



Promoting a feeling of pleasure: Empiric research in high education based on spinoza's philosophy

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the relationship between an ability to implement theories and feeling pleasure and self-assurance, based on Spinoza's philosophy that when the mind regards its self and its power of activity, its feels pleasure. The research presents results of a study among students at the Safed Academic College, Israel. A high correlation was found between feeling pleasure and self-assurance, and an ability to implement theories learned about a specific case. The 3-year long research in practical courses used 249 questionnaires in heterogenic classes (Druze, Muslims, Christians and Jews) and included women and men aged 18-50. One of the most famous of Spinoza's universal teachings uses a practical system to promote human pleasure. This is a pioneering study following the identification of student's satisfaction in practical lessons. The interesting finding of the study that founded no differences between students based on gender, religion, personal status and age. The research findings validate Spinoza's claims in Ethics from 350 years ago.

Keywords: research; Spinoza's Ethics; theory implementation; educational-practice; experience

INTRODUCTION

This research intends to validate Spinoza's claims from 350 years ago in Ethics, that when the intellect merges better in daily life, this leads to happiness and pleasure, i.e. he is more content. For example, in Definition of the Emotions²⁵Part 3, Self-contentment is pleasure arising from a man's contemplation of him-self and his power of activity and, Self-contentment can arise from reason, and only that self-contentment which arises from reason is the highest there can be (Spinoza, 2002a).

To achieve this goal, Zefat Academic College in Israel carried out a three-year- research program. This program included practical courses, in which students were

required to apply theories from case studies in „International Relationships“. Students studied four theories and applied them practically. In addition, „Philosophy of Education“, in which five philosophical methods were applied in early childhood education. The contribution of the research, given the results, using practical exercises of theories brings satisfaction increased the motivation that accompanies learning practical achievements.

In order to test Spinoza's assumptions that When the mind regards its self and its power of activity, its feels pleasure (Spinoza, 2002a), the authors conducted an

empirical research based on a survey with data collected from a sample of Zefat Academic College students (N=256). Based on 10 questions from the survey, the authors built the Student Satisfaction Index (SSI, ranking from 1 to 10, where 10 indicates highest satisfaction). SSI and grades were found to be statistically related: satisfaction is greater with higher grades, with a statistically significant correlation of 0.618 (Spearman's rho).

The study included Druze, Muslims, Christians and Jews with both women and men aged 18-50. It should be emphasized that Spinoza's Ethics is undeniably universal and deals with the person as a person, eliminating any aspect unrelated to his nature from birth (nation, religion, creed, culture, language, etc.) he says that the greatest good of those who seek virtue is common to all mankind, and can be enjoyed equally by all (Spinoza, 2002a).

Spinoza's Ethics

One of the most famous of Spinoza's universal teachings uses a practical system to promote human pleasure. All theoretical knowledge can be implemented. He implements the Euclidean geometric theory on behavioral, emotional, intellectual and even metaphysical content. He says that he should attempt to treat of the fault and follies of mankind in the geometric manner, and that he should propose to bring logical reasoning to bear on what they proclaim is opposed to reason; vain, absurd, and horrifying. However, his argument is that in Nature nothing occurs which can be attributed to its defectiveness, because Nature is always the same, and its force and power of acting is every-where one and the same (Spinoza, 2002a).

In this case, he himself feels a sense of pleasure (Steenbakkers, 2009). According to his approach, the value of philosophy is measured by its practical results, the extent to which a person is empowered, directing his emotions and leading him to happiness and pleasure (Ben-Shlomo, 2012).

Spinoza's claims in his seminal book Ethics resulted from observing human beings and from his own self-reflection as a philosopher. The results of this research form an intergenerational bridge that links his behavioral theory to current empirical research. Apart from validating Spinoza's claims, validating the research question that emanates from his Ethics offers us a philosophical perspective on contemporary empirical work in the behavioral sciences.

This research is based on three of Spinoza's basic principles: Firstly, a human being is part of nature and not a separate world within it. Secondly, since man is part of nature he is governed by the laws of nature, where the basic law that governs his behavior is the law of self-preservation (Conatus) according to which all things in

nature (inanimate, plants or animate) strive to the best of their ability to preserve their existence. Thirdly, the law of self-preservation includes within it man's desire to improve his state of being. Man is concerned with advancing from an existence based on purely physiological needs to more sophisticated levels of existence, the highest being intelligent management of daily life. This involves man-implementing knowledge gained through learning or experience to improve and enhance his existence in order to fulfill himself, in such a way that when assessing levels of happiness and sadness or pleasure and pain he will be less sad and/or happier. The main advantage of such implementation means that when he is faced with difficult situations his intelligence, reasoning and awareness of reality will help him deal with his surroundings. Even if he acted appropriately and did not manage to overcome the difficulty, his rational and practical understanding will prevent him from sadness. Spinoza uses the concept „happiness" in various expressions where the highest is „blessedness". Other uses in Ethics include happiness, enjoyment, peace of mind, self-fulfillment, pleasure and lack of pain, each according to the level of Human existence.

This article is an interpretation that adheres to the text, built in an additive form – each statement of Spinoza's statement discussed is added as an interpretative layer to those preceding it until a full model is achieved, reinforced by the empirical research and discussion at the end of the paper.

