Economics

MEASURING HAPPINESS: A SURVEY OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT The aim of the present work was to test for an association between well-being and happiness. Investigation of the factors that enhance happiness is the current focus of happiness research. The factors which can influence happiness were carried out with the help of a questionnaire. To achieve the set objectives, a primary survey was undertaken for collecting the relevant data. The subjects or respondents were chosen on random basis and primary data was collected from 400 respondents from different districts of Himachal Pradesh in 2016. To avoid various problems and for statistical reasons a numerical scale of 0-10 will be used for the large part of the questionnaire. The majority of studies report higher level of life satisfaction, social and economic status, education etc on the numerical scale and have a positive influence on level of happiness and very fewer negative consequences of life events.

KEYWORDS : Well-being, Happiness, Life Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Achieving well-being has been the concern of philosophers since Aristotle, and is, in many regards the essence of human existence. One of the main motives of analysing and measuring economic well-being is that well-being is, at least in principle, a key target variable of economic policy. Well-being is a very broad term and can be influenced by many factors which can be economic, social, political, psychological, physiological etc. There can be trade-off or complementarily among the various components of well-being some of which are subjective and others objective or subjective as well as objective in nature. This makes the measurement of well-being a very complex issue.

It needs to be noted that the welfare analysis in early times never attempted an empirical measurement and thereby indirectly promoted the income of an individual to be used as an indicator of welfare at micro level. At the macro level, the income of an economy measured through Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross National Product (GNP) received acceptance as an indicator of the welfare level of an economy. Now it is well accepted that GDP is not a reliable measure of well-being.

While measuring GDP no value judgement is made (or help of no other source or agency is sought) about welfare influencing capacities of various goods and services, that is, no mention is made about welfare increasing, welfare decreasing and welfare neutral characteristics of goods and services produced and consumed in a particular year. This cannot be considered as a limitation of GDP/GNP as the basic purpose of measuring GDP is/was different. GDP basically is a measure of level of economic activity and it was well understood by its developers.

GDP measurement does not and need not take into account the various quantitative and qualitative differences that exist among different individuals/ nations in resource endowment. It just aims to measure the value of goods and services produced in a year. As per the definition of GDP this is not the limitation of GDP but it is definitely the limitation of existing theory of economic welfare which does not take various quantitative and qualitative differences among different individuals/ nations. Failure to do so seems to have: (1) prevented clear differentiation between the needs of human beings and the needs of economic system they live in ; and (2) an indepth analysis of the motive behind the production and consumption of various economic activities by different individuals/ nations. G D P also fails to serve as an accurate index of level of economic activity or economic progress as it does not adequately account for the goods and services that are not exchanged in the market, that is, goods and services of the non market sector including illegal activities. These are just limitation of GDP but they are equally applicable to any other

approach such as use of GDP as a measure of well-being, use of GDP per capita in the formulation of indices such as HDI etc.

The main problem encountered while analysing and measuring well-being is based on whether one should look at objectives or subjective economic conditions when making welfare comparison. It, therefore, becomes important to understand the relationship between objective and subjective indicators of well-being.

Objective of the Study

The main objectives of the study are to analyse the relationship between well-being and the income level which is generally associated with economic development and to analyse how factors other than income such as health status, future security etc. can influence the well-being of people 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 400 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. 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 and Discussion

The average level of self-reported happiness for all the respondents is presented in this Table 1. The data reveals that around 96 per cent of the respondents feel themselves above 5 on the happiness scale of 0-10. None of the respondents have reported their happiness level to be below 3 on the scale. Around 37 per cent of the individuals reported themselves to be at 7 and around 28 per cent of respondents covered themselves to be at 8 on the scale. This level on the scale indicates complete or perfect happiness.

Table 1: Distribution of Self Reported happiness

Rank on Scale	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
0	0 (0)	0 (0)
1	0 (0)	0 (0)
2	0 (0)	0 (0)
3	2 (0.005)	2 (0.005)
4	2 (0.005)	4 (0.01)
5	29 (0.072)	33 (0.082)
6	85 (0.21)	118 (0.29)

7	150 (0.37)	268 (0.66)
8	112 (0.28)	380 (0.95)
9	17 (0.042)	397 (0.99)
10	3 (0.007)	400 (1)

Note: Figures in parenthesis are proportion to total number of observations.

