

The think-feel-act cycle of happiness

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For most of us, the ultimate goal of existence is happiness: we seek to live well and to live a life filled with happiness. It is for this reason that it is important for us to find ways to achieve happiness. This issue has been investigated by numerous researchers, who have taken a variety of approaches in their discussion of happiness and how to achieve it. In the present study, the author will use what has been called the 'think-feel-act' approach to happiness, and an attempt will be made to integrate many of the relevant studies in a meaningful way. Briefly, the 'phenomenon of thinking' in this context consists of the construct of optimism, while the 'feeling phenomenon' is comprised of the construct of gratitude. The 'act phenomenon' includes the constructs of exercising, learning, and purpose, which in turn consist of acts of kindness and taking action for a better world. The relationships among all of these constructs and happiness will be seen to be positive. At the end, a discussion of the study is provided.

Keywords: act; feeling; happiness; thinking; well-being

One might wonder why happiness is important. If you believe, as the present author does, that happiness is a choice and a skill that can be learned, then why is it important enough to go out of your way to achieve it? Why choose happiness? Happiness makes you feel good. Happiness is fun and it feels good, and that is a good reason why happiness is important in itself. One may live longer when one is happy. Many studies have demonstrated that happy people live longer. For example, one study investigated nuns that wrote a short biographical sketch before taking their vows. It was revealed that at the age of 85, 90% of the nuns that had written cheerful biographies (top 25%) were still alive compared to just 54% that had expressed being the least cheerful. At 94 years of age, 54% of the most cheerful were alive compared to only 11% of the least cheerful. Many other studies have shown similar, revealing results concerning the relationship between the feeling of happiness and one's longevity.

It can lead to better health. There is a famous expression in English that is supposed to make the listener feel good: 'When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.' In other words, if you find yourself in a 'tough spot' or in a difficult position that makes you unhappy, you have to just make the best (lemonade) of it. It has been well-documented that there is a close relationship between stress and illness, between the mind and the body that is; and the reverse is also true of course; if you lack stress your body will respond to this good feeling. In other words, happy, positive feelings (like negative feelings) can actually change the chemical make-up of our bodies, producing chemicals for example that strengthen our immune system, repair our cells, and add to the strength of our bodies generally. It can be said that happiness is the opposite of stress. Happiness makes us 'bounce back' quicker. Happiness and optimism can be said to go hand in hand; that is, optimistic people see bad things as of a more temporary nature and good things as being more permanent. Their positive expectations regarding good things help them to perceive and take advantage of options and opportunities in a more expedient way. There is a saying, 'You get what you look for.' Optimists look for opportunities for good outcomes.

Happiness makes you more productive. Oswald et al. (2015) observed that there is a 12% increase in productivity on the part of workers who felt that they were happy, while unhappy workers were found to be 10% less productive. Happiness has large and positive causal effects on productivity. Positive emotions appear to invigorate human beings. Happiness makes you more creative. A happy mood can 'free our mind'; and increase our ability to think creatively. At the same time however, being in a good mood may also distract us (Shin et al., 2018). Feeling happy can help us to solve problems better and faster. Studies have indicated that people that experience a positive mood are able to solve problems in a better and faster way, and often their solutions are more inventive and they are able to concentrate better (e.g., Frederickson, 2003). In addition to this, it has been asserted that happiness can also improve one's ability to learn and remember things. Further, better problem solving is another reason why happiness is considered to be significant. It is important to look for the 'win-win' situations. Researchers have theorised that positive emotions such as happiness have served an evolutionary purpose. In other words, where negative emotions encourage us to engage in a fight or flight response through the generation of chemicals in our bodies, positive emotions encourage us to learn, explore, and grow. In short, positive emotions create a completely different way of 'thinking' in our bodies and a different way of responding to our environment.

