Discussion
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The present study aims to investigate the difference between sexes, among age groups and between married and unmarried individuals with regard to happiness. The study also aims to explore the contributory factors of happiness and for this purpose the following important variables have been undertaken: attachment patterns, ego functions, emotional intelligence, inner – other directedness, stressful life events in last one year and meaning in life.

On the basis of obtained results and existing literatures, these areas will be discussed in this chapter. At first, the discussion will be presented separately in different sections for the different variables. Then, an integration of the findings will be presented. These sections are:

Section 5.1: Gender difference regarding happiness.

Section 5.2: Difference among the age groups regarding happiness.

Section 5.3: Difference among the age groups regarding attachment patterns, ego functions, emotional intelligence, inner – other directedness, stressful life events in last one year and meaning in life.

Section 5.4: Difference between married and unmarried individuals regarding happiness.

Section 5.5: Role of attachment patterns.
Section 5.6: Role of ego functions.

Section 5.7: Role of emotional intelligence.

Section 5.8: Role of inner–other directedness.

Section 5.9: Role of stressful life events.

Section 5.10: Role of meaning in life.

Section 5.11: Integration of the present findings.
Section 5.1: Gender Difference regarding happiness

The Present study suggests that males and females do not differ between themselves as far as happiness is concerned (table-4.3) as shown in figure 5.1.

Other national surveys affirm the general conclusion that there are few (if any) gender differences in overall happiness (Diener et al., 1999; Manstead, 1992). Men and women are, on average, likely to report feeling happy and satisfied with their lives as a whole. For example, one study on 18,000 college students representing 39 countries found no significant gender difference regarding happiness. Some large-scale surveys also suggest that men and women report approximately the same levels of happiness (Inglehart, 1990). Figure-5.1.a shows the results from life satisfaction and gender surveys of nearly 1,70,000 people in 16 nations.
Even studies that do report gender differences also report that differences are small in magnitude. Fujita et al., (1991) and Haring et al. (1984) showed that gender accounts for less than 1% of difference in people's reported levels of happiness.

The finding of almost no gender difference in happiness creates a paradox as it is evident in research that there are significant differences in the emotional lives of men and women (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1995; Brody & Hall, 1993) yet the overall level of happiness among men and women is essentially same. One possible answer comes from studies suggesting that women have more intense emotional experience than men. For example, some researchers have found that women report higher levels of both pleasant and unpleasant emotions than men (Fujita et al., 1991); that women are more likely than men to report being very happy (Lee et al., 1991); and that women's greater emotional intensity occurs across many different ages (Diener et al., 1985). These findings
suggest that women are “more emotional” than men, in the sense that women have more intense and extreme emotional lives (Brody & Hall, 1993; Fujita et al., 1991). Differences in emotional intensity may contribute to the paradox of gender. Diener and his colleagues (1999) have suggested that women’s more intense positive emotions may be balanced by there more intense negative emotions. This averaging out of extremes could result in an overall level of happiness similar to men’s.

Another explanation for the gender paradox suggests that some of the “emotionality” of women may be more apparent than real. Gender stereotypes, and the expectations that follow from them, may influence women’s responses on measures of subjective well-beings. Brody & Hall (1993) suggest that gender stereotypes may become a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy or normative expectation that influences women’s expressions of emotion. Gender stereotypes may affect women’s outward expression of emotion more than their actual emotional experience (Nolen-Hoeksema & Rusting, 1999). Robinson et al. (1998) and Robinson & Johnson (1997) compared men’s and women’s actual levels of emotion as measured in real time by experience sampling methods (ESM) to levels based on retrospective recall. They found that men and women showed similar levels of emotion on the ESM, but women reported higher levels of emotion than men on recall measures, and this difference increased with longer recall time delays. The differences found for the retrospective measures may have resulted from men and women recalling their emotions in ways that were consistent with gender stereotypes.

Finally, eudaimonic theories of well-being suggest, “psychological vulnerabilities may exist, side by side with notable psychological strengths” (Ryff & Singer, 2002). In other words, the co-occurrence of strengths and vulnerabilities is not particularly paradoxical when happiness is defined as healthy psychological functioning. All of us
have our strengths and weaknesses, and unless weaknesses are extreme, they do not necessarily compromise our overall health and happiness. One reason is that strengths can compensate weaknesses.

So, who is happier, men or women? The answer is neither. Each gender appears on average, to have a unique combination of strengths and vulnerabilities. In overall comparisons, these gender-related strengths and vulnerabilities may offset each other, producing no overall differences in average levels of happiness.

**Section 5.2: Difference among the age groups regarding happiness**

The present study reveals that significant difference among the four age groups exist in happiness (table-4.3) as evident in figure 5.2.