Satisfaction with Different Variable and level of Happiness
Table 2: Level of Happiness among different Variables

Scale	Life as a Whole (in %)	Financial Position (in %)	Contribution of Education (in
0	1 (0.25)	4 (1)	28 (7)
1	1 (0.25)	4(1)	17 (4.25)
2	2 (0.5)	2 (0.5)	10 (2.5)
3	1 (0.25)	14 (3.5)	12 (3)
4	8 (2)	22 (5.5)	15 (3.75)
5	36 (9)	55 (13.75)	27 (6.75)
6	33 (8.25)	54 (3.5)	38 (9.5)
7	85 (21.3)	81 (20.25)	49 (12.25)
8	84 (21)	75 (18.75)	73 (18.25)
9	62 (15.5)	42 (10.5)	43 (10.75)
10	87(21.7)	47 (11.75)	88 (22)

The life as a whole clearly reveals that most of the respondents have reported themselves to be at 7 or higher ranks on the scale of 0-10 and around 80 per cent of the respondents perceive themselves to be above 7 on the scale, that is, this level on the scale indicates complete or perfect happiness. Whereas around 20 per cent of the respondents covered in the sample reported them to be at 0-6 on the scale. The result reveals that so far as the financial position is concerned the shares of the respondents perceiving themselves to be above 5 on the scale are 88 per cent respectively.

The level of satisfaction with the contribution of education to economic or financial position is reflected where 80 per cent of the respondents have reported their level of satisfaction to be above 5 on the scale, which shows that respondents are satisfied with the contribution of education towards economic or financial position.

Table 3: Level of Happiness among different Variables

Scale	Health Status (in %)	Environment (in %)	Future Security (in %)	Expected Income (in %)
0	1 (0.25)	7 (1.75)	10 (2.5)	13 (3.37)
1	2 (0.5)	4 (1)	4 (1)	14 (3.63)
2	5 (1.25)	4 (1)	15 (3.75)	13 (3.37)
3	4 (1)	8 (2)	14 (3.5)	20 (5.19)
4	18 (4.5)	14 (3.5)	24 (6)	21 (5.45)
5	33 (8.25)	28 (7)	56 (14)	47 (12.2)
6	47 (11.75)	23 (5.75)	62 (15.5)	41 (10.64)
7	90 (22.5)	48 (12)	67 (16.75)	75 (19.48)
8	95 (23.75)	67 (16.75)	69 (17.25)	74 (19.22)
9	62 (15.5)	127 (31.75)	48 (12)	39 (10.12)
10	43 (10.75)	70 (17.5)	31 (7.75)	28 (7.27)

For the health status the most of the respondents have reported themselves to be at 5 or higher ranks on the scale of 0-10 and around 85 per cent of the respondents perceive themselves to be above 5 on the scale, that is, this level on the scale indicates very good health. Whereas around 15 per cent of the respondents covered in the sample reported them to be at 0-4 on the scale.

Satisfaction with environment reveals that most of the respondents have reported themselves to be at 5 or higher ranks on the scale of 0-10 and around 84 per cent of the respondents perceive themselves to be above 5 on the scale, that is, this level on the scale indicates complete or perfect happiness. Whereas around 9 per cent of the respondents covered in the sample reported them to be at 0-4 on the scale.

The level of satisfaction with the future security is reflected where around 18 per cent of the respondents were reported below 5 on the scale which means they were completely dissatisfied and 82 per cent the respondents were reported themselves to be above 5 on the scale which means they were completely satisfied with the future security. The level of satisfaction with the expected income is reflected where 67 per cent of the respondents have reported their level of satisfaction to be above 5 on the scale, which shows that respondents are satisfied with the expected income.

Conclusion
GDP or income is not real indicator of well-being and if income is considered the after a certain level it will decrease and has a limited influence on well-being. The variables on which the well-being depends are the health, environment, future security and expected income which are related to development. Besides income and other factors health is one of the important indicators of well-being for particular individual and for all society. The present and future income as well as the future security is depends on health. The future security is not only depends on health but also depends on environment. The income and expected income depends on health which is influence by environment.

Briefly the main finding of this paper is that income has a positive influence on happiness. The future security determines the level of happiness. Satisfaction with financial position was a much better explanatory variable. Satisfaction with married life is the significant variables to influence the level of happiness. Health satisfaction contributes positively to happiness. Satisfactions with the environment contribute positively and significantly to happiness.

It is to interest of the individual or the society or the government to create a conclusive environment for good health and sustainable income and development. Moreover our analysis also revealed that besides other variables happiness is also significantly influence by health, future security and expected income- variables which are greatly depends on environment - which is a pre-requisite for development as well as happiness and well-being.

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