

# **THE IMPACT OF HAPPINESS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNDERGRADUATES. (AN INVESTIGATION OF UNDERGRADUATES OF THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF RUHUNA, SRI LANKA)**

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## ***ABSTRACT***

*Happiness is a very deep concept which would be different from one to another. It is not easy to define as they exist multiple meanings and it has been combined with different fields. But with the modernization human beings have become like machines without feelings. Happiness goes far away from them as they have become money minded. The main goal of undergraduates is to be successful in their academic life. Their short term and long-term academic plans are focused to achieve a higher-Grade Point Average (GPA). If they get any failure in their academic life, they become most stressful people. Then it will make someone to be addicted to drugs and some bad habits or perhaps attempt to suicide also. It is important to find the impact of happiness on the academic performance as those topics are basically discussable in the society. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of happiness on the academic performance of Undergraduates. A sample of undergraduates of University of Ruhuna has been taken for the study. Ordinal Regression and Spearman's Correlation were used to achieve the main goal. Finally found that there is a positive impact of happiness on the academic performances of Undergraduates. Further, due to the results it can be concluded that most of the undergraduates are not particularly happy or unhappy.*

## ***KEYWORDS***

*Academic Performance, Happiness, Grade Point Average, Undergraduates*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Happiness is an especially important feature in each and every person. Happiness corresponds to what we feel from both inside and outside (Zulkifli, 2013). Happiness is not easy to define as they exist multiple meanings in the literature and they also change over time (McMahon, 2008). Happiness has been combined with different fields. But with the modernization human beings have become like machines without feelings. Happiness goes far away from them as they have become money minded. Economically, being happy is interesting because happy people tend to work harder and are healthier (Veenhoven, 1988). Happiness is a very deep concept which would be different from one to another. Most of the physiologists have done different research on the concept of happiness and they have given different definitions too. In the world it considers the happiest country annually and according to the United Nations World Happiness report 2020, Finland owns the first place for the third time. Accordingly, Sri Lanka is in the 130<sup>th</sup> place. Happiness is an incredibly significant feature in every human being. It may be different from one person to another. The way of being happy is also different from another. There may be different

factors which affect for the happiness and the same time happiness would be affects for other fields either positively or negatively.

When consider about university students their main goal is to success in their academic life. Their short term and long-term academic plans are to achieve a higher-Grade Point Averages (GPA). Through that they are willing to have a degree with a super class. If they got any failure in their academic life, they become most stressful people. Then it will make someone to being addicted to drugs and some bad habits or perhaps attempt to suicide. In the point of view there are different factors which affect for the academic performance of university students. There are several research have been done to determine the factors which affect for the academic performance of undergraduate students. But in this study the main objective is to investigate the impact of happiness on the academic performance of undergraduate students.

### **1.1. Research Problem**

In recent times the education has become a top priority in emerging economics. A huge competition is stepping towards within each and every student. Their main goal is to be success in their academic performance. There are different determinants which affect for the academic performance. It is important to identify those factors and thereby can have improvement within individual academic performance. When examine about the happiness it is a very important factor for every human being. According to the literature it seems that individuals who have a high sense of happiness are more active in their day today lives (Meimanat Tabbodi, 2015). If there is a direct impact of happiness for the student performance, it is very important to identify the nature of the relationship. Extreme stress among students causes educational failure, unemployment, addiction and drug abuse, health problems, poor performance, dropout, and in some cases even leads to suicide and murder.(Meimanat Tabbodi, 2015). If any student is having a failure in his or her academic life, they may become disappointed. It is a very dangerous situation and decisions must be taken to overcome this issue. In any country university students form a very important and large portion of the active population. The whole society is bothering about the fate of those individuals. In the most of literature reviews they have taken the GPA to measure the academic performance of students. It is important to investigate whether there is an impact of happiness on the GPA of students. According to that the research problem of the study mainly focused to discuss whether there is an impact of happiness on the academic performance of the undergraduate students of the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka.