![Graph Showing the Difference Among the Four Age Groups in Happiness](image)

Significant differences have been obtained in happiness between Group-I & Group-II (table-4.4); Group-I & Group-III (table- 4.5) and Group-I & Group-IV (table-4.6) beyond 0.05 level in Duncan’s Multiple Range Test, Group-I having the lowest mean
The other three groups do not differ significantly among them with regard to happiness (table-4.7, 4.8 & 4.9). Thus, it is clear from the result that individuals belonging to age group 21 years-30 years are least happy and happiness becomes more or less stable, as they grow older. However, in previous literature young adulthood has commonly been seen as the happiest time of life (Harris, 1997).

The present finding is contrary to the previous. This can be explained with the help of life span developmental theories, which have stressed the differing challenges confronted by individuals as they grow older. These formulations suggest that certain aspects of well-being such as self acceptance or autonomy are more easily achieved by aged (Buhler & Massarik, 1968), whereas other dimensions (e.g. environmental mastery) are more prominent in the self perceptions of middle aged individuals (Neugarten, 1973). Another study found that young adults have scored lower of autonomy, environmental mastery, affect balance and purpose in life (Ryff, 1989). Thus as the different aspects of well being is lower in the young adults, happiness is also lower in them. Some big international surveys, over many countries and with over 100,000 subjects have also found that life satisfaction increases with age (Cantril, 1965).

Erikson (1950) outlined a sequence of eight separate stages of psychosocial ego development. Each stage consists of a crisis and a resolution point. Each stage builds upon the resolution and integration of previous psychosocial conflict. According to his ‘epigenetic principle’, these stages are the result of epigenetic unfolding of a ‘ground plan’ of personality. It also postulates that when all the stages have unfolded according to plan, a fully functioning personality comes into existence. Thus as an individual grows older he becomes more matured to face life’s challenges as he or she has already resolved conflicts of the previous developmental stages and as a result he
or she gradually approaches the fully functioning personality which takes him or her one step further towards happiness.

Again Sheldon & Elliot (1999) proposed that "goal self concordance" would be important for happiness; by this they mean believing in the importance of goals & choosing them for fun and enjoyment rather than goals being extremely imposed or followed to avoid guilt and anxiety, which is rare particularly in Indian culture in case of young adults. In most of the cases they are driven by externally imposed goals.

Carstensen (1992) have argued that affective well-being in particular is likely to be improved over the ages of the life span because of age-graded changes in emotion regulation. Carstensen's (1992) socioemotional selectivity theory posits that as people move through adulthood, they shift their orientation toward the future. Younger people see the future as more open, whereas older people see the future as being more bounded. This causes older people to gear their lives, especially their negative affect. Thus, socioemotional selectivity theory assumes an emotion regulation change in later life that predicts an improvement in well-being.

Other theories also endorse this idea of improved well-being with age Labouvie-Vief & Blanchard-Fields (1982) claimed that the roles of affect and cognition become restructured with age, permitting greater cohesion between the two. This can bring greater regulation of emotion in older age and with it comes the kind of maturity for effective maximization of positive affect and minimization of negative affect that leads to greater happiness. Additionally, Lawton (1996) advocated the idea that older adults learn to manage their affect more effectively as they age.

Erylmaz (2010) has proposed two explanations of older people's more happiness. The first one is that by getting old, people gain property in many domains. The second one
is that when we compare with young adults and older adults each other, the gap which is between ideal self and real self is closed (Ryff, 1989).

Section 5.3: Difference among the age groups regarding attachment patterns, ego functions, emotional intelligence, inner – other directedness, stressful life events in last one year and meaning in life

Among the attachment patterns only fearful attachment pattern, among the ego functions JD, SR, DC, OR, TP, DF, SB & SF, presence of meaning in life, and search for meaning in life have been found to differ significantly across age groups (as evident from table-4.3). Number of stressful life events in last one year, emotional intelligence, and inner-other directedness did not differ significantly across age groups (as evident from table-4.3).

![Figure 5.3: Graph Showing the Difference Among the Four Age Groups in Fearful Attachment Pattern](image)

It can be very clearly understood from the figure 5.3 that individuals belonging to different age group differ among themselves regarding fearful attachment pattern. This result does not support previous literature. Literature suggests that early experiences with caregivers affect one’s functioning in later relationships (Ainsworth,
1982, 1989). Thus attachment pattern once formed in childhood does not change in adult life. The present finding goes contrary to this concept. This type of result may have come due to the fact that the sample was not studied longitudinally. As the different groups were studied, longitudinal study would have yielded different kind of result. In that case it may happen that the age groups did not show any significant difference regarding fearfull attachment pattern.

