# Analyzing the explaining factors of social happiness among Islamic Azad University students in Tabriz: Due to sense of distributive justice, social relative deprivation and Social alienation

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## ABSTRACT

*Happiness as one of the positive basic feeling has a crucial role in providing health of people and society. Happiness is always along with joy, optimism, hope and trust and hence it can be used as a catalyst, a catalytic role in development process of society. Feeling of happiness, from one hand, prepares the people for a better life with high efficiency and from the other hand because of its contagious nature, increases the affiliation of person with the environment. Purpose of this study is to evaluate the relationship between social happiness of Islamic Azad University students in Tabriz. This is done through sense of distributive justice, a sense of relative social deprivation, social alienation variables and predicting the social happiness of students.*
*We used survey method and data collection technique was standard questionnaire. Statistical population includes Islamic Azad University of Tabriz students in 2011-2012. They were 25974 of which 11535 were female and 14,439 were male. Sampling method was relative stratified random method and sample size (310 students) was determined based on the formula of Cochran. The results showed that there was a significant correlation between the level of social happiness of Islamic Azad University students in Tabriz and distributive justice, relative social deprivation and social alienation variables. Regression analysis results of explaining factors of students' happiness showed that among predictor variables, relative deprivation and distributive justice variables could explain %9 percent of variance in criterion variable.*
***Key words:*** *Social happiness, Sense of distributive justice, A sense of relative social deprivation, Social alienation, students of Islamic Azad University in Tabriz*

## INTRODUCTION

Sense of happiness is one of the most essential needs of human being and is considered as a man's innate psychological need. Because of its main effect on making a healthy society and improving it, this issue has preoccupied the human mind from the old past. In the way that many nations sought to create a healthy and joyful society. Feeling of happiness, from one hand, prepares the people for a better life with high efficiency and from the other hand because of its contagious nature, increases the affiliation of person with the environment. Hence, as long as the students are feeling joyful, they will always be in service to other members of the society. The role of happiness in people's lives is such an extent that social thinker, Ruskin emphasizes on this point that the richest country is one which can cover most people under his happiness wing.

The concept of happiness in recent years has mainly been considered by psychologists, sociologists and health professionals. Studies show that the twentieth century sociology and psychology has focused on negative factors (such as social damages and abnormalities), and negative emotions such as depression and anxiety, not positive emotions such as joy and happiness of population.

In other words, definition and meaning of personal and social health equals lack of mental health and social problems in community, while there have recently been many changes in the definition of health. Health psychology and sociology texts are not just limited to negative aspects and elimination of the negative affects on society members. Thus, in definition of the World Health Organization, it emphasizes on positive aspects of health and a person is known healthy that is well qualified in biological, psychological and social conditions [29].

Since 2000, in the United Nations' view towards determining the level of development of countries, some variables such as life expectancy, happiness and satisfaction of people are included as a key. It means that

if people do not have a sense of happiness, pleasure and satisfaction in a society, it can not be considered as a developed society (especially in social development area).

Therefore, happiness is one of the most important indicators of mental health in the community. Along with a positive and hopeful attitude, it can a source of mobility, dynamism and effort [14]. Joy and Happiness phenomenon whereby leads to physical, cognitive, behavioral mobility and numerous competences and capacities, for example, it involves human being with work and stimulates the active and goal-oriented activities. It leads to more happiness and avoids useless hedonism [15].Happiness as one of the positive basic feeling has a crucial role in providing health of people and society. Happiness is always along with joy, optimism, hope and trust and hence it can be used as a catalyst, a catalytic role in development process of society. Inglehart in this area states that lower level of life satisfaction and sense of happiness leads to the negative attitude towards the whole society and when the expectations are not met in a long run, it leads to emergence of a pessimistic attitude is which can transfer from generation to generation [6].  Being happy and good behavior has practical implications in life and job performance of people. Happiness raises the activity, level of awareness, reinforces the creativity, facilitates their social relations and safeguards the health and longevity of people [23].

