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Initial Development and Validation of a Brief Scale to Measure Genuine Happiness in
the United States

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Autobiographical paragraph of the first author: I received my Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Basel, Switzerland, and I am currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Human Development and Family Science at Florida State University. My research interests include the evaluation of mindfulness- and compassion-based trainings, the study of mechanisms through which mindfulness and self-compassion are associated with mental health and well-being, and the development and validation of scales to measure lasting happiness.

Abstract

Genuine happiness can be described as an unlimited, everlasting inner joy and peace undisturbed by external circumstances. The current study proposes a Genuine Happiness Scale (GHS) with four items. The sample consisted of 678 U.S. young adults, with 432 completing the online surveys twice, approximately six weeks apart. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis provided evidence for a unidimensional factor structure of the GHS. Hierarchical regression analysis revealed that, after controlling for genuine happiness at baseline, caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion predicted genuine happiness approximately six weeks later. In addition, genuine happiness predicted later overall well-being after controlling for overall well-being at baseline.

Keywords: happiness, well-being, caring for bliss, mindfulness, compassion, Genuine Happiness Scale (GHS)

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“However differently we may express it, as living beings what we all have in common is a wish, at the very core of our hearts, to be happy.”

-Dalai Lama

Introduction

Human beings strive for happiness, something that scholars have tried to understand since ancient times (Choudry & Vinayachandra, 2015). Psychology has come to recognize the fundamental importance of happiness for health and longevity (e.g., Diener & Chan, 2011; Steptoe, 2019). For instance, compared to very happy people (i.e., people who are happy with how things are), the risk of death is 14 percent higher among people who are not happy, even after controlling for demographic, socioeconomic, and lifestyle-related factors (Lawrence et al., 2015).

Positive psychology has investigated happiness primarily from two distinct perspectives. One is the hedonic approach, which focuses on stimulus-driven pleasure attainment and pain avoidance and defines it as subjective well-being; the other perspective is the eudaimonic approach, which focuses on the actualization of the true self and defines it in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning (Delle Fave et al., 2011; Thorsteinsen & Vittersø, 2020). There are numerous terms associated with the eudaimonic approach, including “self-fulfillment, personal growth, flourishing, excellence, fully functioning, self-determination, self-actualization, and developing one’s true potentials” (Straume & Vittersø, 2012, p. 387), but they do not appear to capture the essence of the Buddhist view of *sukha*, which refers to a genuine or authentic-durable happiness (e.g., Cutz et al., 2015; Dambrun & Ricard, 2011; Ricard,

2014; Wallace, 2005). This article provides a description of genuine happiness and introduces a new scale to measure it.

The Buddhist view of happiness

Sukha can be described as “a state of flourishing that arises from mental balance and insight into the nature of reality” (Ekman et al., 2005, p. 60). *Sukha* is further described as “an optimal way of being, a state of durable plenitude based on a quality of consciousness that [...] allows us to embrace all the joys and the pain with which we are confronted” (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011, p. 139). Plenitude, bliss, peace of mind, inner peace, or fulfillment are conceived of as indicators of genuine happiness (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011). *Sukha* therefore comes from an exceptionally healthy state of mind that manifests itself when a person has freed oneself of afflictive emotions, such as hatred and compulsive desires and through the eradication of ignorance of our inherent potential for happiness (Ekman et al., 2005).

As influential external conditions may be, Buddhism assumes that it is the mind that translates circumstances into happiness or misery (Choudry & Vinayachandra, 2015; Ricard, 2011). That is, unlike pleasure, *sukha* is not contingent upon specific times, places, and circumstances (Cutz et al., 2015), and, therefore, gives a person the resources to deal with the ups and downs of life (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011). Based on these descriptions, we define genuine happiness as an unlimited, everlasting inner joy and peace that is undisturbed by external circumstances and that gives a person the inner resources to deal with whatever comes his or her way in life. This does not mean, however, that we will never be sad or anxious or that we should suppress such feelings, but rather that we can maintain an inner joy and peace deep within us, no matter what

the external circumstances might be. Genuine happiness thus describes a sense of fulfilment associated with inner freedom (Ricard, 2015).

