

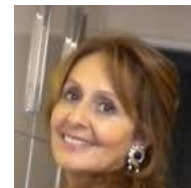


## Happiness Level of Teachers and Analyzing its Relation with Some Variables

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### Abstract

Happy and successful societies are possible through training of healthy, happy and successful individuals. Responsibility of raising healthy happy and successful individuals belongs to parents as well as teachers. The purpose of this research is to determine the factors that differentiate happiness of teachers who work at primary, secondary and high school levels and to present the necessary suggestions for raising happier individuals. In addition, due to lack of research focused on happiness of teachers, the aim is also to contribute to the literature. Sample space consists of 448 teachers, who are teaching in elementary, middle school and high school levels, working in 36 different schools. The happiness scores of the teachers were generally higher than average and it is concluded that the teachers' happiness scores did not differ significantly according to age, marital status, number of children, seniority and income levels. However, there is a significant difference in happiness scores of teachers who are willing to go to school and teachers who are unwilling to go to school.

**Keywords:** Happiness, Teacher, School, Happy, Primary school, Secondary school, High school.

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## 1. Introduction

Happy and successful societies are possible through training of healthy, happy and successful individuals. When the education programs of schools are examined, especially those of the first years, educating healthy, happy and successful individuals is determined as the most ultimate goal among other purposes. (Basic Law of National Education No. 1739).

Responsibility of raising healthy happy and successful individuals belongs to parents and as well as teachers. Especially children between 0-6 years old take their parents as role models. Therefore, happy parents and happy teachers play crucial role in raising happy individuals.

Education system aims to train healthy, happy and successful individuals regardless of their profession (Basic Law of National Education No. 1739). However, happy and peaceful teachers are an important factor in raising happy individuals.

In almost every society and culture, the concept of happiness, which is considered as the aim of life, includes concepts such as "life satisfaction", "being healthy", "flow", "subjective well-being", "optimism" and "positive emotions", and sometimes they are used interchangeably (Harju and Bolen, 1998; Diener *et al.*, 2003; Eryilmaz, 2012).

"Life Satisfaction" can be expressed as how satisfied the individual is Veenhoven (1996). The concept of "Life Satisfaction" expresses what one is doing and being pleased with his/her life, and it describes subjective well-being. "Subjective well-being" is a general term describing both life satisfaction and happiness. "Flow", which is a related term with happiness, expresses that the individual has a pleasant time to understand how time is spent during an activity he / she especially wants. Furthermore, one should be active for the "flow". "Optimism", which is a term that is part of being happy, focuses on being positive about tomorrow and having hopes towards future

To summarize, individuals who are satisfied with their lives, feeling good, being optimistic and having positive expectations about future are considered as happy people. Therefore, teachers should have these attributes so that they can be role model to their students.

On the other hand, happiness of students do not always depend on teacher. There are other factors affecting students' happiness.

Parental attitudes and behaviors, environment, whether basic needs are met, physical and mental health are important factors. For example, there are studies showing that 39% of personality traits are decisive in happiness (Myers and Diener, 1995; Steel *et al.*, 2008).

Recent research on the causes of happiness related to neurological and hormonal tendency may suggest that teachers have a limited role in educating happy individuals (Knutson *et al.*, 2005).

However, studies showing how such factors like family, teachers and relationship with environment affect children's happiness put more responsibility on parents, child caregivers and teachers (Uusitalo-Malvimaara and Lehto, 2012).

If being optimistic and hopeful, in other words, being happy, is something that can be learned, teachers should make the necessary efforts in this regard (Rolls *et al.*, 2003; Kubzansky *et al.*, 2004). Research showing that considering being healthy as blessing and that constantly remembering and listing the things that will bring happiness increase the level of happiness is important in terms of demonstrating the cognitive dimension of happiness and proving that it can be learned (Emmons and Shelton, 2002).

