

FRAGILITY OF HAPPINESS AS A PREDICTOR OF INSECURE ATTACHMENT AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING: A STUDY ON EMERGING ADULTS

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Abstract: *The belief that happiness is fragile and transient and may soon turn into less favourable states is often experienced by a lot of us. Fragility of happiness is an aversion to the experience and/or expression of happiness due to the belief that happiness may cause bad things to happen. The present study aims to examine the impact of fragility of happiness on insecure attachment orientation and subjective well-being of emerging adults. A sample of 100 emerging adults falling into the age group 18-25 years, was taken to conduct the study. The sample included 50 males and 50 females. fragility of happiness scale (Joshi et al., 2015), Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read 1990) and The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) were used to collect the relevant data. Findings indicated that subjective well being is negatively predicted by fragility of happiness. There is a positive significant association between insecure attachment styles and fragility of happiness while subjective wellbeing is related negatively to attachment orientation and fragility of happiness.*

Key Words: *Fragility of Happiness, Subjective Well-Being, Attachment Avoidance, Insecure Attachment, Fear of Happiness, Life Satisfaction*

1. INTRODUCTION

“Fragility of happiness is an aversion to the experience and/or expression of happiness due to the belief that happiness may cause bad things to happen.” [7]. Fragility of happiness goes in conjunction with the notion that happiness is a fugitive construct, that can transmute to rare favourable state or a state of unhappiness. This belief is theoretically accompanied by the fear of happiness. Also known as chrophobia, aversion to happiness or fear of happiness is an attitude where individuals may consciously refrain from events or experiences that solicit more joyful states. Some experts have classified chrophobia as a form of anxiety disorder. Individuals who experience chrophobia usually believe that being happy is a waste of time. They also assume that there is only a limit to one being happy. According to their belief, excess joy brings bad consequences. They usually hold a belief that being happy makes you an awful being and causes harm to your friends and family. Despite the plethora of research work published on happiness, there is a very sparse comprehension of happiness as a construct and happiness is substantially elucidated as an emotionally charged state marked by the feelings of rejoice, complacency, pleasure and gratification. [9]. An individual who is fearing happiness, isn't necessarily a depressed individual, but is someone who steers clear of the events that may bring or lead to happiness. Some of the examples that could define fragility of happiness are : Experiencing anxiety at the thought of attending a joyful gathering like a party;

Refusing positive life changes as this could make a negative event follow and; Avoiding events that others would find fun. While culture has credited an extensive influence on chrophobia, personality factors could also be attributed to this concept. Recent researches have identified personality to be moderating the association between fear of happiness and the experience of happiness along with their relationship with other significant factors such as personality [2]; wherein higher levels of agreeableness and neuroticism reinforced the influence of aversion to happiness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Attachment Theory was initially proposed and commenced by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. They worked together on the attachment style between children and their caregivers. It was in the 1980s when Johnson introduced attachment theory to adult therapy and Hazan and Shaver (1987) further extended it. The emotive bonding that develops between an adult intimate couple is extended through a similar motivation system, i.e. the attachment behavioural system. This further increases the psychological association between infants and their caregivers.

Attachment Styles: Attachment is a profound and persisting sentimental association that binds individuals over time and space. Attachment can also be expressed as an impassioned relationship that involves reciprocity of solace, care and contentment. An individual's initial attachment orientations are established in childhood. A healthy and secure attachment style is characterized by individuals who confide in long term relationships. They report greater levels of high self-esteem, appreciate intimate relationships, look out for social assistance and the ability to develop fondness. Several studies have reported that anxious or insecure attachment patterns capitalize on chrophobia. It makes it arduous for people to believe that the feeling of contentment is effortless to attain and will persist. Attachment insecurity is usually constituted by attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. There are four major types of attachment styles as outlined below:

1.Secure: Individuals with secure attachment orientation score less on avoidance and apprehension/anxiety. They are comfortable with affection and seldom agonize about abandonment. These individuals regard themselves and their partners in a positive light. They cater to higher levels of satisfaction and adjustment in their relationship.

2.Dismissive-Avoidant: These people show greater levels of avoidance and grow less anxious. They are not congenial with closeness and regard their independence and freedom more.

Availability of their partner is none of their concern. These individuals boast their positive self and view others in a negative light. Perceiving themselves as self-sufficient and less vulnerable, they often refuse to establish close relationships.

3. Anxious-Preoccupied: People with this attachment style show low level of avoidance but higher extents of anxiety. They yearn for closeness and intimacy and reflect higher levels of insecurity in a relationship. These individuals frequently display impulsivity, emotional dysregulation and agony. They treasure intimacy to such an extent that they develop unduly dependent attachment style.