According to Buddhism, *sukha* can be achieved by sustained training in mindfulness and compassion (Ekman et al., 2005; Ricard, 2011). Monastics typically follow this path in a very disciplined way, but lay people can also integrate mindfulness and compassion practices in their life. In practicing mindfulness, people learn to release their regrets about the past and their worries about the future by bringing their awareness to the present moment in a non-judgmental, open-hearted, and accepting way (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In addition, compassion, which is the capacity of being moved by another person's suffering and wanting to help (Lazarus, 1991; Sprecher & Fehr, 2005), is assumed to lead to a sense of transpersonal harmony that is intimately linked to authentic-durable happiness (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011; Ricard, 2011).

Relatedly, Rudaz et al. (2020) describe active practices or behaviors to cultivate genuine happiness, which they subsume under the term caring for bliss. They refer to practices designed to generate feelings of happiness in the here and now, a search for lasting happiness inside oneself, appreciating what one has, and following the deepest desires of one's heart.

Relation to self-centeredness, selflessness, and daily spiritual experiences

Dambrun and Ricard (2011) propose that selflessness and self-centeredness are two distinct aspects of psychological functioning that are linked to happiness. Specifically, they assume that self-centeredness is based on the perception of the self as being separate from others. It is therefore accompanied by an exaggerated importance given to the self and tends to lead to engagement in maximizing pleasure and avoiding

displeasure (hedonic principle) resulting in fluctuating happiness. In contrast, selflessness refers to the perception of the self as being interdependent with others and the environment. Thus, it tends to lead to engagement in pro-social behaviors and an optimal adaptation to outer circumstances (harmonic principle) resulting in authentic-durable happiness. Another concept that relates to genuine happiness is that of daily spiritual experiences. Underwood and Teresi (2002) describe daily spiritual experiences as “mundane” or ordinary spiritual experiences of the transcendent, a connection with other people, or a connection with nature. Like selflessness, the concept of daily spiritual experiences emphasizes interconnectedness with people and other living beings in one’s environment.

Happiness Measures

Many scales assessing happiness and well-being have been developed such as the World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5; WHO Collaborating Center for Mental Health, 1998) or the Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010), but to the best of our knowledge there is only one scale that directly refers to *sukha*: The Subjective Authentic-Durable Happiness Scale (SA-DHS; Dambrun et al., 2012). In line with their happiness model, Dambrun et al. (2012) found that authentic-durable happiness was positively related to self-transcendence values (i.e., universalism and benevolence), but not to self-enhancement values (i.e., power and achievement). In addition, they found positive correlations with mindfulness and perceived resiliency and negative correlations with depression and psychological distress. Although this scale assesses the regular level of durable contentment and inner peace by letting people rate words, such as “overall well-being”, “bliss”, “peace of mind”, there is a need for a measure that assesses genuine happiness as an unlimited, everlasting inner joy and

peace that is undisturbed by external circumstances. The independence from external circumstances is key to genuine happiness and must be measured as such to obtain valid information about a person's genuine happiness as a way of being in the midst of ordinary daily life and when facing life adversities.

The Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to develop and validate an economical measure of genuine happiness, which we call the Genuine Happiness Scale (GHS). Another aim was to examine whether caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion predict genuine happiness and whether genuine happiness predicts later well-being. Caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion were chosen as predictor variables because they can be cultivated and, according to Buddhism, should lead to genuine happiness. Three sets of assumptions were tested. First, we assumed that genuine happiness represents a single underlying construct that can be measured by a set of three to five items (Kline, 2000), shows acceptable reliability (internal consistency and test-retest reliability), and yields metric invariance across time. Second, we assumed that genuine happiness correlates positively with authentic-durable happiness, daily spiritual experiences, well-being, flourishing, caring for bliss, mindfulness, compassion, resilience, and self-transcendence values and negatively with depression, anxiety, stress, and self-enhancement values. Finally, we hypothesized that caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion will account for a significant amount of variance in genuine happiness concurrently and longitudinally and that genuine happiness will predict well-being longitudinally.