In case of ego functions some of the ego functions have been found to differ according to age which is clearly depicted in figure 5.4. According to Erikson (1950) ego develops in a sequence of eight separate stages. Each stage consists of a crisis and a resolution point. Each stage builds upon the resolution and integration of previous psychosocial conflict. These stages are the result of epigenetic unfolding of a 'ground plan' of personality. It is also postulated that when all the stages have unfolded according to plan, a fully functioning personality comes into existence. Thus as an individual grows older his or her ego functions in a more matured way as he or she has already resolved conflicts of the previous developmental stages.

Figure 5.4: Graph Showing the Difference Among the Four Age Groups in JD, SR, DC, OR, TP, DF, SB & SF
But in the present study the result has not come exactly in line with this concept. In some of the ego functions group-I has been found to score highest. This may be because the study was not longitudinal in nature. Same sample was not studied for all the age groups. If the same sample was studied longitudinally, it might happen that the result would come in the expected direction.

Significant age difference has been found in case of presence of meaning in life. In Duncan’s range test Group-I has been found to have significant differences with Group-II, Group-III & Group-IV (as evident from table-4.4, 4.5, & 4.6), where the mean of the Group-I is lowest again (Table-4.1) as shown in Figure-5.5. The other three groups do not differ significantly with each other (as evident from table-4.7, 4.8 & 4.9). Meaningfulness refers to more personally expressive and engaging activities that may connect individuals to a broader and even transcendent view of life (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2009). A young adult, particularly in Indian culture, has few chances to be engaged in personally expressive activities as he has less independence. Again, it is difficult to have a broader view of life and to achieve self-transcendence at this age.

![Figure-5.5: Graph Showing the Difference Among the Four Age Groups in presence of Meaning in Life](image-url)
Significant age difference has been found in case of search for meaning in life also. In Duncan's range test Group-I has been found to have significant differences with Group-II, Group-III & Group-IV (as evident from table-4.4, 4.5, & 4.6), where the mean of the Group-I (table-4.1) is lowest again. Significant difference also exists between group-III & group-IV (table-4.9) while group-II & group-III; and group-II & group-IV did not differ significantly (table-4.7 & 4.8) which is depicted in figure 5.6.

Thus it can be interpreted that as an individual grows older he or she tries to find new meaning to his or her life, to develop new attitudes to interpret situations, and newer ways to meet life's challenges. Again, it has been found that in group-IV the mean value of search for meaning drops significantly. This may be due to the fact that they have ended the search for meaning. It is possible that people have searched in the past, although they may not still be searching for meaning (Steger et al., 2006).
Section 5.4: Difference between married and unmarried individuals regarding happiness

Results yield that married individuals are significantly happier than the unmarried individuals (Table-4.10) which has been clearly depicted in Figure-5.7.

Marriage has consistently been found to be a predictor of happiness. Close, supportive, and stable relationships are important to people's physical and emotional well-being. People consistently rank close relationships among their top life goals (Emmons, 1999). Marriage has the potential to provide companionship, intimacy, love, affection, and social support in times of crisis. The role of spouse may also provide opportunities for personal growth and the development of new competencies that increase self-esteem and satisfaction.

A “general benefits” view is supported by the fact that the marriage-happiness relationship is found across widely diverse cultures, independent of whether
researchers ask about marriage quality. The significant drop in well-being when marriages end due to death, divorce, or separation provides further evidence for the benefits of marriage. The end of marriage may mean loss of intimacy, companionship, and emotional support, and decreased financial resources. The benefits of marriage are further revealed in terms of higher levels of emotional distress and mental illness found among people who are unmarried and living alone with few friends and confidants (Diener, & Seligman, 2004; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). In contrast, married people have a lower risk for experiencing depression, loneliness, or physical and mental health problems, and live longer than individuals who widowed, separated, or divorced. Overall married people generally enjoy better physical and mental health than unmarried people (Horowitz et al. 1996). A majority of married couples say that their spouse is their best friend and that they would marry the same person again (Glenn, 1996).

Selection Effects
The effect of benefits of marriage offers straightforward explanations for the higher levels of reported happiness among married people. Well-being researchers have examined two other factors that may attenuate the marriage-happiness relationship: selection and adaptation. The term selection effect refers to the possibility that people who marry are simply happier, before they get married, than those who don’t marry. These so-called selection effects are based on the assumption that happy people are more desirable marriage partners than unhappy people, and are therefore more likely to marry, and to do so sooner (Veenhoven, 1988). This certainly makes some sense given that most of us prefer the company of people who are upbeat and cheerful rather than moody and irritable.
Section 5.5.: Role of Attachment Patterns

Among the four attachment patterns secured attachment pattern has been found to be positively and significantly correlated with happiness in all age groups (Table-4.11, 4.12, 4.13 & 4.14) and also contributed in the development of happiness in all age groups(Table-4.15. 4.16, 4.17 & 4.18).