When we are happy we are more likely to help others. It has been asserted that not only does doing good help us to feel good, but it also been asserted that people that are happy are more willing to share their good feelings and circumstances with others that are less fortunate. In other words, happy people make the world a better place to live in. Given the various benefits of happiness discussed above, it is logical that happiness is something that one would naturally seek in life, and therefore, how to achieve happiness merits study – hence the purpose of the present writing. Generally speaking, there are many ways to achieve happiness; however, this study will focus on using what can be called a 'motivational pathway' to happiness in terms of cognition affection and the behavioral (think-feel-act) aspects of human activity as the underlying themes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Optimism and life satisfaction

According to Sharpe et al. (2011) optimism is a dispositional trait of a person and is connected with four personality factors: emotional stability, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Optimists are individuals that often have positive expectations regarding what is going to happen in the future and expect positive outcomes (Peters et al., 2016; Scheier & Carver, 1985). For this reason, optimism can be considered an important indicator for the promotion of what has been termed 'subjective well-being' (SWB) (Alarcon et al., 2013; Carver & Scheier, 2014). On the other hand, pessimists are those that expect negative events to occur and therefore pessimism is often linked to stress and negative feelings, such as anxiety and anger, among other mental health problems (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Scheier & Carver, 1992). These differences

between optimists and pessimists in terms of their interpretation of the future researchers refer to as the 'optimism bias' (Sharot, 2011). According to this bias, there are three cognitive modes that can be used to explain why optimistic people create positive expectations for themselves (Hecht, 2013).

First is selective information processing (i.e., optimistic people focus on positive aspects of events and their surroundings and tend to ignore negative elements. Second is referred to as the locus of control; this is where optimists tend to rely upon their own decisions and to have trust in their own capabilities. The third cognitive mode that leads to an optimistic bias is what is called attribution styles; this is where optimists feel that their achievements are a result of elements and attitudes that are internal to themselves and that offer stability in their lives. A variety of studies have indicated that this 'optimism bias' is associated with one's increased satisfaction in life (Bailey et al., 2007; Karademas, 2006). However, knowledge in this area is incomplete, particularly as regards the mechanisms that are activated by optimism, those that mediate the relationship between this construct and the subjective perception of life as a whole (Margolis & Lyubomirsky, 2018; Zhang et al., 2014). It has been suggested in a recent study by Diener et al. (2018) that optimism can be said to predict SWB because optimism helps people to find meaning in their lives using different cognitive processes. According to this line of thought, the present study aims to demonstrate how optimism may provide resources that also increase one's life satisfaction.

Optimism and positive affect

One of the most important ways in which optimism seems to contribute to SWB is the positive affect that is experienced in daily life. According to Diener (2000), the greater is the level of SWB that people have, the greater are their pleasant experiences and the fewer are their painful experiences. In this sense, optimistic people experience more positive affect and happiness as they focus more on their expectations regarding success and use positive coping strategies. This is in contradistinction to pessimistic people, who concentrate more on the negative elements in their lives (Schütz & Baumeister, 2017; Segerstrom et al., 2017). Segerstrom and Sephton (2010) have confirmed this by testing the hypothesis that optimism has a direct influence on a person's attitudes such that as optimism increases, so does the individual's positive affect. According to this line of thinking, the so-called bottom-up perspective of SWB emphasises the importance of positive affects in one's daily activities and this leads to the positive interpretation of one's life (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). This kind of thinking is in agreement with 'the broaden and build theory' discussed by Fredrickson (1998; 2001; 2013). According to this theory, one's positive attitudes help individuals 'build' personal resources that are long lasting and that can also increase their SWB (Extremera & Rey, 2018; Nelson et al., 2015; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). It can be seen then that these perspectives suggest that optimistic people are likely to experience greater levels of life satisfaction, and thus it is suggested here that positive affect will have a mediating effect on the relation between optimism and life satisfaction.