Method

Participants

Participants were young adults recruited from undergraduate courses that satisfied a university-wide liberal study requirement at Florida State University. Those who completed one or more of the three control questions (e.g., “This is a control question assessing random responding, please answer Strongly Agree”) at time 1 incorrectly were excluded from the analyses. Also, those who had incomplete responses on the genuine happiness items at time 1 were excluded, leaving a sample of 678. Participants’ mean age was 20.23 years ($SD = 2.32$; range 18-54). Among the 678 participants, 610 (90.0%) were female, 66 (9.7%) were male, and 2 (0.3%) were other. Regarding racial background, 64.2% identified as White or Caucasian or European American, 17.1% as Latino or Hispanic, 9.4% as African American or Black, 5.2% as Asian or Pacific Islander, 0.4% as Middle Eastern, 0.3% as American Indian or Native American or Alaska Native, 2.5% as other, and 0.9% preferred not to say. The online survey from which the present data come was administered as part of a larger study to examine mental, physical, spiritual, and relational well-being and took approximately 60 min to complete. It was one of multiple ways to earn a small amount of extra course credit. Some students filled out the survey at two time points, approximately 6 weeks apart. Again, those who completed one or more of the three control questions incorrectly at time 2 were excluded from the analyses resulting in a sample size of 432. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the local Institutional Review Board and all participants gave their informed consent.

Item Development

Following the two steps for item development described by Koenig and Al Zaben (2021), the first author generated a pool of 19 items based on the concept of genuine happiness in Buddhism and then collected feedback from the co-authors and

two other researchers. Specifically, after introducing the concept intended to be measured, the first author asked for feedback on the comprehensibility and clarity of each item. Based on the feedback, the first author changed the wording of some items. All items were positively worded and study participants were instructed to indicate how often they experience each of these statements on a 5-point rating scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (regularly).

Measures

In addition to genuine happiness, several other measures were administered to document its nomological network. These include authentic-durable happiness, daily spiritual experiences, well-being, flourishing, caring for bliss, mindfulness, compassion, self-transcendence and self-enhancement values, resilience, stress, and mental health.

Authentic-durable happiness. The 13-item Subjective Authentic-Durable Happiness Scale (SA-DHS; Dambrun et al., 2012) assesses the regular level of durable contentment and plenitude or inner peace. Participants were asked to indicate their regular level of happiness (e.g., “overall well-being”, “bliss”, “peace of mind”) in their lives on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (very low) to 7 (very high). A mean score was calculated with higher scores indicating higher levels of authentic-durable happiness (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .98$).

Daily Spiritual Experiences. The 5-item Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale from the Midlife in the United States study (MIDUS-II; Ryff et al., 2017) was used to assess ordinary or “mundane” spiritual experiences regardless of a person’s religious or non-religious orientation. Items from the original 16-item Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale (DSES; Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging Working Group, 1999; Underwood, 2006; Underwood & Teresi, 2002) referring to “God,” “religion,” “creation,” and

“blessings” were excluded. The aim of the original version to measure ordinary spiritual experiences as opposed to mystical experiences (e.g., near death experiences, hearing voices) remained unchanged. The final items were: “A feeling of deep inner peace or harmony,” “A feeling of being deeply moved by the beauty of life,” “A feeling of strong connection to all of life,” “A sense of deep appreciation,” and “A profound sense of caring for others.” The participants were asked to indicate how often they have those experiences, on a daily basis, on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (often) to 4 (never). All items were reverse-coded and then summed up so that higher scores indicated more daily spiritual experiences (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$). The MIDUS version has shown good reliabilities (e.g., Einolf, 2013; Greenfield et al., 2009; Rudaz et al., 2019).

