

Doing Act Of Kindness To Enhance Subjective Happiness: Correlates Of Academic Success

Amalia E. Roldan¹, Nimfa B. Pastrana^{2*}

¹Occidental Mindoro State College College of Teacher Education Associate Professor V
CTE Faculty- Main Campus, Philipina

²Occidental Mindoro State College College of Architecture, Engineering and Technology,
Associate Professor IV CAET Faculty, Philipina

* Corresponding author:

Email: nimfapastranab@gmail.com

Abstract.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of doing act of kindness as intervention program to enhance subjective happiness as correlates of student's academic success for college freshmen. The subjective happiness of the respondents were assessed twice before and after the intervention program. The respondents' academic achievement in their Psychology class was correlated to their academic achievement. Using the One – Group Pre-test and Post-test design the effectiveness of the intervention program was determined. The results of the pre-assessment (degree of their subjective happiness before the intervention program) and post-assessment (degree of their subjective happiness after the intervention program) was compared and analyzed using the t-test for dependent means. The study concluded that the respondents' perceived degree of subjective happiness had increased after the conduct of the intervention program. The difference on the subjective happiness of the respondents before and after the intervention program is significant. Thus the intervention program is effective. There is significant relationship between the respondents' subjective happiness and academic achievement in Psychology class. Results depict that happiness is a correlates of students' academic success.

Keyword: *Subjective happiness, academic success, intervention program*

I. INTRODUCTION

The pursuit and attainment of happiness is of great interest to every people. One of the strongest findings in the literature is that happy people have better relationships than do their happy peers (Lyubomirsky, 2007). One of the strategies on the path of becoming happier is investing in social relationships where practicing kindness acts to others has proven effective. According to Lyubomirsky (2007) the common refrain of the spiritual leaders of Tibetan Buddhism stating that “If you want to be happy, practice compassion”. Doing acts of kindness is a practice of compassion. She mentioned that in our daily lives we used to do acts of kindness to others. Sometimes we are doing those acts of kindness unknowingly. These activities were been a habit to some of us but sometimes we are not aware on the implications of these, that these acts may not only help others happy but we ourselves doing it becomes happy. The common acts of kindness enumerated by Lyubomirsky (2007) from very small, simple helpful behaviors to fairly big ones are as follows: “bought a friend a sundae”, “washed someone else’s dishes”, “donated blood”, “stayed on a friend on her first night at a new place”, “visited a nursing home”, “help strangers with computer problems”, “let my sister borrow the my car for the weekend”, “share your favorite food to other”, and “told a professor thank you for his hard work”. Other kinds of kind acts were suggested by Goldman, (2010.) According to him the best act of kindness is not to spend a lot of money; 1) Smile at people you meet. There are sayings that “Start every day with a smile and get it over with”. “Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing (~Mother Teresa); 2) Leave a small gift (toy, key chain etc) for someone to find through.

We really loved the idea of making some small gift/ and leaving them as a surprise gift; 3). Leave positive well-wishing notes around for your family - and for strangers; 4) greet and help their teachers carry their

books/things; 5) Pick a bunch of flowers and leave them on someone; 6) Pick up litters in your local area. Research shows that these simple act of kindness activities reliably make people happier. The generous acts don't have to be random and they don't have to be a certain kind (e.g, anonymous or social or big, etc.). It is found that almost any types of acts of kindness boost happiness or subjective happiness. Empirical studies show the effect of doing kindness to subjective happiness. According to Lyubomirsky (2007) & Dean (2006) doing kindness often benefited people relieve their guilt, distress, or discomfort and it encourages them to have sense of awareness and appreciation for their own good fortune. In doing acts of kindness people can deliver a welcome of distraction from their own troubles and ruminations since their focus was shifted to somebody else and not to themselves alone. Furthermore, Lyubomirsky (2007), added that a considerable benefit of kindness is its impact to self- satisfaction. Doing acts of kindness makes people view themselves as an altruistic and compassionate. They view things positively, gain more confidence and more functional. Lastly, according to her, in doing act of kindness many people will appreciate their deeds, and eventually will redound to a better performance. This study was conducted to test if doing random act of kindness will enhance the subjective happiness of college freshmen as they are experiencing adjustment to college and other personal and family problems. Thus, this study also investigates if happiness affects the academic achievement of the students in their Psychology class.

