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Fear of Happiness and Subjective Well-being: Mediating Role of Gratitude*

Mutluluk Korkusu ve Öznel İyi Oluş: Minnettarlığın Aracılık Rolü

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Abstract: Fear of happiness is a dysfunctional belief system that is linked to poorer functioning, and negatively impacts crucial aspects of mental health, specifically subjective well-being. Previous studies have documented that fear of happiness, either directly or through mediators, has an impact on various forms of subjective well-being. Despite the conceptual convergence, no studies to date have investigated the mediating role of gratitude in the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. The current study aims to explore such a relationship. A total of 344 university students participated in the study from Educational Science Department at Bursa Uludag University. The sample included 264 females ($M=21.08$, $SD=1.62$) and 80 male students ($M=21.68$, $SD=1.87$). Participants completed the Fear of Happiness Scale, Gratitude Scale and Satisfaction with Life Scale. In terms of results, correlational analyses demonstrated that fear of happiness was inversely correlated with the dimensions of gratitude and life satisfaction. No correlation was found between fear of happiness and the component of appreciation for others. Structural equation modelling (SEM) analyses indicated that gratitude components of sense of abundance and simple appreciation fully mediated the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. The results demonstrated that fear of happiness contributes to some of the components of gratitude, such as sense of abundance and simple appreciation, which in turn contributes to life satisfaction. Implications are discussed further.

Structured Abstract: Introduction: Fear of happiness refers to a dysfunctional belief system that happiness may result in unpleasant life outcomes as experiencing excessive happiness is perceived to invite envy, rivalry or evil eyes. Thus, individuals with fear of happiness avoid happiness-provoking activities and restrain their otherwise authentic positive emotions such as joy, enthusiasm and particularly happiness in order to secure their well-being. Despite such effort, studies documented that steering away from happiness and authentic positive feelings might result in negative consequences for the well-being of individuals (Belen et al., 2019; Joshanloo, 2013; Joshanloo, 2018; Yildirim, Barmanpek & Farag, 2018). To this end, literature documents support for the negative association between fear of happiness and various types of well-being, particularly subjective well-being (Yildirim, 2019). In such studies, the effect of fear of happiness was investigated on life satisfaction directly or via mediators. Yet, more variables are needed to illuminate the

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underlying mechanism in the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. Thus, current study aims to examine such relationship.

Method: Participants consisted of 344 university students at Bursa Uludag University Educational Science Department and included 264 female (M=21.088, SD= 1.62) and 80 male students (M=21.684, SD= 1.87). Fear of happiness scale (FOH; Joshanloo, 2013), short gratitude scale (S-GRAT; Thomas & Watkins, 2003) and life satisfaction scale (SWLS; Diener, 1985) were used in terms of the measurement tools. All the scales were administered with voluntary participation and informed consent standard. SEM analyses were utilized in order to test the mediating effect of gratitude in the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. In terms of testing the model-data fit, chi-square statistics, Root Mean Square of Approximation (RMSEA), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI) and, finally, Chi-Square/DF ratio were reported. Calculations were performed using SPSS Amos 23.

Results: Zero-order correlation analyses revealed small to moderate, though significant and negative correlation coefficients between fear of happiness and life satisfaction as well as two dimensions of gratitude (sense of abundance and simple appreciation). As such, moderate to large and positive effect size was detected between life satisfaction and dimensions of gratitude (Cohen, 1988). Appreciation for others was not found correlated with fear of happiness. Regarding SEM analyses, mediating effect of gratitude between fear of happiness and life satisfaction was examined and results demonstrated very satisfactory fit to the data: $\chi^2(50, N = 432) = 92.23$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.84$, $p < .001$; CFI = .98; GFI = .95; IFI=.98; RMSEA = .05 (90% CI = .049-.080).

Conclusion: There is a link between fear of happiness and gratitude and experiencing a reduced fear of happiness contributing to greater levels of gratitude, which in turn contributes to increased levels of life satisfaction.