Today, positive psychology-based intervention programs are particularly effective in the happiness of adolescent children (Shoshani and Steinmetz, 2013). All these studies show that teachers have an important role in raising happy individuals in the education system.

Research showing that there are significant relationships between students' happiness and academic achievement suggest that being happy plays an important role in academic achievement (Huebner, 1991; Huebner and Alderman, 1993; Cheng and Furnham, 2002). Therefore, teachers should give their children an optimistic and hopeful point of view so they can be happy with small things.

To sum up, in order to raise happy and successful children, happy, peaceful and calm teachers who can be a role model for their students are needed, especially from the first years of their education. In addition, as happiness is something that can be learned, teachers have more responsibility in this respect.

The purpose of this research is to determine the factors that differentiate the happiness of teachers who work at primary, secondary and high school levels and to present the necessary suggestions for raising the happier individuals. In addition, due to lack of research focused on the happiness of teachers, the aim is also to contribute to the literature.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Sample

Sample space consists of 448 teachers, who are teaching in elementary, middle school and high school levels, working in 36 different schools in Foça and Dikili district of İzmir, Turkey. "Oxford Happiness Scale" is used to collect data (Hills and Argyle, 2002). "Oxford Happiness Scale" has 29 items and participants answered each item based on a scale 1 to 6 (1- strongly disagree; 6-strongly agree). For statistical analysis of data, Mann-Whitney U test, One-Way Anova, Levene Statistics, Independent Samples T-test and Group Variations Homogeneity Test are used.

#### 2.1.1. The Following Questions are asked in Our Research

1. General happiness level of teachers. What are the issues that make teachers happy and unhappy according to the items in the Happiness Scale?
2. What are the factors affecting teachers' happiness?

Does happiness of teachers change according to the variables below?

\* Gender

\*Marital status

- \*Number of children
- \* Service Time
- \* Occupation of their spouse
- \*total income level
- \*Willingness to come to work
- \*Willingness to do their job

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. General Happiness Level of Teachers. What are the Issues that Make Teachers Happy and Unhappy According to the Items in the Happiness Scale?

On “Oxford Happiness Scale”, 18 of 29 items are designed as positive and 11 of them are designated as negative items. According to this, the high score received from the positive items indicates the high level of happiness and high score received from the negative items indicates high level of unhappiness.

Table 1 and Table 2 show scores that are received from positive items and negative items respectively. In both tables, scores are ranked from highest to the lowest point.

As it can be seen from Table 1, teachers received 3.5 or above scores from positive items.

Table-1. Averages that Teachers Receive from Positive Items on Oxford Happiness Scale

Positive items	Average	Std. Dev
20. Feeling able to take any responsibility in any matter	4,69	1,167
9. Life is beautiful	4,67	1,141
16. I notice beauty around me	4,67	1,130
8. Being interested in what they do and devoting them selves.	4,65	1,145
2. Being very interested in other people	4,37	1,869
26.Usually, I have a positive effect on events	4,35	1,015
22. I am usually cheerful and happy	4,21	1,099
17. I always leave a cheerful effect on other people	4,07	1,123
25. I feel quite energetic	4,06	1,216
21.Mentally I feel completely fit	4,05	1,283
11.I am very smiling.	4,04	1,171
15. I am vey happy	3,96	1,177
4. I have very warm feelings against almost everyone.	3,87	1,253
12. I am quite happy with everything in my life.	3,79	1,235
7. I find many things fun.	3,76	1,231
18. I can save time for everything I want to do.	3,57	1,250
3. I think life is quite rewarding.	3,56	1,391
5. I wake up as fully rest in every morning.	3,52	1,441

These scores indicate general happiness level of teachers is above avarage. The top five subjects that make teachers happy are “Feeling able to take any responsibility in any matter”, “ Finding life beautiful”, “Noticing beauty around them”, “Being interested in what they do and devoting themselves”, “Being very interested in other people”