4. Anxious and Avoidant: These people are high on both constructs, anxiety and avoidance. They are uncomfortable with intimacy and are worried about their partner's commitment and love. Individuals who go through severe trauma during childhood, may develop this attachment orientation. They seldom view themselves as worthy of the responsiveness of their attachment and suspect the credibility of their bonds.

Subjective well-being is regarded as one of the definitions of happiness. It is a self-reported assessment of well-being which is commonly procured using a questionnaire. It embraces moods and emotions along with a judgement of individuals' satisfaction with extensive and specific arenas of life.

Subjective well-being is 'people's cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives.' [4]

It has two comprehensive components:

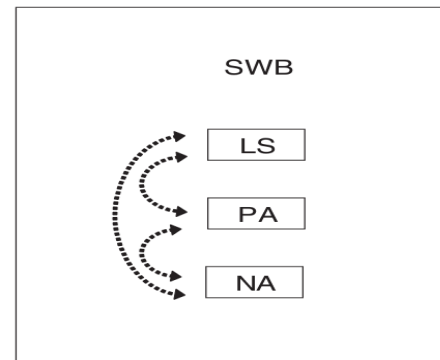
1. Cognitive Appraisal: It elucidates how we evaluate our satisfaction within our respective global and specific domains. (eg. family, life, career, etc)
2. Affective Appraisal: It discusses our experience of fierce and persistent positive state of being, along with the general absence of the negative states of being.

Subjective Well-being also encompasses 3 discrete components:

1. Positive Affect: It is the degree to which an individual experiences positive emotions.
2. Negative Affect: It deals with the extent to which an individual experiences negative emotions and poor self-concept.
3. Life Satisfaction: Life satisfaction focuses on how individuals exhibit their emotions and feelings about their career and other directions of life.

It is important to note that subjective well-being embraces the affectivity balance which is inclusive of the balance between frequent positive affect and infrequent negative affect. Levels of happiness, subjective well-being and attachment style are found to be altering social anxiety levels among university students. The study pointed out how social anxiety correlates with insecure attachment orientations. Individuals with secure attachment orientations reflect self-sufficiency in dealing with their own emotions and needs. They try to embrace intimate

relationships, fidelity and commitment, thus resulting in



happiness. [1]

Source: Bussari & Sarava, 2010

Fig. 1. Tripartite Model of SWB

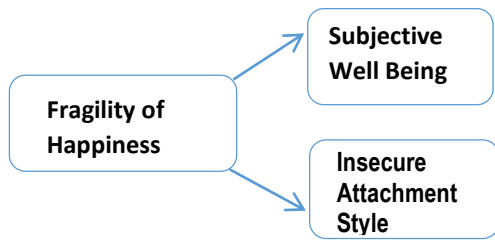
Alexithymia and depression correspond highly fear of happiness and compassion. The research explored the links of this process with adult attachment styles, cultural security and pleasure. The target population was a depressed group. Aversion to happiness reflected the variance in depression, anxiety, and stress, while fear of compassion best predicted adult attachment orientations. [5]. Another research lent evidence to how fear of happiness influences individuals' responses to items in a life satisfaction scale. Since happiness encompasses both life satisfaction and subjective well being, empirical evidence from this research highlights that aversion to happiness (a belief that happiness may bring negative consequences) brings variance in the ways individuals comprehend their life satisfaction. [1] Insecure attachment orientations are related with a spectrum of mental disorders, varying from mild negative affectivity to severe. Several studies have shown how attachment insecurities correlate with vulnerability to disorders. These studies have suggested attachment insecurities to be reasonable pathogenic states. It is worth noting that there could be miscellaneous clinical interventions helping the clients to establish a sense of secure attachment orientation. [10] Fear of happiness has also been studied in context with optimism and subjective happiness levels. Individuals who were high on the optimism quotient, reflected positive significant relationship between fragility beliefs and well-being, while people scoring less on optimism displayed aversion to happiness beliefs to be inversely related to well-being. It was predicted that fear of happiness related significantly to lowered happiness in people who displayed low levels of optimism. [6].

3. METHODOLOGY

Participants:

The sample included a total of 100 emerging adults (18-25 years), consisting of 50 males and 50 females. Purposive sampling technique was used for the same.

Research Design : A causal research design was employed.