Moreover, most of the researchers in the world have been done several efforts to identify the effects of happiness in different fields. It is widely considered about the impact of happiness and academic performance in different countries especially in European countries. But in Sri Lanka it seems like null regarding research articles on happiness and the academic performance. So, another intention of doing this research is to fill that research gap.

### **1.2. Objectives**

The core objective of the study was to investigate the impact of happiness for the academic performance of Undergraduate students of the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Happiness**

A state in a person's mind can be identified as an emotion. A person can have several emotions in several times. Then, happiness can be identified as one of the emotions in a person's mind. A positive and pleasant state in a person's mind (Awan, 2016; Mandal, 2020). Happiness has been defined as a temporary condition and sometimes a fixed condition. Sometimes, happiness can be identified as the overall perception of his or her life as a long-term perception. When a person is considering all activities, which is done by him or her, such person may have a positive or negative perception on his or her life. If that person is positive, it can be identified as positive (Kaczmarek, 2017; Madjar et al., 2004; Veenhoven, 2012).

According to the philosophy of happiness, happiness is individualized, and it depends on the personal condition of a customer. There are some general situations where a person can be happy such as passing an exam, having a happy meal, earning a large income etc. However, there are some conditions only some person can be happy. For example, some people are being happy by killing other people and animals, cheating other etc. Moreover, a person who work in a farm who kills animals may be happy but another person who is doing the same job may be unhappy. Thus, according to philosophy of happiness, happiness is a personal status or happiness can be vary according to the personal characteristics (Kaczmarek, 2017; Veenhoven, 2015).

### **2.2. Happiness of youth**

Happiness is a broad concept. Happiness is not easy to define as them exist multiple meanings in the literature and they also change over time (McMahon, 2008). Happiness has been combined with different fields. "Strive after happiness; they want to become happy and to remain so. This endeavor has two sides, a positive and a negative aim. It aimed, on the one hand, at an absence of pain and displeasure, and, on the other, at the experiencing of strong feelings of pleasure"(Freud, 1930). According to World Happiness Report the countries have been ranked by their happiness levels. In 2020 they have concerned about 156 countries by how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be. According to their survey results Finland (7.809 points) tops the happiness rankings for the third time. In Sri Lankan context it owns the 130<sup>th</sup> rank with 4.327 points(Helliwell, 2020). When concern about the young generation "the youth happiness" has been declining in recent years while highlighting the potential for the Happiness Index to be used as a tool by those seeking to improve youth happiness in at the community, state, or country level (Edwards, 2019).

According to Berridge in 2010, both pleasure and happiness are much more complex psychological states than the unitary words imply, with multiple sub-components within each. According to them the progress in building a science of pleasure and have identified some of the mechanisms and regions important in the brain's hedonic networks that generate basic pleasures (Berridge, 2010). They have previously proposed that hedonic happiness could be akin to 'liking' without 'wanting;' as a state of pleasure without disruptive desires a state of contentment (Morten L Kringelbach, 2019). The eudemonia components of meaning and engagement were crucial to happiness for human beings.

### **2.3. Academic Performance of Students and Happiness**

In the academic context, it is useful to study the determinants of college Grade Point Average (GPA) because GPA reflects human capital acquisition at a time when young adults are close to

permanent entry into the labor force (Morell, 1999). Number of studies has found a positive and significant relationship between student Grade Point Average (GPA) and subsequent earnings including (Jackson, 1990; Grogger, 1996; Wise, 1975). Similarly, (Morell, 1999) aimed to determine the factors underlying variations in student performance, measured by GPA, at University of California San Diego.