Objectives of the study

The focus of the study is to determine the effectiveness of doing act of kindness as intervention program conducted to enhance the subjective happiness and its influence to academic achievement of the college freshmen:

Specifically, this study aimed to:

1. Determine the perceived degree of subjective happiness of the respondents before and after the intervention program.
2. Determine the level of academic achievement of the respondents.
3. Test the significant difference on the subjective happiness of the respondents before and after the intervention program.
4. Test the significant relationship between the subjective happiness of the respondents after the intervention program and their Midterm grades in Psychology class.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study used the input- process- output to determine the effectiveness of the Doing Act of Kindness to enhance subjective happiness of the respondents. The input is the current degree of the subjective happiness of the students before the intervention program. These variables are expected to increase (output) after the conduct of the intervention program (process), the doing act of kindness. After the intervention program, the students' perceived degree of subjective happiness after the intervention program is correlated to their academic achievement in Psychology.

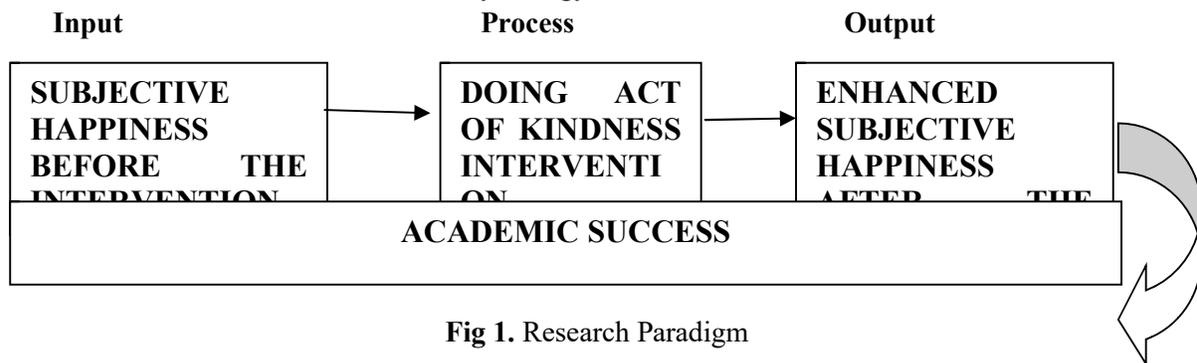


Fig 1. Research Paradigm

II. METHODS

The researcher used pre- experimental method using pre-test (pre-assessment) and post test (post-assessment) design in order to find out the effectiveness of the doing act of kindness intervention program to the subjective happiness of the students in their Psychology classes. This method was used to determine the significant difference on the degree of happiness of the participants before and after the intervention program. A descriptive - correlational approach is also used in the study. The students' perceived subjective happiness after the intervention program is correlated to their academic achievement in Psychology. The respondents were chosen in random from college freshmen who are taking Psychology classes.

The students who were experiencing difficulty in their adjustment to college, students who have some personal and family problems were identified through the intake interview conducted by the researchers. Out of 50 students 27 were chosen as participants of the study. The instrument used is the Subjective Happiness Scale by Lyubomirsky (2007). A 4 questions questionnaire which measures their perceived degree of happiness with the scale of 1-5, 1 means not a happy person and 5 means a very happy person. For the academic achievement, the researchers used the midterm and final grades. Mean distribution was used to determine the degree of happiness of the respondents and their academic achievement in Psychology before and after the intervention program. T-test for dependent means determines the significant difference of both variables before and after the intervention program.

