

## Choosing happiness: Breaking the shackles of freedom

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In two studies, we examine the effects of freedom on an individual's synthesis and experience of happiness, arguing that happiness results from deliberate, individual choices that are independent of external circumstances and factors. In the first experimental study consisting of 33 undergraduate students, we hypothesized that individuals who have freedom of options (choice condition) will experience, and subsequently, report lower levels of happiness compared to individuals bereft of choices (no-choice condition). Results from the selection task experiment provided support for our hypothesis, showing that individuals in the no-choice condition reported significantly higher levels of happiness than individuals in the choice condition. We replicated the findings in a second experimental study, and examined whether the effects were also applicable to a workplace choices scenario. Results from the second experimental study of 48 undergraduates also provided support for our hypothesis, in that individuals who are given freedom of options in the selection of tasks and reward (choice condition) reported lower levels of happiness compared to individuals who are simply assigned a task and reward (no-choice condition). Results from this study suggest that providing freedom of options may be detrimental to individual happiness. Implications and directions for future research are discussed in light of these findings.

**Key words: happiness, choice, experiment**

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