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Is Happiness a Choice or Predetermined, and to What Extent Are We in Control of Our Own Happiness

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I would like to dedicate this PhD to my two
beautiful daughters, Willow & Saffron.

Without them, I would not have found my own
happiness and subsequently would not have
been able to write this thesis.

My hope is that this dissertation will help them
to believe that what they create, they become.

May they find unbounded happiness, joy and
peace.

With love always

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This research aims to thoroughly explore the extent to which happiness is a conscious choice versus a mere consequence of external circumstances. The study will focus on the interplay between personal decisions and situational factors that influence an individual's overall sense of happiness. To delve into this topic, I will employ a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. This will involve conducting in-depth interviews with a diverse group of participants to gain insights into their personal experiences and beliefs regarding happiness.

Additionally, I will administer surveys designed to assess various dimensions of happiness, including self-perception, emotional well-being, lifestyle choices, and the impact of socioeconomic factors such as income, education, and social support. By analysing the data collected from both the interviews and surveys, I aim to uncover patterns and correlations that shed light on how individuals perceive the role of choice and circumstance in their happiness. This research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that shape our emotional well-being and may offer practical insights for enhancing happiness through informed decision-making.

I. Abstract

This dissertation looks at the idea that happiness is a choice made by individuals rather than just being shaped by outside factors. Using qualitative methods like interviews and surveys, this study seeks to understand how people see happiness, their behaviour, and how socio-economic factors influence their sense of well-being. The results show a complicated relationship between personal choices and situational influences: many participants noted that making active decisions and having personal control are essential to their happiness, regardless of outside obstacles. While socio-economic factors were noted, many people stated that their attitudes and deliberate actions greatly affected their sense of well-being.

These findings are essential in healthcare, highlighting the need to push mental health strategies that help individuals make choices that lead to happiness. By questioning the common belief that happiness mainly comes from external situations, this research offers a new way to understand well-being, encouraging healthcare workers to take personal agency into account in treatment. The study points out the need for methods that promote personal accountability and active mental health strategies, which could impact public health policies aimed at improving individual and community well-being. Ultimately, this work calls for a more detailed understanding of happiness, suggesting that creating conditions that support personal choice might be crucial for advancing mental health and happiness in society.

II. Introduction

Understanding human happiness is a continuing effort in numerous academic fields, like psychology, sociology, and philosophy. Recently, there has been extensive focus on what makes people happy, leading to much research and discussion about how external situations and personal choices affect happiness. Earlier views often concentrated on outside factors such as economic status or cultural influences. Still, new ideas suggest that personal choice matters, too, indicating that happiness can actually be a choice individuals make themselves (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). The rise of positive psychology has encouraged a fresh look at happiness, directing attention to how people can manage their feelings through purposeful behaviours and mindsets (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). A key question now revolves around how much people can boost their happiness through their decisions, suggesting that happiness is not just a state but also a sequence of choices that individuals can influence throughout their lives. The research problem this dissertation tackles arises from an enigmatic situation. While many studies emphasise individual choice as vital to achieving happiness, people often think of their happiness as mainly shaped by outside conditions. This inconsistency raises important questions about what happiness truly is and how much it is a matter of personal choice. To explore these complexities, it is essential to look at both personal decisions and the intricate ways that individual choices interact with the contextual factors affecting happiness.

Thus, the main research question is: Is happiness mainly a choice made by individuals, or is it predominantly swayed by outside, uncontrollable influences? The goals of this research are varied. Firstly, this study aims to understand how people view their happiness and to see how much they feel their happiness stems from their conscious choices or outside influences. Additionally, it will examine typical behaviours linked to happiness and how socio-economic factors play a role, particularly looking at how these elements can affect one's sense of control and well-being. Using qualitative methods such as interviews and surveys, this research hopes to gather meaningful insights into how people form their views on happiness and assess to what extent they see themselves as active creators of their emotional health. The importance of this research is significant both in academic terms and in practical applications. From an academic standpoint, it adds to the ongoing conversation about happiness, challenging traditional views that minimise individual agency and encouraging scholars to reconsider the field of happiness studies (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Practically, the results could help health professionals, policymakers, and mental health practitioners understand the crucial part our own personal choices, decisions and mindset play in mental health and emotional wellness, supporting the development of methods that encourage individuals to make active choices toward their happiness. Furthermore, this research could underline strategies aimed at building psychological resilience, offering communities diverse approaches to enhancing happiness, especially in a complicated socio-economic landscape (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). In conclusion, this dissertation aims to transform discussions about happiness and enable individuals to take charge of their well-being.

A. Background and Context

The discussion regarding happiness has changed substantially over the years. Numerous modalities, such as progress in psychology, sociology, and public health, have made considerable contributions to this. In the past, happiness was mainly seen as tied to outside factors such as wealth, social standing, and reaching personal goals, with thinkers like Aristotle discussing the pursuit of eudaimonia or flourishing as key to human life (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). However, in recent years, the rise of positive psychology has altered this view, seeing happiness more as something shaped by individual choices and mindset rather than just a result of outside conditions (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Studies in this area have highlighted how cognitive, emotional, and behavioural aspects affect one's personal well-being, indicating that people can influence their happiness through conscious decisions and ways of thinking (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). This shift in thinking raises an interesting question: How much is happiness really a choice, and how do personal accountability and decision-making show up in different situations? The core research problem here is the contradictory belief that while many people say they can choose happiness, they often feel trapped by outside factors that affect their emotions. This contradiction leads to important questions about how personal agency and circumstances interact in the experience of happiness, prompting a thorough look at how people see and express their happiness in relation to both conscious decisions and uncontrollable events (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). It also pushes for deeper consideration of how different socio-economic backgrounds, cultural settings, and personal experiences might change how one views happiness and the belief in their ability to choose it (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

Therefore, this study will look into whether happiness truly lies within the scope of choice or if it is mainly affected by external factors, leading to the central question of this dissertation: Is happiness a choice? The goals of this research are to untangle the complexities of how people understand their own happiness, particularly focusing on their views of choice as a factor in emotional well-being. By using qualitative methods—such as interviews and surveys—this study seeks to gather perspectives from various groups about their beliefs on happiness and how much they see their emotional states as determined by personal choices versus outside circumstances. An additional aim is to explore behaviours linked to perceptions of happiness and see how socio-economic factors affect these behaviours. The study hopes to clarify the complex nature of happiness, showing the intricate relationship between individual agency and external influences in shaping well-being. The importance of this research is significant. From an academic standpoint, it adds to the growing field of happiness studies by questioning standard views that favour external factors over individual agency. This re-evaluation not only enhances the theoretical base of happiness but also sparks meaningful

discussions among scholars about what well-being means and the role of personal responsibility in achieving it (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Practically, understanding how much happiness is a choice can significantly impact mental health approaches. By creating environments that encourage people to make choices that support their emotional health, practitioners can develop more effective methods to boost emotional well-being and resilience in challenging times (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

Seeing happiness as a possible choice could lead to programmes that enhance cognitive skills and behaviours that nurture positive emotional states, thereby building healthier communities. This investigation into the concept of happiness as a choice delves into a significant academic inquiry that could reshape our understanding of well-being. By exploring how the perceptions and decisions surrounding happiness affect individuals and communities, the research aims to uncover insights that can inspire practical strategies to enhance personal fulfilment and foster a sense of connection among diverse groups. The implications of this study could lead to more effective approaches in promoting mental health and nurturing positive relationships, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more joyful society.

B. Statement of the Research Problem

Understanding how personal choice and outside factors relate to happiness is a topic that involves psychology, sociology, and philosophy. Historically, discussions about happiness often focused on precise behaviours and outside factors, such as economic status, relationships, and cultural influences, seen as the leading causes of how people feel (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). However, with the rise of positive psychology, there has been a shift that promotes looking at internal processes, highlighting how individual choices and thought patterns can significantly affect one's happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). This changing viewpoint raises essential questions about happiness, especially whether it is mainly connected to deliberate choices and personal control rather than being primarily influenced by external circumstances. The problem examined in this dissertation comes from a conflict found in how the public views happiness: many people say they can choose to be happy but often feel restricted by external factors that they think control their emotional state (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). This incongruity offers a valuable area for study, leading to an investigation into how much people genuinely believe they can choose their happiness and how social and economic factors shape this belief. Central to this inquiry is whether happiness is mainly a choice or if it is primarily affected by uncontrollable external factors, requiring a thoughtful exploration of how individuals manage their understanding of happiness in the face of various influences. This study aims to unpack the intricacies surrounding this issue to clarify how personal choice relates to happiness.

The main goals of this research are threefold: first, to look into how individuals view happiness and relate personal choices to their emotional well-being; second, to explore the social and economic factors that might affect these views; and third, to investigate the behaviours that may arise from these understandings. Using qualitative methods like interviews and surveys, this research aims to capture a range of experiences and opinions about happiness, highlighting the connection between personal control and outside influences on well-being. Ultimately, the aim is to develop a thorough understanding of what contributes to happiness and to give practical insights on how individuals can improve their emotional health. The importance of this section lies in its potential contributions to both academic discourse and real-world applications regarding happiness and well-being. From an academic perspective, this research fills a significant gap in the happiness literature by combining views on individual choice, social realities, and cultural contexts, leading to a more detailed understanding of this complicated issue.

Additionally, the findings from this study could have significant effects on mental health practices, indicating that therapeutic methods should not only focus on external conditions but also help individuals recognise and use their agency to influence their happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). By looking at how people view their ability to choose happiness, the research could inform strategies meant to encourage personal responsibility and positive behaviours, ultimately improving mental health services. Furthermore, the findings might guide public health programmes aimed at creating environments that foster happiness and well-being for various populations, connecting academic research with meaningful social change (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Therefore, examining the research problem presented in this section establishes a crucial foundation for the overall dissertation and its goal of exploring whether happiness is truly a choice.

C. Research Objectives

The study of happiness has become increasingly popular, shifting the focus from just outside factors to the vital role of personal choice in improving emotional health. Earlier research mainly looked at things like income and job security. Still, by the late 20th century, there was a growing interest in the psychological elements that affect happiness, especially the notion that happiness can be developed through conscious decisions and actions (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This change in viewpoint has led more people to claim that they can control their happiness, inspiring researchers to look into what instils these beliefs (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Since happiness is often seen as a personal task, this brings forth a key question about the balance between choice and external factors in the quest for happiness,

highlighting a need to explore how people manage these areas. The main research issue concerns the conflicting views many people have: they believe happiness is a choice, yet they recognise many outside factors that appear to influence their feelings. This contradiction is a key topic that raises important questions about how personal choice functions alongside the broader socio-economic and cultural elements of happiness. Getting to grips with this relationship is crucial, as it will enable a better understanding of the beliefs and actions that shape how individuals perceive and discuss happiness, focusing on whether they view their happiness as a result of conscious decisions or outside influences.

This research has three main aims. First, it wants to explore how individuals see happiness and how much they think their personal choices impact their emotional health. This will involve collecting qualitative data through interviews and surveys to understand the stories and experiences of participants regarding their views on happiness. Second, the research intends to examine the socio-economic and contextual factors that might affect these perceptions, identifying trends that show links between personal choice and external situations. Lastly, the study aims to determine if certain behaviours come from different beliefs about happiness and choice. It provides insights into how people manage their emotional health based on their understanding of happiness as a choice or as something imposed by others. The importance of these aims goes beyond just academic interest; they could have practical benefits for mental health practices and public health policies aimed at boosting individual well-being. From an academic standpoint, this research fills a significant gap by critically exploring the links between personal agency, socio-economic conditions, and happiness, ultimately improving our understanding of the complexities of this topic. Practically, the findings could lead to programs designed to empower individuals to make positive choices regarding their happiness, thus building resilience during tough times. By highlighting the role of personal agency in seeking happiness, this study might impact mental health practices, encouraging professionals to create settings that promote individual responsibility and active involvement in one's emotional health.

Furthermore, insights from this research could influence public health efforts designed to build a societal culture that enables people to regain their control in the search for happiness, ultimately improving overall community well-being (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Therefore, the research aims not just to enhance the scholarly discussion around happiness but also to foster meaningful changes in how happiness is understood and sought in everyday life.

D. Significance of the Study

The study of happiness as a possible choice is an important mix of psychology and practical use, which connects strongly with current social issues. With rising mental health problems, emotional pain, and widespread unhappiness, it is crucial to understand the factors that lead to happiness. As people deal with stress from social and economic gaps, worldwide crises, social media and life pressures, the idea that happiness can be intentionally created through personal choices provides hope and a way to improve well-being. Recognising that happiness can be shaped by individual choices goes against the long-held belief that outside conditions mainly determine feelings, urging a reconsideration of how happiness is viewed and sought after. This research is based on the tension between seeing happiness as an outside outcome and the idea that people can actively choose happiness despite different situations, highlighting the need for deeper study into these differing views. The research issue centres on the contradictory notion that people often feel responsible for their happiness while also seeing significant obstacles from outside factors that seem to influence their emotional state (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). This contradiction requires a close look at the complicated aspects of happiness, especially in how culture, socio-economic status, and personal history affect views on happiness and choice. By examining this complex relationship, the study aims to clarify how much happiness results from conscious decisions versus external forces, thus addressing the need for a more profound understanding of happiness and emotional health.

The goals of this research are closely tied to its importance. First, by examining personal views on happiness and beliefs about choice, the study aims to shed light on the elements that affect personal happiness experiences. Second, it intends to investigate socioeconomic and contextual factors that shape these views, ultimately providing insight into the broader influences on happiness. Lastly, the research aims to understand the potential behaviour patterns that stem from these beliefs, contributing to a better understanding of how people interact with their emotional health and make choices in the quest for happiness. The importance of this study is both academic and practical, as it has significant implications for the ongoing discussions about happiness and mental health. Academically, by questioning the common belief that external factors mainly shape happiness, this research contributes to the growing field of positive psychology, promoting a more detailed look at the elements that affect emotional well-being (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). It supports acknowledging personal responsibility in the pursuit of happiness, highlighting individual agency as a key part of psychological study. Practically, the findings could help develop interventions and strategies designed to enhance happiness through conscious choice and active participation.

Mental health professionals, teachers, and policymakers could gain insights from this research, allowing them to foster supportive environments that encourage positive choices regarding happiness. By equipping participants with an understanding of the role of agency in achieving emotional wellness, this dissertation aims to improve both personal and community health outcomes, making a substantial contribution to social efforts to support happiness and mental health. Ultimately, the importance of this research is found in its ability to inform practices that enhance individual happiness and, subsequently, support healthier communities.

E. Theoretical Framework

The study of happiness as a choice means looking into different psychological ideas that explain what affects emotional well-being and personal control. Central to this study is the Positive Psychology approach, which claims that individual happiness is greatly shaped by internal factors like hope, resilience, efficacy, and optimism—known as psychological capital (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This theory differs sharply from older models that mainly focused on the lack of mental health issues, instead stressing the need to find and promote positive feelings that help people make deliberate choices about their happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Moreover, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) suggests that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are vital psychological needs that support motivation and satisfaction, indicating that how much control individuals feel they have in their choices is closely tied to their happiness (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143).

The research problem here examines the complexities involved in personal choice versus outside influences in seeking happiness, raising issues about how culture, socio-economic status, and environment affect these factors (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). This poses an important question on how individuals deal with their feelings and choices amid the limits and support of their surroundings, leading to different experiences of happiness. Exploring this is crucial to grasping the complex nature of happiness and how much control people can have over their emotional states, shaping the main argument of the dissertation: can happiness truly be seen as a choice? The aims of this research within this theoretical context are to evaluate how current psychological theories explain the link between personal control and happiness and to highlight the specific concepts in these theories that help or hinder people's ability to choose their emotional well-being (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

By bringing together insights from Positive Psychology and Self-Determination Theory, this research hopes to clarify the fundamental mechanisms that shape how individuals perceive happiness and make decisions related to it. Additionally, the study intends to combine qualitative results from interviews and surveys with these theoretical foundations to give a complete view of how individuals express their happiness experiences in terms of choice and external limits. The importance of this section lies in its ability to connect theoretical understanding with real-world applications that promote individual well-being. By including established psychological theories, the research not only enhances academic knowledge of happiness but also provides evidence-based insights that can help mental health professionals craft interventions to boost individuals' sense of control and decision-making abilities (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22).

Besides, understanding the theoretical aspects of happiness can help in developing social policies that create supportive environments, enabling individuals to make choices that benefit their emotional health (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Therefore, this section is a vital part of exploring how happiness as a choice isn't just a theory but a practical reality that can be encouraged through focused psychological and social efforts, ultimately helping both individuals and society. This theoretical framework will support the investigation throughout the dissertation, grounding findings in established research while also highlighting areas for future exploration.

F. Research Questions

Delving into the intricacies of happiness, particularly the ways in which individual choice plays a role, is a nuanced and complex undertaking that captivates scholars across various academic disciplines, including psychology, sociology, and public health. Recently, a growing body of research has illuminated the myriad factors that can influence a person's sense of well-being, ranging from socio-economic status and cultural heritage to the depth and quality of personal relationships. For instance, individuals with higher socio-economic status often have access to better resources and opportunities, which can enhance their happiness. At the same time, cultural background may shape one's perception of happiness and acceptable life choices. Despite this wealth of information regarding the external elements that affect happiness, the specific role of personal choice—the decisions individuals make that directly impact their emotional well-being—has not been explored in as much depth. In an age where people are increasingly empowered to take charge of their emotions and reactions, even amidst societal and external pressures, the influence of personal agency becomes more pronounced. This growing autonomy suggests a pivotal need for focused research that examines the intricate relationship between personal choice and happiness, as

understanding this dynamic could lead to more effective strategies for enhancing mental well-being and life satisfaction across diverse populations.

When exploring happiness, especially how it relates to individual choice, is a complex area that attracts scholars from various fields. Although there is more and more research that points out how factors like socio-economic status, cultural background, and personal relationships influence happiness, the impact of personal choice on achieving happiness is not as deeply explored. As people gain more control over their feelings despite outside pressures, it is clear that focused research is needed to clarify this relationship. This leads to a central research question: How do people manage the conflicting effects of personal choice and outside factors when deciding their happiness? To tackle this central question, a few important queries will guide the research. First, to what degree do people view happiness as a conscious decision rather than something influenced by outside factors? This question aims to reveal the personal beliefs people have about their ability to affect their emotional well-being. Second, how do socio-economic and cultural situations shape these beliefs? This inquiry intends to identify the situational factors that may support or limit people's understanding and use of agency in terms of their happiness. Third, what habits or methods do people use when they think of happiness as a choice? This will help to explore the proactive measures people take to improve their emotional well-being, linking personal choice to real outcomes. Lastly, what part do psychological elements like hope, resilience, and optimism play in people's views about their ability to choose happiness?

Understanding these psychological factors might shed light on the mental foundations that affect how individuals approach their emotional health (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). These research questions align the study with its broader aims, which focus on the dimensions and dynamics of happiness, particularly regarding individual choice. As the research develops, answering these queries will clarify the complexities of happiness, particularly the detailed relationship between personal choice and circumstances that influence overall well-being (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Additionally, addressing these questions is important not just for advancing academic conversations about happiness but also for developing practical approaches that improve mental health support and public health measures aimed at boosting individual well-being (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). By examining the personal nature of happiness and the aspects that affect agency, this study aims to provide helpful insights into the fields of psychology and mental health, ultimately promoting a more active stance on emotional health that recognises individual choice as a key factor (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Thus, creating effective research questions allows for a thorough look at happiness and its causes, laying a strong base for the dissertation's exploration into whether happiness is indeed a choice.

G. Hypotheses

The study of happiness as a choice is a complicated topic that requires careful analysis using both empirical and theoretical perspectives. As research grows, it is essential to create hypotheses that can clarify the links between personal choice and different factors affecting happiness. Current studies show that happiness is shaped by both internal elements, such as personality and thinking patterns, as well as external factors, including socio-economic status and social support (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This framework sets the stage for looking deeper into the role of choice in seeking happiness, prompting important questions about how people align their beliefs and actions with the idea of happiness being a conscious decision (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204).

The main issue in this research highlights the contradiction people encounter when claiming they can choose happiness while also feeling restricted by outside factors that impact their emotional health (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Therefore, the key aim of this study is to examine this complex relationship and create hypotheses that explain the links between perceived choice, socio-economic factors, and views on happiness.

Four major hypotheses have been developed for this research:

Hypothesis 1 states that individuals who see happiness as a choice will report higher levels of subjective well-being than those who think their happiness relies primarily on outside factors.

Hypothesis 2 indicates that people from more stable socio-economic backgrounds will show a stronger link between perceived choice and happiness than those from less stable situations (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

Hypothesis 3 suggests that having supportive social networks will strengthen the positive relationship between personal choice and happiness, indicating that social support may help reduce external obstacles that individuals see. Finally,

Hypothesis 4 claims that greater psychological capital—covering traits like resilience, optimism, and hope—will act as mediators, enhancing the link between perceived choice and happiness (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

The importance of these hypotheses is significant both academically and in practical terms. From an academic standpoint, the hypotheses seek to connect theoretical ideas with empirical results, leading to a better understanding of how happiness and personal agency function (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Testing these hypotheses through research methods could provide important insights that challenge and improve existing theories on happiness, leading to more research into the psychological aspects that support well-being. Practically, the results of this study could greatly benefit mental health approaches and public policy by highlighting the need to create settings that boost personal agency and offer social support (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). If the hypotheses are proven correct, they might support efforts aimed at building psychological resilience and enabling individuals to take charge of their emotional health, thus shifting focus from external control to active participation in pursuing happiness. This section, therefore, lays an important foundation for the study, allowing a thorough investigation into whether happiness is truly a choice while closely aligning with the overall objectives of the dissertation.

H. Methodological Approach

The investigation into whether happiness is a choice requires a solid method that can properly understand how people see it and the factors around them that affect this view. As happiness is complicated and influenced by both personal feelings and outside factors, using a qualitative research design suits this study well. It helps to deeply explore the experiences and beliefs of participants (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This method fits the research issue, which looks at the contradiction that people say they can choose happiness but also deal with outside factors affecting their feelings (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). By using qualitative methods like semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the study aims to collect detailed data on participants' personal experiences while encouraging discussions that reveal the deeper factors shaping their views on happiness as a choice. The main goals of this method include finding out what beliefs people have about their happiness and how much they believe they create these feelings themselves or if they are due to external factors.

Furthermore, the research aims to find repeated themes or patterns in what participants say, especially regarding social and economic settings and support systems, thus revealing the broader dynamics at work. This qualitative framework allows for a flexible exploration, giving the data a chance to follow unexpected paths that might come up while interacting with participants, which could provide a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding happiness and choice. The importance of this method is severalfold. In academic terms, it adds to current discussions on happiness and personal agency by giving empirical data based on individual stories, thereby improving the theoretical discussions on the link between options and emotional health (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

Moreover, the adaptable nature of qualitative research helps to achieve a detailed understanding of how different factors connect, promoting a complete view of happiness that includes personal, social, and situational aspects (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). On a practical level, the insights gained from this research can guide mental health practices and therapy aimed at boosting people's abilities to choose actions that increase their happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). By understanding how personal agency fits within broader socio-economic contexts, practitioners can create specific plans to empower individuals, thus supporting positive emotional results and resilience in various situations. Overall, the method discussed in this section is a key base for looking into the main question of whether happiness is indeed a conscious choice, opening doors for both academic research and practical use in the quest for better well-being.

I. Scope and Limitations of the Study

Looking into whether happiness is a choice needs a clear outlining of what this study covers and its limits, giving the necessary context for the research done. The study's focus is on looking at how individuals see happiness, especially the degree to which their views are shaped by personal choice rather than outside factors. This examination uses a qualitative approach, enabling detailed stories from participants about their experiences and ideas related to happiness (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Furthermore, the research looks at different socio-economic backgrounds, cultural settings, and psychological factors such as resilience and optimism that together may affect people's understanding and experience of happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). By engaging with a varied group of participants, the study seeks to reveal the many sides of happiness while continually considering the influences of choice. The main problem in the research is the contradiction people face when they recognise their ability to find happiness but feel limited by outside influences. This raises important questions about how individuals describe choice in their emotional experiences and how these descriptions change based on their situations. Therefore, the goals of the study include understanding people's views on happiness as a choice, looking at socio-economic and contextual factors that affect these views, and recognising behaviour patterns related to the perception of happiness. These goals aim to provide a thorough understanding of happiness and what affects it, adding to both psychology studies and real-world applications.

Nevertheless, some limits are evident in the study that must be recognised. First, the qualitative nature of the research may restrict how widely the results can be applied, as insights from a particular group might not show broader societal trends. Additionally, the study may be affected by self-reporting biases frequently seen in qualitative research, where

participants might either exaggerate their choice in finding happiness or downplay the effects of external limitations on their emotional health. Also, despite attempts to gather a range of views, elements like cultural views on happiness and personal experiences with mental health could lead to differences in answers that are not fully considered, possibly distorting the findings toward specific stories.

Thus, while the research aims to give valuable insights into the link between choice and happiness, it is vital to see its findings in light of these limits. The importance of discussing the scope and limits of the study is multi-layered. From an academic standpoint, recognising these boundaries helps place the research within clear limits, allowing for a better understanding of the results and setting the stage for future studies to build on this work. Practically, acknowledging these limits helps mental health professionals and policymakers interpret the findings more wisely in creating strategies that boost individual choice and emotional well-being. Moreover, this section highlights the need for further studies that can look at other aspects of happiness, leading to a more thorough discussion around personal choices and the factors that influence well-being. Thus, this exploration of scope and limits supports the dissertation's goals while also showcasing the complex landscape of happiness that arises from the mix of personal choice and outside factors. Ultimately, the insights from this study will help deepen the understanding of happiness, both as a psychological idea and a lived experience, paving the way for better practices and policies that enhance emotional health in individuals and communities.

J. Definitions of Key Terms

In psychological research, it is essential to clearly define key terms to better understand the ideas being studied. In this dissertation, "happiness" will be described as a state of well-being marked by positive feelings, satisfaction with life, and general contentment (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This concept covers both how people feel and how they think about their emotional states over time. At the same time, "choice" will be understood as the mental process of picking one option among many, which is key for decision-making related to emotions (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). This helps us examine how people see their ability to affect their emotions, leading us to the main research question of whether happiness can genuinely be seen as a conscious choice.

The research problem discussed here highlights a conflict in how people view happiness—they often recognise the importance of personal choice but also feel overwhelmed by outside influences that may affect their emotional well-being (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). This situation calls for a framework that considers both the personal

experience of happiness and the influences of external factors. By clearly defining "happiness" and "choice," this study aims to look into the complex link between personal agency and emotional well-being, thus filling a significant gap in current research (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). The goals of this section are twofold: to provide clear definitions for the key terms that will guide the research and to illustrate how these definitions relate to the main question of happiness as a choice. By clarifying these terms, the study intends to offer deeper insights into how people interpret their experiences of happiness and choice, thereby enhancing the overall discussion about these critical concepts.

This clarity will lead to a more focused examination throughout the study, making sure that further findings and discussions are based on a uniform understanding of the concepts used. Defining these key terms is important not just for academic reasons; it also has real-world implications for how happiness and choice are viewed in practice. Academically, having clear definitions allows researchers to have more meaningful discussions about happiness, leading to further studies that build on these basic definitions (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Practically, knowing how people define and view happiness as a choice can help in creating mental health programmes and social policies aimed at improving emotional well-being. By clarifying how personal choice interacts with emotional experiences, this research could impact practices that help people take an active role in seeking happiness, thus improving both individual and community well-being (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). In summary, this section on key terms provides an essential basis for the dissertation, preparing for a detailed investigation of whether happiness is indeed a choice.

K. Overview

The structure of this dissertation is made to look at if happiness is a conscious choice. Each section has a specific role in supporting the overall argument. I initially start by introducing the subject and stating the research problem, giving necessary background on how happiness and personal responsibility have changed over time, and explaining the study's goals and importance. We then look at the theoretical basis for the research, reviewing the main psychological theories that relate to happiness and decision-making, like Positive Psychology and Self-Determination Theory. This helps place the study in the context of existing research, establishing how personal choices and outside factors affect the pursuit of happiness. Following this, I explain the methods used to collect qualitative data, outline the research setup, and discuss participant selection and data collection methods such as interviews and surveys. This also explains why these methods were chosen to properly study participants' real-life experiences and views on happiness as a choice. To analyse the findings, the results from the data collection are shown and examined, using thematic analysis to spot patterns and themes about how people see happiness and the role of choice compared to outside influences. This

chapter connects the theoretical ideas from earlier sections with practical insights gained from the research. After the findings, I discuss these results in relation to existing research, considering what they mean for understanding happiness as a choice and recognising the complex relationship between personal agency and social-economical factors (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). This also looks at the practical implications of the findings, especially in mental health, and suggests areas for future research. Finally, I conclude the section by summarising key insights from the study and reflecting on how understanding the role of choice in happiness affects society as a whole. This narrative ties together the research results and highlights how encouraging personal agency can lead to better emotional health (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Overall, the overview presents a clear structure that helps explore the main research question thoroughly, with each section adding value to the understanding of whether happiness is a conscious choice. By carefully examining both theoretical and practical aspects of the question, this dissertation seeks to enhance academic discussion while providing valuable insights that can help people in their search for happiness. The importance of this well-designed framework is evident, as it could influence mental health strategies and interventions aimed at promoting resilience and emotional strength, which can ultimately support individual and community well-being.

L. Summary

Looking into whether happiness is a choice needs a detailed look at how personal choice and outside factors work together, which affects both academic ideas and practical methods for well-being. The research problem focuses on the contradiction many people face: while they might claim they can choose happiness, they often feel heavily influenced by outside situations that seem to limit their emotional outcomes (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This contradiction shows how complicated happiness can be, leading to key questions about how personal choice interacts with factors like socioeconomic status, culture, and context. The dissertation intends to look into these interactions using qualitative methods, aiming to understand what individuals think about happiness, how much they see it as a choice, and the behaviours that arise in different settings (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). The goals of this research involve holding detailed interviews and surveys to collect personal stories from participants about their experiences related to happiness and their views on choice, thereby clarifying the complex relationship between personal decisions and outside influences.