Keywords: Fear of Happiness, Gratitude, Life Satisfaction, Mediation, SEM

Öz: Mutluluk korkusu ruh sağlığı ve özellikle de öznel iyi oluş üzerinde olumsuz etkileri olan ve fonksiyonel olmayan bir inanç sistemidir. Daha önceki çalışmalar, mutluluk korkusunun hem direkt olarak hem de aracılar etkisiyle subjektif iyi oluşun çeşitli formları üzerinde etkisinin olduğunu göstermiştir. Kavramsal yakınlığına rağmen, günümüze kadar hiçbir çalışmada mutluluk korkusu ve yaşam doyumu arasındaki ilişkide minnettarlığın aracılık rolü araştırılmamıştır. Mevcut çalışma böyle bir ilişkiyi araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmaya Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü'nden 264'ü kadın (M = 21.08, SD = 1.62) ve 80'i erkek öğrenci (M = 21.68, SD = 1.87) olmak üzere toplamda 344 üniversite öğrencisi katılmıştır. Mutluluk Korkusu, Minnettarlık ve Yaşam Doyumu Ölçekleri katılımcılar tarafından tamamlanmıştır. Pearson Momentler Çarpımı Korelasyon analizi sonucu elde edilen bulgulara göre, mutluluk korkusu, minnettarlık ölçeğinin alt ölçekleri (basit takdir ve yoksunluk duygusu yokluğu) ve yaşam doyumu arasında anlamlı düzeyde ilişki bulunmuştur. Mutluluk korkusu ile diğerlerini takdir etme alt ölçeği arasında bir ilişki bulunmamıştır. Yapısal eşitlik modeli analizlerinden elde edilen bulgulara ise minnettarlığın unsurlarından basit takdir ve yoksunluk duygusu yokluğunun, mutluluk korkusu ile yaşam doyumu arasındaki ilişkide tam aracılık etkisi gösterdiği görülmüştür. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre bireylerin mutluluk korkusu ile yaşam doyumları arasında doğrudan bir ilişki tespit edilemezken; mutluluk korkusunun yaşam doyumunu, basit takdir ve yoksunluk duygusu yokluğu aracılığı ile etkilediği belirlenmiştir. Bulgular daha ayrıntılı tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mutluluk Korkusu, Minnettarlık, Yaşam Doyumu, Aracılık Etkisi, YEM.

Introduction

Happiness, as a psychological construct, has been extensively used across different cultures and disciplines to enhance individuals' quality of life, and also supports individuals in terms of achieving any desired goals. In particular, happiness is seen as contributing to one's positive functioning in various areas of life including social relationships, work and marriage (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005; Myers & Diener, 2018). Though, from a cultural perspective, the influence of happiness on one's life differs. For instance, Western cultures consider happiness

as one of the basic human rights, whereas most Eastern cultures are prone to disfavour excessive happiness as it is perceived to result in suffering or invite ‘evil eyes’, envy or rivalry in certain specific situations (Joshani et al., 2014). To avoid potentially unpleasant consequences, individuals restrain otherwise authentic emotions, decrease their perception of any positive impact or avoid any behaviour related to achievement, excessive enthusiasm or joy (Joshani, 2013; Joshani, 2014; Joshani et al., 2014; Joshani & Weijers, 2014). Contextually, this belief has emerged as fear of happiness and numerous studies documented that steering away from experiencing happiness and authentic positive feelings might result in negative consequences for the well-being of individuals (Belen et al., 2019; Joshani, 2013; Joshani, 2018; Yildirim, Barmanpek & Farag, 2018). As a result, the idea of fear of happiness in this context is conceptually similar to more negative psychological constructs because it implies a somewhat pessimistic attitude towards life.

In the positive psychology literature, many researchers have undertaken studies to understand and identify the impact of fear of happiness on subjective and psychological well-being. As fear of happiness is stated to be a dysfunctional belief, empirical evidence also documented negative associations between fear of happiness and an array of well-being indices. For example, Belen and colleagues (2019) examined the influence of fear of happiness on flourishing by understanding the mediating role of hope components, namely agency and pathways and the study reported inverse associations between fear of happiness and hope and flourishing. Several other studies supported the link between fear of happiness and other aspects including psychological and subjective well-being (e.g., Yildirim, Barmanpek & Farag, 2019; Yildirim & Belen, 2018). As one of the vital components of subjective well-being, life satisfaction and its relationship with fear of happiness was also examined by various scholars (e.g., Joshani, 2013). Essentially, concept life satisfaction pertains to one’s overall cognitive judgment of one’s own life (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Larsen & Eid, 2008). Positive psychology literature proposed that individuals appraise multiple life domains including family, friendship, work and goal achievement when they cognitively evaluate their life satisfaction (Diener & Lucas, 2000; Pavot & Diener, 2008). However, one’s level of life satisfaction does not provide precise information about such conditions (Joshani, 2013). In this regard, Oishi and colleagues (2003) pointed out that when the classification of “excitement versus peace” was experimentally examined, people tended to generate their life satisfaction judgements in favour of the frequency of excitement over peace. This suggests that situational cues influence a person’s evaluation of life satisfaction dependent upon to certain aspects of life and emotional experiences.