Well-being. The 5-item World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5; WHO Collaborating Center for Mental Health, 1998) was used to measure overall well-being. Participants were asked to indicate for each statement (e.g., “I have felt cheerful and in good spirits”) how they felt over the past two weeks using a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time). A sum score was calculated with higher scores indicating higher levels of well-being (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$).

Flourishing. The Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010) measures social-psychological prosperity, including aspects of human functioning, such as self-perceived success in relationships, feelings of competence, and meaning and purpose in life. The 8 items (e.g., “I lead a purposeful and meaningful life”) are scored on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A summed score was calculated with higher scores indicating higher levels of flourishing (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .96$).

Caring for Bliss. The Caring for Bliss Scale (CBS; Rudaz et al., 2020) measures the cultivation of inner joy or genuine happiness. The 4 items (e.g., “I search for lasting happiness inside myself, rather than outside of myself”) were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (regularly). A mean score was calculated with higher scores indicating higher levels of caring for bliss (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$).

Mindfulness. The 14-item Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI; Walach et al., 2006) was used to measure trait mindfulness. Items (e.g., “I watch my feelings without getting lost in them”) were rated over the past two weeks on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (rarely) to 4 (almost always). As suggested by Sauer et al. (2013), the one item that was reverse coded (“I am impatient with myself and with others”) was excluded and then all items were summed up so that higher scores indicated higher levels of mindfulness (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .93$).

Compassion. The 5-item Santa Clara Brief Compassion Scale (SCBCS; Hwang, Plante, & Lackey, 2008) measures compassion or altruistic love towards non-intimate others, including strangers. The items (e.g., “I tend to feel compassion for people, even though I do not know them”) were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 7 (very true of me). A mean score was calculated with higher scores indicating higher levels of compassion (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$).

Self-Transcendence and Self-Enhancement Values. Self-transcendence values (i.e., universalism and benevolence) and self-enhancement values (i.e., power and achievement) were measured with 9 items of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-21; Schwartz, 2003). Participants were asked to respond how much each statement resonates with them on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (very much like me) to 6 (not at all like me). Example items are: “It’s very important to me to help the people around

me. I want to care for other people” (self-transcendence) and “It is important to me to be rich. I want to have a lot of money and expensive things” (self-enhancement). A mean score was calculated for the self-transcendence and self-enhancement values separately with higher values indicating higher levels of self-transcendence and self-enhancement values, respectively (Cronbach’s alphas were .97 for self-transcendence values and .80 for self-enhancement values).

Resilience. The 6-item Brief Resilience Scale (BRS; Smith et al., 2008) assesses the ability to bounce back or recover from stress. Items (e.g., “It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event”) were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A mean score was calculated with higher scores indicating higher levels of resilience (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .80$).

Stress and Mental Health. The 21-item Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) was administered, which gives information about the three related negative emotional states of depression (e.g., “I couldn’t seem to experience any positive feeling at all”), anxiety (e.g., “I felt I was close to panic”), and stress (e.g., “I found it hard to wind down”). Items were rated over the past week on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (did not apply to me at all) to 3 (applied to me very much, or most of the time). All items were summed up with higher scores indicating higher levels of depression, anxiety, or stress (Cronbach’s alphas were .91 for depression, .86 for anxiety, and .86 for stress).

Analytical Plan

The statistical analyses focus on the selection of the final items for the Genuine Happiness Scale, measurement properties, and the prediction of genuine happiness and well-being. Three main steps were performed to select the final items for the Genuine

Happiness Scale. In a first step, those items that deviated from the normal distribution as indicated by skewness and kurtosis were excluded. Data can be considered as normal if skewness is between -2 and +2 and kurtosis between -7 and +7 (Hair et al., 2010).