Secured attachment constructs the foundation of close relationships. Relationships are responsible for our greatest joys, and our most painful sorrows. Physical and emotional well-being is enhanced as much by supporting and caring connections with others as it is jeopardized by social isolation and bad relationships. The quality of relationships has equally powerful effects on mental health and happiness. Healthy people have strong, supportive connections to others and happy people have rich social lives, satisfying friendships, and happy marriages. Secured relationships contribute to happiness in multiple ways.

Relationships as the Pathways of Healthy Development:

Secure adult attachment as characterized by low attachment-related avoidance and anxiety, involves a comfort with emotional closeness and a general lack of concern about being abandoned by others. Feeling secure in one's attachment to other significant adults has numerous benefits. Most importantly, this approach provides the pathways to survival and healthy development. By successfully recruiting care from significant others, children and adults become stronger and more able to cope with threats (Bowlby, 1988). Moreover by pursuing growth experiences within the context of safe, secure relationships, individuals can pursue optimal human functioning or flourishing (Lopez & Brennan, 2001).
**Relationships as Social Support:**

Secured attachments provide social support. Social support has a “buffering” effect that is it helps people when they are under stress. The **buffering hypothesis** states that social support from others reduces the potential debilitating effects of stress (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Williams et al. (1981) have also found that the total set of attachments and ties is associated with better mental health, at all stress levels. Those who have concern for other people and concerns that go beyond self are less affected by stress; they make more active attempts to cope with their problems (Crandall, 1984). Actually, relationships represent a sort of safety net to catch us when life knocks us off balance. Secure and satisfying relationships will likely involve six characteristics: knowledge, trust, caring, interdependence, mutuality, and commitment (Miller et al., 2007). The depth of knowledge, care, concern, and trust provide confidence that we don’t have to go the time of crisis alone. Support from friends, family members, and intimate partners in times of trouble has been consistently documented as one the strongest coping resources (Ryff & Singer, 2000; Salovey et al., 2000). Close relationships are also viewed as “resources”, which can help to achieve goals, and which must be conserved (Hobfoll, 1989).

**Relationships as Sources of Satisfaction of Social Needs:**

Argyle & Furnham (1983) found three clear factors which are the sources of satisfaction in different relationships: instrumental help, emotional support and companionship. This can work by the provision of tangible help, and can make people feel that they can cope with problems, and restore self esteem.

These benefits could be explained in terms of the satisfaction of social needs. McClelland (1953) assessed need for affiliation and found that those strong in this need had higher levels of dopamine which is central to the reward system in the brain.
They also have a more active immune system, and they spent time with friends, join clubs, avoid competition and conflict. Another social need is need for intimacy, and those strong in this are found to be cooperative and loving, high in self-disclosure, sensitive to faces (McAdams, 1995). Baumeister & Leary (1995) mentioned that need for belongingness is another fundamental human need which they described as, “a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships” and satisfaction of this need appears to be essential for well-being.

**Relationships as Source of Meaning in Life:**

Often people view close relationships themselves as most important goal in life goals and a primary source of meaning in life (Emmons, 1999). In one study, 73% of students said that they would sacrifice another important life goal (e.g., good education, career) before they would give up a satisfying romantic relationship (Hammersla & Frease-McMahan, 1990). In answer to a “deathbed test” most people point to relationships as a major factor that contributes to a satisfying and meaningful life (Reis & gable, 2003).

**Relationships as a Source of Positive Emotions:**

Relationships also enhance happiness when things are going well. It can produce a more positive mood through enjoyable companionship. Most of the “good times” of an individual’s life involve shared activities with families and friends. These good times translate into more frequent positive emotional experiences that, in turn, allow people to reap the benefits of positive emotions.

Fredrickson (2002) provided the ‘broaden-and-build’ theory which describes how positive emotions open up thinking and actions to new possibilities, and how this expansion can help build physical, psychological, and social resources that promote
well-being. The theory states that "...positive emotions - including joy, interest, contentment, pride, and love - although phenomenologically distinct, all share the ability to broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources" (Fredrickson, 2001).

Positive emotions broaden our outlook, offset negative emotions, enhance resilience, and improve emotional well-being (Fredrickson, 2002). In general people experiencing positive affect tend to show more proactive coping styles and skills (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997). Positive affect leads people to think about how to prevent stressful situations rather than just how to cope with them after the fact.

Individuals high in positive affect have more flexibility and creativity in solving problems. Thus, in short, positive emotions, triggered through enjoyable
companionship of close and secured relations, help to build all of our resources which, in turn, enhance happiness.