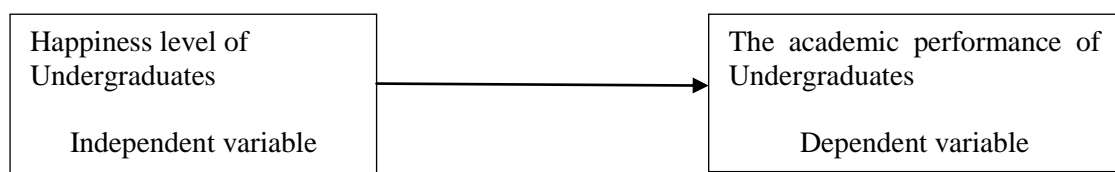
When there is discomfort and lack of self-esteem, happiness decreases. Religious beliefs: One of the factors contributing to happiness is faith. It makes people feel less abandoned, and lonely. Social Capital: Social capital affects happiness more than human capital. Leisure time activities: It can be a very good source to create happiness. Economic situation: Some think money is the main factor of happiness, while scholars have rejected this approach. Health: Happiness boosts the immune system and strong immune system, improves health (Bahmani, 2000). According to Zulkifli (2013), the regression estimates reveal a negative relationship between happiness and achievements in quantitative subjects. It was a preliminary study with the title of “Happiness and Students’ Performance in Quantitative Subjects”. Their main objective was to study on happiness and academic success, especially among students. Conventionally, economics has taken income as a suitable though incomplete proxy for human welfare. “Reported subjective well-being” is a term used in psychology for an individual’s evaluation of the extent to which he or she experiences happiness or satisfaction with life.

According to Malik et al in 2013, there is no relationship between happiness and academic performance. According to that study, life happiness or life satisfaction of students cannot enhance their academic performance (Malik et al., 2013). The study was conducted in Asian Context. Moreover, in 2004, Corwyn found that in the Asian context, happiness of the students cannot increase the academic performance but in European and American context, happiness can increase the academic performance (Buecker et al., 2018; Lumontod III, 2018; Mertoğlu, 2018).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

All Undergraduates in the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in the University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka registered in 2020 have been selected as the target population of the study. But only the quantity of Undergraduates in 2000, 3000, and 4000 levels in the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences have narrowed down as the total population of the research study because the results have not been released in any semesters of 1000 level in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in the University of Ruhuna. Population of the study was all the students in the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna. 13% from the total population was chosen as the sample. The data collection was done from all 3 study levels (2000 level, 3000 level, and 4000 level) separately except the 1000 level. As the sampling technique for this study, Stratified sampling method was used. There were three strata as 2000 level 3000 level and 4000 level. For the collection of data for each stratum, random number generator was used as a method of simple random sampling.

#### 3.1. Conceptual framework



### 3.2. Academic Performance of Undergraduates

The variable academic performance was measured using Grade Point Averages (GPA). In most of the literature GPA have used to measure the academic performance, (Lalita Tuntiwarodom, 2008) therefore GPA has been used to gather academic performance. Grand point average (GPA) is the basic foundation for the university education. Each undergraduate student has their own GPA value. Grand point average (GPA) value is varying from zero to four. It has been categorized into five main groups and collected as categorized data as the respondents are not filling to express their exact GPA value.

### 3.3. Happiness level of Undergraduates

The variable happiness level was measured using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. The level of happiness of an individual cannot be easily measured. The majority of studies on happiness of students have used the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) (Martin , Argyle, & Crossland , 1989). The average happiness scores were finally categorized into seven groups and finalized their happiness level.

This study consists of quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. Primary data were collected by a structured questionnaire. Academic performance was measured by Grade Point Average values. Average happiness scores are utilized in this study to investigate the impact of happiness on the academic performance of undergraduate students. Happiness levels of undergraduate students were gathered using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. (Martin , Argyle, & Crossland , 1989). Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) has been used due to two main reasons. First, the scale is widely used worldwide, and it was dominantly used on university students. Since the participants in this study are University students, using OHQ was found to be appropriate.

The descriptive statistics and Ordinal regression were conducted to examine whether there is an impact of happiness for the academic performance of Undergraduates in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna.

$$\text{logit}[P(Y \leq j)] = \alpha_j - \sum \beta_i X_i \quad [1]$$

In here,  $j$  is the level of an ordered category with  $J$  levels and  $i$  correspond to independent variables.

$$j = 1, 2, \dots, j - 1 \text{ and } i = 1, 2, \dots, m$$

This examines whether there is a significant impact between the academic performance and the happiness of Undergraduates. The Spearman's correlation was conducted to measure the strangeness of the happiness and the academic performance of undergraduates. The data was analyzed through the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 01: Summary of Descriptive Statistics.