The Importance of Implementation in Spinoza's Ethics

Spinoza's Ethics supports a functional connection between the metaphysical discussion concerning the deterministic structure of nature that was discussed in Part 1 and the remaining parts of the method that discuss behavioral and educational aspects. Most of the norms recommended by Spinoza when guiding the reader to govern their lives with knowledge and knowledge according to Spinoza is understanding nature including human nature and acting accordingly within the laws of nature whilst being continually aware of our role in nature.

Part four of Ethics uses formal terminology for values such as good, good quality, ion, freedom, useful etc., all describing ways of promoting self-preservation. Spinoza regards the principle of self-preservation as an aspect of the metaphysical laws of nature, a law that includes man within it. In Ethics part three proposition six he says, Each thing, insofar as it is in itself, endeavors to persist in its own being (Spinoza, 2002a). Spinoza aims to direct the reader from understanding the metaphysical foundation of nature, to the goal of the method, which is

to be a happy person. In Della-Rocca's words, Spinoza stresses that we strive not only to persist but also to increase what he calls our power of acting (Della-Rocca, 2009).

A person who is founded on wisdom is free from the influences that cause him to make mistakes that lead to sorrow and sadness. Someone who implements the metaphysical aspect of nature - including human nature - and lives within its framework as an integral part of nature will function within the framework surrounding him with understanding, spiritual freedom that is accompanied by self-fulfillment and joy according to the extent to which his knowledge is implemented in everyday life. Spinoza claims that, so long as man is a part of Nature he must follow the laws of Nature, and this is divine service; and so long as he does this, it is well with him (Spinoza, 2002a). The same as we found in the research, that has its reference point in the philosophy of Carlo Ponti, and the criticism of empiricism and neo-Kantianism, with the Swedish National curriculum for compulsory education in the background. There, Bengsson (2012) states that the practical education causes people to be not only subjective but also objective and so to be involved with what is going on around them in nature. People learn in this way to extend their lives and worlds.

A central aspect in aspiring to survive is striving to improve the existential framework to reduce pain, suffering, depression or anything that disturbs existence to a minimum, and to promote enjoyment, happiness and pleasure. According to this principle, there is a hierarchy, in which a person can make progress with his ability. Of course, a thing can be the cause of a certain effect to a greater or lesser degree. These varying degrees of ability are, for Spinoza, varying degrees of power of acting (Della Rocca, 2008). In order to achieve this aim, Spinoza explains how to internalize the theory presented in his method and to bring man to maximum completeness, as far as possible, by implementation in daily life. This process begins in Ethics by man defining good and bad: By good, I understand that which we certainly know to be useful to us and by bad, I understand that which we certainly know to be an obstacle to our attainment of some good (Spinoza 2002a). Spinoza connects good and bad with joy and sadness in a more complex definition: Knowledge of good and evil is nothing other

than the emotion of pleasure or pain insofar as we are conscious of it. We call good or bad that which is advantageous, or an obstacle, to the preservation of our being. That which increases or diminishes helps, or checks, our power of activity (Spinoza, 2002a).

Spinoza's definition of „good“ necessitates that good must be something we consider to be good and only then do we desire it, and then only from our internal actions. It should not be something we covet as a result of an external stimulus causing us to think it is good, which would make us passive drawn only by external stimuli

(Spinoza, 2002a).

Knowledge that some good is always a means to perseverance can help one to know when he is or is not acting in the way a free man acts (LeBuffe, 2010). Spinoza's definition of good is designed to correct the common materialistic definition of good, which, in essence, is a prison within which man lives his life passively. If a human being lives his life according to Spinoza's definition, he will release himself from this incarceration (For further discussion see LeBuffe, 2010: 160-174).

Spinoza's pragmatism regarding the importance of the definitions of good and bad is the basis on which his ethical approach can be understood, as the aim of the theory of values (understanding values) will be meaningful only when it is actually implemented. Its value is in its implementation in practice and is the force for striving for a sense of joy; by the guidance of reason, we pursue the greater of two goods and the lesser of two evils (Spinoza, 2002a).

The knowledge that something is good due to its self-existence and preferring what it actually is and not because it is something that I want, is not only understanding the metaphysical law of self-preservation but also implementing it in practice. Even more so, according to Spinoza this understanding helps man know when he is being active or passive. This promotes the idea that knowledge and experience work together and advance man's goals from basic existence to higher levels of joy and happiness (Mounitz, 2011). Katz (2014) emphasizes the practicality of Spinoza's Ethics as a guide for continual improvement of human existence and how Spinoza offers a direction from theory to practice as, a means of allowing the individual to progress towards happiness. LeBuffe (2010) expresses the results of resisting urges by internalizing the metaphysical principles of Ethics that in order to attain value, individual must resist passion, secure the means to perseverance, and be able to know when he is doing so successfully.

Froel (2009) develops this discussion. In his chapter concerning happiness, he stipulates that Spinoza does not promise happiness, not even to a learned person. Happiness can be found in people who adhere to the practical way, as this is the ultimate driving force behind man's self-awareness of his abilities.

A central aspect of implementation in Ethics that Spinoza discusses in the preface to Part 3 is the geometrical aspect in his method. He considers human action and appetites just as if it were an investigation into lines, planes, or bodies" (Spinoza, 2002a).

Research of Spinoza in recent years has revealed a turning point regarding the implementable links of theoretical knowledge. This turning point can be found in the claim that the geometric system used by Spinoza in his philosophical discussion in Ethics is relevant regarding content and not only form.

