

The Pursuit of Happiness: Do Family, Friends or Finance Matter?

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Recent literature has shown evidence that a sizeable number of Malaysians suffer from unhappiness and mental illnesses and at least a fifth of them have stress, anxiety, and depression, making mental disorders the second largest health problem among Malaysians, after heart diseases (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2017). The National Health and Morbidity Survey (2017) found that secondary school students were among those suffering from poor mental health, with approximately 9.3% of them facing loneliness and about 7.1% of them being insomniacs due to worry and stress, leading to the prevalence of suicidal tendencies and actual suicide cases. Similarly, mental health illnesses were discovered in Malaysian young adults, with 62.6 percent being college and university students aged 20 to 29 years (Ahmad et al., 2015). Young adults, who frequently desire social inclusion from large peer groups as well as parental independence as adults capable of rational decision-making (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Cunsolo, 2017) find university life stressful and complicated, thus reducing their levels of happiness. It is common for students to feel pressured due to the high demands of today's tertiary education system, and the inability to cope with such challenges may lead to poor mental health with negative consequences such as depression, anxiety, stress, or even suicidal ideation (Lee and Syaid, 2017). The literature supports the notion that it is extremely crucial to examine the factors affecting happiness or well-being, especially of Malaysian youths as they are the critical drivers and catalyst of change and progress in the development of the nation. There is a need for more research to be carried out to determine what enables or hinders happiness, so that informed policy decisions can be implemented to improve people's happiness, especially that of the youth. This paper explores the relationship between social factors and happiness, as well as the relationship between happiness and creative ideation among youth in Malaysia. Data from a total of 250 self-administered questionnaires were collected and analysed by the covariance based-structural equation modelling (SEM) using AMOS software version 27. The direct effect results demonstrate the significant positive association between family and happiness, friends and happiness, financial security and happiness, social media use and happiness, and happiness and creative ideation supporting all five hypotheses of this study, with family and social media playing the most pivotal role in enhancing youth happiness. The findings reflect that families, despite the diverse sizes,

patterns, creeds and colours they come in, are indeed the heart and soul of the youths, as they provide the most intimate social environment for these youths. Social media is another factor that enhances happiness, as friendships are a key component of teen life. The findings on the positive impact happiness have on creativity is a pertinent finding, as policymakers for higher education need to consider the psychological factors that can enhance youth happiness as it translates to the enhancement of their creative skills which have been lauded as one of the most important twenty first century IR4.0 skills.

Keywords: *Creative Ideation, Family, Financial Security, Friends, Happiness, Mental Health, Social Media, Youths*