The Intervention Program

This intervention program followed the procedures done by Lyubomirsky & Della Porta (2008) which was patterned to Lyubomirsky (2005) & (Boehm et al, 2008). The procedure was different in terms of the selection of the participants. Only one intervention was utilized where the participants are asked to perform five acts of kindness and spread over the week for 2 weeks.

Session 1 – Orientation

The researcher met the participants for the orientation program. After the orientation the participants were given a pre-assessment using the Subjective Happiness Scale Lyubomirsky (2007).

Session 2 - Start of the two weeks of Intervention Program

On the first day of the intervention program, this is one month after they took their pre- assessment; Participants were asked to keep track on every act of kindness they performed through journal writing. Most of the act of kindness reported by the students are simple tasks like writing inspiring notes to their friends and classmates; saying thank you to their parents, friends and teachers; look for something around the classroom that can be fixed up, sending handmade cards or a letter to someone they cared and leave positive well wishing notes around for the members of the family and for others whom they do not know.

Session 3: Last day of the two week intervention

The day following the 2-weeks intervention, participants were asked to rate their perceived achievement of the goal of counting kindnesses as well as how grateful they felt during the intervention week. The item tapping perceived achievement will be asked participants to indicate the extent to which they achieved the goal of the intervention on a scale from 1 ("I did not achieve at all") to 5 ("I achieved a great deal").

Session 4: Post- assessment

After a month of the two weeks intervention program the participants they were asked again to answer the Subjective Happiness Scale.

Relationship between subjective happiness and academic achievement

To determine how the intervention program affects their academic achievement in their Psychology class, their perceived subjective happiness after the intervention program was correlated to their Final grades in Psychology.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Perceived degree of subjective happiness of the respondents before and after the intervention program

Table 1 presents the perceived degree of happiness of the respondents before and after the conduct of intervention program, doing act of Kindness. Results showed marked increased in the degree of subjective happiness of the respondents before and after the intervention program. Before they conducted the act of kindness activities, the respondents generally consider themselves less happy persons (mean = 2.20) as well as, when they were compared to others. However, when they participated in the intervention program their degree of happiness had increased (mean = 4.16). This findings show that the act of kindness they participated in and conducted affects their subjective happiness. That they become happy. The finding was supported by empirical studies that shows doing kindness affects subjective happiness.

According to Lyubomirsky (2007) & Dean (2006) doing kindness often benefited people relieve their guilt, distress, or discomfort and it encourages them to have sense of awareness and appreciation for their own good fortune. In doing acts of kindness people can deliver a welcome of distraction from their own troubles and ruminations since their focus was shifted to somebody else and not to themselves alone.

Table 1. Respondents’ perceived degree of subjective happiness before and after the intervention program

Subjective Happiness	Before the Intervention		After the Intervention	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
1. In general, I consider myself	2.44	less happy	4.42	happy
2. Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself	1.78	less happy	3.87	happier
3. Compared to some people who are generally very happy: They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything.	2.04	less happy	4.44	very happy
4. Compared to some people who are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seems as happy as they might be.	2.55	moderately happy	3.92	happier
Total Mean	2.20	Less happy	4.16	Happier
<i>Scale: 4.50- 5.00 - very happy;</i>	<i>3.50 - 4.49 - more happy ;</i>	<i>2.50 - 3.49 - moderately happy</i>	<i>1.50 - 2.49 - less happy;</i>	<i>1.00 - 1.49 - not happy</i>

Academic Achievement of the respondents

Table 2. presents the academic achievement of the respondents in the Psychology classes as measured by their Final grades.