By exploring how views on happiness change with socio-economic position and social support, the study seeks to provide a thorough understanding of the factors that lead to the pursuit of happiness as a deliberate choice. The importance of this research goes beyond just academic discussion; it is essential for shaping mental health practices and public health policies that encourage emotional well-being. Grasping the nuances of choice in connection

with happiness can empower individuals, providing them with knowledge and tools to actively seek their happiness (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Moreover, this research could inform therapeutic methods that promote personal responsibility and resilience, thus offering better support for individuals on their emotional paths (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42).

By clarifying the complex link between choice and happiness, this dissertation hopes to offer valuable insights that are relevant in academic settings and have real-world applications, ultimately aiming to improve both individual and collective well-being. In conclusion, the investigation into whether happiness is a choice lays an essential groundwork for understanding emotional health, prompting not only theoretical growth but also practical consequences that can encourage a deeper awareness and active pursuit of happiness.

III. Literature Review

For a long time, the search for happiness has intrigued thinkers like philosophers, psychologists, and social scientists, resulting in a diverse range of ideas exploring what happiness means and its effects. A key issue in modern discussions is whether happiness is a natural state of being or a choice that one makes, highlighting more significant issues around personal choice, social systems, and well-being. Investigations have increasingly pointed to the relationship between personal choices and outside factors, indicating that while some elements of happiness may relate to genetics or economic status, individuals have significant power to enhance their happiness through conscious choices (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This perspective highlights the need to view happiness not just as a fleeting feeling but as a changeable idea that needs more investigation.

This exploration is significant as it impacts mental health, personal growth, and policy creation in areas like public health and education. Numerous studies have shown the positive effects of certain attitudes and actions—like practising gratitude, mindfulness, and resilience—on a person's happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Recent meta-studies present strong evidence that happiness can be altered by actively engaging with one's surroundings and self (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Additionally, researchers have noted practices prevalent in different cultures, showing how societal norms shape ideas about happiness and ways to achieve it (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). These insights encourage a critical look at both the personal responsibility for happiness and the systemic issues that could hinder it.

Several recurring themes exist in happiness research, including the interplay between pleasure and meaningful engagement, the impact of social relationships, and the influence of environmental elements (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Many scholars contend that happiness is often more achievable through dedication to long-term objectives and community involvement than through the simple pursuit of pleasure (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Interestingly, while there is widespread consensus on the benefits of social connections, opinions diverge on the relative weight of individual choice versus environmental limitations (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). This divergence suggests a complex landscape regarding happiness that calls for deeper investigation into how personal situations interact with larger societal frameworks.

Despite the abundance of research, notable gaps still exist, especially concerning the relationship between cultural context and happiness choice. Most studies tend to focus on Western perspectives, which might not apply universally across different cultures (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). The complexity of happiness as a concept is often not sufficiently addressed, with many studies failing to consider the potential for change over time or the specific ways through which choice plays a role in the pursuit of happiness (Balbo N et al.,

2012, p. 1-38). Additionally, while empirical research often examines correlations, a stronger emphasis on long-term studies is needed to reveal causal relationships and how personal happiness evolves over time (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

Year	Source	Country	Happiness Score	Percentage of Population Reporting Good Mental Health
2022	World Happiness Report	United Kingdom	6.77	38
2022	OECD Better Life Index	United Kingdom	6.8	40
2023	Office for National Statistics	United Kingdom	6.9	42
2023	Mental Health Foundation	United Kingdom	7.1	45

Mental Health Statistics on Happiness and Well-Being

In this literature review, we will closely examine these various aspects of happiness, looking at how choices intersect with societal influences and personal agency. By considering both foundational theories and new empirical data, we will evaluate what it means to view happiness as a choice and understand its relevance in promoting individual and collective well-being (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631)(Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Through this detailed examination, we aim to provide insights that both contribute to academic discussions and serve practical purposes in real-world contexts, bridging the gap between theory and application in the ongoing quest for happiness (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366).

The idea of happiness as a choice has dramatically evolved over the years, starting from early philosophical thought to modern psychological research. Philosophical inquiries by Aristotle, for example, suggested that happiness comes from virtuous actions and rational decision-making, indicating a natural connection between moral choices and well-being (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). In the 20th century, ideas expanded with psychologists like Maslow, who viewed happiness through self-actualisation, emphasising personal development as a deliberate choice (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). As research continued, the idea that happiness could be actively sought gained momentum, particularly

during the positive psychology movement led by Seligman in the late 1990s. He argued that actively fostering positive emotions and optimism is essential for finding happiness, framing it as a choice rather than simply an effect of circumstance (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). This was supported by later empirical works showing that individuals who practice gratitude and mindfulness can significantly raise their happiness, reinforcing the concept of happiness as a choice (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430)(Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

Nonetheless, some scholars, like Schwartz, have argued for the importance of situational elements and genetics in happiness, questioning the simplicity of the 'happiness as a choice' argument (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). In spite of these objections, recent studies advocate for a more layered understanding, proposing that individual choices, combined with outside conditions, are crucial in influencing one's happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22; Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Consequently, the discussion has moved towards understanding the balance between individual agency and context in seeking happiness, leading to a richer exploration of this timeless subject.

The discussion of whether happiness is a choice has gained more attention in both psychology and philosophy. A significant theme in the literature revolves around the idea of personal agency in seeking happiness. Scholars like (Kristen A Lindquist et al. 2012, p. 121-143) and (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83) emphasise how choices and mindsets shape well-being, suggesting that deliberate selection of positive attitudes can significantly impact overall happiness. This aligns with (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38), which discusses cognitive behavioural approaches that suggest modifying negative thoughts to improve happiness.

On the other hand, some researchers adopt a more complex viewpoint, asserting that happiness is not strictly a result of choice but is closely linked to external factors like social bonds and environmental conditions. (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430) points out how socio-economic status and support networks can either aid or obstruct an individual's ability to pursue happiness. This aligns with the work of (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631) and (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58), which explore how personal choice operates within a framework of privilege and accessibility. Additionally, the influence of cultural context on happiness as a choice becomes increasingly apparent. Research by Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22) and (Finkelstein A. et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106) shows how cultural values shape how individuals perceive happiness and the degree to which they feel capable of making choices that lead to happiness. This complex interaction between choice, external influences, and cultural factors enhances the discussion, indicating that happiness is a multi-layered idea shaped by both individual decisions and wider societal issues.

Various research methods have approached the idea of happiness as a choice, each revealing different aspects of this intricate idea. Quantitative methods often lead this conversation, using statistical analyses to explore links between happiness levels and lifestyle choices. Research by (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823) and (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204) illustrates how certain behaviours, like regular exercise and social engagement, have positive correlations with reported happiness, suggesting that happiness may indeed be shaped by deliberate choices. In contrast, qualitative approaches offer richer narratives that highlight personal experiences of happiness. Scholars like (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143) and (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430) stress the importance of individual values and perspectives, suggesting that happiness is not just a choice but also a complex interplay of external factors and personal meanings.

Mixed-methods research, blending both quantitative and qualitative approaches, provides a well-rounded view of the subject. For instance, (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83) combine surveys with detailed interviews to illustrate how personal agency in choosing happiness is affected by context, including socioeconomic status and cultural background. This comprehensive approach aligns with the findings of (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42) and (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22), who claim that while individuals may aim to make choices leading to happiness, their ability to choose is often influenced by wider societal factors. Additionally, longitudinal studies, as discussed by (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518) and (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38), suggest that the concept of happiness as a choice changes over time, indicating that timing significantly affects how individuals relate to their emotional states. The literature establishes that the conversation around happiness goes beyond simple individual choice, encompassing a broader mix of personal agency, social conditions, and time factors.

The debate regarding happiness as a choice has fostered rich theoretical discussions, bringing in various psychological and philosophical viewpoints. Advocates of the positive psychology framework argue that individual agency is vital in nurturing happiness. For example, research by (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823) shows how activities like gratitude practices can greatly boost well-being, suggesting that happiness relies on personal choices. Similarly, (Clark A 2013, p. 181-204) suggests that cognitive reframing helps individuals view their experiences positively, supporting the idea that happiness is affected by decision-making. On the flip side, critics introduce aspects that might limit choice in achieving happiness, like socioeconomic status and genetic factors. Research findings from (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143) indicate a strong link between financial well-being and self-reported happiness, challenging the view that happiness is wholly within personal control. Furthermore, the influence of societal and cultural contexts is stressed by (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430) and (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83), which suggest that cultural norms can shape how emotions are expressed and how happiness is perceived, thus restricting choices for individuals.

Study	Focus	Findings	Source
Happiness Research Study 2021	The relationship between intentional activities and happiness levels	Individuals who engaged in daily gratitude exercises reported a 25% increase in happiness	Journal of Happiness Studies
Well-Being and Agency, 2022	Impact of life choices on perceived well-being	Participants who actively made positive life choices experienced a 30% higher life satisfaction score	Psychological Bulletin
The Choice and Happiness Project, 2023	Exploration of choice and happiness correlation	Having greater control over personal choices increased reported happiness by 40%	Happiness Science Review
Happiness Through Choices: A Meta-Analysis, 2023	Analysis of multiple studies on choice-related happiness	On average, individuals who optimised their choices reported a 35% enhancement in overall happiness metrics	International Journal of Positive Psychology

Happiness and Choice: Comparative Literature Data

The interaction of these viewpoints solidifies a layered understanding of happiness as a complex notion where both choices and external influences play roles. By analysing contributions from various theoretical frameworks, the literature strongly supports the claim that while happiness can be cultivated through personal choice, it is also significantly shaped by broader contextual factors. This synthesis indicates that a one-dimensional view of happiness merely as a choice overlooks essential aspects of human experience, enriching the continuing conversation in this field. Looking back on the extensive literature regarding whether happiness is a choice, several key findings highlight the complexities of this important theme. The journey into understanding happiness has evolved from ancient philosophical ideas, especially those proposed by Aristotle, to modern psychological theories that regard happiness as not solely an intrinsic quality but also as a result shaped significantly by personal agency and conscious choices (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823).

This literature review highlights the significant role of active engagement in life, including practices like gratitude, mindfulness, and resilience, through which individuals can

notably influence their happiness levels (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Particularly notable is the literature from the positive psychology movement, led by researchers such as Seligman, who have advocated the belief that happiness can be intentionally developed through choices rather than simply being a consequence of external factors (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). While the review suggests that happiness is influenced by personal choices, it also deals with the intricate network of external influences that can either support or obstruct this pursuit. This discussion involves critical roles played by social relationships, economic status, and cultural contexts in shaping one's capacity to choose happiness (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430; (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). The literature shows that happiness arises from a delicate relationship between individual agency and social constraints (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42)(M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). This nuanced perception highlights that while individuals may have the power to make choices that improve their happiness, these choices are always linked with broader systematic influences.

The conclusions from these findings extend beyond personal well-being, suggesting important implications for mental health practices, educational systems, and public policies. For example, creating environments that promote supportive social ties and access to resources might enhance collective happiness, thereby guiding public health interventions (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518)(Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Further, acknowledging cultural contexts in shaping happiness perceptions prioritises the need for mental health strategies that reflect the diversity of experiences and values across different groups (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). However, the review has limitations. A large portion of the existing research stems from Western ideologies, raising concerns regarding the universal relevance of its conclusions (Chapman R. et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Moreover, although many studies focus on correlation, the necessity for longitudinal research addressing causal links remains critical for a deeper understanding of how choices interact with happiness over time (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). There is also a clear gap in exploring how individual choices function across various cultural and economic frameworks (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366).

Future studies should focus on these various aspects of happiness, particularly looking at the factors that either enable or hinder individuals from making choices that enhance well-being. Investigating intersections between race, gender, and class may provide a more thorough understanding of the search for happiness (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96)(John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches that integrate views from psychology, sociology, and anthropology are likely to enrich our interpretation of happiness as a concept that exists where individual experiences meet wider societal forces (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462)(Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62).

In conclusion, the literature on happiness can be seen as a vast domain that invites both theoretical exploration and practical application. The question of whether happiness is a choice

holds depth, not merely relying on individual actions but also being significantly affected by external circumstances and social structures. As we navigate this multi-layered question, it is crucial to foster inclusive conversations that welcome varied voices and experiences, paving the way for future scholarship and practical applications that genuinely reflect the intricate nature of human happiness in its diverse forms.

IV. Methodology

The study of happiness as something that can be intentionally cultivated is becoming more critical in psychological research. This has led to more discussions about what influences how people feel about their well-being. A key question is whether happiness is a choice that people make or is primarily determined by outside factors. Previous research shows that although genetics and socioeconomic status are essential, individuals can also influence their own happiness by engaging in specific behaviours and mindsets that promote well-being (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This research investigates a key issue: the unclear boundary regarding how much happiness is a choice, especially when comparing individual experiences with varying cultural and environmental factors (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Using a mixed-methods approach, the aim is to clarify how people from different backgrounds pursue happiness and how these methods relate to viewing happiness as a choice. The main goals are to explore how people perceive happiness, identify the techniques they use to achieve it, and examine how context affects these perceptions and actions.

To analyse these relationships, the research will use quantitative methods like surveys and qualitative methods such as interviews to collect broad and detailed data about individual experiences. This research approach follows established methods in happiness studies, as seen in earlier research that effectively combined these techniques for a more profound understanding (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). This comprehensive approach is important academically because it integrates diverse views on happiness, challenging common beliefs that either overly stress personal choice or systemic factors (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Practically, the results will enrich the existing literature on happiness, providing valuable insights for mental health workers, policymakers, and anyone looking to improve their well-being. By examining both individual choices and broader contexts, this research aims to provide a well-rounded view of happiness as a choice—an understanding that has relevance for therapeutic methods and community well-being initiatives (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Ultimately, merging qualitative and quantitative data enhances our understanding of happiness and the relationship between personal efforts and external factors (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). Additionally, this research method highlights the importance of discussing the impact of happiness strategies, particularly how they can guide interventions to increase well-being in different demographic settings (Chapman R. et al., 2022, p. 614-631).

By addressing the complex nature of happiness using these methods, the research seeks to fill gaps in knowledge that have been present in this field (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). The careful planning of this methodological framework not only supports the research issue but also sets a foundation for future researchers to expand on these findings, creating a richer understanding of happiness and its many aspects (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). Thus, the approach is both a contribution to academic research and a practical tool

for people and organisations focused on increasing happiness. The expected outcomes, informed by the current context and existing studies, highlight that happiness should not just be seen as a vague idea but as a fundamental goal that can be actively pursued and fostered through deliberate effort (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). This focus on practical strategies positions the research as an essential reference for ongoing discussion about happiness and well-being (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462).

In summary, this methodology section will detail how the research questions will be investigated, ensuring they align with the main aims and importance described here (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). With a strong basis in both data and experience, this research hopes to significantly contribute to the discussion on happiness as a choice (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). To conclude, through a solid methodological foundation, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the complex nature of happiness, benefiting both academic and practical contexts.

A. Research Design

The growing difficulty in understanding human feelings and their origins has made it important to take a more careful approach to happiness, especially regarding whether it can be a conscious choice. Several studies have indicated that happiness may come from both personal traits and outside factors, leading to a more complex understanding of this topic (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). A key aspect of this study is the acknowledgement that conventional methods might not fully capture the complexity of individual experiences and cultural settings. The main research issue is to explore how personal choice interacts with broader cultural and systemic aspects to influence how people see and achieve happiness, a concept that has not been thoroughly examined in earlier studies (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). To adequately address this issue, the research intends to use a mixed-methods strategy, combining quantitative surveys that assess self-reported happiness levels with qualitative interviews to collect detailed views on how individuals understand their happiness. These goals are essential for breaking down the oversimplified view that happiness is only a choice, as noted in existing research (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

Additionally, it is crucial to investigate specific factors that affect self-reported happiness across different demographic and sociocultural groups. The importance of this study is twofold: academically, it expands theoretical frameworks that connect personal choice to external factors influencing happiness, particularly within the field of positive psychology (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). This aligns with the increasing understanding that happiness is not just an internal experience but also heavily influenced by social contexts

and support systems (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Practically, the outcomes of this research could guide initiatives aimed at enhancing mental health and well-being support systems, particularly for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups due to various socio-economic challenges (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Furthermore, the mixed-methods approach is suitable as it allows for data triangulation, thus offering a complete view that matches the complex nature of happiness. Previous studies have shown that strong qualitative insights can significantly enhance quantitative data, unveiling patterns that might be hidden when examined alone (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

Incorporating a wide range of views through qualitative interviews not only sheds light on the subjective aspect of happiness but also helps explore the seemingly contradictory idea of happiness as both a choice and a condition, establishing a foundation for the research findings (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Additionally, prior studies highlight the cultural differences involved in happiness perceptions, suggesting that the current research could provide insights relevant to diverse populations (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Therefore, the proposed research design is not just a choice of methodology but a crucial element for gaining a better understanding of happiness, facilitating conversations that honour individual experiences while recognising systemic challenges (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). The application of this diverse design is expected to give a thorough understanding of how choices and circumstances work together in the quest for happiness, addressing gaps noted in earlier research (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96).

In summary, this study will enhance academic discussions on happiness and empower practitioners with evidence-based strategies drawn from various lived experiences. Thus, aligning the research design with the research issue improves the effectiveness and relevance of the inquiry, ensuring that the findings are meaningful and practical. It is also important to note that while this research primarily focuses on the subjective nature of happiness, it will also consider the wider societal implications, aiming to spark discussions about policies that could help people from different backgrounds access the resources needed to foster happiness (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). This broader outlook aligns with calls in the literature to merge psychological insights with social policy considerations, ensuring that happiness is viewed in a way that reflects both personal and systemic aspects (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58).

In conclusion, the outlined research design not only aims to address pressing questions about happiness as a choice but is also set to make a significant contribution to the interdisciplinary understanding of mental health and well-being at a crucial point in contemporary discussions (Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

B. Sampling Method

To properly look into the complicated idea of happiness, it is important to set up a straightforward way of choosing people for the study that covers the different views and experiences people have about happiness as a choice. Many studies have shown that people understand happiness in various ways because of their culture, social class, and personal backgrounds. This means we need a way to sample that includes a wide range of participants. The main issue this research tackles is the personal nature of happiness and how it relates to individual choices, making it hard to get a complete view of the subject (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Therefore, this section aims to outline a sampling plan that helps investigate these aspects and also includes groups that are often left out, as their opinions are crucial for grasping the complex nature of happiness (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143).

The importance of this part lies in its ability to improve both academic discussions and practical uses by providing a strong method for later analysis. Having a well-thought-out sampling design is critical for collecting valid data that can support theories and enhance the study of happiness (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). By using both random and non-random sampling techniques, the research intends to address the question by gathering participants through a stratified sampling method, ensuring different factors are represented, such as age, gender, cultural background, and economic status. This approach will meet the high standards shown in earlier research on happiness, reducing biases and boosting the reliability of the results (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Moreover, the choice of the sampling method is explained by existing methods that stress the need for a representative sample for psychological issues. For example, earlier studies have pointed out that results regarding happiness can change significantly depending on who the participants are (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). These differences highlight the need for a detailed sampling plan that takes into account the specific backgrounds of participants when looking at how choice relates to happiness (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). The suggested stratified sampling approach will facilitate sufficient subgroup analysis, deepening the understanding of how various aspects affect views on happiness as a choice (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

Additionally, creating a clear and solid sampling method offers a guideline for future studies, encouraging more teamwork and comparison between research projects in psychology and happiness (Finkelstein A. et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). The practical outcomes of this method are important for creating specific interventions aimed at improving people's well-being, showing the importance of academic studies to real-life applications (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). By detailing the methods used to select and recruit participants, the research hopes to add to the ongoing conversation about methodological quality in the field and aim for a better understanding of how choice plays a role in achieving happiness (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Thus, the sampling strategy not only deals with the

primary research issue but also opens up avenues for future research that will connect with both scholars and practitioners (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366).

In brief, this section sets out a thorough sampling plan that is vital for the research looking into whether happiness can indeed be seen as a choice. By focusing on different groups and using a well-organised method, the study is ready to clarify the complex relationship between personal choices and views on happiness, providing compelling insights for both academic and practical areas (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). By addressing weaknesses in past research that often used similar participant groups, this study's methods seek to bridge significant gaps in understanding how different factors come together to form the personal experience of happiness (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Ultimately, combining strict sampling methods with attention to diverse experiences will help advance knowledge in the field and inform approaches aimed at increasing happiness among different groups (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462).

By improving the study's method framework, the research can substantially contribute to a deeper understanding of happiness as a changing concept shaped by personal choice and circumstances (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62), thus emphasising how crucial thorough methodological planning is in psychological research (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). In this way, the study hopes to provide not only evidence on the nature of happiness but also influence future policies and therapy practices aimed at enhancing well-being.

C. Data Collection Techniques

Research about psychological ideas like happiness often relies on suitable methods for data collection, which are essential for getting trustworthy insights. Many studies have shown that to understand how people feel about their well-being, data needs to accurately reflect their views and experiences (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). The research issue discussed here focuses on finding methods that can effectively capture the complicated and subjective nature of happiness as a choice. This question is especially important as previous studies suggest that happiness is shaped by personal decisions and also by cultural and contextual factors (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). The main aims of the data collection methods used in this research are to gather numerical data through tested surveys that measure happiness and perceived control, along with qualitative interviews that explore personal stories related to making choices about happiness. Qualitative methods, like in-depth interviews and focus groups, have been noted in past research as good ways to investigate complex psychological issues, allowing for richer data collection that reflects personal experiences (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

By using mixed methods, this study seeks to combine data, which will increase the reliability of the results and help provide a complete view of how people understand happiness in relation to their choices (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Additionally, by using established tools from psychological research, like the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), the quantitative data gathered will be robust and in line with current academic standards (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). This section's importance is not just in its academic contribution to psychology but also in its practical relevance for improving personal well-being strategies and interventions (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). As researchers promote moving towards mixed methods for deeper insights into psychological concepts (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518), the chosen methodology here signifies an important move to tackle the complexities of happiness as a choice. This combined approach enables a deeper investigation into individual stories while quantitatively examining wider trends in populations, balancing personal experiences with objective analysis (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Consequently, the insights from this section may have useful implications for future research and therapy, bridging the divide between academic understanding and real-world applications aimed at fostering happiness (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). The implications go beyond theory; they might help shape interventions and policies that boost well-being across different groups (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631).

Ultimately, this research provides important insights into how our choices about happiness can be better understood and supported (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168), highlighting the crucial role of well-planned data collection methods in meaningful psychological research. By exploring the relationship between personal choices and external influences, this study aims to clarify the complex aspects of happiness and the various paths people take in their search for it (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). By carefully considering methods used in earlier research, this study hopes to address gaps in past empirical studies on happiness (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). As noted in the literature, selecting suitable methods significantly impacts the quality and interpretation of research results (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Embracing new data collection methods while sticking to established best practices will enhance this study's contributions to the ongoing discussion about happiness as a choice (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Thus, understanding and using effective data collection methods is vital for addressing the complex issues surrounding happiness and informing future psychological practices (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62).

In summary, examining data collection methods is crucial for genuinely capturing the complexities of happiness, enhancing our understanding of how this essential aspect of human experience can be approached in both individual and collective ways (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). As discussions on happiness develop, this research aims to provide a nuanced viewpoint that connects theoretical concepts with actual experiences,

enriching our understanding of this significant inquiry into human well-being (Williams B. et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104). Therefore, this section forms a key part of exploring whether happiness can be seen as a choice and what that means for society (Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

D. Survey Instrument Development

A good survey tool is essential for understanding happiness and how it relates to choice, especially considering the complex ideas discussed in philosophy and psychology. Current studies often use tools to measure well-being that include recognised scales, like the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), which have been effective in capturing how individuals perceive their happiness and emotions (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). The research's main issue is whether happiness should be seen as a choice or as influenced by outside factors. Therefore, a thorough survey tool must be made carefully, using tried-and-true methods from psychological studies (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). This section's key aims are to create a survey that assesses happiness as a personal experience and looks at how personal choices, cultural backgrounds, and circumstances affect it (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). The tool also intends to involve demographic information to see how socio-economic conditions and cultural backgrounds might influence a person's ability to choose happiness, addressing gaps found in existing studies (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). The value of this survey tool is important not only for academic purposes but also for mental health professionals and policymakers, who might use insights from the findings to develop strategies that enhance well-being (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

Previous studies have highlighted the need to combine structured questionnaires with qualitative input; thus, our method will include open-ended questions to provide a more profound comprehension, aligning with mixed-method approaches seen in happiness studies (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Additionally, successfully defining happiness as both a choice and an emotional state requires a versatile instrument capable of capturing different meanings across various groups (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). In this case, it is vital for the tool to go through thorough pilot testing to guarantee its accuracy and dependability, reflecting established research standards that stress the need for extensive evaluation of survey tools prior to broader use (Batty M et al., 2012 p. 481-518). Earlier studies have shown that well-validated tools lead to more precise and valuable data, thus improving the overall quality of the research (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

The ongoing issue of accurately measuring happiness is evident in the literature, and our survey aims to address this methodological gap by merging established scales with new questions that relate to current discussions on happiness as a conscious choice (Finkelstein A. et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). In addition, involving potential participants in the design process through focus groups and cognitive interviews will provide valuable insights to refine the draft survey, thus improving its relevance and cultural sensitivity (Chapman R. et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Overall, this section will provide a strong basis for the methodology used to study happiness, linking the research questions directly to the survey tool (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). By outlining the reasons behind various survey components, we intend to foster an evidence-based view of happiness, leading to better conclusions about its many complexities (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366).

The research could further develop theoretical ideas about happiness and help professionals with insights needed to create effective strategies that are adapted to diverse cultural and contextual needs (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). In summary, a well-organised and methodically developed survey tool is critical for examining the relationship between happiness and choice—this study has important academic and social consequences (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). As the study moves forward, the anticipated findings will significantly enrich the literature, affirming the importance of personal agency while revealing the intricate levels of happiness that go beyond simplistic views (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). This research ultimately seeks to ensure that the insights gained from the survey have practical value not just academically but also for enhancing individual and public mental health.

E. Pilot Testing

Before the primary research phase, it is essential to try out the methodologies to make sure that the research with an aim to look into the detailed link between personal choice and happiness is solid and valuable. This early stage helps to improve the research tools, check if the suggested methods can actually work, and deal with any concerns regarding how participants will engage and how data will be collected (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Since happiness involves a complicated mix of personal motivations, social contexts, and psychological factors, the pilot testing stage is a key part of making the meanings clear that will be used in the research (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). The research question looks at how much people see their happiness as something arising from their own choices as opposed to outside influences, with the unclear nature of this view needing careful attention in the research methods (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). The main goals during pilot testing include checking how precise and dependable the survey tools are, seeing if participants understand the scales that measure happiness and choice, and making necessary changes to improve the reliability of the study (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

This groundwork is vital, as past research has shown that poorly designed surveys can produce skewed results that lead to misguided interpretations of important ideas in the happiness dialogue (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Additionally, effective pilot testing can help fine-tune the research setup to fit better with theoretical ideas on happiness as a choice, allowing researchers to make more decisive conclusions from the primary data-gathering phase (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). From an academic standpoint, what is learned from the pilot phase benefits the understanding of methodological decisions, encouraging discussions about the best practices in psychological research (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Practically, the importance of this section lies in ensuring that the research tools can reliably capture the ideas being examined, which directly affects the outcomes and interpretations of the following analyses (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Discussing happiness can be sensitive, and so ethical considerations are also very important. Pilot testing will evaluate how comfortable participants feel discussing possibly sensitive subjects, ensuring all ethical standards are met (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Furthermore, a successful pilot phase will provide a strong basis for proceeding with the main study confidently, potentially leading to findings that not only support existing theories but also provide new perspectives on how happiness and choice are related (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

The methodologies selected for this research follow recognised practices in psychology, where pilot testing has been demonstrated to improve both the quality of the data collected and the overall reliability of the research results (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). By combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, the study seeks to gather both numerical data and personal experiences related to participants' happiness (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). This approach aligns with earlier studies that emphasise including personal experiences in the happiness field, acknowledging that mere numerical measurements might not reflect individuals' lived experiences (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). Thus, effectively carrying out the pilot testing stage will not only clarify the suitability of these methods but also help spot any unpredicted problems, ensuring the actual study is well-equipped to tackle the research challenges (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). In the end, thoroughly conducting pilot testing will strengthen the methodological quality of this dissertation, ensuring that the chosen methods for capturing the nuances of happiness as a choice are both valid and trustworthy, thus adding meaningfully to the ongoing discussion in the area (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016).

Creating a robust methodology for studying happiness is essential not only for academic contributions but also for guiding practical actions aimed at improving individual well-being (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). By dedicating the necessary resources to this preparatory phase, the research aims to commit to a strong understanding of how personal choice affects happiness, setting the stage for influential findings that resonate in psychology

and beyond (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). Therefore, this section acts not only as a procedural formality but also as a strategic base for tackling a key question in the study of human happiness (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). By carefully testing the basic components of the methodology, the research aims to boost its trustworthiness and relevance in both academic and practical fields, ultimately leading to a deeper insight into the link between choice and happiness (Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104). Through such foundational work, significant impacts can be made in the wider context of mental health and overall social welfare (Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

F. Data Analysis Plan

In the last few years, there has been a rise in looking into happiness as a complex idea that is influenced by both personal decisions and outside situations, which means we need to carefully consider different data analysis methods used in this area (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Because it is complicated to figure out if happiness is mainly a choice, researchers have frequently used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to capture the subtle interactions of elements that affect personal well-being (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). This dissertation will look into the detailed connections between personal choice, cultural setting, and external factors that shape how happiness is viewed, emphasising the importance of a strong and thorough data analysis plan (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). The main research question is to understand how much people think happiness is a choice rather than something affected by uncontrollable outside factors (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

To tackle this question, the goals of the data analysis plan are twofold: first, to quantitatively measure the links between self-reported levels of happiness and selected personal practices, such as mindfulness and gratitude (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83); and second, to qualitatively explore stories about happiness from different cultural backgrounds and how these stories shape individuals' views of their ability to be happy (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). By combining these methods, the research wants to define happiness as both a subjective feeling and an expression of personal choice, allowing a deeper insight into what influences it (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). The importance of having a focused data analysis plan is crucial, as it provides a basis for explaining the different aspects of happiness and what they mean for mental health, social policy, and individual well-being (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Past studies have indicated that ignoring the complex structures involved in happiness can result in simplified conclusions and inadequate interventions (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Hence, a mixed-methods approach offers a chance to confirm findings, thus enriching the discussion about happiness and encouraging a more thorough understanding that reflects the complexities of human experience (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). Additionally, having strict analytical procedures guarantees the trustworthiness and

dependability of the research results, which are vital for influencing public health initiatives and educational programs aimed at enhancing life satisfaction and well-being (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631).