Optimism, prosociality, and meaning in life

Recently, it has been hypothesised that what is called prosociality is a basic psychological need of humans (Martela & Ryan, 2016), and this can be seen to complement three other needs-relatedness, autonomy, and competence, which comprise the self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Over the last few years, there has been greater attention paid to how prospective variables such as optimism are related to prosociality (Baumsteiger, 2017), and in a recent study conducted by Maki et al. (2016), the authors concluded that prospection promotes prosocial behavior and consequently increases the likelihood that people will help others. It is thought that optimists typically possess better connection skills, but at the same time they also make an effort to develop positive relationships with others (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Segerstrom, 2007). It seems to be the case that optimism allows a person to employ his or her positive affective resources which act as drivers and motivational mechanisms for going beyond one's exclusive interest in self (Carver & Scheier, 2014). In this regard, gratitude is one of the most studied emotions that transcends one's individual interests, and it is also relevant to prosociality behavior (Haidt, 2003; Stellar et al., 2017). Gratitude refers to acknowledging or being grateful for the benefits received from others (Nelson et al., 2016). Although different studies have suggested a strong relationship between optimism and gratitude (Emmons & Shelton, 2002; Rey & Extremera, 2014), it has not been determined whether optimism and other prosocial variables actually increase gratitude, and it would therefore be interesting to investigate whether optimism is related to life satisfaction through prosocial behaviour, given the fact that establishing interpersonal relationships is responsible for the construct of important human sources of strength and meaning (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Hicks et al., 2010; Stavrova & Luhmann, 2016) and is therefore fundamental to SWB (Diener et al., 2018a). In more concrete terms, self-transcendent emotions such as gratitude are crucial for enjoying our lives and for developing more meaningful outlooks on the world (Lambert et al., 2009; Van Cappellen et al., 2013). Nakamura suggested that helping others and being grateful can make people feel proud and can foster a sense of meaning in life (Nakamura, 2013). In this way,

optimistic people experience a greater degree of gratitude, providing them with greater sense to their lives and in turn enhancing their life satisfaction. The eudaimonic perspective of well-being suggests that in order for people to experience long-lasting happiness, they need to live a life that is rich in meaning (Ryan & Deci, 2008), and following this line of thought, various studies have demonstrated the significance of the perceived importance of meaning of one's life to an increase in one's life satisfaction (Steger, 2018; Steger et al., 2008).

Dispositional gratitude

Dispositional gratitude has been defined as 'a generalised tendency to recognise and respond with grateful emotion to the roles of other people's benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains' (McCullough et al., 2002, p. 112). Scholars and practitioners have demonstrated that dispositional gratitude has the possibility of facilitating a person's well-being because it is associated with several important phenomena, such as stress, anxiety, psychopathology, health, adaptive personality characteristics, positive relationships, subjective well-being, and humanistic-orientated functioning (e.g., Jordan, Masters, Hooker, Ruiz, & Smith, 2014; McCullough et al., 2002; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). Since the time when dispositional gratitude was first investigated (McCullough et al., 2002), empirical research has examined its relationship with such indicators as well-being. Several scholars for example have identified several mechanisms that underpin the relationship between gratitude and well-being, asserting for example that individuals that experience gratitude also experience a higher degree of well-being through what has been termed 'schematic biases' that allow them to be open to the helpful actions of others—which are considered to be beneficial to one's self (Wood et al., 2008). In fact, being grateful helps one to cope with stress and can lead to the reduction of negative emotions that can stem from the numerous comparisons that we make in our social actions (Emmons & Mishra, 2011). Moreover, if we experience positive emotions in a more or less routine way by being grateful, it can lead to the reduction of certain mental problems and types of stress (Fredrickson, 2004; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