Section 5.6: Role of Ego Functions

Significant positive correlation with happiness has been found for reality testing (RT), judgment (JD), sense of reality of the world and of the self (SR), adaptive regression (AR), regulation and control of drives, affects and impulses (DC), defensive functioning (DF), stimulus barrier (SB), autonomous functioning (AF), synthetic-integrative functioning (SF), mastery-competence (MC) and happiness in case of group-I (Table-4.11), for AR, SF, MC in case of group-II (Table-4.12), for RT, SR, OR, TP, SF, MC in group-III (Table-4.13) and for RT, AR, SF when group-IV is considered (Table-4.14). Thought Process (TP) has been found to contribute in the development of happiness as far as group-III is concerned (Table-4.17), and synthetic-Integrative functioning (SF) has been found to be a significant predictor of happiness when group-IV is taken into account (Table-4.18).

Ego functions can be treated as personality variables in terms of their status as coping mechanisms (Basu et al., 2000). Basu et al. (2000) grouped the ego functions in terms of their status as coping mechanisms. Among the above mentioned ego functions AF, DF and DC fall into the category of ‘Adequacy of everyday functioning’; RT, JD and SR were named ‘Physical, interpersonal and intrapersonal reality orientation’ and AR and MC were clustered into the category of ‘Flexibility and self-confidence’. Thus an individual having adequate everyday functioning, appropriate reality orientation, flexibility in his responses and self-confidence will become happy as these factors help an individual to cope with stress.
**Section 5.7: Role of Emotional Intelligence**

Significant positive correlation exists between emotional intelligence and happiness (Table-4.11, 4.12, 4.13 & 4.14) and emotional intelligence contribute to the development of happiness in case of all the groups (Table-4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.4.3 & 4.4.4).

Emotional intelligence helps people to apprise and express (both verbally and non-verbally) emotion; to regulate self as well as others; and to utilize emotion in terms of flexible planning, creative thinking etc.. People who are emotionally intelligent harness emotions and work with them to improve problem solving and to boost creativity. It helps people to bring “emotional hijacking” under control and recover quickly from upsets and distressing emotions which is essential for happiness.

Individuals with high trait emotional intelligence scores believe that they are “in touch” with their emotions and that, they can regulate them in a way that promotes well-being. These individuals enjoy higher levels of happiness. Well-being is a salient component of trait emotional intelligence (Furnham and Petrides, 2003) as trait emotional intelligence predicts important life outcomes (Petrides, in press). Persons with high trait emotional intelligence, will, thus, face more positive life outcomes. Positive outcomes will lead to happiness by increasing positive affect. This can be understood with the help of the diagram below:

![Diagram](image)

**Figure-5.10: How emotional intelligence predicts happiness**

Happiness is also determined by people's emotion-related self-perceptions and dispositions like, for example, emotion regulation, relationship skills, and social
People with high emotional intelligence are more successful in their relation, are capable for striking a balance between emotion and reason (Kulshrestha & Sen, 2006). High emotional intelligence facilitates in making the right decision & Problem solving (Singh, 2001). Since the persons having high emotional intelligence have skills to identify and regulate the emotions of self and others to activate emotions at the right time and place to the right degree to apply these processes adoptively in social interaction (Baron & Parker, 2000) therefore they have significantly more positive affect and less negative affect. People with high emotional intelligence are also reported significantly high life satisfaction comprising of three dimensions: satisfaction with personal life, satisfaction with standard and achievement, and satisfaction with life style. Thus, people having high emotional intelligence will be happier as they are better in three dimensions of happiness: high in positive affect, low in negative affect and high in life satisfaction. This is schematically presented in the following diagram.

Figure-5.11: How emotional intelligence predicts happiness
Emotional intelligence also helps the individual to cope up with any given situation and makes the person well adjusted, psychologically balanced, which leads to competent and fully satisfied life. Yate’s (1997) findings support this motion. He found that high EQ individuals are on the higher levels of success and satisfaction and it is significantly and highly correlated with job performance.

High emotional intelligence also help people to build up a strong social support as relationship skill, one major component of emotional intelligence facilitates to establish and maintain close relationships. Again close and secure relationships themselves and social support built up with them are major sources of happiness as explained in section 5.5.

Section 5.8: Role of Inner-Other Directedness

It has been found that inner-other directedness and happiness are significantly correlated in case of group-I, & group-II (Table 4.11, & 4.12). Inner-other directedness has also been found to be a significant predictor of happiness in group-I, group-II and group-IV (table 4.15, 4.16, 4.18).