As can be seen from Table 2, teachers received low average points with the highest score 3.02. These scores indicate that unhappiness level of teachers are below average. The top 5 subjects that make teachers unhappy are as follows; “There is a big difference between what they do and what they want to do”, “Difficulties in deciding on any subject”, “They are not optimistic about their future”, “Feeling like they're not in control of their lives”, “Thinking that the world is a good place”

Table-2. Averages that Teachers Received from the Negative Items on Oxford Happiness Scale

Negative Items	Average	Std. Dev
14. There is a big difference between what I see and what I want to	3,02	1,395
23. I have trouble deciding on any subject.	2,88	1,406
6. I'm not very optimistic about my future.	2,85	1,616
19. I feel like I can't control my life.	2,82	1,413
10. I don't think the world is a good place.	2,64	1,553
13. I don't think I'm attractive.	2,33	1,262
28. I don't feel very healthy.	2,31	1,261
29. I don't have many happy memories about my past.	2,20	1,348
27. I don't enjoy being with other people	1,96	1,184
1. I'm not happy with myself.	1,79	1,311
24. My life does not have a certain purpose and meaning.	1,74	1,148

#### 3.2. What Are the Factors Affecting Teacher's Happiness?

Difference tests are applied to determine whether happiness scores of teachers are changing according to different factors such as gender, age, marital status, number of children, seniority, occupation of spouse, income, willingness to come to school, willingness to do the job of teaching.

Difference tests are applied by taking the average of 29 items on Oxford Happiness Scale. When average is calculated, the answers given to the 11 negative item on the scale are reversed (item numbers: 1, 6, 10, 13, 14, 19, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29)

### 3.2.a. Does Happiness of Teachers Change Based on Gender?

Happiness level of teachers based on gender are compared by independent t-test. According to results, there is no statistical difference between happiness scores of male and female teachers ( $t = -1,469$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ; see also. [Table 3](#))

**Table-3.** Difference in Happiness Based on Gender

	Cinsiyet	N	Average	ss	t	sd	p
Happiness	Female	299	4,32	0,60	-1,469	443	,143
	Male	146	4,22	0,74			

### 3.2.b. Does Happiness of Teachers Change Based on Age?

Ages are categorized in 4 groups (20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50 and above). As there are at least 30 teachers in each group, average happiness scores of age groups are compared by one-way ANOVA.

Before one-way ANOVA is applied, variations homogeneity test is applied to the age groups. As variations are determined as homogeneous, (Levene Statistics = 1,016;  $sd1 = 3$ ;  $sd2 = 437$ ;  $p > 0,05$ , see also. [Table 4](#)) F test is applied.

According to the results, there is no statistical difference between average happiness scores of teachers with different age group. ( $F = 1,044$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ; see also. [Table 5](#)).

**Table-4.** Variations Homogeneity Tests For Different Age Groups

	Levene Statistic	sd1	sd2	p
Happiness	1,016	3	437	,385

**Table-5.** Difference in Happiness based on age groups

	Age	N	Average	ss	F	p
Happiness	20-29 years old	54	4,36	,593	1,044	,373
	30-39 years old	162	4,31	,656		
	40-49 years old	147	4,21	,642		
	50 and above	78	4,32	,701		

### 3.2.c. Does Happiness of Teachers Change Based on Marital Status?

Marital status of teachers is categorized in 3 groups (single, married and divorced). The happiness scores of marital status groups were compared with Kruskal-Wallis test which is the non-parametric alternative of one-way ANOVA because of the unbalanced distribution of the number of participants in the groups.

According to the results, there is no statistical difference between average order scores (Ki Square = 2,043;  $p > 0,05$ ; bkz. [Table 6](#)).

**Table-6.** Differences in Happiness Based on Marital Status

	Marital Status	N	Average Order Scores	Ki Square	sd	p
Happiness	Single	48	219,55	2,043	2	,360
	Married	371	225,23			
	Divorced	25	187,60			

### 3.2.d. Does Happiness of Teachers Change Based on Number of Children?

The number of children of teachers are categorized in 4 groups (0-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9 and above). Because of the unbalanced distribution of the number of participants in the groups, the happiness values of the two groups with children between 0-2 and 3-5 were compared with the Mann-Whitney U test, which is the non-parametric alternative of t-test.

