

# The Relationship between Contingencies of Self-Worth and Happiness with Academic Achievement of High School Male Students

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## Abstract

Academic achievement has been one of the major issues in psychology and affiliated sciences over a century. There are many factors involved with that, one of them is a sense of happiness among students. And, the other one is self-esteem of students. So, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between contingencies of self-worth and happiness with academic achievement in male students of second high school. The research method was descriptive and correlations study. The statistical population of research consisted of all the male students of second high school Shahriyar City, Iran (3800 people). First of all, according to Morgan's suggested table, 340 students were selected by multistage cluster random sampling from this population. Second, all participants were asked to complete contingencies of self-worth tests of Crocker et al., and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. The final academic semester GPA was considered as a measure of academic achievement. Then, the data were analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson's correlation coefficient and regression analyses. The results of Pearson correlation revealed that there were significant relation between the contingencies of self-worth and happiness with academic achievement. And, the correlation between happiness and contingencies of self-worth were negative and significant. In general, the result of regression analysis indicated that happiness is the best predictor of academic achievement. Educational specialists should pay attention to psychological variables along with formal education.

**Keywords:** Academic Achievement, Contingencies of Self-Worth, Happiness.

## **Introduction**

Academic performance is one of the top priorities for schools and academic achievement refers to the learner's acquired abilities in school subjects that are measured through standardized learning tests or teacher-made tests (Navidi, 2003). Some psychological factors play an important role to promote or decline academic performance (Sepehrianazar, 2013). It can be studied in two general categories of factors: individual factors and the educational system (Soleymannejad & Shahraray, 2001). One of individual factors is Contingent self-worth. Crocker (2001) introduced this new concept in psychology by studying the origin of self-esteem. The meaning of Contingent self-worth is self-esteem based on the approval of others or on social comparisons. It is certain events will shape one's self-esteem when the individual bases their self-worth on the outcome of those events (Chip, Canevello, Bush, Cook, 2008). Relationship contingent self-worth is an unhealthy form of self-esteem that depends on one's relationship and represents a particular kind of relationship investment (Cross & Morris, 2003 cited by Chip & colleagues). Contingent self-worth is a fragile component of self-esteem and refers to the extent to which self-esteem is contingent upon outcomes and achievement (Kernis, 2002 cited by Chen, 2011). Jennifer Crocker and Connie Wolfe (2001) argue that how and why events affect the self-centers on the notion of contingent self-esteem. And they believe that we can understand the relationship between self-esteem and behavior by examining specific sources of self-esteem. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) studied the concept of contingent self-esteem within specific domains. They claimed that major domains of contingent self-esteem among college students are appearance, competition, family support, perception of God's love, approval from others, school competence and behavior. Students who base their self-esteem on their academic successes use their school work to prove their intelligence. Since failures in domains of contingency have negative effects on one's self-esteem, students will avoid failure by increasing their effort. Jennifer Crocker and Riia K Luhtanen (2003) in a longitudinal study of 642 college students show that academic competence contingency predicted academic problems.

The other variable that studied in this research was happiness. It is one of the important variables that effects on the students' lifestyles and academic achievement (Headarzaghan & Mashdiabbas, 2011). Happiness has three components; emotional, social and cognitive components. The emotional component makes the person happy. The social component enhances social relations and social support. The cognitive component causes a person to think and process his particular information (Myers & Diener, 1995, cited by Carr, 2004). Tabodi, Rahgozar, Mozaffari Makki Abadi (2015) studied on 320 students and showed that There is a significant positive correlation between happiness and the progress of students. Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, et al., 2005, cited by Marie Spice (2011) found that people with high levels of happiness have good performance job than those who are less happy. Thelwell, Lane & Weston, (2007) with studied on 57 undergraduate

students, showed that mood states is one of their variable that predicted examination performance.

In this article, we describe a program of research that examining contingencies of self-worth and happiness associated with academic achievement to get a better picture of contingent self-esteem and happy in academic domains among high school students. We tested three hypotheses: There is a meaningful relationship between happiness and achievement academic. There is a negative meaningful relationship between contingencies of self-worth and happiness. Does contingencies of self-worth and happiness predict academic achievement? What is the contribution of each in predicting academic achievement?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The statistical population of the present study are all of the male students who, studying in second grade of Shahriar city, Iran (3800 people). Their age range was 15 to 16 years.

Study samples of the study were 340 students. They were selected by multistage cluster random sampling and based on Morgan's table.

### **Design**

The method of this study is a descriptive (non-experimental) one. The design of study is correlational.

### **Materials**

In the present study, two instruments have been used. Semester GPA of the academic year was considered as a measure of academic achievement.

#### *Contingencies of self-worth tests of Crocker et al.:*

The questionnaire was designed by Cracker and her colleagues in 2003. They reported the reliability of this scale in terms of Cronbach's alpha equal to 0.73 (Cracker and colleague, 2003).

Contingencies of self-worth tests is self-report instrument and consisted of 35 items. This scale has seven subscales of approval from others, physical appearance, outdoing others in competition, family love and support, being a virtuous or moral person, and God's love (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003). Cronbach's alpha of this study was 0.80. In the present study, the reliability coefficient of subtests was 0.35 to 0.80.

#### *Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ):*

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was developed by Argyle, M., & Crosland, J. at Oxford University in 1989. This scale has 29 items. Each item was scored on a 4 - point Likert scale ranging from 'not at all' (0) to 'too much' (3). For example:

I am not particularly optimistic about the future

I feel optimistic about the future.

I feel I have so much to look forward to.

I feel that the future is overflowing with hope and promise.

