

Factors Affecting the Happiness Index

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Abstract

The happiness index is a system of measuring collective happiness as well as the well-being of a nation. The instrument measures life satisfaction and the condition of life among citizens because happiness is an indispensable human goal. A country's happiness provides an important insight into its citizen's well-being. For the citizens to be happy, the government must offer good governance supporting their well-being. A number of factors have a negative or positive impact on the happiness index of any given country. The factors that positively impact the happiness index include Gross Domestic Product, generosity, high life expectancy, generosity, and social support. Corruption negatively impacts the happiness index of a country. The government must ensure that they minimize the cases of corruption in the government so that citizens can have hope in the government, which increases their happiness. To ensure citizens are happy, the government ought to have a consistent gathering of happiness data on a large scale because it helps policymakers recognize deliverables that must be formed to enhance citizens' well-being.

Keywords: Happiness index, happiness, world happiness, gross domestic product, corruption, high life expectancy, social support, generosity

Introduction

The world is filled with different cultures, customs, and landscapes, and hunting for happiness is a common endeavor. All individuals yearn for happiness, satisfaction, and well-being. The pursuit of happiness is not only a preference but a fundamental part of human beings. The Happiness Index refers to a scheme of measuring collective happiness along with the well-being of a country. The term originated from Gross National Happiness, invented in 1972 (Oberoi et al., 2020). Happiness is an essential human goal. The first World Happiness Report was released in the year 2012, and the 20th of March was declared International Happiness Day by the United Nations (Xu, 2022). Approximating a nation's happiness offers important insights into its citizen's well-being. It also aids government and policymakers in comprehending the main factors that contribute to an individual's contentment and identify the areas that might need improvement (Forbes India, 2023). This paper discusses the factors that affect the happiness index globally.

High GDP Increases Happiness Index

One factor affecting the happiness Index is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GDP refers to the value of all the goods and services that are produced in any given nation in a year, divided by the total population of a country and then adjusted for inflation (Oberoi et al., 2020). The happiness of any nation and the quality of life of its citizens go hand in hand. A country with a high GDP will likely have a good economy where citizens can live a good life. Though a nation's GDP enhances

its standard of living, the quality of life is essential to the nation's well-being (Nagwanshi et al., 2021).

GDP defines the general growth of a country from its production, which leads to increased spending among individuals. With increased spending, individuals display characters of contentment that ensures spending does not affect their future budgets and, therefore, happiness. When people have little to spend, then happiness is diminished through worries. Also, increased GDP directly increases employment chances in a country. When employed, individuals earn a living, making it easy for their day-to-day budgets and, therefore, happiness (Naghdi et al., 2021). However, lack of employment leads to poverty, which is discomfort, leading to sadness and ultimate lack of happiness among citizens.

Additionally, high GDP leads to increased tax payments that empower the government to offer public services. Public services such as healthcare and road infrastructures are essential in smoothening individuals' livelihoods. Lack of healthcare leads to increased illness and individual spending on medication, and therefore discomfort. Similarly, a lack of infrastructure destabilizes the economy, making people unhappy. Moreover, increased GDP leads to increased salaries that improve livelihood compared to low payments (Zhao & Sun, 2020). Whenever individuals receive high pay, they cannot only satisfy their budgets, but they can also budget for leisure, such as cars. However, sadness dwells when low salaries make people struggle to cater to their budgets. Therefore, high GDP increases happiness.

High Life Expectancy Increases Happiness Index

Life expectancy gives hope for the future, making individuals live a careful and responsible life. High life expectancy is defined through quality living conditions and good physical health. People living in poor conditions also have poor physical health following discomfort and lack of essential basic needs, as a condition that induces sadness and discomfort that negatively affects mental health. They become unhappy due to low life expectancy. Again, high life expectancy increases the quality of social relationships leading to happiness (Lee & Singh, 2020). Correlation within a society is important because people get chances to share ideas and comfort increases.

