Redefining happiness: Is the happiness pie literature missing some slices?

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Positive affect and subjective well-being are often used as measures of happiness. However, research suggests that happiness may be a multi-dimensional construct, including constructs such as contentment and self-compassion.

Research also suggests that happiness may spring from three sources (e.g., an individual’s personality, environment, and voluntary behavior).

Thus, the current study’s purpose was two-fold:

1. To examine the network of constructs that may explain (or not explain) happiness
2. To examine sources of individual happiness

Correlational analyses indicated that many of the constructs shared moderately strong relationships with happiness:

- Positive affect ($r = .48, p < .01$)
- Subjective well-being ($r = .51, p < .01$)
- Self-compassion ($r = .59, p < .01$)
- Depression ($r = -.43, p < .01$)
- Neuroticism ($r = -.51, p < .01$)

Strong relationships between contentment and happiness ($r = .76, p < .01$), as well as between happiness and subjective well-being, were found ($r = .601, p < .01$).

There appeared to be a link between personality and trait happiness, suggested by the relations between extraversion and happiness ($r = .44, p < .01$), agreeableness and positive affect ($r = .30, p < .01$), and conscientiousness and negative affect ($r = -.11, p < .05$).

Different individual difference measures predicted the percentage of happiness due to personality, the situation, and voluntary behaviors (see Table 1).

**Table 1A. Stepwise regression analysis (N = 347).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables entered</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>ΔR</th>
<th>ΔF</th>
<th>F-Change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>5.54*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>7.82**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enduring Happiness</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>6.10*</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05 (two-tailed); **p < .01 (two-tailed). |

**Table 1B. Stepwise regression analysis (N = 347).

<table>
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<th>ΔF</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Enduring Happiness</td>
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<td>.04</td>
<td>14.24**</td>
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<td>Openness to Experience</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>8.20**</td>
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</table>

Note. *p < .05 (two-tailed); **p < .01 (two-tailed). |

**Table 1C. Stepwise regression analysis (N = 347).

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<th>ΔF</th>
<th>F-Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
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<td>.03</td>
<td>9.31**</td>
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</table>

Note. *p < .05 (two-tailed); **p < .01 (two-tailed). |

Results corroborate evidence for a happiness construct that is multi-dimensional in nature, as contentment, subjective well-being, and happiness were found to be highly related.

In spite of research showing that almost half of our happiness is determined by voluntary actions, participants in the present study felt that, on average, their happiness was due to their:

- Personalities (30.36%)
- Situations (36.88%)
- Voluntary actions (32.70%)

Future research should continue to approach happiness holistically and set out to better define a higher-ordered factor model (via Confirmatory Factor Analysis) that encompasses various clusters (e.g., subjective well-being, positive affect, contentment) thought to be a part of a larger happiness construct. More longitudinal research is also encouraged.