



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WELL-BEING AND BUDDHIST MONKS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

**Poonam Prabha
Negi**

Research Scholar (Economics), Department of Evening Studies- MDRC, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the present work was to test for an association between Buddhist monks/nuns and well-being. The factors which can influence happiness and extent to which religion particularly Buddhism can influence happiness, a survey of Buddhist monks will be carried out. To achieve the set objectives, a primary survey was undertaken for collecting the relevant data with the help of a questionnaire. The subjects or respondents were chosen on random basis and primary data was collected from 100 respondents from different districts of Himachal Pradesh in 2016. For empirical investigation an "Ordered Probit model" was used. The positive influence of satisfaction of Buddhist monks/nuns on well-being, however, is direct and substantial: individuals report higher levels of life satisfaction, greater personal happiness, and very fewer negative consequences of life events.

KEYWORDS : Happiness, Well-being, Life Satisfaction, Buddhist Monks and Nuns

INTRODUCTION

The concept of well-being has been the basis of most economic analysis. Achieving well-being has been the concern of philosophers since Aristotle, and is, in many regards the essence of human existence. Religion is a global cultural phenomenon that has arguably been, and remains, one of the most powerful influences on humanity. Religion has been identified as one factor that may enhance happiness. Investigation of the factors that enhance happiness is the current focus of happiness research. Perhaps more than any other religion, Buddhism is associated with happiness. According to Buddhist thinking, happiness and sorrow are our own responsibility and completely within our control. Religious motivation is a construct that has been the focus of decades of research.

Well-being or happiness is much pursued by individuals and society in all cultures. There is a general assumption that income and happiness are directly related. Happiness research findings defy this generalisation, however, and show that increasing incomes are not accompanied by increasing happiness (Hirata 2006). The Buddha discovered this 2500 years ago. He did not reject outright the idea of possessing wealth but recognised that for the layperson a certain degree of wealth is essential to live a happy life. He did stress, however, that living an ethical and moral life more so than wealth but would bring genuine happiness. He rejected greed in accumulating wealth, being enslaved to materialism, and treating wealth as the ultimate goal (Wijeyawansa 2009).

Buddhism teaches people that the real source of happiness is inner peace. If our mind is peaceful, we shall be happy all the time, regardless of external conditions, but if it is disturbed or troubled in any way, we shall never be happy, no matter how good our external conditions may be. External conditions can only make us happy if our mind is peaceful. According to the Dalai Lama (2001), "the purpose of spiritual practice is to fulfil our desire for happiness". Buddhism indeed has much to say about happiness. Sogyal Rinpoche, a renowned Buddhist teacher, states there are two kinds of happiness: one based on material comfort and pleasures; the other on inner contentment and peace (Dorji 2010). The two are the physical and mental components of happiness, with the mental experience or the inner force playing a more powerful role.

The essence of Buddhism is to tame, transform, and conquer the human mind, for it is the root of everything, it is the creator of happiness and suffering. There is a similarity between the Buddha's teachings and Aristotle's concept of happiness. Aristotle indicated that if we want to be happy, we should cultivate and practice virtues through wisdom. Most of his ethic is devoted to an account of virtuous activities that he states constitute happiness. He describes happiness as "doing well combined with virtue or self sufficiency of

life or the pleasantest life with safety or prosperity of possessions and bodies with power to protect them and use them in action" (Irwin 1999). He also believed that power and fortune are aspects of happiness because they are the best providers of safety. The Dalai Lama states that Buddhists aim not merely for temporary happiness but for long-term results, they are also concerned with life after this life. This means that ultimate happiness in Buddhism is Nirvana, the cessation of suffering, the end of the cycle of birth-and-death. He further adds that spiritual practice, the practice of dharma, can bring both long term happiness and more inner strength day by day (Dalai Lama and Hopkins 2000).

The principle of interdependence is one of the most important principles of Buddhism (Negi 1999, Flanagan 2007, Dorji 2010). Buddhism teaches that we are all interdependent; what we do affects those around us. To create happiness, it is important that we not only reflect on the interrelationship of all things but also see ourselves clearly as a part of one larger system of causal relationships. Genuine happiness can be generated from developing a compassionate heart focused also on animals and the environment because they too are part of the same world. The root of all Buddhist practices is the heart of loving kindness and compassion (Gyatso 1984, Dalai Lama 2000 and 2001).

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study are to analyse the relationship between well-being and Buddhist monks/nuns and to analyse the satisfaction level with various aspects of life of Buddhist monks/nuns of Himachal Pradesh.

Methodology

For empirical analysis of the measurement of subjective well-being a primary survey of different districts of Himachal Pradesh was undertaken for collecting the relevant data with the help of a questionnaire and it was designed so as to ascertain or capture the maximum possible information. Efforts were made to collect information on more than 100 individuals in all, in the year 2016. To avoid various problems and for statistical reasons a numerical scale of 0-10 was used for the large part of the questionnaire. For empirical investigation an "Ordered Probit model" was used. The subjects of the respondents were chosen on random basis but different regions were selected for survey so as to include a diverse range of welfare group.

Analysis & Discussion of Results

Exhibit 1 shows that how satisfied and happy were the respondents with the life as a whole, the coefficient indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship between the satisfaction level and happiness of the monks and nuns. It is evident that the pseudo R² is high and the LR Statistic values shows that overall significant

level.

