

*Original Article***The relationship between students' study habits, happiness and depression**

*Susan Bahrami\**, *Saeed Rajaeepour\*\**, *Hasan Ashrafi Rizi\*\*\**,  
*Monereh Zahmatkesh\*\*\*\**, *Zahra Nematolahi\*\*\*\**

**Abstract**

**BACKGROUND:** One of the important requirements for cultural, social and even economic development is having a book-loving nation. In order to achieve this, there is a need for purposeful and continuous programming. The purpose of this research was to determine the relationship between students' study habits, happiness and depression in Isfahan University of Medical Science.

**METHODS:** This research was a kind of descriptive and correlation survey. Statistical population included all MSc and PhD students in the second semester of the Isfahan University of Medical Science (263 students). In this research, stratified and random sampling was used in which a sample of 100 students was selected. Data collection instruments were Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Oxford Happiness Inventory and a researcher-made questionnaire to determine the amount of students' study. Validity of this questionnaires was determined by structure and content related validity and its reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the first ( $r = 0.94$ ), second ( $r = 0.91$ ) and third ( $r = 0.85$ ) questionnaire. Analysis of research findings was done through descriptive and inferential statistics.

**RESULTS:** Findings showed that 68.8 percent of students study less than 5 hours and only 2.5 percent of students study more than 10 hours. 65 percent of students had high amount of happiness and 35 percent had medium amount of happiness. In 60 percent of students there was no symptom of depression and 7.5 had depression symptoms. Also, there was no significant relationship between happiness and studying but there was a significant and negative relationship between studying and depression and happiness and depression.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The amount of study and tendency for reading are among the most important indices of human growth in terms of potential abilities for achieving a perfect human life and to prevent one-dimensional thinking. Thus, finding ways to encourage students to study is considered essential to achieve a healthy and developed society.

**KEY WORDS:** Students' study habits, depression, happiness.

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Students in each society are human sources that make future of their country and existence of mental problems among students has many serious effects such as decreasing the academic achievement and increasing, drop out and inefficiency among students. Studying

based on some specific criteria can lead to growth and development of personality dimensions in humans which in turn can cause mental health and treatment of many disorders including depression which is a very important health issue in the world.<sup>1</sup>

\* PhD, Department of Educational Administration, Health Management & Economic Research Center, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran.

\*\* PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Administration, Faculty of Education and Psychology, The University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran.

\*\*\* PhD, Assistant Professor, Health Information Technology Research Center, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran.

\*\*\*\* BA, Department of Medical Library and Information Sciences, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran.

Correspondence to: Hasan Ashrafi Rizi, PhD.

Email: hassanashrafi@mng.mui.ac.ir

Research Article of Health Information Technology research Center, Management & Medical Information Faculty, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, No: 287285.

Happiness is also a very important factor in human life. It is due to happiness that a person has always a good feeling about himself and others, rejects despair feeling, accepts his weaknesses, never forgets learning, is always honest with himself and others, lives in the present time and is stable against problems.<sup>2</sup>

Mental health of people in a society is an important and necessary factor for achieving a better life, social welfare and logical compatibility with life events. Therefore, some factors should be recognized in order to prevent occurrence of disorders. One unique property of humans is thinking ability which creates and accelerates human action.<sup>3</sup> Mental health is considered as one of the important factors for a healthy society. Having this divine gift (mental health) is very important for having a comfortable life and achieving great goals. Not having this divine grace (mental health) leads to different problems for people.<sup>4</sup>

Jokar (2001) in an investigation of the lack of students' motivation in secondary schools and students of public universities in Shiraz reported some preventive factors for studying such as high amount of homework at school and lack of proper facilities for studying.<sup>5</sup> Fazel and Shabani (2002) in an investigation of the amount of studying in 360 students of secondary school showed that the amount of studying in male students is 1 hour and 25 minutes and in female students is 2 hours and 32 minutes.<sup>6</sup>

Jafari (2004) in an investigation of the amount of happiness and the elements affecting that among students of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences showed that 78 percent of students had high amount of happiness and the rest of students had medium amount of happiness. Cognitive and behavioral factors as well as self-disclosure were considered as the most influential factors in the clarification of students' happiness.<sup>7</sup>

Abedini et al. (2007) in investigation of the depression prevalence in 190 nursing and medical students of Hormozgan Medical University showed that depression prevalence in nursing students was 60 percent and in medical students was 49.5 percent.<sup>8</sup> Khosh Konesh et al.

(2008) in investigation of happiness and mental health relationship in students found a significant and negative relationship between happiness feeling and mental problems, physical disorders, anxiety and depression of male and female students.<sup>9</sup>

Dadkhah et al. (2006) in a research about investigation of mental health condition of students in Ardebil University of Medical Science showed that there was no significant difference between male and female students in terms of mental disorders.<sup>10</sup> Lightsey (1994) in a research about positive thinking effects on happiness and depression found that positive thoughts cause happiness but negative events and thoughts lead to depression. However, comparatively it can be said that the negative thoughts have less relationship with depression than positive thoughts and happiness.<sup>11</sup> Bitsika (2010) in investigation of 200 students of a private university in Austria showed that symptoms of fatigue, anxiety and insomnia were more prevalent among female students than in male students.<sup>12</sup>

The present research attempted to determine study habits, happiness, and depression among Isfahan University of Medical Sciences students and also it aimed at determining the relationship between these three factors.

