

A GUIDE TO FINDINGS ON HAPPINESS OF CHILDREN IN THE WORLD DATABASE OF HAPPINESS

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1 WORLD DATABASE OF HAPPINESS

The World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven 2012) is *findings archive*, that is, a collection of observations that result from scientific empirical research. The database focuses on research findings on happiness in the sense of subjective enjoyment of life. Its goal is to facilitate accumulation of knowledge on this subject.

The database consists of several *collections*. It builds on a collection of all scientific publications about happiness, called the ‘Bibliography of Happiness’ (Veenhoven 2012a). To date this collection includes some 7000 books and articles, of which half report an empirical investigation that used an acceptable measure of happiness, listed in the collection ‘Measures of Happiness’ (Veenhoven 2012b). The findings yielded by some 3500 studies that past this test for adequate measurement of happiness are described on separate ‘finding pages’, using a standard format and a standard terminology. Two kinds of findings are discerned: *distributional findings* on how happy people are at a particular time and place and *correlational findings* about the things that go together with more or less happiness in these populations.

To date the database contains about 8000 distributional findings, of which 5000 on happiness in the general population of nations (Veenhoven 2012c) and 3000 on happiness in particular social categories, such as students or psychiatric patients (Veenhoven 2012d).

The collection ‘Correlational Findings’ (Veenhoven 2012e) contains some 15.000 research results. These findings are sorted by subject, such as ‘Happiness and Age’ and ‘Happiness and Income’. The collection can also be searched on characteristics of the population investigated, i.e. public, place, time, and on methodological features such as sampling and measurement. Though far from complete, this is the best available source on conditions for happiness at present.

The database is free available on internet at <http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl>
A detailed description is found with Veenhoven 2011.

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2 PUBLICATIONS ON HAPPINESS IN CHILDREN

The Bibliography of Happiness involves a detailed subject classification, among which a classification of publics studied. Part of that categorization is a distinction of age groups in which happiness is assessed, which is presented on [scheme 1](#). The numbers at the right in [scheme 1](#) refer to the number of publications. To date (November 2012) the Bibliography lists 290 publications in which the happiness of children is addressed. Most of these (178) are among adolescents, but there are also quite some publications on happiness in basic school children (58) and a few on pre-school children (6).

The numbers at the right in [scheme 1](#) link to a list on which these publications are described. An example of such a list is presented on [Scheme 2](#), the 6 publications on happiness in pre-school children. For each publication the usual bibliographic signature is given: author, title, source of publication and year of publication. When possible links to the full text are added, either using the DOI links or a link to a website where the publication is available. If the publication involves research findings that are included in the findings collections of the World Database of Happiness a link to the extracted findings pages is also added (WDH).

3 ACCEPTED STUDIES ON HAPPINESS IN CHILDREN

Investigations that used at least one acceptable measure of happiness are described on a ‘study page’ and one of the descriptors is the ‘public’ concerned. Publics can be ‘general’ or ‘special’; the *general public* is all people living in a particular area at a certain time, *special publics* are particular kinds of people, such as intellectuals, home-makers or people in certain ages. Studies among children are considered to concern a ‘special public’ and classified under ‘age-groups’. For particular kinds of children, such as gifted children, additional classifications are made.

An overview is presented on [Scheme 3](#). The number of studies mentioned in [scheme 3](#) is much lower than the number of publications in [scheme 1](#). One reason is that not all publications report an empirical investigation that used an acceptable measure of happiness. Another reason is that about half of the accepted studies is still waiting to be entered in the findings collections.

Each of these studies is described on a ‘study page’ using a standard format and a standard terminology. The page starts with a short description of the investigation, which involves detail about the people investigated, the way of data gathering and the measure of happiness used. On the page are links to further pages on which the findings are reported. An example is presented on [scheme 4](#).

4 MEASURES OF HAPPINESS IN CHILDREN

Happiness is defined as ‘the enjoyment of one’s life as a whole’. Since this is something people have in mind, it can be measured using questions such as ‘Taking all together, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life-as-a-whole these days? Please rate with a number between 0 and 10, where 0 stand for extremely dissatisfied and 10 for extremely satisfied’. Such questions are commonly used in surveys of the general population, some of which consider people from age 12 on. Questions of this kind are also being used in studies among adolescents. Such questions are classified as pertaining to ‘overall’ happiness in the collection ‘Measures of Happiness’ and coded ‘O’.

