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Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding

GENDER SPECIFICITY OF THE SUBJECTIVE IDEAS ABOUT HAPPINESS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

Theoretical analysis of the philosophical and psychological literature has shown that there are several different approaches to determining the phenomenon of happiness. Domestic and foreign scientists direct their researches at identification of the content of subjective ideas about happiness, studying the psychological formation mechanisms of positive thinking, positive self-perception, and satisfaction with life. The purpose of the study: to identify the gender specificity of ideas about happiness among employees of a university in a multicultural region. Employees of Volgograd State University (320 people) took part in the study. The method of free description of the phenomenon was used in order to study the content of respondents' ideas about happiness. In addition, methods of mathematical statistics were used. A comparative analysis of the study results of the content of ideas about the happiness of women and men led to the conclusion that the concept of "Family" is the most important concept in connection with the concept of "Happiness" for most of the respondents. It can be stated that the idea of women's happiness is more related to the family and the health of relatives based on the analysis of the study results. Men's ideas about happiness differ in their individuality and originality. In general, we can conclude that the content of ideas about the happiness of University employees in a multicultural region according to the study results may indicate the orientation of these people to the spiritual, universal values of family, work for the benefit of society, and friendship.

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1. Introduction

Happiness as a psychological phenomenon has been of interest to humanity for a long time. Throughout history, scientists have tried to answer questions: "What is happiness?", "How to achieve it?", "What can make a person happy or unhappy?"

In ancient society when philosophy was just in its infancy, the category of "happiness" was associated with the concepts of "favorable fate", "pleasure", "long state of pleasure", "cheerful mood of serenity", "sense of fullness of being and joy", "bliss" (Koroleva, 2013).

The psychological direction "positive psychology" begins to develop from the late 80's-early 90's of the last century at the initiative of the American psychologist Seligman. Seligman (2002) together with his colleagues begins to study happiness as a psychological phenomenon. In Russian psychology, the study of happiness was carried out by Dzhidar'yan (2013), Vinichuk et al. (2008) There are several approaches to understanding "happiness" at the present stage of development of psychological thought.

Happiness, according to Seligman (2002), consists not only in multiplying pleasant momentary subjective feelings. True happiness requires a true life which implies positive personal qualities and spiritual satisfaction. A person receives spiritual satisfaction by doing what he loves.

Argyle (1987) defines happiness as a state of satisfaction with life in general, taking into account the frequency and intensity of positive emotions.

Dzhidar'yan (2013) considers happiness as a qualitatively heterogeneous formation of personality as a complex cognitive-emotional structure. This structure is connected to the awareness of the fullness and realization of individual existence. This structure is also connected to the potentials inherent in each individual. Dzhidar'yan (2013) adds to this the significance of the experience of harmony and perfection achieved by human during his life.

Vinichuk (2008) offers an integrated concept of happiness. She believes that happiness is a psychological phenomenon characterized by satisfaction and meaningfulness of human activity. In addition, this phenomenon is characterized by the dominance of a positive emotional state and a positive attitude towards oneself, the world around you, and a perceptual unity of time. We take this concept in our study as the main one.

Domestic researchers in their studies of ideas about happiness use the methods of unfinished sentences, free description of the phenomenon, associations with the word "happiness", author's questionnaires and surveys. This choice of diagnostic material indicates that the phenomenon of "happiness" is multifaceted and it is possible to identify the content of ideas about happiness of people of different groups, ages and gender only by studying their thoughts, meanings and associations (Artem'eva, 2007; Lejfrid, 2009; Petrov & Zlygosteva, 2015; Semenova et al., 2017; Vinichuk, 2008; et al.).

The concepts of "family", "love", "children", "health", "well-being" and others dominate in all studies in connection with the image of "happiness" (Lejfrid, 2009; Petrov & Zlygosteva, 2015; Ryff, 1989; Semenova et al., 2017; Vinichuk, 2008 et al.). These studies show that the main criterion in the ideas of happiness are spiritual values in the everyday consciousness of people (regardless of age, gender, belonging to a group, national differences) (Phillips et al., 2017; Tamir et al., 2017). A large place in these representations is also occupied by positive emotions and feelings – joy, love, etc. (Lejfrid, 2009; Piff & Moskowitz, 2018). The study results of the attitude of young people to the family institution also showed that 68% of respondents consider having a family a prerequisite for happiness (Semenova et al., 2017).

