

Women's and men's happiness in the context of eternal values

Olga Anatolievna Griva^{1*}, *Taisiya Nikolaevna Danilova*², *Igor Grigoryevich Timoshchuk*², and *Zarema Zudievna Khairedinova*¹

¹Crimean Federal University named after V. I. Vernadsky, Taurida Academy, Department of Religious Studies, Simferopol, Republic of Crimea, Russia

²Crimean Engineering and Pedagogical University named after Fevzi Yakubov, Department of Psychology, Simferopol, Republic of Crimea, Russia

Abstract. The authors draw attention to the issue of gender differences in the features of the subjective experience of happiness and unhappiness. The article describes the results of a study conducted with clients of psychologists who report problems related to the experience of destructive interpersonal relationships and consider themselves deeply unhappy in life. The purpose of the study is to reveal the gender specificity of the frustration of the subjects' life needs underlying the deep experience of unhappiness in their lives. A peculiarity of the approach used by the authors is the consideration of issues of psychological nature in the context of philosophical and religious understanding of eternal values, such as happiness and love for one's neighbor. A special focus of the authors' attention is the problems related to the philosophical and religious basis of consideration of the feminine as Sophia the Wisdom of God with the complex of her rejection, the dominant sense of guilt, and the desire to return to the Father. Such methodological symbiosis is facilitated by interdisciplinarity as one of the main principles of the authors' interaction with the materials of this work. The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) aimed at the amplification of subjects' unconscious intentions is used as a diagnostic instrument. The conducted psychological study allows to reveal and describe some of the causes for the manifestation and experience of happiness and unhappiness in the lives of modern men and women and show specific differences between their subjective experiences of happiness and unhappiness in their lives. Unlike previous studies of this kind, the deployed philosophical and religious studies approach provides an opportunity to take a new look at the outlined issues considering them from the point of the philosophical context of values.

Keywords: interpersonal relationships, subjective experiences, gender differences, values.

*Corresponding author: ogriva@yandex.ru

1 Introduction

The attitude to happiness as a phenomenon of human life has changed significantly over the past two thousand years or more. This has occurred in accordance with the prevailing ideological attitudes and cultural specificities of a particular human community. According to the Roman philosopher Varronback, in the 1st century B.C., there already were 289 views on happiness. Accordingly, questions about the possibilities and ways of achieving happiness were also a constant focus of human attention. In antiquity, there were two main approaches to happiness that had a decisive influence on the modern attitude to the phenomenon of happiness: the first allows assessing happiness from the objective perspective, i.e. as an external observer, and the second concerns the subjective experience of happiness, i.e. from the subjective perspective [1]. In recent decades, happiness increasingly began to be regarded as a scientific category [2]. There emerged a whole direction of research on the phenomenon of happiness – feliciology – the study of achieving happiness serving as a framework for a great number of studies including active research in psychology [3, 4]. Separate traditions in approaches to the study of the phenomenon of happiness also emerged and have been comprehended and described [5].

The present article describes the results of a study conducted within the framework of the second approach which conditions the psychological toolkit of the study. Moreover, it should be noted that the study hypothesis includes the assumption that the specificity of the experience of happiness depends, among other things, on gender characteristics (we proceed from the fact that the concept of gender reflecting the social characteristics of sex corresponds to sex in the Russian cultural tradition). Nevertheless, studies of gender differences in the experience of happiness are not a new development [6].

A special focus of our attention lies on the issues of the philosophical and religious basis of considering the problem of womanhood as the image of Sophia-Wisdom of God with its complex of rejection, the dominant sense of guilt, and the desire to return to the Father. Such methodological symbiosis is facilitated by interdisciplinarity as one of the main principles of our interaction with the materials of this work.

The theoretical and methodological foundation for the study is the personalist theory of H. Murray the central category of which is the category of need as “the potential possibility or readiness of the organism to react in a certain way under the given conditions”. In the process of work with respondents of the main group, we proposed a hypothesis that the frustration of vital needs serves as a basis for the deep experience of unhappiness in their life. The research objectives include identifying the specifics, including gender-related, of these people’s experience of unhappiness in their lives.

2 Methods

The respondents recruited for the study are the clients of psychologists who referred for help with the problem of experiencing destructive interpersonal relationships and considered themselves deeply unhappy in life (the main sample). The control sample included men and women who, according to experts (friends, relatives, colleagues at work), are happy, harmonious people with a high level of self-acceptance. The number of respondents in the main group is 38 people, the control group consists of 40 people.

The deployed diagnostic method is the Thematic Apperception Test aimed at the amplification of subjects’ unconscious intentions. “According to the activity-meaning approach, TAT describes the subjects’ individual image of the world – an integral multidimensional and multilevel representation of reality formed throughout the person’s life that performs the functions of regulation of practical activity and mediates any processes of mental reflection” [18].