For the next two steps, the sample was randomly split in two halves to perform an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with one of the halves and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with the other half (Koenig & Al Zaben, 2021). For the second step, the items selected in the first step were entered into an EFA extracting a single factor using maximum likelihood (ML) estimation method. In the event of there being more than five items that showed substantial factor loadings, the number of the items was reduced based on their face validity as gauged by the first and second authors. In the third step, a CFA was conducted to test the hypothesis of a unidimensional scale for genuine happiness meaning that all items of step two load on one underlying latent factor representing genuine happiness. The software package lavaan (Rosseel, 2012) in R (R Core Team, 2020) and full information maximum likelihood (FIML) were used to run the CFA. The model fit of the CFA was assessed based on the following fit indices and criteria: comparative fit index $CFI \geq .95$, root mean square error of approximation $RMSEA \leq .06$, and standardized root mean square residual $SRMR \leq .08$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999). After a good-fitting CFA model was found, Cronbach's α and coefficient omega were calculated. Measurement invariance across time was tested using three nested models (Meredith, 1993): The configural invariance model (i.e., invariant item-factor structure across time), the metric invariance model (i.e., invariant factor loadings across time), and scalar invariance (i.e., invariant factor loadings and intercepts across time).

Once the final items were selected, Pearson correlations were used to assess the concurrent validity of genuine happiness with authentic-durable happiness, daily

spiritual experiences, well-being, and flourishing. Divergent validity was assessed for caring for bliss, mindfulness, compassion, self-transcendence and self-enhancement values, resilience, depression, anxiety, and stress. Based on Cohen's classification (1988), correlations were interpreted as follows: Between .10 and < .30 as small in size, between .30 and < .50 as medium, and equal or bigger than .50 as large. Finally, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis in R was used to assess whether caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion predicted genuine happiness concurrently and longitudinally. Specifically, three hierarchical models were tested. The first two models used caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion at time 1 as predictor variables of genuine happiness at time 1 (model 1) and time 2 (model 2), with genuine happiness at time 1 as a control variable. The third model used genuine happiness at time 1 as a predictor of well-being at time 2, with well-being at time 1 as control variable.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Preliminary analysis showed that skewness and kurtosis were between -1 and 1 for all 19 items, indicating no deviation from normality. Entering all items into the EFA using one-half of the sample, the standardized factor loadings ranged from .58 to .82. Since all items showed substantial factor loadings, items were dropped based on conceptual considerations. First, eight items beginning with "I feel an urge" and referring to alleviating sorrow and suffering in the world were excluded because they focused more on the natural consequences of genuine happiness rather than the core aspect of the genuine happiness concept that refers to an inner joy or peace that is independent of external circumstances. Of the remaining eleven items, those that did not explicitly emphasize this independence of external circumstances were excluded as

well, leaving six items. Of these, two pairs of items each overlapped in content, and therefore the first and second author selected the two items that they judged to have better wording. The four final items are shown in Table 1 along with the corresponding means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis for the total sample.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The four final items were entered into a CFA using the other half of the sample (the one that was not used for the EFA) to examine the underlying factor structure and to test measurement invariance across the two time points. Results from the CFA support the notion that caring for bliss has a unidimensional structure: $\chi^2(2) = 0.290$, $p = 0.865$; CFI = 1.000; RMSEA < .001 (90% CI = [.000,.056]); and SRMR = .003. Standardized factor loadings ranged from .75 to .91 and can be viewed in Table 1. The scale showed good internal consistency with a Cronbach's α of .91 and an omega of .92 for the total sample.

The results of the measurement invariance analysis are shown in Table 2. The test for configural invariance indicated that the factor structure is invariant across time. Adequate model fit was also found for metric and scalar invariance, indicating that the observed variables were related to the latent variable equivalently across time and that the intercepts of the items did not change significantly over time. The model implying residual variance invariance was consistent with the data according to the RMSEA, CFI, and SRMR, but the chi-square statistic indicates that residual variance invariance did not hold across time. In the model with scalar invariance, the correlation between the latent variables was .68 corresponding to an overlap of 46%, which can be considered as test-retest reliability. Calculating a composite score, the correlation between genuine happiness at time 1 and time 2 was .65, which equates to an overlap of 42%.