As it is noted by Vinichuk and other researchers, family and family values have a fairly close relationship with subjective experiences of happiness (Semenova et al., 2017; Vinichuk, 2008).

2. Problem Statement

In the framework of our study, let's pay attention to the problem of the formation of value orientations, positive thinking and a positive perception of the events of public and personal life among students in the educational space of a classical university (Raeva & Cheremisova, 2017). We emphasize that the solution of these psychological and pedagogical problems in a multicultural region is particularly difficult (Cheremisova et al., 2019; Vorob'eva et al., 2018). Young people belonging to different national cultures observe different national traditions and follow different social and religious norms. Students during their studies at the University interact not only with teachers, but also with employees of various departments and units. In this sense, all employees of the University, regardless of their position, level of education, and culture are the subjects of the educational process (Phillips et al., 2017).

3. Research Questions

Therefore, it is important to study the value-semantic sphere of University employees who demonstrate by personal example compliance with social and cultural norms of relationships and interaction.

Study hypothesis: it is assumed that the family will be mentioned more often in women's ideas of happiness than in men's.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the empirical study: to identify gender-specific ideas about happiness among University employees and determine the place of the family in the content of these ideas.

This study was carried out as part of a master's thesis by Irina Barakova.

The sample in our study included 320 people, of which 63 were men and 257 were women. The age of respondents is 21-79 years. The median age of the sample was 42 years.

The study was conducted on the basis of Volgograd State University. The sample was made by teachers; employees of the personnel, economic, and legal departments; library employees; and employees of departments and offices of dean.

5. Research Methods

The study was conducted in two stages. Data was collected at the first diagnostic stage with the use of the method of free description of the phenomenon. Participants were asked to finish the sentence "I'm happy because..." (Artem'eva, 2007). Qualitative analysis of respondents' statements and methods of mathematical statistics (frequency analysis, Pearson's chi-square, correlation analysis) were used at the second data processing stage with the use of the program SPSS version 23.0.

6. Findings

The results of the frequency distribution of respondents' responses showed that 49% of the entire sample indicated family and close relationships in their ideas of happiness.

The responses contained the following statements: "My happiness is in small things: my daughter's smile, my grandchildren's laughter, my husband's help, the sun outside the window", "I am happy, I have a wonderful husband, good children. Life is beautiful", "I am happy because I have a family, the best family", "I have everything, namely my lovely family", "I am happy because I have a wonderful family", "I am happy because I love my family".

The concept of "Health" (25.3%) was also indicated along with the concept of "Family": "Happiness is my family, the health of family members and loved ones", "Health of family members and relatives", "I Have 3 grandchildren, all are healthy. 3 children. What else do I need?", "My family members are healthy and happy, the love of relatives and friends", "Happiness is when my children and husband are healthy and successful".

It should be noted that statements about the family have a bright positive emotional connotation (39.7%), respondents call their family the best, favorite, wonderful, etc. The answers are complete and detailed, which may indicate interest, focus on warm thoughts about family, and important attributes of family happiness.

At the same time, several statements (9.1%) about the family do not have an emotional connotation, such expressions have simply a statement of fact, for example: "I have a family".

The rest of the respondents indicated in their responses the concepts of "Work" (16.3%), "Life" (15.3%), "Optimism" (12.2%), "Love" (9.7%), "Friends" (8.4%), etc.

Thus, family, family relationships, and close relationships are the most important for almost half of the respondents in their ideas of happiness.

After that, the Pearson's chi-squared statistical processing method was performed with the use of the SPSS program version 23.0 in order to identify the gender specificity of ideas about happiness (determining the frequency of using the concept of "Family" in the representations of men and women).

