

Dispositional factors, perceived social support and happiness among prison inmates in Nigeria: A new look

Nijerya'daki hapisane mahkumlarında kişilik faktörleri, algılanan sosyal destek ve mutluluk: Yeni bir bakış açısı

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Abstract

This study contributed to happiness literature by exploring the extent to which the big five personality (extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience), emotional intelligence, and social support predict happiness among less explored sample such as prison inmates in Nigeria. The study also investigated whether perceived social support will predict happiness beyond and above dispositional factors after demographic variables such as age, gender, and religion were controlled for. Two hundred and fifty one (251) prison inmates randomly selected from 3 prisons in three South-western States in Nigeria participated in the study. Data were collected by Oxford happiness questionnaires, Big Five Personality Inventory, Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test, and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and were analysed using hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Results showed that extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, emotional intelligence, and perceived social support collectively and relatively contributed to prison inmates' level of happiness. Moreover, social support predicted happiness above and beyond big five personality and emotional intelligence. The results were discussed in line with past findings. Practical implications of the findings were also highlighted.

Keywords: Personality factors, emotional intelligence, social support, happiness, prison inmates

Özet

Bu çalışma, beş faktör kişilik modeli (dışadönüklük, duygusal dengesizlik, uyumluluk, sorumluluk, deneyime açıklık), duygusal zeka ve sosyal desteğin mutluluğu ne düzeyde yordadığını oldukça az araştırılan bir örneklem olan hapisane mahkumları üzerinde ve Nijerya'da araştırarak mutluluk literatürüne katkıda bulunmuştur. Ayrıca bu çalışmada, algılanan sosyal desteğin, kişiliğin ötesinde, yaş, cinsiyet ve din gibi demografik değişkenler kontrol altına alındıktan sonra, mutluluğu yordayıp yordamadığı da araştırılmıştır. Çalışmaya Nijerya'nın üç Güney-Batı Eyaletindeki 3 hapisaneden rastgele seçilmiş iki yüz elli bir (251) hapisane mahkumu katılmıştır. Veriler, Oxford Mutluluk Ölçeği, Beş Faktör Kişilik Envanteri, Öz-bildirim Duygusal Zeka Ölçeği, ve Çok Boyutlu Algılanan Sosyal Destek Ölçeği kullanarak toplanmıştır ve hiyerarşik çoklu regresyon analizi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar dışadönüklük, nevroitiklik, uyumluluk, sorumluluk, deneyime açıklık, duygusal zeka ve algılanan sosyal desteğin toplu olarak ve göreceli olarak hapisane mahkumlarının mutluluk düzeylerine katkıda bulunduğunu göstermiştir. Dahası, sosyal destek algısı, beş faktör kişilik ve duygusal zekanın ötesinde mutluluğu yordamaktadır. Sonuçlar geçmiş bulgular ışığında tartışılmıştır. Bulgulardan çıkarılan pratik öneriler de ayrıca vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kişilik faktörleri, duygusal zeka, sosyal destek, mutluluk, mahkumlar

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Introduction

Although, for years, happiness remained neglected, with research concentrating on aspects of human unhappiness, such as depression, anxiety, and emotional disorders, according to recent evidences, this imbalance has been corrected (Fredrickson, 1998; 2001; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Furnham & Christoforou, 2007). Today, ample studies have been published on the definitions, correlates, and predictors of happiness in many western countries (particularly in America) (Fredrickson, 1998; Argyle, 2001; Seligman, 2002; Lyubomirsky, 2007; Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008).

Many environmental factors such as work, money, religion, and leisure activities have been shown to have a strong effect on happiness (Diener, et al., 2008; Lu & Hu, 2005; Abdel-Khalek, 2006). Some researchers concluded that dispositional factors such as personality and emotional intelligence (EI) are greater determinants of happiness than factors like race, social class, money, work leisure, and religion (Furnham & Brewin 1990; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Furnham & Cheng, 1999; Lu, et al., 2005; Chamorro-Premuzic, Bennett, & Furnham, 2007; Bahiraei, Eftekhareh, Zareimatin, & Soloukdar, 2012). Others reported that receiving social support such as emotional support, increases happiness than personality factors (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Reis, et al., 2007; Diener, et al., 2008; Uchida, Kitayama, Mesquita, Reyes, & Morling, 2008).

Despite the arrays of studies on the correlates of happiness, it is however obvious that past findings was inconclusive and moreover little or none were done on the correlates of happiness among Nigerian sample. Findings from the western countries may not be applicable to or reflect happenings in Nigeria due to socio-cultural differences. Therefore, relying on western findings alone may not give us a clear picture of the determinants of happiness among Nigerians. To ensure their generalizability, there is need to examined the correlates of happiness in Nigerian context especially among less explored sample such as prison inmates.