Similarly, high life expectancy increases independence, ensuring individuals' economic security in society. With independence and economic security, people gain confidence in their livelihood, leading to happiness. However, dependency and economic instability lead to discomfort and low life focus, making individuals unhappy. In another perspective, high life expectancy directs improvement of people's safety and observation of basic human rights in society. Society becomes happy with the feeling of safety and confidence that everyone observes each other's rights (Blanchflower, 2021). Differently, individuals cannot be happy when unsafe and feel threatened without anyone questioning their human rights. Therefore, increased life expectancy directly increases happiness.

Improved Social Support Increases Happiness Index

Social support is received from diverse dimensions ranging from emotional, informational, physical, social, and appraisal support. Emotionally, individuals like being appreciated as important, loved, and trusted because that creates a feeling of self-worth, leading to ultimate happiness. The opposite is observed when society observes individuals as worthless because that expression directly transmits into self-hatred and sadness. In another view, instrumental support shows self-worth and care whenever people receive aid and help when in need (Öztemel & Yıldız-Akyol, 2021). However, the needy become unhappy when society fails to give physical and social support. For example, people hit by floods require aid like food, and their painful outcry is heard when that fails. Therefore, social support to the needy increases happiness.

Again, informational support is significant in society whereby individuals give advice on certain subjects while others give suggestions. Individuals receiving

the information can judge and either use or discard the information offered and, therefore, be happy. Here, the informal support shows care and importance, and individuals cannot be unhappy, positing they were not advised in advance. Moreover, appraisal support is significant in showing people their importance, an action that leads to self-evaluation. Whenever individuals are appraised, they become happy knowing that their actions matter and are monitored (Bai et al., 2020). Sadness dwells when people realize that they did wrong when others see it but are quiet. Therefore, appraisal corrects mistakes, indicating that improved social support increases happiness.

High Generosity Increases Happiness

Generosity leads people to help the disadvantaged despite limited resources, leading to mutual happiness. The person helping and the one receiving the aid become happy through mental satisfaction. Generosity creates a sense of belonging that makes both the giving and receiving persons feel like part of the society. For example, picking a dropped object for somebody creates happiness for both. However, ignoring someone creates partial sadness that could otherwise be happiness if some generosity was shown. Again, generosity creates friends, therefore reducing loneliness. With an increased number of friends, issues are shared, advice is offered to solve existing challenges, and stress is reduced in the process (Aknin & Whillans, 2021). Individuals without generosity end up lonely, and issues that could be shared are kept building up to mental stress and sadness.

Moreover, high generosity leads to increased connection with the community, leading to social networks. The society offers support that ranges from physical to mental support that helps reduce mistakes and improve perfection. Whenever perfection is improved, and problems are shared, society becomes happy in general. The needy get generous aid, while generous individuals connect to society (Meer & Priday, 2021). However, cases of mental distress are likely to be minimized whenever the community develops individualism because everyone becomes unwilling to help, leading to high rates of sadness. With high generosity, happiness will increase in the society.

High Corruption Reduces Happiness Index

Corruption presents a diversion from legal or normal processes in society's operations. It is inversely related to happiness, such that high corruption rates lead to diminishing happiness. The person giving bribes may

be unhappy about losing in the corruption process for services or goods they could otherwise obtain for free. Again, general corruption reduces taxes, leading to low government revenues. As explained earlier, low taxes lead to less development, and the government is unable to complete public projects such as hospitals and general infrastructure. Overall, society ends up lacking government-sponsored essential services, leading to sadness and discomfort (Li & An, 2020). When corruption is avoided at this level, revenue collection is maximized, leading to the development and implementation of a happy society.

From another perspective, corruption leads to the unfair awarding of tenders and duties to unqualified individuals, actions that result in poor-quality projects. Ultimately, funds are wasted in repeating the projects, or society uses risky facilities that make the poor unhappy (Ali et al., 2020). For example, poor-quality bridges can be used even though it is risky, making society unhappy. However, evaded corruption presents quality projects that improve the quality of livelihood and increase happiness in society.

Conclusion

Every citizen in any country deserves happiness. It is thus important for the government to make sure their citizens are happy. To ensure citizens are happy, governments ensure they have a consistent collection of the happiness data on a large scale because it helps inform policy makers and help them recognize the deliverables that ought to be created to foster the well-being of its citizens. Some factors that increase the happiness index include the high GDP, generosity, high life expectancy, social support, and reduced corruption in the government.

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