Introduction

• Some life goal choices promote life satisfaction (Headey, 2007).
  
  • **Question 1**: What is the relationship between happiness and the type of goals people set?
  • **Question 2**: What is the relationship between happiness and goal commitment?
  • **Question 3**: What is the relationship between happiness and goal stress?
  • **Question 4**: What is the relationship between happiness and goal difficulty?

Methods

• Participants included 227 undergraduates (age 17-24; 62.5% female)
  • Ethnicity: 39% Asian, 35% Hispanic, 10% Caucasian, 6% Middle Eastern, 6% mixed race and 3% African American.
  • Participants completed the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) and listed ten current life goals, and rated each goal on:
    - Difficulty: “How difficult will this goal be to obtain?”
    - Commitment: “How committed are you to working toward this goal?”
    - Stress: “Is working toward this goal stressful?”
  • Goals were coded using a content based goal taxonomy (Reisz, Boudreaux, & Ozer, 2013)

Results

**Correlations of Happiness with Goal Presence, Goal Commitment, Goal Stress and Goal Difficulty.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Happiness</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Academic/Occupational</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>p = 0.046</td>
<td>95% CI [0.002, 0.2630]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Health</td>
<td>-0.142</td>
<td>p = 0.032</td>
<td>95% CI [-0.300, -0.041]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Goal Commitment</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>p = 0.023</td>
<td>95% CI [0.021, 0.021]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Goal Stress</td>
<td>-0.329</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>95% CI [-0.281, 0.021]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Goal Difficulty</td>
<td>-0.330</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>95% CI [-0.206, 0.454]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 1:**

• There is a significant positive relationship between having academic/occupational goals and happiness.
• There is a significant negative relationship between having health-related goals and happiness.
• Happiness was not associated with the goal content categories of Social Relationships, Financial Concerns, Organization, Affect Control, Independence and Moral/Religious were observed.

**Question 2:** To the extent that individuals are happier, they report being more committed to working toward their goals.

**Question 3:** To the extent that individuals are happier, they rated working toward their goals as less stressful.

**Question 4:** To the extent that individuals are happier, they rate their goals as less difficult to attain.

Contact

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Conclusions

• Happiness may be related to both goal content and various features of goals including stress, difficulty, and commitment.

• Health-related goals are reported less frequently by happier individuals, consistent with the prior finding of an association between health goals and neuroticism (Kaiser and Ozer, 1997).

• Though happier individuals report less goal stress and goal difficulty, it is unclear whether this reflects their perceptions or the actual goal attributes.

• Limitations:
  • College student sample is unrepresentative of the general population.
  • Other important goal characteristics (e.g., short vs. long-term) may moderate the reported relations with happiness.
  • Inability to distinguish between actual vs. perceived goal characteristics.

References