Against this background, the present study investigated the roles of personality (extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience), emotional intelligence (dispositional factors) and social supports (from family, friends, and significant others) on happiness among prison inmates in Nigeria. The study is also set out to determine whether social support would predict happiness beyond personality and EI.

Cross-Cultural Differences in the Perception of Happiness

Although, happiness has been considered by philosophers for a very time, it recently became of topic of research in positive psychology literature (Abdel-Khalek, 2006). Since its inception, happiness has been defined and viewed in different ways. Pflug (2009) submitted that although, happiness as a state of mind may be universal, its meaning takes culture-specific forms. Uchida and Ohgihara (2012) also supported this idea by submitting that the cultural construal of happiness is grounded in historically nurtured ideologies and religious ideas. Drawing on the concept of folk and individualism/collectivism approaches (Hofstede, 1984; Pflug, 2009), different studies have attempted to uncover meaning about the nature of happiness (for review see Lu & Shih 1997; Lu & Gilmour 2004; Pflug, 2009; Uchida, et al., 2012).

In European-American cultural contexts for example, happiness is defined as a positive emotional state that is typically construed as a state contingent on both personal achievement and maximized positivity of personal attributes (Myers & Diener, 1995, cited in Uchida, et al., 2012, p.357). This view usually affects the way they seek happiness. Body dysfunction and negative emotional state are possible hindrances to the happiness of European-American citizens. In this

culture, individual happiness is best predicted by personal goal attainment and high self-esteem or self-efficacy.

The European-American view of happiness has a close ties with the protestant worldview (Uchida, et al., 2012). According to this worldview, individuals are predestined to be “selected” or “doomed” (Weber, 1920). The belief in predestination generates a strong desire to affirm the worthiness of the self through hard work and to obtain positive outcomes, and, thus, as being “selected” by God. Affirmation of personal worthiness, such as feeling happiness, might serve as an effective buffer against anxiety (negative prospect of the self); thus, there is a high motivation to seek happiness (Uchida, et al., 2012 p.358).

On the other hand, in East Asian culture, happiness is majorly defined as balance in social relationship (Uchida, et al., 2012). They considered social support, relationship harmony, positive relationship, and ordinariness as yard sticks for measuring individual’s level of happiness. Unlike the European-American who viewed happiness using the lens of the protestant worldview, the Asian cultural construal of happiness is related to certain strands of ideas revealed in Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. All these ideologies and worldviews emphasize a holistic or dialectical world order where everything is assumed to be connected with everything else (Kitayama & Markus, 1999; Peng & Nisbett, 1999).

The scenario seems not to be different in Africa. For instance, Pflug (2009) reported that South Africans associated happiness with close social relationships and a stable social environment in which everybody is well-off. The importance of family relationships was also emphasized by South Africans. Nigeria is not exempted because Nigerian society is more collectivistic than individualistic (Salami, 2010). As a collectivistic society, people in this culture belief that seeking social supports (e.g. emotional, instrumental, informational, and tangible supports) from family, friends and significant others on some personal, social and other vital issues is significant to happiness. This is because the support from family and friends usually takes care of personal and social problems while that from significant others may likely take care of other critical problems of the individuals (Salami, 2008). Feelings such as acknowledgement, praise, consolation, and respect were derived from relationships with significant others (Pflug, 2009). Here are some of the views of some Africans on happiness as reported by Pflug (2009) “Happiness to me is having the people that I love around me and knowing that they are safe” “Happiness to me is when I am content with my family and no one is suffering emotionally, financially or any other way” and “I feel very settled when no one around me is suffering”.

From the aforementioned evidences, it is clear that western countries tend to be more individualistic while Asian and African countries operate within the framework of collectivism. Individualistic societies (i.e. European-American) emphasize the needs and rights of the individual (Eaton & Louw, 2000), therefore achievement and self-esteem, autonomy, hedonism and stimulation are culturally sanctioned values (Kitayama & Markus 2000; Schwartz 1992). In collectivistic societies (e.g., Nigeria, South African, Japan, and China), the fundamental unit of perception is not the self but the relationship with relevant others (Triandis 1995). Family values, concern for others and harmony are of crucial importance (Lu & Gilmour, 2006). From these submissions, one cannot just assume that happiness research from western cultures will be the same in Nigeria. To ensure their generalizability, there is need to examined happiness and its predictors in Nigerian context, hence the aim of this present study.

Personality and Happiness

As noted earlier, amongst the determinants of happiness, personality characteristics have been argued to be important (than external factors) predictors of happiness. The term personality is usually used to refer to the totality and uniqueness of a person rather than just the biological makeup of an individual. It is the cognitive and behavioural patterns that show stability over time and across situation. Although, there are several taxonomies of personality, the Big Five Factor Model (Costa & McCrae, 1998) has been widely used in investigating the role of personality on subjective well-being (Onyishi, Okongwu, & Ugwu, 2012). The five personality traits included neuroticism (characterized by a tendency to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, depression or sadness, hostility and self-consciousness, as well as a tendency to be impulsive), extraversion (characterized by positive emotions, warmth, assertiveness and the disposition towards, sociability and high activity), openness to experience (people high in openness are inclined to be curious, imaginative, empathetic, creative, original, artistic, psychologically minded, aesthetically responsive and flexible), agreeableness (the inclination towards interpersonal trust and consideration for others, cooperation, conscious, tolerant, soft-hearted, flexible, and forgiving), and conscientiousness (characterized by hard working, careful, habitual, reliable, and purposeful).