The answering of these questions requires that the respondent has formed an idea about ‘overall satisfaction’ and ‘life-as-a-whole’ and this is typically not the case with young children. Still school age children do mostly have an idea of how happy they ‘feel’ most of the time and at least from age 8 on they appear to be able to respond to questions on that matter in a consistent way (VanVaalen 2011). Such questions tap what is called the ‘affective component’ of happiness and are coded ‘A’ in the collection Measures of Happiness.

Younger children are less able to estimate how well they feel most of the time, but are still able to report how they feel at the moment. Therefore their happiness can be measured using multi-moment assessment, such as by repeatedly asking ‘How happy do you feel right now? Such repeated single questions are coded A-ARE for ‘Affect-Average Repeated Estimates’ in the collection ‘Measures of Happiness’.

Very young children, such as toddlers, cannot even report how they feel at the moment and their affect level must therefore be inferred from behavioral indications, such as frequency of crying and facial expression. Measures of this kind are coded A-CA, for Affect-Cheerful Apppearance. Such rating can be made by trained observers or by teachers and parents.

Studies on happiness in children that used acceptable measures are listed in the collection of ‘Happiness in Publics’, in the section ‘Happiness in Age Groups’, subsection ‘Children’. See [scheme 3](#). Scrolling these studies one can see which particular measures have been applied as yet.

5 DISTRIBUTIONAL FINDINGS ON HAPPINESS IN CHILDREN

Each of the findings obtained in studies that used an acceptable measure of happiness are described on a separate ‘finding page’. Findings on how happy children are, are noted together with full detail about the measure used. An example of such a page is presented on [scheme 5](#).

These pages can be assessed in several ways. One way is through the ‘study pages’ listed in the collection of findings on ‘Happiness in Publics’. The finding pages can also be assessed through the collection of findings on ‘Happiness in Nations’. Select a nation and an overview of findings in that nation will appear. Select ‘distributional findings’ and next under ‘special publics’ the category ‘age group’ and within that category the sub-category

‘Children’.

To date (November 2012) an option for comparison of average happiness in children across nations is in preparation. As yet, most of these data concern adolescents.

6 CORRELATIONAL FINDINGS ON HAPPINESS IN CHILDREN

Correlational findings are also presented on a ‘finding page’, an example of which is presented on [scheme 6](#). On top of this page is a description of the ‘study’, with reference to the publication in which the finding was reported and a short description of the investigation. Next on the page is a description of the ‘correlate’. That is, the factor of which the relationship with happiness was investigated; in this case the parents estimate of how happy their child is. At the bottom of the real finding, in this case a surprisingly low correlation with the child’s own rating of how happy it feels most of the time.

7 ADDING FINDINGS TO THE WORLD DATABASE OF HAPPINESS

On the website of the World Database of Happiness are instructions for adding findings to the archive.

REFERENCES

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Measures of Happiness

World Database of Happiness, Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Happiness in Nations

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Happiness in Publics

World Database of Happiness, Erasmus University Rotterdam Available at:

http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_pub/pub_fp.php

Veenhoven, R. (2012e)

Correlates of Happiness

World Database of Happiness, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Available at: http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/hap_cor/cor_fp.htm

Scheme 1**Publications on Happiness in Age-groups listed in the Bibliography of Happiness
(number)**

Happiness in age-groups	5
In children	40
Infants	9
Pre-school children	6
Basic school children	53
High school pupils, adolescents	178
Mentally retarded children	4
In young adults	15
In middle aged people	10
In elderly people	802

