

Is Happily Ever After Possible for Singles? A Latent Profile Analysis

Lisa C. Walsh, Calen Horton, Anthony Rodriguez, Victor A. Kaufman

Abstract

Is it possible for a single person to be as satisfied with their life as someone who is in a romantic relationship? If so, how likely is it? And what special considerations (if any) must be counted for singles to be as happy as their coupled peers? The present paper aimed to address these questions via a secondary analysis of an existing cross-sectional dataset ($N=2,000$) of coupled ($n=1,438$) and single ($n=562$) adults. We identified ten candidate predictors of life satisfaction, seven of which were significant in multiple regression models: friendship satisfaction, closest friend intimacy, self-esteem, family satisfaction, perceived stress, romantic satisfaction, and physical health. Using the seven predictors as indicators in latent profile analysis (a person-centered, group-differential approach), we identified four distinct profiles (or groups) of coupled adults and six distinct profiles of single adults. Some of these profiles had very favorable levels of the predictors and some had very unfavorable levels, while several profiles fell in between the two extremes with a range of nuances. People who had strong personal relationships, self-esteem, and low stress were happiest—regardless of whether they had a romantic partner or not. Most importantly, we found that 68.8% of single adults follow a life satisfaction pattern that is nearly identical to that of 78.8% of coupled adults. In other words, these adults occupy happiness profiles that are analogous and not significantly different in terms of happiness.

Keywords: singles, couples, well-being, happiness, life satisfaction, personal relationships