



A Study on Psychological Flow and its Relationship with Happiness among Young Writers

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Abstract: “Being in that zone” has often been associated with elite sports or performances, but is it for other activities too that make the doer get immersed in the action without the worry of the fruit, was the question that led this study as well is it bringing happiness if it is studied on doers that are not related to elite activities only, like young writers specifically. Was the subjective reference of time taking a backseat even when the task was not just any elite performance and was it enough to transcend the doer into the Psychological Flow. Was it possible that holding a pen and writing down abstracts made them feel happy if Psychological Flow was taking over. There were numerous questions that laid the foundation of this research as we conducted this study on 100 young writers from different linguistic, cultural backgrounds from different parts of India and abroad. Our results indicate that among young writers (20-30 years old), Psychological Flow is significantly correlated to Happiness at ($r=0.354$, $p<0.1$) level of significance. This highlights the tendency of Psychological Flow to associate itself with Happiness and once the doer is immersed in this elite state, happiness is what drives the doer in autotelic state, when the task itself becomes the reward. The further suggestions would include using mechanisms to test the role of immediate feedback and its importance as a bridge between Psychological Flow and Happiness.

Keywords: *Psychological Flow, Happiness, Writers*

1. Introduction

As I have written, “Ink may dry, but words thrive.” It signifies the respect for the writers who created an impact by their words and those words made this world a better place.

Psychological Flow is regarded as the state of optimal human focus in which the background activities take backseat and the doer is lost in the act without the further worry of the end result or the reward, so when actions turn into the reward itself, the actions are pure as per the definition of Autotelic Personality which is highlighted by the doer's ability to get into the flow state more often, and the similar is the definition given by the rulebook of everyday human action in the Indian Philosophy known as the Bhagavad Gita, written anytime between 400-200 BC, tells that "If the actions are right, the doer will not look for the fruits elsewhere but only in doing the task itself" but the disclaimer of the interpretation is that the task must be right (worthy) and "it all depends on the intentions of the doer" as per the Vedanta school of Indian Philosophy.

The flow state was originally brought into the light of Positive Psychology by Csikszentmihalyi (1975), a Hungarian American psychologist in 1975. Csikszentmihalyi's research focused on optimal human experiences and how individuals can achieve a state of deep engagement and enjoyment during different activities. His theory of flow emerged from people who become deeply involved in activities like work, sports, and the arts, and how this involvement leads to a sense of fulfillment and peak performance.

The qualities of Flow State include intense focus, effortless involvement, and intrinsic enjoyment in an activity.

Conditions to enter flow state are basic and mandatory for the occurrence of this state, a person's skills match the challenge level of the task he/she must do, the challenge and skill both must be high with immediate feedback for the flow state to take place (Csikszentmihalyi,1990).

Characteristics

1. ***Focus:*** The doer is deeply concentrated in the activity, with all attention channelized towards the action, reducing awareness of the background and what is going all around the doer.
2. ***Goal Clarity:*** To experience flow state, the does must need to have a crystal-clear understanding of what is needed to be done or performed
3. ***Immediate Feedback:*** To keep the engagement ongoing, immediate feedback of the doer's actions is an important key component of the flow state.

4. ***Intrinsic Motivation:*** The activity itself becomes the reward. People in flow are not much bothered by rewards or external results, but by the satisfaction and fulfillment that comes while being in the moment and doing the task.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) stated the depth of human focus and absorption that defines the flow state experience. Flow is linked to high performance tasks and creativity. It can be experienced in a variety of situations, from high end tasks to even everyday tasks.

5. ***Flow Channel:*** Balance between challenge level and skill level, there are three sets that define boredom, anxiety and the flow channel depending on the high or low levels of challenge and skills.

Happiness is defined as “An emotion of joy, gladness, satisfaction, and well-being” (American Psychological Association, 2018).

Theories:

1. ***Set-Point Theory*** (of happiness) claims that people have a baseline or "set-point" standard for happiness, which is evaluated mostly by factors of genetics and traits of personality. Referring to the narrative of this theory, circumstances such as wealth, health, or marital status may temporarily affect happiness levels, but individuals normally come back to their levels (set levels). This theory suggests happiness is largely stable and that long-term changes in happiness are relatively rare according to this perspective (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996).
2. ***Self Determination (SDT):*** This theory puts light on intrinsic variation of motivation and the needs (psychological in nature) which contribute to the well-being of an individual. The theory posits that happiness is best achieved when three fundamental psychological needs are satisfied: autonomy (the ability to make choices and control one's environment), competence (the ability to effectively perform tasks), and relatedness (having close, supportive relationships). If the given needs would be fulfilled, a person would experience higher levels of well-being with long-term happiness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).
3. ***The PERMA Profiler:*** Developed in 2011, is an elaborated framework for understanding well-being and happiness. This work consists of five major parts that are linked to a flourishing life of an individual. P- Positive Emotions, E- Engagement, R- Relationships, M- Meaning, A- Achievement (Seligman, 2011).

