

## **The Relationship between Happiness and Defensive Methods among Primary School Teachers in Birjand**

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### **Abstract**

*The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between happiness and defensive methods of primary school teachers of Birjand. The current study is a descriptive–correlational study. Population of the study included 1300 teachers of primary schools in Birjand in 2013. The standard Defense Styles Questionnaire (DSQ-40), encompassing three dimensions of mature, immature, and neurotic, as well as, the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI) was used. The questionnaires' validity were checked in terms of their content and the reliability was estimated about 0.78 and 0.90, respectively, using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. To describe the data, frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were applied. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to analyze the data. Test results indicated a direct significant relationship between mature and immature defensive methods and happiness.*

**Keywords:** Happiness, Defensive Methods, Primary School teachers

### **Introduction**

Like many other psychoanalytic concepts, defensive methods are ambiguous and unknown concepts. Such ambiguity has fueled uncertainty about its presence or effects on human mental activity and what spread this ambiguity is related to its position, since from Freud to psychologists of ego, all have emphasized on the important effect of unconsciousness on the creation and emergence of such styles (Heydari Nasab, and Shaeeri, 2011, p 78). Defensive methods are involuntarily and almost unconscious non-rational methods to reduce anxiety and to maintain the character in which the distortion of reality and self-deception are more or less seen (Shafi Abadi, 2009, p. 91). Defensive methods are automated regulatory processes that act to reduce the cognitive dissonance and to minimize sudden changes in the internal and external reality through influencing the quality of perceiving threatening events (Vaillant, 2000, p. 91). Defensive methods are states that exist in all human beings, whether normal or abnormal (patient). In fact, they defend the existence of human being and establish their balance.

The person who does not use these methods would be totally defenseless against the pressures and deprivations of life. He/she would not be capable of withstanding emotional and social issues. However, the functions of these methods and their role in healthy individuals are different from those of abnormal (Abdi, 2001, p. 21).

Defensive methods can be set according to a hierarchy of adaptation. Adaptive defense methods are associated with physical and mental health consequences and non-adaptive defensive methods are associated with many negative health indicators, such as personality disorders and depression (Besharat, 2008, p. 182). Based on Vaillant's (1976, 1971) hierarchical classification of defensive mechanisms, Andrews and Singh (1993) divided twenty defensive mechanisms into three defensive methods of mature, immature, and neurotic. Mature defensive method as an adaptive exposure method is considered normal and efficient. Neurotic and immature defensive methods are deficient non-adaptive exposure methods (Besharat, 2005, pp. 10-11).

Stress coping strategies are more important than the nature of stress itself in terms of the response type. If more appropriate strategies are applied to cope with stress, the resulting damage will be less. Stress coping strategies are defined as the process of how an individual confronts real events which is used for successful coping and adaptation with appropriate environmental conditions and interactions (TaHERI, et al, 2013, p. 58). Numerous studies have been conducted on defensive methods of which the following can be pointed out: Besharat (2005), in “Examining the Relationship of Positive and Negative Perfectionism and Defense Mechanisms”, concluded that positive perfectionism is positively correlated with mature defensive mechanism and it is negatively correlated with neurotic and immature defensive mechanisms. Conversely, negative perfectionism is negatively correlated with mature defensive mechanism and positively correlated with neurotic and immature defensive mechanisms. If the individual is well adapted to the environment and can control the ambient stress with a defensive method, he/she may experience a sense of joy or happiness.

According to many theories of emotion, happiness is one of the six big emotions including, wonder, fear, anger, happiness, hate and worry. Eysenck (1945) considered happiness as a stable extraversion and pointed out that when positive feelings are detected in happiness, it is considered as correlated with easy socialization and desired pleasant interaction with the community (Azimzadeh Parsi, 2011, p. 3). Individuals’ optimistic happy thoughts tend to regard bad accidents as concerned about the same time and same place with no other impact on other parts of life. Generally, happy people tend to respond more positively and adaptively to events and situations (Lybomirsky, et al, 2005, p. 118).

Happiness is the degree of positive value specified to one’s own. This construct has two aspects. The emotional factors that represent the emotional experience of joy, pleasure, happiness and other positive emotions and the cognitive evaluation of satisfaction from different domains of life that represent happiness and psychological well-being. However, happiness is not a sign of lack of depression, yet it shows a number of positive cognitive and emotional states (Alipour, 2007, p. 288).

Indeed happiness is the scientific title for individuals’ assessment of their life. People can review their life through a whole judgment or through assessing the particular scopes of their life or their recent emotional feelings in connection with what they have experienced (Paezi et al, 2007, p. 27). Schwarz and Strack (1991) argued that happy people are biased towards processing information in favor of optimism and glee. This is why they process and interpret information in a way that leads to happiness. In other words, happiness provides a positive evaluation of one’s own life (Keshavarz, 2007, p. 52). Due to the importance of happiness, extensive research has been conducted on the issue of which the following can be pointed out:

Khosroei and Cheragh-Mollayi (2012), in “A Comparative Study of Social Commitment, Happiness and Mental Health of School and University Students: with an Emphasis on Gender”, concluded that there is a significant correlation between the age and content of positive experiences, the severity of positive experiences and the level of social commitment. According to the above, it can be noted that if the person is able to overcome the daily anxiety, he/she can achieve happiness and joy. Accordingly, the main research question is:

Is there any significant relationship between happiness and defense styles?