## Methods

This research was a descriptive and correlation survey. Statistical population in this research included all MSc and PhD students in the second semester (2008 - 2009) of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (263 students). A stratified and random sampling was used and a sample of 100 students was selected. Data collection instrument included 3 questionnaires as follows:

- A researcher-made questionnaire including 17 items based on Likert five degree scale to determine the students' study habits.
- Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) which was published in 1987<sup>13</sup>: Respondents of this test should have reading ability at least in fifth or sixth grade of secondary

schools in order to understand its questions They must answer each question based on a 4 grade scale of Likert from zero to three. Minimum grade in this test is zero and maximum grade is 63. By calculating the sum of student grades in each question, the student grade can be obtained directly. Grades can be interpreted as 0 - 13: none or the least amount of depression, 14- 19: mild depression, and 20 - 28: medium depression which is used for general level of depression.<sup>14</sup>

- Oxford Happiness Inventory (1987) which includes 29 multiple choice questions which are graded from zero to three, respectively.<sup>15</sup> Each examinee's grade stands between zeros to 87.

To determine the validity of the questionnaires, the content related validity was utilized and their validity was confirmed by a number of experienced instructors in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, and some psychology experts of Isfahan University. Also, for estimating their reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used. In a pilot study, 30 questionnaires

were distributed among students of the university and then, recollected and Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated in the first ( $r = 0.94$ ), second ( $r = 0.91$ ) and third ( $r = 0.85$ ) ones. Analysis of research data was accomplished through descriptive statistics such as frequency percent and through inferential statistics such independent t test and one way variance analysis test (ANOVA).

## Results

Findings showed that 20 percent of respondents were male and 77.5 percent of respondents were female. Also, 8.8 percent of respondents were at PhD level and 81.3 percent were at MSc level. Furthermore, 61.3 percent of respondents were single and 35 percent were married.

Results of Table 1 showed that in 68.8 percent of students, the amount of studying was less than 5 hours and 2.5 percent of students studied between 10 - 15 hours and more than 15 hours. Also, 65 percent of students had high amount of happiness and 35 percent had medium happiness. In 60 percent of students, there was no symptom of depression and 7.5 had chronic depression symptoms.

**Table 1.** Frequency and percentage of the examinee's amount of study, happiness and depression of students

Main variables research	Choices	Frequency	Percentage
Amount of Study	Less than 5 hours	55	68.8
	5-10 hours	18	22.5
	10-15 hours	2	2.5
	15 hours and more	2	2.5
	No answer	3	3.8
Amount of Happiness	Medium	28	35
	High	52	65
Amount of Depression	Null or the least amount	48	60
	Mild	9	11.3
	Medium	16	20
	Chronic	6	7.5

**Table 2.** Correlation coefficient & the level of significant relationship between the amounts of study and students' happiness and depression

Relationship	Correlation Coefficient	significance
Studying & Happiness	0.043	0.707
Studying & Depression	- 0.960	0.006
Happiness & Depression	- 0.657	0.000

Results of Table 2 showed that correlation coefficient between the grades of study and happiness in  $p \leq 0.05$  level was not significant. However correlation coefficient between grades of study and happiness in  $p \leq 0.05$  level was significant and negative. This means that the amount of depression was decreased by increasing the amount of study and on the other hand, the amount of depression decreases when happiness increases. Also, the comparison of the results with regard to the average grade of study, happiness and depression in terms of age and sex showed that the observed amount of  $t$  was not significant in  $p \leq 0.05$  level and it means that there was no significant difference between the amount of study, happiness and depression among students in terms of age and sex.

## Discussion

Amount of study and tendency for reading are among most important indices of human growth in terms of potential abilities for achieving the goal of a perfect human and eliminating one dimensional thinking.<sup>16</sup>

Results showed that most students study less than 5 hours; high amount of homeworks, lack of motive for studying and expensive cost of books can be considered as factors of students' lack of interest to study. This finding was in accordance with Joukar's research (2001) in Shiraz public schools and universities.<sup>5</sup>

Findings showed that most students had high and medium amount of happiness and it can be justified in a way that most students were with high amount of motive and happiness. This finding in investigation of happiness amount and its effective factors was in accordance with Jaffari's (2004) research in students of Isfahan Medical Science University.<sup>7</sup>

Also, findings showed no depression in most students and 7.5 percent of them had chronic

depression. Also, to clarify these findings, it can be said that more than half of students had no depression and had a relative amount of mental health. This finding was in accordance with Abedini et al. studies (2007) but it was not in accordance with Hormozgan Medical students and nursing students and depression prevalence among them.<sup>8</sup>

Also, the results showed that relation between the scores of study and happiness were not significant but the relation between study and depression was negative and significant. This means that their amount of depression decreased with increasing amount of studying and on the other hand, there was a significant and negative relation between happiness and depression. In other words, with increasing happiness in students, their amount of depression decreased. This finding was in accordance with the results of the research of Khosh Konesh et al. (2008) who investigated the relationship of happiness and mental health<sup>9</sup> and also, with Lightsey findings (1994) in a research titled "Positive thoughts in the happiness and depression of an individual".<sup>11</sup>

Also, results showed no significant difference between the amount of study, happiness and depression among students in terms of sex and age. This means that there was no difference in the amount of study, happiness and depression among male and female students in terms of age. This finding was not in accordance with findings of Khosh Konesh et al. findings (2008) and also Bitsika studies (2010) in Austria.<sup>9,12</sup>

## Conclusions

Considering the low amount of study in our country and according to the obtained results, it can be said that studying is influential in overcoming the individual's depression. Therefore, it has been suggested to perform some

researches to find the fields of students' interests for studying and comparison of different methods to encourage students to study so that

they can enjoy a better mental health.

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this study.

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