How Spinoza Links Implementation and a Sense of Joy?

The following discussion will show that on the ethical plane, the law of preservation primarily has a practical-behavioral aspect, similar to geometry in his system. With this, the human as a behavioral actor, bares the metaphysical knowledge and carries it to the practical world of his life. The mere capability to understand this logic is the freedom that transforms him from passive to active. Nonetheless, one cannot escape the idea that the two levels of discussion are the foundation stones in the system: the relationship between the theoretical-metaphysical aspect and man's happiness as central point in his empirical act for preservation (Mounitz, 2011). For example, When the mind regards its own self and its power of activity, it feels pleasure, and the more so the more distinctly it imagines itself and its power of activity. Man knows himself only through the affections of his body and their ideas. When therefore it happens that the mind can regard its own self, by that very fact it is assumed to pass to a state of greater perfection, that is, to be affected with pleasure, and the more so the more distinctly it is able to imagine itself and its power of activity (Spinoza, 2002a).

In contrast to the older school of thought and interpretation led by Wolfson (1934), Steenbakkers (2009) claims that the geometrical arrangement of Ethics is not only an external framework for the method, but is also content by itself, content that turns the Euclidean theory into practice. The geometrical structure of Ethics is not simply a matrix into which Spinoza fits the contents of his method, but is inherently connected to the contents. A structural rationale fits with human logic embedded in the reader's awareness as part of the behavioral and educational contents of Ethics. It can be said that the geometry is designed for practical ethics, to contribute to the understanding of the method, and to bring the reader to the desired happiness (Steenbakkers, 2009). In this vein, Barbaras (2007) claims that Spinoza himself perceived between the joy of doing mathematics and the philosophical 'therapy' he developed the Ethics. What the Euclidian mathematician experiences when gradually disclosing the universal ballet proportion is an unequalled joy.

Since Spinoza himself experienced the therapy of developing a philosophy by means of a mathematical method, then, practically speaking, the geometry turns the formal structure of the philosophy into practical ethical content that contributes to the positive feeling of self-fulfillment and pleasure (Steenbakkers, 2009).

Koistinen (2009) claims that the process of understanding is in essence a move from a supposition to a conclusion and is an act that is positive, not something vague that merely happens to a person. In an active operation of this kind, it is clear that the feeling of the

agent involved in this process is not to avoid difficulty, to see reality as it is, to prefer to deal with the situation and reach the proper conclusion. Regarding the Euclidean structure, apart from the main connection between the axioms and the statements and between the statements and the explanations, the geometrical order settles the metaphysical aspect with the ethical-behavioral claims using Spinoza's naturalistic method. Implementation in this way is what determines the status of the agent between bondage and freedom (LeBuffe, 2010).

Spinoza discusses different levels of self-satisfaction. The agent advances gradually according to his ability from a basic level of self-preservation, to the implementation of the knowledge presented in Ethics into his daily life. The more perfection a thing has the more active and the less passive it is. Conversely, the more active it is, the more perfect it is (Spinoza, 2002a).

Part 3 proposition 53 in Ethics discusses the active nature of the soul where the emphasis is placed on the words „the power of activity“. When Spinoza talks about this ability, he is referring to man's ability to live his daily life according to the theoretical tools he has acquired. Internalization of the metaphysics as an ethical guide is designed to be implemented in daily life and this is what leads to the feeling of „blessedness“ as the desired goal. In his words in the Appendix to Part 4 in Ethics Spinoza says that the endeavor of the better part of us is the harmony with the order of nature (Spinoza, 2002a).

The title of Part 5 of Ethics is “Of the Power of the Intellect or of The Human Freedom”. This title clearly reflects Spinoza's comparison between human freedom and intellectual ability. In Part 3 proposition 53, Spinoza discusses this ability and describes it as the soul's delight, continuing with an example of this statement asking, what is this delight? His answer is, „Pleasure“ is man's transition from a state of less perfection to a state of greater perfection and “Pain” is man's transition from a state of greater perfection to a state of less perfection (Spinoza, 2002a).

In Part 3, proof to proposition 9, Spinoza expands on the power of the mind as power of understanding, power of activity. So no emotions of pain can be related to the mind insofar as it is active, but only emotions of pleasure and desire, which are to that extent also related to the mind (Spinoza, 2002a).

Spinoza connects adequate intellectual ideas, as those that match reality with the power of actions. The power of actions can only be expressed by intelligent implementation of knowledge in situations that a person is faced with in daily life. Ethics as a practical guide is worthless when the person who acquired it merely understood it, even delighting in the moment of understanding, as this delight is limited. Acquired knowledge that is not implemented is likely to be forgotten sooner or later, and the satisfaction and self-fulfillment achieved at the time of learning will vanish with

it. Aristotle (2014) noted this in *Nicomachean Ethics*, when he regarded a life of study as a continual activity and a purpose in and of itself accompanied by activity having an excessive element of seriousness, and later the Stoics, who were more consistent regarding the aspects of implementation of knowledge as a central element in man's happiness (Senecae, 2010).