Feeling of happiness is the opposite point of feeling depression. Social dynamism largely depends on the abundance of joyful factors, reduction of anxiety, depression and grief in the community. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the relationship between social happiness of Islamic Azad University students in Tabriz and sense of distributive justice, a sense of relative social deprivation, social alienation variables and predicting the students' happiness level in Islamic Azad University students inTabriz, according to sense of distributive justice, sense of deprivation relative social and social alienation variables[5].

## THEORETICAL RESEARCH

According to Durkheim's approach, any illness as the result of disease is considered as deviation from public health. Durkheim does not know the collective conscience as the sum of people, but he knows it something apart from people, if necessary, can be imposed on each one. According to Durkheim, this makes necessary the imposing roots in the man. Due to having an insatiable desire, it needs social monitoring to be harnessed. Society can only be sustained when through social pressure rein the unruly and self-interested human beings. In this situation, man understands the meaning of the social contract and obligation. Finally, in terms of Durkheim, social conventions and moral obligation of life become intolerable[21].

In modern societies, whether in social level or in it's certain forming Groups, traditional norms and measurements are weakening without being replaced with the new norms. Accordingly, non normative conditions can develop when in certain areas of social life; there are clear criteria to guide behavior. Consequences of this situation appear in the form of a mental disorder or individual anomie, conflict of individual personality along with selfish character or generosity one. This will reduce the individual's quality of life. According to Durkheim, the apparent reason of anomie refers to rapid economic development, because this development leads to a crisis in the system of values and norms of society [24]. Durkheim believes that concept of anomie possess three characteristics: disturbing or painful anxiety, feelings of detachment from the group standards and measurements, feeling of being unknown, or absence of a clearly defined purpose. Among them, the lack of goals means absence of values that can give direction to life. Weakening and loss of inner and social value are placed in subgroup. In other words, anomie is used as a conflict of norms. In any case, the contrast between the cooperative and competitive groups or active aggressive measures and passive measures, are all examples of these conflicts [1]. Anomie, due to the features mentioned, can reduce the amount of happiness because in such status people are wandered and perplexed due to the rules and measures of social behavior. As the result of this situation, one has not the ability to follow the norms and rules of society. They can not distinguish right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate. Therefore, the social environment is prepared for the formation and growth of selfish and willful individualism.

In this case, the collective interest is dominated by the individual interest and provides mistrust and suspicion towards others and the social institutions. In such circumstances, Context is provided for the emergence of social unease and level of happiness drops in the community. Durkheim wanted to show that society whose people are directed by a system of values and norms or the moralities, they are more satisfied with their status in the society. It is consequently affects the life quality of people. Durkheim, with an emphasis on the role of relationships and social cohesion in reducing the complexities of and social issues, says that those relationships have at least two roots: A) voluntary Membership in associations and institutions B) membership in a religious assembly or religious communities. Then he refers to the impact of those relationships on the happiness phenomenon and states that those relations increase the happiness rates for two reasons: firstly, membership causes social order, so that through it, the extreme

individualism and anomie is controlled, secondly, it makes a spiritual transcendence combination through which, the integration of faith and practice (operational) forces changes to a collective sense of understanding the different aspects of life [10]. Another view associated with this approach is Giddens's theory of modernity and its consequences.

Giddens argues that modernity has reduced risk in some areas, but at the same time has replaced another alternative risks and insecurity. Among the factors threatening the happiness and joy, Giddens include violent threats due to war industrialization, shaken roots of trust to abstraction and feelings of insecurity and anxiety. Some factors which make the happiness and joy in the society, according to Giddens, we can name trust with caution towards abstract systems, trust and giving life control to specialized systems, formation and transformation of intimacy and genuine relationship [6]. In addition to the micro-social context, macro socio-political context, which also includes major political institutions referring to the rights of students in community, is considered an important role in creating and maintaining a feeling of happiness among the society members[10]. According to the studies, the more socio - economic condition of the community is favorable and leads to meeting the needs, the happiness of the people in society is higher. In this regard, need theory proposed by Maslow also emphasizes on this point that the differences between the communities in term of happiness to be can be explained by the sources that those societies spend money for meeting the basic needs of their students. Communities with the highest sources are wealthy and rich societies. In particular, they can prepare the necessary resources to satisfy the requirements of high-level needs and offer additional comfort and opulence to person. Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006) believe that civic, political, social factors such as social freedom have main role in explaining the happiness of people in society and accessing the civic and also social policies or opportunity for choosing appropriate tools for achieving the goals[7].