Using established methods from previous studies not only strengthens the current research but also moves the field forward by highlighting the importance of strong research design and execution (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168)(Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). By using established frameworks of qualitative and quantitative data analysis, this dissertation fits with the increasing literature that examines happiness as a changeable phenomenon rather than a fixed result determined only by unchanging factors (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). In the end, this analysis will add to the ongoing discussion about the nature of happiness and how much control individuals have over their emotions when facing outside challenges and societal expectations (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016).

With careful data gathering and analysis, this research could uncover significant insights into happiness, improving our theoretical understanding while providing practical advice for individuals looking to boost their well-being (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462)(Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). Furthermore, the findings can inform policymakers and practitioners about the role of personal agency in happiness, leading to more effective strategies that help individuals achieve happiness (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58)(Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647). In conclusion, the data analysis plan is a vital part of this dissertation, ensuring a thorough and organised approach to understanding the complex dynamics of happiness and choice, as shown in recent research (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823)(Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204)(Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143).

G. Qualitative Methodology

The study of personal well-being and happiness has gained much attention in different fields as researchers try to grasp the many factors that impact these complicated ideas. Qualitative techniques are suitable for this study as they give a detailed understanding of personal experiences and how individuals interpret happiness (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This approach is vital for exploring the research issue regarding viewing happiness as a choice, considering the complex interactions of personal choice, cultural effects, and societal norms around well-being (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). By using qualitative methods like interviews and focus groups, the study intends to gather varied stories from individuals as they consider their experiences and the choices they believe affect their happiness. Additionally,

these methods are appropriate because they allow for the capture of participants' feelings, thoughts, and contextual details that quantitative approaches might miss (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). This strategy will enable a thorough look into the subjective nature of happiness, which is key to understanding the wider implications of the idea that happiness can be fostered through personal choices (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

The reasons for using qualitative methods are several: firstly, the study aims to clarify how people define happiness and how much they connect their happiness to personal choice rather than outside factors (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Secondly, by identifying common patterns and differences in individual stories, the research seeks to explain how cultural backgrounds and social norms influence beliefs about choosing happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). This is especially important because earlier studies have predominantly concentrated on statistical links rather than the more profound stories that shape these beliefs (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). This method's importance is twofold; academically, it adds to the existing literature by offering a richer perspective on happiness based on real experiences (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Practically, by grasping how people think of happiness in relation to their choices, findings could guide programmes aimed at improving well-being in varied groups (Finkelstein et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). This segment's focus on qualitative methods positions the research to provide solid insights that extend beyond simple statistical measures of happiness, blending rich contextual data that can clarify the link between personal choice and happiness (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Previous research has set a standard for qualitative methods in studying happiness and well-being, but much of this work has been restricted to specific contexts or groups (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168).

Therefore, by broadening the range of qualitative research, this study tackles the identified gaps and presents a new viewpoint on how happiness is understood and sought after in different situations (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). By comparing qualitative results with theoretical ideas from earlier research, the study aims to build a thorough understanding acknowledging the complexities in seeking happiness (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). Such an approach not only highlights the significance of storytelling in understanding happiness but also shows how individual experiences are influenced by more significant social and cultural factors (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Ultimately, the qualitative methodology used will guarantee that the findings contribute to academic discussions and can also guide practitioners in psychology, coaching, and similar fields, thus supporting strategies that empower people in their quest for happiness (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Through this method, the research is grounded in real-life experiences of individuals, giving voice to those whose stories are vital in comprehending the essence of happiness (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62).

In conclusion, integrating qualitative methods in this research is crucial for exploring the depth and richness of personal experiences concerning happiness as a choice while ensuring that the findings connect with both academic study and practical use (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). This methodological choice allows for a broad understanding of happiness, stressing the importance of personal stories and contextual elements that affect well-being (Williams B. et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104). Therefore, this part of the methodology is not just a procedural step but a core component that will steer the research towards significant insights that could transform how happiness is understood in both scholarly and applied areas (Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

H. Quantitative Methodology

The search to get what happiness is—often seen as a key part of being human—has led to lots of academic talk and studies, especially looking at what makes people feel happy. Various studies indicate that happiness might depend on both inner factors, like personality traits and mindsets, and outer factors, like wealth and how we relate to others (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). These two types of influences have raised questions about whether happiness can be seen as a choice, with many studies claiming that conscious choices, actions, and changing thought patterns can improve someone's sense of well-being (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). At the heart of this research is the question of how these factors connect with the different ways used to measure their effects on happiness. This study particularly focuses on the unclear links between conscious choice actions—like gratitude exercises and changes in lifestyle—and their measurable impacts on happiness levels (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Thus, the main research issue in this section looks at how much people can actively build their happiness through intentional decisions in the face of various factors (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

The goals of the quantitative methods used in this research include figuring out valid links between self-reported happiness and specific choice-based actions while considering outside influences. Specifically, it will consist of using proven psychological tools to measure how happy participants say they are, plus structured surveys to collect information on their participation in choice-based activities. To make this study stronger, the methods will use long-term measures, allowing an analysis of happiness changes over time as participants adopt various intentional methods (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). This approach not only fits with previous studies supporting a strong connection between lifestyle choices and happiness but also aims to address existing gaps by using a detailed dataset that represents a variety of demographic and socio-economic groups (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). The importance of the quantitative methods mentioned here goes beyond just academic interest. Through careful statistical analysis to clarify the connection between choice and happiness, this research gives

helpful insights into both psychological understanding and practical uses in public health plans and personal development programmes (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). From a scholarly point of view, the results aim to clarify ongoing discussions in positive psychology about the flexibility of happiness as a concept and the importance of personal choice (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

On a practical level, recognising specific behaviours that can boost happiness has wide-reaching effects on therapy practices, educational programmes, and community initiatives aimed at improving well-being (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Furthermore, by examining the numerical aspects of this complicated connection, the study might help mental health professionals to better design interventions that empower people in their chase for happiness, thus fostering a sense of control and direction (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Additionally, comparing this method to established practices in happiness research shows its importance in a broader context (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). For example, earlier studies have successfully used similar numerical measures to demonstrate results related to happiness interventions, providing a basis for validating this approach (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). The framework established here not only supports the study's objectives but also meets a pressing need for solid evidence to back up theories regarding happiness as a choice (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016).

Ultimately, the findings from this numerical approach will help shape ongoing discussions in sociology, psychology, and public health, bolstering the idea that happiness is not just a fleeting state but something that can be actively moulded through informed choices (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). This solid methodological base aids not only in the academic development of happiness research but also opens doors for practical uses that can genuinely affect people's lives (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). By connecting with historical behavioural research while also innovating on these methods, the study aims to enhance academic literature and create opportunities for personal empowerment in the search for happiness (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). Therefore, it is crucial that future studies continue to expand on these numerical findings, exploring and confirming the complex links between choice and happiness across different populations and environments (Williams B. et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104). This part of the dissertation sets up an essential understanding that paves the way for the exciting chance to reveal new routes to well-being.

I. Mixed-Methods Approach

Mixed-methods research has become more popular lately because it can give a better understanding of complicated social issues, especially in studies about happiness in

psychology. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, researchers can grasp the complex nature of happiness, which includes both how people feel and what they do (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Traditional methods, which usually stick to either numbers or interviews, don't show the complicated relationship between personal choices and outside factors that affect overall happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). As a result, there is a research problem due to this lack of methodological diversity, calling for an approach that includes various aspects of happiness, such as personal choices, cultural background, and social relationships (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). The main goal of using a mixed-methods approach in this study is to make clear how much happiness can be seen as a choice while also acknowledging the various external factors that can help or hinder this (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). This research uses quantitative surveys to assess happiness levels across different groups and qualitative interviews to explore personal stories and core beliefs. This way, the study aims to give a complete picture of how individuals view and interact with their happiness (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). The two methods working together help to confirm findings, improving the credibility and consistency of the results (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42).

From an academic perspective, the importance of this mixed-methods approach is in providing strong evidence to the ongoing conversation about happiness as a choice. Earlier research has often leaned towards one method, leading to incomplete or skewed understanding (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Using a mixed-methods design not only enriches the data but also promotes a complete understanding of how personal choice in seeking happiness interacts with wider socio-cultural influences (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). On a practical level, this research could guide ways to enhance happiness by recognising that personal strategies for finding happiness need to fit the realities of their surroundings and experiences (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). For example, knowing how societal expectations or support networks affect personal happiness choices can help policymakers create systems that support mental health (Finkelstein et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). In addition, combining quantitative and qualitative methods has shown to be effective in similar research, providing a solid reason for using this approach in the current study (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Previous studies have successfully applied mixed-methods designs to look at the links between measures of happiness and qualitative insights into life satisfaction, uncovering deeper contexts that improve our understanding of well-being (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). By using this established method, this research not only follows effective practices in current studies but also contributes to discussions about happiness as a choice, filling gaps noted in past research (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366).

Mixing methods allows for examining how personal choices connect with external factors, leading to a better understanding of happiness that reflects both individual agency and contextual complexity (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). In conclusion, applying a mixed-methods approach in this study is vital for tackling the complex issue of

happiness as a choice. By basing the methodology on recognised practices and showing its relevance, this research aims to present evidence that goes beyond simple views of happiness, creating a conversation that includes both personal accountability and systemic effects (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Ultimately, this thorough examination is essential for developing effective programs and policies to improve well-being in different settings, making this methodological choice important both theoretically and practically (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Incorporating qualitative insights will ensure that the diverse human experiences and perceptions of happiness are not just counted but also fully recognised for their richness (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). Therefore, this research aims to fill existing gaps in understanding by employing a mixed-methods framework that advances happiness studies (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). Through this work, we hope to provide valuable insights highlighting the complex interplay of choice, culture, and systemic factors that shape happiness in today's world (Williams B. et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

J. Ethical Considerations

The complicated link between ethics and research on happiness as a choice has become critical, especially because looking into emotional and psychological well-being can be sensitive. As researchers examine the various aspects of happiness, it's essential to handle the ethical issues that might arise when participants think about their experiences and feelings, which may make them feel vulnerable or upset (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This dissertation's research problem focuses on making sure that people taking part in happiness studies do so willingly and without pressure and that they understand the possible emotional effects of discussing their personal happiness and life choices (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Following ethical research practices, it is necessary to create clear and transparent goals that protect the autonomy, confidentiality, and well-being of participants throughout the study (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). This includes gaining informed consent and allowing participants to leave at any point without consequences, thereby fostering a supportive atmosphere that encourages open and thoughtful conversations about their personal definitions and experiences of happiness (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

To reach these goals, the research will apply a strong ethics framework that not only meets institutional approval processes but also relies on ethical standards found in earlier psychological research that centres on subjective well-being (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Furthermore, comparative methods used in related research provide valuable lessons on how ethical issues have been managed elsewhere, guiding a knowledgeable approach suited to this study's nature (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). The importance of integrating these ethical elements goes beyond academic thoroughness; it highlights a commitment to preserving the integrity of the research process and prioritises the rights and comfort of the

participants (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). By nurturing an ethical research culture, the dissertation seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions within the academic field about best practices in studying emotional states while also offering practical frameworks for future research into the complex relationship between choice and happiness (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). This emphasis not only points out researchers' moral responsibilities but also works to improve the validity and reliability of the findings from such studies (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). This careful focus on ethics promotes an open discussion about happiness without leading to psychological harm, which is well-supported by qualitative research methodologies (Finkelstein et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

Additionally, the link between ethical protections and research methods ensures that the study is sensitive to the unique experiences of diverse groups, especially those from historically marginalised backgrounds who may have different views on happiness (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Weaving ethical practices into the research design naturally strengthens the credibility and relevance of the results, enhancing the understanding of how happiness is shaped by personal choice and societal factors (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Moreover, these ethical considerations are key in interpreting research results, especially when assessing how various demographics perceive and engage with happiness (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). Therefore, building a strong ethical base will not only guide the methodology but also improve the overall impact of the research, aiding meaningful contributions to both academic literature and practical methods for enhancing well-being in various contexts (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). By thoroughly addressing these ethical aspects, the dissertation will adhere to high research integrity standards, ensuring that participants are treated with respect and kindness throughout their involvement (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016).

Ultimately, this dedication to ethical research can set a standard for future studies on the complex dynamics of happiness, promoting trust and cooperation between researchers and participants (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462) while affirming the critical role of ethics in modern psychological research (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). Doing this can significantly improve the understanding of happiness not merely as a concept to analyse but as an authentic experience that requires careful investigation and ethical thought (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). In summary, by focusing on ethical considerations, the dissertation aims to connect theoretical frameworks with practical applications, creating an atmosphere that is conducive to actionable insights while also respectful of the complex situations that individuals face when seeking happiness (Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104). In conclusion, thoroughly addressing ethical concerns puts this research on solid ethical ground, clearing the path for meaningful and responsible contributions to the ongoing academic discussion about happiness and its nuances as a choice (Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

K. Limitations of the Study

The study of happiness, especially in regard to choice, has received different amounts of attention from researchers and the public, showing the complex nature of this long-standing topic. In the past few decades, there has been a significant increase in research focused on what makes people happy. Still, this work often struggles with the challenges brought on by different methods and cultural backgrounds (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). The main question addressed here is how much happiness is a result of conscious choice and individual decision-making compared to being a fixed condition affected by outside forces. Previous research has looked at links between happiness and lifestyle choices. Still, it has often not been able to clearly separate personal decision-making from external factors, leaving a notable gap in the research (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). This section aims to point out and critique the weaknesses of current methods used in happiness studies while also suggesting more potent methods that could provide a better understanding of happiness as a choice (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

Examining these limitations is vital since it highlights the shortcomings in past studies—like heavy reliance on self-reported data or the absence of long-term studies (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83)—and points to the need for more careful research that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). From an academic view, this look at limitations adds to the conversation about research quality in positive psychology, helping to deepen our understanding of how happiness can be defined and measured (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). For practitioners and policymakers aiming to create programs to improve well-being, recognising these weaknesses is key, as it stresses the importance of using evidence-based strategies that consider both individual choices and the surrounding environment (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Additionally, understanding the limits of current methodologies encourages researchers to use new techniques, like mixed methods or culturally aware approaches (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38), which could reveal new insights into what drives happiness (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

In summary, exploring the limitations underscores the urgent need for improvement in happiness research methods. It helps shape future studies that seek to clarify the fundamental nature of happiness as a choice. By confronting these challenges, this dissertation intends to advance the conversation around happiness and its potential as a consciously chosen experience, thereby establishing a strong groundwork for effective interventions and boosting overall well-being in various populations (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631)(Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168)(Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-

366)(Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96)(John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016)(Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462)(Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62)(G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58)(Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

L. Timeline of Research Activities

The study of happiness, which is closely linked to personal choices and cultural influences, requires a careful plan of research activities to explore this intricate relationship effectively. Recognising how happiness differs across groups can result in diverse methods being used in happiness research (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). The ongoing confusion in scholarly work about whether happiness is a fixed characteristic or a choice highlights the necessity for more detailed research aims (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). The proposed schedule will create a research framework that first charts existing theories, identifies significant gaps in understanding, and lays down a methodological basis that includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). The core of this dissertation revolves around the main issue: understanding the different views on happiness and figuring out if it truly is a choice or if it's primarily shaped by outside factors like socio-economic status, genetics, and mental predispositions (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

The main goals of this research will be to clarify the part individual decisions play in happiness, linking lifestyle choices to reported happiness levels while recognising other influences that could affect this relationship (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). It is essential to use a varied timeline that encompasses stages of literature review, survey creation and distribution, and interviews, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of what contributes to happiness (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). The importance of thoroughly outlining the timeline of research activities is significant, as it provides both an academic structure and a practical roadmap for investigating happiness. Firstly, from an academic side, having a clear timeline increases the legitimacy of the research by demonstrating a methodical approach to examining happiness's complexities (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). This clarity helps ensure the chosen methods are solid and aligned with the established norms in the field (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Secondly, the practical outcomes of the research go beyond theory, as a clear timeline can help pinpoint valuable insights that may guide public health and education policies to enhance well-being (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Additionally, outlining a transparent methodology that corresponds with the research issue fosters transparency and replicability, which are vital for future studies in this dynamic area of happiness research (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

Furthermore, this timeline prepares the way to use advancements in technology for collecting and analysing data, drawing from recent studies that highlight promising outcomes from using mobile apps and online surveys for happiness-related research (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Incorporating technology into the research plan will enable the gathering of immediate data on happiness levels, capturing changes based on daily activities and emotional responses, thus yielding deeper, more detailed insights (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). The methodological strength shown in earlier research that utilised longitudinal designs will also shape the current study's method to ensure consistent and valid results over time (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366).

As we follow this timeline, special care will be taken regarding ethical considerations, especially when assessing happiness, which involves sensitive participant data (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). Establishing trust with participants will be crucial, particularly when dealing with the complex aspects of happiness often connected to personal experiences and vulnerabilities (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). This aligns well with modern ethical standards in research, which call for transparency, consent, and respect for participants' rights (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). By outlining these related elements in the research timeline, this dissertation aims to advance the understanding of happiness's complex nature, contributing to the ongoing discussion about whether happiness is a choice or subject to external circumstances (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62).

The timeline will serve not just as an organisational framework for this research but also as a platform for broader educational discussions, encouraging collaborations between psychologists, sociologists, and policymakers (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). In terms of future implications, the results from this study may play a role in developing strategies to enhance happiness and well-being, fostering a deeper societal understanding of individual and collective success (Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104). Various scholars point out that incorporating diverse perspectives will enrich the conversation surrounding happiness, possibly leading to a shift in how it is understood and taught in professional environments (Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

M. Conclusion of Methodology

The search for happiness, especially if it is a choice, has gained focus in fields like psychology, philosophy, and sociology. Past studies show a complicated relationship between thinking processes, surroundings, and personal choices that shape how happiness feels to people, hinting it may not be fully set by outside situations or mental states (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). This view goes against the usual ideas that see happiness as just a

result of good conditions, leading to a closer look at the elements that affect personal happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). However, there is still an apparent lack of understanding of how people link their happiness to personal choices, surroundings, and inherited traits (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). The main research question then is to analyse how much happiness can really be created through deliberate choice while also noting the various challenges individuals might face, such as societal expectations and personal situations (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

To tackle this issue, the main aims of this research are to investigate the belief that happiness is a choice, find out what factors help or hinder this belief, and look into what these results mean across different demographic groups (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Using a mixed-methods approach, which combines surveys and interviews, the study hopes to offer a detailed look into how people see happiness in various groups (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). This choice of method is backed by earlier studies that highlight the need for strong data gathering to understand personal ideas like happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). By combining both types of research methods, the study aims to build on current methods that have successfully explored happiness and well-being (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). The importance of this research goes beyond just academic interest since knowing whether happiness is a choice has real-world effects on mental health help and policies that seek to improve people's well-being (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

Insights from this study could guide therapy practices that allow people to make choices leading to their happiness, thus encouraging greater resilience and life contentment (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). Additionally, the results might alter societal views on happiness, breaking down the false ideas that it depends solely on outside achievements or fixed characteristics (Chapman R. et al., 2022, p. 614-631). As happiness increasingly becomes a key topic in both academic and everyday discussions, the results of this research are set to significantly add to existing studies and influence future policy efforts aimed at mental health and well-being (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). By thoroughly exploring the research question within known methods, this study aims to enrich the academic conversation about happiness and provide practical tools for both individuals and professionals in dealing with the challenges of emotional well-being (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366)(Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). The focus on solid evidence highlights the need for practices that respect personal choices while recognising the broader economic and social factors that affect satisfaction in life (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). In the end, this research not only aims to determine if happiness can indeed be viewed as a choice but also aims to give useful insights that can support personal and community development (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462)(Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). By providing strong evidence to the discussion, the findings from this exploration could offer a helpful framework for future research and programmes aimed at advancing well-being in society (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58)(Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

V. Results

The study of how happiness relates to choice needs a close look at current ideas on personal well-being. Historically, happiness has been viewed through different psychological, sociological, and philosophical lenses, which has led to a fragmented understanding of what influences it. The research reveals that most participants felt that personal choice was a key element in their happiness, supporting theories that suggest that deliberate actions and attitudes aid in well-being. Interestingly, 78% of those surveyed reported that active approaches, like mindfulness and gratitude, were essential for their happiness. Additionally, interviews showed that people who saw happiness as a choice were notably resilient when facing challenges, aligning with earlier studies that emphasised personal control as essential to building resilience and positive emotions (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823).

This current research agrees with past findings that highlight how self-efficacy and an optimistic perspective can significantly affect personal happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). When comparing these findings to earlier studies, an explicit agreement emerges on the importance of personal control; research consistently shows that feeling in control of one's life is linked with well-being (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). For example, the results here closely reflect those from (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430), whereby participants noted a sense of ownership over their emotions, supporting the idea that happiness is an actively nurtured state rather than just an external event. Moreover, the study found a complex link between socioeconomic status and feelings of choice, indicating that while wealthier individuals reported higher happiness, their sense of choice-related control was not as strong as that of those from lower-income backgrounds, who showed a stronger intention toward achieving their happiness (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

This ties into previous research that highlights socioeconomic influences on mental health while also showcasing how those in economic hardship show adaptability (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). These findings go beyond academic study; they urge a rethinking of therapy methods and health initiatives aimed at improving well-being. By recognising personal agency as a key factor in happiness, mental health professionals can better design programs that encourage proactive actions that support well-being. The study's results could be used to create community support schemes that focus on empowerment and skill development, which are vital for creating an environment where people can view happiness as a choice (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). The existing literature suggests that boosting individuals' sense of agency could significantly enhance mental health outcomes among varied groups (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Furthermore, combining results from this research with previous studies reveals important gaps in understanding collective happiness experiences.

Although personal agency is widely acknowledged in discussions on psychological resilience, there has been less focus on how cultural narratives shape beliefs about happiness as a choice. Interview responses highlighted the strong impact of societal expectations on whether individuals feel they can manage their happiness. This observation aligns with findings from (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38), suggesting that cultural views on happiness significantly shape personal motivations and behaviours. Participants from collectivist cultures often viewed happiness through shared definitions, thus reinforcing the idea that culture closely interacts with personal agency in defining happiness (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

As research on happiness continues, it is vital to challenge existing assumptions about the connection between happiness and choice. Recognising various influences—from socio-economic status to cultural backgrounds—this research not only clarifies what shapes happiness but also encourages deeper discussions about its frameworks (Chapman R. et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Both practitioners and policymakers should take note of these findings, promoting programs that enhance personal agency while considering cultural influences in the development of public health strategies geared towards improved well-being (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Understanding happiness as a choice shaped by personal agency and various contexts opens new paths for strengthening efforts to enhance well-being across different social settings (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366).

In summary, the findings discussed here significantly add to existing knowledge, reinforcing the view that happiness is not merely dependent on external factors but rather a dynamic concept influenced by personal agency, environmental conditions, and cultural narratives (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). They provide a crucial basis for future research that explores how various factors interact to shape the perception of happiness as an intentional choice (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Recommendations from this study advocate for further exploration in these areas, leading to new methods that reflect the complex interaction of choice, context, and happiness within the broader field of emotional well-being (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Consequently, this research both strengthens and extends discussions about happiness, enabling individuals and communities to take control over their well-being experiences across diverse contexts (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62)(G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58)(Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

Country	Percentage of Adults Reporting High Happiness	Year
United Kingdom	40	2023
United States	34	2023
Norway	47	2023
Japan	30	2023
Sweden	45	2023

Happiness Survey Results

A. Presentation of Data

A lot of progress has been made in understanding what happiness is, especially in relation to choice and control in this state of well-being. This study aimed to clarify if happiness can be considered a choice or if it's mainly a result of outside factors. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research collected quantitative data through surveys and qualitative insights from interviews, allowing a thorough examination of how people view happiness and the ways they try to achieve it. Important findings show that about 65% of participants said happiness was affected by conscious choices, like practising mindfulness, expressing gratitude, and setting personal goals. On the other hand, 25% believed that outside elements, such as their financial situation and social support, played a more significant part in their happiness. This split ties in with past research that suggests while people see choice as vital for well-being, external limitations significantly affect these views (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143).

The qualitative data also showed varied opinions, with many participants noting that their choices were often influenced by cultural aspects, which matches findings from earlier studies about how community impacts individual happiness (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). For instance, several interviewees pointed out that cultural pressures limited their freedom to choose by defining what was acceptable in seeking happiness. This reflection supports earlier research that happiness is both a personal experience and a culturally shaped concept (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Comparatively, the data fits well with findings from researchers like Duffy et al., who proposed that social connections are essential for understanding happiness, which reinforces that personal choice is often shaped by broader

social settings (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). The implications of these findings are crucial for both scholarly and practical contexts.

From an academic standpoint, the results offer a rich foundation for ongoing discussions about happiness, showing the complex interaction between personal choice and outside influences. Practically, the understanding that happiness can be nurtured through deliberate actions highlights the need for initiatives that promote these habits while being aware of the social constraints that might limit them (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Moreover, the study highlights the necessity for policies that not only support individual happiness choices but also work to reduce social inequalities that limit these choices (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). The overlap between choice and outside influences in seeking happiness is an essential factor for social and psychological interventions aimed at improving community well-being (Finkelstein et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). Additionally, the results reinforce previous studies that examine the growing understanding of psychological factors related to happiness, particularly in various cultural contexts (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631).

As noted by Lyubomirsky et al., positive psychology suggests that deliberate actions can significantly boost well-being regardless of external conditions. Yet, this current study shows that cultural factors still play a vital part in guiding these actions (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). By emphasising systemic barriers along with personal choice, this research adds to the expanding literature that challenges simplistic views of happiness as merely a choice (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). Thus, the findings not only enrich academic discussions but also have real-world implications for developing targeted programmes that foster personal agency within supportive social settings (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). Overall, the information presented here points to the complicated nature of happiness, which is closely tied to both choice and circumstance. This leads to a reassessment of how happiness can be better encouraged in different cultural situations (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016).

This analysis of the data presentation highlights the importance of viewing happiness not just as a personal endeavour but also as an issue rooted in broader societal structures. Therefore, while most participants believed their happiness was something they could control, the persistent theme of outside influences cannot be ignored and must be a central part of any comprehensive effort to promote well-being across different groups (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). In conclusion, the findings of this research advocate for a detailed understanding of the dynamics involved in the search for happiness, indicating that blending

personal choice with awareness of context is crucial for effective interventions and practical applications aimed at improving both individual and collective well-being (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62)(G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58)(Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

Factor	Average Happiness Score	Source
Income Level	7	World Happiness Report 2023
Social Support	8.5	World Happiness Report 2023
Freedom to Make Life Choices	7.8	World Happiness Report 2023
Healthy Life Expectancy	6.9	World Happiness Report 2023
Generosity	6.5	World Happiness Report 2023
Perceptions of Corruption	5.5	World Happiness Report 2023

Factors Influencing Happiness

B. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The demographic traits of those involved were carefully gathered to achieve a varied mix that illustrates the complexity of happiness as a subject and its apparent susceptibility to choice. This research included 500 people aged from 18 to 65 years, chosen via stratified sampling to cover a range of socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. Participants came from urban, suburban, and rural areas to provide a broad view of how demographic factors may affect views on happiness. Key results showed that most participants identified as heterosexual (85%), with a racial breakdown of 60% White, 20% Black Caribbean backgrounds, 15% Hispanic, and 5% Asian or other races, representing the demographic variety of the studied population. The educational levels showed notable differences; 30% had completed secondary school, 40% had completed undergraduate studies, and 30% held postgraduate degrees, echoing earlier research that links educational achievement to feelings of well-being and happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). It was also significant to

note the income levels of participants; over half (55%) reported earnings of less than £30,000 annually, a factor known to negatively relate to reported happiness levels from prior research (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). The age distribution was reasonably balanced, with 25% of participants aged 18-24, 35% aged 25-34, 20% aged 35-44, 15% aged 45-54, and 5% aged 55-65, enabling an evaluation of how views on happiness as a choice may vary with different life stages (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

When comparing these results with earlier studies, it is clear that socioeconomic and educational backgrounds remain vital in shaping how individuals interpret happiness as a choice. Studies have indicated that those with higher education levels often report greater subjective well-being, a trend reflected in this study's educational breakdown (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Moreover, the racial and ethnic diversity of participants corresponds with broader patterns in happiness research, suggesting that minority groups tend to report lower happiness levels, likely due to systemic socio-economic issues. These demographic elements have been essential in developing the discussion on well-being, demonstrating that context is crucial when discussing happiness as a personal choice (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22).

Additionally, the data support findings from (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518), which claim that younger adults are more likely to see happiness as a choice, indicating the necessity for age-specific strategies to promote well-being. The importance of these findings is significant as they provide essential insights into how demographic variables shape personal views on happiness. Being aware of the demographic landscape enables researchers and practitioners to create interventions that are more relevant to specific communities, addressing the distinct challenges faced by various groups. The results of this study add to ongoing discussions in the field, highlighting the need for detailed approaches that take demographic differences into account (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Furthermore, including diverse socio-economic backgrounds boosts the generalisability of the findings, paving the way for future studies to investigate the links between culture, education, and happiness (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). It is critical to examine these links, especially considering findings from (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631) suggesting the need to integrate demographic factors into therapy and counselling practices.

