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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE QUALITY OF LIFE, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND HAPPINESS AMONG TEACHERS IN IRAN

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### ABSTRACT

Quality of life is an important issue having been studied by socialists and even psychologists. The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between quality of life, social capital and happiness. The population of this study is the teachers of Karman city's region 1. The size of the samples is 400 teachers which are calculated by Cochran formula. The theoretical framework of the study has integrated the human development approach, described by Griffin and Mcnkinley as well as the theories proposed by Putnam, Coleman, Stone and Harper about social capital. The results suggest that the relationship between quality of life and happiness isn't significant; however, social capital and life style have direct impacts of 109/0 and 120/0 on the feeling of happiness, respectively.

**Keywords:** *Quality of Life, Happiness, Job Quality, Social Capital, Family Status*

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Introduction and Statement of the Problem**

Theoreticians of social sciences and development studies have considered quality of life from the second half of the twentieth century (Ghafari and Omid, 2011). The structure of social science is being repeated in social science concepts continuously and has turned into a cultural-political term (John and Mohaqeqi, 2010). Research data suggest that the life quality index is low for all members of the society. According to the life quality index of 2010, Iran ranks 150<sup>th</sup> among 194 countries of the world. Although Iran has ascended thirteen steps compared to 2009, it is still among the weakest countries in life quality.

Formerly, the quality of life was evaluated by the improvement of the material life (such as income, education, physical health and housing) but then, Psychologists and experts stated that the main criteria for having a desirable life quality, does not mainly depend on facilities of the material life, it mostly depends on satisfaction and mental perception of the concept of work, employment and housing (Masaeli *et al.*, 2013). Also, happiness causes life satisfaction and leads to the feeling of happiness, in other words, as stated by researchers, life satisfaction is one of the main components of the feeling of happiness (Kajbaf *et al.*, 2011). The feeling of happiness is one of the most pleasant and positive emotions in humans, because this feeling provokes useful activities, encourages creativity (Ale-e-Yasin, 2001), facilitates social relations (Mayers, 2000), fosters political- social participation (Arzbani *et al.*, 2011), promotes emotional, mental and physical health and provides hope (Al-e- Yasin, 2001), strengthens a sense of security, comfort and decision-making ability (Mayers, 2000), Causes a feeling of being close to others (interest), a feeling of love, confidence and interaction with others (Argyle, 2004).

In addition, societies entering information based age, have considered the importance of the educational system more than ever, and the issue of happiness is studies by researchers. In order to investigate the relationship between the feeling of happiness, and the quality of life we have conducted interviews with teachers of region 1 of Kerman's Educational office.

#### **The Review of Related Literature**

Schalk *et al.*, (2002), evaluating the quality of life in more than 20 countries, suggest some factors to measure the life quality; such as emotional health, interpersonal relationships, health, marital relationships, individual growth, physical health, the ability to decide for themselves and other (as stated by Rezaei *et al.*, 2007). Roslan *et al.*, (2010) believed that variables of social capital and quality of life are related and affect each other. Kohli *et al.*, (2005, as cited in Costanzia *et al.*, 2007) stated that the quality of life is a general feeling of improvement consisted of happiness and life satisfaction. Ralston (1995, as

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cited in Galloway, 2005) divided the quality of life in to 5 categories namely; natural life, happiness, being successful in accomplishing the goal, being useful for the society, and natural capacity. Gough and Doyal (1991) social elements, physical health and physical environment are important in achieving the feeling of happiness. Mojinyinola (2002) studying the determinants of a happy life concluded that age, employment, education, and income positively affect the happy life and the number of children negatively affect the happy life. Gurin *et al.*, (1960) have considered the relationship between happiness and income. They believed that happiness increases with the increase in income in all levels of improvement.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In order to determine the relationship of life quality and happiness we have combined some scientific approaches. Utilization of common basic needs known as nutrition, health, education and shelter, being prerequisites to other aspects of life, must be the top priorities of any government (Stewart, 1996). In the human Development Approach which is applied by United Nation Development Programme it has been mentioned that: “People are the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. The purpose of development is to offer people more options. The most important of them are long and healthy life, training and learning, and benefitting from appropriate standards of life.