Several tables were selected as stimulus material. According to A. Hartman and L. Bellack, the use of this set (the classical version includes 20 images) of tables allows getting an overall understanding of the specificity of the subjects' personal problems. The interpretation of stories is carried out through semantic analysis of fiction texts with all of the respondents' stories considered as a single text.

The analysis demonstrates that the stories of most respondents reveal destructive relationships with close people as the cause of unhappiness – “possessiveness” (as a certain attitude toward another person manifesting in the desire to possess the object of one's attachment), fear of loneliness, fear of rejection. The latter corresponds to the neo-Freudian conception of A. Adler who believed that the desire to fully possess an object of affection is caused by the desire for superiority and the inferiority complex [7]. In this case, a person turns into a real tyrant trying to control the thoughts, feelings, and desires of others.

Opposed to the negative components characterizing the specifics of interpersonal relations of the respondents of the main group are the positive ones typical in happy men and women including love, trust, and sincerity based on respect, care, patience, forgiveness, and responsibility (the main components of love according to E. Fromm, 1956).

We proceed to describe the opposition structure considered as a set of semantic oppositions relating to different components of the theme. The analysis of the respondents' stories allows identifying the following types of oppositions (Fig. 1):

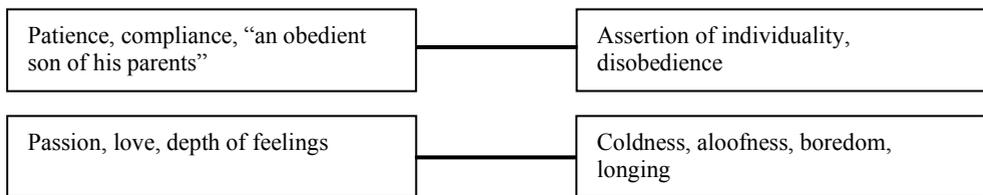


Fig. 1. Respondents' types of oppositions

For instance, the story of a young man considering himself very happy shows an unconscious resistance to the will of his parents as a struggle for his individuality (the picture of a boy looking at the violin lying in front of him). As noted by Jean Cournut (a representative of the French psychoanalytic school), this desire of men to completely dominate women is due to the fear of them. “Women are mothers but men are directors or their deputies: men are exalted, women are subordinated.” [17: 440].

A similar opinion is expressed by K. Horley who argues that the fear of women encourages a man to dominate and rule over them [8]. The typical forms of manifestation of this fear are ironic jokes, sarcastic remarks, cynical comments which this young man, being the head of one of the organizations, often used in his relations with his female subordinates. The more he was attracted to a woman, the crueler he was becoming when communicating with her (an example of a psychological defense mechanism – a reactive formation). His relations with the women he liked could be schematically presented as follows: sympathy – fear – jealousy – demanding – frustration (humiliation) of the woman. The analysis of the typical behavioral patterns of the subjects is discussed in more detail in the syntagmatic structure.

A syntagmatic structure is typically aimed at describing events in stories combined into a single semantic chain. The links of the chain reflect the specificity of the events taking place, thus helping to identify typical storylines in the stories of the various subjects. Thus, the analysis of the subjects' stories reveals two typical plots with a similar fable.

In the first case, the respondents' stories typically contained the theme of love, cheating on a woman, killing her, or a man leaving her. Interestingly, men's and women's stories do

not differ much in terms of the plot. On the one hand, this can be explained by the masochistic attitude (as indicated by Z.Freud, [9], M.Klein, [10], E.Fromm [11], etc.) of women whose stories contained the theme of murder, a woman lying on her bed, and, later on, the suffering and torment of the man who lost his only and unique beloved in a fit of anger and despair (even though he caught her with another). On the other hand, there is narcissism and, to some extent, the hysterical nature of the women (the authors of the stories) ready to lose their lives only to enjoy the experiences of the men who love them.

The analysis of the second scheme (most common in men's stories) also allows identifying similar themes in the respondents' stories. There is a theme of loneliness and boredom provoking the man to engage in new entertainment or putting him into a depressive, apathetic state.

The next stage of the research work involves content analysis of the composed stories [12].

The identified quantification units (the semantic units most common in the respondents' stories) include possessiveness, confidence, loss of a loved one, trust, rejection, striving for superiority, rivalry, dependence, relationship with the father, and relationship with the mother. Calculations in the content analysis are made using the Janis-Fadner imbalance coefficient.

3 Results

The The analysis of the work with the stimulus material and the conducted content analysis reveal the following themes as typical of the male type of experiencing unhappiness: loneliness and boredom provoking the man to engage in new entertainment or putting him into a depressive, apathetic state. The latter is oftentimes a consequence of an existential crisis projected onto various areas of human relations including relationships with co-workers.