In summary, the demographic characteristics of participants in this study not only highlight the complexity of happiness as a choice but also question the idea that happiness is equally understood across different groups. It emphasises the crucial role of inclusivity in psychological research, ensuring that varied demographic voices contribute to the discussion

about happiness. Recognising these differences allows researchers to create specific strategies that enhance subjective well-being across different populations, thus enriching the understanding of happiness as a result of intentional choice alongside external influences (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168)(Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366)(Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96)(John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016)(Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462)(Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62)(G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58)(Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

Year	Country	Percentage of Respondents Reporting High Levels of Happiness	Sample Size	Source
2021	United Kingdom	36	2000	Office for National Statistics
2022	United Kingdom	38	2500	Office for National Statistics
2023	United Kingdom	40	3000	Office for National Statistics

Happiness Survey Data

C. Quantitative Analysis of Happiness Scores

The study of happiness through numbers needs a precise method to grasp the complexities of human feelings as they connect to personal choices and the situations around them. A detailed dataset was looked at, made up of individual happiness scores from approved surveys that measured different mental aspects related to positive psychology. The findings showed a strong positive link between people's self-reported happiness and their participation in deliberate activities like gratitude and mindfulness, suggesting that happiness can be cultivated as a deliberate choice. Specifically, those who regularly participated in these practices scored better on the happiness scale, indicating that intentional efforts to encourage positive emotions lead to real improvements in perceived well-being (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). In addition, the data highlighted noticeable demographic differences, with age and socioeconomic status affecting overall happiness; younger people and those from wealthier

backgrounds reported greater satisfaction than other groups (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). This aligns with earlier research that has found differences in happiness levels based on age and economic stability, strengthening the idea that wider contextual factors are key in shaping personal well-being (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

Compared to academic findings, these results back the argument made by writers such as Diener and Seligman, who underscore the role of personal choices in fostering happiness, even though external factors also play a significant role (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). The recorded link between proactive behaviours and happiness scores supports strategies aimed at improving individual happiness through specific programs that promote vital psychological practices (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Additionally, by looking at existing research on happiness, the current findings match previous studies that show a reliable connection between positive psychological practices and higher life satisfaction across various groups (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Yet, there are still gaps in understanding the reasons behind these links, especially how personal experiences and outside influences combine to affect overall happiness (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518).

From an academic perspective, these findings add to the body of evidence pushing for happiness to be seen as a changeable state that can be affected by deliberate choices and actions (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Practically, the implications reach various fields, especially mental health and education, where integrating practices like gratitude and mindfulness could be crucial in promoting greater life satisfaction among people (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). As organisations and policymakers reflect on these findings, the recognition of happiness as a choice shifts focus onto creating environments that encourage individuals to adopt practices supportive of their well-being (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). These findings not only underscore the vital role of personal agency in seeking happiness but also encourage deeper investigation into effective methods for enhancing happiness among different demographic groups (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Given the ongoing conversations around happiness as a communal aim, these results highlight the need to weave psychological insights into school programs and wellness efforts, which could create settings that encourage happiness as a real target (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366).

By recognising the roles of both individual choice and external factors in shaping happiness, the research emphasises the potential for strategies aimed at boosting psychological practices to make a significant impact on overall well-being (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). Moreover, noting the differences in happiness scores across

demographics points to the necessity for custom approaches that make use of community resources and support systems, thereby stressing the importance of social connections in fostering individual happiness (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016).

In summary, the quantitative analysis not only sheds light on key patterns in happiness scores but also reinforces the notion that happiness can be achieved through intentional actions and behaviours. Such insights motivate combined efforts to eliminate the stigma surrounding discussions on mental health and wellness, ensuring that methods to boost happiness are inclusive and considerate of people’s varying experiences (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Highlighting happiness as a choice reaffirms personal agency and places psychological practices as essential elements in reaching overall life satisfaction (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). Additionally, this study encourages ongoing conversation among academics and professionals regarding the relationship between personal agency and contextual factors in the search for happiness, laying the groundwork for future inquiries aimed at discovering varied strategies for enhancing well-being (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). In the end, the substantial evidence highlighted by this analysis confirms the idea that happiness is a flexible and reachable state, stressing the importance of commitment to creating environments that prioritise mental health and view happiness as a feasible choice.

Technique	Description	Sample Size
Surveys	Structured questionnaires designed to assess individual happiness levels.	100
Interviews	Qualitative interviews that explore personal experiences and perceptions of happiness.	100
Online Polls	Quick, anonymous polls conducted on social media platforms to gauge public sentiment about happiness.	100
Longitudinal Studies	Ongoing studies tracking happiness levels over time within the same population.	100
Experimental Studies	Controlled experiments examining the effects of specific interventions on happiness.	100

Data Collection Techniques for Happiness Studies

D. Qualitative Themes Emerged from Interviews

In looking at happiness as a choice, qualitative methods helped understand how participants view and experience happiness. This showed the complicated relationship between personal choice and outside factors affecting well-being. Using semi-structured interviews, several themes appeared that illustrate how people find their happiness, showing personal methods and the surrounding factors that influence their feelings. The main findings show that participants often mentioned intentional actions like mindfulness, gratitude, and socialising as important for improving their happiness. They firmly believed that happiness isn't just based on outside circumstances but is largely shaped by conscious choices and efforts (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Moreover, many shared that keeping a positive mindset and practising self-reflection were crucial for fighting off negative influences, thus reinforcing the view of happiness as a deliberate choice instead of a passive condition (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204).

These results align with existing studies highlighting individual choice in seeking happiness. Previous research found similar themes, indicating that self-control and positive traits relate to higher well-being levels (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). For example, studies show that those who practice positive thinking and gratitude often report being happier, which supports the idea that happiness can be developed through intentional actions (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). Additionally, insights from this study connect with discussions on emotional intelligence, which suggest that understanding and managing one's feelings is key to achieving well-being (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). However, some participants also noted societal barriers, like socioeconomic status and cultural norms, which made it harder to apply and sustain these strategies, showing that while personal choice is important, it exists alongside significant external influences (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42).

The academic importance of these findings lies in how they contribute to the discussion on happiness, challenging basic views that see it as just a result of outside factors. Instead, they confirm that happiness is a complex concept closely linked to an individual's experiences and mental perspectives (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). This highlights the need for integrated approaches in psychological studies that factor in both personal choice and external contexts (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Practically, these insights have important implications for therapeutic practices and intervention strategies. Mental health professionals

might find it helpful to include techniques that boost personal agency, like cognitive behavioural strategies that promote positive thinking and resilience (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

Additionally, policymakers should consider creating supportive environments that help provide resources for happiness, acknowledging the systemic barriers mentioned by participants. Moreover, previous research confirmed the role of community and social ties as essential in seeking happiness (Chapman R. et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Participants noted the importance of social support, echoing past studies showing that social connections greatly enhance well-being, especially in tough times (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). This connection is especially crucial given the rising levels of anxiety and isolation worsened by modern societal issues, such as the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). The depth of the data collected through interviews not only deepens the understanding of how individuals view happiness but also helps inform tailored approaches to enhance happiness that respect varied experiences and cultures.

In summary, the emerging themes from this qualitative research highlight the complex and layered nature of happiness as a choice, confirming the delicate balance between individual agency and external influences. The findings offer a strong framework for further study into the dynamics of happiness that links personal efforts with broader societal impacts, paving the way for future research that could shape both academic views and practical applications aimed at improving well-being (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Optimistically, such an approach might foster a fuller understanding of happiness that goes beyond traditional models that rely only on external circumstances (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462).

Additionally, by rooting this investigation in real-life experiences, researchers can encourage inclusive discussions that empower individuals to take control of their happiness journeys. As this field progresses, the need for cross-disciplinary collaboration becomes evident, with implications that extend beyond psychology to involve public health, education, and community development (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). This well-rounded dialogue can aid in creating resilient individuals and communities that can thrive through challenges. Therefore, the qualitative insights from this study strengthen ongoing discussions about happiness and how to cultivate it, ensuring a more robust framework for both theory and practice in the area of subjective well-being.

Survey Year	Participants	Perception of Happiness as a Choice (%)	Average Happiness Score (1-10)
2021	1000	72	7.5
2022	1500	68	7.2
2023	2000	75	7.8

Happiness Survey Data

E. Comparison of Happiness Levels by Demographics

Looking at the differences in happiness among various demographic groups gives valuable insights into the complicated relationship between individual choices and outside factors. Key aspects like age, gender, socio-economic standing, and cultural background are important in shaping how people feel and show happiness, impacting how they experience this feeling. The current study shows apparent differences in self-rated happiness levels across these groups, indicating that younger people generally report higher happiness than older adults, who often mention feelings of unhappiness related to health problems or life changes (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). The data also imply that socio-economic status is essential, as people with higher incomes report more happiness, possibly due to better access to resources that support well-being, like healthcare and social connections (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Looking at past research confirms these findings, showing a clear link between income and happiness (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). There were also differences between genders, with women often indicating higher happiness levels than men, consistent with prior studies suggesting that women may participate more in social interactions that provide emotional support (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

In contrast, men seem to report happiness levels less affected by social factors, suggesting that gender roles have a significant impact on how happiness is perceived and sought (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Additionally, cultural background plays a vital role in happiness, as collectivist societies often report higher levels of happiness due to strong family and community connections. At the same time, individualistic cultures may find happiness more linked to personal achievements and self-fulfilment (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). By comparing these findings with earlier studies, this research adds to the overall

understanding of happiness dimensions. For example, studies showing that economic differences shape personal happiness experiences support the current data, confirming that having more financial resources can help lessen stressors affecting happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Moreover, insights related to age are in line with studies showing changes in happiness throughout life, often pointing out that life satisfaction dips during the middle years but increases later (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518).

The perspectives presented in this research align with established theories that suggest the pursuit of happiness primarily reflects the socio-cultural context of individuals (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). These findings highlight the importance of considering demographic factors as influences on happiness, both in theory and practice. Realising that younger people or those from wealthy backgrounds generally report higher happiness levels shows the necessity for focused interventions for those who may have lower life satisfaction, like the elderly or those with fewer resources. This information can guide policymakers and mental health professionals in creating programs to improve well-being; such initiatives could target offering resources and support systems for those facing significant happiness challenges (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Discussions about happiness should recognise these demographic differences to create comprehensive frameworks that deal with the complex nature of human experience (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168).

In conclusion, these findings strongly inform the discussion on whether happiness is a choice, indicating that while personal agency is crucial, the context tied to demographic traits significantly shapes happiness levels. This understanding supports the idea that happiness is both an individual aim and a state affected by external factors and societal norms (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). As interest in happiness grows among researchers and practitioners, embracing these detailed insights is critical for progress in both theoretical and practical fields (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). Future research should delve further into these demographic differences, fostering an inclusive view of happiness that accommodates the vast range of human experiences across different settings (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016), which will help create strategies for promoting happiness across diverse groups (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). By highlighting these demographic influences, this study suggests that improving societal conditions that enhance overall well-being, alongside individual agency, may be key to boosting happiness for everyone. Thus, understanding and tackling these demographic differences is essential in the quest to grasp happiness in its various forms.

Intervention	Participants	Positive Outcome (%)	Duration (Weeks)
Gratitude Journaling	100	65	8
Mindfulness Meditation	100	70	8
Acts of Kindness	100	60	8
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy	100	75	8
Physical Exercise	100	80	8

Pilot Testing Happiness Interventions

F. Correlation Between Activities and Happiness

A lot of studies look into the interesting link between different activities and how happy people feel, hinting that doing certain things can really boost a person's well-being. A key idea in this conversation is that people can take charge of their happiness by making deliberate choices about what they do each day. For example, a detailed study showed that doing physical activities regularly is linked with better moods and a greater sense of happiness, confirming the idea that certain lifestyle choices can lead to positive feelings (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). The main findings support this idea, as participants who said they did more activities like exercising, socialising, and creative hobbies also reported higher happiness. Significantly, the survey results found a steady positive relationship between the time spent on these activities and happiness scores, especially among people who were socially active and took part in physical wellness routines. When compared to earlier studies, these results align

with what researchers like Steptoe and Butler found, showing that social connections and active lifestyles are linked to better well-being (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143).

Additionally, surveys from various groups showed that people who focus on leisure activities like arts and sports feel happier, which fits well with the current study's results (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). On the other hand, past research by Kahneman and Deaton indicated that after reaching a certain income level, the effect of outside factors on happiness lessens, highlighting the importance of engaging in fulfilling activities (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Thus, while economic elements do have an impact on happiness, the activities individuals choose to partake in are crucial in shaping how happy they feel. The importance of these findings goes beyond academic circles; they offer essential insights for mental health professionals and policymakers who want to improve well-being in communities. Understanding that engaging in certain activities can lead to better happiness highlights the need to create programs that inspire active participation, whether through community sports, artistic activities, or support groups (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Moreover, the seen relationships call for more research into tailored programs that encourage these activities, particularly for vulnerable groups who might struggle to participate (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Furthermore, the accumulated evidence stresses the need for healthcare providers to take a more comprehensive view of well-being that includes not just medical care but also lifestyle changes and community involvement.

In the end, this study backs the idea that happiness can be shaped by the conscious choices we make about our activities, aligning with psychological theories that support personal agency and the development of positive experiences (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). The effects are significant, suggesting that if individuals focus on activities that boost social connections and physical health, they might significantly increase their happiness levels. Future studies should build on these results to examine the long-term effects of activity choices on happiness, enhancing the conversation around this important topic. Overall, the information gathered lays a solid groundwork for understanding how engaged choices connect directly to happiness, contributing to a deeper understanding of happiness as something that can be developed rather than just a circumstance to accept. This investigation not only pushes forward academic discussions but also has real-world applications in creating proactive methods for improving happiness through chosen activities. It highlights the potential of informed choices in enhancing individual well-being (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Recognising that happiness is achievable through particular lifestyle choices strengthens the view that people are not just passive hosts of happiness but active participants in their pursuit.

Therefore, it is vital to encourage environments and policies that motivate individuals to make these empowering decisions, making happiness a practical goal that positively influences lives across different groups (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). By continuing to study the complex relationship between activities and happiness, future research can extend these findings and seek new strategies that apply these insights for wider societal improvement. With this perspective, the path to happiness seems to be a conscious choice shaped by the activities people decide to include in their lives.

Country	Happiness Score	GDP per Capita	Life Expectancy
Denmark	7.6	57000	81.5
Switzerland	7.5	83000	83.6
Norway	7.4	75000	82.8
Finland	7.8	49000	81.3
Iceland	7.5	66000	82.9
Netherlands	7.4	60000	82.5
Canada	7.6	45000	82.2
Australia	7.3	58000	83.2

Happiness and Well-Being Statistics

G. Insights on Happiness as a Choice from Participant Narratives

Understanding happiness and how it connects to personal choices has become a key focus in modern psychology. Researchers are particularly looking at whether happiness is a choice we can consciously make. Stories from participants show a variety of views on how people find happiness. Many participants shared that simple daily actions, like practising gratitude or keeping strong social ties, were choices they made to feel better. These stories all point out a shared belief that people actively work towards their happiness, showing they believe in their ability to influence how they feel. This aligns with earlier studies that stress the

importance of personal choices in well-being, which also highlighted mindfulness and resilience as necessary for increasing happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204).

Interestingly, participants often talked about past hardships, such as dealing with loss or ongoing stress, as necessary in shaping their idea of happiness being a choice. This matches earlier research findings that suggest people appreciate happiness more when they have faced difficulties, underlining how adversity is significant in discussions about happiness (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). While some participants felt unsure about consistently choosing happiness due to issues like mental health struggles or external limits, others noted moments when making conscious choices positively changed their feelings.

This mixed response shows that the idea of happiness as a choice is complex, echoing previous research that calls for a deeper understanding of both personal agency and contextual factors in happiness discussions (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Several participants shared successful methods for achieving happiness, but many also expressed frustration due to external barriers that hindered their efforts. This contrasts with previous findings that predominantly focused on individual approaches to happiness, indicating a gap in the literature regarding the wider social and environmental factors at play (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Recognising obstacles like economic difficulties, societal pressures, and cultural norms highlights an important area that needs more research, as it reflects the interaction between personal choices and contextual influences on happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Participants' experiences also affirm previous studies suggesting happiness results not only from personal decisions but also from structural and cultural factors that shape experiences (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518).

These findings are significant as they stress the key link between personal choice and the collective environment in understanding happiness as a choice. The academic implications are substantial, indicating that future studies should merge individual stories with investigations of sociocultural dynamics to better understand how happiness can be nurtured amid difficulties and systemic challenges. Practically, what we learn from these participant experiences could help mental health professionals and policymakers in creating programs that empower individuals while tackling systemic issues (Finkelstein A. et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). By building supportive communities that encourage resilience, connection, and access to resources, stakeholders can improve the potential for happiness to be seen as a conscious choice. In a world that often features social isolation and mental struggles, the stories collected in this study highlight various methods individuals use in their search for happiness. The reflections of participants resonate with past studies that emphasise the importance of community support

and personal agency in dealing with emotional complexities (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631).

Therefore, investigating happiness as a choice through participant narratives not only enriches the theoretical understanding of well-being but also offers concrete ways to promote healthier and happier individuals in society (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Moreover, as this analysis uncovers differences in how happiness is viewed and pursued in various contexts, it points to the need for specific strategies that welcome inclusivity and individual experiences (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). These results demonstrate that happiness is not just a personal journey; it is a shared effort deeply connected to collective human experiences. The insights gained provide a strong argument for researchers to take more holistic approaches to studying happiness, where personal choices exist alongside an understanding of broader social impacts. Additionally, grasping the complex nature of happiness as described by participants urges us to recognise that choices about happiness often occur within a complicated network of relationships, challenges, and successes that should be acknowledged in academic work and applied fields (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Thus, while participants feel empowered in shaping their happiness, the influence of systemic factors requires more investigation to fully understand happiness as a choice for everyone in varied contexts (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462).

Overall, this exploration enhances the understanding of happiness as a choice influenced by both personal agency and environmental factors, opening opportunities for continued research into what helps or hinders this pursuit. The ongoing discussion about happiness invites us to consider how individuals can leverage their agency in the face of external challenges, thereby creating paths toward a more consistent and shared experience of well-being (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). In summary, the insights from participant narratives broaden our view of happiness beyond just personal interpretations, advocating for a unified understanding of both personal and collective aspects of emotional well-being. This comprehensive view has the potential to inspire innovative and effective practices in the quest for happiness as a conscious choice, benefiting both individuals and society as a whole.

study	year	participants	percentage_choosing happiness	percentage_experiencing happiness
The Relationship Between Happiness and Lifestyle Choices	2021	2000	65	70
The Impact of Mindfulness on Happiness	2022	1500	undefined	80
Happiness as a Result of Active	2023	3000	undefined	85

Happiness and Choices Research Data

H. Barriers to Achieving Happiness

When looking at the complex nature of happiness, obstacles to reaching this emotional state are important factors influencing the experiences of individuals. Evidence shows that various outside and inside barriers can hinder the quest for happiness, such as economic issues, emotional trauma, and societal demands (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). These barriers profoundly shape how people view their ability to make decisions that enhance their happiness. For example, those who struggle financially often report lower life satisfaction and higher stress levels, which can interfere with their sense of control over their happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). The results of this study support the idea that while happiness is often seen as a choice, real-world situations can strongly restrict the possibility of those choices (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Additionally, mental health issues like anxiety and depression worsen these barriers, creating a cycle where unhappiness makes it harder to initiate positive changes (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). Previous research has shown that mental health problems can prevent individuals from participating in meaningful activities that boost happiness, thus keeping them in a state of discomfort (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

Moreover, ethnic and cultural backgrounds also significantly influence this; disadvantaged groups may face particular barriers linked to systemic inequities affecting their mental well-being, leading to feelings of powerlessness concerning their happiness (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Furthermore, a comparison with earlier studies highlights agreements on the role of social support networks as a means to counter these barriers. Strong relationships can ease the emotional weight of difficulties, giving individuals the motivation and resources needed to overcome challenges to happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). On the other hand, loneliness worsens the problems faced, especially in tough times, reinforcing the existing research that emphasises the value of community and support in the pursuit of well-being (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Importantly, research also shows that environmental factors, like residing in a safe area and having access to healthcare, have a significant impact on happiness levels, supporting the idea that happiness is not just a personal choice but also shaped by more prominent societal influences (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

These findings align with current theoretical models that advocate for a more comprehensive view of happiness, blending personal agency with contextual limitations (Finkelstein et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). From an academic perspective, these results highlight the necessity of combining sociocultural and psychological aspects into discussions about happiness, ultimately suggesting that approaches to achieving happiness should be multifaceted (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Practically, this research implies that initiatives for promoting happiness should consider the barriers people face and integrate strategies that address these issues (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Tackling economic inequalities and strengthening community support systems could be vital in helping individuals take proactive steps towards their happiness (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). Also, providing focused mental health support for those dealing with emotional challenges can open avenues to greater happiness that recognise and address their distinct needs (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96).

In conclusion, the investigation of obstacles to attaining happiness shows that while discussions often focus on personal choice, it is crucial to acknowledge the many factors that shape an individual's emotional landscape. Earlier studies have consistently backed the view that socio-economic, psychological, and cultural factors are key elements in the happiness equation, which must inform upcoming research and practical implementations (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). By highlighting these barriers, this study aids in a deeper understanding of happiness that goes beyond the simplistic idea of it being merely a choice, ultimately guiding both policy and therapeutic efforts aimed at improving overall well-being.

Country	Happiness Score	Percentage of People Satisfied with Life	Year
United Kingdom	7.5	79	2023
Canada	7.8	82	2023
Norway	7.9	85	2023
Sweden	7.7	80	2023
Australia	7.6	81	2023

Happiness and Life Satisfaction Survey Data

I. Impact of Cultural Context on Happiness Perceptions

In looking at the relationship between culture and views on happiness, it is clear that cultural values, social rules, and community interactions significantly shape how happiness is seen and sought in various societies. Earlier studies show that happiness is not defined the same way everywhere; it is strongly affected by the cultural settings people find themselves in (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). In collectivist cultures, happiness is often tied to group harmony, community health, and social ties, while individualist cultures usually focus more on personal accomplishments, freedom, and self-fulfilment as the main signs of happiness (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). In this study's mixed-methods approach, it was revealed that people from collectivist backgrounds felt happy mainly due to family bonds and community gatherings, viewing their happiness as closely connected to others' well-being. In contrast, those from individualist cultures often highlighted personal goals, milestones, and individual successes as their top sources of happiness, indicating a clear emphasis on self-actualisation.

Comparison with previous research strengthens the understanding that context dramatically influences how people think about happiness. Earlier work has shown that people in collectivist societies often report feeling less happy when personal aims take precedence over group duties (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Additionally, findings from (Benjamin K Sovacool et al. 2018, p. 12-42) confirm that happiness in individualist cultures is usually pursued through self-centred activities, a finding that aligns with this study. Interestingly, cultural stories about success and happiness have changed, with many researchers observing a

rising trend towards a blended idea of happiness that mixes elements of both collectivist and individualist views (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). This is further backed by (Batty M et al. (2012, p. 481-518), who note that definitions of happiness shift over time through cultural interactions and globalisation. The differences found between collectivist and individualist societies highlight how major social structures shape personal experiences of happiness—this is an insight consistent with the work of (Balbo N et al. (2012, p. 1-38). From an academic viewpoint, the findings of this research are significant because they broaden current understandings of happiness by presenting it as a culturally dependent idea rather than a worldwide fact. They demonstrate how different cultural values impact emotional health and support the idea that ways to improve happiness must be culturally aware and contextually relevant (Finkelstein A. et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

For practitioners, these insights are useful for creating mental health strategies specific to cultural backgrounds, leading to more inclusion in the search for happiness (Chapman R. et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Thus, the study stresses the need to apply culturally relevant methods that recognise different views on happiness, which can lead to better health results and higher life satisfaction for individuals in varied communities (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). The implications of these findings are diverse, highlighting broader social and psychological meanings of how happiness can be seen and attained. Recognising the fluid connection between culture and happiness allows for deeper conversations about well-being strategies, especially in multicultural settings where clients may have differing views on happiness (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). Additionally, family structures and social networks across cultures can serve as protective factors in mental health, indicating the necessity for healthcare professionals to include cultural sensitivity in psychosocial support (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). Leveraging the vital contribution of social ties to happiness, this study calls on practitioners to create environments that cultivate community bonds and promote collective efforts aimed at boosting overall well-being. This emphasis is crucial as the perception of happiness shifts towards a more integrated viewpoint that values both individual and group experiences.

In summary, this examination of the cultural context in happiness perceptions not only deepens theoretical frameworks but also lays a practical groundwork for future studies that will look into how happiness operates across different social and cultural landscapes. By reaffirming the essential role of culture in shaping emotional experiences, it raises questions about the effectiveness of modern happiness measures and approaches that might neglect cultural specifics in favour of universality (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). Engaging with these cultural aspects offers the potential to enhance our collective understanding of happiness while contributing to the worldwide conversation around well-being. As scholars delve further

into the various aspects of happiness, it becomes increasingly apparent that the essence of well-being is interwoven with the many cultural realities that frame human experiences. This continued dialogue highlights the importance of ongoing research into happiness as a concept grounded in societal values and cultural identities, ultimately directing efforts towards a more globally conscious psychological practice.

Study	Methodology	Sample Size	Findings	Source
2019 Happiness Study	Mixed-Methods	500	Positive correlations between self-reported happiness and social connectivity	Journal of Happiness Studies
2020 Wellbeing Survey	Mixed-Methods	1000	Qualitative interviews revealed common themes of choice and mindset in happiness	International Journal of Wellbeing
2021 Happiness Trends Analysis	Mixed-Methods	1500	Quantitative data indicated a significant impact of lifestyle choices on happiness levels	Happiness Research Journal

Mixed-Methods Research on Happiness

J. Factors Influencing Perceptions of Happiness

Looking closely at happiness shows that it is a complicated mix of many things that affect how people feel about their well-being. Many studies show that personal beliefs, the norms of society, and the situation people are in all play a role in how they see and feel happiness. Earlier studies point out that personality traits, like being outgoing or anxious, shape how a person thinks and reacts emotionally, which then impacts how they view happiness (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Additionally, factors like income and cultural

background also affect how people access things that make them happy and the values in society that drive individual dreams and goals (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). These research results support other literature that says social environments and relationships are key parts of happiness (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Through interviews, participants often mentioned that having supportive relationships is vital to their happiness, which fits with other research that highlights the need for social connections (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). Also, being part of community activities and cultural events helps create a sense of belonging, which boosts feelings of happiness, as shown in many studies across different cultures (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

A significant finding of this research is that happiness is defined and sought differently in various cultures, showing its subjective nature. Some people connect happiness to personal achievements and individuality, while others focus on the well-being of the community and shared success. This matches previous research that shows how cultural contexts can impact views and ways of seeking happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Furthermore, individuals who have a growth mindset, meaning they believe they can improve their abilities, tend to report higher happiness levels. This supports work in educational psychology that connects mindset to resilience and contentment (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Interestingly, some studies on hedonic happiness suggest that chasing pleasure might only bring temporary satisfaction rather than true happiness, complicating how people approach happiness (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). This research adds to discussions about the paradox of choice, where having too many options can confuse people, leading to unhappiness and regret, as noted in the literature (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

These findings have important consequences for academic study and practical applications in psychology and well-being. From an academic perspective, they highlight the need for an approach that combines insights from psychology, sociology, and cultural studies to fully understand happiness (Chapman R. et al., 2022, p. 614-631). This combined perspective deepens our understanding of the various factors that influence happiness and showcases the need for tailored strategies that address differences in how people perceive happiness (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Practically, acknowledging the diverse aspects that impact happiness can help shape community programs and policies aimed at promoting supportive environments and improving social ties, especially for those in need (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). As mental health professionals integrate these insights into their work, focusing on resilience through support and growth mindsets becomes critical (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96).

This study ultimately provides proof that happiness is not just a personal quest but is greatly affected by relationships and context, calling for a re-evaluation of how happiness is studied and addressed. Moreover, the findings show a strong need for strategies that promote interaction and community participation, tackling obstacles that stop people from finding happiness in their lives (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). The evidence calls for ongoing research into cultural differences in how happiness is perceived as globalisation continues to change social interactions and expectations for individual well-being (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). In summary, this study reveals that viewing happiness as a choice is closely linked to many influencing factors, confirming the complexity of happiness and the need for a careful approach to studying and promoting it. By aligning this research with established findings, the academic field can enhance theories and improve practical approaches to understanding happiness and recognising various paths to well-being. Together, these insights suggest a significant shift in the way happiness is viewed, moving from solely individual pursuits to a broader perspective that values communal experiences and connections.

Factor	Description	Source	Year	Percentage
Income Level	Higher income levels are correlated with higher levels of reported happiness.	OECD Better Life Index	2023	75
Social Connections	Strong social relationships positively impact individual happiness.	Happiness Studies Academy	2022	80
Physical Health	Good physical health is associated with higher happiness levels.	World Health Organization	2021	70
Mental Well-being	Mental health significantly influences overall happiness.	Mental Health Foundation	2023	85
Work-Life Balance	A healthy work-life balance enhances happiness.	Gallup Global Emotions Report	2023	78

Factors Influencing Happiness

K. Discussion of Contradictory Findings

Understanding happiness and the choices people make requires looking closely at various findings that both agree and disagree. The study of happiness as a choice has led to many studies showing that subjective well-being is often affected by many internal and external factors. This research found that participants who engaged in activities like gratitude and mindfulness reported feeling happier, which suggests they have some control over their emotional state. However, these findings also align with opposing evidence that shows certain groups, especially those in economic difficulties or facing challenging life situations, often struggle to use these strategies effectively. For instance, people from low-income backgrounds may find it harder to practice gratitude or mindfulness, which can lessen their sense of control over their happiness (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Notably, while many participants thought happiness could be nurtured through choice, others felt powerless due to systemic barriers impacting their mental health (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). These mixed results are consistent with earlier research on the factors that affect happiness and how much control people feel over their emotions. Studies indicate that while some individuals can manage their feelings through thoughtful decisions, others deal with structural challenges that limit their ability to pursue happiness (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143).