Table 2. Respondents’ academic achievement

Academic Achievement	Mean	Interpretation	Scale
Final Grade	86.53	Very satisfactory	: 75-79 =

Fairly Satisfactory; 80-84 = Satisfactory; 85-89 = Very Satisfactory; 90-100 = Outstanding

Comparison between the subjective happiness of the respondents before and after the intervention program

Table 3 shows the comparison of the subjective happiness of the respondents before and after the intervention program. Based on the t-test analysis the subjective happiness of the respondents before and after the intervention program differ. The t- value of 7.296 is significant at .000 level of significance. This finding suggests that the doing act of kindness as intervention program is effective to make people happy or very happy. Happy people have more happy memories in daily life in terms of both quantity and quality. Happy people became more kind and grateful through the counting kindnesses intervention (Diener, 2009).

Table 3. Comparison between the respondents' subjective happiness before and after the intervention program.

Variable	Mean Before	Mean After	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Subjective Happiness	2.20	4.16	1.96	7.296	0.000	Significant

Relationship between the subjective happiness of the respondents after the intervention program and their academic achievement.

Table 4 shows the relationship between the subjective happiness and academic achievement of the respondents. Results showed high significant results ($r=.480$, $p=.00$) between the variables. Student happiness directly correlates to student academic performance. The finding implies that the happier the students are the more they perform well in school. Respondents of the study often reported that happiness, or positive feelings like enjoyment or fun, supported their schoolwork. One student shared, "In school I feel happy and accepted, which allows for a fun and free learning experience." Yet another explained, "I always feel pushed to do my best when I have a project that I find to be really interesting and fun." One student summed it up, "I only do good work when I think happy thoughts." This finding is supported by the study of **Schiller and Hinton (2015)**. **The results of their study revealed that** on average, students who reported being happier had higher grades. Specifically, they found a statistically significant correlation between happiness and students' GPA from elementary school through high school. Moreover, Otake et al (2006) states happy people scored higher on their motivation to perform, and their recognition and enactment of kind behaviors.

Table 5. Relationship between the respondents' subjective happiness and academic achievement

Variables	r- coefficient	p-value	Interpretation
Subjective Happiness and Academic Achievement	0.428	0.000	Significant

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. The respondents' perceived degree of subjective happiness had increased after the conduct of the intervention program.
2. The respondents' academic achievement is very satisfactory
3. There is significant difference in the subjective happiness of the respondents before and after the intervention program. The respondents become happy/happier after the doing of kindness intervention program.
4. There is significant relationship between the respondents' subjective happiness and academic achievement.

V. RECOMMENDATION

Sustain the conduct of doing act of kindness as intervention program not only for the college freshmen but also for other levels of the college students.

REFERENCES

- [1] Boehm, J. K., Lyubomirsky, S., & Sheldon, K. M. (2008). Spicing up kindness:
- [2] The role of variety in the effects of practicing kindness on improvements in mood, happiness, and self-evaluations.
- [3] **Dean , B. (2006)** *Kindness and the Case for Altruism*, Pennsylvania.
- [4] Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95, 542-575.
- [5] Diener, E. (2009). A primer for reporters and newcomers Perspectives on Psychology science
- [6] Goldman E.,(2010)Random Acts of Kindness Ideas
- [7] Lyubomirsky, S. (2007)Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

- [8] Lyubomirsky, S. (2007) *The How of Happiness*, Penguin Press, USA
- [9] Lyubomirsky, S & Della Porta, M. (2008) *Boosting Happiness, Buttressing Resilience: Results from Cognitive and Behavioral Interventions* New York: Guilford Press.
- [10] Miller, G. F. (2000). *The mating mind: How sexual choice shaped the evolution of human nature*. New York: Doubleday.
- [11] Otake, K., Shimai, S., Tanaka-Matsumi, J., Otsui, K., Fredrickson, B. L. (2006). Happy
- [12] people become happier through kindness: A counting kindnesses intervention. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7, 361-375.
- [13] Schiller, L. & Hinton, C. (2015) It's true: happier students get higher grades. *Academic Rigour Journal Flair*, Australia