According to Joshani (2012), fear of happiness can be one of the belief domains influencing individuals’ life satisfaction as avoiding positive psychological states including happiness, love, cheerfulness and fulfilment, may result in negative life outcomes (Joshani, 2012). Existing studies also documented that increased fear of happiness is associated with decreased levels of life satisfaction (Sarı & Çakır, 2016; Türk, Malkoç, & Kocabıyık, 2017). In another study, Joshani (2013) attempted to determine whether fear of happiness is indicative of life satisfaction amongst undergraduate students in Iran. Several other studies sought to facilitate an understanding of the underlying mechanism on the association between fear of happiness and other concepts through mediators. For instance, Yildirim (2019) attempted to understand the mediating effect of resilience in the relationships between fear of happiness and affect balance, satisfaction with life and flourishing. Although such studies are crucial, literature is still scarce in terms of fully understanding the concept and more potential mediators are needed to be examined. In this regard, gratitude potentially represents a novel construct as a mediator to understand the influence of fear of happiness on life satisfaction.

Gratitude is defined as “a sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life that can be expressed towards other sources, typically by giving thanks to benefactors for their help” (Emmons & Shelton, 2002). More generally, concept gratitude conveys a dispositional propensity

to react with positive feelings towards other people or transpersonal bodies (McCullough et al., 2002; McCullough & Tsang, 2004; Emmons et al., 2007). As a social emotion, gratitude conceptually appears positively linked to mental health and well-being of individuals (McCullough et al., 2001). In this regard, impact of gratitude have extensively been studied on various well-being outcomes including depression, positive effect, psychical health and life satisfaction (e.g., Emmons & McCullough, 2003; McCullough et al., 2002; McCullough et al., 2004; Park et al., 2004; Spangler, 2010; Thomas & Watkins, 2003; Wood et al., 2008). In these studies, findings from a sample of students indicated that increased levels of gratitude is linked with greater academic achievement and life satisfaction (Froh et al., 2009), academic accomplishment (Froh et al., 2011), and decreased levels of stress (Ma, et al., 2013). Additionally, studies with participants of school staff also demonstrated that elevated gratitude was related to greater levels of job satisfaction (Waters, 2012), life satisfaction, positive affect (Chan, 2010, 2011), and reduced burnout and depersonalization (Chan, 2010, 2011). Although many studies provided vital findings between gratitude and well-being outcomes, the potential association between gratitude and fear of happiness, to date, has been overlooked. As stated earlier, fear of happiness expresses the prevention of situations that can evoke positive feelings that might result in depreciation of positive life outcomes such as joy and achievement (Belen et al., 2019). On the contrary, gratitude aligns with appreciation and acknowledgement of possessing happiness-related outcomes. To this end, fear of happiness has a potential link with the characteristics of gratitude: “(a) a lack of a sense of deprivation (LOSD) – or sense of abundance, (b) the tendency to appreciate simple pleasures/simple appreciation (SA), and (c) the tendency to appreciate the contributions of others for one’s own well-being, appreciation for others (AO)” (Oguz-Duran, 2017, p.25).

Present Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction among Turkish undergraduate students as mediated by students’ levels of gratitude. It was hypothesised that (a) fear of happiness would be inversely related to life satisfaction and gratitude (sense of abundance, simple appreciation, and appreciation for others) and that (b) gratitude (sense of abundance, simple appreciation, and appreciation for others) would mediate the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. As no studies yet investigated such potential link between the concepts, exploring this, while a niche area in the field, is certainly worth studying.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of 344 undergraduate students at Bursa Uludag University Educational Science Department and included 264 females ($M=21.088$, $SD= 1.62$) and 80 male students ($M=21.684$, $SD= 1.87$). Participants were requested to indicate their perceived socioeconomic status based on a 5-point Likert scale (1=very low, 5=very high) and two hundred and sixty-four students reported that they had medium perceived socioeconomic level, 39 participants reported to have low socioeconomic level, 33 to have high, 1 is very high and 5 participants reported very low levels of socioeconomic status. Convenient sampling method was used in terms of recruiting the study partakers and participants are requested to provide some of their demographic information including gender, age and socioeconomic status.

