

Exploring the Nexus: Economics of Happiness and Quality of Life in College Students

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Abstract:

A happy person will have a more active lifestyle, better career opportunities, and promote a more productive, cohesive, and lasting sustainable society. India is noted for having one of the world's youngest populations. India has more than fifty percent of the population under 25. The primary objective of this study is to explore the levels of happiness and quality of life among college students in rural and urban areas of Karnataka. The sample comprises college students aged 18 to 25, drawn from different rural and urban colleges in Karnataka using a stratified random sampling method: the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and the Quality-of-Life Questionnaire for data collection. The collected data underwent analysis using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. It was observed in the present study that there was no significant difference between rural and urban students in Physical and Psychological quality of life. Results also indicate that in Social and Environmental domains urban students are better than rural students. The study revealed a significant relationship between happiness and different quality of life domains among urban and rural college students.

Keywords: Happiness, Quality of Life, College students

1. Introduction

The well-being and happiness of society are closely intertwined with the contentment and satisfaction of its members. Measuring the quality of life often involves using happiness as a subjective index, reflecting both individual and social well-being. The definition of happiness has been a subject of interest for numerous studies, each presenting its unique perspective on this complex and multifaceted concept. For example, Veenhoven (1992) indicated that: "Happiness is the degree to which a person judges whether his quality of life is satisfactory". Happiness among students of higher education levels has been considered a vital factor for improving the education system.

World Health Organization defines quality of life as individuals' perceptions of their situation in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, standards, and concerns (WHOQOL Group 1998, p. 551). The definition of quality of life encompasses various aspects, including an individual's perception of their overall well-being, personal experiences, and values. It incorporates indicators such as well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction, which provide insights into one's contentment and fulfillment. Quality of life is a comprehensive concept that takes into account an

individual's functional health, feelings of competence, independence in daily activities, and satisfaction with social circumstances.

Different models of quality of life exist, and they can vary significantly. Some models are based on needs, inspired by Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, which includes deficiency needs like hunger, thirst, and security, as well as growth needs like learning and self-actualization. Other models focus exclusively on factors such as happiness, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, morale, social expectations, or an individual's unique perceptions. In essence, quality of life is a complex and interconnected amalgamation of both objective and subjective dimensions. It involves a dynamic interplay of various elements that contribute to an individual's overall sense of well-being and satisfaction.

With significant advancements in science and technology, living standards have drastically improved, offering safety and luxury. However, this progress has been accompanied by industrialization and competition, leading to heightened stress in the workforce. The level of happiness and well-being in society has become a common subject of debate, with efforts to assess and enhance it. Positive emotions play a pivotal role in leading a meaningful life as they contribute to both mental and physical health. They serve as coping mechanisms for psychological distress, enabling individuals to live stress-free and happy lives. Understanding the concept of quality of life involves recognizing humans as social beings who must adapt to society. The fundamental motives of survival, seeking enjoyment, and enhancing life guide individuals in adjusting to various stressors. Effective adaptation skills lead to an improved quality of life. The landscape of higher education has evolved into a highly competitive environment, leading to a substantial rise in student stress levels over the years. Alarming trends of stress disorders, dropouts, and instances of suicidal thoughts or attempts have emerged. As a result, this study aimed to explore the relationship between quality of life and happiness in college students. Additionally, the study sought to identify which aspects of quality of life (physical, psychological, social, and environmental) were more closely linked to the students' happiness.

2. Review of Literature

The literature review provides a comprehensive analysis of diverse concepts, viewpoints, theories, and methodologies put forth by various scholars and researchers, addressing research issues relevant to the subject of our study. The review was done to understand the Relationship of Happiness and Quality of Life among college students.

Happiness is of great importance for the development of future careers of university students and lasting happiness will especially promote a more productive, cohesive, and lasting sustainable society (Yingying et al., 2022). Meenakshi Sharma in her study titled A Study on Indian College Student's Happiness and Related Factors: A Review finds that aspects of a student's social life, career prospects, and personal conditions are positively associated with happiness (2022). In a study conducted by Saleem T in 2018, the relationship between quality of life and happiness was explored. The research also aimed to determine which domain of quality of life (physical, psychological, social, and environmental) was most strongly correlated with happiness. The results revealed a positive association between happiness and all four domains of quality of life. Furthermore, the study highlighted that among university students, happiness was mainly influenced by the environmental quality of life. In 2016, Abolghasem P. and colleagues conducted a study to investigate the link between quality of life and happiness among students from four medical sciences universities. The researchers utilized the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and the 36-item Short Form Health Survey (WHO SF36) as measurement tools. The study findings indicated a strong

positive correlation between students' happiness and their quality of life. The aim of this study by Iranpour S. M., Erfani N., and Ebrahimi M. (2018) was to explore the relationship between the time span of students and their quality of life and happiness levels. The researchers selected 120 students using stratified random sampling and employed the WHO BREF (2006) questionnaire for measuring quality of life and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. The results revealed that the students reported high levels of quality of life and happiness. Moreover, a significant positive association was found between the quality of life and happiness among the students.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Importance and need for the study:

The literature review indicates a close relationship between the term happiness and quality of life, but some studies differentiate between the two. Some studies measure the quality of life using elements like income or residential environment, while others view it as related to abstract issues like freedom and human rights. Considering the urban growth and rural transformation, there was a need to examine the level of happiness and quality of life among college students and explore their relationships. The present study aimed to investigate the differences in quality of life and happiness between rural and urban college students, given the various variables impacting their lives during the transition from adolescence to early adulthood.

Research on quality of life has predominantly been conducted in Western countries, making it essential to conduct similar studies in India, particularly focusing on college students. Happiness, encompassing positive emotions from contentment to intense joy, can also be expressed through life satisfaction, well-being, subjective well-being, flourishing, and eudemonia. Understanding the current state of happiness experienced by college students is crucial.

This study aims to explore the relationship between happiness and different domains of quality of life (physical, psychological, social relationships, and environment) among both urban and rural college students.

3.2 Aim:

- a. To study the levels of happiness and quality of life in college students.
- b. To study the level of happiness among urban and rural college students.
- c. To study the level of various domains of quality of life among urban and rural college students.

3.3 Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant relationship between happiness and domains of quality of life (Physical health, psychological, social relationships, and environment) among urban and rural college students.
2. There will be no significant relationship between happiness and domains of quality of life (Physical health, psychological, social relationships, and environment) among urban college students.
3. There will be no significant relationship between happiness and domains of quality of life (Physical health, psychological, social relationships, and environment) among rural college students.

The present study was undertaken to understand the happiness and quality of life among urban and rural college students. The purpose, design of the study, objectives, hypotheses, sample, instruments used, procedure, and statistical techniques used are explained in this chapter.

3.4 Variables

Independent Variables

- Area: Urban and Rural region

Dependent Variables

- The responses of college students on the happiness questionnaire.
- The responses of college students on the quality of life questionnaire.

3.5 Research Design

Stratified random sampling opted for the study.

Procedure

The study was conducted in three phases.

Phase I: Sample selection.

For the purpose of the present study, college students were selected using a stratified random sampling technique.

Phase II: In this phase, the collection of data (online) from the sample to assess happiness and quality of life was done by administering the scales.

Phase III: Analysis of data was done using an appropriate statistical method.

3.6 Sample and Sampling

- **Participants:** For the present study 200 urban and rural college students aged between 18 to 25 years studying in Government degree colleges of urban and rural areas of Karnataka were selected using a stratified random sampling method. Government college students from the following areas K.R. Nagar, Jevargi, Hassan, and Bengaluru were selected for the study.

Inclusion criteria

- Both male and female college students aged between 18 to 25 years studying in Government degree colleges of urban and rural areas.
- College students from the English medium have opted for the study.
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Table 3.6.1 shows the distribution of the sample by Area

| Age | Urban | Rural | Total |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 18 – 25 yrs. | 100 | 100 | 200 |

Assessment tools

The following tools were used in this study:

1. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University).
2. Quality of Life Questionnaire (WHOQOL – BREF, Field Trial Version,1996)

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Michael Argyle and Peter Hills): The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was developed by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University. The 29-item Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) is a widely used scale for the assessment of personal happiness. Confirmatory Factor Analysis indicated that the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire measures happiness as a uni-dimensional construct. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire was found to be 0.71 for the whole population, 0.71 for females, and 0.70 for male samples which is satisfactory. The study of the internal stability of the questionnaire showed that all 29 items have a high correlation with total scores, Cronbach's alpha was 93% and split-half reliability was 92%. The assessed reliability by test-retest after 3 weeks was 79% (n=25).

Quality Of Life Questionnaire: WHOQOL BREF Instrument (WHO, 1998): The WHOQOL-BREF is an abbreviated 26-item version of the WHOQOL-BREF. The instrument comprises four domains-physical health, psychological, social relationship, and environment. The WHOQOL instruments place primary

importance and the perceptions of the individual. WHOQoL-BREF has been shown to display good discriminate validity, content validity, and test-retest reliability. Domain scores produced by the WHOQoL-BREF have been shown to correlate at around 0.9 with the WHOQoL-100 domain scores.