4. **Psychological Well-being Theory:** Carol Ryff created a system to understand well-being that claims six key components that involve in a person's sum of fulfillment happiness and Self-acceptance: An optimistic and positive attitude for self. Personal growth: Continuous development of the self. Purpose in life: A search and sense of higher goal. Environmental mastery: To manage the surrounding environment with ease. Autonomy: Taking independent and strong decisions in life. Positive relationships (beyond self and with social world): Strong, supportive social connections with others (Ryff, 1989).

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to study the relationship between flow state and happiness among computer science engineers.

1.2 Hypothesis

It is expected that Psychological Flow will be related to Happiness.

2. Methodology

2.1 Samples

This study sampled 100 female and male writers aged between 20-30 years, from different geographical locations of Northern Indian States of Punjab, Chandigarh (Union Territory), Eastern and Central Uttar Pradesh and Non-residential Indians residing in Canada and Middle Eastern Countries. The sampling was done on hybrid mode, which includes both offline and online forms (traditional printed paper and google form).

2.2 Measures

Psychological Flow Scale (PFS): This scale is developed by Norsworthy et al. (2024) and designed to measure Psychological Flow during an activity. The measuring in this questionnaire comprises total 9 items in three dimensions or sub-scales of psychological flow named as (Absorption, Effortless Control and Intrinsic Rewards), these sub-scales are divided based on items. Scoring is done on a Likert Scale of (1-7), in which 1 denotes Strongly Disagree and 7 denotes Strongly Agree. The scale reflects a range of scores from 9 to 63. There is no reverse scoring in this scale, and all the items are summative, the scores of all the items must be added to get the total score. Reliability and Validity- Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.88$.

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short Form (OHQ-SF): This scale is developed by Hills and Argyle (2002) and designed to measure happiness. This questionnaire consists of 8 items and reverse scored items are (1,4 and 8) while the summative items are (2, 3, 5, 6 and 7). The scores of all the items must be added to get the total score. Scoring is done on a Likert Scale of (1-6), in which 1 denotes Strongly Disagree and 6 denotes Strongly Agree. Reliability and Validity- Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.72$.

2.3 Procedure

The study commenced with a review of the literature on the selected variables, followed by the collection of tools for data collection for all the variables. Hypotheses were formulated and expected outcomes were identified. The study's purpose was briefly explained to the participants, and any questions they had regarding the questionnaire were addressed. Data was collected after providing the participants with instructions. Before completing the questionnaire, informed consent was obtained by signature from the participants, and those who declined were thanked for their interest.

Demographic information such as name, age, gender, region (state), writer type, writing since, source of inspiration for writing, preferred language of writing (including bilingual), mother tongue of the participant and source of finance were added in this study. Participants were asked to fill out the necessary scales in the study. Once the responses were collected, participants were thanked for their valuable time, followed by the evaluation of collected raw data via standardized tools and further interpretation of results.

3. Analysis of Data

3.1 Results

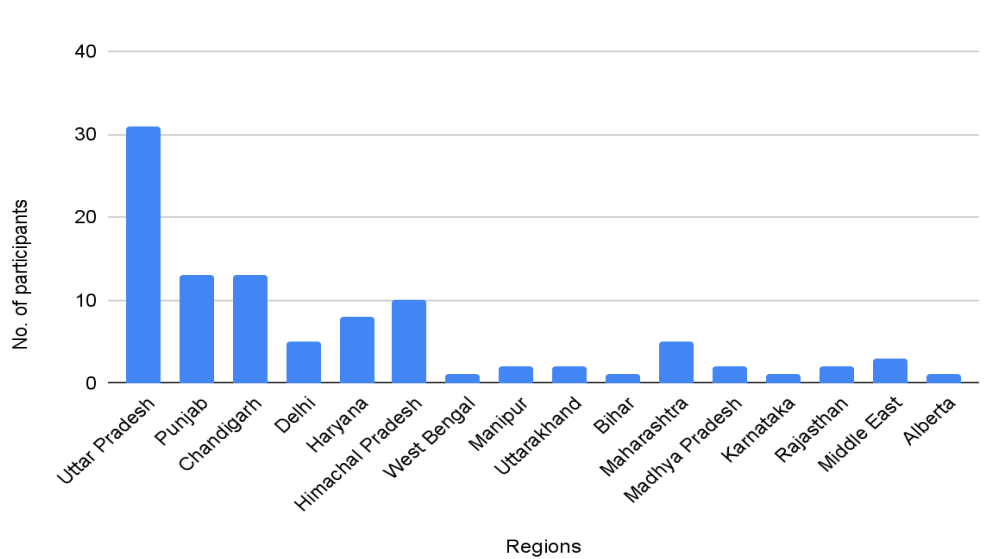


Figure 1. Showing regions from where the participants come from, total sample is 100.

