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Original Research

Analysis of Clinical Nurses' Happiness Levels Using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire in a Hospital

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Abstract

Background: Nurses' happiness is a critical determinant of job satisfaction and quality of care. Adverse working conditions, shift schedules, and heavy workloads can diminish nurses' happiness.

Objective: Identifying the level of happiness and its primary contributing factors among clinical nurses is therefore essential.

Methods: This study utilized a descriptive quantitative approach with the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Seventy-three clinical nurses from five inpatient wards at Hasanuddin University Hospital in Makassar were selected through purposive sampling.

Results: Most respondents reported a very high level of happiness (87.7%), while 12.3% reported a high level. The most significant contributing aspect was the perception that "life is rewarding" (97.3%), followed by "happy memories" (94.5%) and being "pleased with life" (93.2%). Factors associated with higher happiness included the absence of additional employment, effective time management, higher education level, marital status, and higher income.

Conclusion: Clinical nurses in inpatient wards at Hasanuddin University Hospital predominantly experience very high levels of happiness, with the perception of a meaningful life emerging as the most influential factor. Both individual and organizational factors contribute to these outcomes. Hospitals should sustain and strengthen supportive work environments by managing workloads, facilitating career development, and providing psychological support programs. Future research should incorporate additional variables, such as burnout and social support, and employ more comprehensive research designs.

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Keywords

Clinical Nurses, Happiness Levels, Oxford Happniness Questionnaire

Background

Happiness among nurses is an experience that helps them continue their profession by increasing job satisfaction. Understanding nurses' happiness levels can help reduce the problems and difficulties they face by implementing appropriate interventions that improve their well-being. In the nursing profession, challenges often arise from difficult working conditions, shift work, irregular sleep patterns, role conflicts, limited access to equipment, and excessive workloads. These conditions can lead to stress among nurses and ultimately reduce their level of happiness.

A systematic review by Krajewska (3) shows that most studies indicate organizational factors (workload, work environment, and management support) have a significant relationship with nurses' happiness ($p < 0.05$). Individual factors (mental health and life satisfaction) also show a significant positive correlation with happiness.

Other studies report that nurses' happiness levels are generally above average (at a moderate level). Nurses who do not exceed weekly working hours tend to be happier, while dissatisfaction with their workplace negatively affects happiness. Excessive working hours and dissatisfaction with the organization reduce nurses' happiness levels. Therefore, interventions are needed to assess factors that negatively influence nurses' happiness and implement corrective measures (4).

In conclusion, research on happiness is important because it is a fundamental aspect of human life, regardless of age or gender. It represents a form of fulfillment and motivates individuals to engage in positive actions (4).

Based on preliminary interviews conducted with head nurses in inpatient wards at Hasanuddin University Hospital, Makassar, there are 77 clinical nurses across five inpatient wards (VIP, Eye Ward, Sandeq, Katinting, and Phinisi). This study aims to determine the level of happiness among clinical nurses and identify the most dominant factors contributing to their happiness.

Methods

A quantitative descriptive approach was employed in this study. Descriptive research designs systematically and accurately describe variables based on collected data. The primary variable analyzed was the level of happiness among clinical nurses working in inpatient wards at Hasanuddin University Hospital, Makassar, as measured by the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Developed by Peter Hills and Michael Argyle in 2002 as an improvement on the Oxford Happiness Inventory, the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) measures psychological well-being, or subjective happiness, using a 6-point Likert

scale. The OHQ is widely utilized in research to assess overall happiness and positive psychological functioning.

The study population comprised 77 clinical nurses working in five inpatient wards at Hasanuddin University Hospital, Makassar. Non-probability purposive sampling was employed. In non-probability sampling, samples are selected based on the researcher's judgment rather than through random selection, distinguishing it from probabilistic sampling methods.

Non-probability sampling does not permit generalization of findings to the broader population; results are applicable only to the study participants. Purposive sampling, or judgmental sampling, involves selecting participants based on specific criteria such as characteristics, knowledge, or experience relevant to the study. Preliminary screening questions may be used to determine respondent suitability.

Of the 77 clinical nurses invited, 73 agreed to participate in the study, and 4 declined.

Result and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Distribution of Respondent Characteristics (n =73)

Characteristics	Total	
	n	%
Age		
25-30	43	59
31-35	20	27
36-40	10	13
Gender		
Female	64	87,7
Male	9	12,3
Education level		
D3	3	4,1
Ners	65	89,0
S2	5	6,8
Married		
Married	43	58,9
Single	30	41,1
Salary		
1-3 million	51	69,9
3-5 million	21	28,8
>5 j million	1	1,4
Clinical level		
Pra clinical	10	13,7
Clinical Level 1	31	42,5
Clinical level 2	21	28,8
Clinical level 3	11	15,1
Work experience		
1-3 Years	41	56,2
3-5 Years	5	6,8
5-10 years	16	21,5
>10 Years	11	15,1

additional job		
Yes	0	0
No	73	100,0
Rooms		
VIP	10	13,7
RI Mata	10	13,
Katinting	23	31,5
Sandeq	9	12,3
Phinisi	21	28,8