As this category, in ancient Greek philosophy, (Aristotle's ethics) was a precondition for accessing the happiness and prosperity which was closely linked to public health. This belief, however, roots in the opinions of classic and modern sociologists and hence Auguste Comte emphasizes on this point that freedom raises the rate of happiness. In explaining the freedom, he describes them as opportunity choices and believes that there will be freedom for choosing the opportunities only when the capacity and mechanisms of selection are extended in the community [10].

Another suggestion made, according to the sociological approach, is a theory that seeks the happiness of individual actors in the society exchange network and between the characters. Using a multi-dimensional conceptual framework from the human, personality and community makes a relationship between the rate of people's happiness and their satisfaction from the four areas in both individual and social levels. More precisely, the theory can be summarized in this way that source of human needs (material, security, communication and cognitive) is in close connection with the social or in other words in four areas of social system. According to this view, if each of the four main systems can respond effectively to the supreme interests (livelihood, security, social, and cognitive) of the individual and community, in this case each one can cause a positive sense that leads to happiness. That is, the exact function of economic area is to make the feeling of comfort. Also, political, social and cultural area's functions are feeling of justice and security, a sense of social cohesion and a sense of dignity and respect, respectively [6]. Thus, this theory, associated with various human interests, introduces the four areas and their proper function in which the exact function of political area is to make a sense of security, justice, self-determination, hope and autonomy[21].

## LITERATURE

There have been carried out many researches within Iran and the other countries about social happiness. Alizadeh Aghdam (2011) in a study among students of Tabriz University found that there is a direct and significant correlation between hope and religiosity dimensions of social capital, cultural capital and economic capital and happiness of students[5]. Among the general characteristics of the respondents, only age is weakly correlated with happiness. The result showed that the students' happiness is influenced by structural factors not the individual ones. Hezarjaribi and Astin Afshan (2009) in a research among people of Tehran found a significant relationship between social happiness and social justice. In the way that when the social justice reduces, social vitality also decreases[13]. There was not a significant correlation between feeling of alienation and social happiness. There was also a significant correlation between feelings of deprivation and social happiness, so that when feelings of deprivation increases, sense of deprivation, social happiness decreases.

Socio- economical status variable has also a significant correlation with social happiness. In the way that people with high socio- economical status are happier than people with low socio- economical status [13]. Panahi and Dehghani (2011) in a study among the students of Tehran University found out that there was no significant difference between the average of happiness between male and female students, although

this mean was a little more for girls (0.6). Socio - economic status also showed significant difference social happiness [21].

In his master thesis, based on a study among students of Islamic Azad University of Tabriz, Ebadi couldn't find a significant difference between happiness of male and female students and marital status (being single or married). In this study, he found a significant correlation between happiness and sense of fairness, a sense of deprivation and alienation [8]. Ahmadian, in his master thesis based on a study among the youth of Piranshahr, couldn't find a significant difference between happiness of young boys and girls. In this study, significant relationship between happiness and sense of deprivation and also a significant difference between marital status (being single or married) and socio - economic status were obtained [2]. Survey conducted among university students in Kerman University by Alavi (2009) showed that when the scientific, artistic, moral and religious activities increase, the rate of happiness will increase, too. In the oversea survey researches in which the happiness measurement instruments were used for the first time, took place in America. The purpose of this study was to determine the mental health of people[3].