But there are other options as well, including long life, knowledge, political freedom, personal security, community participation and guaranteed human rights (United Nation Development Program, 1990). Griffin and Mckinley (1996) state that the advantages of human development are: Direct role in quality of life, paying attention to equal opportunities for people, improving the distribution of development achievements, the relationship between different types of investment (capital, material, natural and human).

Everyone based on the quality his/her life, is able to support or refuse the extensive communicational networks. Public trust plays an important role here. Trust attracts community participations. However, partnership and Trust are among the basic components of social capital.

Social capital has been defined by different authors. For instance the definitions of Putnam (2000), Coleman (1988), Stone (2011), and Harper (2011) are similar. There are common concepts in the definitions proposed by these researches, used in theorizing the concept of social capital. Some of these concepts are: participation in networks, exchanges between people, Trust, social norms, the use of shared resources and activism. Thus, we can conclude that social capital is a combination of networks, norms and perceptions which facilitate within group and between groups cooperation in order to gain mutual benefits. This capital is mostly determined by people’s participation rate in public life and the existence of trust among them.

According to the theory of learning, happiness emerges in the learning process in the social arena. In the theory of learning, more or less permanent changes in the behavior are cause by reinforcement and practice. Albert Bandura emphasizes on the role of learning. He claims that most human behavior are formed through observation and modeling process. According to him some advanced behaviors like speaking or chained behaviors like driving a car, undoubtedly need a pattern (Salimi and Davari, 2001). So happiness could be a pattern obtained from the personal life style and through the influence of processes in the social environment or arena. An arena which is influenced on one hand by cooperation, trust- building, and network patterns (social capital) on the other hand it is influenced by the quality of meeting the needs of people achieved by the government. These effects appear through an interaction process in an individual (Zandi, 2003). According to the above theoretical framework, following hypotheses are developed:

### **Main Hypotheses**

1. There is a significant relationship between life quality and happiness among teachers.
2. There is a significant relationship between life patterns and the feeling of happiness among teachers.
3. There is a significant relationship between the family status and happiness among teachers.
4. There is a significant relationship between capital social and happiness among teachers.
5. There is a significant relationship between occupational life quality, life quality and happiness.

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### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### Methodology

The survey method is used in this study. The population of the study is consisted of all teachers of region on 1 of Kerman city including 899 teachers 244 males and 655 females. The size of the samples is 400 teacher which is calculated by Cochran formula. Sampling was based on the selection of different teaching method clusters as well as age and gender. In order to determine the validity, construct validity is used in the study and to determine reliability, Cronbach alpha coefficient is used. This coefficient was higher than 7/0 for all variables which is very desirable.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Findings

194 respondents (48.5 %) were male and 206 (51.5 %) were female. The highest percent belonged to the respondents between 30 to 40 years old (47.5 %) and the lowest percent belonged to the respondents over 50 (5 %). The highest percent belonged to the married respondents (79.3%) and the lowest percent belonged to the divorcees (2.8 %). To describe the socio-economic variable, the scores are divided into three categories of low (score less than 9), average (score 9 to 1.12) and high (score 1.12, and higher). According to the data analysis, the socio-economic class of 13.1 % of teachers was low, 73.64 % was average and 13.5 % was high.

In the feeling of the happiness, 99 respondents felt low feeling of happiness (24.8%), 264 respondents felt average amount of happiness (66%), and 37 respondents felt great amount happiness (9.3%). In the quality of life, 8 respondents (2%) suffered from very poor life quality, 331 of them (82.8%) maintained average life quality and 61 respondents (15.3 %) maintained excellent life quality. In life style status 19 respondents (4.8%) had unsuitable lifestyles, 259 respondents (64.8%) had average life styles, and 122 respondents (30.5%) had desirable life styles.

In social capital, 8 individuals (1.3%) had low social capital, 187 respondents (46.8%) had average social capital and 208 respondents (52%) had high social capital. According to the results obtained from testing the hypotheses: there is no significant relationship between life quality of teachers and the feeling of happiness (Pearson coefficient:  $R=0.096$  and  $p=0.056$ ).

However, there is a significant relationship between lifestyle patterns and happiness of teachers (Pearson coefficient:  $R=0.318$  and  $p=0.001$ ).

In addition, the results showed that there is a significant relationship between family status and happiness of teachers (Pearson coefficient:  $R=0.196$  and  $p=0.001$ ) also the data confirm the relationship between the social capital and happiness of teachers (Pearson coefficient:  $R=0.277$  and  $p=0.001$ ). The strongest relationship among the variables is that of social capital and the quality of life.