The stated aim of Spinoza's method is for the individual to progress from a state of excessive sadness to a state of excessive joy, in other words, to ensure that happiness plays a greater role in daily life than sadness as far as possible. The aim, then, is to „redeem“ man from his passivity (*passio*), where he is dragged along with events to a state of activity (*actio*). Spinoza says that his final task is to show what practical advantages accrue from knowledge of his doctrine and, Therefore, this practical doctrine, apart from giving us complete tranquility of mind, has the further advantage of teaching us wherein lies our greatest happiness or blessedness namely, in the knowledge of Nature alone (Spinoza, 2002b).

Thus, we are bound in one way or another by the rules of nature, often being pulled by the order of our surroundings and random coincidences, even though we are frequently able to act of our own accord in this reality. It is this natural ability that Spinoza tries to improve by way of instilling knowledge that will become intellectual property. When this knowledge is implemented, it will express our strength, which is freedom to act, within our natural human surroundings – reality. This is the ability to overcome random events even if we find it uncomfortable, in the encounter between study and action (Gilead, 1986), an ability that is accompanied by contentment-happiness-joy.

The findings in this study reveal that this force of action expresses an internal determination of the mind that prevents us from being drawn by coincidental events. Implementing knowledge in daily life can be expressed in different aspects and at various levels and expresses an action determined by the agent's nature, his presence in reality as judged by himself and not dragged along by events.

Knowledge itself awakens positive feelings, but when these feelings are accompanied by actions, we really feel good. Knowledge itself, i.e. knowing what is true, correct and good still does not prevent us being drawn towards error, badness and sadness.

Daniel Gilbert(2007), in the fifth section of his book *Stumbling on Happiness* maintains that in order to achieve ultimate pleasure and minimize pain we need to be able to identify experiences with the circumstances that caused them. However, we must also be able to explain how and why those particular circumstances caused those particular experiences. Gilbert (2007) claims that all the physiological indications such as EEG, PET or MRI scans are inferior to a person's own personal expressions about his feelings. The person who actually

had the experience is the only one able to see inside himself and therefore his statements act as a baseline from which feelings of happiness can be compared, and this research has been undertaken bearing these factors in mind.

One of the central conclusions in the research of Arnd-Michael Nohl (2015) about learning application-transformation, where the range of differences in, age, gender, education and ethnicity, points to a connection between practical educational achievements and the positive feeling of new life experiences, as well new and unexpected life horizons.

Under the heading, “Unity of Study and Action” Yovel (1988) describes Moshe Hess (1950) as being the first to determine the need to conduct oneself not only by understanding concepts but also by actions. Indeed, Hess truly expressed the practical aspects of Spinoza. Under the heading, “The Philosophy of Action” in his book *Selected Articles* he calls Spinoza's *Ethics* the philosophy of action (Hess, 1950). According to Hess, Spinoza had a profound influence on the theory of Karl Marx. In his view, understanding is for action, and action creates a new basis for understanding. Even then, Hess claimed that the metaphysical part of *Ethics* prepares the practical side that emanates from it, starting in Part 3 of the book. The individual, who clearly understands his own emotions and actions as they flow from him causally from his nature and desires, can act in a decisive manner. This is Spinoza's ethical basis from which social ramifications are derived, i.e. socialism is grounded in the ethical part of Spinoza and is its nucleus. This is based on the concept that action carried out joyfully will make the agent free and happy (Hess, 1950).

Yovel (1988) enumerates the stages between study and action:

1. I must know myself therefore I must know what private things are in general.
2. How worldly matters affect one another and how emotions are formed in this relationship between affect-effect.
3. How the social environment is created and how it affects the individual.
4. How personal and social emotions are determined within the causal context that influences me externally.
5. I use this theoretical knowledge to reflectively decipher my essence as an object examined from outside myself.
6. From now on, after gaining scientific knowledge of myself from various complementary causal aspects, I can rearrange my cognitive components, thus orientating myself in the natural world in general and in the social world in particular, and function in that world clearly and coherently.

Table 1: Statements for the Student Satisfaction Index

	Statements
1	When I look at what I have acquired in the course, I feel I got tools that make me feel satisfied with myself.
2	The applied learning performance has given me tools that are not obtained in regular theoretical learning. [Capability]
3	Compared to other theoretical courses I feel greater satisfaction. [Feeling]
4	As I increased my application skills, so my satisfaction increased.
5	The ability to apply theory in a concrete case in life gives me a sense of power in relation to my previous situations.
6	The practical knowledge that I acquired raised my satisfaction with myself.
7	In my view, the ability to apply knowledge equals power and inability to apply knowledge equals weakness.
8	In my opinion, the ability to apply knowledge equals feeling of happiness.
9	After completing the course, I have applied a higher ability to look at myself and my abilities.
10	The acquisition of applied knowledge contributed to my ability to help others, and it gives me happiness.

It is easy to discern that these six stages are dependent on the reflective ability of the self-reflection. The combination of the reflective and the application leads the student to very sophisticated abilities in the stage of learning and practical life. The importance of implementation in education is prominently expressed in the research that suggests exercise and request for reflection in the medical profession. Apart from the essential need of professional medical worker, is the reflectiveness ability development of the student -The ability to look at his actions, to examine them and to look back at the way to achievements (Saperstein et al., 2015). The researches questionnaire was built accordingly and the results showed that advancement of application ability by itself also improves the reflective abilities.