It was shown in a study conducted among Chinese university students that students who are extraverted experience higher level of happiness than those who are neurotics (Lu, et al., 2005). Lu and his colleague's findings concurred with Lu, et al., (1997) earlier findings which also reported the same results. Spangler and Palrechal (2004) examined the influence of extraversion, neuroticism, and personal striving on happiness among 271 undergraduate and graduate students Binghamton, USA and they found that students who are extraverted and are neurotics reported higher and lower level of happiness respectively. Personal strivings had no relationship with happiness. In their study where they assessed the roles of harm avoidance, extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism on two mood states (happiness and sadness) among students in Edinburgh's University, Stewart, Ebmeier, and Deary (2005) found harm avoidance, neuroticism, and extraversion correlated with both positive mood (happiness) and negative mood (sadness) but psychoticism played a small role.

In a longitudinal study, Daneilsson (2006) found Swedish adolescents who were neurotics experience lower level of happiness in later life (adulthood). In London, Chamro-Premuzic, et al., (2007) examined the connection between big five personality traits and happiness among a sample of students and non-students. Their results showed that stability, extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness were positively related to happiness. When Behiraei, et al., (2012) tested the relationship between personality dimension and happiness among students in Teran University in Iran, they found that neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness contributed 45% variance in happiness while agreeableness, openness and sensationism had no significant relationship with happiness. In spite these contributions, none of the studies examined the role of big five personality traits on happiness among non-students or non-free linking people such as prison inmates. The present study is an attempt to fill these identified vacuums.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Happiness

The positive consequences of emotional intelligence have made it one of the most studied construct in organisational and social psychology. Emotional intelligence (EI) involves the ability to understand and manage one's and others' emotion, feelings of emotions, to discriminate among them and use to use information to guide one's thinking and action (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). It can also be defined as the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understanding and reason

with emotion, and regulate emotion in self and others and adapt to environmental pressure (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Caruso, Salovey, 2000). Individuals with higher level of EI possess five traits of EI. These traits are: intrapersonal component, interpersonal component, adaptability component, stress management component and general mood component (Bar-On, 2002). Intrapersonal component is the ability to understand, manage and controls one's emotions. Interpersonal component is the ability to understand how others feel and relate with them. Adaptability component is the ability to adapt and cope with environmental demands. It is also the ability to adjust one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviour to changing situations and conditions. Stress management component is the ability to manage, change, adapt, and solve stressful situation and strong emotions without falling apart but by actively coping with stress. Lastly, general mood component is the ability to look at the brighter side of life and maintain a positive attitude even in the face of adversity (Optimism). It is also the ability to feel satisfied with one's life, to enjoy oneself and others and to have fun and express a positive mood (happiness).

Happiness is an aspect of emotional intelligence, and research has shown that happy individuals feel more of positive affect and less of negative affect (Francis, 1999). Moreover, measures of emotional intelligence and happiness are positively correlated (Furnham, et al., 2003). Emotional intelligent people are more flexible, assertive, optimistic, capable of communicating their feelings to others, influencing others people's feelings, and controlling their own emotions thus, they are often capable of adjusting to or withdrawing from pressure and regulating stress (Furnham, et al., 2007, p. 457). Emotionally intelligent individuals are always cheerful and satisfied with their lives, confident, and tend to focus on the good side of life (Carmeli, 2003). EI helps an individual to be in touch with their emotion and regulate it in a ways that promotes well-being and happiness (Furnham, et al., 2003). Several researches have been on EI and happiness but unfortunately these results were inconclusive. For example, Chamorro-Premuzic, et al., (2007) found that trait EI contributed 18% variance (beyond personality traits) in happiness among students and non-students samples in University of London. The same result was also reported by Dasgupta (2010) among female IT professionals. She found that IT females with high level of emotional intelligence experienced work-family life balance, higher quality of life and level of happiness. On the contrary, Sillick and Schutte (2006) results showed that emotional intelligence had no significant influence on adult happiness. Since the findings of past studies on the connection between EI and happiness were mixed and inconclusive, there is a need to further investigate this relationship in Nigeria context.

