

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Drought and happiness in rural Iran

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Accepted 1 December, 2011

**The place of positive emotions such as happiness and its relationship with natural disasters like drought is ambiguous; therefore, the purpose of this research was to explore the impact of drought on happiness in rural Iran using a causal-comparative research design. The findings revealed that drought significantly reduced the happiness of rural people, and variables such as; intensity of drought, perceived drought impact, welfare and well-being poverty lead to more reduction of happiness during drought. A typology of happiness was provided to explain the findings of this study. It is concluded that the relatively high level of happiness among respondents is a "tactical happiness" used to cope with drought.**

**Key words:** Happiness, drought, Oxford happiness inventory, Iran.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the field of positive psychology has emerged to bring awareness to the role of psychology in making life more fulfilling, enhancing human functioning, and increasing happiness (Seligman, 2002). Happiness might not only be a goal of life but also a means for reaching other goals and for facilitating desirable behaviors and outcomes (Eid and Larsen, 2008). Hence in recent years happiness is considered more and it is an ultimate goal and thus constitutive part of development (Schimmel, 2009). Unlike GNP (Gross National Product), the economic indicator that measures cash flow through an economy, GNH (Gross National Happiness) measures the happiness of the people as an indicator of development and progress (Richard, 2003). The inclusion of a happiness indicator changed UNDP's (United Nations Development Program) perspective from a 'development as freedom' to a 'development as happiness' (Schimmel, 2009). Since then identifying the determinants of happiness has received great attention. As a result, a considerable body of research concerned with identifying the variables associated with happiness has been developed (Argyle, 2001). The findings imply that there is a high complexity in determining the strongest predictors of happiness.

Although researchers disagree about the exact relationship between different variables and happiness, but the

determinants of happiness can be sought at two levels: external conditions and internal processes (Veenhoven, 2000). Also three main conclusions have emerged from investigations. First, outward conditions and other general factors - such as income (Argyle, 1999; Biswas-Diener, 2008; McCullough et al., 2000), education (Argyle, 1999; La Barbara and Gurhan, 1997; McCullough et al., 2000; Oishi and Koo, 2008; Schimmel, 2009), social relations (Argyle, 2001; Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2008), gender (Argyle, 1999, 2001; McCullough et al., 2000), age (Cacioppo et al., 2008; McCullough et al., 2000), and so on - have circumstantial influence but account altogether for no more than 10 to 15% of the variable satisfaction quotient (Argyle, 1999; Diener et al., 1999; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Richard, 2003). Second, we seem to have a genetic predisposition to being happy or unhappy (Inglehart and Klingemann, 2000; Schimmack et al., 2002) - about 25% of our potential for happiness appears to be determined by genes (Richard, 2003). Third, we can exert considerable influence on our experience of happiness and unhappiness through the way we live and think, how we perceive life's events, and how we react to them (Richard, 2003). Personality traits (Peterson, 2006; Schimmack et al., 2002) account for a large portion of the variance in individual differences in happiness - as much as 40 to 50% (Diener et al., 1999; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).

Issues of community and individual well-being under normal circumstances frequently involve competing

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