Additionally, it has been asserted (e.g. Emmons & Mishra, 2011) that being grateful is associated with several other mechanisms that influence one's sense of well-being, such as improved self-esteem, enhanced access to positive memories, higher spirituality and mindfulness, the easier attainment of goals, greater social resources, and improved physical health among others. In summary, it can be seen that several theoretical explanations and mechanisms both directly and indirectly can link dispositional gratitude to the components of a sense of well-being. It should not be understood however that happiness and a person's sense of well-being do not come about without any work on the individual's part; in fact, it has been suggested that a certain amount (or a lot) of introspection is required if one wants to achieve a long-lasting sense of happiness that is tied to the feeling of gratitude (Wood et al., 2008). Empirical findings suggest that individuals that experience a sense of gratitude are more likely to engage in such positive self-reflection, and that this can lead to long-lasting happiness and well-being (e.g., Wood et al., 2008). Dispositional gratitude can also be seen to play an important role in a person's adaptation to life events that he or she considers significant, as suggested in the following passage: 'adaptation to satisfaction can be counteracted by constantly being aware of how fortunate one's conditions are, and how it could have been otherwise, or actually was otherwise before' (Frijda, 2007, p.14). Considering the numerous mechanisms that can be seen to link gratitude to well-being, it can be expected that dispositional gratitude is (at least) moderately related to the categories, dimensions, and indicators of well-being.

Exercise

It has been extremely well document that there are multiple benefits of exercise or physical activity (PA) on a person's mental health (Saxena et al., 2005). For instance, a large body of literature demonstrates that PA is effective in reducing depression and anxiety (Strohle, 2009). It is also true however that these previous studies have for the most part focused on the effects of PA on the negative aspects of mental health and its use as a way to "cure" or prevent mental disorders (Rosenbaum et al., 2014). The relationship between PA and mental disorders is important, according to the present author, because mental disorders can be linked to increased morbidity, premature mortality, and greater medical costs (Alexopoulos, 2005; Katon et al., 2003); on the other hand, the relationship between PA and positive mental constructs has remained for the most part unexplored. The World Health Organization has stressed the positive dimension of mental health and has stated that 'health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (WHO, 2014). At the beginning of 21st century, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) pointed out that the empirical focus of psychology should shift from 'only preparing for the worst things in life to also building positive qualities.' That is, attention should not be paid only to the negative aspects of our lives when examining the relationship between PA and mental health.

Happiness is a positive element of a person's mental well-being and it is generally defined as a subjective state of mind that is characterised by a feeling of enjoyment, which reflects the individual's overall feeling about life (Diener, 2000; Veenhoven, 2010). Most people feel that happiness is one of the most if not the most important aspect of their lives (Diener & Seligman, 2004), and a growing number of studies focuses on the benefits that can come from happiness in terms of one's health. For example, a 15-year follow-up study revealed that a higher level of happiness is related to lower mortality and morbidity (Koopmans et al., 2010), and recently several countries (France, Canada, and the UK for example) have even included a national happiness index as an indicator of their progress (Ghent, 2011).

Among the factors that have been associated with happiness, PA has received increasing attention among psychologists, and in cross-sectional studies based on large general populations it is associated with happiness (Lathia et al., 2017; Richards et al., 2015). Some reviews have indicated that PA might be an important correlate of happiness and that the investigation of the effects of PA on happiness is a promising research area (Diener & Tay, 2012; Dolan et al., 2008), investigation that could provide new ways in which to apply health promotion models to PA interventions (Huppert, 2009).