The majority of nurses were aged 25–30 years, comprising 43 respondents (59%), suggesting that the nursing workforce was primarily composed of young, productive individuals. Most respondents were female (64; 87.7%), reflecting the ongoing predominance of women in the nursing profession. In terms of educational attainment, 65 respondents (89.0%) held a Professional Nursing (Ners) degree, indicating that the majority had completed the required professional nursing qualification. Regarding marital status, 43 respondents (58.9%) were married. Most respondents (51; 69.9%) reported a monthly salary of IDR 1–3 million. With respect to clinical level, 31 respondents (42.5%) were classified as Clinical Level I, suggesting that a significant proportion of nurses were at an early stage of clinical career development. The majority of respondents (41; 56.2%) had 1–3 years of work experience, indicating that most were relatively early in their professional careers. All respondents (100%) reported having no additional employment outside their primary nursing position.

The largest proportion of respondents worked in the Katinting Ward (23; 31.5%), followed by the Phinisi Ward (21; 28.8%), indicating that the Katinting Ward had the highest concentration of nursing staff among the surveyed hospital units.

Analysis of Happiness Levels and Aspects of Happiness

Table 2. Happiness Levels and Aspects of Happiness Among Clinical Nurses (n=73)

Happiness Aspect	Total	
	n	%
Happiness Level		
High	9	12,3
Very High	64	87,7
Life Is Rewarding		
Moderate	2	2,7
High	71	97,3
Mentally Alert		
Moderate	28	38,4
High	45	61,6
Pleased With Life		
Moderate	5	6,8
High	68	93,2
Find Beauty Things		
Moderate	11	15,1
High	62	84,9

Satisfied In Life		
Moderate	11	15,1
High	62	84,9
Can Organized Time		
Moderate	13	17,8
High	60	82,2
Look Atractive		
Moderate	23	31,5
High	50	68,5
Happy Memories		
Moderate	4	5,5
High	69	94,5

The frequency distribution of happiness levels and aspects of happiness among clinical nurses in five inpatient wards at Hasanuddin University Hospital, Makassar, is presented in Table 2. The analysis shows that, out of 73 respondents, 9 (12.3%) had high levels of happiness, while the majority, 64 (87.7%), had very high levels of happiness. Regarding aspects of happiness, the most dominant was "life is rewarding," with 71 respondents (97.3%) in the high category and 2 (2.7%) in the moderate category. The mental alertness aspect showed 45 respondents (61.6%) in the high category and 28 (38.4%) in the moderate category. The aspect of having a pleasant life showed 68 respondents (93.2%) in the high category and 5 respondents (6.8%) in the moderate category. The ability to find beauty in all things was reported as high by 63 respondents (84.9%) and moderate by 11 respondents (15.1%). Similarly, life satisfaction showed that 63 respondents (84.9%) were in the high category and 11 (15.1%) were in the moderate category. The ability to manage time effectively was rated high by 60 respondents (82.2%) and moderate by 13 respondents (17.8%).

The aspect of feeling attractive showed 50 respondents (68.5%) in the high category and 23 respondents (31.5%) in the moderate category. Lastly, the positive past memories aspect was high among 69 respondents (94.5%) and moderate among 4 respondents (5.5%).

Discussion

The present study found that the majority of clinical nurses demonstrated a very high level of happiness (87.7%). This result is significant, given that nursing is widely recognized as a profession characterized by high workloads, emotional demands, shift work, and frequent exposure to stressful situations. Positive psychology theory posits that happiness reflects an individual's overall evaluation of life, including both cognitive judgments and emotional experiences. The high level of happiness observed among nurses in this study suggests the existence of protective factors that support psychological well-being despite occupational challenges. (2,3,13)

The most prominent aspect identified was the perception that "life is rewarding" (97.3%). This suggests that nurses view their profession as meaningful and valuable. The meaningfulness of work is recognized as one of the strongest predictors of happiness and psychological well-being among healthcare professionals. Nurses who perceive their work

as contributing to patient recovery and community health typically report greater job satisfaction, resilience, and professional commitment. Similar results were reported by Zhang et al., who found that nurses with higher professional autonomy and a stronger sense of purpose experienced significantly greater happiness and well-being. (5,14)

The high score in the "happy memories" dimension (94.5%) indicates that positive experiences accumulated throughout professional and personal life contribute substantially to happiness. Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory asserts that positive emotions expand individuals' thought-action repertoires and help build enduring personal resources that promote resilience and well-being. Positive memories may function as psychological resources, enabling nurses to cope effectively with workplace stressors and maintain emotional stability. (15,16)

Similarly, the high proportion of respondents reporting satisfaction in the "pleased with life" dimension (93.2%) reflects overall life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is a central component of subjective well-being and is consistently associated with better mental health, lower burnout, and higher work engagement among nurses. Previous studies have shown that nurses with higher life satisfaction tend to provide higher-quality patient care and demonstrate stronger professional performance. (2,13,16)