It should be noted that we included responses mentioning family members, relatives, children, grandchildren, etc. in the category of family.

Table 01. Results of response analysis of men and women *

Components of happiness	Total number	Men	Women	Pearson's chi-square
Family	48.8%	6.9%	41.9%	0.014
Health	25.3%	2.8%	22.5%	0.025

Note: the table shows statistically significant results*

The results presented in Table 1 showed that women are more likely to associate happiness with family and health than men. No statistically significant results were found for men. This may indicate that every man has his own personal idea of happiness.

Women consider family a factor that allows them to maintain health. In turn, they represent health as an important condition for successful self-realization in the family sphere.

In the framework of our study, we will present in more detail the content of ideas about the happiness of women and men, the significant relationships between the concept of "Family" and other concepts in the idea of happiness. We performed a correlation analysis for this.

Figure 1 illustrates the following correlation relationships that are typical for men.

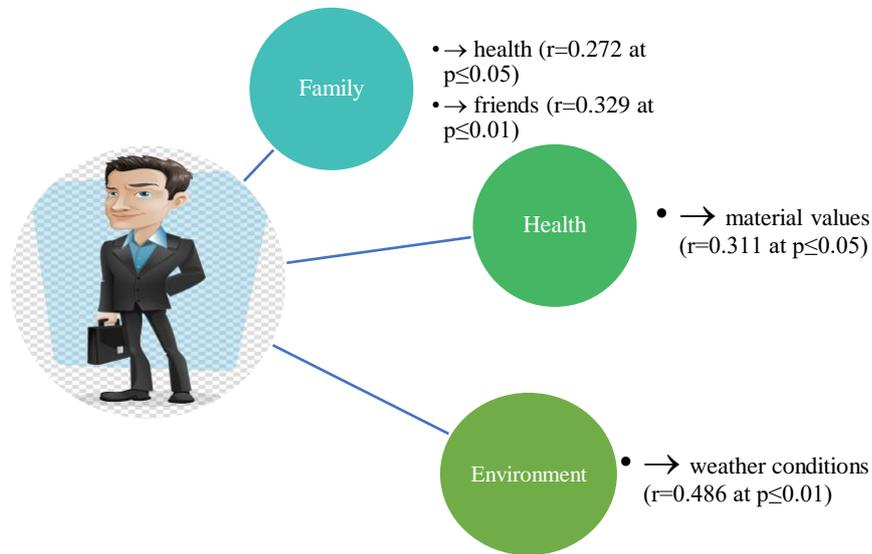


Figure 01. The correlation relationships typical for men

The result analysis showed that the happiness image in women has a semantic affinity with more concepts than in men. Perhaps this is due to the large number of female respondents.

Figure 2 shows the following correlation relationships that are typical for women.