The results Show that there is no statistically significant difference between happiness average scores based on number of children that teachers have.

**Table-7.** Happiness Difference Based On Number Of Children.

	Number of Children	N	Average Order Scores	Mann-Whitney U	p
Happiness	0-2 Child	311	166,97	3410,500	,981
	3-5 Child	22	167,48		

### 3.2.e. Does Happiness of Teachers Change Based on Seniority?

Seniority of teachers are categorized in 6 groups (0-5, 5-10, 10-15, 15-20, 20-25, 25 and above). Since there are at least 30 teachers in each group, average happiness scores of each group are compared by one-way ANOVA.

Before one-way ANOVA is applied, variations homogeneity test is applied to each seniority category. As variations are determined as homogeneous, F test is applied. (Levene Statistic = 0,653;  $sd1 = 5$ ;  $sd2 = 440$ ;  $p > 0,05$ , bkz. [Table 8](#))

According to results, there is no significant difference between happiness scores of teachers in different seniority group.

**Table-8.** Variations Homogeneity Test For Different Seniority Groups

	Levene Statistics	sd1	sd2	p
Happiness	0,653	5	440	,659

**Table-9.** Difference in Happiness Based on Seniority

	Seniority	N	Average	ss	F	p
Happiness	0-5 years	59	4,27	,653	0,672	,645
	5-10 years	68	4,27	,624		
	10-15 years	79	4,38	,604		
	15-20 years	86	4,22	,665		
	20-25 years	74	4,23	,685		
	25 and above	80	4,32	,664		

**3.2.f. Does Happiness of Teachers Change Based on Occupation of their Spouse?**

Occupation of teachers' spouse is categorized in 6 groups. Because of the unbalanced distribution of the number of participants in the groups, the happiness scores of the two groups were compared with the independent t-test.

According to the results, there is a statistically significant difference in happiness scores of teachers based on their spouses profession ( $t = -2,054$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ; see also. [Table 10](#)). Teachers whose spouse has a different profession than teaching have higher happiness score with 4.34 whereas teachers whose spouse is also teacher have lower happiness scores (4.20).

**Table-10.** Difference in Happiness Based on Spouse's Profession

	Spouse's Profession	N	Average	ss	t	sd	p
Happiness	Teacher	146	4,20	0,69	-2,054	330	,041
	Other	235	4,34	0,62			

**3.2.g. Does Happiness of Teachers Change Based on Their Income?**

Income of teachers is categorized in 3 groups. Because of the unbalanced distribution of the number of participants in the groups, the happiness scores of the two groups were compared with the independent t-test.

According to results, there is no statistically significant difference in average happiness scores based on income level ( $t = -0,406$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ; bkz. [Table 11](#)).

**Table-11.** Difference in Happiness Based on Income

	Income	N	Average	ss	t	sd	p
Happiness	3000-5000 TL	176	4,27	0,66	-0,406	438	,685
	5000 TL and above	264	4,30	0,64			

**3.2.h. Does Happiness of Teachers Change Based on their Willingness to Coming to School?**

353 teachers stated that they are willing to coming to school whereas 24 of those are not willing to come to school and 71 of those did not answer the question.

Since the number of teachers who mentioned they are not willing to go to school is less than 30, the happiness values of the two groups were compared with the Mann-Whitney U test, which is the non-parametric alternative of the independent samples t-test.

Results illustrate that there is statistically significant difference in happiness scores of teachers who are willing to go to school and not willing to go to school (Mann-Whitney U = 3128,500;  $p < 0,05$ ; bkz. [Table 12](#)). As it is shown in [Table 12](#), average order score of teachers who are going to school is higher (192.14). Therefore, they are happier than the teachers who are not willing to go to school.

