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**PRESENTING A STRUCTURAL MODEL BASED ON ROLE OF SOCIAL
STRUCTURES IN DEVELOPING HAPPINESS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN
IRAN***

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to present a structural model based on the relationship between social capital and other factors which affect happiness. Previous studies on this topic have shown that strengthening social vitality in the society does not have a single cause; but, social vitality among the members of a society is strengthened or reduced by a set of factors (personal and transpersonal) including satisfaction with life, hope for future, family status, interest in others, and socio-economic status. In this article, the statistical population included all the students of Islamic Azad University, Kerman Branch, (16403 students) in academic year 2013-2014, out of whom 400 students were selected as the sample. In this research, Oxford questionnaire was employed. The theoretical framework of this article was based on the combination of sociological and psychological theories by Max Haler, Markaz Hadler, Belbum and Barhir, Shinez, and Bergezma. Then, the hypotheses were formulated and a model based on structural equations was developed in AMOS 17 software. Results obtained from the model fitting indicated that social capital had a direct and positive effect (equal to 0.14) on happiness and other social factors had the effect of about 0.27.

Keywords: Social capital, Hope for future, Spirit of criticizing and accepting criticism, Satisfaction with life

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Happiness, defined as vitality and prosperity is among the most important psychological needs of humans and has great importance owing to significant effects on human life. Is there a person who claims that s/he does not need happiness?

People show different reactions to external and internal factors, including happiness, anger, hatred, fear, and sadness, which are called emotions by psychologists. Depending on the causing factors as well as people's viewpoints and ideas, these emotions can be either positive or negative. One of the emotional aspects is happiness (Tarighehdar, 2004: 22), which keeps away negative emotions such as frustration, despair, fear, and anxiety.

Studies in this field have demonstrated that happy people have higher sense of security, make decisions more easily, and express more satisfaction than those living around them (Mayers, 2002: 80). Lack of happiness and vitality could cause many negative effects in the society, which includes depression, pessimism, negative evaluation of events, lack of interest in work and occupational consciousness, drug addiction, social disorders, prevalence of violence in social

relations, divorce, and inclination toward foreign cultures and outsiders.

On the other hand, some researchers believe that social participation and activities can affect happiness and life satisfaction (Darikvandi, 2002). Therefore, the environments in which there is participation may cause happiness. In fact, a healthy society is the one which seeks participation. This kind of society requires a participation-seeking and lively educational and academic system, which could follow its scientific progress with great motivation and hope for future. On the other hand, participation is practical when there is mutual trust between two sides. Several studies have focused on the effective role of trust in others in terms of developing happiness (Panahi, 2012). Components such as trust and participation along with communication networks conduct us to the concept of social capital.

In this study, the mechanism and manner of the relation between sense of happiness and social capital were investigated among university students. As one of the main components of social capital, social participations can help citizens make their lives more purposeful based on their goals. Results of a number of studies by Jowkar

(2007) suggest that the people who are more purposeful in their lives have a higher level of life satisfaction and happiness. Thus, we can assume a relationship between social participations (because of giving purpose to people's lives), trust, communication networks, and happiness and this article was aimed to investigate such a relation.

Literature Review

Various studies have been conducted on happiness and its effective social and psychological factors at national and international levels. In Iran, a group of researchers have focused on the role of goal-orientation in happiness (Jowkar, 2007) and believe that goal-orientation can affect happiness of university students as one of the most important motivational factors. Alavi (2009) emphasized students' type of behavior and found that their membership in student societies and groups could be an influential factor for their happiness. Also, Panahi and Dehghani (2012) concentrated on the role of variables such as satisfaction of needs, trust in others, and informal social participation in the development of happiness and introduced the above-mentioned variables to be influential for happiness. Isanejad (2011) proved the effect of social networks on happiness and stated that some enhancement educational

programs regarding inter-personal relationships (boys and girls) must be conducted in the society. According to him, relationship enhancing skills are those that can be applied in almost all cultures and help satisfy the most extreme needs of families; the important ones include love, compassion, sense of attachment, trust, loyalty, security, and pleasure. Zarei Matin et al. (2011) emphasized the role of university in developing happiness and believed that universities are responsible for promoting culture of happiness in the society. In another study, Pahlavan Sadegh and Nasrabadi (2009) focused on the effective factors for happiness and studied the role of family status in sense of happiness among people; they believed that, beside other personal and psychological factors, family can have an important effect on happiness. Haghighi et al. (2012) emphasized the role of religious beliefs in creating happiness among nurses and found a relationship between religious beliefs and sense of happiness. Their results demonstrated that the nurses who had stronger religious beliefs and repeatedly tried to calm the patients down by resorting to religious beliefs had a higher level of happiness than other nurses.