Result revealed that more the person is inner-directed, happier he is. Inner-directed persons turn to their own values and standards for guidance in their behaviour (Kassarjian, 1962). They are thought to be driven by their need for accomplishment and are not motivated by the need for approval from others. This means inner-directed people feel more control over their lives than the other-directed persons. This feeling of “mastery” over life is significantly correlated with life satisfaction (Lachman and Weaver, 1998) and have found to be a predictor of happiness (Lu et al., 1997). Happy people have positive
response to good events—that they caused them themselves, and that these will continue to occur and in different spheres.

Inner-directed people are, thus, more active in attempting to manipulate their environment. They believe they control their own destiny. Therefore they act to take control of events in contrast to other-directed individuals. Individuals with external control fell powerless in terms of controlling their success or failure. They report higher levels of career dissatisfaction and illness and perceive limited occupational alteration for themselves (Kulashrestha & Sen, 2006). Canter & Sanderson (1999) have suggested that the way we approach our goals influence our well-being. Those with internal control results in more positive behaviour and have a definite goal in sustaining life. When things go bad for externals, it affects their temperament for a long time (Kulashrestha & Sen, 2006). Subjects with external control are more likely to be passive and defensive, rather than do something to reduce stress they acquiesce. This type of persons fell that, no matter what he had done the same outcome would have progressed, therefore externals feel more stress and reported significantly high negative affect and significantly low life satisfaction. These differences between inner-directed and other-directed people are illustrated with the help of the following diagram.

![Diagram: Happiness in Inner-directed person and Other-directed person](image)

Figure-5.12: Happiness in Inner-directed person and Other-directed person
Section 5.9: Role of Stressful Life Events

It has been found that stressful life events are not correlated with happiness in any of the four age group (table-4.11, 4.12, 4.13 & 4.14). Hedonic treadmill theory suggests that although people may react strongly to life events, they eventually return to their initial levels of happiness. In their classic article on adaptation Brickman & Campbell (1971) argued that people are confined to a hedonic treadmill – they are doomed to experience stable levels of well-being because, over time, they adapt to even the most extreme positive and negative life circumstances. This idea has also received considerable empirical support. Most cross-sectional studies of life satisfaction and long term emotional levels find that objective circumstances account for surprisingly little variance in reports of subjective well-being. Even people who have won large sums of money in lotteries and people who have experienced debilitating injuries appear not to differ strongly from the average person (Brickman et al., 1978). The theory’s supporting evidence has led some researchers to conclude that adaptation is quick, complete, and inevitable and that most of the long term stable variance in subjective well-being can be accounted for by personality and genetic predispositions rather than by life circumstances (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996). According to this idea, people have happiness set points to which they inevitably return following disruptive life events (Larsen, 2000; Williams & Thompson, 1993).

Again, a person’s cognitive appraisal of stress is the most important factor in evaluating stressful life events. Stress is determined by person-environment fit (Lazarus & folkman, 1984) as already discussed in chapter-I. On the basis of appraisal process if a situation is perceived as uncontrollable that is if the individual perceives that he or she does not have adequate coping resources to deal with the situation stress is experienced and only then it can have detrimental effect on the individual. Same event may be stressful for one but not for another due to psychological appraisal. Experience of stress, then, results from the process of appraising events (as harmful,
threatening, or challenging), of assessing potential responses and of responding to those events. Thus, a person who appraises situation as being less stressful and perceives that his or her coping resources will suffice to meet the new demands put by the situation experience little stress and becomes happier.

Section 5.10: Role of Meaning in Life

Presence of meaning in life has been found to be positively and significantly correlated with happiness in all the four age groups (table-4.11, 4.12, 4.13 & 4.14) and as a contributory factor in the development of happiness in case of all the four age groups (Table-4.15, 4.16, 4.17 & 4.18). The above findings are supportive of the previous researchers. The relationship between presence of meaning in life has been found to be positively correlated with happiness by Freedman (1978), Mukherjee & Basu (2008). Meaning in life has also been reported as a route of happiness (Seligman, 2002).