Perceived Social Support and Happiness

Perceived social support is the extent to which individuals feel that provisions of social relationships are available to them. It refers to the physical and psychological comfort provided by friends, family, and other significant people such as pastor, love partner, spouse etc. Perceived social support is the perception that one is loved and cared for, esteemed and valued, and form part of a social network of mutual assistance and obligations (Wills, 1991). Taxonomies of social support have shown that social support can come in different forms. These include affective support (i.e., love, liking and respect), instrumental support (e.g. aid in work, giving information, or money), emotional support (involves providing warmth and nurturance to another individual and reassuring the person that he or she is a valuable person who is cared about), appraisal support, and informational support (Edwards, 2004). Social support enables people to cope with varying life stressors and experience lower levels of strain and burnout (Taylor, 2003; Onyishi, et al., 2012). This supports the social buffering model that posit that social support have an effect on the individual psychological well-being during stressful life events (McCormick, 1999).

In this study, the multiple social support comprises support from family, friends and significant others (co-workers, prison officers, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and Government). Although, in this study the composite score of social support was used, the logic underlying the selection of social support as a possible factor influencing happiness is based on some socio-cultural factors. The Nigerian society is more collectivistic than individualistic as such it is appropriate for an individual to seek social support from family, friends and significant others on some personal, social and other vital issues (Salami, 2008a). The support from family and friends often takes care of personal and social problems while that from significant others may likely take care of other critical problems of the inmate. Lack of social support could result to arrays of negative emotions such as unhappiness, depression, anxiety etc.

Most well-being researchers have consistently reported a significant positive connection between social support and happiness. For example, scholars such as Diener, et al., (2008), Lyubomirsky (2007), Reis (2001), Sharma, et al., (2010), and Demir, Simsek, and Procsal (2012) have all found that perceived autonomy support from significant sources (e.g., friends, and the romantic partners) positively correlated with students' subjective well-being and happiness. This could be because friendship experiences promote individuals' feelings of uniqueness and comfort and keep him/her away from loneliness. When people (including prison inmates) perceive that they are cared for, their level of happiness may increase, thus empower their coping ability (Cohen, 2004). Studies have shown that happy individuals are adept at placing themselves in positive effective states and are able to cope with environmental challenges or stressors (Argyle, et al., 1995). The present research therefore seeks to answer the following questions:

Would personality factors independently and jointly predict happiness? Would emotional intelligence influence inmates' happiness? Would social support predict happiness even beyond and above personality traits and emotional intelligence?

Method

Procedure and Participants

To get the prisons that participated, 6 prisons in 6 South-western States in Nigeria were normally listed and the even numbers were selected. The choice of even numbers was arrived at via the ballot technique. That is odd and even were wrapped differently and all put together in a box. An individual was then asked to pick one and she picked a wrapped paper upon which even numbers was written. Prisons that are even numbers on the list were selected. Out of these prisons, 3 prisons located in Lagos, Ondo, and Oyo States were randomly selected. The researcher visited the different prisons that were selected to participate in the study. After obtaining permission from the respective prison authorities, the researcher went to each of the prisons on an agreed date. Using systematic sampling technique (i.e. odd and even numbers) on the list of prison inmates provided by each prison officials of the selected prisons, the researcher with the help of some prison officers administered 300 copies of questionnaires to the prisoners consented after the purpose of the study had been clearly explained to the prisoners and prison officers. To reduce self-report bias, confidentiality and anonymity were provided through a highlighted sentence at the top of the questionnaire that asks the participants not to identify themselves in any way. The researcher went to the prisons on an agreed date to retrieve the filled questionnaires. 293 were retrieved but only 251 were found usable for the analysis. This yielded a response rate of 83.7%. The administration and collection of the questionnaires took two weeks. The participants comprises of 203 (80.87%) males and 48 (19.12%) females. Their ages ranged between 21 to 46 years with a mean of 25.6 and standard deviation of 4.21. Moreover, 199 (79.28%) were

Christians, 34 (13.54%) were Muslims, and 18 (7.17%) claimed to be traditional worshippers. Moreover, 101 (40.23%) of the participants were married while 150 (59.76%) of the participants were single. In terms of the crime committed, the crimes reported by the respondents include; rape, theft, assault, examination malpractices, and robbery. All the participants had formal education. 89 (35.45%) of the participants had SSCE (senior school certificate examination), 67 (26.69%) had Ordinary National Diploma (OND), 53 (21.11%) had National Certificate Examination, 23 (9.16%) possessed a B.Sc/HND Degrees, and 19 (7.56%) had Postgraduate Degrees. Their length of imprisonment ranged between 9 months to 4 years.

Instruments

Happiness: This was measured contained 29-items Oxford Happiness Questionnaires (OHQ) scale developed by Hill and Argyle (2002). The 29-item scale was designed to assess people's level of happiness. Sample item include: I often experience joy and elation. The scale is scored on a 6-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree). The OHQ has a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of 0.91 (Hill, et al., 2002; Argyle, et al., 1995). In this study, a Cronbach's alpha of .81 was obtained. Scores above the mean reflect that the individual has higher level of happiness.