In proof to proposition 59 Part 3, Spinoza (2002a) expresses the connection between active intelligent action and happiness and passive unintelligent action. A functional connection does in fact, exist between the metaphysical section of Ethics and the other aspects of the behavioral and educational method (LeBuffe, 2010) and this is what guided us in our choice of research question: Is there a connection between the implementation of theory and a sense of joy or happiness? Consequently, in the design of the questionnaire presented in Table 1 comparing Spinoza's statements in Ethics and the results of our empirical research. The uniqueness of this article lies in the pioneering way that it brings the discussion of Spinoza's theories down from the philosophical ivory tower to the field of daily life.

METHOD

Participants

In order to test Spinoza's assumptions we conducted an empirical research based on a survey with data collected from sampled Zefat Academic College students. 256 respondents were surveyed, 122 of them Jews and 122 of them Israeli Arabs (62 Muslims, 42 Druzes and 18 Christians) (12 were others or not mentioned). About a half of those surveyed (47%), were men (6% did not mention); approximately 47% were single and 48% married (5% others or not mentioned) and the average age was 28.6 (SD = 8.24).

Procedure and Results

The grades in the course were coded by an ordinal measure, where 1 represents the grades between 90 and 100; 2 for grades between 80 and 89; 3 for grades between 70 and 79; and 4 for grades lower than 70. As figure 1 shows the grades were equally distributed, and the median grade was between 80 and 89.

The main quest of our research was to reveal the students' satisfaction with practical knowledge. In order to do so, respondents were asked to rank the extent of their agreement with 10 different statements on a 5-point scale (1, not at all; 10 to a great extent). As Table 1 shows, the statements are counted equal and we measure the basis to our dependent variable – the Student Satisfaction Index (SSI). The Index is measured, for each respondent, as the sum of all his statements (divided by 10) which gives us a rank from 1 (indicating the lowest satisfaction

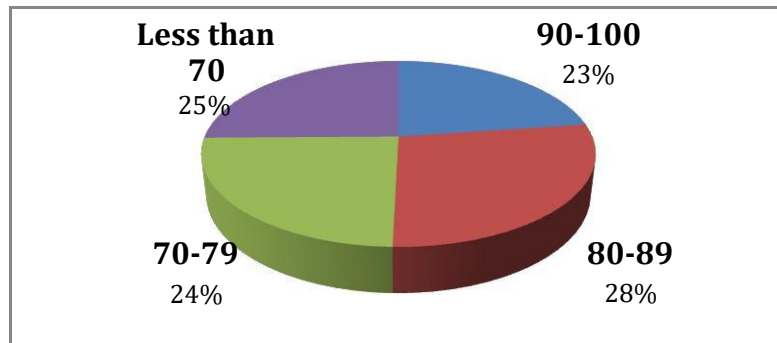


Figure 1: Grades Distribution

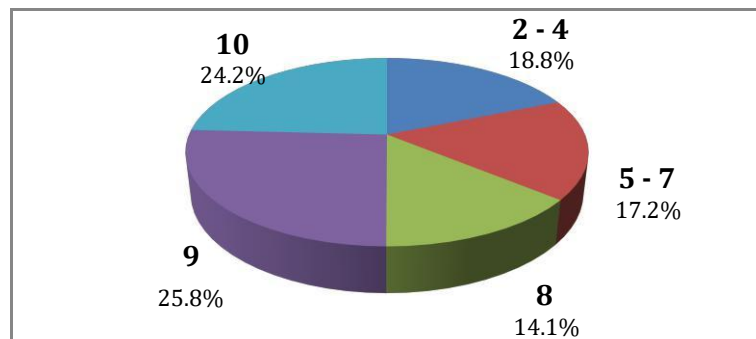


Figure 2: Distribution of the Student Satisfaction Index (N=128)