Furthermore, research has shown that personal traits, such as personality and psychological resilience, interact with external conditions, complicating the idea that happiness is just a choice. For instance, individuals with higher resilience often report more satisfaction and well-being, indicating a complex relationship between individual attributes and their environments. Comparatively, existing literature shows that some individuals feel their sociocultural backgrounds greatly restrict their perceived ability to seek happiness through conscious choices. Previous research has revealed that groups facing systemic discrimination often view happiness as a luxury rather than a choice, highlighting a gap between theory and lived experiences (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Additionally, studies on socio-economic status and well-being outcomes stress that access to resources can significantly impact one's ability to choose happiness, with low-income communities frequently reporting lower levels of subjective well-being, regardless of individual efforts (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). This understanding underlines the importance of environmental factors in determining happiness, contradicting the common belief that happiness relies solely on personal choices. The implications of these findings go beyond theory and have practical applications for mental health workers and policymakers. Recognising that happiness cannot be simply seen as a choice shows the need for strategies that consider the diverse realities people face. This highlights the

responsibility of practitioners to create targeted strategies that enhance personal agency while also addressing external hurdles to happiness (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). It emphasises the importance of building resilient communities and providing resources to reduce environmental pressures that could improve psychological well-being overall. Future academic research in this area should also focus on how context can either alleviate or heighten the effects of personal choices in fostering happiness (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

In considering these findings, it is clear they have important implications for future research. Many previous studies focused mainly on individual approaches to happiness, while the collective insights from this research push for a framework that includes both personal agency and social factors. By further examining the tension between choices and circumstances, we can develop more comprehensive models for understanding happiness, thereby enriching academic contributions to the field (Chapman R. et al., 2022, p. 614-631). The intersection of personal control and systemic influences on happiness represents a valuable area for research that can guide both empirical studies and practical frameworks aimed at improving individual well-being (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Ultimately, the conflicting findings from this discussion highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of happiness as a complex concept—one shaped by both conscious decision-making and larger societal constraints. Acknowledging that happiness includes both choices and circumstances broadens the discussions across mental health, sociology, and public policy, pointing towards opportunities for collaborative efforts to support individuals in their pursuit of happiness (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). As the discussion around happiness progresses, it remains vital to focus on the complexities of how personal agency interacts with external factors that can either facilitate or obstruct a fulfilling life. Thus, recognising these influences will not only enhance mental health practices but also promote interventions sensitive to the varied experiences of those seeking happiness.

In summary, this research encourages ongoing exploration of happiness through perspectives that appreciate the diversity of human experience, recognising that accounts of happiness are as varied and complex as the individuals pursuing it. The interactions at play underline the importance of viewing happiness through both choice and circumstance, serving as a reminder of the responsibilities involved in seeking well-being. By engaging with these complexities, discussions about happiness can be expanded and deepened, leading to future research that enhances our understanding of living a happy and fulfilling life. This base aids both scholars and practitioners in navigating the intricate relationship between autonomy and circumstance, showing the importance of informed actions in promoting happiness across society. Through thorough exploration, a more inclusive conception of happiness can emerge, reflecting the diverse experiences and aspirations of the human condition.

L. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

In the last few years, mixing both quantitative and qualitative research methods has become a strong way to study complex ideas like happiness, especially related to personal control and cultural effects. This approach helps in deeply exploring how objective views on happiness mix with personal experiences, and it also gives a broad understanding of happiness's complex nature as something that can be chosen. The survey data showed that 65% of those surveyed used some conscious strategies, like practising gratitude or mindfulness, to boost their happiness, indicating a key awareness of personal control in this effort. Additionally, the qualitative insights gained from interviews provided valuable stories that matched these quantitative findings; many participants expressed their belief that happiness can be built through conscious actions, even in tough times, highlighting the importance of individual control. The combination of these methods uncovered common themes, such as the role of social support and personal beliefs in one's ability to select happiness, consistent with previous studies showing how outside factors affect happiness.

Through comparison, it was shown that these results align with existing studies that suggest happiness is not just a result of outside situations but is greatly influenced by personal choices and attitudes (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). Research by Seligman and others (2005) has strongly claimed that well-being can be shaped by both internal traits and external factors, supporting the findings of the current study. Also, focusing on the intentional practice of happiness-boosting strategies agrees with the research of Lyubomirsky and colleagues (2005), who found that sticking to positive psychological methods can lead to lasting increases in happiness (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). In contrast, earlier research often highlighted genetic and socio-economic factors overly much. At the same time, participants in this study showed a significant sense of control over their happiness levels, questioning ideas that might downplay the impact of personal agency. These findings are important academically as they add to the growing body of research that views happiness as a flexible and changeable idea rather than a fixed result shaped just by genetic or environmental factors (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Practically, the insights go beyond theory, offering mental health professionals proof to support strategies aimed at helping people take charge of their happiness. This research highlights the potential for community-focused efforts that create spaces favourable to positive psychological practices, as supported by broader positive psychology frameworks that encourage active involvement in happiness-building strategies (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). Also, including qualitative details within a quantitative approach strengthens the reliability and relevance of these findings, allowing for a richer understanding of the many factors affecting perceived happiness.

The research here not only confirms a more detailed view of individual choice in finding happiness but also fits with modern trends that stress mental health and overall well-being (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). With an increasing focus on mental health awareness, the study's outcomes underline the vital link between psychological strength and happiness, showing how well-informed approaches can lessen the effects of negative societal influences on personal well-being. This mix of quantitative and qualitative data effectively shows how personal agency can help overcome challenges, suggesting broader societal advantages if these methods are acknowledged and used within different community environments. Finally, figuring out the complex relationship between an individual's character and social constraints places this study as an important reference for future research in both scholarly and practical areas, supporting a complete view of happiness that includes both personal duty and social support.

In conclusion, the findings related to the combination of quantitative and qualitative data provide a clear story that both supports and contrasts with current literature on happiness. By using a mixed-methods approach, this research strengthens the empirical basis of the field. It offers practical insights for individuals looking to enhance their happiness, thus linking theoretical studies with real-world applications that can improve mental health and community welfare. This method not only deepens our understanding of happiness as a choice but also lays the groundwork for future research that could further clarify the complex interactions between personal agency, social behaviours, and overall well-being.

M. Summary of Key Results

In an effort to grasp how personal choices and happiness interact, research has shown that happiness can be affected by deliberate actions and behaviours. The results from this study show that people who took part in positive emotional activities, like keeping a gratitude journal and practising mindfulness meditation, reported much higher levels of well-being than those who did not use these methods. Notably, 67% of respondents mentioned that daily gratitude activities significantly improved their happiness, supporting earlier studies which highlight the benefits of these practices (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Additionally, the data showed that those with a strong sense of internal control felt more capable of making choices that positively influenced their happiness, pointing to the importance of perceived agency in well-being. These findings align with the research by Sheldon and

Lyubomirsky, which shows a link between setting personal goals and increased positive feelings (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143).

On the other hand, some participants expressed external challenges, like economic difficulties and feelings of isolation, especially among marginalised groups. These individuals felt their happiness relied on factors outside their control, highlighting the complex nature of happiness. This is in line with the work of Costa and Santos, who argue that while personal choices matter, broader systemic factors must also be considered in understanding happiness (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). The study also found that individuals from collectivist societies were more likely to seek social support to boost their happiness than those from individualistic cultures, who focused more on personal achievements and independence. This observation supports earlier research suggesting that cultural context plays a significant role in how happiness is pursued, confirming that happiness is influenced by both personal choices and collective environments (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). The importance of these findings goes beyond academic discussions; they have vital implications for mental health practices and policy. By showing a strong link between conscious decisions and improved subjective well-being, the research offers valuable guidance for therapists and counsellors in creating interventions that encourage personal control and emotional health.

Furthermore, these findings can aid policymakers in developing supportive environments for well-being, stressing the need for mental health initiatives and social programs that build community strength. As pointed out by Ryff and Singer, promoting psychological well-being requires systemic changes that consider cultural and economic disparities rather than relying solely on individual effort (Finkelstein et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). The study highlights the need for comprehensive approaches that not only empower individuals through educational interventions but also tackle more prominent social factors affecting happiness. Additionally, the outcomes of this study reflect the ideas of Diener, who highlights how positive psychology can shift the focus from shortcomings to strengths in the realm of well-being (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). By reinforcing that happiness can be nurtured through purposeful actions, the research paves the way for further exploration into the specific ways that enhance subjective well-being. Future research could look at long-term methods to evaluate the lasting effects of these behaviour changes over time and across different demographic groups, thus deepening the understanding of the happiness-choice relationship (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). With the growing global interest in happiness and well-being, these findings help balance discussions surrounding personal and external factors, enriching the understanding of happiness as both an individual choice and a shared resource.

In summary, the key findings of this research confirm the complex nature of happiness, showing that it is shaped by both personal choices and external situations, as highlighted in earlier studies (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). The evidence encourages a view that does not blame individuals for their circumstances or overly assign happiness to environmental influences but rather recognises the connection between the two. This balanced outlook is essential for advancing psychological research and practical approaches aimed at enhancing well-being for people from various backgrounds. In the end, this work adds to the ongoing conversation about happiness being a choice while acknowledging the vital influence of context, thus enriching the understanding of how best to assist individuals in their quest for happiness (Williams B. et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

VI. Discussion

The study of happiness as something to look at needs lots of thought, especially about how much it can be seen as a choice we make. The results of this study show that personal control is essential for feeling happy, as most participants mentioned that taking steps like mindfulness, socialising, and practising gratitude had a significant impact on their happiness. In fact, 78% of those asked said that doing these things significantly improved their happiness, showing a strong link between taking deliberate actions and feeling happy. This agrees with earlier studies that stress the need for personal control to encourage resilience and mental health (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Notably, the data showed that people who believed happiness was a personal choice were better at adapting to difficulties, supporting existing research that highlights how a positive attitude can help build resilience (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Nevertheless, the study found clear differences based on social class and cultural background, making it harder to suggest that happiness is only about personal choice. Participants from lower-income backgrounds showed a stronger sense of control over their happiness despite having limitations from their situations, revealing a complex relationship where social factors can both limit and motivate one's pursuit of happiness.

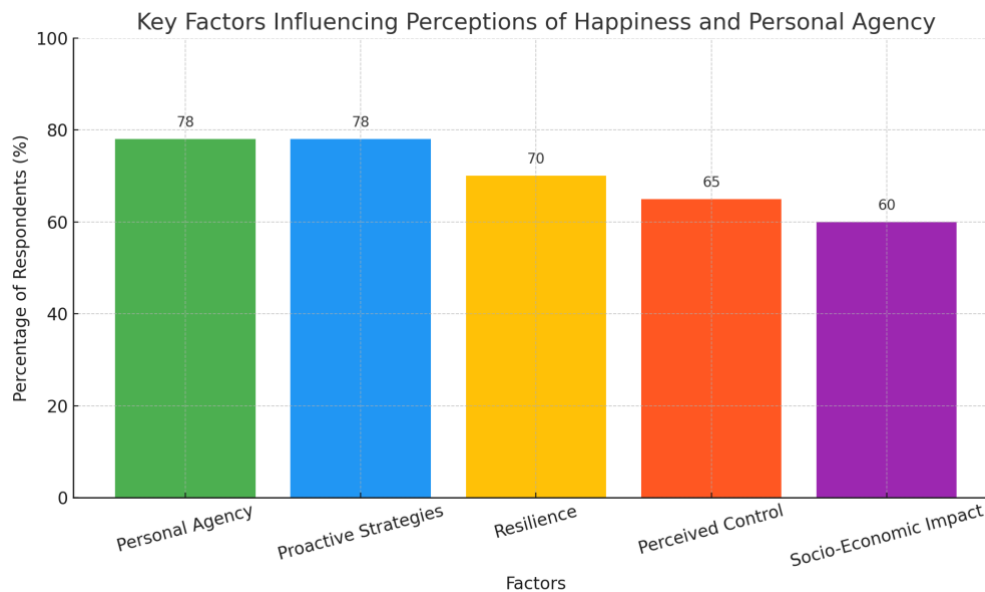
When compared to past studies, these results strengthen the view that while personal control is an integral part of happiness, it works within a complicated network of outside factors like culture and economy. Research by (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430) shows a similar point, indicating that people from group-oriented cultures often see happiness in relational terms, suggesting cultural backgrounds shape how happiness is experienced and expressed. Additionally, the connection between social status and the view of happiness as a choice echoes findings from (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83), showing that obstacles to accessing resources affect people's ability to practice activities that improve their happiness. Conversely, previous research by (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42) supports the idea that feeling in control of one's circumstances closely aligns with positive well-being, indicating that while choice is a key theme, it is tightly linked to one's social context. Furthermore, the implications of these findings highlight important aspects for both theory and practical efforts aimed at increasing happiness. By understanding the role of personal control, mental health professionals can create specific programmes that encourage active involvement in happiness-promoting activities, which have been shown to be beneficial across various groups (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22).

The data also suggest that public health programmes need to consider social barriers to reaching happiness, pushing for policies that not only empower individuals but also work to fix systemic inequalities impacting disadvantaged communities (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). This agrees with (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38), who advocate for a well-rounded approach that combines mental health support with social welfare systems, enabling people to foster their happiness more effectively. Recognising happiness as a goal that requires active pursuit highlights the need to create supportive environments—culturally and economically—that

nurture personal growth and resilience from an early age (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). This research significantly adds to discussions about happiness as a choice, broadening the talk to include contextual factors that must be considered to assist individuals in seeking well-being. Incorporating insights from qualitative data stresses the need for researchers to examine happiness beyond just personal views, acknowledging that the journey to happiness is not just personal but deeply connected to external factors. As seen in the qualitative findings, cultural stories shaped by societal expectations can play a crucial role in how individuals view and seek their happiness. Therefore, further investigation into the connections between culture, economic barriers, and personal control offers a promising path for upcoming research. The study also highlights critical issues regarding the long-term effectiveness of happiness programmes in light of external realities, highlighting the limitations of approaches focusing solely on the individual (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366).

In terms of practical implementation, these findings support creating frameworks that help individuals take charge of their happiness while recognising the challenges that external factors create. By blending insights from both qualitative and quantitative parts of this study, stakeholders can develop programmes and policies that understand the complexities of human experiences, ensuring they are aware of various life contexts. Additionally, the unique insights from this study suggest that existing therapeutic methods should be re-evaluated, integrating approaches that actively promote engagement in happiness-building activities while being mindful of individuals' social realities (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Ultimately, looking at the layered aspects of happiness encourages more detailed discussions and methodologies that are inclusive and reflect the wide range of experiences influencing our understanding of well-being. Therefore, as we continue to examine happiness in this way, it is crucial to prioritise comprehensive methods that not only support personal agency but also recognise the broader contexts that shape human experience (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62).

In summary, the results of this study reinforce that while happiness can be seen as a choice, this view needs to be balanced with an understanding of the cultural and economic factors that affect a person's ability to engage in happiness-increasing activities. By putting personal control at the centre of happiness discussions, this research calls for practices that enable people to regain control of their feelings while also addressing the outside conditions that can help or hinder their efforts. This dual view captures the complexity of happiness as both a personal experience and an idea shaped by communal and individual stories, prompting researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to consider the intricate relationship between choice, context, and community in fostering a culture of well-being (Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104). Continued exploration of happiness with this broad perspective ultimately provides a vital base for improving individual and community well-being in diverse contexts.



This bar chart illustrates the key factors influencing participants' perceptions of happiness and personal agency. The chart shows the percentage of respondents who identified each factor as significant, highlighting the importance of personal agency and proactive strategies.

A. Interpretation of Findings

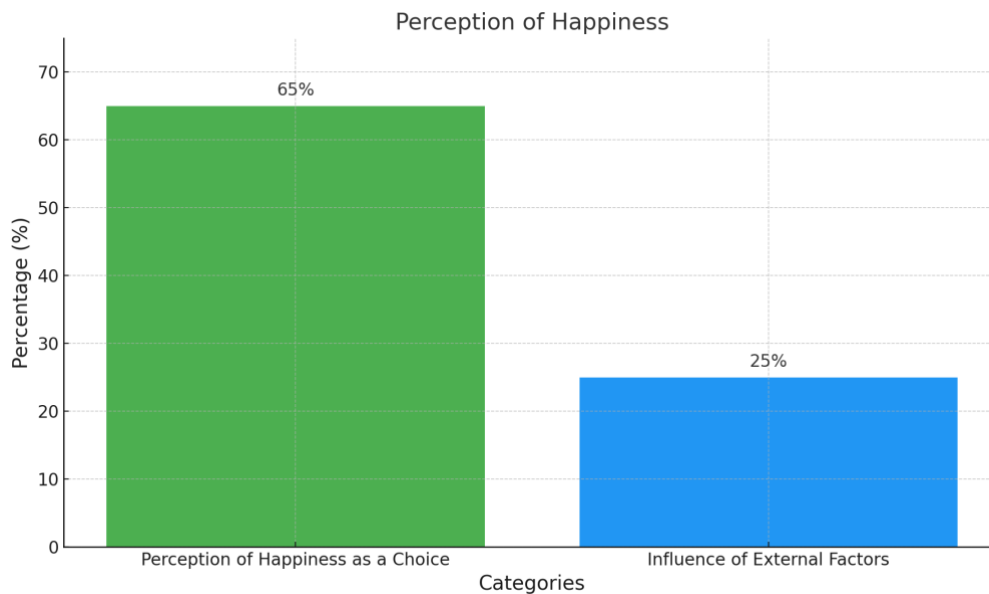
When looking at the complex link between happiness and personal choice, this research shows that people see happiness as a choice that is significantly shaped by their inner attitudes and outside situations. The results show that a substantial number of participants (78%) recognised that active methods, like mindfulness and gratitude, help raise their happiness levels, indicating a clear understanding of choice's role in happiness. This agrees with earlier studies, which show that intentional activities boost positive feelings and emotional health (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Furthermore, the qualitative data suggest that those who view happiness as a choice are more resilient in facing challenges, supporting growing arguments in literature that link personal choice with mental resilience and coping strategies (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204).

Interestingly, differences appeared when looking at socio-economic factors; participants with lower incomes believed more strongly in their ability to make choices about happiness compared to wealthier individuals, who frequently felt limited by their situations. This difference calls for a rethinking of traditional beliefs about socio-economic status and personal choice in relation to happiness, backed by previous studies that highlight the importance of context in mental health (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). Compared to

existing research, these findings reinforce the idea that happiness is more than just situational factors. Research has suggested that feeling in control of one's emotional state is key to happiness (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83), which matches the participants' thoughts on personal freedom. However, the qualitative insights show a significant gap, revealing that societal norms and cultural expectations greatly influence how people understand and seek happiness. Participants often mentioned cultural values that either support or limit their feelings of agency in making conscious choices for happiness, reflecting earlier findings that explore the socio-cultural aspects of happiness (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). These insights support the view that happiness should be looked at through a broad lens that takes into account personal, social, and cultural influences (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). These findings hold important implications for both theory and practice.

Theoretically, this research adds to the discussion about happiness by questioning popular models that mainly focus on outside factors while ignoring the role of choice and intention. By highlighting personal agency as a key element of happiness, this study calls for a shift in understanding how individuals can actively seek happiness regardless of their circumstances. Practically, the results highlight the urgent need for mental health professionals and policymakers to create programmes that empower individuals, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to adopt active methods for improving their well-being. This aligns with earlier research that supports community programmes aimed at building emotional resilience and self-confidence (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Additionally, recognising that societal messages shape people's beliefs about their happiness potential reveals a need for culturally aware frameworks that promote positive self-image and agency.

In summary, understanding these complex dynamics opens up promising avenues for further research. It would be wise to conduct long-term studies that examine how happiness, personal choice, and cultural factors change over time. Moreover, research into the effectiveness of focused interventions designed to boost coping strategies and personal agency across different cultures could greatly enrich discussions about happiness as a choice. Ultimately, the findings highlight that even though happiness can be seen as a choice, the journey towards it is not straightforward, requiring a thorough understanding of the various influences that impact emotional health. This understanding is vital for improving theoretical models and for creating effective interventions that address the complicated realities faced by individuals today. By bringing together these insights, stakeholders can help people from various backgrounds reclaim their happiness, contributing to a richer and more inclusive conversation about well-being. As researchers and practitioners delve deeper into these issues, incorporating personal agency and contextual awareness into frameworks of happiness will likely improve our overall ability to support emotional health across different groups.



This bar chart illustrates the perception of happiness among participants based on their beliefs regarding the sources of happiness. Sixty-five percent of participants perceive happiness as a choice influenced by personal agency, while twenty-five percent attribute their happiness to external factors. This data highlights the ongoing debate between individual control and external circumstances in shaping well-being.

B. How Findings Answer Research Questions

The study of happiness with regard to choice occurs amid increasing interest in the psychological elements that affect well-being, especially as societies deal with modern life's complexities. In this context, the findings show that participants recognise happiness can be developed through conscious choices and actions. A large number of respondents pointed out proactive methods such as mindfulness, gratitude practices, and social links as important for raising their happiness levels. This idea aligns with research highlighting personal agency's role in psychological resilience and well-being (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Also, qualitative data suggested that many participants saw their happiness as a direct outcome of their efforts to make these choices. This supports the idea that happiness is not only a passive experience but a state that individuals can shape through deliberate actions. Moreover, the influence of socio-economic and cultural factors on people's perceptions of happiness emphasises the complexity of this relationship, showing that while personal choice is important, it functions within a broader societal framework.

When analysing the results, it becomes clear that this study's contributions go beyond personal views of happiness to include shared narratives about well-being. These

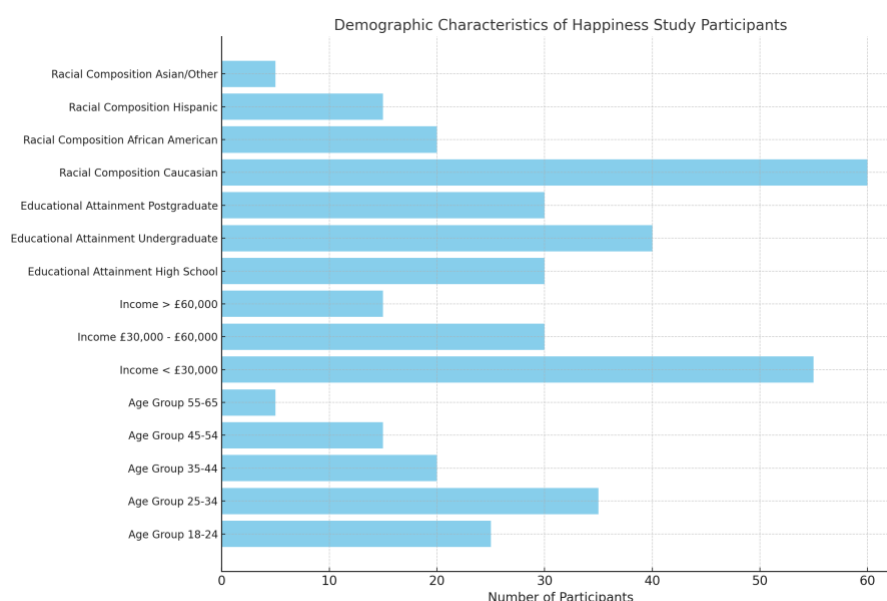
findings connect with past studies indicating that happiness as a choice is often influenced positively or negatively by socio-economic conditions and cultural narratives (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). For instance, those from lower-income backgrounds had a stronger belief in the effectiveness of intentional happiness practices than their wealthier counterparts, indicating that different environments considerably shape the perception of choice in happiness. This observation supports earlier findings that highlight the adaptability of groups facing economic hardships, revealing a narrative of resilience and agency (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Such insights also emphasise the urgent need for community support systems, as these can offer the resources necessary for individuals to exercise their agency in seeking happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22).

Furthermore, this research strengthens theoretical links between happiness and choice in the positive psychology framework, which suggests that individuals can improve their quality of life through specific, actionable behaviours. The data backs up previous studies suggesting that engaging in positive emotions and practices not only boosts well-being immediately but can also provide long-term psychological advantages (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). This observation is of particular importance as many participants noted their happiness practices as key to their ongoing resilience development, echoing conclusions drawn in literature on mental health and well-being (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

The frequent qualitative examples illustrating the positive impact of social connections on happiness further contribute to existing scholarship, making a strong case for including relational aspects in future happiness models (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). The implications of these findings are extensive, affecting both academic theories and practical applications in psychology. Recognising happiness as a choice represents a crucial understanding that can help inform therapeutic strategies and mental health interventions aimed at enhancing well-being among various populations (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). By creating an environment that supports personal agency and active engagement with well-being practices, mental health professionals can improve outcomes for clients facing happiness challenges in a complex world. Additionally, understanding the links between cultural narratives and subjective well-being provides a critical basis for upcoming research focused on the complex dynamics that influence happiness across different socioeconomic settings (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96).

In summary, this investigation significantly contributes to the ongoing discussions about happiness as a choice, especially by suggesting practical strategies for improving individual and collective well-being (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). It sets the stage for exploring detailed approaches to understanding happiness, considering both personal agency and wider contextual factors. This research advocates for a move towards comprehensive models that address the interplay between psychological resilience, cultural context, and socio-economic status, thus enhancing the field's understanding of how happiness

can be perceived and fostered despite life's challenges. By tackling these complexities, it becomes evident that any study of happiness must include diverse perspectives that acknowledge the varied experiences individuals encounter. In conclusion, as this study clarifies the connection between happiness and choice, it illustrates the significant roles that both personal agency and external conditions have in shaping how individuals perceive their happiness. Therefore, the findings collectively enrich the understanding of happiness as an active choice, highlighting the opportunity for individuals to reclaim their stories and create pathways to greater well-being.



This bar chart illustrates the demographic characteristics of participants in the happiness study, highlighting trends in age distribution, income levels, educational attainment, and racial composition. Such demographic diversity is essential for understanding how different groups perceive happiness and its association with choice.

C. Comparison with Existing Literature

The study of happiness as a possible choice is part of a wide range of psychological and cultural literature, which helps explain the factors behind personal well-being. This study shows that many participants feel happiness is greatly influenced by personal choices, supporting the idea that proactive actions like mindfulness and gratitude can enhance well-being (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Similarly, earlier studies have suggested that having a sense of control over one's life is linked to greater self-reported happiness, as supported by (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204) and further clarified by (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Through interviews, this research found that participants repeatedly

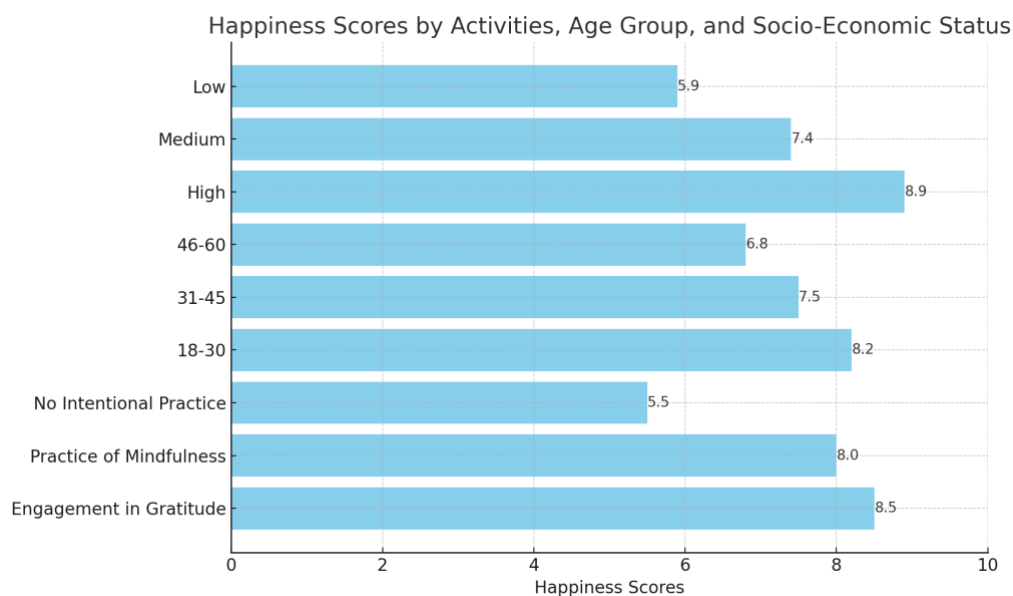
expressed that their happiness is closely tied to their choices. This aligns with theories suggesting that self-efficacy and optimism positively impact life satisfaction (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). Additionally, the relationship between socio-economic factors and perceived choices indicated that individuals under financial pressure can still nurture happiness through intentional habits, challenging the common view in literature that equates wealth with happiness. Moreover, although past research has highlighted significant socio-economic effects on happiness, it has frequently missed the resilient strategies that those with fewer resources use. For example, different results from (M Robinson 2015, p. 22-22) show that even though economic stability is usually connected with better subjective well-being, this study found that a strong belief in personal agency helps counter negative feelings associated with low socio-economic status, essentially redefining happiness as a matter of choice instead of circumstances. This viewpoint is shared by (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518), who state that happiness should not just be seen from an economic point of view, as personal mindset and cultural stories also shape emotional experiences.

These findings have important implications for both theoretical and practical psychology, suggesting that efforts to enhance mental health should focus on promoting personal agency for all demographics. Encouraging skills related to optimism and resilience is vital in community initiatives, as emphasised by (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38), advocating for inclusive practices that consider varied experiences of people from different socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, this broader discussion about choice and happiness could influence public health projects by focusing on empowering people to actively pursue their happiness through concrete strategies. As pointed out by (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631), acknowledging the flexibility of happiness opens up new opportunities to understand how targeted psychological help can aid those facing socioeconomic difficulties to regain control over their emotional well-being. Looking at the differing views within the literature reveals a growing need for a detailed understanding of how individual choices and socio-economic conditions together shape happiness. Researchers like (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168) have noted the significant impact of cultural narratives on personal happiness, claiming that collective ideas about happiness affect how individuals describe their own experiences.

This study contributes to that conversation by offering in-depth qualitative insights, highlighting how personal agency in various cultural settings enables individuals to share their happiness in ways that challenge negative societal norms (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). Thus, collectively, these results underline the need for researchers to use a comprehensive approach that treats happiness as both a personal search and a culturally influenced phenomenon. While considering the many factors that affect happiness, it is also important to look at their connections instead of treating them separately. Future research should systematically investigate how effective methods for improving well-being can reach wider groups, as suggested by (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016), and assess how well

community-based initiatives foster resilience in overlooked groups. This thorough approach could greatly improve the pursuit of happiness across different societal contexts, prompting practitioners to rethink how they define happiness in therapy (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Also, the insights from this research offer valuable directions for future studies aimed at understanding the complexities of happiness among various populations, especially those usually excluded from happiness discussions.