The other hypothesis of the study concerning the relationship between the occupational life and the happiness was confirmed (Pearson coefficient:  $R=0.246$  and  $p=0.001$ ).

To identify which variable is suitable predictor of life quality, the multivariate regression model was designed.

The hypothesis of the model is: life quality, social capital and lifestyles are predictors of happiness in teachers. So the  $H_0$  is based on the fact that the regression model is not linear, and  $H_1$  is based on the fact that the regression model is linear:

$$H_0^1: \beta_1 = 0 \quad H_0^2: \beta_2 = 0 \quad H_0^3: \beta_3 = 0$$

$$H_1^1: \beta_1 \neq 0 \quad H_1^2: \beta_2 \neq 0 \quad H_1^3: \beta_3 \neq 0$$

Since  $p(0.001)$  is less than the significant level, being 0.05,  $H_0$  is rejected so the regression model is significant. In other words, there is a significant linear relationship between life quality, social capital and lifestyles in relation to the amount of happiness in teachers.

The coefficient is  $r=0.338$ , this shows the relationship of life quality, social capital, and lifestyles with the happiness of teachers so the significance level is 0.001 and lower than  $\alpha=0/05$ . So the relationship is significant. Since the  $R^2_{adj}$  (adjusted  $R^2$ ), is 108/0, all variable of the model 108.0 determine happiness of the teachers (Table1).

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**Table 1: Regression analysis of quality of life, social capital and lifestyles in the happiness of teachers**

Change sources	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	average of squares	R	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj</sub>	F	p
Regression	4877.13	3	1625.71				
Left	37705.15	396	95.215	0.338	0.108	17.07	0.001
Sum	42582.29	399	-				

Also according to the  $-p$  calculated in the regression model's coefficient,  $H_0^2$  and  $H_0^3$  are rejected on the level of 0.05, but  $H_0^1$  is accepted on the level of 0.05 and according to the amount of  $\beta$ , social capital and life styles of the teachers are 0.155 and 0.242 respectively, and could predict the amount of happiness in them. However the life quality doesn't predict the amount of happiness significantly, because its significance is higher than 0.05 resulting in lifestyles and social capital being the most important predictors of happiness in teachers (Table 2).

**Table 2: Regression coefficients between quality of life, social capital and lifestyles in relation with the amount of happiness in teachers**

Variable	B estimation	Standard error	Standard estimation	$\beta$ The amount of p	t
Stable	69.228	4.723	-	14.657	0.001
Life quality	-0.034	0.033	-0.055	-1.038	0.30
Social capital	0.109	0.044	0.155	2.466	0.014
lifestyles	0.120	0.030	0.242	4.066	0.001

**Summary and Conclusion**

Life quality is a concept which has been considered by different researchers all around the world. The relationships of different variables such as life style, social capital, family status, occupational life quality, the quality of life have been identified towards happiness in teachers in the present study. 194 respondents (48.5 %) were male and 206 (51.5 %) were female. The highest percent belonged to the respondents between 30 to 40 years old (47.5 %) and the lowest percent belonged to the respondents over 50 (5 %). The first hypothesis, discussing the direct relationship between life quality and happiness is rejected. However, the results showed that there is a positive direct relationship between variables such as: lifestyles and patterns, family status, social capital, occupational life style, and happiness. According to the results obtained from the multivariate regression equation, it is concluded that life style and social capital have an impact on the feeling of happiness. Lifestyle has the strongest effect on the feeling of happiness.

The social capital defines the quality of one's membership in a group and voluntary association on one hand, and on the other hand shows the amount of trust namely; general trust, trusting the institutions and organizations called organizational trust which is consisted of the trust towards the family members, the amount of intimacy between them and interpersonal trust among them. Social partnerships are directly affected by the trust variable. Trust is able to turn the participations of people into an active or passive status. Meanwhile, the communication networks of an individual towards others called social networks. The values of the individual are coordinated with the values of others (people and government). Thus, the communication networks might be developed or limited. The results indicate that membership; trust, and social or communication networks play an important role in determining teacher's happiness. Participation and trust features as well as values lead teachers to certain patterns and lifestyles which are directly affected by happiness.

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