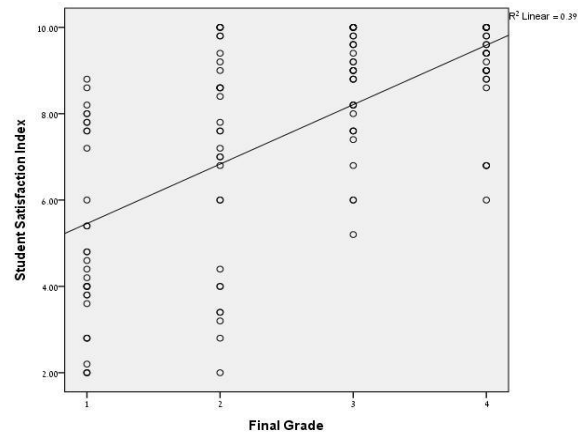


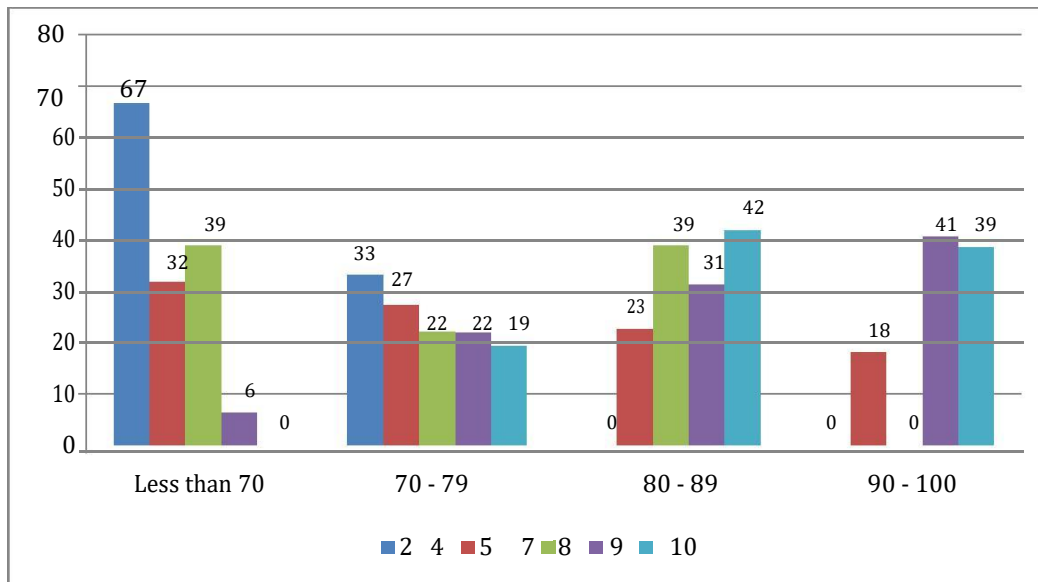
Figure 3: The Relationship between Grade and SSI

rate) to 10 (indicating the highest satisfaction rate).

Figure 2 shows us the distribution of the Student Satisfaction Index. Half of the respondents – 24.2 and 25.8% – received the score 10 and 9 respectively on the index, which indicates the highest satisfaction. About a third of the respondents (14.1 and 17.2%) received the scores between 8 and 5, which indicate a medium satisfaction rate, and about 20 received the scores between 2 and 4 which indicate the lowest satisfaction

rates.

The main object of our research was to examine student's attitudes toward, and expectation of, practical knowledge. The first stage, therefore, was in search of a relationship between SSI and grades. As Figure 3 shows, our main finding is that they are related to each other: satisfaction is to be greater with higher grades (4 = 90 to 100), with a correlation (Spearman's rho) of 0.618 and statistically significant ($p < .001$).



Note: Chi square test was 59.55 and statistically significant, $p < .001$;
Figure 4: Final Grades and Grouped Students Satisfaction Index

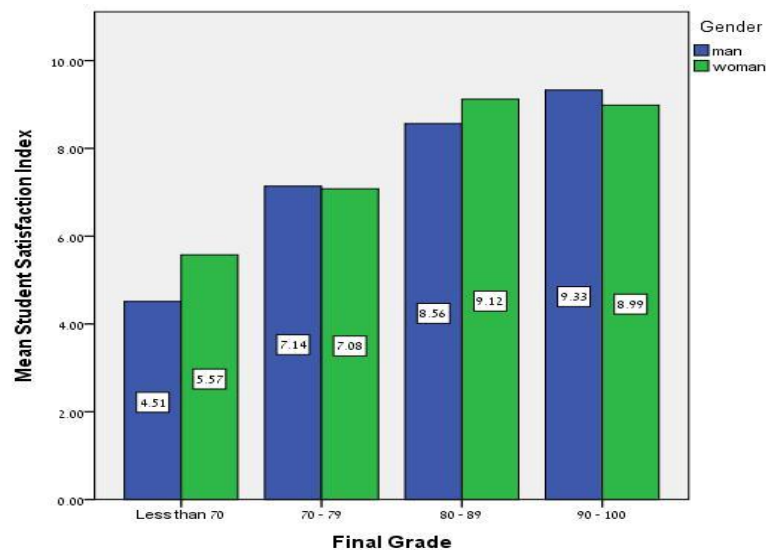


Figure 5: Final Grades and Average SSI by Gender

When the Student Satisfaction Index was gathered into five groups, it was evident that low grades are related with low satisfaction rates. 66% of the respondents who scored between 2 and 4 in the index received a grade lower than 70, and 33% of them between 70 and 79. On the other hand, a high level of student satisfaction with practical knowledge is evident in the high grades (between 90 and 100): 41 and 39% of the respondents (and a total of 80%) that scored 9 and 10 respectively received very high grades.

Given these results, our next stage was to search for the effects of four main explanations— gender, religion, personal status and age – on the correlation between student's grades and the Student Satisfaction Index. The figures below show some interesting findings and more comprehensive results.

First, with regard to gender, it is evident that no significant differences exist between men and women. Figure 5 shows that the average Student Satisfaction Index is relatively high in both men and women when