The analysis of the results for the sample of women deeply experiencing the lack of happiness in their lives shows that their unhappiness stems from narcissism, egoism, and the sense of possessiveness which directly manifests in the desire "to not let anyone near the object of their adoration", "the person belongs only to me". Opposition to the negative components characterizing the specifics of interpersonal relations of the respondents of the main group is the positive ones typical of happy men and women. These components include love, trust, and sincerity based on respect, care, patience, forgiveness, and responsibility.

An important role in understanding the phenomenon of the experience of happiness is played by self-confidence and confidence in one's feelings and the stability of relationships. Thus, the conducted psychological psychological study allows to reveal and describe some of the reasons for the manifestation and experience of happiness and unhappiness in the lives of modern men and women.

The study results mainly confirm the approach to happiness as a dependent variable [13]. We conclude that the phenomenon of happiness can be viewed as subjective well-being which continues some previous research [14–16].

At the same time, new approaches to the study of happiness as an experience are discovered and give insights into some new variables characterizing the experiences of happiness and unhappiness in modern men and women. This reveals the importance of positive patterns characteristic of happy people such as love, trust, and sincerity based on respect, care, patience, forgiveness, and responsibility. The listed behavioral patterns of behavior fit quite well into the category of values considered to be eternal – love for one's neighbor, goodness, freedom, truth, beauty.

4 Conclusion

Thus, considering the results of psychological research in a philosophical and religious context, we can conclude that people who feel truly happy are those who love, believe, are sincere, trust their surroundings, who do not experience anger, jealousy, and envy in everyday life. It is these enduring values that are also important for a person's spiritual development.

In conclusion, we note that happiness is a complex multidimensional phenomenon that most certainly calls for further interdisciplinary research and analysis.

References

1. V. Tatarkevich, *O schaste i sovershenstve cheloveka* [On the happiness and perfection of a person] (Progress, Moscow, 1981)
2. A.L. Zhuravlev, A.V. Yurevich, *Herald of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, **8(84)**, 715–723 (2014)
3. B.K. Baimukhanova, *Bulletin of Science and Education. Psychological Sciences*, **17(53(1))**, 112–113 (2018)
4. D. A. Leontiev, *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*, **1**, 14–37 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2020.1.02>
5. R. Biswas-Diener, T. B. Kashdan, L. A. King, *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, **4(3)**, 208–211 (2009). <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760902844400>.
6. V. Semenova, *Izvestiia of Saratov University. Philosophy. Psychology. Pedagogy*, **1**, 71–74 (2013)
7. Adler, *Vospitanie detei. Vzaimodeistvie polov* [Parenting. The interaction of the sexes] (Feniks, Rostov-on-Don, 1998)
8. K. Horney, *Nevroz i lichnostnyi rost* [Neurosis and human growth] (B. S. K., Saint Petersburg, 1997)
9. Z. Freud, *Ia i Ono* [Ego and Id] (Eksmo-Press, Moscow, 1998)
10. M. Klein, *Zavist i blagodarnost* [Envy and gratitude] (B.S.K., Saint Petersburg, 1997)
11. E. Fromm, *Iskusstvo liubit. Issledovanie prirody liubvi* [The Art of Loving. An exploration of the nature of love] (AST, Moscow, 2009)
12. A.E.Voiskunskii, S.V.Skripkin, *Moscow University Bulletin, ser. 14, psych*, **2**, 93–109 (2001)
13. D. A. Leontiev, *Perezhivanie schastia kak zavisimaia peremennaya v psikhologicheskikh issledovaniakh* [The experience of happiness as a dependent variable in psychological research], in A. O. Prokhorova (Ed.), *Psychology of Mental States*, **6**, 36–58 (Vladimir Ulyanov-Lenin Kazan State University, Kazan, 2006)
14. E. N. Osin, D. A. Leontiev, *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*, **1**, 117–142 (2020)
15. K. Sheldon, *Putting Eudaimonia in its Place: On the Predictor, Not the Outcome, Side of the Equation*, in J. Vittersø (Ed.), *Handbook of Eudaimonic Well-Being*, 531–541 (Springer, New-York, 2016). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-42445-3_36
16. K. Sheldon, S. Lyubomirsky, *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, **16(9)**, 1–10 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1689421>
17. A. Zhibo, A.A. Rossokhin (ed.), *Frantsuzskaia psikhoanaliticheskaia shkola* [The French Psychoanalytic School] (Piter, Saint Petersburg, 2005)

18. D. Leontiev, *Tematicheskii appertseptivnyi test [Thematic Apperception Test]* (Smysl, Moscow, 2000)