

Mental Health Status in Relation to Happiness and Depression

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Abstract

The purposes of the present study are twofold : (i) Investigating the relationship between happiness and mental health; (ii) and finding the relationship between depression and mental health. The data was collected from 120 students who were purposively selected from different universities. The instruments used in this study were personal information questionnaire, Bangla version of General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) of Goldberg (1972), Bangla version of Happiness questionnaire (Hills &Argle, 2002), Bangla version of Depression Scale (Uddin & Rahman, 2005). The result showed that there is a significant positive correlation between happiness and mental health, and negative correlation between depression and mental health.

Key-words : Mental health, happiness, depression.

Introduction

Mental health is a state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life. Mental health refers to how a person thinks, feels and acts when he faces different life situations. It is how people look at themselves, their lives and other people in their lives; evaluate the challenges and problems; and explore choices. This includes handling stress, relating to other people and making decisions. It also implies a large degree of adjustment to the social environment. Mental health has the capacity to think rationally and logically, and to cope with the transitions, stresses, traumas, and losses that occur in all lives, in ways that allow emotional stability and growth. In general, mentally healthy individuals value themselves, perceive reality as it is, accept its limitations and possibilities, respond to its challenges, carry out their responsibilities, establish and maintain close relationship, deal responsibly with others, pursue works that suit their talent and training, and feel a sense of fulfilment that makes the efforts of daily living worthwhile.

Happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being characterized by positive or pleasant

emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. A variety of biological, psychological, religious and philosophical approaches have striven to define happiness and identify its sources. Various research groups, including positive psychologists, endeavour to apply the scientific method to answer questions about what "happiness" is, and how it might be attained. It is of such fundamental importance to the human condition that "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" were deemed to be unalienable rights by the independence. The 2012 World Happiness Report stated that in subjective well-being measures, the primary distinction is between cognitive life evaluations and emotional reports.

Depression is a state of low mood and aversion to activity that can affect a person's thoughts, behaviour, feelings and sense of well-being. Depressed people may feel sad, anxious, empty, hopeless, worthless, guilty, irritable, hurt, or restless. They may lose interest in activities that once were pleasurable, experience loss of appetite or overeating, have problems concentrating, remembering details, or making decisions, and may contemplate or attempt suicide. Insomnia, excessive sleeping, fatigue, loss of energy, or aches, pains, or digestive problems that are resistant to treatment may also be present. Depressed mood is not necessarily a psychiatric disorder. It may be a normal reaction to certain life events, a symptom of some medical conditions, or a side effect of some drugs or medical treatments. Depressed mood is also a primary or associated feature of certain psychiatric syndromes such as clinical depression.

Rationale of the study

Our minds are not separate entities from the rest of our body. When we are depressed, our physical health is also affected, and our spirits flag. Many physical conditions are actually rooted in a state of mind. Our personal relationships and work abilities are affected by both physical and mental health issues. Lives can even be endangered when people are stressed, depressed, anxious, or grief-stricken. So, mental health issue is very important in our life. Marx and Woolly (1998) said that mental health problem can negatively affect within families, schools and communities and result in financial and mental disorders as they relate to physical illness and conditions, social problems, biological and psychosocial assessment and intervention. Further, there is the dimension of age, covering the life span from childhood and adolescence through the adult years. Mental health care functions within the larger context of health care delivery and involves scientific and professional disciplines across the fields of knowledge and technology. Scientific study of mental health is important because it can provide positive contribution to the quality of life. Mental health services in our country are inadequate. Well-trained practitioners are scarce; drugs and psychosocial interventions are unavailable or of poor quality. Even most of the people are not conscious about their mental health. People become conscious when it turns in severe cases. So it is necessary to know how some factors are related with mental health status. Thus, present study is undertaken for studying mental health in relation with happiness and depression.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are :

- (i) to investigate whether there is any relationship between happiness and Mental health;
- (ii) to examine a correlation between depression and Mental health.

Method

Sample

A cross-sectional survey design was followed for conducting the present study. A total number of 120 students were chosen as sample using purposive sampling technique from different universities.

Among 120 participants, 60 were male (50%) and 60 were female (50%), the age range of participants was 18 to 26 years. In selecting participants, their age, sex, education level and monthly income of parents were considered.

Measuring Instruments

Demographic and Personal Characteristics Questionnaire :

By this questionnaire, the data on age, sex, education level and monthly income of parents were collected.

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12)

This scale was originally developed by Goldberg (1972) in 1981 to measure mental health of respondents. This 12 item scale contains 6 positive and 6 negative items. Responses were given weights of 0, 1, 2 and 3. The items were answered on a four-point response format ("not at all", "some what", "to a considerable extent" and "to a great extent"). Positive items were scored in 4 points, from 3 to 0 and the negative in the reverse order from 0 to 3. Total scores are the sum of all the items, with a range of 0 to 36. High score in the scale indicates the high mental health problems. The reliability of the Bangla version of the GHQ-12 (Sarker and Rahman 1989) was measured by parallel form method which was found to be quite satisfactory ($r = 0.69$)

Bangla version of Happiness Questionnaire: Happiness Questionnaire was developed by psychologists Hills peter and Argyle Michale (2002) at Oxford University. Calculation process of score: Step 1- Items marked (R) should be scored in reverse: If subject give a "1," cross it out and change it to a "6.", Change "2" to a "5", Change "3" to a "4", Change "4" to a "3" Change "5" to a "2", Change "6" to a "1". Step 2- by adding the numbers for all 29 questions. (Use the converted numbers for the 12 items that are reverse scored.). Step 3- Diviided by 29. So happiness score is the total (from step 2) of divided by 29. The questionnaire was translated in to Bangla. Then English and Bangla versions of the scale were administered to 50 participants with an interval of 7 days. Significant positive correlation ($r = 0.822$) was obtained between scores of Eanglish and Bangla versions indicating high translation reliability of the scale.

