2.52	0.97	4.37	0.72	2.42	1.08

According to table 2, after the mean score and standard deviation are analysed, the type of happiness based on the hamburger model contains the highest mean score is Happiness, followed by Rat race, Hedonism and Nihilism. Focusing on Happiness, the data analysis revealed that the mean score of Happiness in professional among other types of educational backgrounds in Happiness was statistically the highest ($x = 4.37$) followed by the mean score of Happiness in university ($x = 4.33$) and the mean scores of Happiness in school ($x = 4.20$). It is encouraging to see among the 151 participants that they tend to possess a Happiness type. Our point of view in this matter is Happiness is an ideal characteristic. To be Happiness, People with this type of personality need to have better time management than Rat racers since they can deal with stress and still maintain their happiness during their process of a journey. In addition, one of the most essential characteristics of these types of people is a positive attitude. This personality can let go of inconsequential situations and do not consider them (Hiew, 2004). Thus, Happiness is the most challenging type of happiness.

Apart from this, the statistical results after t-tests analysing, the only one type of happiness that has a significant change in different educational backgrounds is Rat race while others do not have considerable change among three educational experiences. To be more precise, according to table 3, there was a statistical difference between school students and Professionals in Rat race ($p = 0.00$) at the significant level of 95%. Whereas, there were no significant differences between school students and university students ($p = 0.06$) as well as university students and professionals ($p = 0.88$) in Rat race at the confidence level of 95%. These inferential statistics show that there is an increasing level of rat race between school students and professionals. The rationale behind this is that the older they are, they have to become more considerate about their future in order to prevent any consequences from their present action. To elaborate Rat racer in a greater depth, Rat race is a way of life in which people passionately struggle for wealth and happiness, completely ignoring the journey. Hence, Rat race becomes more intensified substantially when they are in professions. However, Rat racers are able to cope with stress and depression better than other types of happiness due to the fact that they have a well-organised future that will decrease the amount of stress (Davis et al., 2008). In addition, the characteristics of resilient people include stress resistance (Glick, 2006); therefore, it claims that Rat Racers who ignore the journey and focus only on the final destination must have a high tolerance to stress and depression.

Recommendations can be made for Rat race who ‘Work now, play later’. It is suggested that, in every stage of life, people should have life satisfaction and be pleased with their things (Huebner et al., 2006), it is essential to have a sustainable lifestyle as well as balance between work and live a life or known as ‘Work-life balance’. This descriptive theory is a state of equilibrium where a person equally prioritizes the demands of one’s career

and the demands of one's personal life (Delecta, 2011). Rat race characteristics match some of the reasons that lead to a poor work-life balance, such as working longer hours or increased responsibilities at work. Furthermore, according to the definition of happiness, happiness is the overall feeling and pleasure and meaning (Feldman, 2010). It is unnecessary that humans have to possess everything they desire, but it is more important to live a life with enthusiasm and a joy to reach the ideal of happiness.

Conclusion

To summarise this study into a conclusion, this study provides statistical support for the hamburger model of happiness. Also, this study is the investigation of statistical evidence on the level of happiness in three different educational backgrounds: school students, university students, and professionals. A self-administered online survey used 151 respondents to answer 12 questionnaires using a 5-point Likert scale. As a result, a correlation test revealed that it had reasonable value to support this psychological framework. There were weak positive correlations between Rat race and happiness, between Rat race and Nihilism, and between Hedonism and Nihilism; this is because some characteristics of those types match each other. In contrast, there were weak negative correlations between Rat race and Hedonism, between Happiness and Nihilism, and an unpredicted correlation between Happiness and Hedonism; the rationale behind this is that some characteristics are entirely different and provide opposite meanings. Also, mean scores show that, of all three educational backgrounds, they likely want to be Happiness among other types of happiness. Apart from this, t-test analysing provides statistical evidence for Rat race that there is a significant change from school to a career while between other educational experiences have no considerable change. This is due to the fact that when they become older, they become more considerate about the future. Surprisingly, people obsessed with Rat race have more 'stress resistance', a characteristic of resilient people to cope with stress and depression, than other types of happiness. It is suggested that people should have life satisfaction and be pleased with their things. Likewise, 'Work-life balance' can be adopted to equilibrate between one's career and one's personal life in Rat racers.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

The author declares that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPHELS journal belongs to the author.

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