### ***Materials and Methods***

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between happiness and the defensive methods among primary school teachers of Birjand. Descriptive-correlational research method is used.

### **Population**

The population includes all primary teachers of Birjand.

### **Sampling and Sample Size**

Due to high number of teachers, it was not possible to examine all of the population. Therefore, according to Kryjs and Morgan’s table, 297 of teachers were selected through cluster sampling method in order to complete the questionnaires.

### **Data Collection Method and Instruments**

In this study, data collection was conducted through two questionnaires of Defense Style Questionnaire (DSQ-40) and Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI).

**Defense Style Questionnaire (DSQ-40):** In the current study, subjects 'defense style was determined using the Persian form of Defense Styles Questionnaire (Andrews, Singh, and Bond, 1993). The questionnaire examines 20 defense mechanisms and 3 distinct defensive methods. The questionnaire is a 40-item tool of 9-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) which measures twenty defense mechanisms in terms of three mature, neurotic and immature defensive methods. Mature defensive method includes mechanisms of sublimation, humor, anticipation and suppression. Mechanisms of neurotic defensive include undoing, pseudo-altruism, idealization and opposite reaction formation. Immature defensive method includes twelve mechanisms: projection, passive-aggressive, acting-out, isolation, devaluation, autistic fantasy, denial, displacement, dissociation, splitting, rationalization and somatization.

In the present study, the questionnaire has high content validity checked through the approval of six education experts. Besharat et al. (2000) have reported the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each methods of mature, immature and neurotic about 0.75, 0.73 and 0.74, respectively. Likewise, in this study, the reliability was calculated through Cronbach's alpha for each of the styles of mature, immature and neurotic about 0.80, 0.76 and 0.78, respectively.

**Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI):** The questionnaire was developed by Argyle & Luo in 1990. Argyle consultation with Beck and reversed the sentences of depression measure to encompass other aspects of happiness. The final form included 29 four-choice items. For scoring each item, the choice representing the maximum happiness receives 4 and the item representing the lack of happiness receives 1. Thus, the highest score that subjects can obtain from this scale is 116 and the minimum score is 29. The questionnaire has high content validity checked through the approval six education experts. Aliped and Agah Harris (2007) examined the validity of the Oxford Happiness Inventory among Iranians. According to the study, Cronbach's alpha for the total inventory was obtained about 0.91. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability is about 0.90.

### Statistical Techniques

Both descriptive and inferential analysis was used in the present study. Data were described through statistical indicators such as mean and standard deviation and were also inferentially analyzed to find an answer to the research hypotheses through Pearson's correlation coefficient. All statistical calculations were performed using SPSS V.20 software program.

### Results

Is there any significant relationship between happiness and defensive methods among primary school teachers in Birjand?

To investigate the research question, descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation, as well as Pearson's correlation coefficient were used.

**Table 1: Results of Descriptive Statistics of Happiness and Defensive Methods**

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Happiness	49.61	13.71
Defense styles	31.54	15.11

**Table 2: Results of Correlation Coefficient between Happiness and Defensive Methods**

Variables		defense styles		
		Mature	Immature	Neurotic
<b>happiness</b>	r	0.62	0.47	0.29
	sig	0.001**	0.04*	0.14
** : 99% of significant level				
* : 95% of significance level				

To find the relationship between happiness and three defensive methods, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. According to Table 2, the correlation between happiness and mature defensive method is 0.62 which indicates a significant correlation between these two variables. Statistically, according to the level of significant less than 0.01, the relationship is 0.99. The correlation of happiness with immature defensive method is 0.47 with the statistical significance level of less than 0.05 which indicates a significant relationship at 0.95. However, there is no significant relationship between happiness and neurotic defensive method.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The results of the study indicated significant positive correlation between happiness and mature as well as immature defensive methods. Therefore, individuals who use these two methods to inhibit anxiety and stress are happier. In addition, it was revealed that there was no significant relationship between happiness and neurotic defensive method. These findings are consistent with Shokouhi Yekta's (2012). He conducted a research among primary school teachers and concluded that education of problem-solving, anger control methods could be used to increase happiness, reduce hostility and also improve educational methods.

The results are also consistent with those of Ahadi (2012) who conducted a research at Tehran University of medical sciences and concluded that happiness is explained by emotion-focused coping style, components of comfortable with self, comfortable with others, and the ability to meet the requirements related to mental health, and optimism. According to the above, it can be argued that if individuals are properly trained to deal with frustration, stress, anxiety or the very defensive methods, they may experience higher levels of happiness. Consequently, the society that has happy individuals can better and faster strive toward development.

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