

“Happiness Index” – The Footsteps towards Sustainable Development

Mevawala Jency¹

¹Post Graduate Student Town and Country Planning, Sarvajani College of Engineering and Technology
Surat, Gujarat

Abstract - The Happiness Index is a comprehensive survey instrument that evaluates happiness, wellbeing, and aspects of sustainability and resilience. The Happiness Alliance developed the Happiness Index to provide a survey instrument to community organizers, researchers, and others seeking to use a subjective well-being index and data. It is the only instrument of its kind freely available worldwide and translated into over ten languages. This instrument can be used to measure satisfaction with life and the conditions of life. It can also be used to define income inequality, trust in government, and sense of community and other aspects of wellbeing within specific demographics of a population. Through, this review paper it will be understood what is happiness index? By which method one can measure Gross happiness Index? The indicators of GNH (Gross National Happiness) given by Bhutan.

Key Words: Happiness, Human Well-Being, Development, India, GNH

1. INTRODUCTION

Gross National Happiness Index

A revolution in quantifying happiness or wellbeing was made by Bhutan by calculating their country's Gross National Happiness (GNH) instead of Gross National Product (GNP). The term GNH was coined by the 4th King of Bhutan Jigme Singye Wangchuk.

'GNH measures the quality of a country in more holistic way and believes that the beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occur simultaneously to complement and reinforce each other.

GNH index was based on four pillars:

1. Good governance
 2. Sustainable socio-economic development
 3. Cultural preservation
 4. Environmental conservation.
- Nearly 5% of Indians suffer from mental illness

1. With one in five requiring mental health counselling.

2. By 2025, 38.1 million years of healthy life will be lost to mental illness in India

3. Mental peace and happiness have become the need of the hour due to increasing stress of modern day life.

It has become necessary to understand happiness, quantify it and find ways of being happy in our lives if we want to prevent the ticking time bomb of mental illness from exploding. Psychologists define happiness as 'a mental or emotional state of well-being defined by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy.

4. Happiness brings about improved physiological functioning in humans, improves capacity to combat stress, pain and lengthens life span.

When it comes to happiness, we Indians always consider good financial conditions and physical well-being among the top-most reasons to remain joyous. A new survey adding that India ranked ninth on happiness index among 28 global markets.

Personal safety and security, friends and feeling in control of life were other top determinants for Indians to stay happy, said the "Global Happiness Survey" from market research firm Ipsos.

"For Indians, it boils down to comfortable living conditions, robust health, good financial conditions, friends and social circle and to have purpose in life. Hobbies and interests are important too," said Parijat Chakraborty, Country Service Line Leader, Public Affairs and Corporate Reputation, Ipsos India.

GNH measures the quality of a country in more holistic way and believes that the beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occur simultaneously to complement and reinforce each other.

GNH, though the interpretation of happiness is more complex than the indicators behind the Human Development Index. If people are less happy or satisfied, is it a result of worse conditions, or growing expectations, for example, and how should this influence decision-making?

The United Nations Development Programme has a net worthy role to play in supporting this smooth transition. They have focused on measuring what matters – a complex, ambitious list of targets captured in 17 Sustainable Development Goals to which the world have

agreed. These goals set out an international plan of action for peace, people, the planet, prosperity and partnership, driven by the same ethos and instincts as GNH. The challenge for GNH is how to translate such ambitious goals into practical development plans and implement them – how to ensure theory turns into practice..

1.1 Concept of well-being in Indian philosophy and related measurement efforts

The concept of wellbeing and happiness is inherent in ancient Indian philosophy like Yoga and in scriptures like Upanishads. Yoga helps in union of individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness leading to self-realization. Yoga is a holistic way of life leading to a state of complete physical, social, mental and spiritual wellbeing and harmony with nature. But it seems modernization and technology has robbed us of our inner peace.

Researchers in India have time and again attempted to measure SWB and study the factors affecting SWB of people. It has been reported that extended families tend to have more SWB than nuclear families. SWB is also hardly hit by social norms among rural Indian women and due to between caste than within-caste comparisons. Rural Indian households with conspicuous consumption reported lower levels of SWB. Agrawal et al, reported Bengaluru adults to have above average levels of SWB while another study reported that about 89% of Indians suffer from stress compared to the global average of 86%.

1.2 Efforts in measuring happiness

Sociologists define happiness as ‘the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole positively, or how well one likes the life one lives. It is usually referred to as subjective well-being (SWB) or life satisfaction. Few scales have been developed to measure SWB of individuals in different countries.

- The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) is a 4-item scale requiring participants to use absolute ratings (out of 7) to characterize themselves as happy or unhappy individuals.
- The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) is a 20-item questionnaire used to detect the relation between personality traits and positive or negative effects using a five-point Likert scale.
- The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a global cognitive assessment of life satisfaction requiring a person to state their agreement/ disagreement with five statements about their life. Certain surveys also track life satisfaction of citizens across the globe.
- The World Values Survey (WVS) is a global research project that explores people’s values and beliefs, how

they change over time and what social and political impact they have. Euro barometer does the same in EU Member States.