Analysis of results:

The collected data was analyzed using the following statistical method.

Descriptive statistics

- a. Mean and Standard Deviation
- b. Pearson’s product-moment method.

Inferential statistics

- a. T-test
- Relationship between happiness and quality of life among urban and rural college students.

Table 3.6.2: Results on Pearson’s product-moment correlation between happiness and various domains of quality of life for the overall sample

| Happiness and Domains of quality of life | Happiness | Physical | Psychological | Social | Environmental |
|--|-----------|----------|---------------|--------|---------------|
| 1 | | .567** | .607** | .474** | .476** |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate that there is a significant correlation at 0.01 level between happiness and various domains of quality of life like physical(.567**), psychological(.607**), social(.474**), and environmental(.476**). The correlation values on different domains are also around in the moderate level and are positively correlated indicating that the increase in different domains of quality of life also could increase the happiness of college students.

Table 3.6.3: Results on Pearson’s product-moment correlation between Happiness and various domains of quality of life for the urban sample

| Happiness and Domains of quality of life | Happiness | Physical | Psychological | Social | Environmental |
|--|-----------|----------|---------------|--------|---------------|
| 1 | | .622** | .671** | .748** | .692** |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate that there is a significant correlation at 0.01 level between happiness and various domains of quality of life like physical(.622**), psychological(.671**), social(.748**), and environmental(.692**). The correlational values on different domains are also around in the moderate level and are positively correlated indicating that the increase in different domains of quality of life also could increase the happiness of the urban college students.

Table 3.6.4: Results on Pearson’s product-moment correlation between Happiness and various domains of quality of life for rural sample

| Happiness and Domains of quality of life | Happiness | Physical | Psychological | Social | Environmental |
|--|-----------|----------|---------------|--------|---------------|
| 1 | | .478** | .530** | .092 | .076 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of rural college students indicate that except for social (0.092) and environmental domain (.076), there is a significant correlation at 0.01 level between happiness and physical domain (.478**) of quality of life and psychological domain (.530**). The correlational values of the Physical and psychological domains are around a moderate level and are positively correlated indicating that the increase in these domains of quality of life also could increase the happiness of rural college students.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The main findings of the study

A significant relationship was observed between happiness and various domains of quality of life among urban and rural college students.

Objectives and Hypotheses Related Discussion

Objective 1: To study the levels of happiness and quality of life in college students.

Objective 1 was formulated to study the levels of happiness and quality of life in college students and the present study revealed moderate levels of happiness and quality of life among college students.

Objective 2: To study the level of happiness among urban and rural college students.

The results show that on the happiness scale, both rural and urban students are moderately happy/satisfied.

Objective 3: To study the level of various domains of quality of life among urban and rural college students.

Though there are some differences between rural and urban students on the scores of different domains but are almost sail in the same range as far as the quality of life in all the domains are concerned.

Hypothesis 1: There will be no significant differences between urban and rural college students in happiness and various domains of quality of life (Physical health, psychological, social relationships, and environment).

Hypothesis 1 is accepted as it is found that no significant differences between urban and rural college students in happiness and various domains of quality of life.

Hypothesis 1a: There will be no significant difference in happiness between urban and rural college students.

Hypothesis 1a is accepted as there is no significant difference between rural and urban students on happiness observed in the present study.

Hypothesis 1b: There will be no significant difference in the domains of quality of life (Physical health, psychological, social relationships, and environment) between urban and rural college students.

Hypothesis 1b is accepted as it was observed in the present study that there was no significant difference between rural and urban students in Physical and Psychological quality of life. Results also indicated that in Social and Environmental domains urban students are better than rural students.

Previous literature reviews indicate consistent findings regarding the relationship between happiness and quality of life. Saleem (2018) discovered a positive association between happiness and four domains of quality of life, with environmental quality of life strongly predicting happiness among university students. Similarly, Abolghasem et al. (2016) reported a high correlation between student happiness and their quality of life. Additionally, Iranpour, Erfani, and Ebrahimi (2018) identified a significant relationship between quality of life and happiness among students. These studies collectively support the idea that happiness and quality of life are closely linked.

5. Limitations of the study

Instead of complete random sampling, stratified random sampling was used, which may affect the generalization of the results of the entire population. The study focused on students from four colleges in four districts of Karnataka, all of whom were from Government colleges. Additionally, only English medium students were included in the study. Other socio-demographic aspects such as economic status, family type, parents' occupation, birth order, and gender were not considered in the study due to time constraints and specific research objectives, with the study solely focusing on geographical area as a determining factor.

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