Big Five Personality Factors: These were measured by a standardized 44-item big five inventory personality scale developed by John, Donahue, and Kentle (1991). The scale has been validated for use with Nigerian sample by Umeh (2004). The instrument was designed to five dimensions of personality (extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience). Direct scoring is used for all the sub-scale and the response format ranged from 1 = Disagree strongly to 5 = Agree strongly. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.80 and a 3 month test-retest of 0.85 were reported by John, et al., (1991). A validity coefficient of 0.75 was obtained by John, et al., (1991). Onyishi, et al., (2012) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83. In the present study, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78 was obtained.

Emotional Intelligence: This was measured with a 33-item Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SREIT) developed by Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim (1998). SREIT measured social skills, emotional regulation, and utilization of emotions (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). The response format ranged from 5- strongly agree to 1-strongly disagree. The composite score was used to assess the overall level of emotional intelligence. Ehigie, Oguntuase, Ibode, and Ehigie, (2012) reported a coefficient value of 0.84 for the overall scale among frontline restaurant workers in Nigeria. Item-total correlation analysis led to dropping of 5 items that did not meet the criterion value of .30. Therefore, twenty-five (28) items were retained, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.71. Individual whose score is above or equal to the mean had higher level of emotional intelligence while score below the mean implies low level of emotional intelligence.

Perceived Social support: This was measured using a 12-item Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988). MSPSS measures perceived supports from friends, family members and significant others. The scale has 3 sub-scales: social support from family (4 items, i.e., 3, 4, 8, and 11), social support from friend (4 items, i.e., 6, 7, 9, and 12), and social support from significant others (4 items, i.e., 1, 2, 5, and 10). Sample items included: I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone (social support from family), I am well satisfied about everything in my life (social support from friends) and I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am (social support from significant others). The 12-item scale was rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (Very strongly Disagree) to 7 (Very strongly agree). The test-retest reliability for the family, friends, and significant other subscales were 0.85, 0.75, and 0.72 respectively (Zimet, et al., 1988) while a value of 0.85 was obtained for the overall scale. Among Nigeria sample, a

Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 was obtained for the overall scale. Score above the mean implies that the individual perceived higher social support.

Results

Person Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was conducted to test the association among the study variables. The results are presented in Table 1. The results show that extraversion ($r = .41; p < .01$), agreeableness ($r = .45, p < .05$), conscientiousness ($r = .36, p < .05$), and openness to experience ($r = .31, p < .05$) are positively significantly related to happiness. These imply that an extraverted, conscious, and open minded prison inmates are more likely to be happy. However, neuroticism had a negative significant relationship with happiness ($r = .21, p < .05$), implying that the more neurotic inmates are, the lower their level of happiness. Emotional intelligence ($r = .63, p < .05$) had a positive significant influence on happiness. This indicates that the higher the emotional intelligence of prison inmates, the higher their happiness level will be. Lastly, perceived social support ($r = .70, p < .01$) had significant positive relationship with happiness, suggesting that inmates who perceive higher social support reported higher level of happiness.

Table 1. Relationship among the study variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	1									
2. Gender	-.18**	1								
3. Extraversion	.60**	-.13**	1							
4. Neuroticism	.75**	-.11*	.57**	1						
5. Agreeableness	.03	-.33*	-.04	-.04	1					
6. Conscientiousness	.08	-.01	-.41*	-.06	.29**	1				
7. Openness	.03	-.51**	-.07	-.12**	.38**	.51**	1			
8. Emotional I.	.39**	-.02	-.16*	-.03	.25*	.40**	.59**	1		
9. Social Support	.25*	.20**	.59**	.25*	.40**	-.03	.25*	.62	1	
10. Happiness	-.18**	.57**	.41**	-.21*	.45*	.36*	.31*	.63*	.70**	1

** $p < 0.01$ (2 tailed) * $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed). Note: Emotional I. = Emotional Intelligence

Five steps hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to answer the three research questions raised in this study. The results are presented in Table 2.

Control variables (age, gender, and religion) were entered in model 1. The results reveal that age, gender, and religion had no significant joint influence on happiness ($R^2 = 0.06$, $F = 1.20$, $p > ns$). Independently, none of the control variables: age ($\beta = 0.07$, $t = 0.13$; $p > ns$), gender ($\beta = 0.02$, $t = 0.64$, $p > ns$), and religion ($\beta = 0.05$, $t = 0.22$, $p > ns$) contributed significantly to happiness, implying that the control variables of age, gender, and religion were significant predictors of prison inmates level of happiness.