Measurement Tools:

- **Fragility of happiness** - The 4-item fragility of happiness scale (Joshani et al., 2015)
- **Attachment styles** – Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read 1990)
- **Subjective well-being**- Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Correlation between Fragility of Happiness, Attachment Style and Subjective Well-Being

	Fragility Of Happiness	Subjective Well-Being	Attachment Avoidance	Attachment Anxiety
Fragility Of Happiness	1	-0.276**	.462*	.027
Subjective Well-Being	-	1	-.201*	-.432**
Attachment Avoidance	-	-	1	.444**
Attachment Anxiety	-	-	-	1

Source: Realized by authors

Table 2: Regression (fragility of happiness as the predictor of attachment avoidance)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	72.95	5.94		12.27	.00
Fragility of Happiness	-.73	0.14	.46	-5.14	.00

Note: Fit for model $R^2 = 0.21$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.20$, $F(1,99) = 26.47$, $p < .001$

Source: Realized by authors

Table 3: Regression (fragility of happiness as the predictor of SWB)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.73	3.06		2.20	.000
Fragility of happiness	.39	0.07	-.27	5.32	.000

Note: Fit for model $R^2 = 0.22$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.21$, $F(1,99) = 28.32$, $p < .001$

Source: Realized by authors

It can be seen through the result that fragility of happiness is significantly predicting 21% variance in attachment avoidance (see table 2). It can also be noted that fragility of happiness is predicting 22% variance in subjective well-being (see table 3).

The result also indicates that there is a significant positive relation between fragility of happiness and attachment avoidance $r = .462$, and an inverse relation between fragility of happiness and subjective well-being $r = -0.276$. There is also a negative relation between subjective wellbeing and attachment avoidance, $r = -.201$.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study intended to assess the relationship between fragility of happiness and attachment styles, the relationship between fragility of happiness and subjective well-being, and the relationship between insecure attachment styles and subjective well-being. The sample of the study comprises 100 emerging adults (18-25 years of age) including 50 males and 50 females.

5.1. Fragility of Happiness and Insecure Attachment Style

It was hypothesized that Fragility of Happiness and Insecure Attachment Style would show a significant positive relationship. The results indicate a significant positive correlation of .462 ($p < .05$) between the two. It was also determined that fragility of happiness is accountable for 21% variance in the insecure attachment styles of the participants thus proving to be a significant predictor of insecure attachment styles. Individuals who find happiness as a transient concept cannot form significant attachments with others. Fragility of happiness interferes and disrupts a secure attachment style, thereby creating a more anxious and avoidant attachment orientation. Happiness is a fleeting construct is often reflected in individuals with insecure relationship inclination. In the same vein, it has also been observed that the people who usually harbour insecure attachments usually display an aversion to the experience and the expression of happiness [8].

5.2. Fragility of Happiness and Subjective Well-Being

The present study hypothesized that Fragility of Happiness and Subjective well-Being will show a significant inverse relationship. The results did display a negative correlation of -0.276, significant at 0.01 level and was also accountable for 22% variance in the subjective well-being scores of the participants confirming the belief that fragility of happiness negatively affects the subjective well-being of individuals. Subjective well being as a state of mind is characterized by satisfaction with one's life and having a 'happy' outlook towards life while fragility of happiness is definitely an antagonistic component in this wake. The belief in the fleeting nature of happiness can diminish the states of well-being and can instead lead to pessimism and scepticism [11].

5.3. Insecure Attachment Style and Subjective Well-Being

From the results obtained, a significant negative relationship between insecure attachment styles and subjective well-being was found (-0.201 , $p < .05$). Attachment insecurity, both in terms of avoidance and anxiety, is associated with weariness, reduced perceived social support, and, as a result, lower well-being. A history of caregiving rejection and a view of others as unavailable or untrustworthy are associated with attachment avoidance. Individuals with an avoidant attachment orientation may not regard aid from others as readily available since they feel they are capable and self-sufficient, and hence may dismiss any social support as unavailable or unnecessary. Anxious

attachment, on the other hand, is associated with a history of inconsistency in caregiving and, as a result, anxiety about desertion [3]. People with an anxious attachment orientation utilise excessive, and often insatiable, support seeking strategies when threatened because they think they are unlovable and unworthy. Insecure attachment orientations lead to emotional incompetence, which further contribute to a degraded sense of well-being [12]. It can thus be concluded that Fragility of happiness can be consider as a significant factor affecting the attachment orientations and subjective wellbeing of individuals, particularly the emerging adults who are yet in the phase of conceptualizing their interpersonal relations, strengths and limitations. The future studies can further highlight the mechanisms behind fragility of happiness and the processes or mechanisms to tone down its impact on people.

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