Meaning in life is regarded as a positive variable – an indicator of well-being (Ryff, 1989) and a facilitator of adaptive coping (Folkman, 1997). Meaningful living has been directly equated with authentic living (Kenyon, 2000), and in eudaimonic theories of well-being, which focus on personal growth and psychological strengths beyond pleasant affect, meaning is important, whether as a critical component (Ryff & Singer, 1998) or as a result of maximizing one’s potentials (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Having more meaning has been positively related to work enjoyment (Bonebright et al., 2000), life satisfaction (Chamberlain & Zika, 1988), and happiness (Debates et al., 1993). Meaning is one of a set of growth-related variables that are thought to provide conditions from which happiness arises (Lent, 2004; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Thus, meaning may contribute to the foundation of overall happiness. Meaning of life can produce happiness in many different ways.
Frankl (1963) argued that “will to meaning” is a basic motivating force in people’s lives. He thought that people need an overarching sense of purpose, meaning, and direction to sustain them through life’s journey. A meaningful life is expressed in people’s goals and ambitions that, in turn, direct their energy toward the future. When traumatic experiences shatter or disrupt these goals and purposes, life may be perceived as meaningless. Under such conditions, people are highly motivated to restore a sense of meaning and purpose to their lives. Such circumstances present opportunities for personal growth as people develop and commit themselves to new goals, ambition, and purposes that re-establish their sense of meaning and direction. Thus Pursuit of meaning is a central feature of human life (Baumeister, 1991). Humans are “meaning-maker”s of their lives in the sense of seeking and creating an understanding of the specific and broader purposes of life (Bruner, 1990).

Meaning-making refers to an active process of reappraisal and revision of how an event might be interpreted or what it might signify (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). Researchers have focused on two forms of meaning-making: making sense of the event, and finding benefits or positive outcomes (Nolen-Hoeksema & davis, 2002). Sense-making refers to making the event comprehensible in terms of beliefs about how the world operates. The second form of meaning-making is called benefit-finding. This involves finding benefits or positive outcomes in trauma and loss. This result is consistent with the existentialist position that a sense of meaning in life has unique causal influence on mental health. In much of supportive existential theorizing, meaning is conceptualized as a stress buffer (Maddi, 1967; Yalom, 1980; Mascaro & Rosen, 2006), with those high in meaning in life having a resiliency against decompensation in the face of stressors and individuals low in meaning having a vulnerability to stress induced emotional problems. Therefore, people having high meaning in life are able to cope with stresses and traumas more readily and thus are prone to be happy.
Another characteristic of meaning in life is **transcendence**. Transcendence is the strength that forges connections to the larger universe. To transcend means to go beyond or rise above the ordinary and the everyday. Transcendent thinking lifts individuals out of the usual concrete preoccupations of daily life and out of an individualized sense of self by providing a broader view of the world and the universe. Transcendence puts things in perspective and keeps people from worrying about or striving for things that don’t really matter. Whatever their various form, transcendent beliefs connect the individual to a more encompassing understanding and a deeper meaning of life. A meaningful life is an aspect of happiness that derives from going beyond one’s own self-interests and preoccupations. This is a deeper and more enduring aspect of happiness that stems from giving to, and being involved in, something larger than one’s self. The point is that a life well-lived means being connected to something “larger than the self” (Seligman et al., 2006). Finding purpose in life, both large and small, is an essential ingredient in psychological health (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Meaningful life is an important foundation for personal satisfaction and health. The opposite is also true. A life regarded as meaningless is likely to be accompanied by profound unhappiness and emotional distress (Baumeister, 1991).

The importance of meaning may reflect a connection of basic human needs. Baumeister (1991) described four human needs that underlie the pursuit of meaning: purpose, value, self-efficacy, and self-worth. These four needs help explain the basis for people’s motivation to find meaning in life. The need for **purpose** refers to a desire for direction in life. Organizing life around the pursuit of personally significant goals and ideal end states are major ways people fulfill their need for purpose. The second need is for **value**. This need fulfills by finding justifications for actions that affirm the positive value of one’s life. People want to believe their actions are “right” or “good” as judged by a system of values. Values and code of conduct provide
standards for judging right, wrong, moral, and immoral acts and provide guideposts for evaluating specific actions and the overall quality of life.

Third need is for a sense of self-efficacy. People need to feel that they have control over the things that happen to them so that life does not seem chaotic, capricious, and beyond their control. Meeting challenges and accomplishing goals are two major ways that people develop feelings of self-efficacy. Control may take the form of changing the environment to meet individual needs and goals, or changing the self in order to adapt to the environment when the environment can not be changed. An important form of control is interpretive control. As Baumeister notes, being able to understand why things occur is an important source of meaning. Even if outcome cannot be changed, finding meaningful interpretations for life events contributes to a sense of control and provides a basis for adaptation to life’s challenges.

Self-worth is the fourth basis for meaning. Self-worth reflects people’s need for positive self-evaluation and self-esteem. Talents, accomplishments, recognition, and admiration from others, and favourable social comparisons (i.e. doing better than others) may all contribute to a sense of self-worth. Thus as meaning in life satisfies these basic human needs it also contribute to a feeling of happiness.

Meaning in life motivates an individual to pursue valued and purposeful goals. Cantor & Sanderson (1999) argue that “Participating in valued activities and working towards personal goal “is important for well being. They broaden concept of purpose and goals to include “Valued activities”. These goals and activities enhance well being in several ways:

1. By giving a sense of personal agency and purpose, produced by valued and challenging activities.

2. Giving structure and meaning to daily life,
(3) By giving help to cope with problems and adversity in daily life, which may lead to renewed commitment; and
(4) By strengthening social relationships and leading to more social participation.