Bangla version of Depression Scale: Bangla version (Zahir Uddin and Mahmudur Rahman, 2005) of Depression Scale was used to measure depression. The scale is a 5 point Likert-type consisting of 30 items. The response options are "not at all applicable + 1", "not applicable = 2", and "Uncertain = 3", a bit applicable = 4", and "totally applicable = 5". All items were scored in positive direction. Total score of any individual was obtained from sum total of scores of all the 30 items. A high score indicates higher depression. The adapted translating reliability is 0.67.

Procedure

Data of the present study were collected individually. Necessary level of rapport was established before administrating the questionnaire. The participants were ensured that these answers will be completely anonymous as well as confidential and will be used only for research purpose. The participants are requested to fill up the personal information sheet carefully. Then they are asked to leave the first page vacant and answer the following questions simultaneously. They were instructed to complete their task according to the instruction. They were asking to give tick (✓) mark in the appropriate box. Then the filled up answer sheets were collected from then. In this way data were collected.

Results

Data were analyzed by means of some statistical point of view, such as, Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation were calculated. They are presented in the Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Distribution feature as central tendency and its deviation (M=Mean, SD=standard deviation, Number=120)

Variables	M	SD
Mental health	17.02	7.23
Happiness	2.28	12.42
Depression	68.32	14.31

Table 2

Correlations of Mental health with Happiness & Depression

Correlations of Mental health with	r	Significant level
Happiness	.48	0.01
Depression	-.51	0.01

Correlations is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 shows the correlation of mental health with happiness and depression. Table shows that there is a significant correlation of mental health with happiness and depression. Here we can see there is positive correlation ($r = .48$) between happiness and mental health which indicate if people feel happy, their mental health is good and there is negative correlation ($r = -.51$) between depression and mental health which means if the people feel depressed, their mental health is poor.

Discussion

The objectives of the present study are, to investigate whether there is any relationship between happiness and mental health and any relationship between depression and mental health. A total of 120 students were taken from different universities of Bangladesh as the sample for the present study. Three standard questionnaires were used in the present study. The findings showed a significant co-relation with happiness and mental health as well as a negative correlation with depression and mental health. This result indicates if people feel happy then their mental health poses well. On the other hand if the people feel depressed then their mental health is poor.

Depression can have impact on individuals at any level of age. People with frequent depression also have weak mental health. The causes of depression appear to be complicated. While there may be a biochemical cause, meaning that certain chemicals as neurotransmitters in the brain may be low. It is not clear if the low level of the neurotransmitters is the primary cause of the depression, or simply a marker for the cause of depression. This study reveals that people with good mental health, or an ability to refrain from acting on impulses, are happier. Additionally, it is found that mental health is linked to healthy weight management, academic success, financial success, and healthier relationships. Once people meet their basic needs of food, shelter, and comfort, our life becomes concern about maximizing happiness.

Depressed people often find it very difficult to motivate themselves and often reject new interests and activities without trying to cope up with the new environments enjoy interests without first cultivating them. People often don't enjoy a new activity right away. Instead, it may take time to become accustomed to a new activity and for interest and pleasure to grow. People may need to learn relaxing in the new situation or developing some expertise or skill before they can learn to enjoy it.

Negative thinking habits play a very important role in getting depression. Research shows depressed people tend to minimize their accomplishments, talents, and qualities. They tend to see themselves as inferior and incompetent, despite being comparable to other people in qualities and skills. Their thinking habits focus on or exaggerate problems and faults and minimize or fail to see the good thinking in their lives. They tend to recall negative things more often than positive ones, and they tend to minimize, overlook, or forget feelings of pleasure in their lives. They may feel preoccupied with loss or personal problems, perhaps wallowing in thoughts about self-pity, inability to cope up or escaping out their problems.

However, happy people experience failure, disappointment, rejection, negative emotive, pain, and great sorrows, too just like depressed people. But happy people keep a positive attitude by gracefully accepting sadness and suffering as normal parts of life, while doing what they can about their problems. This also makes them more pleasant to cope up their surroundings and improves their social lives. Part of happiness is a courageous choice of loving life in the face of suffering, a chosen position or view of things.

Conclusion

Overall findings of the study are suggestive of the fact that mental health should take measures for increasing happiness and depression. It is found that there is a positive correlation of mental health and happiness ($r = .48$) at 0.01 level of significance. On the other hand there is a negative correlation of mental health and depression ($r = -.51$) at 0.01 level of significance. This result indicates if people feel happy their mental health is good, on the other hand if the people feel depressed then their mental health is weak.

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