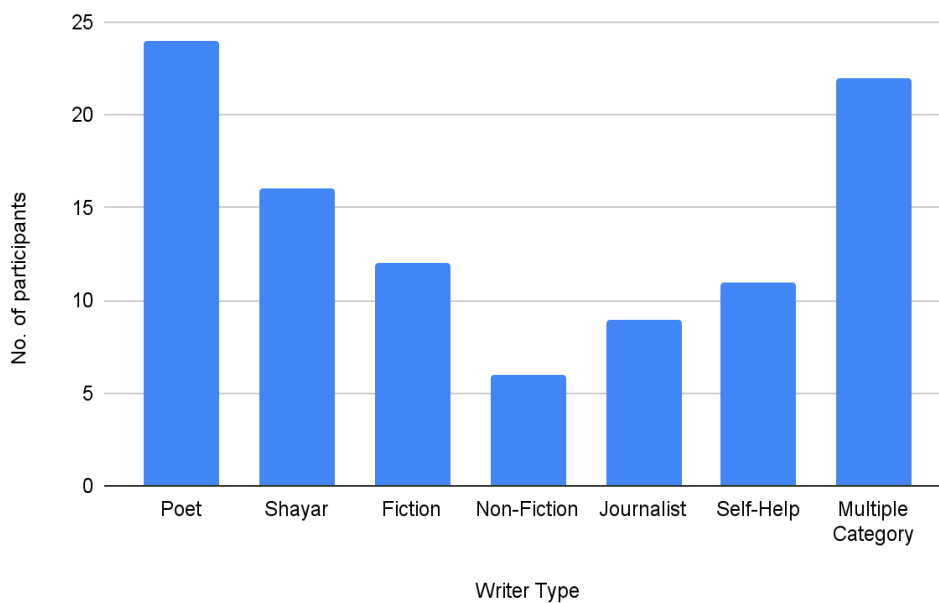


Figure 2. Showing writer type, total sample is 100.

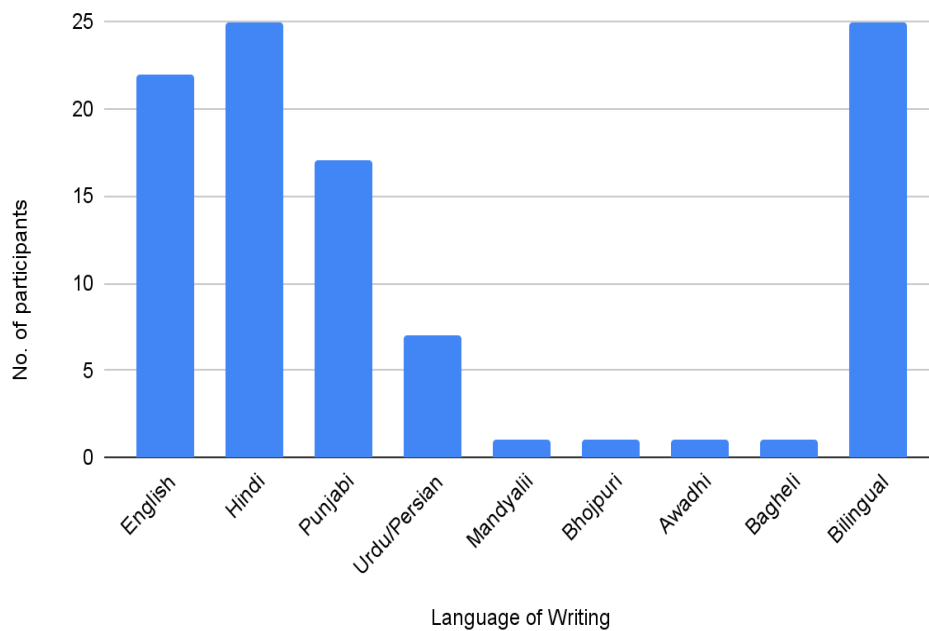


Figure 3. Showing Language of writing preferred by participants, total sample is 100.