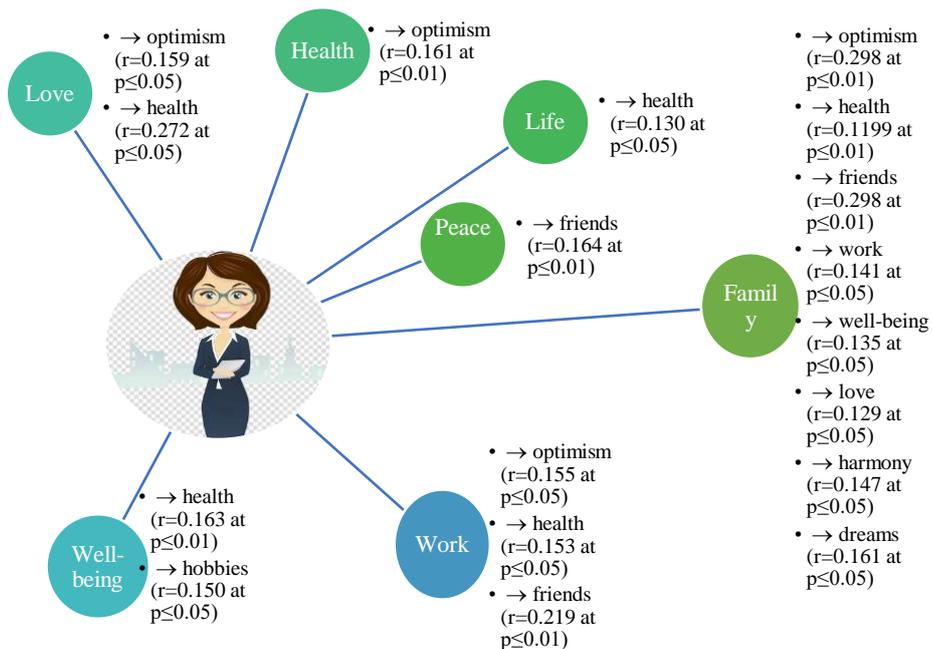


Figure 02. The correlation relationships typical for women

The relationship between the concepts of "Family" and "Love" ($r=0.129$ at $p\leq 0.05$) is consistent with the facts presented in modern studies. These facts show the significance for people of the motives for creating a family based on love. These facts also confirm the implementation of the psychotherapeutic function of the family, the function of emotional support.

In addition, the analysis of responses from female respondents showed that the concept of "Family" has a positive correlation with the concept of "Health" ($r=0.1199$ at $p\leq 0.01$). The same correlation was found in men ($r=0.272$ at $p\leq 0.05$). This may mean that respondents consider family to be a factor that allows to maintain health, as well as consider health as an important condition for successful self-realization in the family sphere.

A similar correlation for men ($r=0.329$ at $p\leq 0.01$) and women ($r=0.298$ at $p\leq 0.01$) can also be noted between the concepts of "Family" and "Friends". The relationship may indicate the importance of various types of social relationships in a person's life, in addition to family relationships. The development of friendly and family relationships for the sample respondents is a complement to the system of ideas about happiness, both among women and men.

The relationship between the concepts of "Family" and "Well-being" ($r=0.135$ at $p\leq 0.05$) may also indicate that a woman's priority is to take care of her family.

We believe that the relationship between the concepts of "Family" and "Harmony" ($r=0.147$ at $p\leq 0.05$) indicates a positive perception of family and family values. The harmonious state of women is achieved through the perception of family relationships.

Correlation relationships were found between the emotional connotation of the description of the image of happiness and a certain concept. It should be noted that there were no negative statements in the description of ideas about happiness among the respondents responses. The revealed relationships correspond to the positive emotional connotation of the ideas of happiness.

Figure 3 illustrates the correlation relationship between positively colored characteristics and the following variables found in men and women.

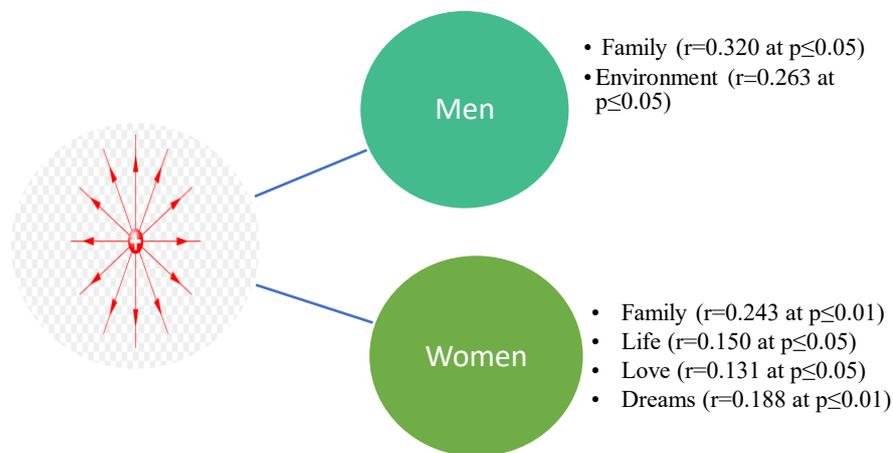


Figure 03. The correlation relationship between positively colored characteristics and the following variables found in men and women

Based on these results, it can be concluded that the family in the ideas of happiness for both genders is a source of positive emotions and thoughts.