Exhibit: 1 Dependent Variable - Happiness

Explanatory Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-Statistic	Prob.	Pseudo R2	LR Statistic
Satisfied with life as a whole	0.299673	0.055381	5.411071	0.0000	0.111966	0.000000
How often feel stuck as a monk	0.123570	0.035198	3.510735	0.0004	0.044590	0.000372
Progress as a monk	0.333511	0.053605	6.221673	0.0000	0.147994	0.000000
Recommend people	0.222522	0.040759	5.459426	0.0000	0.110160	0.000000
Health status	0.184036	0.053763	3.423124	0.0006	0.041801	0.000569

The coefficient indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between happiness and the monks and nuns as they don't feel themselves stuck. It may be noted that the coefficient estimated in the Ordered Probit model does not represent the marginal effect of explanatory variable rather it indicates the relationship in terms of probability. The coefficient shows the positive and statistically significant relationship with happiness. The respondents are very much satisfied with the progress they have made as a monk/nun. The higher magnitude of pseudo R2 indicates the better explanatory power of the present specification and the LR Statistic represents the overall significance.

The respondents recommend people to pursue the path of happiness and become a monk/nun as they are satisfied with the progress they have made as a monk/nun. The coefficient is statistically significant. The higher magnitude of pseudo R2 indicates the better explanatory power of the present specification and the LR Statistic represents the overall significance. Satisfaction with health status showed statistically significant and positive influence on happiness. The pseudo R2 remained almost the same as was in the above specification. The LR Statistic indicates the overall significance value.

Exhibit: 2 Dependent Variable - Happiness

Explanatory Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-Statistic	Prob.	Pseudo R2	LR Statistic
Food	0.062238	0.154505	0.402823	0.6871	0.294303	0.000000
Clothing	0.151739	0.082690	1.835025	0.0665		
Housing	0.050199	0.142838	0.351442	0.7253		
Future security	0.097943	0.104723	0.935256	0.3497		
Leisure	0.106149	0.080035	1.326283	0.1847		

The satisfaction with various economic aspects was aggregated so as to simplify the analysis. The satisfaction with food, clothing, housing, future security and leisure turn out to be statistically insignificant. Satisfaction with education showed statistically significant and positive influence on happiness. Education might lead to enhancement in happiness through a number of ways. The education changes the personality of an individual and capable of influencing the level of happiness through personality change. Education is crucial to every aspect of social and economic development. Presently, the magnitude of pseudo R2 is 0.29, which is more than all the earlier specifications in this chapter. The relatively higher magnitude of pseudo R2 indicates the better explanatory power of the present specification and the LR Statistic

represents the overall significance.

Exhibit: 3 Dependent Variable - Happiness

Explanatory Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-Statistic	Prob.	Pseudo R2	LR Statistic
Overall social life	0.327506	0.058495	5.598849	0.0000	0.121179	0.000000
Friends/Neighbourhood	0.303275	0.070380	4.309124	0.0000	0.128143	0.000000
Changed social status	0.129382	0.069073	1.873120	0.0611		

Exhibit 3 shows result of satisfaction level with overall social life. The coefficient is statistically significant and shows a positive relationship between happiness and satisfaction with overall social life. The pseudo R2 is high and indicates the better explanatory power of the present specification and the LR Statistic represents the overall significance. The result of satisfaction with friends/neighbourhood and changed social status since childhood indicates that the coefficient of friends/neighbourhood is positive and statistically significant whereas the coefficient of changed social status since childhood was found to be statistically insignificant. The pseudo R2 is high and the LR Statistic indicates the overall significance value.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal in Buddhism is to achieve genuine happiness. The monks/nuns never feel stuck in their life. Satisfaction with the progress as a monk and also to recommend people to pursue the path of happiness at peace to become a monk/nun is statistically significant variable to determine happiness. Satisfaction with life as a whole is also statistically significant. The level of education found to be positive and statistically significant. Health satisfaction contributes positively to happiness. Satisfaction with social life, social status, friends and neighbourhood influences happiness positively whereas changed social status since childhood was found no influence on happiness.

Happiness is not only worldly pleasure derived from physical comfort but also an inner state of mind, which can be cultivated through the practice of compassion, generosity, ethics, meditation, patience, and wisdom. This can bring happiness to the individual and to society. Buddhism states that peace must first be developed in the individual mind before it can contribute to others and the happiness of the society. Thus, it is not primarily the outer conditions of our life that determine our happiness or suffering, it is our own mind that creates the cause for happiness or success.

References

- Dorji, L. C. (2010), "Suicide Rates Alarming", available at <http://www.bhutanoday.bt/p=3162>
- Flanagan, O. (2007), "The Really Hard Problem: Meaning in Material World", Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Gyatso, K.G. (1984), "Buddhism in the Tibetan Tradition: A Guide", London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hirata, J. (2006), "Happiness, Ethics, and Economics", PhD thesis (unpublished) St. Gallen: University of St. Gallen.
- Irwin, H. T. (1999). Aristotle's Ethics in Sherman, N. (Ed.). Aristotle's Ethics: Critical Essays New York, Rowan and Littlefield Publishers
- Lama, D. and Hopkins (2000), "The meaning of life: Buddhist perspective on cause and effect", Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publication.
- Lama, D. and Vreeland, N. (2001), "An Open Heart: Practicing Compassion in Everyday Life", New York: Little Brown and Company.
- Negi, D. S. (1999), "Emotions and their impact on health: An analysis of traditional Tibetan Buddhist and contemporary Western approaches", PhD thesis (unpublished) Atlanta, GA: Emory University.
- Wijeyawansa, W. L. (2009), "Buddhist Spectrum, Buddhism and Wealth", available at <http://www.dailynews.lk/2009/11/24/fea30.asp>