Measures

Fear of Happiness: FOH is designed to assess individuals’ tendency to steer away happiness-related situations and comprised of 5 items rated based on 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Joshnloo, 2013). The total score of the scale is obtained by obtaining the sum of 5 items for each participant. Example items include “I prefer not to be too joyful, because joy is followed by sadness” and “Disasters often follow good fortune” and higher

scores on the scale convey the higher levels of fear of happiness beliefs. Psychometric properties of the scale revealed good evidence of reliability with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86. In regards with criterion-related validity, studies reported correlations between FOH and positive affect ($r=-0.22$), negative affect ($r=0.24$), and life satisfaction ($r=-0.13$) (Yildirim & Aziz, 2017). Findings of the current study indicated good alpha reliability of .86 for the fear of happiness scale.

Gratitude Scale: S-GRAT is a 16-item scale developed to measure dispositional gratitude and based on 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree) (Thomas & Watkins, 2003). The scale is encompassed of three dimensions: sense of abundance (SOA), simple appreciation (SA), and appreciation of others (AFO). Example items include "Life has been good to me" (sense of abundance), "Every fall I really enjoy watching the leaves change colors" (simple appreciation), "I feel deeply appreciative for the things others have done for me in my life" (appreciation for others). The dimension scores are obtained via sum of relevant items to the dimension and the global score is computed by the sum of all scale items with reverse coding the negatively worded items. Higher scores yield higher gratitude dispositions. Reliability and validity studies of Turkish form of the scale was conducted by Duran (2017) who reported satisfactory evidence for psychometric properties including test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.72 for total score, 0.61, 0.71, and 0.61 for SOA, SA and AFO, respectively. Additionally, the study reported large correlation coefficients between S-GRAT and gratitude ($r=0.64$), and life satisfaction (0.53) in terms of convergent and criterion-related validity. In the present study, coefficient alpha for internal consistency was found .79.

Satisfaction with Life Scale: SWLS is a 5-item self-report scale rated based on 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Example items encompasses "In most ways, my life is close to my ideal" and "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing." The scale score is provided sum of the item scores and higher scores indicates higher levels of life satisfaction. Reliability and validity studies of the Turkish adaptation of the scale revealed satisfactory evidence for the psychometric properties of the scale including coefficient alpha of .92 for internal consistency reliability and alpha of .88 for test-retest reliability. In terms of concurrent and discriminant validity, intercorrelations between SWLS and self-esteem ($r=0.40$), depression ($r=-0.40$) and willingness to self-censor ($r=-0.08$) were reported (Durak, Senol-Durak, & Gencoz, 2010).

Procedure

Students in Bursa Uludag University Educational Science Department were contacted by mailing lists and were requested to circulate the invitation to participate in the study in order to obtain a larger sample size. Test administration procedure was conducted through online survey. All the scales were administered with voluntary participation and informed consent standard. Informed consent was secured with the first page of online survey and participants were informed regarding the rights of withdrawal from the study, anonymity and security of the personal information and disposal of the data. Other than demographic information, all questions were mandatory to answer, and participants could only proceed from one page to another after responding all questions.

Data Analyses

Prior to commencing main analyses, preliminary analyses including examining normality assumptions and collinearity analysis were conducted. Normality assumptions were tested based on skewness and kurtosis values (Kline, 2005). The results of the collinearity analyses were evaluated based on the threshold that the variance inflation factor values for all constructs were less than 5 indicating no multicollinearity (ranged from 1,316 to 1,559). In terms of determining the adequacy of sample size, as a rule of thumb, the minimum number of participants per item is ten in order to conduct SEM analysis (Schreiber et al., 2006). Thus, the current sample size of 344 (greater than

26×10=260) had sufficient power to test the mediating effect of gratitude. Before testing the mediator roles of gratitude components in structural model, measurement model was examined. Finally, structural equation modeling analysis was performed in order to test the mediating effect of gratitude in the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. In terms of testing the model-data fit, generally, studies take a range of fit statistics into account in order to evaluate the final model. The current study considered absolute, incremental and parsimonious fit indices in examining the final model. In terms of absolute fit indices, current study reports chi-square statistics depending on its sensitivity, Root Mean Square of Approximation (RMSEA), and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI); for incremental fit indices, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) and, finally, we report Chi-Square/DF ratio for parsimonious fit index. Calculations were performed using SPSS Amos 23.