Helliwell (2006: 34-44) examined the effect of social capital and order in society on happiness. Results indicated the significant relationship of social networks, participation, and social capital in general with happiness. Furthermore, he found a relationship between marital status and sense of happiness so that, during the early years of marriage, sense of happiness was strong among couples; but, after some years, the couples returned to their initial point in terms of happiness. Thogersen, Ntoumani, et al. (2005: 609-627) examined the role of sport activities in happiness among citizens and concluded that performing sport activities can affect people's happiness. Anand et al. (2001) emphasized the role of variables such as empathy, self-worth, security, and stress in happiness.

Theoretical Framework

While discussing the effect of structures on emotions, particularly happiness, Max Haler and Markaz Hadler emphasized networks and fundamental personal relations, altruism and socio-cultural solidarities and affinities, participations and occupational success, social status, and macro-socio-political and institutional context (Haler and Hadler, 2006: 178).

To confirm the claim made by Haler and Hadler (2006: 179), Belbum and Barhir

demonstrated that intimate relations with others, spouse, parents, children, relatives, friends, neighbors, and colleagues are among the major sources of life satisfaction and happiness. On the other hand, Hium also claimed that attaining happiness is a fundamental goal which can be only achievable via relations with other people.

Vinhoven and Kalmijen believed that people's membership in associations is a principle: the more the participation of people in associations, the higher their happiness would be (Vinhoven & Kalmijen, 2005: 436). Moreover, they emphasized effect of justice on happiness and believed that, the stronger the economic, social, cultural, and political justice in the society, the better and fairer would be the distribution of happiness among people (Vinhoven & Kalmijen, 2005: 435). Researchers have referred to a set of factors such as participation, trust, and social networks as social capital. From the methodological point of view, social capital is defined as the manner of social participation and relation network, friendship, altruism, sense of control, social trust, etc. According to Putnam (2000), social capital consists of the communications between people, which enhance their lives in terms of social relations (quoted by Jafari, 2004: 14).

But, based on the literature review, in addition to social capital, other social factors such as hope for future, satisfaction with life, and sense of relative deprivation can affect happiness. In this regard, it is necessary to consider sense of relative deprivation. According to this viewpoint, people generally compare themselves with others and show strong and extreme emotional reactions when they feel sense of poverty and injustice. When this kind of emotion reaches its highest level, social conflict and extreme conflicts are resulted (Rafipour, 1999: 45). Psychologists believe that emotion does not occur without the cognitive assessment of a stimulating event; but, people's initial assessment of the stimulus as good/bad is an important cognitive mechanism that is expressed as physiological arousal and future emotional experience (Rio, 1999: 317, quoted by Khodapanahi, 2000: 121). Such assessment can be positive assessment either with hope for future or accompanied by despair and depression. In fact, based on Campbell's view, one of the major and principle causes for the creation of happiness and vitality is the presence of hope for self, life, and future. Anxiety or stress is in direct relationship with lack of hope for future, which is achieving the goal or expecting to achieve the goal; thus,

hope theory is called theory of motivation (Campbell, 1981).

It can be concluded that the set of the aforementioned social factors can be related to happiness. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is a relationship between inter- and intra-group social capital and happiness among university students.
2. There is a relationship between spirit of criticizing and accepting criticism in the society and happiness among university students.
3. There is a relationship between hope for future and happiness among university students.
4. There is a relationship between sense of relative deprivation and happiness among university students.
5. There is a relationship between satisfaction with life and happiness among university students.

Conceptual Definition of Research Variables

Happiness:

In fact, happiness refers to the feeling in humans that causes the person to feel liveliness and pleasure and experience more happy moments than sad ones. In order to measure happiness, Oxford questionnaire

(Hills and Argyle, 2002) was used in this study.

Sense of criticizing and accepting criticism in society:

On the one hand, it refers to capacity and tolerance in accepting criticism from others; on the other hand, it shows the capacity of the society and their courage to express their opposite views (criticism) in different social, cultural, and political issues. Also, it can be said that sense of criticizing and accepting criticism refer to the rate to which criticism is accepted in the society.

Hope for Future

Hope for future refers to people's hopefulness about the occurrence of positive events in their lives in future. This hope can be about different fields including occupational, educational, family, personal, and social ones; the extent to which the respondents are optimistic about issues like improvement of economic, social, educational, and research conditions in the country.