Concurrent Validity

Table 3 presents the product-moment correlations among the study variables as well as their descriptive statistics. A mean score was calculated for genuine happiness with higher scores indicating higher levels of genuine happiness. The correlations between genuine happiness with authentic-durable happiness, daily spiritual experiences, well-being, and flourishing were all positive and ranged between medium and large in size. As expected, the largest correlation was found between genuine happiness and authentic-durable happiness. The overlap was 41%, indicating that genuine happiness and authentic-durable happiness measure different aspects of *sukha*. Also, the correlations with caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion were all positive and ranged between medium and large in size. A small correlation was found between genuine happiness and resilience. As expected, negative correlations emerged between genuine happiness and depression, anxiety and stress. These correlations ranged between small and medium in size. Contrary to our expectations, no correlations were found between genuine happiness and self-transcendence and self-enhancement values, respectively.

Prediction of Genuine Happiness and Well-being

The results of the hierarchical regression models are provided in Table 4. In the first two models, the concurrent and longitudinal model, greater caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion were associated with greater genuine happiness. All predictors were statistically significant, revealing that the greater caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion, the greater the genuine happiness. The total explained variance was 48% for model 1 and 49% for model 2. For model 2, the variance explained by caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion above and beyond genuine

happiness at time 1 was 7%. In the third model, greater genuine happiness at time 1 was associated with significantly greater well-being at time 2. The total explained variance was 44% and the variance explained by genuine happiness above and beyond well-being at time 1 was 2%.

Discussion

Happiness is expected to yield to numerous important outcomes, including health and longevity (e.g., Diener & Chan, 2011; Lawrence et al., 2015; Steptoe, 2019). The Buddhist term *sukha* (e.g., Cutz et al., 2015; Dambrun & Ricard, 2011; Ekman et al., 2005; Ricard, 2014; Wallace, 2005) refers to a genuine or authentic-durable happiness, which, unlike pleasure, is not contingent upon external circumstances and therefore gives a person the inner resources to deal with the ups and downs of life. Although there is a scale that measures *sukha* in terms of regular levels of durable contentment and inner peace, namely the Subjective Authentic-Durable Happiness Scale (SA-DHS; Dambrun et al., 2012), there is no measure that assesses *sukha* as an unlimited, everlasting inner joy or peace that is undisturbed by external circumstances. The current study provides initial psychometric support for a new measure, the Genuine Happiness Scale, designed to assess genuine happiness, which can be described as inner joy and peace independent of external circumstances or *sukha* in Buddhism.

The present study provided support for a unidimensional factor structure of the Genuine Happiness Scale in young adults. In addition, evidence was found for metric and scalar invariance across time. The results showed that the scale correlated positively with authentic-durable happiness, and related constructs such as daily spiritual experiences, well-being, and flourishing thereby providing evidence for convergent validity. Although the correlation with authentic-durable happiness was, as expected,

the strongest, the overlap was just over 40 percent indicating that the two scales measure different aspects of *sukha*. In addition, a positive correlation emerged between genuine happiness and resilience and negative correlations between genuine happiness and depression, anxiety, and stress. In contrast, the correlations found between genuine happiness and self-transcendence and self-enhancement values were negligible. Results also showed no correlations between authentic-durable happiness and self-transcendence and self-enhancement values. These results are partially at odds with previous findings that showed that authentic-durable happiness was positively related to self-transcendence values, but not to self-enhancement values (Dambrun et al., 2012). These conflicting results may be due to the fact that the samples in the two studies were different, one involving a regional community sample and the other a university student sample. Furthermore, results from regression analysis indicated that greater caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion predicted greater genuine happiness cross-sectionally and longitudinally about six weeks later, controlling for genuine happiness at baseline. These findings support the Buddhist notion that genuine happiness can be attained through sustained practice of mindfulness and compassion and, as hypothesized by Rudaz et al. (2020), through caring for bliss. Moreover, genuine happiness predicted overall well-being about six weeks later, controlling for well-being at baseline.