Learning

But what according to researchers is the single variable that is most closely tied to improved health and longevity? The answer is education—it has been found that when people are deeply engaged in what they are doing and when they are learning new things, their sense of well-being is exponentially enhanced. This relationship is also clear as we grow older, for in older age, according to recent research, our brains possess the plasticity to adapt to the life situations we encounter and are able to assist us to a greater extent than previously thought; old 'dogs' then can indeed learn new tricks. 'I think most social scientists would put their money on education as the most important factor in ensuring longer lives' says psychologist Laura Carstensen, director of the Stanford Center on Longevity. In other words, people with more education get better jobs, which pay more money, are less physically demanding, and provide more enjoyment. Such individuals live in safer neighbourhoods, generally practice healthier lifestyles, and experience less stress. In a paper published earlier by the National Bureau of Economic Research, David Cutler and Adriana Lleras-Muney reviewed education-longevity research around the world and found that 'education not only predicts mortality in the U.S., it is also a large predictor of health in most countries, regardless of their level of development'. They cited research that indicated that 25-year-olds with some college education in 1980 could expect to live 54.4 more years, on average. On the other hand, it was found that 25-year-olds with only a high school degree had a life expectancy of only 51.6 more years, or nearly three years less.

A similar study in 2000–20 years later found that the gap in life expectancy between those with some college and those that were high school graduates had increased to seven years. Some studies suggest that all or most of the benefits of education are a result of making more money, but not all researchers agree with this, as seen in Carstensen's statement: 'While income level best predicts how quickly people decline after they get sick, education predicts whether or not people get sick in the first place.' She explains further that people with a higher level of education tend to have better problem-solving skills and the tools that they can use to help themselves, and they can enhance their health and survivability by making lifestyle decisions that are backed by good, well-thought-out information. Lisa Berkman, professor of public policy and epidemiology at Harvard University, has suggested that although the importance of income is significant in terms of life happiness, it is basically outdistanced by the significance of education. One of Berkman's students did an in-depth study of different school attendance requirements that were set by state laws 70 and 80 years ago. Berkman stated that "[i]f you lived in a state where the schooling laws made you go to school for a longer period of time, you had better cognitive functioning later in life' In other words, regardless of the amount of money that a person earns monthly, just being physically in a classroom had a significant effect on one's mental health later in life.

There has also been a discussion of the close relationship between a person's sense of happiness and how deeply he or she is in tasks that provide knowledge and a feeling of fulfilment. It is common to see in daily life that people that are intensely absorbed in what they are doing can easily lose track of time; hours can pass like minutes. They indeed may be tired because of the task but can emerge energised and happy. This condition is known as a name coined 30 years ago by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who recalls encountering people as a child in wartime Europe that were able to happily lose themselves in an activity, such as chess despite being in constant physical danger and the terrible scenes of war. The activity was absorbing and meaningful in itself, a condition that has been referred to as autotelic. 'People just liked to do such activities, They did not need to be told to do it. They did not need money to do it.' Csikszentmihalyi goes on to characterize the development of his theory: 'I later constructed this kind of model or theory for such behavior. Since nobody knew what autotelic meant, I called it "flow"'. Researchers over the years have

shown that when people are totally engaged in what they are doing, it can trigger healthy changes in their respiratory systems and brain chemistry.

Indeed, the idea of flow is easily associated with creativity and the image of a musician or artist 'lost' in what they engaged in, and Csikszentmihalyi indicates that in some ways, society values the arts and sporting pursuits exactly for this reason; it allows the spectator to witness something that they can identify in as being beneficial; that is, losing oneself in what one is doing, which everyone has experienced at one time or another, particularly most frequently when we are children. Perhaps this is why we become engaged in such activities in the first place. 'The real challenge,' he says, 'is to take something that you have to do that has purpose and meaning'; and figure out how to create a state of flow while doing it: 'It's possible to experience your job and your family life as flow, and that to me is more important than that we provide opportunities for flow in art and sports.' One important point is that a feeling of flow can come in so-called stages, where a person may have a high goal of achieving a particular task or activity, but at the same time be able to experience a sense of "flow" or connection with what he or she is doing at 'lower' stages of engagement in the activity. From this point of view, one can think of there being a kind of path toward flow that also provides a sense of satisfaction and happiness. Researchers have found however that in order for the flow of our tasks to yield the benefit of happiness they have to be sufficiently challenging, for it is the feeling of a challenge that attracts us to the activity and holds our interest; thus producing health and/or happiness.