In model 2, the big five personality variables (extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) were entered. The results reveal that all the personality variables had a significant joint influence on happiness ($R^2 = 0.31$, $F = 10.23$, $p < .05$), accounting for 31% variance in happiness. It is interesting to note that independently extraversion ($\beta = 0.25$, $t = 3.32$, $p < 0.05$), neuroticism ($\beta = -0.35$, $t = -6.74$, $p < 0.05$), agreeableness ($\beta = 0.30$, $t = 5.83$, $p < 0.05$), conscientiousness ($\beta = 0.43$, $t = 6.84$, $p < 0.01$), and openness to experience ($\beta = 0.51$, $t = 7.29$, $p < 0.01$) significantly positively predict happiness. This implies that prison inmates' who scores high on extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience reported higher level of happiness. However, neuroticism negatively significantly predicts happiness ($\beta = -0.35$, $t = -6.74$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that an inmate who possesses high neuroticism personality type experience lower level of happiness. Therefore, the first research question was supported.

Addition of emotional intelligence (EI) in model 3, reveal that EI alone contributed 41% variance in happiness, increasing the R^2 by 10 (i.e., from 0.31 to 0.41). EI also had a significant relative influence on happiness ($\beta = 0.46$; $t = 6.16$; $p < .05$), suggesting that the higher the EI of prison inmates' the higher their level of happiness. This result therefore confirmed the second research question which states that "would emotional intelligence influence happiness"?

At model 4, perceived social support was introduced. The results show that when perceived social support was entered the regression square value increases from 41% to 82%. This implies that perceived social support alone accounted for 82% variance in happiness among prison inmates ($R^2 = 0.82$; F-ratio = 28.45; $p < .01$). The beta value also indicate that perceived social support relatively predicted happiness ($\beta = 0.61$; $t = 8.12$; $p < .01$).

When control variables (age, gender, and religion), personality descriptors (extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and EI), and perceived social support were entered simultaneously into model 5, results reveal that the influence of control variables and personality descriptors were insignificant and extremely small respectively. The whole model accounted for 89% ($R^2 = 0.89$; F-ratio = 18.02; $p < .01$), implying that a further 7% of the variance in happiness were accounted for by the inclusion of control variables (age, gender, and religion) and personality descriptors (extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and EI). Except for age, gender, and religion, extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, EI, and perceived social support made unique contribution to happiness among prison inmates.

This result therefore provided positive answer for the last research question which says can social support predict happiness even beyond and above personality factors and emotional intelligence? The results suggest that perceived social support predicted happiness beyond and above both personality factors and emotional intelligence.

Table 2. Hierarchical multiple regression of happiness, extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, emotional intelligence, and perceived social support controlling for age, gender, and religion

Predictor variables	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	<i>F</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Model 1</i>	0.15	0.06	-	1.20	-	-	-
Age					0.07	0.13	ns
Gender					0.02	0.64	ns
Religion					0.05	0.22	ns
<i>Model 2</i>	0.38	0.31	0.25	10.23*	-	-	-
Extraversion					0.25*	3.32	< 0.05
Neuroticism					-0.35*	-6.74	< 0.05
Agreeableness					0.30*	5.83	< 0.05
Conscientiousness					0.43**	6.84	< 0.01
Openness to Experience					0.51**	7.29	< 0.01
<i>Model 3</i>	0.61	0.41	0.10	19.23*	-	-	-
Emotional Intelligence					0.46*	6.16	< 0.05
<i>Model 4</i>	0.53	0.82	0.41	28.45**	-	-	-
Perceived Social Support					0.61**	8.12	< 0.01
<i>Model 5</i>	0.21	0.89	0.07	18.02**	-	-	-
Age					0.02	0.05	ns
Gender					0.07	0.03	ns
Religion					0.00	0.01	ns
Extraversion					0.52*	6.92	< 0.05
Neuroticism					0.30*	2.00	< 0.05
Agreeableness					-0.27*	-1.34	< 0.05

Conscientiousness	0.16*	1.19	< 0.05
Openness to Experience	0.38*	3.01	< 0.05
Emotional Intelligence	0.32*	2.10	< 0.05
Perceived Social Support	0.55**	7.24	< 0.01

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Discussion

The extent to which the big five personality factors, emotional intelligence, and perceived social support predict happiness among prison inmates in Nigeria were assessed in the present study. The study also investigated whether social support would predict happiness beyond and above dispositional factors after demographic variables such as age, gender, and religion had been controlled for. The results of this study revealed that all the predictor variables (i.e. extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, emotional intelligence, and perceived social support) collectively predicted happiness. This result corroborates the findings of Sharma, et al., (2010). These authors found that personality characteristics (such as emotional stability, extraversion, hardiness, locus of control), religion, and social support positively correlated with happiness of adolescents in rural and urban cities of Indian.

In addition, the result confirmed the joint influence of the big five personality factors on happiness among prison inmates in Nigeria. This is not surprising; because earlier studies also reported the same results (see Furnham, et al., 1997). The finding supports Chamrro-Premuzic, et al., (2007) results which revealed that stability, extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness were positively related to happiness. Also corroborating the present study's result is the findings of DeNeve, et al., (1998) that showed that the big five personality factors predispose individuals to happiness. Weiss, Bates, and Luciano (2008) also found that that subjective well-being (a term synonym to happiness) was accounted for by unique genetic influences from neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness. The partially support the findings of Behiraei, et al., (2012). The authors found that neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness accounted for 45% variance in happiness while agreeableness, openness and sensationism had no significant relationship with happiness.