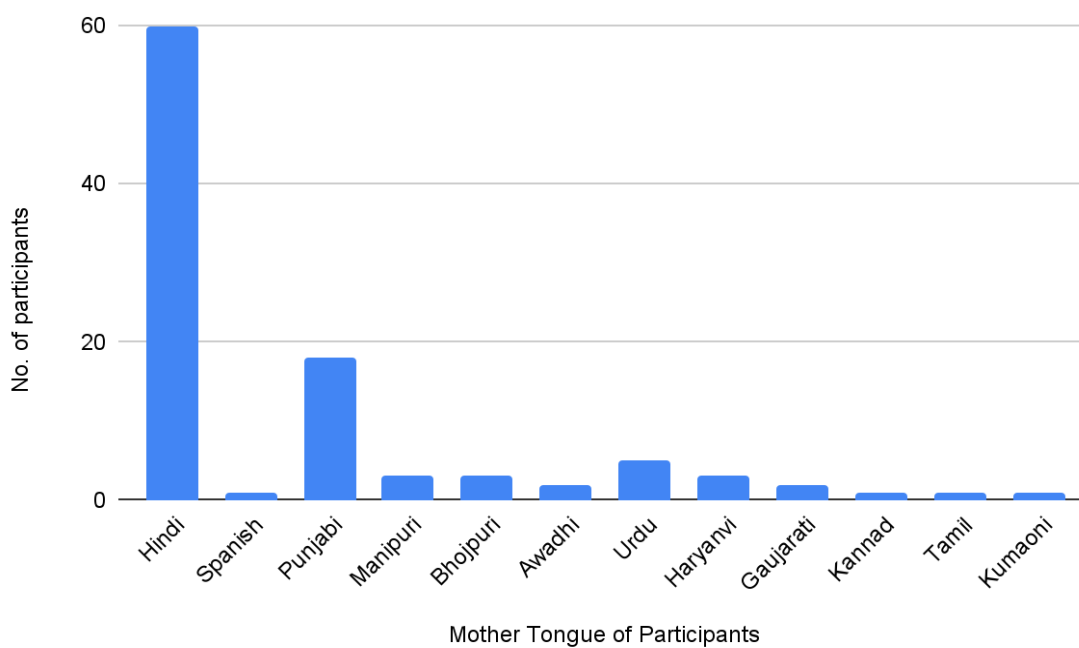


Figure 4. Showing the mother tongue of the participants, total sample is 100.

Table 1. *Descriptives (Mean and Standard Deviation)*

	Psy Flow	Happiness
Mean	48.1	34.1
Std. Deviation	9.15	6.49

Table 2. *Correlation Matrix*

	Psy Flow	Happiness
Psy Flow	-	
Happiness	0.354***	-

4. Discussion of Results

Our findings indicate that among young writers (20-30 years old), Psychological Flow is significantly correlated to Happiness at ($r=0.354$, $p<0.1$) level of significance.

This highlights the tendency of Psychological Flow to associate itself with Happiness and once the doer is immersed in this elite state, happiness is what drives the doer in autotelic state, when the task itself becomes the reward. The creator of flow himself states that “flow as a deeply engaging state that enhances subjective well-being” Csikszentmihalyi (1990).

Another study demonstrates that frequent experiences of flow are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness (Moneta, 2010). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, argues that engaging in intrinsically rewarding activities broadens cognitive and behavioral repertoires, ultimately enhancing well-being (Fredrickson, 2001). The selfless nature of the flow state reflects its association with action rather than just reward and when the directions of actions of the doer are directed inwards, they facilitate happiness from the intrinsic zone which is often characterized as Eudaimonic Happiness, known to be a deeper, more enduring state of well-being derived from meaningful activities and personal growth (Ryff, 2018).

5. Conclusion

It is expected that Psychological Flow will be related to Happiness.

Hypothesis accepted, this can be interpreted as Psychological Flow is significantly correlated to Happiness at ($r=0.354$, $p<0.1$) level of significance.

This investigation was aimed to study the relationship and occurrence of Psychological Flow with Happiness among writers (aged between 20-30 years), the sample was purposive and was collected from different geographical locations across Indian States and International participation was also welcomed, the size of sample was N=100. The research findings support the occurrence of Psychological Flow in writers as well the significant relationship of Psychological Flow with Happiness. So, it is concluded that Psychological Flow is present in individuals who write either professionally or for hobby. The end message of this research work would be to de-associate the concept of flow to only prime performances and consider flow beyond the boundaries of elitism and into everyday life activities too. While I conclude this paper, someone somewhere on this same planet with a piece of paper and pen would be creating a new literature or revolution in the language of abstracts.

It is happening, yes!! the FLOW is happening.

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