Results

Preliminary analyses

Findings from preliminary analyses demonstrated that no severe violations of normal hypotheses were encountered (e.g., skewness from 0.78 to -0.96, kurtosis from 0.21 to -0.43). Descriptive statistics, skewness and kurtosis values and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all main study variables are presented in Table 1.

Table1: Descriptive Statistics for Variables (N=344)

Variables	Mean	SD	α	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
1.FOH	13.12	7.82	.93	0.78	0.13	-0.34	0.26
2.SOA	29.98	9.10	.77	-0.11	0.13	-0.43	0.26
3. SA	45.54	7.25	.75	-0.96	0.13	0.21	0.26
4. AFO	25.64	5.72	.71	-0.66	0.13	0.21	0.26
5. LS	20.90	6.22	.85	-0.17	0.12	-0.33	0.23

Note. FOH= Fear of Happiness, SOA= Sense Of Abundance, SA= Simple Appreciation, AFO= Appreciation for Others, LS=Life Satisfaction.

Zero-order correlations between variables were computed with Pearson product-moment correlation analysis as the data is normally distributed. Results revealed small to moderate, though significant and negative correlation coefficients between fear of happiness, life satisfaction and two dimensions of gratitude (sense of abundance and simple appreciation). As such, moderate to large and positive effect size was detected between life satisfaction and dimensions of gratitude (Cohen, 1988). Appreciation for others was not found correlated with fear of happiness (Table 2).

Table2: Zero-order Correlations between Fear of Happiness, Gratitude and Life satisfaction

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1.FOH	1				
2.SOA	-,310**	1			
3. SA	-,217**	,229**	1		
4. AFO	-,090	,165**	,466**	1	
5. LS	-,208**	,610**	,256**	,225**	1

Note. ** p correlation coefficients are significant at the .01 level; FOH= Fear of Happiness, SOA= Sense Of Abundance, SA= Simple Appreciation, AFO= Appreciation for Others, LS=Life Satisfaction

Measurement Model

Before testing the structural model, measurement model was specified in order to determine the relationship between observed variables and their latent factors. In the measurement model, latent variables of fear of happiness and life satisfaction were represented by their five items. Gratitude components, sense of abundance and simple appreciation, were included into the model as observed variables. Gratitude dimension of appreciation for others was not included into the model as no correlation was found between the dimension and fear of happiness. Then, measurement model was tested. The results indicated a good data-model fit, ($\chi^2=102.26$, $df=60$, $p<.001$, $CMIN/DF=1.70$, $RMSEA=0.04$ [90% CI for RMSEA: 0.03–0.06], $CFI=0.98$, $GFI=.95$, $IFI=.98$, $NFI=.96$ and $TLI=0.97$)

Structural Equation Modeling Analyses

Structural equation modeling analyses were conducted in order to examine the mediator role of gratitude. To this end, two possible structural models have been examined in order to compare the alternative models and determine the most appropriate model in terms of the structural relations. First, a full mediation model, without the direct relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction was tested as Model 1 (M1) and results revealed good model-data fit with all paths being significant between latent and observed variables: χ^2 (51, $N = 432$) = 93.23, $\chi^2 / df = 1.80$, $p<.001$; $CFI = .98$; $GFI = .96$; $IFI=.98$; $RMSEA = .04$ (90% CI = .049–.080). Second, partial mediating effect of gratitude between fear of happiness and life satisfaction was examined with the aim of comparison alternative models (M2) and results demonstrated very satisfactory fit to the data: χ^2 (50, $N = 432$) = 92.23, $\chi^2 / df = 1.84$, $p<.001$; $CFI = .98$; $GFI = .95$; $IFI=.98$; $RMSEA = .05$ (90% CI = .049–.080). Despite no considerable difference between Model 1 and 2 based on fit indices (Table 3), the path between fear of happiness and life satisfaction became non-significant for Model 2 supporting the full mediator role of gratitude ($\beta = .01$, $p<.05$).