Scheme 2**Some publications on happiness in pre-school children listed in the Bibliography of Happiness****Overview of publications on Happiness and Pre-school children***Additional keywords:* kindergarten, toddler**Author(s)** Fekkes, M.; Brugman, E.; Theunissen, N.C.; Veen, S.**Title** Development and Psychometric Evaluation of the TAPQUOL: A Health-Related Quality of Life Instrument for 1-5 Year- Old Children.**Source** Quality of Life Research, 2000, Vol. 9, 961 - 972**Year** 2000**DOI link** [DOI:10.1023/A:1008981603178](https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1008981603178)**ISSN** 0962 9343**Author(s)** Henggeler, S.W.; Borduin, C.M.**Title** Satisfied Working Mothers and their Preschool Sons: Interaction and Psychosocial Adjustment.**Source** Journal of Family Issues, 1981, Vol. 2, 322 - 335**Year** 1981**ISSN** 0192 513X**WDH excerpt** [HENGG 1981/1](#) [HENGG 1981/2](#)**Etc*****Number of publications: 6***

Scheme 3**Links to findings on happiness of children in the collection of ‘Happiness in Publics’**

⊖ AGE groups	
Infants	6
Toddlers	
Basic school children	21
Teens, adolescents	81
etc	
⊖ CHILDREN	
Children living with single parent	1
Gifted children	
Handicapped children	2
Twins	4
Children of divorce	2

Scheme 4

Example of a ‘study page’ in collection of ‘Happiness in Publics’ classified as regarding ‘Children’**Investigation***Author(s)* [Holder, M.D.; Coleman, B.; Wallace, J.M.](#)*Title* Spirituality, Religiousness, and Happiness in Children aged 8 - 12 Years.*Public* 8-12 aged children, 2 schools, Canada, 200?*Happiness measure used* [A-AOL-g-sq-f-7-a](#) , [Responses](#)*Happiness measure used* [A-AOL-g-rdf-f-7-a](#) , [Responses](#)**Correlational Findings***How author named it* *Our subject classification*Activity [Active](#)Communal Spirituality [Perceived quality of intimate ties](#)Emotionality [Emotional](#)Environmental Spirituality [Ecological values](#)Gender [Sexe \(male vs female\)](#)Parent rating of child happiness [Rating of happiness by parents](#)

Etc

Scheme 5

Example of a distributional finding on happiness in children

Happiness measure used in study HOLDE 2010

Full text Self report on single question: "Overall how do you usually feel?" Rated on seven step faces scale ranging from sad to happy, without verbal or numerical labels

Classification [A-AOL-g-sq-f-7-a](#)

Focus Affect: Average Overall Level

Time frame generally

Mode 1 question

Scale type faces scale, range = 7

Author's label Faces scale

Public 8-12 aged children, 2 schools, Canada, 200?

Page in source 135,138

Distribution of happiness

% score 1 = 0

% score 2 = 0

% score 3 = 3

% score 4 = 7

% score 5 = 19

% score 6 = 47

% score 7 = 24

% Don't know, 0

No answer

Mean on original scale 5.82

Mean on scale 0 - 10 8.03

Standard deviation 0.97
on original scale

Standard deviation 1.62
on scale 0 - 10

Scheme 6

Example of a correlational finding on happiness in children

Study**HOLDE 2010***Author(s)* Holder, M.D.; Coleman, B.; Wallace, J.M.*Title* Spirituality, Religiousness, and Happiness in Children aged 8-12 Years.*Source* Journal of Happiness Studies, 2010, Vol.11, 131 - 150*DOI* [DOI:10.1007/s10902-008-9126-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-008-9126-1)*Public* 8-12 aged children, 2 schools, Canada, 200?*Sample* Non-probability purposive sample*Non-Response* 11*Respondents N =* 320**Correlate***Author's label* Parent rating of child happiness*Page in Source* 138*Our classification* Rating of happiness by parents, code H8.2.1*Operationalization* Rating by parents in response to single question:

Overall how does your child usually feel?

1 sad face

2

3

4

5

6

7 happy face

Seven faces presented ranging from sad to happy, without verbal or numerical labels

Observed distribution **M= 5,74, SD= 0.77***Remarks* Assessed 10 days before children rated their happiness**Observed Relation with Happiness***Happiness Measure* *Statistics* *Elaboration/Remarks***A-AOL-g-sq-f-7-a** **r=+.35** **p<.05** Child's self rating of happiness on the same scale