Intra- and Inter-group Social Capital

Intra-group social capital can be assessed as a negative factor, because this type of social capital, which in fact creates intra-group solidarity, might encourage the members of a group to show hostility toward those who do not belong to their group by promoting

emotional support and solidarity between the group members. It is also measured by assessing components such as informal, intra-group charity participation, intra-group religious participation, intra-group participation (cooperation), intra-group social networks, and inter-personal trust, all of which include a small range of family members, relatives, and close friends.

Inter-group social capital refers to the type of communications between people that rely on common interests instead of personal and identity closeness. More heterogeneous inter-group networks refer to the communications that are called weak bonds by Granovetter (1973). Main examples of this type of social capital can be found in social networks and membership in non-local associations and groups. This variable can be assessed by measuring components such as informal, inter-group charity participation, inter-group religious participation, inter-group participation (cooperation), inter-group social networks, passive (civil) participation, political participation, and organizational and public trust, all of which are promoted at an extensive, but superficial, communication level among citizens.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a survey and its statistical population included all students of Islamic Azad University, Kerman Branch, who were studying at six different faculties of this university. Total number of students at this university was 16403 in academic year 2013-2014 and included 6411 male and 5316 female students. According to Cochran's formula, the sample size was estimated as 384 students. Sampling was performed based on selecting different clusters from each faculty; the samples were also classified based on their gender. Construct validity and Cronbach's alpha coefficient were used to verify the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, respectively. Cronbach's alpha was 0.775, 0.867, 0.831, 0.724, 0.842, 0.764, and 0.864 for satisfaction with life, interest in others, intra-group social capital, inter-group social capital, sense of relative deprivation, hope for future, spirit of criticism, and happiness, respectively.

FINDINGS

According to the results from the sample size of this research, 211 students (55.5%) were female students, while 169 (44.5%) were male. 65.8% were single, 29.2% married, 1.5% divorced, and 4.2% were widows/widowers. Average age of the respondents was 17 years old. According to

the data, the majority of the respondents belonged to above-average and high social classes.

Happiness was the dependent variable of this study. As mentioned earlier, this variable was analyzed using Oxford questionnaire. The resulting average score of 29 questions in the happiness questionnaire indicated that the average score for happiness was equal to 97.96 (out of 145), which showed that happiness was at medium level among these students. The third quartile demonstrating 75% of the respondents showed the average score of 106.

Among other important variables considered as an influential factor for happiness in this study was spirit of criticizing and accepting criticism. Results of this study suggested that Iranian society was a society with high frequency of criticism among people (average score of 3.58 out of 5). This criticism was related to different organizations (average score of 3.32 out of 5). Nonetheless, such criticisms were mainly made about subordinate authorities, not managers and superior authorities.

Results of the frequency of the responses to the next variable indicated that hope for future in terms of occupational conditions and health issues in the society was slightly more than

the average score (3 out of 5), which showed that hope for future in terms of these two issues was at medium level. 38% of the respondents stated that they were optimistic or very optimistic about the improvement of health conditions in the society, 2.34% had medium-level hope, and 42% were optimistic or very optimistic about the improvement of employment condition in Iran. However, it is interesting to note that, although the statistical population was composed of university students, the resulting scores related to the three items of research and academic issues in the society were not favorable and were lower than the average score: 48, 47, and 42% were pessimistic or very pessimistic about improvement of educational and research conditions and facilities, improvement of teaching quality and knowledge of teachers and professors at universities and schools, and improvement of people's knowledge and information in Iran, respectively.

Frequency distribution of the presented responses for satisfaction with life indicated that the items related to satisfaction with economic status of families were at a relatively acceptable level (3.62 out of 5). Satisfaction with "self" was also favorable (3.58 out of 5). However, scores for other

items were very low, which indicated low satisfaction level.

Research results regarding sense of relative deprivation showed the strength of this sense in city of Kerman. Maximum relative deprivation was observed in educational fields and social respect. Results demonstrated that around 50, 38, 40, 48, and 40% of the respondents had high and very high levels of relative deprivation in terms of educational, occupation, welfare and financial facilities, social respect, and distribution of health services and facilities, respectively. These results showed very strong relative deprivation in this city.