Relatively, extraversion had a positive significant influence on happiness among prison inmates in Nigeria. This implies that the more extraverted an inmate is the more his/her level of happiness increases. From the understanding of the characteristics of an extraverted person, this result may be expected. Extraverted people may be happier than low extraverted individuals because extraverted people seem to be more involved with people and have a large circle of friends. They engage in rewarding social activities, experience more affection, and enjoy higher level of social support (Furnham, et al., 2007; Sharma, et al., 2010). According to Lu, et al. (2005), the greater happiness of extraverts result not only from their involvement and enjoyment in leisure and social activities but also from the greater satisfaction they derive from them. Life may treat an extraverted individual well because of his/her ability to effectively cope with environmental pressure, participate and enjoy leisure and other social activities, see the positive said of life, and share his/her problems with others (Furnham & Brewin, 1990; Furnham, et al., 2007). Apart from that, extraverted individuals are sociable, assertive, social dominant, ambitious, sensation-seeking, and talkative, experience frequent positive affects, and are expert in expressing emotion. This finding concurred with the number of

researches that have consistently shown that the more extraverted people are, the higher their level of happiness (Argyle & Lu, 1990; Lu & Argyle, 1991; Spangler, et al., 2004; Stewart, et al., 2005; Bahiraei, et al., 2012).

Neuroticism also significantly predicted happiness of prison inmates in Nigeria, suggesting that higher scorers on neuroticism reported low level of happiness. This finding concurs with Cheng and Furnham (2000) who found that individual who are neurotic experience lower level of happiness. This may be expected because unlike extraversion, people with neuroticism type of personality worry excessively, lack confidence, are more pessimistic, and perceived life negatively (Furnham, et al., 2007). This type of people may possess low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, and worry excessively because of their negative view of themselves. They easily get offended and upset and in most times they overreact. These individuals are vulnerable and susceptible to stress because of their belief that they don't have the resources to cope with stressors (Watson, Clark & Harkness, 1994). They also (i.e., neurotic people) tend to experience negative feelings, depression, hostility and guilt (Watson, 2000) and thus develop physical and mental health problems like depression, anxiety (Watson, et al., 1994; Cheng et al., 2000). Low scorers on neuroticism on the other hand are more emotionally stable, confident, care free content and tend to think positively than high scorers (Watson, et al., 1994). Like the present result, neuroticism has been consistently found to be associated with happiness in most longitudinal and cross-sectional studies (Argyle, et al., 1990; Vitterso & Nilsen 2002). Chamorro-Premuzic, et al., (2007) for example, found that individuals who are neurotic experience lower level of happiness than their fellow counterparts. The lower level of happiness of neurotics may also be explained by their fewer involvements and lower enjoyment of social activities (Lu, et al. 2005). Higher level of neuroticism may predispose people to negativity. This general way of experiencing negativity may be a hindrance to experiencing happiness.

Agreeableness had a positive significant influence on happiness of prison inmates. The reasons for the present result may be due to the fact that agreeable individuals are soft hearted, friendly, trusting, and helpful as oppose to those who are antagonist, self-fish, ruthless, and uncooperative (low scorers on agreeableness). Agreeable inmates may be happier than their counterparts because they enjoy support from their friends, prison officials, and receive reinforcement because they are modest and unselfish (Chamorro-Premuzic, et al., 2007).

The results of this present study also shows that inmates who have conscientiousness type of personality reported higher level of happiness. This finding also shares the same view with that of previous findings (see Chamorro-Premuzic, et al., 2007; Bahiraei, et al., 2012). Reasons for this result are not far fetch. Conscientiousness points out trustworthiness as well as wilfulness. Unlike unconscientiously counterparts who are negligent, careless, lazy, and lack ambition, individuals (or inmates) with this personality traits (conscientiousness) are often industrious, persevere, and possess a high sense of duty. They are adept at controlling, regulating, and directing their impulsiveness; tolerate stress, spent most of their time on how to accomplish a task, hardworking, and ambitious than unconscientiously people or inmates. Conscientiousness people also know when and how to avoid trouble and achieve high levels of success through purposeful planning and persistent. These and many more are the reasons why conscientious individuals are happier than those who have low conscientious personality trait (Strobel, Tumasjan, & Sporrle, 2010).

Inmates who score high on openness to experience scale reported higher level of happiness. This finding lends credence to the finding of Furnham, et al., (2007) who reported that individuals with high openness are happier than low scorers on openness. This is not surprising because open individuals have an open and creative attitude towards phenomena; they look for new experiences and test their ideas by modern tools and techniques. Therefore, prison inmates with this personality type may see

prison as a place to learn new things and acquire new ideas. This may give them joy and make them happy rather than weighing them down.