**Table-12.** Difference in Happiness Based on Willingness to Going to School

	Willingness	N	Average order scores	Mann-Whitney U	p
Happiness	willingly	353	192,14	3128,500	,032
	unwillingly	24	142,85		

**3.2.j. Does Happiness of Teachers Change Based on their Willingness to Do their Job?**

409 teachers mentioned they are willing to do their job whereas 31 of them mentioned they are not eager to do their job, and 8 of those did not answer to that question.

Although, the number of teachers who are not eager to do their job is almost 30, as there is unbalanced distribution between teachers who are eager and who are not eager to do their job, happiness scores of two groups are compared by independent t-test which is the non-parametric alternative of Mann Whitney U test.

Results Show that there is statistically significant difference in average happiness order scores of groups (Mann-Whitney U = 2910,500;  $p < 0,001$ ; see also. [Table 13](#)). As it can be seen on [Table 13](#), average order value of teachers who are willing to do their job is higher (228.88). Therefore, they are happier compared to teachers who are not willing to do their job.

**Table-13.** Difference In Happiness Based On Willingness To Do Their Job

	Willingness	N	Average	ss	t	p
Happiness	Willingly	409	4,34	0,62	5,910	,000
	Unwillingly	31	3,65	0,68		

#### 4. Discussions, Results and Suggestions

The happiness scores of the teachers were generally higher than average. In other words, teachers are generally happy.

But factors affecting teachers' happiness are significant in terms of preventing teachers from being happy. For example, "having trouble deciding on any subject", "not being very optimistic about future", "feeling they cannot control their life" and "not thinking the world is a good place".

The generalization of these results is possible by expanding the research group and performing it in different cultures. The results could not be compared because there was no other study examining the happiness of teachers.

It was concluded that the teachers' happiness scores did not differ significantly according to age, marital status, number of children, seniority and income levels. These results coincide with the results of many researches about the happiness of people other than teachers. For example, analyses conducted on 146 researches showed that gender differences accounted for only 1% of happiness scores, and men were slightly happier than women (Haring *et al.*, 1985; Webb, 2009; Wang and Vander, 2011).

While the age variable is not seen as a determining factor in the happiness of teachers, there are studies conducted on different groups with different professions showing that happiness increases as age progresses in other studies conducted about the happiness of people in different groups (Michalos *et al.*, 2005; Agrawal *et al.*, 2011). Also, there are studies showing age does not have an effect on happiness (Diener and Ryan, 2009).

Income level of teachers is considered together with their spouse's income. It can be seen income levels are correlated with happiness scores. However, studies on how changes in the income level affects happiness show that income is a decisive factor in the condition of poverty. It is not a determining factor if basic needs are met (Myers and Diener, 1995).

The evaluation of the result of the lower happiness scores of the teachers' whose spouses are teacher can be made in separate research related to this subject.

One of the important results of this research is that there is a significant difference in happiness scores of teachers who are willing to go to school and teachers who are unwilling to go to school.

There is no doubt that unhappy teacher who is coming to school unwillingly will affect the students' happiness. Therefore, improving the school environment and creating a positive institutional climate by enabling teachers to come to the schools where they work willingly can make a significant contribution to the happiness of teachers and students. If there are other, reasons that prevent teachers from coming to school willingly, those can be examined and necessary measures can be taken by the managers.

Another important finding is that teachers who are willing to do their job are much happier compared to teachers who are not willing to do their job. It is possible to consider the implementation of tests to measure the interest of the teachers during their admission to the profession.

The fact that happiness is something that can be learned increases the need for happy teachers in raising happy and successful students.

Hence, when the relationship between teachers' happiness and the variables mentioned above are investigated, it can be seen that there is no relationship between teachers' happiness and the demographic characteristics. However, willingness to go to the school and do the job is a factor increasing the happiness score. This research is important for the happiness of the students and the contribution of happiness of the teachers.

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