2. Domains of Happiness

The Happiness Index measures life satisfaction, the feeling of happiness, and other happiness domains: psychological well-being, health, time balance, community, social support, education, arts and culture, environment, governance, material well-being, and work (Happiness Alliance, 2014c).

The qualities measured in the domains are as follows:

- Psychological Well-Being: optimism, senses of purpose and of accomplishment;
- Health: energy level and ability to perform everyday activities;
- Time Balance: enjoyment, feeling rushed, and sense of leisure;
- Community: sense of belonging, volunteerism, and sense of safety;
- Social Support: satisfaction with friends and family, feeling loved, and feeling lonely;
- Education, Arts, and Culture: access to cultural and educational events and diversity;
- Environment: access to nature, pollution, and conservation;
- Governance: trust in government, sense of corruption, and competency;
- Material Well-Being: financial security and meeting basic needs
- Work: compensation, autonomy, and productivity.



Fig -1 Indicators of GNH (**saurse: Bhutan website)

2.2 Adopted Methodology for measuring Happiness Index

After studied all research paper, these methods can be used for measuring Happiness Index.

1. Standard method of measuring happiness in practice: Surveying

Survey questions to all members of a sample that is considered to be representative for the target population of the study, one or more closed questions are presented with a limited number of response options. This combination of the question and all response options together is referred to as a primary scale of happiness measurement. In the World Database of Happiness (further abbreviated as WDH), some one thousand such scales have been gathered in the so-called "Measures of Happiness" collection. In the Happiness Research literature they are often referred to as "items". Examples of survey questions on happiness an example of such a primary scale is the combination of the single question: "Taking all things together, would you say you are ...?"

With four response options:

- very happy
- quite happy
- not very happy
- not at all happy.

2. Delphi exploration of subjective well-being indicators

Delphi approach is a research method that formally obtain expert opinions in a series of 'rounds' and feedbacks process for a complex research problem to develop informed solutions. Communities are not only physical but also social, economic, political, psychological and cultural settings.

This study seeks expert consensus to determine indicators that could be used to assess subjective well-being for strategic urban planning in the context of sustainable development. For this purpose, a Delphi study including a panel of 45 academic experts was carried out. The study consisted of two rounds. At each round, experts were asked to rate key elements by assessing indicator as very low importance, low importance, moderate importance, high importance and very high importance. A 75% agreement was used as cutoff. The result sat second round reveal that panelists agreed on 37 key indicators being essential to assess subjective well-being for sustainable urban development. Using these results as a framework to develop guidelines at local, state, and national levels would

allow better assessing and comparing transition programs towards sustainability.

This study developed a framework, including a list of key sustainable indicators to assess subjective well-being towards urban sustainable development in a two-round Delphi survey. Experts in the Delphi study has identified set of indicators across the four sustainability dimensions to aid strategic urban planning to promote human well-being.

3. **The World Happiness Index** is an alteration of the Human Development Index as it adopts the same statistical aggregation method. It aims to measure the happiness of countries and it defines the following themes as preconditions for a happy country:

- peace and security
- freedom, democracy and human rights
- living standards
- research, education, information, communication and culture

As UNDP, Their journey in measuring what matters started with the Human Development Report, published for the first time nearly 30 years ago from 2019. The HDR imagined a world where income was not the only measure of wellbeing. Instead, human development would measure people's choices and opportunities: whether they lived long lives, whether they were healthy, educated, and had sufficient income.

The index presents a stark picture, but by measuring what matters, beyond only GDP, the data shows how fragility and crisis block the arteries of progress.

As the international community, it helps us figure out where to focus our efforts, such that no-one is left behind. UNDP will continue to look to and learn from pioneers in measuring what matters, like Bhutan.

Is India a "happy country"?

India ranked poorly 122 on a list of the world's happiest countries. It has dropped four slots from last year and has come behind China, Pakistan and Nepal.

According to The World Happiness Report 2017, Norway ranks as the happiest country in the world. The World Happiness Report 2017 ranks 155 countries by their happiness levels. Displacing Denmark, Norway jumped up three spots from last year.

India was 118 in the 2013-2015 report, but it slid down on the 122nd spot this year. The parameters which maps happiness are social support, GDP per capita, generosity,

freedom to make life choices, healthy life expectancy and perceptions of corruption.

Though India is referred to as the biggest and the greatest democracy in world but findings clearly shows that people of India are unhappy leading to lower position of India at Happiness Index 2018. Happy countries which have topped the latest rankings have risen to their pole positions more on intangibles like social capital, trust and generosity than the conventional measures of prosperity. Despite being the world's biggest democracy and showing good GDP growth, why India is ranked so low in Happiness Index? Which factors leads to India's poor position in Happiness Index and why is India showing continuous decline in rankings of World Happiness Index from past few years?