Dependent Variable		Independent Variable	
Academic Performance	Statistics	Happiness of Undergraduates	Statistics
N	154	N	154
Range	4	Range	5
Minimum	1	Minimum	1
Maximum	5	Maximum	6
Sum	449	Sum	514
Mean	2.92	Mean	3.34
Std. Error	0.072	Std. Error	0.087
Std. Deviation	0.893	Std. Deviation	1.074
Variation	0.797	Variation	1.153

Source: SPSS output -Survey Data, 2021

According to table 01 the Happiness of Undergraduates has a larger mean value than the mean value of Academic Performance. The variation of happiness of Undergraduates is also higher than the variation of Academic performance.

Table 02: Summary results of Ordinal Model Fitting

	Model	
	Intercept only	Final
-2 log likelihood	92.171	69.908
Chi-square	-	22.264
df	-	5
Sig. value	-	0.000

Source: SPSS output -Survey Data, 2021

Table 02 shows the model fitting information. The p value is 0.000 and  $\alpha$  value is 0.01. As the p value is less than  $\alpha$  value there is enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis. This tells that model gives better predictions based on outcome categories. Therefore, there is an impact of happiness for the academic performance of Undergraduates in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna.

Table 03: Summary results of Ordinal Regression Goodness-of-Fit

	Pearson	Deviance
Chi-square	25.282	24.233
df	15	15
Sig. value	0.056	0.061

Source: SPSS output -Survey Data, 2021

Table 03 represents the Goodness-of-Fit information. This contains Pearson's Chi-square statistic for the model and as well as another chi-square statistic based on deviance. Here the null

hypothesis is that the model fit is good. As here the p value is greater than 0.05 null hypothesis is not rejected and concluded that the data and the model predictions are similar and have a good model.

Table 04: Summery results of Spearman’s correlation for the happiness and the academic performance of Undergraduates

Dependent variable	Academic Performance of Undergraduates
Independent variable	Happiness of undergraduates
N	154
Spearman’s rho correlation coefficient	0.296
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

Source: SPSS output -Survey Data, 2021

The main objective of the study was to investigate of the impact of happiness for the academic performance of Undergraduates in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna. The study analyzed whether there is a significant impact of happiness on the academic performance of Undergraduates. To examine whether there is a significant impact of happiness on the academic performance of Undergraduates the Ordinal regression was conducted. Spearman correlation was conducted to identify the direction of the association. According to the results, there was a significant impact of happiness on the academic performance of Undergraduates. And according to the spearman correlation coefficient there is a positive impact, and it is not a very strong association. The study findings also indicated that the greatest numbers of Undergraduates are from happiness group three which represents not particularly happy or unhappy.

## 5. CONCLUSION

From the study findings, conclusions were made regarding the happiness and academic performance of Undergraduates. The main objective of the study was to investigate of the impact of happiness for the academic performance of Undergraduates in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Ruhuna. To examine whether there is a significant impact of happiness on the academic performance of Undergraduates the Ordinal regression was conducted. Spearman correlation was conducted to identify the direction of the association. From the study results, it can be concluded that there is an impact of happiness on the academic performances of Undergraduates. It is a positive impact and not a very strong correlation. With regards to academic performance, the study indicated that the highest number of students were from the third GPA category which represent GPA is between 3.3 and 3.7 scores. The study findings also indicated that the greatest numbers of Undergraduates are from happiness group three which represents not particularly happy or unhappy.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

More psychological research is needed to examine about the impact and the behavior of happiness. More than that, there should be concern about the other factors that affect both academic performance and happiness in research field. As an example, there should be further research to be done to measure the impact of happiness on the academic performance in both sociological and physiological aspects.

Based on the findings of this study, I would like to offer some suggestions on how to improve the academic performance of Undergraduates. As large number of students had a GPA in between 3.0 and 3.3 it can be increased up to a first class by being happy. Because the study found that there is an impact of happiness on the academic performance of Undergraduates. Then suggestions can be employed to increase the happiness level of Undergraduates within the University. And also, by investigating the other factors which affect both happiness and academic performances implications can be done to develop the behavior of Undergraduates.

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