Presenting Structural Model for Relationship between Social Capitals and Happiness

Based on the theoretical framework, a structural model (1) was developed to define the relationship between inter- and intra-group social capitals and other social parameters effective for happiness in the form of structural equations modeling. Fitting model indices, which indicated favorable fitting, were as follows: Chi-square index (denoted by CMIN in the software) which is among the important index for absolute fitting, was reported as 11.445 with the significance level of 0.120. This score indicated no significant difference between

Table 1: Standard and non-standard regression coefficients for the research variable

			Regression Weights	S.E.	C.R.	P	Standardized Regression Weights
hope	<---	social	1.000				.611
happy	<---	social capital	.143	.057	2.520	.012	.140
happy	<---	social	.575	.141	4.069	***	.323
hapso	<---	happy	1.000				.693
hapfeel	<---	happy	.838	.114	7.383	***	1.071
bridging	<---	social capital	2.136	.334	6.402	***	.641
satisfact	<---	social	1.187	.156	7.622	***	.775
sprit	<---	social	.513	.083	6.192	***	.405
bonding	<---	social capital	1.000				1.080
hapso	<---	hope	.271	.058	4.680	***	.173

CONCLUSION

In the present article, it was pointed out that one of the major challenges for humans in the modern world is sense of welfare and happiness, because despite considerable developments in technology and human comfort, happiness has not been increased (Panahi, 2012).

In terms of informal charity participations which were evaluated in two inter- and intra-group dimensions, participation was relatively high which was extremely inside the groups. This issue can be originated from ethnic and tribal prejudices and highly traditional social relations which predominant the city. Strangers are quickly and intensely eliminated from the social structure of this society and are kept away from the small range of trust, participation, and devolution (refer to the results reported by (Moinodini and Sanatkhah, 2013, Dadkhahfar, 2012). Such a traditional social space and tribal and ethnic

management (management based on family and tribal relations, not new rules) are observed in the entire social structure of this city. In this space, citizens' priority is on their relatives and friends and they do not show any self-devotion for others. Others are not important and only family and personal benefits play a fundamental role in this regard.

This type of traditional and prejudiced social structure also affects religious participations. Results indicated that religious participation, similar to charity participation, was strong in this city, which was largely related to traditional structure and intra-group social relations. Cooperative participation was also very weak in general. Although this participation was again stronger between families and people with the same language (belonging to the same ethnicity), it was very weaker than general participation of citizens, which can be explained as follows: the more

the inclination from participations related to religious, traditional, and ethnic-tribal context toward civil participations which are typical of modern societies or cooperative participations whose prerequisites are interest in others, trust in them, and inter-group communication, the shorted the range of such participations would be.

Civil participation which refers to people's membership in voluntary groups and associations is another sign of modern society. Considering that Kerman is a highly traditional and ethnic-tribal city, active participations are not expected in this regard. Among other important variables and components related to social capital is communication level among people, which are known as inter- and intra-group social networks. Intra-group radius of communication was very strong among the citizens. Regarding the components related to trust, as mentioned earlier, traditional and ethnic-tribal structures of Kerman strongly supported the inter-personal trust. Results of this study on the spirit of criticizing and accepting criticism indicated that criticism level of people from each other was very high (score of almost 4 out of 5). However, these criticisms were not constructive and thus not accepted. This result could be caused by

another reason: since intra-group social capital is very strong in this city and strangers are quickly removed from competition, criticism has a comprehensive range and even covers strangers, i.e. those who are outside the limited intra-group radius. However, criticism can become destructive in such conditions, while constructive criticism is made compassionately, not belligerently!

Intra-group social capital can make criticism belligerent. Since the intra-group social capital was strong in the city, criticism became destructive and, instead of turning to a tool for improving the city, they acted as an obstacle against development, science, humanity, and even religious values in Iranian society. Therefore, results of this study demonstrated that people do not accept reasonable and correct criticisms about themselves; but, they make many criticisms about different organizations in their city and believe that the authorities do not accept their reasonable and correct criticisms. Lack of criticism spirit in the society can have a destructive effect on happiness, according to the theoretical framework of this study.

In contrast to inter-group social capital in European countries, inter-group social capital in Iran extremely requires formal and public supportive networks (i.e. networks cannot be

spontaneous due to the Iranian social structure). If public and private organizations do not support every constitution of inter-group social capital (such as allowing for the activities of voluntary associations at national level; introducing and improving voluntary organizations, ...), these capitals would be weak and worthless. It has been emphasized that, in traditional social structures like Iran, inter-group social capital requires public and organizational support; but, in developed countries, this capital is spontaneous and supported by the society (instead of government). In advanced countries, components of inter-group social capitals include spontaneous groups, associations, and trade that must be rapidly formed and spread in the society in order to develop strong inter-group social capital. Unfortunately, such a background has not been formed in Iran.

By the establishment of spontaneous associations and organizations, the power of inter-group social capitals and its constitutions for the development of happiness are increased and inter-group participations, inter-group networks, and public and organizational trust can solve various social and even economic and cultural problems of citizens and thus affect their happiness.

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