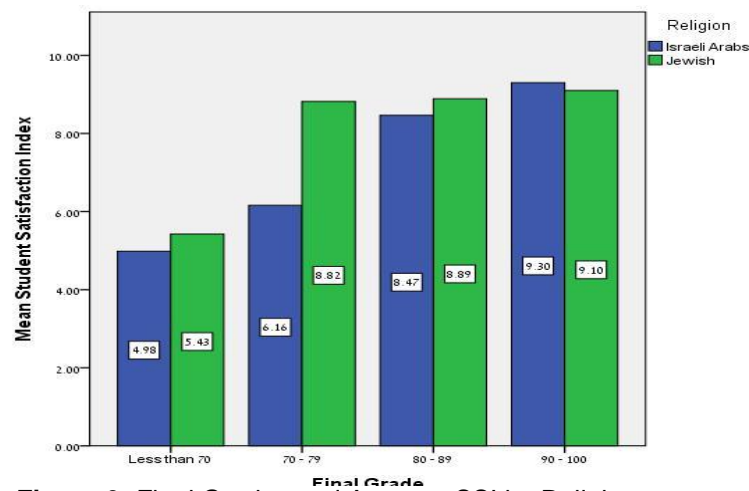


Figure 6: Final Grades and Average SSI by Religion

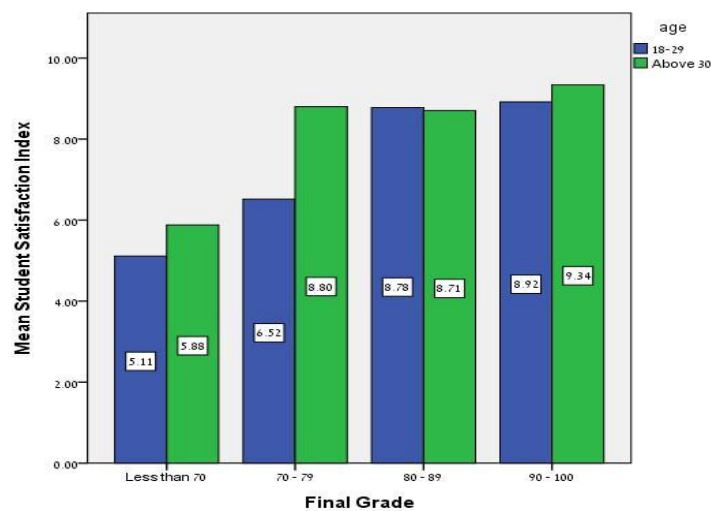


Figure 7: Final Grades and Average SSI by Age

grades are high and low when grades are lower. The correlation in both cases is positive and statistically significant.

Second, with regard to religion, no major differences were found between the sample of Jews and Israeli Arabs. As shown in Figure 6, there are almost no differences in the average Student satisfaction Index between Jews and Israeli Arabs in the high grades (above 80), with relatively high satisfaction rates in both groups. The only difference that we found is in the 70 – 79 grades, which can be related to the small sample at our disposal. In any case, correlations between grades and SSI in both samples are positive and statistically significant.

Last, but not least, age has an important impact on Student satisfaction Index (Pearson Correlation) of 0.422

($p < .001$). No major differences are reported between the younger sample (18-29 years old) and the older sample (above 30 years old) in the higher grades (above 80), and the gap found in the 70-79 sample is insignificant and due to the relatively low number of respondents.

One final note: statements 2 and 3 in the questionnaire and to some extent statement 9 were designed to be a substitute for a control group. Since we could not compare the feelings of the respondent who studied theoretical lessons only and not the implementation course, the above three statements are taken into account in the questionnaire to concrete respondents, who were the only ones that could experience the difference, and are themselves an implicit control group, without their knowledge.

DISCUSSION

The practical method in Spinoza's behavioral theories discussed above is reinforced by the results of this study. Man's desire to exist occurs on various levels where basic survival and bodily needs represent the lowest level of happiness. The higher levels refer to luxuries and quality of life that also lead to fulfillment, but according to Aristotle (2014), these are insufficient: man strives for continual happiness, which is expressed in spiritual pleasure. Indeed, Aristotle defined happiness as an ongoing activity.

The research corroborates Ben-Shlomo's interpretation of Spinoza, that the value of the philosophy is determined by its concrete results, i.e. the extent to which it reinforces man's power (Ben-Shlomo, 2012). The important aspect examined in the research is the practical one emphasized by Hess (1950). The questionnaire focuses on this specific aspect, and the high correlation emerging from its results indicates just how relevant Spinoza's philosophy is in the behavioral sciences and the educational sciences today.

It is not enough to experience a burst of pleasure such as when we gain and understand theoretical knowledge, for example when gazing at a piece of artwork or listening to music. Internalizing information and implementing it to solve problems or life situations, even if the incidents are unpleasant, increases our levels of self-satisfaction, providing us with a sense of security and calm to help us deal with daily life with an ongoing sense of happiness. This, as we have stated, is a higher level of happiness than that achieved by merely gaining theoretical knowledge, which may lead to a certain level of happiness, but is only temporary, and fades after a short while. We have seen, the responses collected from the students in the study, they experienced the differences between the two levels of happiness. The opportunity to implement the theoretical knowledge acquired in real time, and/or in an actual exercise increased, their sense of self-fulfillment and a move from minimal happiness to excess happiness on the scale between sadness and frustration to continual pleasure from happiness and pleasure (see Figures 3 and 5). This is referred to by Spinoza (2002a) in part 4, proposition 52, that there is no greater satisfaction than that which comes from understanding - practical understanding resulting from reason.

According to Della Rocca (2008), there is one crucial aspect where human striving and desire may not appear in the striving and desire of simpler organisms. In speaking of human beings in particular, Spinoza stresses that we strive not only to persist but also to increase what he calls our „power acting“ (Spinoza, 2002a). This fits well with Spinoza's claim that self-satisfaction equals happiness that comes from man's introspection on his own power to act. When Spinoza talks about a correct

idea, he is referring to the adequate idea that matches reality. This is the idea that describes the encounter between theory and the relevant incident, as the results show in all the Figures above, i.e. intellectual application of knowledge when attempting to find a solution for a specific problem.