The results of a study by Larson (2000) and Peterson (2000) showed that happiness can improve the physical and mental health of people[16,22]. People who are happy, they feel more secure, decide easily, have more social happiness, are more satisfied with people living with them. Results of a study by Sharma and Malhotra (2010) showed that in addition to personality factors, social factors have equally important role in determining people's happiness[28]. Gropper and his coworkers (2011) in a research "happiness and liberal economy", using data from a sample including a hundred countries, found a positive relationship between happiness of a nation and liberal economy. According to the findings of this study, per capita GDP of a country has strong positive impact on happiness. Oishi and Koo (2008) in a research called "culture, individual perception and happiness", found that conditions that leads to a general feeling of well being and happiness based on the culture, are different from each other[19]. They showed that among European Americans, understanding of self is very important in getting the happiness in social interaction, while in the Asian Americans, getting to a deep understanding of collective self is a key factor in happiness of social interaction. Rothstein (2010) in his study "corruption, happiness, social confidence, and welfare state" showed that there is a relationship between individual happiness and public welfare with corruption and the level of social trust[25]. He also showed that in countries with extensive welfare programs, corruption rate is low, while level of social trust and social happiness level is high. Conversely, countries with smaller welfare system, they have higher level of corruption and lower level of social trust and social prosperity. Keyes (2002), in a study on 3032 samples including the American adults, studied the mental welfare and happiness as the indicators of mental happiness. They show that %17.2 of people had high welfare who called flourished or grown people and %12.1 of the adults had lower welfare which adopted with Withering measurement [16]. Tsow & Tiu (2001) in a study in Taiwan showed that married people are happier than single ones and educated people were happier. Though the significant differences were observed but these effects were not the same. In this study[12], there was not a significant relationship between happiness, gender and age variables. The people's income showed 0.01 positive significant correlations [16].

## DEFINITION OF VARIABLES

### Social Happiness:

Veenhoven calls happiness a degree or extent that a person judges about overall quality of life. In other words, it shows how much a person loves his life [17]. Feeling of happiness refers to positive feelings and satisfaction of life [13]. For measuring the social happiness, we used Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. This instrument is developed in 1989 by Arjil and Lu with 29 questions. In each question, person judges from high happiness to unhappiness. Answers are scored on a few - degree scale in which the maximum score of total test is 87. Validity and reliability of this questionnaire are approved in different studies. In Iran, [4], through Cronbach alpha reliability test, found coefficient of the questionnaire 0.93. In the present study, this coefficient was obtained 0.87.

### Sense of Distributive Justice

Distributive justice in social relations means that a person expect in their interactions his benefits adopt with costs (usually the bonuses, or net benefits of each person must adopt with the investment). When the investment is more or its interest also become higher, a sense of justice arises in this area [13]. In fact, distributive justice relates with the justice perceived from the consequences and as a potential factor with important applications in organizational and governance fields (Ibid). Operational definition of distributive justice feeling, according to the definition of Nijhoff and appropriate with research environment, we used some items. Reliability coefficient of these items was 0.70 which calculated through Cronbach's alpha. To examine the validity, we used formal validity.

**Sense of relative social deprivation:**

This sense of difference between what one wants and expects, with what he gets, and also compared with others with whom he compares his situation, is achieved [7]. To assess the relative social deprivation variable, we use some items represented by Ted Robert Gar mainly related to more socio - economic fields of individuals' life. This variable is measure with assessing the individual feeling in the comparing themselves with of others in terms of family income, housing condition, region of residence, education level and welfare with designing items in Likert scale form. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.82. To examine the validity, formal validity was used.

**Social Alienation**

Alienation is a condition in which a person feels himself as a stranger. He does no longer know himself the center of universe and the creator of his actions. In contrast, results have dominated him; he obeys them or praises them altogether [9]. To measure social alienation, we used six indicators suggested by Melvin Seeman (1959). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.83. Validity, face validity was used. To examine the validity, formal validity was used[13].

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Method of this study was survey and the data have been collected through field method. Technique of data collection was the standardized questionnaire. Statistical population includes Islamic Azad University students in Tabriz in school year 2011-2012. They were 25 974 people of which 11,535 were female and 14,439 were male. Sampling method was relative stratified random method from each college. Population was sub- divided according to faculties and then randomly sampled within the classes. The sample size was determined 310 people based on the formula of Cochran. To descriptively analyze the data we used frequency, frequency percent, mean, variance and standard deviation and for inferential analyze and comparing the groups, we used T and F tests. To evaluate and predict the relationship between variables, regression analysis was used.

**DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS**

Among 310 samples in this study, 182 students were male and 128 were female, i.e., % 58.7 males and % 41.3 female. 150 singles and 160 married students (% 48.4 single and % 516 married) included the sample of study. The average age of students was 27.20 with % 6.3 standard deviation. The minimum age was 18 and the maximum was 41. Median of the employment status of the respondent's father belongs to farmer and laborer jobs. Education level includes secondary education and diploma in highest level and Houzavi education in lowest level includes the respondents' father education.% 31.6 of the respondents earn less than 3000000 Rials , % 34.5 between 301 - 7000 Rials, %20 of them earned between 701 – 10000000 Rials, % 8.1 between 1200 - 12000000 and 8/5 % over 1,2000 Rials.

% 47.7 of respondents belonged to a low status; %32.6 moderate and %19.7 were from high socioeconomic status in which the median referred to respondents with a relatively low status. Social happiness was assessed with 29 items in Likert scale. Its average among students was 47.63 with a standard deviation 20.74. Descriptive results also show that average distributive justice measured with 12 items and in Likert scale was 46.91 with standard deviation 2.89. Social deprivation was measured with 10 items and on Likert scale. Average social deprivation rate among the students was 40.28 and its standard deviation was 19.71. In order to choose the appropriate statistical tests for analyzing the collected data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. The significance level of this test in all the items was >0.05. Therefore, the distribution of scores was normal and the parametric tests were used.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The difference between sex and happiness hypothesis testing showed that there was a significant difference between happiness of male and female students so that the women's happiness rate was less than men. This rate was 61.5 for males and 64.55 for females. Panahi and Dehghani, in a study among the university students in Tehran, found that the mean happiness between male and female students did not differ significantly, although the mean value for Girls (0.6) was a little higher. In her senior thesis based on a study among students of Islamic Azad University of Tabriz, Ebadi did not find a significant difference between male and female students happiness[21].

Ahmadi in his senior thesis, a study among Piranshahr youth, did not find a significant difference between boys and girls happiness, although people with different gender during socialization, accept socially defined roles and show certain behaviors. To test the difference between marital status and happiness of students, the mean difference test (T-test) was used. Therefore, test results showed that there is a significant difference between happiness of married and unmarried students. That is, the rate of happiness among single students was lower than married ones. This value for single students was 59.62 and 66.37 for married students. In Ahmakdi's research, there was no significant difference between happiness and marital status (being single or married) [2]. Of course, in his master thesis and based on a study among

students of Islamic Azad University in Tabriz, Ebadi could not fins significant differences between students happiness and marital status. Marital status, through Meeting many of the needs of life, high rate of spirit, commitment and a stable network of relations, lead to a positive attitude towards social affaires and consequently the happiness rates increase among the married people. The results of the hypothesis testing difference between the socioeconomic status of students and their happiness showed that there were significant differences between the socioeconomic status of students and their happiness.

Given the significance test F, to pursue the significant differences in multi-group analysis, the LSD post hoc test was used. The results of these tests showed that the greatest differences can be seen in middle and high socioeconomic status. In a research by Hezarjaribi and Astin Afshan, there was significant differences between socioeconomic status and social happiness, so that those belonging to higher socio - economic status had were happier than the people with lower socioeconomic status [13]. In a study by Panahi and Dehghan, significant difference was found between socioeconomic status and happiness variables [9].

In Ahmadi's research, there was a significant difference between happiness and socio - economic status variables [2]. Socio - economic status variables has indirectly and through satisfying the needs, has a growing impact on happiness. In the way that meeting the needs among people with Socio - economic status is higher than people with low Socio - economic status. It says that when the needs are satisfactorily answered, the happiness level will be high, too. Education which is one of the Socio - economic status indicators, also affects the people happiness. Literacy, firstly, impacts on job through getting a satisfying job, high control in life and access to better marriage and other social protection.