Study Limitations

Major strengths of the present study are the development of a new scale for measuring genuine happiness (*sukha*) as inner joy or peace that is undisturbed by external circumstances and the demonstration that caring for bliss, mindfulness, and compassion predicted genuine happiness cross-sectionally and longitudinally. Yet, some limitations must be considered. The sample consisted of college-attending adults with

an average age of 20 years that were predominantly white and female thereby limiting the generalization of the results to other groups. The psychometric properties of the scale should therefore be further examined among more diverse participants, including groups consisting of more males, different age groups, and ethnicities. Regarding diversity, future studies could also examine whether practicing Buddhists or mindfulness practitioners differ on their level of genuine happiness from non-Buddhists or non-mindfulness practitioners or people who practice other religions or no religion at all. Since the concept of genuine happiness comes from Buddhism it is expected that the level of genuine happiness would be high in Buddhist or mindfulness practitioners. Indeed, several studies found support that mindfulness and compassion foster happiness (e.g., Campos, 2016; Choi et al., 2012; Coo & Salanova, 2018; Hollis-Walker & Colosimo, 2011; Mongrain et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is important to note, that in the present study only a subset of existing measures assessing happiness or well-being were included in order to keep the subject burden low. Future studies may want to expand on this by investigating the relationship between genuine happiness and different aspects of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. In a similar vein, future studies should incorporate different spirituality measures that go beyond daily spiritual experiences, such as spiritual openness, spiritual support, and spiritual well-being (e.g., Eyer, 2018; Monod et al., 2011; Peterman et al., 2002). Finally, all measures relied on self-report and future studies are needed that use a multimethod approach with self-report, interview, and observational data.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study provides a novel scale to measure genuine happiness as an unlimited, everlasting inner joy and peace that is undisturbed by

external circumstances. It is the first scale that assesses the core aspect of the independence of genuine happiness (*sukha*) from outer circumstances as defined in Buddhism. It is expected that this scale will contribute to a better understanding of genuine happiness and its impact on important health outcomes. Further, the scale has the potential to make a valuable contribution as a social indicator of community functioning, and to intervention research evaluating mindfulness and compassion trainings designed to help people become more resilient and live a happy life.

Statements and Declarations

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Table 1

Means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, and standardized factor loadings for genuine happiness items

Item		Total sample ^a				One half of the sample ^b
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	skew.	kurt.	<i>stand. load.</i>
1	I experience an inner joy, no matter what the external circumstances are.	2.26	1.06	-0.17	-0.52	.86
2	Deep within me I retain an inner peace, regardless of the external circumstances.	2.22	1.05	-0.14	-0.42	.90
3	When I am going through difficult times, I can relate to a sense of inner peace.	2.32	1.05	-0.24	-0.44	.91
4	When I am going through difficult times, I feel guided by the wisdom of my heart.	2.42	1.02	-0.27	-0.32	.75

Note. skew. = skewness, kurt. = kurtosis.

^a*n* = 678, ^b*n* = 339

Table 2*Model fit indices for measurement invariance across time*

Invariance	<i>df</i>	χ^2	<i>p</i>	CFI	RMSEA	90% CI RMSEA	SRMR	Δdf	$\Delta\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
Configural invariance	15	26.054	.037*	.997	.034	[.008, .055]	.021	-	-	-
Metric invariance	18	28.390	.056	.997	.030	[.000, .050]	.024	3	2.336	.506
Scalar invariance	21	29.719	.098	.998	.025	[.000, .045]	.024	3	1.329	.722
Residual variance invariance	24	40.376	.019	.996	.032	[.013, .049]	.025	3	10.658	.014

Note. CFI = Comparative Fit Index. RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation. CI = Confidence Interval. SRMR = Standardized

Root Mean Square Residual. ^a*n* = 653.