Hills and Argyle (2002) reported the reliability of the questionnaire equal to 0.91. Cronbach's alpha of this study was 0.89. In the present study, the reliability coefficient was 0.40, 0.55, 0.65, 0.67 and 0.81 for all subtests, Self-esteem, Efficiency, the health, Positive mood and Satisfaction respectively.

### Procedure

The students responded simultaneously to the contingencies of self-worth tests of Crocker et al., and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Subjects responded to the tests in group class within 20 minutes at the classroom.

### Results

First, Data obtained through the questionnaires were submitted to SPSS version 18. Then, the descriptive indices of variables (mean, standard deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis) have been presented in order to check the normal distribution of the data. Skewness and Kurtosis indices suggest the normality of data distribution. The data by using statistical Pearson correlation test and multivariable regression analysis analyzes were performed. Before examining the Regression test, all of regression assumptions were examined.

Table 1 represents the descriptive statistics including means, SDs as well as the low, and high.

*Table 1 - Descriptive statistics of Variables (n=340)*

Variable	Mean	SD	Low	High
family support	26.30	4.97	5	35
competition	25.37	5.33	5	35
appearance	20.14	4.66	8	33
God 's love	28.87	4.80	9	35
school competence	24.36	5.48	5	35
virtue	24.65	5.66	5	35
approval from others	17.37	6.47	5	35
contingencies of self-worth	166.79	22.44	89	222
Satisfaction	20.99	6.60	1	32
Positive mood	14.40	4.53	0	23
the health	11.24	3.50	1	18
Efficiency	5.95	2.59	0	12
Self-esteem	3.54	1.51	0	6
Happiness	56.12	15.97	12	85
GPA	16.68	2.33	10	20

The correlations between contingencies of self-worth, happiness with academic achievement were calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficients (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Correlation between contingencies of self-worth, happiness with academic achievement**

Variable	R	P
family support	0.15	0.005
competition	0.158	0.004
appearance	0.076	0.16
God 's love	0.107	0.49
school competence	0.198	0.001
virtue	0.206	0.001
approval from others	0.119	0.29
contingencies of self-worth	0.244	0.001
Satisfaction	0.255	0.001
Positive mood	0.171	0.002
the health	0.200	0.001
Efficiency	0.277	0.001
Self-esteem	0.177	0.001
Happiness	0.260	0.001

According to results (see Table 2), there is a significant correlation between contingencies of self-worth, happiness with academic achievement. The correlations between contingencies of self-worth with happiness were calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficients. The result of Pearson's correlation coefficients shows that there is negative relationship between contingencies of self-worth and happiness.

A multiple regression analysis was carried out to find which of the variables predicts academic achievement. Results of the analysis have been summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis of Academic Performance According to Variables**

Predictor variables	B	Beta	SE	T	P	F	P	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R square
Constant	12.18	-	.914	13.33	.001	16.90	.001	.302	.091	.086
happiness	0.028	.193	.008	3.42	.001					
contingencies of self-worth	0.017	.168	.006	2.97	.003					

The result of multiple regression analysis revealed that happiness (Beta = 0.193, P < 0.001) was the best predictors of academic achievement. Contingencies of self-worth (Beta= 0.168, P < 0.001) is a significant predictor of academic achievement (see Table 3). They explanation .091% variance of academic achievement. There are some other factors which have roles in predicting academic achievement, which have not been investigated in this research.

## Discussion

As mentioned above, the aim of the present research was to examine the relationship between contingencies of self-worth and happiness with academic achievement.

In response to the research hypothesis number one, the result of Pearson correlation test showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between all subscales

of happiness and academic achievement (table2). This result is consistent with some studies such as Thelwell, Lane & Weston (2007) and Tabbodi and Colleagues (2015). In explaining of this finding, we can say that, students with higher positive affect have more energetic, and more focused on their goals. As a result, they gain more success in their education.

In response to the research hypothesis number two; The result of Pearson correlation test showed that there is a negative and significant correlation between happiness and contingencies of self-worth ( $r = -0.34$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ). In explaining of this finding, we can say that, students with contingencies of self-worth are constantly trying to gain approval from others. They may be constantly worried about their appearance or school competence. So, they have less happiness in school and social activities.

In response to the research hypothesis number three, the results from multi-variable regression indicated that happiness and contingencies of self-worth predicted of academic achievement of students. These findings are similar with the findings of many previous international studies, such as Crocker and Luhtanen (2003). In this study happiness was the best predictor of academic achievement ( $\beta = 0.193$ ). Self-efficacy was the best predictor of academic achievement among the components of happiness ( $\beta = 0.207$ ). And virtue was the best predictor of academic achievement among the components of contingencies of self-worth ( $\beta = 0.205$ ). In explaining of this finding we can say that, students with contingencies of self-worth try to gain approval from others and prove their competence. They use their school work to prove their own value. So, they will do more to get academic achievement, But they may not be happy. students with happiness and Self-efficacy have a positive mood, so they work to succeed with higher energy in the educational environment.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this research show that those who have a sense of happiness have higher academic achievement. This finding show that Education officials should pay attention to the feelings of students. The findings of this study would also help teachers know and understand that their student's happiness and contingencies of self-worth have significant roles in students' academic achievement, and help teachers knows that there is negative relationship between contingencies of self-worth and happiness. Consequently, increasing student happiness in school is essential for improving academic outcomes. Furthermore, this study is recommended to improve real self-esteem in students without making their self-worth contingencies to domains.

On the limitations of this research, it can be said that this research was only conducted in a small city of Iran with the second grade of male high school students. So it is impossible to generalize the findings to students of other schools of the country. In spite of the mentioned limitations and according to the findings, the present research is recommended that future research study the relationship between academic achievement with other variables. We suggest that researcher conduct this study with female students.

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