Sheldon and Elliot (1999) proposed a casual model where goal self concordance leads to greater effort, to goal attainment and to enhance well being. Goal self concordance means believing in the importance of goals & choosing them for fun and enjoyment rather than goals being extremely imposed or followed to avoid guilt and anxiety.

![Figure 5.13: Causal model proposed by Sheldon and Elliot (1999)](image)

In agreement with this concept, Lyubomirsky and colleagues (2005) have also proposed that long-term increases in happiness may be possible when people (1) pursue goals that match or fit with personal characteristics, (2) that are autonomously chosen (3) for which implementation plans have been laid out.
Section 5.11: Integration of the Present Findings

Current findings suggest that as far as group-I is concerned, presence of meaning of life has contributed 73%, emotional intelligence has contributed 4% and secured attachment pattern has contributed 1% to happiness as depicted in figure-5.14.

![Figure-5.14: Pie Chart Showing the Relative Contribution of Secured Attachment Pattern, Emotional Intelligence and Presence of Meaning in Life, in the Development of Happiness in Age Group-I](image1)

When group-II is taken into account, it is observed that Presence of meaning of life contributes 36%, emotional intelligence contributes 11%, inner-other directedness contributes 6%, and secured attachment pattern contributes 2% to happiness as reflected in figure-5.15.

![Figure-5.15: Pie Chart Showing the Relative Contribution of Secured Attachment Pattern, Emotional Intelligence, inner-other directedness and presence of meaning in life in the Development of Happiness in Age Group-II](image2)
In case of group-III Presence of meaning of life, secured attachment pattern, thought process and emotional intelligence contribute to happiness 36%, 13%, 9%, & 4% respectively as presented in figure-5.16.

As far as group-IV is concerned, it is evident that Presence of meaning of life has contributed 49%, emotional intelligence has contributed 11%, synthetic-integrative functioning has contributed 4%, secured attachment pattern 2%, and inner-other directedness has contributed 2% in the development of happiness as reflected in figure-5.17.
It can be clearly understood from the above discussion that presence of meaning in life, emotional intelligence, and secured attachment pattern significantly predicts happiness in all the age groups. Thus, it can be interpreted that these three variables are the contributory factors of happiness irrespective of age. The following model has been assumed in the present research paradigm.

![Diagram of Significant Contributory Factors of Happiness](image)

The present findings lead to the interpretation that whatever is the age of the person, the sex of the person, and whatever is the situation, presence of meaning in life, emotional intelligence, and secured attachment pattern can make a person happy. Thus, a person having high presence of meaning in life, high level of emotional intelligence, and more close & secured relationships is more likely to be happy in any life circumstances.

Presence of meaning in life has been found to be most important factor as it explains most of the variance in all the four age groups. So, when a person is unable to derive any sort of meaning from the unavoidable stressful situations, changing attitudinal
values toward unavoidable suffering is only way because everything can be taken from a man but one thing, can not be taken away – the last of the human freedom – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way…” (Frankl, 1984). So, accepting and discovery some benefits of blessings of our sufferings is only way because it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. With meaning, suffering can be endured with dignity. Hence, meaning in life is the most required component in enhancing happiness.

Presence of meaning in life, emotional intelligence, and secured attachment pattern can generate happiness independently (as illustrated in sections 5.5, 5.7. & 5.10) as well as by interacting with each other. The interaction of these factors may again, produces happiness in two ways. Based on these two modes of interaction following two models have been developed to show how these three factors collectively engender happiness.

**Figure-5.19:** Model-I showing the interaction of presence of meaning in life, emotional intelligence, secured attachment pattern in developing happiness
Model-I expresses that emotional intelligence ensures improve problem solving skill while presence of meaning in life provides a broader and positive view towards life. These two components help people to cope with stress, and thus, produce happiness. Again emotional intelligence and meaning in life together helps in effective handling and strengthening of relationships which build up close, secure relationships which act as strong social support against stress and generate happiness.

![Diagram](image_url)

**Figure-5.20: Model-II showing the interaction of presence of meaning in life, emotional intelligence, secured attachment pattern in developing happiness**

Model-II expresses that emotional intelligence helps a person to feel secured in his relationships (attachments) which provide a support system. This support system leads an individual to a step further to achieve his life goal or purpose by enhancing meaning and social support itself is a potential source of meaning. Meaning in turn helps the individual to develop confidence in his guiding values and to feel that his life has a direction which ultimately leads to happiness.