**p* < .05 (2-tailed).

Table 3

Correlations, means, standard deviations, and empirical ranges for the study variables (n = 678)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Genuine happiness	-													
2. Authentic-durable happiness	.64***	-												
3. Daily spiritual experiences	.56***	.52***	-											
4. Well-being	.51***	.71***	.42***	-										
5. Flourishing	.45***	.54***	.41***	.46***	-									
6. Caring for bliss	.54***	.59***	.49***	.54***	.48***	-								
7. Mindfulness	.64***	.65***	.44***	.54***	.49***	.53***	-							
8. Compassion	.36***	.28***	.32***	.15***	.44***	.34***	.36***	-						
9. Self-transcendence values	.09*	.08*	.18***	.03	.16***	.12**	.06	.22***	-					
10. Self-enhancement values	.07	.04	.08*	.03	-.02	.01	.02	-.03	.40***	-				
11. Resilience	.28***	.35***	.22***	.34***	.27***	.22***	.33***	-.01	.06	.06	-			
12. Depression	-.35***	-.57***	-.37***	-.64***	-.40***	-.44***	-.40***	-.08*	-.05	-.02	-.32***	-		
13. Anxiety	-.19***	-.38***	-.18***	-.44***	-.28***	-.26***	-.26***	-.02	-.05	-.03	-.27***	.70***	-	
14. Stress	-.27***	-.45***	-.22***	-.52***	-.27***	-.32***	-.35***	-.05	-.07	.00	-.35***	.76***	.76***	-
<i>M</i>	2.30	5.00	15.54	14.45	43.65	2.82	35.75	5.35	4.50	3.84	3.18	4.65	4.11	6.17
<i>SD</i>	0.93	1.27	3.27	5.51	9.10	0.75	7.99	1.31	1.55	1.13	0.64	4.54	4.19	4.43
Empirical Range	0-4	1-7	5-20	0-25	8-56	0-4	13-52	1-7	1-6	1-6	1.2-5	0-21	0-21	0-21

Note. Possible ranges: 0-4 for genuine happiness, 1-7 for authentic-durable happiness, 4-20 for daily spiritual experiences, 0-25 for well-being, 8-56 for

flourishing, 0-4 for caring for bliss, 13-52 for mindfulness, 1-7 for compassion, 1-6 for self-transcendence values, 1-6 for self-enhancement values, 1-5 for

resilience, 0-21 for depression, 0-21 for anxiety, and 0-21 for stress.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed).

Table 4*Results of hierarchical regression analyses concurrently and longitudinally*

Predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	R^2	ΔR^2	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i> ₂
Outcome: Genuine Happiness T1 ^a				.48		204.70***	671
Caring for bliss	0.32***	0.04	.26				
Mindfulness	0.05***	0.00	.47				
Compassion	0.07***	0.02	.10				
Intercept	-0.93***	0.14	.00				
Outcome: Genuine Happiness T2 ^b				.49		103.60***	427
Step 1							
Genuine happiness	0.43***	0.05	.40				
Step 2					.07	321.00***	430
Caring for bliss	0.23***	0.06	.17				
Mindfulness	0.02***	0.01	.17				
Compassion	0.08**	0.03	.11				
Intercept	-0.37	0.20	-.02				
Outcome: Well-being T2				.44		165.5***	429
Step 1							
Well-being	0.58***	0.04	.57				
Step 2					.02	307.8***	430
Genuine happiness	0.94***	0.25	.15				
Intercept	3.84***	0.64	-.02				

Note. ^a*n* = 678. ^b*n* = 432. T1 = time 1. T2 = time 2.

p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001 (2-tailed).