These conditions have been given a name as well: 'just manageable difficulty' our challenges have to be neither too difficult nor too easy; they have to be 'just right' or just manageable. The benefits of learning and engagement are perhaps particularly important in regard to healthy ageing, as Berkman states, 'your mind is really like a muscle, and using it is a key' to lifelong mental health. In fact recently for example there has been an increase in attention to mental exercise as a way of preventing such diseases as Alzheimer, although this connection requires much more investigation. Nevertheless, it is probably safe to say that most scientists believe that there is a beneficial relationship between lifelong learning and remaining socially active, and mental well-being and happiness later in one's life. Indeed, older people that become isolated have been seen to lose the activities that trigger their minds to engage in enjoyable and stimulating activities. Jacquelyn James is the director of research at the Sloan Center on Aging and Work. She has been overseeing an ongoing study regarding the benefits that older people obtain from continued work. According to the study, the older that individuals were seen to be engaged in what they were doing, the more benefits they derived from the activity. Examples are not only paid work but also various types of caregiving, volunteering, etc. It is not just being involved in an activity that produces the benefits of engagement; the engagement needs to be connected with a sense of purpose and achievement in order to produce happiness. It has been said that if a person does not have a purpose in his or her life, he or she will seek it out in one way or another. From this point of view, engagement in what we are doing is crucial, not matter what our age, but as James indicates, 'As we get older, it is more important to find things to do that light up our lives. ' Our minds and our attitudes are a central part of this effort, and we thrive when we find new things to do and that truly engage us. Whether it is acquiring a new skill or a language (which is very high on the list of the benefits of mental acuity), joining a new group or meeting new people, or finding ways to continue using our existing skills, successful aging and longevity are closely tied to lifelong learning frameworks.

Purpose

A sense of purpose from the viewpoint of the present study refers to dedicating oneself to a cause beyond oneself – it provides motivation in our life and gives us meaning and a sense of direction. When we have a sense of purpose it can make us feel as though we are contributing to those surrounding us. While it might sound strange, it has been suggested that seeking happiness can result in a negative effect on one's life and well-being. This was a finding in a paper entitled *Can Seeking Happiness Make People Happy? Paradoxical Effects of Valuing Happiness*. In that paper, a review of several studies led the researchers to assert the following: 'People who highly value happiness set happiness standards that are difficult to obtain, leading them to feel disappointed about how they feel, paradoxically decreasing their happiness the more they want it' (Mauss et al., 2011). Instead of setting goals that may be unreachable, research suggests that it might be better to focus on achieving a sense of purpose in life. In fact, findings revealed that having a purpose in life or at least a feeling of having a purpose in life rather than happiness that focuses on one's self can lead to a more protracted feeling of satisfaction (Esfahani Smith & Aaker, 2016).

Acts of kindness and happiness

One can wonder whether acts of kindness actually improve the well-being of the actor. Advances in the behavioral sciences during the past few decades have developed numerous theories of human social, cooperative and altruistic behavior, and these theories make it possible to explain a variety of different types

of kindness (for example, love, sympathy, gratitude and heroism). The theories predict that people will be 'happy to help' one's family, friends, community members, spouses, and even strangers under certain conditions. More recently, kindness has been increasingly viewed as an intervention to lift one's subjective well-being, the idea being that 'random acts of kindness' can enhance the well-being of the receiver of the action as well as the giver of the action. For this reason, acts of kindness could be a valuable way of addressing a variety of social problems, ranging from social isolation to more serious mental and physical health conditions. This notion has been addressed by a variety of researchers, in addition to charity and governmental organisations (Aked & Thompson, 2011; Huppert, 2009a).

