

Heiti á speciali

Questions the principles and understanding of happiness dominating today's society

Abstract

According to Economic Co-operation and Development (2014) Denmark is the 4th happiest country in the world. Some might even say that happiness has become a Danish brand. Meanwhile a growing number of books and articles concerning how to live a happy life are being published. This has made the author question the principles and understanding of happiness dominating today's society. The focus of this thesis is two folded. First it aims to understand and outline the current and cited literature concerning happiness, and secondly it aims to study how two individuals who live with psychiatric diagnoses' perceive happiness in their lives.

Some of the current and cited literature concerning happiness was explored in relation to Jürgen Habermas' Knowledge and Human Interests. Hence, the theoretical fundament of this thesis is based on a naturalistic, humanistic and emancipatory interest. In order to explore how individuals living with psychiatric diagnoses experience happiness a qualitative interview study was conducted. Based on a phenomenological approach both individuals were interviewed with a semiconstructed interview-guide. The semi-constructed interview-guide was centred on an understanding of the current and cited literature. The data was analysed based on a phenomenological and hermeneutic approach. The interview findings showed that themes that were identified as relating to the informants happiness were economics, social relations, values such as future ambitions, stigma and the psychiatric diagnoses they live with. Based on a further scientific reflection of the findings the themes were grouped into general and specific conditions for happiness.

Thus, the drawn conclusion is that general themes identified as recognizable in most situations are economics, social relations and values. Economics has significance to happiness where it covers the basic human needs. Social relations also have an impact on happiness where it allows a feeling of social security and personal development. In addition, social relations have an impact on happiness in proportion to the amount of joyful moments with significant others. Personal values such as positive future scenarios and hope also showed to have an impact on the informants' happiness.

Based on the findings the drawn conclusion is furthermore that specific conditions for happiness rely on the informants' specific situation, meaning that the condition is not recognizable in other situations. These themes are stigma in relation to psychiatric diagnoses and the psychiatric diagnoses the informants are living with. Stigma described as predetermined discourses showed to

affect the informants' happiness. Depending on the situation, the presence of predetermined discourses decreased the experience of happiness, whereas the absence of predetermined discourses enhanced the experience happiness. Furthermore, the psychiatric diagnoses the informants live with showed to only affect their short-term happiness, why they still experience long-term happiness. The possibility of experiencing happiness, despite psychological diagnoses, was also explained as the hereditary thermostat the informants have either dragging them up or down after resistance or success. Furthermore, it was explained in relation to the cognitive associations the informants have in varying situations, and in relation to whether they adapt to their circumstances.

Lastly, the main and paradoxical conclusion is that happiness is both relatively and absolute. This can create some ethical implications embracing whether or not psychologists should provide and publish information about how the individual can become or stay happy. The ethical implication is that the psychologist cannot know how the individual perceives or interprets the published information possibly resulting in negative outcomes such as feeling inadequacy. Therefore it is recommended that psychologists evaluate the consequences of making psychological knowledge into public knowledge. Furthermore it is recommended that there should be a focus on understanding different aspects of happiness other than positive ones.