The ability of self-reflection and its connection to implementation skills is clearly expressed in the formulation of the questionnaire. Almost every question requires self-contemplation. In addition, the necessity for self-contemplation is inherent in the questionnaire that requires a comparison of feelings from a previous situation of learning in a purely theoretical course to one that requires application of the knowledge, the subject of this study, and all this including the subjects' contemplation of themselves and their power of action.

The importance of perfecting the reflective abilities in the Ethics of Spinoza is expressed in the 6 rules that Yuval (1988) presented and in contemporary education with direct reflective teaching methods (Saperstein, Lillje & Seibert, 2015). All 10 statements in table 1 and especially 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 show the close relationship between application abilities and reflective abilities.

This conclusion relating to the positive feeling during practical studying matches the research of Nohl (2015) and is relevant to different groups, (gender, age and ethnicity) according to what was seen in tables 6, 7, 8 of this research.

In this context Katz (2014) emphasizes that it is an acquired ability and that in Ethics Spinoza shows that the ability to apply knowledge in and of itself opens up options for critical thinking to examine the success or failure of the action. The ability for reflection is a developed intellectual human skill that is part of his power of action.

Reflection is an essential cognitive element in the move from lesser fulfillment to higher fulfillment, not just, because self-contemplation would not exist without it, but because it is a skill in and of itself that is accompanied by feelings of fulfillment and self-realization, as indicated by the findings of this study.

Regarding the law of self-preservation at its various levels, including the desire for happiness, Spinoza's naturalism that expresses the unity of human nature, adopts a view of equality between all human beings. This statement of Spinoza's is also reinforced in the present study as we found that ethnic differences between the subjects were minor (see Figures 5 and 6 above).

Spinoza's philosophy, as presented in this research, states that human nature, that is not a separate entity from nature as a whole, is constant in all places and at all times. This study showed that ethnic, religious, linguistic or other differences had no effect on the basic human characteristics, which drive us all some extent or another, and this fits with the hierarchical principle of the law of self-preservation., Plants and animals, according to of

nature laws, are also governed by the laws of self-preservation but at lower physiological levels. Intellectual abilities and the positive feelings emanating from them in all people regardless of cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic differences were encouraged in the research. The differences between the natural world and man are not in the principle of the law but in man's ability to achieve them and thus reaching self-fulfillment, to contemplate this achievement and rejoice in his abilities, thereby achieving a higher level of activity within the bounds of the laws of self-preservation. Being a part of nature each person has a common denominator deep in his structural make-up that is irrelevant to ethnic, religious or linguistic differences (Spinoza, 2002a; See also Della Rocca, 2008).

In this spirit and in accordance with Carlo Ponti, Bengtsson (2012) also sees the results of practical education as being motive power for development of expanding personality, experience and worldly concepts, involvement in the world and becoming an integral part of nature and humanity.

According to Spinoza, the key for the free man is this ability for implementation and LeBuffe (2010) emphasizes this in the differences between freedom and bondage. In the theory that has been studied, internalization and implementation provide the difference between them (LeBuffe, 2010).

The correlation between seeing the achievements of implementing knowledge and feelings of happiness found in the study is also supported by the interpretation of the law of self-preservation (Conatus) provided by Katz (2014) regarding overcoming or reducing mental power of action. Climbing the ladder between these opposites is a copy of the move from sadness to happiness. Katz (2014) also claims that this expresses the power of the agent.

CONCLUSION

The research findings validate Spinoza's educational claims in Ethics from 350 years ago and it contribute the value of contribution of using practical exercises of theories which leads to self-satisfaction and increased the motivation of learning achievements.

In addition, companion benefit of this study is the understanding that human nature is universal due to the spirit of Spinoza's educational approach in Ethics. The results of the study reflect a high correlation between a feeling of self-assurance and pleasure and achievement levels more than six months after completion of studies. All the respondents also studied theoretical courses without the practical aspect and were able to notice the results. Thus, the correlation reflected from the results show that the test group on the low achievement level felt a corresponding low measure of self-satisfaction.

The results correspond with Spinoza's claims in Ethics, e.g. Spinoza maintains that implementing theoretical knowledge brings about empowerment and enables some freedom of activity on a daily basis, but within a deterministic environment. The research findings reveal that a combination of theory and practice creates "internal attendance" of the actor, a kind of determination of the soul without dragging along passively after random events. Man performs actively in a natural way and then, as now, intellectual implementation establishes man's presence in reality when he decides for himself rather than as someone being pulled along after events.

The findings of this study show that there is a high correlation between gaining the ability to implement theoretical knowledge and happiness. The research question that was necessitated by Spinoza's views was reinforced by the present study and showed that his claims from the 17th century are still relevant today. This reinforcement of the metaphysical aspect of the law of self-preservation enlightens the empirical research with a philosophical viewpoint and is an integral part of the discussion presented here.

In conclusion, it can be said that in the encounter between Spinoza's theory and the results of the study, a theory that is learned but unapplied is nearer to the bookshelf than to the students' cognitive awareness. A theory that has been applied means that it has been taken from the bookshelf and placed into reality, into daily life. A person who applies a theory turns it into a useful tool and a person who works with tools is more efficient than someone who works with his bare hands. The student who applies his knowledge becomes an active agent between the bookshelf and reality; he senses, he feels, he is happy. He - and only he - can assess his own abilities reflexively according to the criteria of moving from a lesser fulfillment to a greater fulfillment than he had previously, from indifference to happiness that increases his power of action.

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