Still it can be asked, why would performing kind acts improve well-being? Why would helping others make you happy? Broadly speaking, and more abstractly, happiness can be viewed as an internal reward system that promote survival and reproduction, according to Buss (Buss, 2000), and according to Hill et al. (2013), happiness is a psychological reward, an internal signalling device that 'tells us that an adaptive problem has been, or is in the process of being, solved successfully'. From this point of view, it is easy to explain why 'eating' makes you happy; such types of behavior and adaptive goals, and for the reasons discussed above, it is equally easy to explain why acts of kindness can make people happy; it is because caring for family, trading favours with others, and increasing one's status are also important adaptive goals (Schulkin, 2011). Indeed, it might even be expected that helping others can produce a greater degree of happiness than helping oneself, and some people have asserted that acts of kindness toward others have favoured evolution. Thus, the approach to altruism of evolutionary behavioral science predicts that people will be happy to help family, friends, community members, spouses, and even strangers under some conditions. This prediction has received some support from the extant literature, where a large body of research has indicated that there is an association between kindness and well-being (Anik et al., 2009; Konrath & Brown, 2013). However, much of this research has been of a correlational nature, for example showing that people that spend more money on others are happier (Aknin et al., 2013), or that people that volunteer to help others are healthier (Jenkinson et al., 2013).

Acting for a better world and happiness

The happiness and welfare of societies depend to a great extent on advancements that are made regarding sustainable development, a concept that has become more comprehensive and complex in recent years. This concept emphasizes that various types of development—economic, environmental, and social—cannot be viewed in isolation. In fact, there are action plans in place on a global scale that are aimed at sustainable development. The latest addition to these action plans is the well-known 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, drafted by the United Nations in 2015. Here, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been adopted with the purpose of ending poverty and ensuring social participation and environmental protection, among other goals. It has been suggested that these goals must be met so that the welfare of the entire world can be achieved. The goals are constructed according to three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental development. These goals have been defined so as to ensure sustainable development in the world (United Nations, 2015), where one of the aims is to measure sustainable development using the indicators created for each of the dimensions. These indicators are necessary for adequately measuring the progress of sustainable development at the national, regional, and global levels. The indicators can also be employed in order to assist with the processes of decision making with consideration of the three dimensions cited above (Diaz-Sarachaga et al., 2018). The SDGs cited above have been adopted by approximately 200 countries (Campagnolo & Eboli, 2015; United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2015), and it is clear that these three indicators must achieve a global balance in order to achieve sustainable development. According to Basiago (1998), economic sustainability suggests a type of production system that is able to meet the necessary levels of consumption with available resources but without neglecting the needs of the future. On the other hand, social sustainability can be considered as a process that highlights the quality of people's lives (McKenzie, 2004), where the main purpose is social welfare carried out continuously. In brief, environmental sustainability refers to the preservation of natural resources (Goodland & Daly, 1996).

Sustainable happiness has been viewed by O'Brien (2005) as the pursuit of happiness, but as a pursuit that adds to the welfare of the world, of society, and of the individual without taking advantage of others. Neither can it damage the environment or add to the lessening of the quality of life of future generations. O'Brien also indicates that this happiness depends on sustainability. According to economists, the happiness of societies is related to one's personal income, while sociologists emphasize the importance of social capital in achieving a happy community; and ecologists have suggested that the well-being of people is only possible through the sustainability of the environment—everyone sees what he/she is interested in.

However, those that advocate sustainable development have suggested, in the World Happiness report, that happiness depends on a number of factors. These include such elements as a person's "livelihood, housing, nutrition, clothing, security, feeling good, living in a clean environment, social adaptation, justice, freedom, equality, good social relationships," and many others. The report indicated that sustainable development is only possible when all dimensions are considered (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2016). It is possible for an individual to contribute to a better world if he/she is able to see beyond self-concern and mere economic survival, which is difficult at times to do. However, as indicated in the present study, one can achieve happiness if one can look beyond self and place greater focus on the greater good of the world by creating a clean environment and making an effort to reduce the negative effects of climate change.