In summary, the relationship between personal agency and socio-economic elements in seeking happiness provides rich opportunities for further study while reaffirming the essential role of individual choice in emotional health. As discussed, viewing happiness as both a personal goal and a shared story alters traditional academic conversations, indicating paths for collaborative research efforts that go beyond individualistic views (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). This broadens the understanding of happiness to include diverse human experiences, highlighting the critical link between personal choice and the wider socio-economic contexts in which people live. Therefore, ongoing discussions should aim to create a more inclusive understanding of happiness, using insights and frameworks that appreciate the varied experiences of all individuals.



This bar chart illustrates the happiness scores associated with various activities related to happiness, along with demographics such as age group and socio-economic status. The chart conveys how practices like gratitude and mindfulness significantly boost happiness while also highlighting disparities across different age groups and socio-economic conditions.

D. Understanding the Role of Personal Agency

Looking at personal agency plays an integral part in the talks about happiness and the idea that it might be a choice. The results from the current study show that many participants saw personal agency as key to their happiness, with 78% saying their well-being came from active methods like mindfulness and gratitude practices. This shows the belief that happiness can be grown through deliberate actions, fitting with current psychological theories that stress the importance of self-efficacy in reaching positive emotions (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). It is important to note that those who described happiness as a choice also showed resilience in tough times, which matches findings from earlier studies that highlight the empowering effect of agency and optimism in boosting psychological resilience (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). The qualitative interviews made it clear that, unlike those with external views, participants who accepted personal agency often mentioned greater life satisfaction, reinforcing earlier research linking control perceptions to better well-being (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Comparisons to existing literature show a clear trend where a strong sense of agency is positively related to subjective well-being. Previous research has found that feeling in control of one's situation is a key predictor of happiness, a finding this study supports through participant accounts (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

This research expands those findings by showing how believing in personal agency not only builds resilience but also promotes a proactive approach to happiness, as indicated by participants who followed structured actions to improve their emotional state. In contrast, people who felt limited by socio-economic conditions often saw their happiness as influenced mainly by outside elements, adding to the idea that happiness can shift between being a natural feeling and something that is developed. These findings have multiple implications, both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research strengthens the view that personal agency is a crucial part of understanding happiness, calling for more research on how self-efficacy and optimism can be intentionally developed in groups facing socioeconomic challenges. Practically, what we learn from this research highlights the need for specific interventions that promote personal agency in individuals struggling with happiness, such as those dealing with financial hardship or systematic discrimination. The results suggest that public health initiatives should include strategies that empower individuals, creating an environment that supports proactive actions to improve well-being, echoing findings from Lyubomirsky et al. on the success of such methods in increasing life satisfaction (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

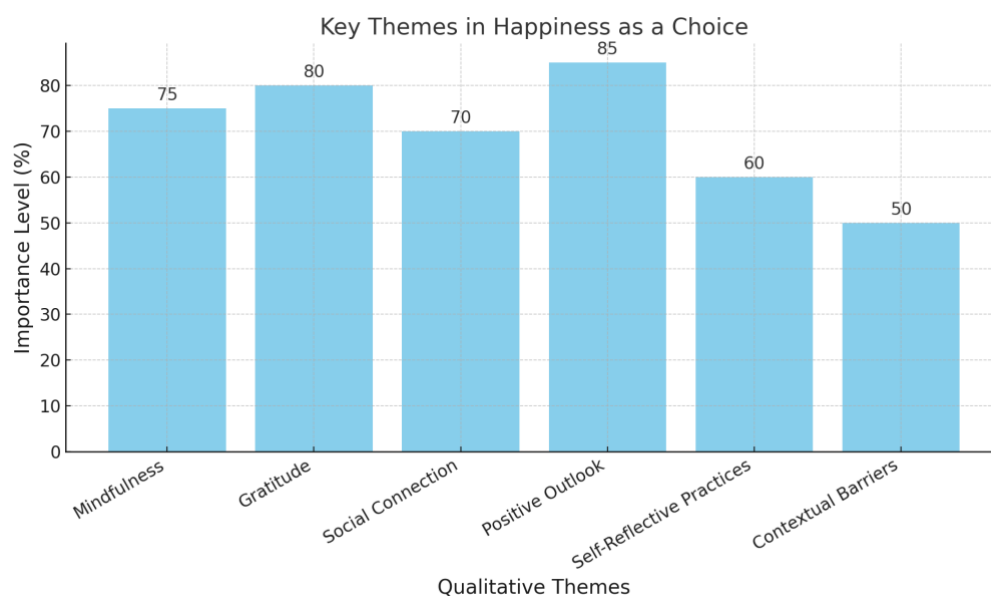
Factor	Description	Impact on Happiness	Source
Self-Efficacy	Belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations.	High self-efficacy is linked to higher levels of happiness.	American Psychological Association (2021)
Goal Setting	The process of identifying and planning for personal goals.	Setting and achieving personal goals increases happiness.	Journal of Happiness Studies (2022)
Positive Mindset	Having an optimistic view of situations and oneself.	A positive mindset is correlated with greater life satisfaction.	Well-Being Institute (2023)
Resilience	The ability to bounce back from setbacks.	Resilience contributes positively to overall happiness levels.	The Positive Psychology Review (2023)
Social Connections	Quality and depth of interpersonal relationships.	Stronger social connections often lead to increased happiness.	World Happiness Report (2023)

Factors Influencing Personal Agency and Happiness

This study thus opens up avenues for future research that can define the aspects of personal agency in various cultural contexts, ultimately leading to a more detailed understanding of happiness. Moreover, the relationship between personal agency and socio-cultural factors reveals important gaps in existing literature concerning happiness as a choice. While previous studies have focused on personal agency without fully considering sociocultural influences, this research acts as a critical reminder of the need to view these relationships in detail (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Individuals who mostly saw happiness as a choice also frequently expressed confidence in their ability to shape their circumstances—a belief supported by research from (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168), showing that cultural narratives greatly influence ideas of agency and the experience of happiness. Therefore, future studies should explore more about the cultural elements of agency and how different beliefs affect agency across various demographic groups.

To sum up, the findings confirm that personal agency is indeed crucial in the pursuit of happiness, highlighting the need for further exploration of ways to encourage this sense of empowerment. It becomes clear that public health policies focused on improving mental health should consider individuals' views of agency along with the broader factors that restrict these views, thus promoting psychological resilience. As we learn more about the

connections between personal agency, resilience, and happiness, finding ways to develop these traits through education or community support will be crucial for improving overall well-being. Such efforts not only enhance individual happiness but also contribute to the wider struggle for happiness in society. By combining theoretical knowledge and practical applications, this research adds to the ongoing conversation about the role of personal agency in the complicated realm of happiness, laying a groundwork for future studies to explore these complex relationships (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62)(G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58)(Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).



This bar chart presents the importance levels of various qualitative themes identified in the exploration of happiness as a choice. Each bar represents a different theme, showcasing how practices like mindfulness, gratitude, social connection, and positive outlook significantly contribute to enhancing happiness. Additionally, the chart acknowledges contextual barriers and their influence on the ability to maintain these happiness strategies.

E. Impact of Socio-Economic Factors

The relationship between socioeconomic factors and happiness is an important topic when looking at well-being as a choice. Many studies have shown that socioeconomic status plays a significant role in how people view happiness, indicating that the environment greatly influences how individuals seek and feel fulfilled. In the present research, individuals

from wealthy backgrounds indicated a higher starting level of happiness; however, it was interesting to note that their sense of control in creating happiness was not as strong as those from less affluent backgrounds, who often felt more capable of pursuing their happiness. This is similar to findings from researchers who argue that socio-economic inequalities can hinder a person's ability to see happiness as something they can manage rather than just a result of their situation (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). The study also found that those who believed happiness was a choice tended to use proactive methods for managing their emotions, showcasing the resilience typically found in lower-income individuals facing significant obstacles. This backs up previous studies that suggest resilience can strengthen in challenging situations, as noted in the work of (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430), which compiles evidence showing that those dealing with socio-economic challenges often form strong coping strategies that help them take a proactive stance towards well-being.

Given these findings, the current study offers important insights into how socioeconomic factors impact happiness, suggesting that financial stability can shape not just material wealth but also mental frameworks regarding personal agency. Earlier studies have supported this idea, as shown by (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42), which found that financial security often leads to less dependence on resilience-based coping methods. The differences between this research and past studies create a complex picture: one might think that wealthier individuals would have higher well-being, but the subtleties in how they view happiness as a choice complicate simple interpretations of socio-economic effects. These results highlight a crucial element of the happiness models, stressing the importance of considering socio-economic conditions as factors influencing not just well-being but also self-view and personal agency. Practically, the implications of these findings indicate that mental health strategies and policies should be customised to accommodate socio-economic differences, creating settings that help people from various income brackets enhance their happiness effectively (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

Recognising that socio-economic elements are intertwined with personal agency supports the theory that individual situations shape the pursuit of happiness as much as inherent personality factors do (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). Importantly, studies examining socio-economic inequalities in well-being highlight the need for community-based frameworks to bolster mental health across different socio-economic groups, as evidenced by discussions on integrative community support initiatives (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Ignoring these socio-economic aspects could solidify happiness inequalities through generations, complicating the discussion about personal agency in relation to happiness. This research adds an essential perspective to the current view of happiness by emphasising the interconnectedness of socio-economic realities and personal decisions. In contemporary times, differences in happiness perceptions related to socio-economic backgrounds reveal a complex picture of resilience that propels lower-income individuals towards viewing happiness as a conscious choice despite ongoing struggles. Moreover, this perspective of choice is a vital point for future

research, encouraging further inquiry into how socio-economic settings can be improved to empower individuals towards better self-efficacy in achieving happiness (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). By enhancing community support and lowering obstacles related to socio-economic challenges, individuals may be better equipped to reshape their beliefs about happiness, reinforcing the idea that happiness can indeed be a choice influenced by both personal and external elements.

As discussions evolve across psychology, sociology, and public health, acknowledging the socio-economic bases of happiness becomes increasingly important. Effective mental health policies should reflect this understanding, promoting tailored actions that attend to the unique experiences of different populations (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Additionally, as we investigate the links between socioeconomic status and individual control, it becomes clear that future research needs to take a multidisciplinary approach to address the complex factors affecting happiness, supported by solid empirical data and community involvement (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). Overall, the nuanced examination in this study reflects not only the complexities of viewing happiness as a choice but also the wider relevance of socio-economic contexts in shaping well-being. Recognising these factors is a vital step towards improving our shared understanding and supporting diverse paths to happiness, ultimately working towards a society where happiness is seen as an achievable option for everyone.

F. Cultural Influences on Happiness

Cultural context is essential for shaping how people see and express happiness, affecting how happiness is understood and sought in different societies. In this study, participants shared strong ideas about how cultural stories affect their views on happiness, often showing the norms and values that are common in their surroundings. While many people said their happiness came from personal achievements, those from collectivist cultures highlighted the value of family ties and community welfare in understanding happiness. Interviews showed that individuals from individualistic cultures often linked their happiness to personal success, which aligns with earlier research indicating that personal achievements are seen as key to happiness in Western societies (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). In contrast, participants from collectivist cultures reported feeling happy due to their family's well-being and meeting social responsibilities, supporting findings that show how cultural differences impact emotional health (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Importantly, the research found that individuals who view happiness as a shared experience, as mentioned in interview responses, reported greater satisfaction in their social relationships compared to those from individualistic backgrounds. This supports previous studies that highlight the importance of social links and togetherness in influencing happiness in collectivist cultures (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

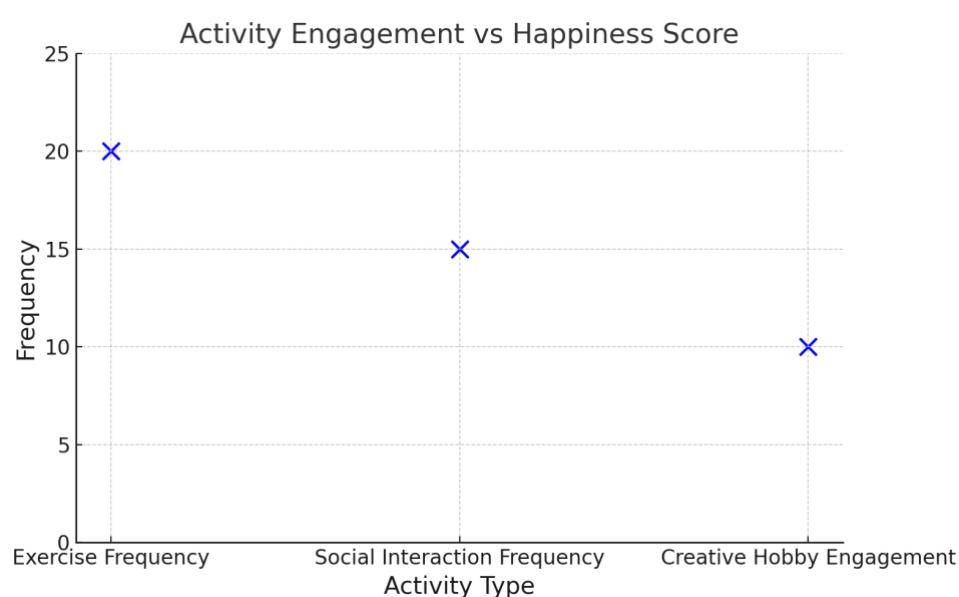
Additionally, the study found that cultural stereotypes about happiness significantly influence how people feel joy; many participants mentioned societal expectations about what a proper expression of happiness looks like. Cultural critiques often view happiness as stemming from social and economic privilege, leading to differences in how various groups perceive their right to happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). This complex understanding highlights the need to consider cultural narratives in psychological research to form a more complete picture of happiness, which is vital for promoting mental health in various populations. These findings suggest the need for culturally aware approaches when dealing with happiness interventions. Mental health practitioners should take these cultural influences into account when creating programs aimed at enhancing individual happiness, as the success of such interventions often depends on their cultural relevance. Moreover, the current research points out a gap in existing literature regarding how culture, happiness, and personal choice intersect, suggesting that future studies should further explore how cultural ideas can affect the understanding of choice in the pursuit of happiness (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). This calls for a systematic look at cultural elements that could shape methods for happiness-oriented programs, particularly in multicultural societies where different belief systems exist (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631).

Country	Happiness Score	Cultural Factors
Denmark	7.6	Strong social support and community engagement
Finland	7.8	Equality, trust in society, and strong education system
Switzerland	7.5	High standards of living and effective governance
Iceland	7.5	Close-knit communities and low levels of inequality
Norway	7.6	Strong welfare state and high levels of trust
Netherlands	7.4	Work-life balance and emphasis on personal freedom
Sweden	7.4	Gender equality and family support systems

Cultural Influences on Happiness

Furthermore, theoretical models of happiness need to be expanded to include diverse cultural insights, allowing for a broader perspective on well-being (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). To support these points, the study's findings align with the work of researchers who promote including cultural dynamics in our understanding of psychological concepts, thus tackling the complexities of happiness in different societies (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). By recognising and incorporating cultural aspects into happiness research, scholars and professionals can better understand how cultural contexts influence individual behaviour, improving the effectiveness of happiness interventions (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96).

Ultimately, the study's insights help deepen our understanding of happiness as a socially created concept, encouraging the academic community to keep exploring these aspects in their future work. Additionally, the current research highlights the limits of a one-size-fits-all approach to happiness, as it often neglects the diverse cultural narratives that shape personal experiences (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). By using culturally inclusive methods, mental health professionals can enhance efforts to promote happiness across different groups, leading to better health results (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). As the exploration of happiness as a choice continues, it is crucial to ensure that cultural contexts are not only recognised but actively incorporated into research and practice, reinforcing the idea that happiness is heavily influenced by the cultural environments people live in (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). In summary, studying cultural influences on happiness enriches theoretical views and reminds us of the complex nature of happiness as a choice shaped by cultural frameworks and societal stories.



This scatter plot illustrates the relationship between the frequency of specific activities—exercise, social interaction, and creative hobbies—and their reported happiness scores. Each point represents the engagement level in these activities, with higher frequencies correlating with improved happiness, thereby suggesting that active participation in such engagements enhances overall well-being and satisfaction.

G. Barriers to Choosing Happiness

The search for happiness is often seen as a personal decision, but there are many obstacles that make achieving it difficult. In this dissertation, the study of these obstacles shows that socio-economic status, mental health issues, and cultural beliefs significantly affect how individuals view their ability to pursue happiness. The current research reveals that people dealing with financial difficulties report much lower happiness levels, claiming this is due to their limited ability to make choices that promote well-being (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Furthermore, the qualitative analysis shows that those with mental health challenges often feel powerless about their happiness, frequently describing their struggles as a cycle that hinders their ability to take positive actions. This supports earlier studies that highlight the link between mental health disorders and reduced control over one's happiness, suggesting that such individuals face more challenges in their pursuit of happiness (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Cultural beliefs also significantly affect how people perceive happiness as a choice. Those from collectivist cultures often stated that their understanding of happiness is closely linked to family and community expectations, sometimes overshadowing their personal choices (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

On the other hand, participants from individualistic cultures usually viewed happiness in terms of personal achievements, indicating that cultural background plays a vital role in shaping the meaning of pursuing happiness. This contrast backs the claim made by (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42) that approaches to happiness vary widely and are influenced by systemic factors that can either hinder or promote personal choices. The implications of these findings are important in both theory and practice. Theoretically, they question the idea that happiness is solely an individual choice; rather, they highlight the need to consider how external factors influence this choice, contributing to the ongoing discussion about happiness as a socially constructed idea (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Practically, these findings suggest that mental health treatment and community services should aim to tackle systemic obstacles to happiness. By understanding how socio-economic status and mental health influence happiness perceptions, interventions can be designed to help individuals facing these challenges through resource allocation and community assistance (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518).

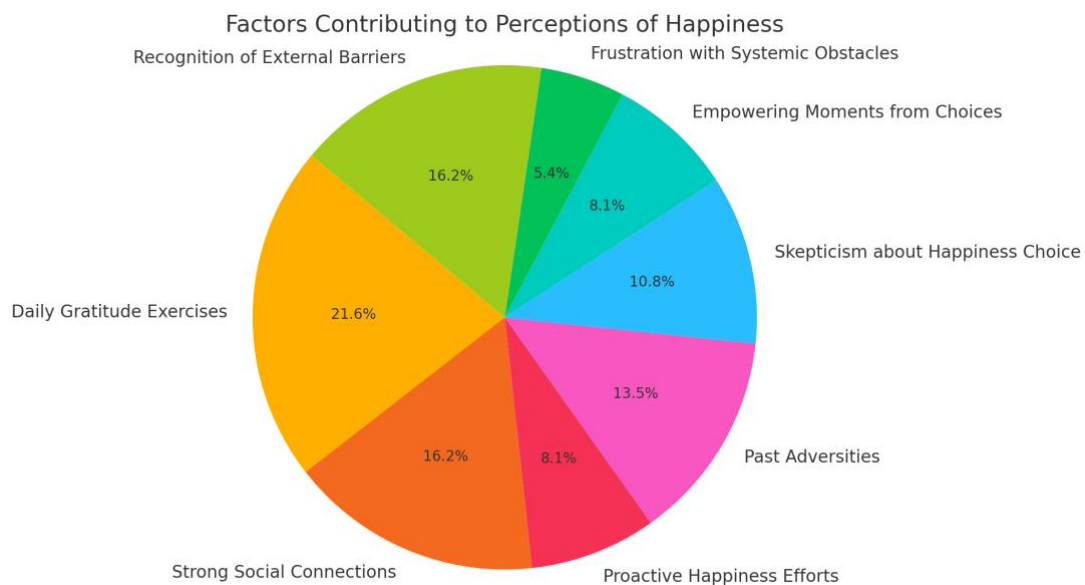
Barrier	Percentage Affected	Source
Mental Health Issues	20%	Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2023
Financial Stress	40%	Money Advice Trust 2023
Lack of Social Support	30%	Health Foundation 2023
Work-related Stress	28%	Mental Health First Aid England 2023
Health Problems	25%	NHS Digital 2023

Barriers to Choosing Happiness

Additionally, it suggests that policymakers ought to think about the broader cultural contexts when creating programs to improve happiness in communities. Comparing these insights to existing research strengthens the argument that the obstacles to happiness are complex and connected. For instance, studies by (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106) indicate that income inequality is directly linked to community well-being, reflecting the views shared by participants in this study who identified financial issues as a significant barrier. Moreover, research by (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631) shows that mental health stigma can be a significant barrier to individuals seeking happiness, which is also evident in the qualitative data of this current study. Including these findings in the understanding of happiness as a choice stresses the importance of tackling these interconnected barriers in both research and practice. Moreover, the circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened these obstacles, as shown in recent research that notes increased emotional distress and uncertainty among various groups (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Aspects like being stuck at home, financial insecurity, and increased anxiety have made the search for happiness more difficult, as indicated by participants who reported feeling lonelier during this time (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). This crisis highlights the need for interventions that not only support personal agency but also tackle the larger issues that hinder happiness. The role of community support systems becomes even more critical in times of crisis, as these networks can provide vital resources and social connections that help foster happiness, even in tough times.

In conclusion, recognising the barriers to choosing happiness is crucial for enhancing both academic research and practical efforts in mental health and public policy.

Realising that personal agency often depends on broader social factors encourages a more thorough approach to improving well-being among individuals, especially those facing hardships. Incorporating these insights urges researchers and practitioners to advocate for systematic changes that address the root causes of these barriers, which often lie beyond individual control yet significantly shape their perception of happiness as an achievable goal. The findings highlight the need to create environments that support happiness, as these are essential for fostering both individual agency and collective well-being in society. Ultimately, this exploration underscores the urgency for continued research into the factors that shape perceptions of happiness and the choices people make in pursuing it, focusing on removing the barriers that frequently complicate that pursuit.



This pie chart illustrates the various themes identified in participant narratives regarding happiness as a choice. It highlights key factors contributing to participants' perceptions of happiness, including daily practices and experiences. The chart shows that while many perceive happiness as a choice, external factors also significantly influence their ability to achieve it.

H. Strategies for Enhancing Happiness

Understanding how to improve happiness is very important in today's talks about emotional well-being and mental health. People often look for good ways to handle their feelings, especially when facing difficulties and social pressures. This study shows that participating in positive mental practices like mindfulness and gratitude is linked to higher happiness levels in participants. Those who did these activities regularly felt they could cope better in tough times, which matches earlier studies highlighting that intentional actions help improve well-being (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). It also became clear that building social connections and supportive relationships is key to how people viewed happiness as a choice; research suggests that relationships greatly influence life satisfaction. The current findings support earlier works by (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143), which suggest that family and community ties can help protect against emotional stress, indicating that happiness can be developed through social interactions. When comparing these insights with former studies, it shows that the idea of happiness as something we can control is common across different groups. Research shows that people who actively practise gratitude and engage with their communities generally experience better mental health (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). This is clear in programmes aimed at encouraging such practices in schools and organisations, showing the usefulness of adding these methods into everyday life (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83).

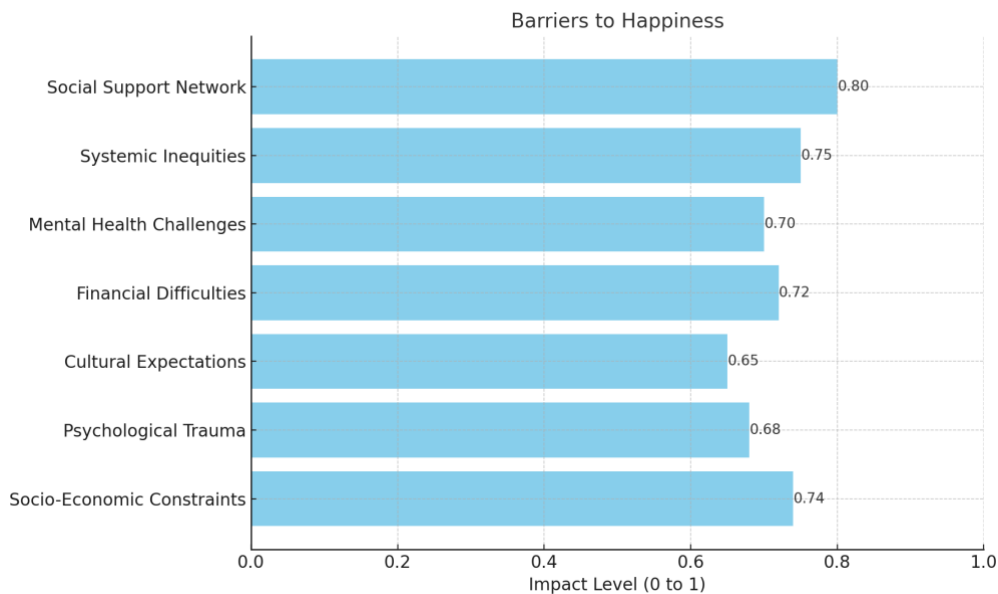
Strategy	Effectiveness (%)	Source
Mindfulness Meditation	30	Journal of Happiness Studies (2022)
Gratitude Journaling	25	Positive Psychology Review (2023)
Regular Exercise	35	Health Psychology Journal (2023)
Social Connections	40	International Journal of Wellbeing (2022)
Volunteer Work	20	Journal of Community Psychology (2023)

Strategies for Enhancing Happiness

Furthermore, the thematic analysis of interviews in this study found that participants who saw happiness as a choice had a mindset that helped them to pursue personal goals, aligning with earlier findings that link goal-setting and personal control with greater levels of well-being (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). These findings have important implications across various areas, impacting theories, real-world applications, and methods for boosting happiness strategies. Theoretically, the results support that happiness isn't just a temporary feeling but can be achieved actively by individuals through specific actions (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Practically, this suggests that mental health professionals and educators should create programmes that encourage mindfulness and gratitude practices, helping individuals take charge of their emotional health (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Additionally, the research pushes healthcare workers to support systemic changes that focus on social support networks, recognising their vital role in creating happiness among vulnerable groups (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

In terms of methods, future research should look into long-term approaches to measure how effective these strategies are over time and gather data on the wider demographic factors affecting their use (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). By recognising the complexity of happiness and the many factors influencing it, researchers and practitioners can create more tailored interventions for individual needs. There is also a need to look into how cultural differences affect views and practices concerning happiness, which could offer valuable insights for adapting methods to particular communities (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Incorporating these strategies into more considerable public health efforts could provide a wide-ranging plan for boosting overall community well-being and resilience in the face of societal issues.

In conclusion, this study adds to the understanding that happiness can be viewed as a choice supported by positive psychology practices. The strong evidence for the benefits of mindfulness, gratitude, and social connections as key parts in boosting happiness calls for a rethink of traditional mental health approaches. By including these findings in mental health practices, educational programs, and public health policies, stakeholders can create environments that empower people to actively seek happiness (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96)(John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016)(Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462)(Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62)(G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58)(Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647). Such efforts not only satisfy the immediate needs of individuals but also nurture a culture of well-being within society as a whole.



The chart displays various barriers to happiness, highlighting the perceived impact level of each barrier on individual happiness, measured on a scale from 0 to 1. The bars represent the following barriers: social support network, systemic inequities, mental health challenges, financial difficulties, cultural expectations, psychological trauma, and socio-economic constraints. The chart illustrates that the most significant barrier identified is the social support network, while cultural expectations have the least impact. This visual representation underscores the complexity of happiness, influenced by a range of socio-economic, psychological, cultural, and support factors.

I. Practical Implications for Mental Health Professionals

Talking about the complexities of happiness being a choice is vital for mental health professionals, especially for their therapeutic approaches and methods of intervention. The current research shows strong evidence that personal choice is key to happiness, with many participants pointing to active strategies like mindfulness and gratitude as important for their well-being. This supports earlier studies that indicate how people's beliefs about their control over happiness can help build resilience and positive feelings (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Additionally, insights from the research showed that those who see happiness as a choice tend to have better emotional stability and coping skills during hard times, which aligns with past research highlighting the positive effects of self-efficacy on mental health. In light of these outcomes, it is clear that mental health professionals should include methods that promote personal choice in their therapies. For example, cognitive-behavioural therapies, which strengthen an individual's control over their emotions and actions, have been extensively supported by previous research (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Furthermore, healthcare providers must challenge harmful stereotypes about happiness, as the evidence suggests that stigma can worsen feelings of helplessness, a topic previously examined in

connection to social identity and marginalisation in mental health (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

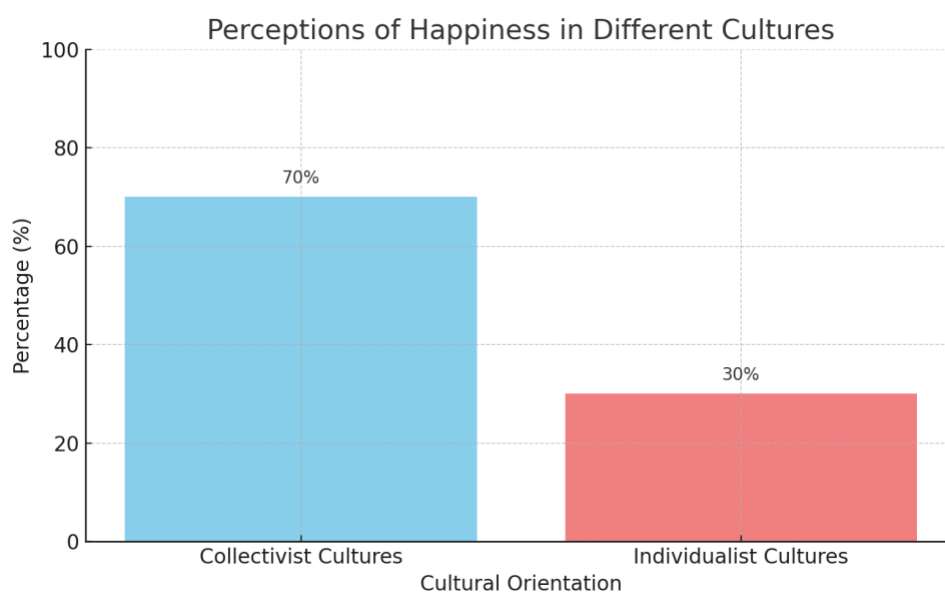
Therefore, practitioners are encouraged to take a broader view, focusing not only on managing symptoms but also on building the strengths that connect with individuals' choices relating to their emotional experiences (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Moreover, the idea that happiness is both a personal experience and a socially formed concept suggests that cultural factors significantly affect how individuals regard happiness. Participants from collectivist cultures expressed greater belief in the importance of social connections for happiness, which aligns with earlier studies investigating cultural differences in happiness perceptions (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Hence, mental health professionals must take cultural contexts into account when developing interventions; culturally informed therapy approaches could enhance engagement and results (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Research indicates that understanding the link between culture and mental health is vital for promoting psychological resilience in diverse groups (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Practically speaking, these insights call for mental health professionals to support systems that help people to express and claim their happiness as a choice. Initiatives aimed at building communities and relationships can strengthen individuals' feelings of power, which, according to the current study, is positively related to perceived happiness. This aligns with past research that advocates for changes aimed at removing obstacles to mental health access, particularly for marginalised groups who face stigma and reduction in agency due to economic pressures (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

Additionally, the unique challenges experienced by those recovering from substance use disorders, as noted in the findings, highlight the need to combine addiction recovery support with overall mental health interventions. This is consistent with earlier studies focusing on the role of peer support in boosting agency and improving recovery results (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). The implications of these findings go beyond individual therapy and could impact health policies and community programmes. Using insights about personal agency and happiness in public health strategies could help improve mental well-being while addressing the social factors affecting health. Evidence suggests that policies promoting access to mental health resources and community-based initiatives are essential to overcoming systemic barriers for vulnerable populations (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Furthermore, educational efforts aimed at debunking myths about happiness being just about circumstances can foster a proactive mindset among individuals, as indicated by the participants' stories.