The continuous rise in population has caused decrease in per capita income which is a measure of World Happiness Index, thus leading to poor ranking of India. Other parameters of World Happiness Index which are Social support, Healthy life expectancy, Freedom to make choices, Generosity and Perceptions of corruption are also analyzed in the paper using certain United Nation Indexes like Corruption Perception Index, Education Index and Human Development Index. Other than this factors which are not the part of any of these parameters but affects India's position in World Happiness Index are also analyses in this paper like Education, Housing and life satisfaction etc.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The Happiness Alliance's Happiness Index has been used by over 200 groups since 2011. It was developed out of a growing interest to

(a) understand and evaluate personal and community wellbeing as it relates to happiness, sustainability, and quality of life

(b) address the need for, and lack of, existing freely available valid survey-based well-being measurement tools for community organizers, researchers, and others;

(c) shape personal, community, organizational, and societal strategies and policies in a way that enhances the connected concepts of happiness, well-being, quality of life, and sustainability; and, ultimately,

(d) the adoption of wider measures of well-being by governments protecting and securing people's right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.

As the result derived from Delphi study, the conclusion includes That the survey was developed over a series of four rounds, each of which sought to streamline and clarify the measurement instrument. Based on experience gathered by the use of the Happiness Index for groups since 2011, the Happiness Index has and can serve as a valuable tool for advancing happiness, well-being,

quality of life, sustainability, and social change. Researchers, teachers, students, policy makers, community organizers, managers and business leaders, therapists and consultants, speakers and authors, and others are invited to use the Happiness Index in their work. The Happiness Index is one piece of the puzzle that completes a picture conveying the importance of happiness, and the happiness movement as a new environmental, social, and economic paradigm to enhance quality of life and sustainability for all beings.

This year, the Human Development Report will paint a detailed picture of inequality, with new data that will go further beyond income and averages. The International Day of Happiness is a good reminder that our world is changing. If we want to understand how we progress, why we sometimes fail, and, ultimately improve the quality of all our lives, then the pursuit of happiness may offer an answer.

REFERENCES

1. NCMH, Background papers: Burden of disease in India, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, New Delhi, 2005.
2. Masand, P., One in five Indians needs mental health counselling, reveals Government statistics. The Times of India, 10 October 2012.
3. Mascarenhas, A., Mental illness India's ticking bomb, only 1 in 10 treated: Lancet study. The Indian Express, 19 May 2016.
4. The Economic Times
5. Kalmijn, W. and Veenhoven, R. J., J. Happiness Stud., 2005,
6. 357-396; <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-005-8855-7>
7. 6. Lyubomirsky, S. and Lepper, H. S., Social Indicat. Res., 1999, 46, 137-155.
7. Frey, B. S. and Stutzer, A., Happiness and Economics, Princeton University Press, 2002.
8. Kahneman, D., Diener, E. and Schwarz, N., Well-being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1999.
9. Taneja, D. K., Indian J. Commun. Med., 2014, 39(2), 68-72.
10. Mohi-Ud-Din, M. and Barthwal, S., Int. J. Sci. Res., 2016, 5(12), 722-724.
11. Hoop, T. D., Kempen, L. V., Linssen, R. and Erdewijk, A. V., Women's autonomy and subjective well-being in India: How village norms shape the impact of selfhelp groups, MPRA, Paper No. 25921, 2010.

12. Fontaine, X. and Yamada, K., World Dev., 2014, 64, 407–419.

13. Linssen, R., Kempen, L. V. and Kraaykamp, G., Soc. Ind. Res., 2011, 101(1), 57–72.

14. Agrawal, J. et al., Soc. Indic. Res., 2011, 101(3), 419–434.

15. The Economic Times, 89 per cent of India's population suffering from stress; most don't feel comfortable talking to medical professionals, 10 July 2018.

16. <http://www.educatingforgnh.com>

17. <http://worldhappiness.report/ed/2018/>

18. <https://tradingeconomics.com/denmark/gdp-growth>

19. Ura, K., Alkire, S. and Zangmo, T., Case Study: Bhutan Gross National Happiness and the GNH Index. Part II of the World Happiness Report (eds Helliwell, J., Layard, R. and Sachs, J.), Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimphu, Bhutan, 2010.

20. OECD, Doctors (indicator), 2018; doi: 10.1787/4355e1ec-en

21. World Economic Forum, The Global Gender Gap Report, 2017.

22. Melnick, M., Denmark is considered the happiest country. You'll never guess why. The Huffington Post, 22 October 2013.

23. Dash, D. K., India loses Rs 60,000 crore due to traffic congestion: study. The Times of India, New Delhi, 31 May 2012.

24. http://www.ivoindia.org/Images/voluntee_ring-and-active-citizenship_tcm78-36149.pdf

25. OECD, Health spending (indicator), 2018; doi: 10.1787/8643de7e-en.

26. The concept of measuring happiness and how India can go the Nordic Way Sangeeta Bhattacharyya, R. Roy Burman and Sudipta Paul

27. Happiness Index Methodology By Laura Musikanski, Happiness Alliance Scott; Cloutier, Arizona State University; Erica Bejarano, Arizona State University; Davi Briggs, Arizona State University; Julia Colbert, Arizona State University; Gracie Strasser, Arizona State University; Steven Russell, Arizona State University

BIOGRAPHIES



Mevawala Jency Pankajbhai
Post graduate student, town and country planning sarvajanik college of engineering and technology, surat, gujarat