DISCUSSION

Positive emotions can be seen as 'road marks' for a person's well-being and happiness. There are certain moments in a person's life when his or her positive feelings are highlighted, emotions such as gratitude, joy, interest, contentment, and love, moments when the individual is not burdened by negative feelings such as anxiety, sadness, anger, and despair. It has been asserted that how one views the balance of one's positive and negative feelings in life will influence their evaluation of their subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1991). Building on this finding, Kahneman (1999) has suggested that 'objective happiness' can perhaps 'best be measured by tracking (and later aggregating) people's momentary experiences of good and bad feelings' (however see Fredrickson, 2000c). Accordingly, having positive emotions can signal having a good life and feeling good about it. However, this is not the entire story, for having positive emotions can also signal the likelihood of the acquisition of positive feelings of happiness over time. From this point of view, positive emotions are more than end states in themselves but are avenues to extended growth and happiness in the future. Again, from this point of view, man's psyche cannot be viewed as a closed system—our feelings influence those around us and we are therefore responsible for our feelings and our behavior because of their influence on the environment. This constitutive characteristic has been called 'the self-transcendence of human existence,' and indicates that human life always points beyond itself, whether immediately to one's family, or less immediately to one's community or the environment. The greater the extent to which the individual reaches beyond him or herself, it can be said the more human he or she is in terms of self-actualization, to use Maslow's term. There is a 'Catch-22' here however: it can be said that self-actualisation is not attainable at all because the more we reach for it, the more we will miss it. In other words, self-actualization is a side-effect of self-transcendence, according to Frankl (Frankl, 1985, p. 133).

A person that is searching for meaning in life will naturally look for something of value, and there are at least two ways of looking. If the person looks in the right direction, he or she will recognize the true nature of sickness, old age, and death, and then he or she will search for a kind of meaning that transcends all human suffering, as the Buddha's life highlighted: In my life of pleasures, I seem to be looking in the wrong way (Buddha, 1966, p.8). What is the best way to prepare people for all of the suffering that they are likely to encounter in life? What is the best way to equip people to realise their potential and live a fulfilling and worthy life? The answer to both questions is to seek meaning in one's life and to use Frankl's term.

From the above literature review, the following can be hypothesised: (1) Thinking (optimism) leads to happiness; (2) Feeling (gratitude) leads to happiness; Acting (kindness, acting for a better world) leads to happiness; (4) Thinking (optimism) leads to Feeling (gratitude), which in turn leads to happiness; (5) Thinking (optimism) leads to feeling (gratitude), which leads to Acting (kindness, acting for a better world), which then leads to Happiness.

CONCLUSION

According to the think-feel-act framework of happiness, it can be concluded that the thinking part of our brain—namely, optimism—the feeling part of our heart; namely, gratitude and the action part of our hands, including exercising, learning, being kind to others and taking action for a better world – all contribute to our happiness. The route to our happiness depends on the choices that we make, which are likely to be determined by the strength of our character.

Having a purpose in life will make an individual happy but the purpose should not be too high or too low. Setting up the purpose at too high level can make a person frustrated because it is too far beyond his or her capability whereas setting up the purpose at too low level may be useless and not challenging at all. Therefore, the optimum purpose is the one which is just about right to go with the 'flow' of an individual's capability in achieving it. If the task is too difficult or too complicated, it is possible to break it down to a smaller chunk in order to make it challenging but not intimidating.

The think-feel-act cycle of an individual's behavior can create happiness. The benefits of this behavior may be in the form of self-concerned such as being in a good physical and mental health through exercising or in the form of others-concerned through helping others by being kind or through protecting the environment by being environmentally friendly. It is noteworthy that the purpose in life should go beyond oneself and the purpose of learning should go beyond creating wealth. The acquired knowledge can be further disseminated to others in order to enable them to live the more fulfilled lives and feel happier. We do not only enjoy ourselves for natural beauty but we do not want to do harm to the environment for its own sake as well.

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