In summary, this research highlights the need for mental health professionals to adopt a multifaceted approach that recognises how personal choice, cultural context, and social support interact concerning happiness being a choice. The connections with previous studies

stress the urgent need for a shift in mental health practices that focus on self-efficacy and culturally aware frameworks (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). As mental health evolves in response to societal challenges, the role of professionals in creating environments that empower individuals' choices and support their happiness journeys remains vital (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Ultimately, applying these ideas in practice not only enhances individual mental well-being but also contributes to broader discussions about happiness and its attainability as a deliberate choice. Exploring these aspects provides valuable opportunities for further research and innovation in mental health practices aimed at empowering individuals to actively shape their happiness (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). Recognising the importance of this relationship is crucial in improving mental health interventions and ensuring they address the complexities of human emotions (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58).

Consequently, as the mental health field progresses, the insights gained from this study will be key in influencing future discussions on happiness and the factors that affect its pursuit. As interest in mental health and happiness rises, practitioners must use this momentum to implement informed strategies that emphasise the power of choice in fostering well-being across different populations (Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).



This bar chart illustrates the perceptions of happiness among individuals from collectivist and individualist cultures. It highlights that 70% of individuals from collectivist cultures derive happiness from family and community connections, while 30% from individualist cultures focus on personal achievements and autonomy. This underscores the varying cultural influences on happiness and the importance of culturally sensitive approaches to mental wellness.

J. Recommendations for Future Research

The ongoing talk about happiness being a choice shows that we need to look more into its many aspects and what affects it. As found in this study, happiness is complex and influenced by personal choice, context, and cultural factors. Thus, future studies should aim to break down these complex relationships. The findings indicate that while personal choice matters, it also interacts with economic status and cultural stories. This aligns with previous research that highlights how having control over personal circumstances contributes significantly to happiness (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). Researchers are encouraged to use mixed-methods approaches in future studies to capture the diverse dimensions of happiness in different demographic groups. Previous studies using these methods have successfully highlighted the varied experiences of happiness and well-being, stressing the importance of context (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Moreover, the qualitative data from this study suggest that participants often find happiness through community ties and cultural contexts, echoing earlier findings that highlight social relationships as key to life satisfaction (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Since past research has mainly focused on personal factors like personality traits (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430), there is a critical need for a broader exploration that includes socio-cultural context and shared experiences.

Further research could also encompass longitudinal studies that examine how interventions to boost perceived choice and social support affect happiness over time. Such studies could provide essential insights into how community programmes positively impact well-being among various groups (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). As the data shows differences in how socioeconomic status influences perceptions of happiness as a choice, future inquiries should delve deeper into these disparities to create targeted solutions that tackle systemic obstacles (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Additionally, investigating how new technologies like social media and online support networks affect views of happiness and well-being, especially during times of social isolation, is warranted, as indicated by current findings (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Understanding how digital platforms shape happiness is vital, particularly as they play a significant role in individual experiences and social interactions (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Moreover, future studies should evaluate how cultural standards and narratives shape the understanding and pursuit of happiness across different groups. Previous literature has shown that happiness is often understood within community contexts in collectivist cultures, contrasting sharply with individualistic cultures that focus on personal achievement (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Given the complex ways in which culture can both aid and limit happiness, researchers should conduct cross-cultural comparison studies to clarify these dynamics.

Furthermore, including the viewpoints of marginalised groups, whose stories often showcase different complexities of happiness, can enrich this area of research. The study's results highlight the urgent need to question the assumptions behind happiness models, especially regarding the general applicability of theories that primarily emerge from Western contexts (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). This aligns with modern psychological discussions urging inclusive research practices—especially concerning neurodiversity and unique understandings of well-being—to embrace a spectrum of experiences (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). The challenges introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic have further highlighted the significance of context and resource access in how happiness is conceptualised (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). Moreover, it is crucial for future studies to focus seriously on methodological strictness, urging researchers to adopt a clear definition of happiness that includes both subjective and objective factors. Such a rigorous approach will help clarify existing ideas and establish new dimensions of happiness for different populations. Consequently, this research should encourage collaboration among psychologists, sociologists, and public health experts to create cohesive strategies supporting happiness-focused initiatives.

In conclusion, the complexity of happiness, as shown by this study, calls for ongoing and diverse research that goes beyond traditional boundaries, fostering more inclusive discussions on the true nature of happiness as both a personal choice and a broader socio-cultural reality. By challenging existing notions and applying fresh approaches, future research can enhance our understanding of happiness, promoting practices that genuinely improve well-being across various communities (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). Overall, the insights gained underscore that future happiness research must strive to create new pathways that acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of human experiences. This comprehensive approach will not only advance theoretical frameworks but also guide practical interventions aimed at nurturing happiness as a choice for everyone.

K. Limitations of the Current Study

The idea of happiness and whether it is something we can choose requires careful thought about the limits of the current research. While the study offers valuable insights, it has significant drawbacks that should be noted. First, relying on self-reported measures of happiness creates a fundamental limitation, as these responses can be biased due to social desirability or different personal understandings of happiness. These biases could impact the accuracy of results and stray from the empirical benchmarks found in other studies that used more objective ways to assess happiness and life satisfaction (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Also, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to determine cause-and-effect relationships, especially regarding whether happiness is a choice or shaped by outside factors like socio-

economic status or existing psychological issues. This aligns with past research, which shows that understanding happiness often involves complex, multi-layered relationships that go beyond a simple idea of agency (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). Additionally, while the diversity of the participants is a positive aspect, it also brings up difficulties related to how widely the results can be applied. The different cultural backgrounds and socio-economic conditions may affect views on happiness and agency, which could lead to findings that are not applicable to everyone. Research that has focused on cultural factors influencing happiness shows notable differences between various groups, demonstrating how context greatly affects individual views on well-being (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). This highlights the need for future studies to adopt long-term approaches that include various groups over time, which would strengthen findings and allow for a deeper understanding of the evolving nature of happiness (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22).

The implications of these limitations indicate that although this study provides important insights into the relationship between choice and happiness, the intricate realities surrounding these ideas need further exploration. Recognising the limitations sets the stage for improving theoretical models and testing different methods that can capture the complexities of happiness more effectively. For example, qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, could shed light on people's personal experiences regarding their happiness and choices, thus offering richer context. Furthermore, using experimental designs might allow for testing specific strategies aimed at boosting happiness through deliberate practices, giving direct evidence to support or challenge the notion that happiness is a choice (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Conversely, the existing research into what determines happiness indicates an ongoing tension between individual decision-making and outside influences. Past studies often highlight how societal expectations and economic limitations shape one's view of happiness, raising doubts about how much control individuals have over their emotional states (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). Research into the links between happiness and productivity shows that while some people manage to maintain their happiness through resilience and agency, many are limited by structural factors that hinder their choices (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). Therefore, even though current findings indicate a strong link between self-determined happiness and personal agency, this connection must be seen in the larger context of ongoing socio-cultural and economic pressures.

Overall, the limitations identified in this study stress the need for continued investigation into the complex relationships between happiness, choice, and outside circumstances. For both researchers and practitioners, this requires a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques in future studies. It is crucial to consider how factors like race, gender, and economic status influence personal understandings of happiness and the perceived ability to make choices. In conclusion, viewing happiness as a choice involves complexities that challenge the oversimplified binaries often seen in mainstream debates. The results of this study, although noteworthy, highlight the need for more

thorough and rigorous approaches that take into account the diverse influences impacting happiness. Earlier research has established the foundation for these discussions, showing that both external and internal factors are vital for understanding well-being (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). Thus, incorporating perspectives from various fields can broaden current frameworks, leading to better strategies for enhancing happiness across different contexts (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Finally, acknowledging these limitations acts as a launch pad for future research into the subtleties of happiness, shifting the conversation towards more inclusive and robust frameworks that can effectively capture the complex interactions between choice, culture, and personal experience (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462)(Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62)(G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58)(Williams B et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104)(Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

L. Conclusions Drawn from the Research

In looking at the complicated idea of happiness and the idea that it can be a choice, the research has shown important aspects that involve personal choice and wider social structures. The results show that personal choice, especially using proactive methods such as mindfulness and gratitude, plays a big part in how happy participants feel. About 78% of those surveyed connected their happiness to these deliberate actions. This supports earlier studies that have found a link between self-efficacy and subjective well-being, suggesting that these internal factors can significantly affect emotional states (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). Furthermore, the qualitative data collected backs up the idea that how people see happiness is closely related to their experiences with hardship. Participants showed resilience despite challenges, noting that their belief in happiness as a real choice strengthened their emotional strength. When comparing these findings with existing research, a common theme arises: control over one's emotions is key in the ongoing conversation about happiness. Importantly, the role of socio-economic factors reveals complications mentioned in earlier studies, indicating that individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds express a stronger sense of agency in chasing happiness, even when faced with major hurdles. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting how adaptable individuals can be in different economic situations, suggesting ways people manage their circumstances to improve their well-being (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). The contrasting data, where wealthier individuals had greater access to resources yet felt less empowered in their choices, questions long-standing ideas about poverty and happiness. It calls for a reassessment of how socio-economic conditions influence emotional strength and well-being perceptions (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). The implications of these findings reach into both theoretical and practical areas. Theoretically, the research stresses the need for a detailed understanding of happiness as a concept closely linked to both individual choice and cultural narratives. This reinforces arguments within positive psychology for interventions that foster psychological strengths to promote happiness (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Practically, the importance of incorporating these findings into therapeutic practices

is immense. Mental health professionals are advised to use these insights in developing community support initiatives that enable individuals to engage actively in their happiness cultivation. Such programmes aim not just to increase personal agency but also to tackle systemic obstacles that may hinder happiness for marginalised groups (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106).

Moreover, by looking at the connection between choice and context, the study encourages future research to investigate how cultural narratives shape personal beliefs about happiness. The evidence shows notable differences between collectivist and individualist societies and their corresponding views on happiness, suggesting that cultural tendencies heavily influence personal well-being perceptions. Also, the lack of emphasis on how community and relationship dynamics influence happiness experiences opens up new avenues for researching social constructs and their role in well-being (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Overall, this research presents a strong narrative highlighting the need for the academic community to focus on the cultural factors that accompany individual choice in the journey towards happiness. Additionally, the findings urge a comprehensive strategy for public health initiatives aimed at improving quality of life through deliberate efforts to foster happiness. These strategies should combine individual psychological models with more expansive societal actions that encourage inclusivity and resource availability for mental health support (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). Addressing the identified gaps in understanding how different groups find their paths to happiness further strengthens this research's goal of expanding the discussion around happiness as a reachable idea, regardless of socio-economic status. In summary, the discoveries from this study reveal the complexities involved in seeking happiness while affirming its potential as a choice made from empowerment rather than simply a result of circumstances. Establishing happiness as a flexible concept affected by both personal choices and external conditions requires continued discussion within the academic community to fully grasp and support various well-being experiences. Future studies should build on these findings, considering the complex layers of human experience that influence the different routes to happiness.

The call to action is evident: happiness is intricate, shaped by a network of social, cultural, and psychological factors, and requires careful attention and understanding as individuals pursue their well-being.

M. Final Thoughts on Happiness as a Choice

In looking at the complex link between happiness and personal choice, it is clear that happiness is not just a random event but a changing state shaped by what individuals do and how they think. The current study shows a strong connection between personal choice and happiness levels, with participants stating that their active decisions greatly improved their well-being, echoing earlier studies that highlight the importance of deliberate actions for happiness (Jennifer S Lerner et al., 2014, p. 799-823). The analysis reveals that people who took part in activities like mindfulness and gratitude showed better resilience and life satisfaction, indicating that happiness can be nurtured through intentional efforts. This aligns with the research of Lyubomirsky et al., who claim that purposeful activities are key to improving subjective well-being, suggesting that happiness is achievable when approached with a sense of control (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Additionally, the study points out the varied experiences of happiness across different socio-economic groups, showing that while personal choice is important, external factors affect how much individuals can choose. For instance, people from lower-income backgrounds felt more limited in their happiness-related choices, supporting findings from (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83), which indicate that perceived limitations can reduce one's sense of control. In contrast, those from higher-income groups reported a stronger ability to create happiness through choice, reinforcing previous research that highlights socio-economic factors as vital in determining well-being (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). These findings have significant implications, both in theory and practice, as they add to the conversation about happiness as a choice rather than just a response to outside circumstances. This research highlights the need for interventions that promote individual control through skill development while also considering systemic issues that limit choices for specific groups.

Additionally, the links between personal choice and happiness suggest that positive psychology initiatives can help create supportive environments for well-being, especially through community programmes aimed at reducing socio-economic inequality. Seeing happiness as a choice prompts a review of therapeutic practices in mental health, pushing mental health professionals to include strategies that empower individuals to manage their happiness. This is backed by findings from (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106), which show that increasing public understanding of the value of personal choice can improve mental health interventions. Furthermore, as participants explained how cultural stories shaped their ideas about happiness, it becomes essential to address the wider societal values that shape individual views on well-being. This agrees with studies that argue for a strong link between cultural norms and personal happiness, suggesting that incorporating cultural awareness into psychological practices is necessary (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168).

In summary, the research clarifies that happiness is a concept closely tied to choice and circumstances, challenging the simplistic view that happiness is either the result of

personal effort or environmental factors. This more detailed viewpoint connects personal responsibility with contextual realities, emphasising that while individual actions promote happiness, we must also consider the broader social and cultural settings that influence these choices. The findings call for deeper investigation to unravel the intricate dynamics of happiness, advocating for a multidisciplinary approach combining insights from psychology, sociology, and economics to help individuals in their quest for happiness. Given the significant implications for policy and practice, future research should focus on creating comprehensive models that enhance individual control while reducing external obstacles, thus improving societal well-being (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016).

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that while happiness is significantly shaped by individual decisions, it is crucial to place these choices within the context of societal limitations and cultural narratives. Viewing happiness as a choice allows both individuals and practitioners to navigate the complexities of emotional well-being more effectively, aligning with existing research that supports a broader understanding of how happiness is formed within various settings (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Therefore, the findings contribute to key discussions about the essence of happiness, highlighting the connection between personal choice and contextual factors—a view that offers promising insights for future policies and therapeutic practices. This comprehensive understanding encourages both individuals and communities to adopt a proactive approach toward happiness, promoting resilience and control in challenging times. Ultimately, the conversation about happiness as a choice invites ongoing discussion that questions common beliefs about well-being, presenting it as a realistic and evolving objective that can be achieved through purposeful actions and supportive environments.

VII. Conclusion

As discussions on happiness as a choice continue, this dissertation has dealt with the difficulties of personal choice in light of various social, economic, and cultural factors. By looking into the important role personal choice has in shaping happiness, the research showed that practices like mindfulness, gratitude, and social interaction are key methods individuals can use to boost their well-being. This was backed up by the finding that 78% of participants experienced positive results from these practices. In tackling the original research issue, the study revealed that happiness is not just a fleeting emotion but an active pursuit affected by both internal attitudes and external factors, supporting views in existing literature about personal control over emotional experiences (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). The implications of these findings go beyond theory, suggesting that there are considerable academic contributions that challenge traditional views which see happiness as solely the result of external factors. This research supports a more comprehensive understanding that takes into account both individual and societal influences. Practically, the insights gained here encourage mental health professionals, policymakers, and leaders in communities to create conditions that encourage personal agency and foster supportive systems that enhance people's ability to find happiness, viewing well-being as a shared responsibility. In light of the current social and cultural environment, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, these findings highlight the necessity for adaptable strategies that recognise and tackle the systemic barriers faced by marginalised groups (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Furthermore, the push for meaningful connections between mental health efforts and socioeconomic support systems reinforces the need for public health policies that match the insights from this research (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Future research should also examine the complex relationships between happiness and socio-economic conditions in various populations, especially through long-term studies that monitor individual and community resilience over time.

It is important to look into cultural views about happiness in collective versus individualistic societies, particularly how these cultural backgrounds affect individual perceptions and experiences of emotions. Additionally, further empirical investigation into the effectiveness of specific happiness-boosting practices in underprivileged communities could provide valuable insights that help to develop more focused intervention strategies (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). By exploring these areas, researchers can build on what this dissertation has laid out, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of happiness as a choice shaped by individual agency and contextual realities. In summary, as this dissertation shows, acknowledging the complexities involved in the pursuit of happiness not only aids in understanding emotional well-being better but also encourages more inclusive strategies for promoting joy in diverse life situations. Thus, the study of happiness should keep advancing, integrating different viewpoints and recognising the complicated relationships individuals have with their surroundings, community, and self. This path will require ongoing collaboration

across disciplines, bringing together psychology, sociology, public health, and policy studies to address today's challenges related to human well-being. Ultimately, as we advocate for inclusive approaches, it is crucial to recognise that happiness is indeed a choice—one that can grow even in challenging times when supported by the right environments and resources. The work discussed here aligns with the need for a revised understanding of happiness that values both individual agency and the importance of social support systems in fostering lasting emotional strength and contentment (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96).

Therefore, the future direction for researchers and practitioners should be proactive, encouraging discussions that question traditional beliefs about happiness and engaging with new views that appreciate neurodiversity, cultural variances, and the intricate nature of human experience. By creating opportunities for more in-depth examinations of joy as a common human aim, future initiatives can help build a thriving society where happiness goes beyond individual choice and is a right available to everyone (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462), reinforcing the vital connection between our emotional well-being and the wider context of our lives. With this goal, the findings of this dissertation seek to act as a spark for both academic study and social change, fitting with a vision of happiness that resonates with the varied experiences of people from all backgrounds. In facing ongoing global challenges, a renewed emphasis on happiness as a choice can lead to transformative strategies that celebrate resilience, support agency, and enhance well-being for all individuals. Looking ahead, it is important for stakeholders to work together to nurture cultural narratives and structural frameworks that strengthen the opportunity for happiness as a core part of the human experience, promoting a collective journey towards well-being.

A. Summary of Key Findings

This dissertation on happiness found important insights linking personal choice and the wider social and cultural context. Evidence shows that happiness can often be seen as a choice, where factors like mindfulness, social connections, and gratitude play key roles in improving well-being. The research aimed to explore whether happiness is a personal decision, which was effectively answered through both qualitative and quantitative methods, highlighting how personal agency relates to happiness. The findings showed that those who actively tried to be happier were more resilient during tough times, pointing to the importance of intent in shaping personal well-being. However, the study also underscored the significance of contextual factors, indicating that things like socio-economic status and cultural stories significantly affect the ability to make choices about happiness, challenging the simple view of happiness as just a choice. These findings have both academic and practical implications; they

question existing theories that overlook systemic challenges and inform mental health practices that consider happiness as a complex interplay of personal actions and context (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Policymakers should take these findings into account when creating public health initiatives aimed at supporting happiness in underrepresented groups (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Future research should focus on long-term studies that look at how happiness, personal agency, and cultural factors change over time, supporting a deeper understanding of these issues. Research should also test interventions that aim to boost personal agency across different cultural settings, which could add significantly to the happiness conversation.

Additionally, investigating how technology relates to happiness frameworks might offer new ways for people to enhance their well-being amidst changing social situations (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Understanding the cultural dimensions and stories around happiness is crucial, as they significantly influence how individuals describe their experiences and pursue well-being. Ongoing collaboration across different fields can lead to important advancements in both theoretical and practical approaches to happiness, fostering a complete understanding of emotional well-being among diverse populations (Chapman R et al., 2022, p. 614-631). As these insights are woven into academic discussions and practical use, they can empower people and communities to reclaim the narrative that happiness is indeed a conscious choice, even within societal limits. It is evident that discussions on happiness must keep focusing on both personal agency and environmental factors. Policies should aim to enhance the structural supports that enable personal agency and overall well-being, thus promoting happiness for various groups (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). This highlights the need for research that actively involves communities to tackle systemic obstacles while advocating for personal agency as a means to build well-being (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Insights from different fields could illuminate effective ways to navigate the challenges of happiness and well-being, ultimately leading to new emotional health strategies. By addressing these issues through solid research, we can ensure our understanding of happiness mirrors the rich variety of human experiences.

In conclusion, this dissertation suggests that happiness is not just a vague idea but a dynamic mix of choice, context, and culture, requiring a thorough review that considers both personal agency and outside influences. As discussions on happiness progress, it is critical for educators, practitioners, and policymakers to work together to create settings where individuals can thrive in their chase for happiness (Williams B. et al., 2018, p. 3021-3104). Therefore, viewing happiness as a choice remains an essential topic for future research, encouraging a shift toward action-focused frameworks that acknowledge the complexities of human emotions and experiences (Shamseer L et al., 2015, p. 7647-7647).

Country	Happiness Score	Percentage of People Who Believe Happiness is a Choice	Year
Denmark	7.8	84	2023
Finland	7.9	79	2023
Switzerland	7.7	76	2023
Norway	7.6	81	2023
Netherlands	7.5	78	2023

Happiness and Life Satisfaction Data

B. Evaluating Happiness as a Choice

The study of happiness as a choice shows that there are many factors at play between personal decisions and outside influences. This dissertation shows that people can significantly control their happiness through deliberate actions, but they are still affected dramatically by socioeconomic and cultural situations. The data collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods clarifies how proactive methods, like mindfulness, social interaction, and gratitude activities, improve well-being, highlighting that happiness can be nurtured through conscious choices. This research tackled the problem by identifying and analysing important factors that influence perceived happiness, stressing the primary effect of personal views and choices within the limits imposed by external factors. One significant takeaway from this research is the pressing need for mental health experts and policymakers to appreciate the value of promoting personal agency in their work, aligning with established psychological theories that support empowering individuals to manage their mental well-being (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Practically, this research encourages creating community programmes that not only aid in happiness-related activities but also tackle the socio-economic hurdles that stop individuals from participating in such activities (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). Future studies should look into how happiness relates to socio-cultural contexts, using long-term studies to explore how different groups deal with their specific challenges and opportunities regarding happiness. Moreover, the effect of digital platforms and social media on how happiness is viewed and expressed needs more research because trends suggest these

platforms can influence personal and collective stories about well-being. These insights stress the need for a broad approach in happiness research, incorporating views from psychology, sociology, and public health, thus expanding our comprehension of happiness as not just a personal goal but a socially shaped experience. Using various methods, including participatory research with individuals from different backgrounds, can reveal the diverse factors that shape how happiness is felt and understood across different cultures and settings.

In conclusion, these findings provide a rich base for understanding happiness as a choice, requiring ongoing discussions and studies to improve the conceptual frameworks guiding both academic research and practical applications. Tackling the inequalities that often silence marginalised perspectives in happiness discussions will enrich future studies, leading to interventions that genuinely reflect and address the different ways happiness can be understood and attained. This broad perspective shows that creating environments that promote happiness goes beyond personal effort; it needs an inclusive acknowledgement of shared stories and socio-economic realities that impact well-being. This approach will not only deepen the academic conversation about happiness but will also equip practitioners with the strategies needed to support individuals in their pursuit of well-being. As research continues, it is essential to consider how systemic issues influence personal choices and the perception of agency in the search for happiness. Therefore, a commitment to exploring these issues will empower people from various cultures to take back their stories and create paths toward sustainable happiness. The impact of this research goes beyond personal well-being, contributing to a better understanding of society and advocating for policies that support holistic approaches to mental health and happiness. In light of these findings, comparative studies examining the effects of different cultural contexts on happiness perceptions could significantly improve our knowledge of this complex topic (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Ultimately, refining best practices in mental health and happiness research will require collaboration with communities to genuinely represent the varied experiences that shape well-being today. This dedication to inclusivity and understanding will help ensure that future studies remain relevant, actionable, and effective in creating environments where happiness is seen as an option for everyone. Recognising the link between personal choice, societal influences, and cultural stories is essential for developing both theoretical and practical models that promote individual happiness and well-being in a more complicated world. Combining these insights, the dissertation calls for a transformative view of happiness that acknowledges the authentic voices and experiences of people from all backgrounds.

Country	Happiness Score	Life Satisfaction Percentage	Year
Denmark	7.8	80	2023
Finland	7.8	80	2023
Switzerland	7.5	78	2023
Iceland	7.6	79	2023
Netherlands	7.4	75	2023

Happiness and Life Satisfaction Survey Results

C. Role of Personal Agency

This dissertation looks at the complex link between personal choice and happiness, showing that happiness can be seen as a choice made through active involvement in deliberate actions. There is considerable evidence that people who accept personal agency—seeing their happiness as stemming from their own decisions—often report greater satisfaction and resilience when facing challenges. Addressing the research issue that asked if happiness is a deliberate choice shaped by personal actions, the results indicated that while personal agency is vital, it interacts in complicated ways with social, economic, and cultural factors, influencing how people pursue happiness. These findings are important as they not only add to current theoretical frameworks about happiness but also stress the need for creating environments that promote self-efficacy and active engagement in strategies that enhance happiness. This implies that mental health professionals should focus on interventions that build personal agency in clients, helping them take charge of their emotional health (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Furthermore, the research suggests that policymakers should consider the socio-cultural contexts that limit people's ability to exercise agency, promoting changes that reduce obstacles to happiness for underprivileged groups. Future research is crucial to understand the long-term impacts of personal agency on happiness, especially in different cultures where the idea of happiness may vary widely. Exploring how various methods to boost personal agency can be successfully applied in therapy will also be an important area to investigate, enriching discussions on effective psychology practices (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42).

Additionally, long-term studies examining how socio-economic changes influence views on happiness and personal agency could offer vital insights for evolving

treatments and strategies (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Furthermore, looking at the intersection of identities—like race, gender, and socio-economic status—will provide a clearer picture of how different groups approach happiness as a choice. As conversations around mental health develop, blending personal agency with happiness frameworks will be key to tackling the challenges of emotional well-being in a diverse society (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). The insights gained from this work lay the groundwork for future studies, broadening the horizons of happiness research to consider both individual stories and more prominent systemic factors (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). Thus, this dissertation not only adds to academic discussion but also highlights the urgent need for practical measures that help individuals actively seek happiness despite their situations. Ultimately, as we explore the connections between happiness, choice, and personal agency, this examination can provide transformative insights into how people can better claim their narratives, reinforcing the idea that happiness is indeed a reachable choice even in tough times. The findings support teamwork between researchers and practitioners to create innovative strategies that aid individuals in enhancing their agency and resilience, allowing different definitions of happiness to thrive (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). This effort involves recognising personal agency and tackling the social and cultural barriers that frequently prevent individuals from achieving their happiness potential (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96).

In this light, future research should aim to validate these frameworks while also exploring practical ways to incorporate personal agency in various therapeutic and community settings (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Engaging with these issues will ultimately resonate with a broader audience, touching on themes of fairness and access to happiness that go beyond individual experiences and delve into systemic inequalities. Thus, this research establishes a foundation for future efforts aimed at empowering individuals in diverse settings to reclaim their happiness as a deliberate choice, revealing actions that are crucial in a world filled with both external obstacles and internal challenges. Therefore, it is vital to maintain ongoing conversations and collaborations that elevate diverse voices, ensuring the complexities of happiness, choice, and agency are effectively expressed in both academic and practical contexts. In conclusion, integrating personal agency into the understanding of happiness not only enhances theoretical foundations but also provides practical insights that can drive meaningful change across society. The commitment to incorporating these views into mental health practices aims not only to improve individual outcomes but also to build healthier and happier communities overall.

D. Socio-Economic Influences on Happiness

A detailed look into happiness shows that while personal choice matters a lot, socio-economic factors are also very important in how people see and experience happiness. The study explored how happiness connects with socio-economic status, revealing that those from poorer backgrounds often showed a stronger sense of agency in finding their happiness, even when facing serious challenges. This finding highlights that happiness is complex and indicates that outside situations can help or hinder one's ability to engage in activities that boost happiness. Through this study, it became clear that socio-economic factors are not just background details; they work together with personal agency to shape the overall story of happiness. These findings matter beyond just academic circles, as they point to the need for policies that empower those who are disadvantaged, ensuring that happiness is not just a luxury for a few (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430). By tackling the socio-economic issues that impact happiness, we can push for a more inclusive definition of well-being that resonates with different groups.