Table 3: Fit Statistics for Model 1 and Model 2

Model	χ^2	DF	p	CMIN/DF	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	IFI
M1 (Full mediation)	93.23	51	$p < .001$	1.80	0.04	0.98	0.96	0.98
M2 (Partial M)	92.23	50	$p < .001$	1.84	0.05	0.98	0.95	0.98

Fear of happiness negatively predicted sense of abundance ($\beta = -0.33$, $p< 0.001$), and simple appreciation ($\beta = -0.24$, $p< 0.001$); and sense of abundance predicted life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.64$, $p< 0.001$), and simple appreciation predicted life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.13$, $p< 0.01$). As demonstrated in the table, fear of happiness no longer predicted life satisfaction after including the mediators, namely sense of abundance and simple appreciation ($\beta = 0.01$, $p>0.05$). Thus, gratitude components fully mediated the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. Yet, in order to examine the significance of mediation model, 95 % bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure was applied. 1000 bootstrapped samples were randomly drawn from original sample ($N=344$) and the indirect effect in each sample was computed. Results indicated that fear of happiness exerted significant indirect effect on life satisfaction via sense of abundance and simple appreciation (95% CI=[-0.30, -0.18]).

Figure1: Mediator Roles of Gratitude Components in the Relationship between Fear of Happiness and Life Satisfaction

Discussion

Fear of happiness is a dispositional belief that happiness may give rise to detrimental consequences in one's life and this important belief system has a crucial impact on individuals' well-being and mental health, specifically their subjective well-being. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate whether a) fear of happiness is related to gratitude and life satisfaction, and b) whether gratitude mediates the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. In this regard, the current study reports two main results: a) decreased levels of fear of happiness is related to increased levels of gratitude and life satisfaction, and b) gratitude mediates the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction.

For the first hypothesis of the study, the findings are in line with the literature. For instance, previous studies documented the positive and significant association between fear of happiness and life satisfaction (e.g., Joshanloo, 2013; Yildirim & Aziz, 2017). Yet, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have previously examined the relationship between fear of happiness and gratitude. The findings of the current study demonstrated that individuals with decreased levels of fear of happiness also report increased levels of gratitude. Conceptually, fear of happiness conveys the avoidance of happiness-revoking activities (Joshanloo, 2013). On the contrary, the concept of gratitude aligns with appreciation and celebration of experiencing happiness-related situations. Thus, the results are consistent with the conceptual frameworks of the constructs. One interesting finding of the study, though, is the non-significant association between fear of happiness and the gratitude component of appreciation for others. As noted, gratitude encompasses three components and appreciation for others is the only component related to the social aspect of gratitude (Duran, 2017). Thus, the current study could not provide information regarding the association between avoidance of happiness-related situations and the social aspect of gratitude.

The main results of the study are derived from structural equation modelling analysis. The findings of the SEM analysis suggested that gratitude components, namely sense of abundance and simple appreciation, fully mediated the relationship between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. This finding suggested that individuals who avoid happiness-evoking activities less are also more prone to be grateful for the simple things in life and experience feelings of deprivation less, which in turn leads to them experiencing greater levels of life satisfaction. The finding is consistent with previous studies. For instance, a considerable number of studies have documented that greater levels of gratitude contribute to increased levels of life satisfaction (e.g., Przepiorka & Sobol-Kwapinska, 2020). In terms of the relationship between fear of happiness and gratitude components, no existing empirical studies have examined such relationships, although the finding is conceptually congruent with the literature. For instance, fear of happiness refers to the perception

of the necessity to steer away from positive feelings as they may result in adverse consequences for individuals' well-being. By contrast, the gratitude components of sense of abundance and simple appreciation align with celebration and appreciation of small but positive experiences (Wood et al., 2007). Thus, it is plausible that less fear of avoiding positivity will contribute to greater levels of gratitude.

Given the lack of research regarding the relationship between fear of happiness and gratitude, the findings of the current study are noteworthy. Yet, no studies are devoid of limitations. Chief among these limitations in this instance was the cross-sectional nature of the study. In order to propose a causal relationship, longitudinal and experimental studies need to be conducted. Second, data was drawn via a convenient sampling method and participants merely included university students which clearly might restrict the generalizability of the results. Randomly drawn samples are thus suggested for future studies. Despite such limitations, the present study sheds light on the underlying mechanism behind the relationship between fear of happiness and gratitude, important constructs that are impactful on individuals' well-being and mental health.

In conclusion, the current study has explored the mediating effect of gratitude in the link between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. The results demonstrated that there is a link between fear of happiness and gratitude and experiencing a reduced fear of happiness contributing to greater levels of gratitude, which in turn contributes to increased levels of life satisfaction.

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