Most respondents were aged between 25 and 30 years and had one to three years of work experience. Younger nurses typically possess higher energy levels, greater adaptability, and stronger motivation for career development. Research indicates that early-career nurses generally report higher enthusiasm and professional engagement; however, prolonged exposure to occupational stress may gradually diminish well-being if adequate organizational support is lacking. Maintaining supportive work environments is therefore essential to sustain happiness throughout nurses' careers. (3,7,17)

Despite most respondents reporting relatively modest monthly incomes, happiness levels remained high. This finding supports Easterlin's theory, which posits that financial resources contribute to happiness primarily by fulfilling basic needs, while social relationships, meaningful work, recognition, and psychological fulfillment become more influential determinants once basic economic needs are met. Similar results have been reported among healthcare professionals in several countries, where non-financial factors demonstrated stronger associations with happiness than salary alone. (8,13,17)

Another important finding concerns the respondents' ability to organize time effectively, with more than 80% reporting high levels of time-management ability. Effective time management is strongly associated with work-life balance, reduced occupational stress, and improved psychological well-being. Nurses who successfully balance professional responsibilities and personal life are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion and burnout. (9,21,22)

The predominance of female respondents in this study aligns with the global demographic composition of the nursing workforce. Previous research indicates that female nurses frequently benefit from stronger social support networks, which may enhance psychological well-being and resilience. Social support from colleagues, supervisors, family members, and friends has been consistently identified as a protective factor against workplace stress and burnout. (3,11,18)

Marital status may also contribute to happiness levels. Most respondents were married, and previous studies suggest that marital relationships can provide emotional support, companionship, and stress-buffering effects that positively influence happiness and life satisfaction. Married individuals frequently report higher subjective well-being than unmarried individuals, particularly when their relationships are characterized by mutual support and stability. (17,19)

In the Indonesian cultural context, spirituality and religious values may further explain the high levels of happiness observed. Spiritual beliefs frequently provide individuals with a sense of meaning, purpose, gratitude, and emotional comfort. Rahmawati et al. reported that spirituality-based interventions significantly improved nurses' happiness and caring behaviors. Spiritual well-being has also been linked to lower stress levels, better coping strategies, and greater job satisfaction among healthcare workers. (10,20)

The findings of this study also underscore the importance of organizational factors. Supportive leadership, effective teamwork, adequate staffing, professional recognition, and opportunities for career development have been consistently associated with higher nurse happiness and lower turnover intentions. Healthcare organizations that prioritize employee well-being improve workforce satisfaction and enhance patient safety, service quality, and organizational performance. (3,6,18,21)

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the descriptive cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation. Second, the use of purposive sampling restricts the generalizability of findings beyond the study setting. Third, self-reported questionnaires may introduce response bias and social desirability effects. Future research should employ analytical or longitudinal designs and incorporate variables such as burnout, resilience, social support, organizational commitment, psychological capital, and leadership style to provide a more comprehensive understanding of nurses' happiness. (7,22,23)

Overall, the findings demonstrate that happiness among clinical nurses is influenced by a complex interplay of personal, professional, social, and organizational factors. Meaningful work, positive life experiences, life satisfaction, effective time management, social support, and spirituality are key contributors to nurses' happiness. Strengthening these factors may enable healthcare organizations to foster a healthier and more productive nursing workforce, thereby improving patient outcomes and organizational sustainability. (11,18,24,25)

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that clinical nurses working in the inpatient wards of Hasanuddin University Hospital generally experience a very high level of happiness. The findings suggest that nurses' happiness is strongly associated with their perception that their work is meaningful and rewarding, indicating that intrinsic aspects of nursing play a more important role in promoting happiness than demographic or financial factors alone. The prominence of the rewarding dimension of *life is a reminder of* the importance of professional purpose and personal fulfillment in sustaining nurses' psychological well-being.

The consistently high scores across most happiness dimensions, including positive life evaluation, life satisfaction, effective time management, and positive memories, indicate that respondents possess strong psychological resources that support their well-being. Furthermore, the findings imply that a supportive work environment, the absence of additional employment demands, and the ability to maintain work–life balance may help sustain high levels of happiness among nurses. Overall, nurses' happiness appears to result from the interaction of individual, professional, and organizational factors. Therefore, maintaining nurses' well-being requires not only adequate workplace support but also efforts to strengthen meaningful work experiences and positive psychological functioning, which may ultimately contribute to improved nursing care quality and patient outcomes.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest
No conflict of interest declare

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Author Contributions
R; J contributed to the study's conception and design, data acquisition, and data analysis, wrote the first draft of the manuscript, revised the final draft, and gave final approval of the version to be published.

Data Availability Statement
The dataset generated and analysed during the current study is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of the Use of AI in Scientific Writing
There is nothing to declare.

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