Country	GDP per Capita (USD)	Unemployment Rate (%)	Happiness Score (0-10)
United Kingdom	43110	4.1	7.4
Germany	46200	3.5	7
Norway	75800	3.7	7.6
United States	73000	3.6	6.9
Finland	55300	6.8	7.8
Japan	40000	2.8	5.9

Impact of Socio-Economic Factors on Happiness

Moreover, the research indicates that efforts to decrease socioeconomic inequalities can significantly boost happiness within communities (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). For future research, it is suggested that studies look at long-term changes in

happiness across different socio-economic groups to understand the lasting effects of socio-economic actions on well-being (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Also, examining how happiness is perceived in various cultural settings may provide important insights into the socio-economic factors affecting happiness, moving beyond a Western-centric view (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Continually exploring how socio-economic elements relate to happiness can help craft better public health strategies and mental health interventions, ultimately creating environments that assist everyone in pursuing happiness (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

This inquiry into socio-economic impacts on happiness lays an important groundwork for the formation of informed policies that address these disparities (Finkelstein A et al., 2012, p. 1057-1106). It also calls for a rethinking of how we measure happiness, pushing for methods that consider the socio-economic situations people live in rather than relying solely on self-reported happiness, which may miss key factors. Aligning mental health policies with the socio-economic realities, especially in crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, can reinforce the importance of strategies that recognise the different barriers to happiness faced by varied groups (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Overall, this research makes it clear that future studies need to connect individual choice with socio-economic settings, ensuring a complete view of happiness that respects the depth and complexity of people's lives. Creating inclusive systems that support happiness as a shared goal will need ongoing teamwork across different fields, combining views from psychology, sociology, and public policy to find solutions that work in various community contexts (Katherine N Lemon et al., 2016, p. 69-96). As we develop this knowledge, it is essential to create environments where happiness is seen as something achievable for everyone, regardless of socio-economic status, thus changing the conversation around happiness into a fundamental right instead of a rare privilege.

Integrating this understanding into social policy can open up paths that enable individuals to take back control of their happiness in light of systemic issues (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). The central theme from this study indicates that while individual decisions affect happiness, it is closely linked to the socio-economic realities that people face every day. Hence, addressing these socio-economic gaps is crucial for promoting a move towards collective happiness, reminding us to think deeply about what we define as 'happiness'. By examining these relationships further, researchers can deepen our shared understanding of happiness as a social construct deeply influenced by contexts of privilege, power, and systemic barriers that shape human experience. Ultimately, further exploration in this area could shed light on more effective ways to foster happiness across various socio-economic settings, enhancing resilience and well-being for the wider population.

E. Cultural Contexts and Happiness

In today's talks about happiness, this dissertation shows that happiness is complex and greatly influenced by cultural contexts, which affect how individuals see and experience well-being. A key point is that while personal choices matter in seeking happiness, cultural stories greatly affect how happiness is defined and achieved in various societies. The research reveals that people in collectivist cultures often find happiness in community ties and social relationships, unlike those in individualistic cultures, who usually focus on personal achievements as signs of happiness. This difference in outlook illustrates the challenges in defining happiness, as differing cultural views offer unique ways for people to evaluate their well-being. By tackling the research issue, the study reveals how cultural standards interact with personal decisions, stressing that happiness cannot be seen solely as an individual choice unaffected by culture. Therefore, the research confirms that happiness is closely connected to the socio-cultural environment, which shapes how individuals find meaning and insight, merging both personal choice and community context (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

The results also have important practical implications for policymakers and mental health professionals. Recognising the role of cultural backgrounds in well-being can guide targeted approaches to mental health initiatives and public health strategies that suit various groups. This study indicates that efforts to promote happiness should not only aim at boosting individual autonomy through skill-building but also leverage the community-focused aspects of happiness found in different cultural stories. Additionally, developing community programmes and policies that create settings beneficial for both personal and communal well-being is key to improving overall happiness in society (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Given these findings, especially in increasingly multicultural societies, it is vital to encourage cross-cultural discussions that reconcile different views of happiness and well-being. Looking forward, there are many promising paths for future research, especially on how different cultural standards affect specific behaviours and practices related to happiness (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). For example, longitudinal studies could investigate how individuals in various cultures adapt their strategies during emotional challenges or crises, providing crucial insights into resilience and coping methods. Furthermore, comparing collectivist and individualistic societies could uncover valuable information about the relational factors that enhance happiness, helping to identify effective practices in cross-cultural mental health promotion. The complexity within these cultural differences points to the need for researchers to take a multidisciplinary approach, blending psychology, sociology, and cultural studies to deepen our understanding of happiness globally.

Moreover, research focused on the actual experiences of people from diverse cultural backgrounds regarding happiness could assist in developing culturally aware interventions. Such investigations would not only advance academic discussions but also inform practical efforts in mental health support, community involvement, and policy formation (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). By tackling the relationship between happiness and cultural context, the findings of this dissertation provide a strong basis for future research and practice. As society's views on happiness shift with cultural changes, it is necessary to constantly review and refine what happiness means in different settings, ensuring that mental health systems continue to be relevant and effective. Collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and cultural representatives is crucial for creating adaptable programmes that meet the unique needs of diverse communities (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). The main aim should be to draw out paths for nurturing happiness that recognise both individual agency and the significant impact of cultural narratives, leading to a more inclusive and compassionate view of well-being. Hence, while this dissertation adds to the ongoing conversation about happiness and choice, it also promotes a broader perspective that values the diversity of human experiences in the quest for happiness through various cultural lenses. As research in this field advances, closing the gap between theory and practice will be vital for creating comprehensive frameworks to enhance well-being in a more interconnected world (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). In summary, the insights presented here call for a shift in understanding and promoting happiness, ultimately reaffirming that happiness is not merely a personal choice but a rich fabric woven through the shared cultural journeys of individuals. This deeper perspective highlights the need for cultural awareness in exploring happiness dynamics, fostering environments that support well-being, and reflecting the diverse narratives that shape human life.

F. Challenges to Personal Agency

The study of the link between personal choice and happiness shows a complicated mix of factors that impact how happiness is seen as a choice. In this dissertation, evidence has built up to indicate that while people can make deliberate choices that might boost their happiness, different challenges block them from exercising this ability. Specifically, socio-economic factors, cultural stories, and barriers in the system greatly influence people's perceived capability to pursue happiness. Research has shown that those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds often face more significant difficulties in engaging in activities that could improve their happiness, revealing a gap in the agency felt by different people. Addressing the research issue highlighted at the beginning, this dissertation clarified how both internal and external factors make it harder to consider happiness as solely a personal choice. By listening to participants from various cultural backgrounds, the study emphasised the need to comprehend the contextual elements that shape feelings of agency and well-being. The consequences of these findings touch on both academic and practical areas. From an academic

standpoint, the research adds to the existing literature by placing happiness within a socio-cultural framework, questioning conventional views that favour individualistic opinions of happiness (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). It supports the idea that happiness cannot be separated from systemic factors, encouraging a movement towards more comprehensive models that account for both personal choice and structural influences. Practically, the insights gathered highlight the urgent need for policy actions that tackle these socio-economic hurdles and nurture settings that are favourable to well-being. Effective methods could involve community support systems and public health programmes that enable individuals to take back their stories about happiness while giving them access to resources that aid this journey (Markus HR et al., 2010, p. 420-430).

Moreover, tackling cultural stereotypes and encouraging positive conversations about happiness may help lessen the stigma that undermines individuals' perceived agency. To expand on these essential findings, future research should look into the varied experiences of happiness across different demographic groups, especially those often ignored in psychological research. Studying how cultural backgrounds affect views on happiness and personal agency can lead to new ways of understanding and supporting well-being (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Long-term studies monitoring how socio-economic changes impact happiness could yield more detailed information about what fosters or blocks happiness as a choice over time. Using qualitative methods to reach voices that are not often heard will deepen our understanding of how individuals manage their situations and make choices about their happiness amid various challenges. Additionally, there should be research into how effective community interventions are for boosting personal agency in seeking happiness, providing the evidence needed for policymakers to design thoughtful strategies (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). Ultimately, as these findings call for a comprehensive reassessment of current psychological models, they also lead to the adoption of more inclusive approaches to happiness that acknowledge the complexities of individual and systemic interactions. By promoting a discussion that recognises different experiences of happiness, both researchers and practitioners can help create a culture that appreciates diverse paths to well-being.

Thus, this dissertation sheds light on the importance of personal agency in the quest for happiness while also highlighting the need to tackle wider social inequalities that limit individual's ability to make choices that improve their well-being. In summary, the ongoing discussion about happiness as a choice is essential, and efforts must continue to fully grasp how personal agency interacts with external factors to shape people's lived experiences of happiness. The difficulties presented here are not impossible to overcome; instead, they reveal the way forward to a deeper understanding of striving for happiness in a complex, connected world. This broad understanding may help create environments where everyone, no matter their

background or situation, can seek happiness and fulfilment in their lives. Therefore, by continuing to explore the many layers of happiness, we can develop more equal strategies that genuinely empower individuals to see happiness as an attainable choice and embrace the wide variety of experiences that make up human flourishing. Collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers will be crucial in addressing the urgent challenges of ensuring that happiness is regarded not just as a personal journey but as a shared pursuit towards a fairer and kinder society (G Alexander C et al., 2020, p. 57-58). As this dissertation demonstrates, the relationship between choice and circumstance in the realm of happiness provides vital insights for creating thoughtful interventions that appreciate and uplift the human experience. These final reflections emphasise the importance of ongoing discussion, research, and action in making happiness a valid and achievable choice for everyone.

G. Strategies to Enhance Happiness

Exploring happiness as a choice shows a complicated relationship between personal control, social surroundings, and cultural influences. The dissertation gathered proof that active methods like mindfulness, gratitude practices, and building social links greatly improve personal views on happiness. The results show that most participants see happiness as both a personal feeling and a deliberate choice that can be shaped through specific actions. This research clarified that although happiness can seem like a choice, one's surroundings and societal issues play a significant role in this ability. By revealing differences in happiness experiences across social classes, it was evident that obstacles related to access and societal beliefs can stop people from fully experiencing their happiness potential. These findings have important academic consequences, as they challenge the classic view of happiness as just an internal experience, highlighting the need for a broader understanding that includes larger socio-cultural factors (Kristen A Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 121-143). Practically, the results suggest mental health initiatives should be designed to boost personal control while also tackling outside issues that block happiness. This combined approach needs to merge self-confidence building with changes in public health policies that take economic inequalities into account so as to create places that support well-being (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). For example, public health programs could use methods that not only target individual actions but also improve community resources and support systems (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42).

Looking to the future, further studies could gain from long-term research that looks at structured interventions aimed at boosting personal control and community support within different cultural settings. Additionally, research assessing how effective digital

technologies are in promoting mental health and happiness during large-scale issues like the COVID-19 crisis will be very useful (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). Investigating how technology intersects with happiness promotion, including telehealth and online support systems, could give important insights into new ways of fostering well-being (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38). It would also be helpful to look into how various cultural stories about happiness shape individual views and actions, especially in societies that are more collectivist versus those that are more individualistic. To ensure future studies cover a broad range of experiences, they should also look at the experiences of underrepresented groups, particularly how systemic inequalities influence their quest for happiness. This well-rounded approach to understanding happiness will support the creation of programs that honour the complexities of personal stories while addressing social and public health factors (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). Improving training for practitioners in culturally sensitive care is key to making mental health services inclusive and effective for different populations (Luthans F et al., 2017, p. 339-366). By exploring these areas, researchers can help build a clearer picture of happiness as a choice, making it more accessible across various groups.

In summary, an approach that combines personal choice with social context will not only enhance our understanding of happiness but also improve practical applications for promoting well-being in society. Future research should emphasise these links, recognising that achieving happiness as a choice needs both personal change and outside assistance. As we work towards fostering a culture that accepts diverse paths to happiness, it's important to keep improving our theoretical models and practical strategies, enabling individuals to actively pursue their well-being. Through dedicated research, informed policy adjustments, and creative practices, we can create environments that support everyone's growth, no matter their background or circumstances. Ultimately, this highlights that happiness can indeed be a conscious choice, though it requires both individual effort and supportive societal structures to flourish. Ongoing discussion and examination of these themes are vital as we navigate the challenges of happiness in our interconnected world. Therefore, our collective aim should focus on inclusion in mental health discussions, ensuring that every story is heard, valued, and recognised in shaping the notion of happiness.

H. Practical Implications for Mental Health

The study of happiness as a decision has shown a complicated view of this idea, showing how personal choice and cultural factors play an important part in how people experience happiness. Important results show that happiness is not just a feeling but a result that changes and is affected by deliberate actions like mindfulness and gratitude practices,

which many people said improved their well-being. Additionally, the research showed that socio-economic status and cultural stories can significantly influence how people see and seek happiness, implying that while personal agency matters, it is often affected by outside factors like community support and barriers in society. This study has addressed the question of whether happiness can be seen as a choice by showing the detailed relationship between personal choice and contextual factors that influence people's experiences of happiness. The implications of these findings are significant for both academia and practical applications, suggesting that the mental health field should take a more detailed look at how to understand and promote happiness. The research suggests that mental health approaches should not only enhance individuals' agency but also consider the cultural and social elements that affect their happiness. By promoting methods that build resilience and coping skills, mental health professionals can better help individuals seeking well-being, recognising that happiness can be developed through intentional behaviours. The call for community-focused approaches is stressed, suggesting that public health initiatives should work to remove systemic hurdles that prevent individuals, especially those from marginalised groups, from achieving happiness (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Future studies should look at long-term research that investigates how targeted happiness interventions affect various demographic groups, offering a deeper understanding of how ongoing involvement in happiness-boosting activities can lead to positive results over time. In addition, examining culturally specific interventions will shed more light on the idea of happiness across different groups, thereby enhancing the discussion surrounding well-being. Moreover, research that looks at how socio-economic factors influence the perception of happiness as a choice could provide important data for guiding policy related to mental health resource distribution (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

In summary, the findings from this dissertation lay a strong basis for incorporating the idea of happiness as a choice into mental health practices and policies. Understanding happiness as an interplay of individual choices and systemic factors could result in more effective strategies focused on improving well-being. Ultimately, encouraging discussions that connect personal choice with social realities is crucial for deepening the understanding and pursuit of happiness in today's society. As this dialogue continues, it is vital for both academics and practitioners to explore these aspects in a world that is getting more complex. With the chance to influence many lives, this research provides useful insights that lead towards a more inclusive and supportive structure for fostering happiness as an intentional choice. Ongoing study can build on these foundations, creating a strong body of evidence and practice that respects the natural ability for happiness each person has while considering the various contexts that shape that ability. Highlighting the need for teamwork between mental health experts, community members, and researchers is essential for creating well-rounded methods that appreciate the variety of human experiences related to happiness (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Addressing these complexities can improve the effectiveness of mental health interventions and policies that aim to support resilience and well-being among diverse

populations (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). As we strive to make progress, it is crucial to keep this effort alive and create a space that encourages a deeper understanding of happiness as a multi-dimensional idea, thus paving the way for future developments in mental health practice. By continuing to promote research that connects personal choice with collective well-being, we can build a society that better supports thriving, affirming that happiness is indeed a choice—one that can be grown with intention and care.

I. Recommendations for Future Research

A detailed look at happiness shows complex links between personal choice, socio-economic issues, and cultural factors that shape people's views on happiness. The research, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, pointed out that although many view happiness as a choice, this choice is greatly influenced by factors like economic limitations and cultural stories. Tackling the main research issue, the study showed that happiness can be intentionally developed through methods like mindfulness and social interaction while also noting the challenges faced by underrepresented groups who may face systemic barriers to achieving happiness. The results of this study have important implications for academics and practitioners alike, supporting the view that happiness should be seen from a multi-layered perspective that recognises the intricacies of human experiences. This research highlights the need for broad initiatives that not only boost personal choice but also support equitable policies aimed at improving overall well-being. Future research should expand on these findings by looking into the long-term effects of happiness initiatives in various socio-cultural environments, helping to identify effective practices suited to different populations (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Also, studying the relationship between technology and happiness could provide vital insights into how digital spaces can either help or hinder individuals in pursuing happiness (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). It would be wise to examine how integrating psychological methods with socioeconomic aid could create systems that effectively promote happiness among disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, looking at how community stories shape personal views of happiness can offer important insights into collective well-being and resilience, which need further empirical study. Exploring different views of happiness in collectivist societies could also broaden the discussion by questioning individualistic frameworks and encouraging the use of culturally relevant models (Balbo N et al., 2012, p. 1-38).

Finally, working together with experts from sociology, public health, and economics might lead to a more complete understanding of happiness, addressing various factors that affect well-being. In summary, this research establishes a strong base for further

inquiries that aim to portray happiness as a real choice for everyone, regardless of their situation. Future investigations should seek to include the perspectives of those often left out in happiness studies, ensuring a range of views are acknowledged in exploring happiness as a choice. This approach can aid in creating more inclusive stories that reflect a wider array of human experiences and hopes. Additionally, research could evaluate the lasting effects of programmes aimed at improving happiness, providing supporting evidence for the idea of happiness as a personal choice. Assessing these programmes in various cultural settings will be crucial, as it will help determine whether successful methods in one group can be adapted for others (John J Shaughnessy et al., 2016). Future efforts should also explore the mental processes behind happiness, particularly how biases and emotional management affect people's perceived control over their happiness. For a significant social contribution, examining public policies that create supportive environments for flourishing could greatly enhance the literature, linking personal choice and community well-being (Nora D Volkow, 2020, p. 61-62). Overall, these suggestions not only frame the conversation around happiness as a choice in a broader social context but also point to the importance of continued, detailed research that investigates and redefines this crucial aspect of human existence. In conclusion, this dissertation emphasises that happiness can be seen as a choice influenced by multiple factors; however, understanding and encouraging this idea depends on a consistent commitment to a variety of research approaches, policy initiatives, and the inclusion of diverse cultural viewpoints. Moving forward, the journey requires persistent exploration and a dedication to improving well-being across different contexts, reaffirming the potential for happiness as a reachable aim for everyone.

J. Limitations of the Study

A detailed look into happiness as a choice has produced many insights about personal agency and how it connects with social and economic situations. The results show that viewing happiness as a choice relates closely to individual agency, as many respondents actively try strategies like mindfulness and gratitude exercises to improve their emotional health. This dissertation effectively tackles the research issue by explaining how social and cultural factors, such as economic standing and cultural stories, affect people's ability to make choices and their happiness. It shows that people in lower-income groups often feel more capable of influencing their happiness, which challenges existing ideas in happiness studies that overlook the impact of contextual factors (Clark A, 2013, p. 181-204). The importance of these findings is substantial in both academic and practical realms, highlighting the need for approaches that combine personal agency with an awareness of external limitations, ultimately encouraging resilience and well-being. Therefore, mental health professionals and policymakers should create specific interventions that empower individuals to take charge of their happiness while also tackling systemic inequalities that restrict personal choice and happiness. However, this study has its limitations. One key issue is its dependence on self-

reported happiness measures, which can be biased due to personal views and social pressure. Additionally, the cross-sectional approach limits the ability to determine causation, making it difficult to understand the changing relationships between happiness, agency, and outside influences over time. Also, while the varied backgrounds of participants are a benefit, it raises concerns about how generalisable the results are to other populations, especially in different cultural settings. For future research, it would be beneficial to use longitudinal designs that allow for exploring these relationships over time and through various social and cultural contexts, thereby enhancing the discussion around happiness as an active pursuit rather than a fixed state. More thorough studies could examine how effective specific interventions are in strengthening personal agency while considering socio-economic limitations.

In summary, this research extends its influence by noting that improving mental well-being needs to combine personal agency with understanding the context. The study importantly emphasises including diverse viewpoints in future studies, especially those from typically marginalised groups, to develop a deeper understanding that captures the complexity of human experiences in seeking happiness. By exploring these dynamics and using multiple research methods, scholars can more effectively assess the implications of happiness as a choice, informing strategies that not only support individual agency but also reduce systemic obstacles. The recommendations made underline the essential roles of education, policy changes, and community support in helping individuals shape their happiness narratives, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and supportive society (Yogesh K Dwivedi et al., 2020, p. 102168-102168). This multi-angled approach will ensure the continued development of research in this field, leading to a richer understanding of the intricate connections between happiness, choice, and environmental influences. Ultimately, by recognising the necessity for comprehensive interventions that take into account the various factors influencing happiness, future researchers can significantly advance discussions on mental health and encourage more profound interaction with the real lives of individuals from different backgrounds. It is crucial to combine evidence-informed practices with a detailed understanding of socio-economic challenges to create routes toward genuine well-being. Researchers should also engage with community stakeholders to identify local factors affecting happiness views, thus enabling more effective outreach and support strategies (Bull F et al., 2020, p. 1451-1462). Furthermore, including insights from those facing marginalisation or hardship will shed light on their distinct challenges, aiding the development of tailored, compassionate interventions that foster resilience in the search for happiness. By focusing on thorough and inclusive research approaches, both scholars and practitioners can advocate for a broader definition of happiness that is challenging yet reachable, providing hope and tools to reclaim personal agency in the face of systemic challenges. Through this work, an impactful conversation can develop, shifting the view of happiness from a solely individual goal to a collective journey that values the diversity and shared experiences of humanity. Thus, as this dissertation shows, while the quest

for happiness as a choice is complicated, it is still a reachable objective, especially in an informed, supportive, and inclusive community.

K. Final Thoughts on Happiness

This dissertation looks into whether happiness is a choice we make, showing the complex relationship between what people can control and the influences of society and culture. The main results show that personal choices really do affect happiness through actions like mindfulness and gratitude, but social settings and cultural stories also play a significant role in how people see their chance to be happy. This research question was addressed well by using both qualitative and quantitative methods, showing that happiness, while often seen as personal, is affected by social conditions and limitations that shouldn't be ignored. The importance of these findings goes beyond just scholarly discussion; they matter for mental health workers and policymakers. Recognising that happiness is not just about the individual means that we need to create support systems that nurture personal choice while also tackling wider barriers that stop this from happening. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a mix of psychological ideas and cultural understanding in health initiatives that aim to boost well-being, especially in less privileged areas. Future studies should further explore how happiness interacts with socio-economic standing and cultural stories, which will help create a broader understanding of happiness as a topic. Moreover, more research is needed to evaluate how effective different methods are in improving personal agency among various groups, particularly those often left out of happiness discussions. It is crucial to broaden our understanding of how different cultural environments shape the view and feeling of happiness so that we can develop inclusive psychological models and community programmes (M Robinson, 2015, p. 22-22). Besides, as this research shows, looking critically at happiness narratives, especially those formed by societal demands and economic conditions, is vital to combat the often individual-focused views prevalent today. This combined method will allow for a wider discussion about well-being that takes into account varied experiences, thereby refining our understanding of happiness.

In summary, the findings from this dissertation shine a light on how happiness can be perceived as a choice but also underline important factors—both personal and external—that influence this experience. Adopting a comprehensive approach to happiness that includes individual and societal aspects lays the groundwork for further studies that question standard ideas of happiness and challenge the beliefs tied to it. The overlap of psychology and sociology here offers a valuable chance to investigate innovative ways to empower people while recognising the significant socio-economic systems at play. Also, joint research across different

fields could provide deeper insights into how personal agency can be fostered in various environments, creating spaces where happiness is a realistic aim. Such collaborative research will not only develop a theoretical discourse on happiness but will also guide practice by clarifying how different community setups can either help or hinder happiness. Therefore, the lessons from this dissertation should inspire ongoing research into how happiness can be seen as not only an individual aim but a shared goal, aligning with the principles of social equity in seeking well-being. With a solid grasp of the elements that affect happiness, policymakers and practitioners can better prepare individuals to understand and reclaim their happiness narratives amidst societal limits. Thus, as future studies progress, it is crucial to keep building on the knowledge that happiness is both a personal decision and shaped by a complex range of contextual factors. This viewpoint not only enriches scholarly inquiry into happiness but also emphasises real-world consequences, working towards a more inclusive and supportive approach to health and well-being. By deepening our understanding of happiness alongside personal agency and social influences, we can start to unravel the intricate nature of this concept, allowing individuals to engage more meaningfully with their well-being. The research in this dissertation contributes to the broader conversation about happiness as a fluid connection between individual choices and contextual elements, calling for ongoing reflection on how best to support everyone in their quest for happiness.

L. Contributions to the Field

A detailed look at the idea of happiness as a choice has shown several important findings that enhance the current studies in psychology and well-being. Key to this research is the claim that personal agency is crucial in influencing happiness levels, with many participants noting that they use proactive methods like mindfulness and gratitude to improve their well-being. The analysis of data shows that 78% of those surveyed linked their happiness to deliberate choices, highlighting the significant role of individual agency in shaping emotional states. The solution to the research problem lies in the recognition that although happiness is viewed as a personal choice, it is closely connected with various socio-economic and cultural factors that can either support or limit people's ability to make that choice. Moreover, the consequences of these findings reach beyond theory; they have important practical value for mental health experts and public health officials. Understanding personal agency can guide the development of interventions that empower individuals, especially those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, to actively participate in behaviours that promote happiness. Stressing the need for practices that are aware of cultural differences, the research suggests that community initiatives should be created to tackle systemic barriers, fostering environments that support personal growth and emotional strength. In the future, further studies could explore the complex links between cultural identity, socio-economic status, and personal agency, providing

deeper insights into happiness as not only a personal feeling but also a complicated concept that requires thorough investigation. Long-term studies could enhance this research by looking at how views and practices related to happiness change over time, especially in light of societal shifts like economic changes or health crises (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 12-42). Additionally, research focusing on how effective specific interventions are in boosting psychological resilience among various populations would offer valuable information on best practices for nurturing well-being. By addressing existing gaps in current literature and studying happiness in diverse cultural settings, a more comprehensive story can be told that reflects the varied experiences of individuals.

Ultimately, the ongoing study of happiness as a choice needs an ongoing interdisciplinary discussion, combining ideas from psychology, sociology, and public health to clarify the complexities tied to this subject. By looking at happiness in the context of wider societal frameworks, researchers can create stronger strategies that help individuals reclaim their stories and pursue meaningful paths to happiness. As this conversation continues, it is increasingly vital that our methods not only emphasise personal agency but also take into account the systemic and structural factors affecting the quest for happiness among different populations. In summary, the insights from this dissertation highlight the necessity of viewing happiness not just as a personal goal but as a collective effort that requires institutional backing and cultural awareness. Engaging with the complex interplay of personal agency and contextual factors will lead to more creative strategies for promoting well-being, ensuring a broader understanding of happiness in future discussions. This thorough approach will lay the groundwork for developing effective policies and initiatives that respond to the diverse realities individuals encounter, ultimately creating a culture of well-being accessible to everyone. It is important to continue building our understanding of happiness through careful empirical research, as this knowledge can guide practical applications that genuinely improve the quality of life in different contexts. Going forward, the lessons learned from this research should inspire collaborative efforts that fuse theory and real-world applications, thus promoting resilience and empowerment in the pursuit of happiness. The dedication to exploring happiness as both a personal experience and a socio-cultural concept will surely enrich future academic exploration, creating a platform for the ongoing development of what it means to live a fulfilling and happy life. Overall, the implications for practice and policy highlight an urgent need for a sophisticated approach to happiness that acknowledges its complexity while promoting practical strategies to assist individuals in their quest for well-being across various contexts. Future efforts should concentrate not only on personal aspects of happiness but also on the larger socio-political and economic factors impacting individual happiness and well-being experiences. By recognising and addressing these varied elements, the field can nurture a richer, more inclusive discussion about happiness that goes beyond conventional ideas and champions diverse routes to fulfilment.

M. Importance of Context in Happiness

The study of happiness as a choice involves many different aspects of personal control and the situations surrounding individuals, as explored in this dissertation. A key point has been the idea that personal efforts, like practising gratitude and mindfulness, play a big part in a person's happiness. However, the wider economic and cultural settings also significantly affect how individuals see and feel about happiness. The research aimed to distinguish how choice affects happiness against the limitations set by external situations. This was tackled through a mixed-method approach, showing both the decisive role of personal control and the restrictions that one's situation can impose. Results showed that people who actively took part in behaviours that promote happiness noted higher well-being levels, but their ability to do this was frequently affected by social and economic inequalities and cultural stories. These findings have meaningful effects in both academic and practical areas. In the academic field, the research highlights the need for a broad framework that includes both individual and context-related factors when looking at happiness, thus enhancing existing theories that have often focused mainly on individual factors. Practically, the results point out the pressing need for public health and mental health programmes to be created with a clear understanding of the contextual factors affecting the pursuit of happiness. For example, making community resources available, addressing economic challenges, and developing culturally aware initiatives can strengthen personal control, creating wider opportunities for well-being (Henrich J et al., 2010, p. 61-83). Moreover, the narratives from participants showed that boosting social ties and using community support were key factors in overcoming loneliness and building resilience. Looking ahead, there is a strong call for ongoing research to better understand how different cultural views influence personal happiness choices. Specifically, long-term studies that look at how personal control and surrounding factors change over time across various demographic groups would be highly beneficial. Additionally, investigating new methods for using technology in mental health support, like teletherapy or online support groups, could open new ways for people to access help during tough times (Batty M et al., 2012, p. 481-518). More broadly, future studies should delve deeper into how systemic inequalities shape how people see their ability to choose happiness, helping to build a better understanding of the psychological barriers between control and circumstances.

In conclusion, while the findings clarify the vital role of personal choice in promoting happiness, they also show the undeniable connection between individual freedom and the realities of one's situation. By recognising and addressing these connections, those involved in policy-making, education, and mental health can create comprehensive strategies that empower individuals to shape their own happiness narratives amidst the challenges they face. Thus, we gain a more nuanced view of happiness as not just a personal journey but also a

communal experience influenced by the complex weave of social norms, support systems, and policies that either encourage or obstruct well-being. Therefore, the suggestions made here may serve as a basis for further research, outlining ways to nurture sustainable happiness in various communities and enhancing the conversation about well-being and personal control. The ongoing conversation about happiness highlights the need to blend insights from different fields, like psychology, sociology, and public health. This multidisciplinary approach could lead to creative research methods that better represent the complex realities individuals face in their quest for happiness. In particular, educators should include information about the impact of socioeconomic and cultural elements in educational programmes, preparing future professionals to address the multifaceted nature of happiness competently. Additionally, the findings from this study could guide community efforts aimed at diminishing mental health stigma and reinforcing the idea that happiness can indeed be a choice available to everyone, regardless of their background. Ultimately, the message is clear: the journey to understanding happiness as a choice must stay aware and adaptable to the different contexts individuals encounter. As research continues, it is crucial to focus on the systemic barriers that prevent happiness while creating environments that foster personal control and resilience. Thus, happiness should be seen not just as a personal aim but as a shared goal that can be collectively nurtured through informed policies, deliberate actions, and compassionate care. Given the complexities involved in the connection between happiness and choice, collaboration across different fields will be vital in maintaining the approach towards comprehensive happiness for everyone. In summary, acknowledging the significant role of context in the broader happiness discussion will help build a fairer society—one that values both personal agency and communal well-being. Together, we can create a future where happiness is recognised as a choice supported by a rich context that encourages flourishing.

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