Frequency analysis revealed the number of mentions in women's responses. 42% of women speak about their family, and they speak about it with positive emotions: "I have an amazing granddaughter, my family and friends are near!!!", "I am happy, I have a wonderful husband, good children. Life is good!"

Women respondents also mention their personal health and the health of their relatives (23%): "Happiness is my family, the health of family members and loved people!", "I'm alive. My family and friends are healthy."

"Life" is mentioned in 13% of the total number of women's responses: "Life is beautiful", "I am happy because I live".

In women's views, happiness is associated with having a lovely job (13%): "Because I do what I love and I have a great family", "Parents are alive, children are healthy, lovely job", "My family is near, I am surrounded by wonderful people at work". Also, a certain place for women in the idea of happiness is occupied by "Friends" (7%). This may indicate the importance of various types of social relationships for women.

Many women's statements about happiness are filled with optimism (9.1%): "I am happy because the world is beautiful", "I am happy because I am good".

Based on the results of frequency analysis, it can be said that for women the concept of happiness is multifaceted, but the prevailing concept of happiness is the concept of "Family". This corresponds to attitudes widespread in our society about the greater importance of family and family relations for women.

Analysis of the results of the study of men's responses showed that the idea of happiness has an individual and exclusively personal meaning for most men. However, 35% of the total number of men also mentioned family: "I am happy because I have a family, the best family", "... because I have a lovely family", "... because I have a wonderful family", "I have a good family", "I am happy because I love my family". There are references to family and work: "I am happy because I have health, work and family", "I have work, relatives and friends".

Men responses in connection with the family also include references to health, life, and well-being: "There is a family, there are hobbies in life, there is a desire to live", "Happiness. Because there is health, family, friends", "I'm happy because I'm alive and all relatives are alive", "Son was born", "Relatives are alive, healthy, I have a place to stay, food", "...be at home."

Some responses of male respondents contained general phrases without clarification or detailed information (11.1%): "I'm happy because I'm good", "I'm fine", "I'm happy, just happy", "I don't know", "Because I have everything for it", etc.). This can be understood as avoiding an answer, not wanting to share thoughts.

Among the responses of male respondents were various statements: "I won the mini-football championship on the weekend", "Because we are loved and love", "There are plans for the future", "Good weather, funny people!", "I was given a chocolate bar", "I am happy because my colleagues constantly need my services", "Optimist", "Self-sufficient", etc.

7. Conclusion

Thus, we can conclude that the family is one of the significant variables in the perception of happiness, but the statistical significance is revealed only for women. Based on the frequency analysis data obtained, it can be assumed that women's perceptions of happiness are more diverse than men's.

Our results complement and do not contradict existing studies of ideas about happiness. The conclusions of our study on the high importance of the family in the ideas of happiness complement the study results of Semenova et al. (2017). Our study confirmed conclusions made by Lejfrid (2009) on the positive emotional connotation of the perceptions of the respondents about happiness. Lejfrid (2009) said that happiness is most often associated with joy and love.

Theoretical analysis of the literature has shown that there is no common understanding of the phenomenon of happiness despite the existence of different approaches to the study of the phenomenon of happiness from the positions of philosophical and psychological science (Blanke et al., 2018; Chopik & O'Brien, 2017; Fuochi et al., 2018; McGuirk et al., 2018; Oerlemans & Bakker, 2018 et al.). This is due to the complexity and multifacetedness of this phenomenon.

Analysis of the study results showed that the family is an important variable in the representation of happiness. However, among women (52%, N=257), the family occupies a more significant place in the ideas about happiness than among men (35%, N=63).

Most of the statements about the family (79%) in the ideas of happiness have a positive connotation, which may indicate a commitment to traditional family values.

Thus, the analysis of the results of theoretical and empirical study of ideas about the happiness of male and female employees of an educational institution in a multicultural region allowed to conclude that most of the respondents feel happy in their families. Many respondents also note that in order to feel happy it is important to be healthy, have a lovely job and friends.

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