The result in the 3rd model of the regression analysis also supported the independent predictor of happiness by emotional intelligence. This implies that inmates who are emotionally intelligent experience higher level of happiness. Although, the finding of Sillick, et al., (2006) among Australian adults negates this result, ample studies have shown positive connection between emotional intelligence and happiness (see Furnham, et al., 2003; Chamorro-Premuzic, et al., 2007). This is possible because emotional intelligent individuals have the skill of understanding and managing other people and the can affectively cope with environmental pressure. In other words, an inmate (who is emotionally intelligent) may have the ability to monitor their own and co-inmates or prison officials' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide their thinking and actions towards co-inmates and prison officers (Salovey, et al., 1990). Because high emotional intelligent individuals know when and how to express emotion, it is likely they experiences greater happiness. The ability model of emotional intelligence explains that emotional intelligence involves perceiving and reasoning abstractly with information that emerges from feelings; it is possible that this is why prison inmates are happier than their counterparts. Individuals who possess high level of EI have been described to have the ability to be aware of, understand, and express themselves, and have the ability to be aware of, understand, and relate to others, the ability to deal with strong emotions, and the ability to adopt to change and solve problems of a social or personal nature (Bar-On, 1997).

With the above dispositions, emotional intelligent inmates are able to understand their co-inmates state and relate with them in ways that would enhance their satisfaction. Emotionally intelligent individuals are able to positively relate with their fellow prison inmates and other prison officers possibly because of feelings of happiness they experience. This could be possible because happiness is an aspect of emotional intelligence (Furnham, et al., 2003). This result is consistent with Khalatbari, Ghorbanshiroudi, Pournesaei, Siahbalaie, and Keikhayfarzaneh (2011) findings among sample of students in Iran. Their study showed a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and happiness.

As expected, social support from family, friends and significant others predicts happiness beyond and above personality and emotional intelligence. The prediction of social support above personality and EI contradict the position of previous studies (e.g., Furnham, et al., 1990; Furnham, et al., 1997; DeNeve, et al., 1998; Lu, et al., 2005; Bahiraei, et al., 2012) that personality attributes predicts happiness beyond environmental factors. This implies that social support is a pivotal variable that should not be overlooked in the study of happiness. This finding concurs with previous studies (e.g., Sharma, et al., 2010; Demir, et al., 2012). The studies revealed that perceived autonomy support from significant sources (e.g., friends, and the romantic partners) contributed to university students' subjective well-being and happiness. Indeed, when people (including prison inmates) perceive that they are cared for or receives abundant emotional or instrumental supports from their family members, friends, or prison officials, their level of happiness may tend to increase, thus empower their coping ability. Empirically, social support has been found by some scholars to be the most robust indicator of well-being and happiness (Cohen, 2004; Sharma, et al., 2010).

Conclusion

The bigger contribution of this study is the context where it was conducted and the sample it made used of. As far as the knowledge of the researcher is concerned, studies on happiness and its predictors are very scanty in Nigeria. Moreover, most of the extant western studies neglected prison inmates. The findings of the present study revealed that prison inmates level of happiness is determine by

personality factors, EI and social support they received from friends, family, and significant others. But social support predicted happiness beyond and above personality and EI. As far as the researcher knowledge is concern, no model explaining the link between personality variables, EI, social support and happiness. This study has therefore illuminates the road linking personality, social support and happiness together. Nonetheless, there is the need for happiness and personality researchers to further investigate the connection between these variables. This would further ensure the generalizability of the present findings and assist in establishing a more comprehensive theory.

Practically, the findings suggest that when deciding to design programmes that would enhance prison inmates' happiness, Government and prison officers' should consider the personality of prison inmate when designing training manuals. This study also calls for urgent attention of prison officials and Government on the need to include the training of emotional intelligence in prison reforms and rehabilitation programme in Nigeria. This would give prisoners the ability to monitor their own and co-inmates or prison officials' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide their thinking and actions towards co-inmates and prison officers and help them to cope with the prison stressors and challenges.

In addition to that, there is a need to encourage interpersonal relationship and supports groups within prison yards. Prisoners are part of the larger society. They were only incarcerated because they violated society norms. So, provision of adequate social supports by family, friends, prison officers, government, and other significant people like pastors may increase their sense of worth or self-esteem and make them better person when they return to the society. The perception that important people cares and values them may also give them hope and increase their level of happiness.

Despite its contributions, the study possesses some limitations. One, the study focused on one set of group; prisoners in south-western Nigeria. The replication of the current findings among prison inmates in Eastern and southern part of Nigeria and among free linking people in Nigeria may be crucial in ensuring the generalization of the present findings. The exclusive reliance on self-report measures may have led to common method bias associated to research. A longitudinal study may help to establish cause-effect relationships. Future studies should pay attention to this.

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