If the education leads you to impossible expectations, it will have adverse effects on people's happiness. To test the relationship between deprivation and happiness variables, Pearson's r correlation test was used. The results of this test indicate that there was an inverse correlation between levels of deprivation and happiness of students. The correlation coefficient between these two variables was -0.235. In his master thesis and based on a study among students of Islamic Azad University of Tabriz, Ebadi found a significant relationship between students' happiness and sense of deprivation [8].

Hezarjaribi and Astin Afshan (2009) in a study among Tehran citizens[13], found a significant relationship between feeling of deprivation and social happiness, so that an increased sense of deprivation leads to low social happiness. In Ahmadi research, there was also a significant relationship between feeling of deprivation and happiness [2]. Based on Relative Deprivation theory, people compare themselves with others and reference group and like to have the same situation. As the result of comparison, they come to this point that the result is not the faire, a sense of relative deprivation and lack of happiness grows in them. According to Maslow's theory, and satisfying the primary and secondary needs of both individuals and society, as long as they do not the needs of individuals are not met; we can not have a lively, dynamic and creative society.

Results of testing the relationship between distributive justice and happiness of students, showed that the there is a significant correlation between these two variables. The correlation coefficient between these two variables was 0.216. Hezarjaribi and Austin Afshan (2009) in a research among people of Tehran found a significant relationship between the social justice and happiness variables[13]: when the social justice declines, social happiness decreases, too. In his master thesis and based on a study among students of Islamic Azad University in Tabriz, Ebadi found a significant relationship between happiness and social happiness [8].

According to the evaluated theories, we can say that strengthening the distributive justice has a direct relationship enhancing the happiness of students. Based on the theory of equality, human beings as rational and emotional one shows particular behavior against external and internal stimuli and when he has the sense of equality in terms of awards, facilities and will be more motivated to continue and respond positively and proactively to the external stimuli. Consequently there will in higher social happiness and satisfaction in the person.

To assess the relationship between social alienation and happiness, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Test results showed a significant inverse relationship between social alienation and happiness of students. This means that social alienation leads to reduction of people's happiness. In her master thesis based on a study among students of Islamic Azad University in Tabriz, Ebadi achieved a significant relationship between happiness and sense of alienation [8].In Ahmadi's research, relationship between alienation and social happiness was not found [2].

According to Friednurg, alienation is the product and caused of discontent, and dissatisfaction. One of the other risk factors of alienation is repression of individuality, personality, mental preoccupation, especially extreme deal with abstract concepts and values and group emotions and values overcome on the individual values and emotions. According to him, this kind of dissatisfaction leads person to the desire of detachment and separation from the surrounding issues, and anything that was already in relation with. In such a case, the person is viewed as something foreign and feels conflict and lack of communication and

understanding between him and this issue. A person, who has a sense of dissatisfaction, finds himself unable to make change in the status and environmental conditions.

Hence the feeling of dissatisfaction leads to disappointment and helplessness. In assessing the dissatisfaction causes, Friednurg mainly focused on the causes of dissatisfaction among the younger generation. He believes that the learning environment and personal educational experiences, family life, family relationships as well as those who interact with them such as peer groups, are the main causes of dissatisfaction feeling in the younger generation [18]. Therefore, regression analysis results, explaining the students' happiness causes, showed that among the predictor variables, relative deprivation and distributive justice variables could explain nine percent of the variance in the criterion variable.

Happiness, as one of the positive roots, has crucial role in providing health of a society and the people. Happiness is always along with optimism, hope and trust and hence can be used as a catalyst, a catalytic role in the development process of society. Generally speaking, vitality and happiness of people highly correlated with felling of happiness, mutual trust and commitment to the community and is a sign of the person's attitude to the world around him. Feeling of happiness and vitality is mainly related to individual condition, it has high importance. From one hand society provides a situation that directs people towards achieving their own goals and desires and from the other hand it provides a bed for interaction and communication with people preparing the calmness, security and trust for a better life in society[23].

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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