

Perceived Sources of Happiness: Things Bhutanese think would make them live a truly happy life

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Abstract

The Royal Government of Bhutan is constitutionally mandated to promote enabling conditions for people to pursue happiness. Although investigator-determined sources of happiness such as nine domains and 33 indicators of GNH index are being discussed widely among the policymakers and used as planning tools, participant-generated sources of happiness has not been studied in detail, let alone featuring in policy discourse.

This study is aimed at answering two questions: a) what are the perceived sources of happiness for Bhutanese, and b) how does the perceived sources of happiness differ among people belonging to different socio-demographic subgroups.

Text data collected through nationally representative sample survey involving 8,871 Bhutanese aged 15 years or older using open-ended question was content analysed, classified and coded using inductive category development approach and deductive category application approach. Inter-rater reliability test using Cohen's kappa (κ) was conducted to ensure reliability of classification and coding process.

A total of 18,850 statements of the perceived sources of happiness reported by 7,141 respondents were classified into

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18 major categories and 42 sub-categories of sources of happiness. The most frequently cited source of happiness among 18 major categories is 'money and financial security' (19.6%) followed by 'health and wellbeing' (13.5%), 'asset ownership' (11.9%), 'family and family relationships' (11.2%), 'access to facilities and services' (11.1%), 'education, employment and future success of significant others' (8.8%), and 'education, employment and job satisfaction' (7.2%). The remaining 11 categories accounted for about 17 percent of the total responses.

A significant gender difference in citation of sources of happiness was observed. The results also reveal existence of significant difference between different socio-demographic status such as rural and urban, age, and education in citation of the sources of happiness.

Keywords: Gross National Happiness; GNH; Bhutan; participant-generated sources of happiness

1. Introduction

Bhutan is unique among the nation states in the practice of the plan development and measurement approach. The development framework of Gross National Happiness (GNH) guides the national plans and programme development (Gross National Happiness Commission [GNHC], 2016). The progress of Bhutan's development is also being tracked holistically through the use of unconventional measurement tool of GNH indicators and GNH index, a composite single number index (GNHC, 2009, p. 18; Ura, Alkire, Zangmo, & Wangdi, 2015, pp. 7-8).

Happiness as national development policy has been legitimised based on its root and foundation in constitutional document in

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Bhutan. The Article 9 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008 now mandates the government to promote enabling conditions for the people to pursue GNH (National Assembly of Bhutan [NAB], 2008). It, therefore, became all the more important to identify and understand the sources of happiness to enable policy-makers and planners to make informed decision.

Besides numerous studies which has identified several investigator determined criteria or conditions of happiness (Diener & Tay, 2013; Easterlin & Sawangfa, 2007; Jun, 2015; Spruk & Keseljevic, 2015; Collewet & Loog, 2015), there also exist several studies conducted to gather participant generated sources of happiness in different parts of the world (Róiste, 1996; Lu & Shih, 1997; Lee, Park, Uhlemann, & Patsula, 2000; Crossley & Langdrige, 2005; Kim, Kim, Cha & Lim, 2007; Jaafar et al., 2012; Primasari & Yuniarti, 2012; Leontiev & Rasskazova, 2014; Gunawardena, 2015; Sotgiu, 2016). However, as the individuals within as well as across culture derives happiness from different sources (Lee et al., 2000, p. 352), it is necessary for a separate study to identify and understand the sources of happiness from the perspectives of the Bhutanese people.

Although the investigator determined sources of happiness, in the form of nine domains and 33 indicators of GNH index (Ura et al., 2012; 2015), are being discussed among the policy makers and being used as planning tools, the respondent reported sources of happiness are rarely discussed in the policy dialogue in Bhutan. Moreover, since the priority of the people changes from time to time depending on the changes in socio-economic conditions and the stage of development, it is important to understand the factors that people believe will make them happy. Several explorative studies conducted in varying cultural and socio-economic settings (discussed in detail in literature review section) have recorded different sources of happiness reported by respondents. Therefore, this

paper attempts to find out the things Bhutanese think would make them live a truly happy life.

The results from this study can help policymakers to design practical public policies and programmes geared towards increasing the happiness of people. Currently, due to absence of any empirical evidence on reported sources of happiness, most government policies and programmes are aimed at developing conventional socio-economic aspects with a view towards increasing happiness of the people indirectly through these development aspects.

This proposed study was planned based on the premise that different people derive their happiness from different sources. Hence this study was intended to identify the perceived sources of happiness that people believe would enable them to live a truly happy life. To guide the research, the following broad research question was framed:

1. What are the perceived sources of happiness of Bhutanese?

The following two research objectives were formulated to guide towards achieving the aim of the research and answering the overall research question:

1. to find out perceived sources of happiness of the Bhutanese; and
2. to assess differences in citation of the sources of happiness among people belonging to different socio-demographic sub-groups

2. Literature review

Happiness is the ultimate goal of human beings and all other things are a means to this end (Thinley, 1999). There seem to be no disagreement on the importance of happiness in people's lives. For instance, it was reported that a survey conducted among 9,000 college students from 47 nations rated happiness as the most important value out of a list of 20 values that includes values such as "love, wealth, health, and getting into heaven" (Kim-Prieto, Diener, Tamir, Scollon, & Diener, 2005).

However, when it concerns the definition of what happiness is, there are lots of differing views. There is no singular definition of what constitutes happiness. Various authors define it either from the cognitive or affective aspects, or from both aspects. According to Lu and Shih (1997), happiness is understood as being satisfied with one's life as a whole and enjoying positive emotional state. This definition captures both cognitive component as well as affective component. However, Layard (2003) simply defines happiness as "feeling good" capturing just the affective aspects.

In order to find out how different people define happiness, a recent study conducted in 12 countries asked the question: *What is happiness for you?* to 2,799 respondents (Fave et al., 2016). The study broadly grouped the definitions into two categories – "psychological definitions" and "contextual definitions". With about 42 percent of the total definitions of happiness falling under the psychological definition category, it was the single most cited definition. Among the 10 contextual definitions of happiness, family and relationships were the two most cited definitions; with about 16 percent and 13 percent of the total responses falling under these two categories respectively.

In Bhutan, the closest Dzongkha¹ term for the word ‘happiness’ is ‘*ga-kid*’ (*dga’ skyid*). The term ‘*ga-kid*’, unlike the English term ‘happiness’, conveys much broader meaning. ‘*Ga*’ is usually associated with mental aspects of wellbeing (*smes dga*), while ‘*kid*’ is usually associated with physical wellbeing (*lus skyid*). Moreover, Bhutanese generally consider themselves to be happy if they are free from physical illnesses and mental worries. Ask any Bhutanese: *How are you?* And the chances are high that the answer would be: *lus lu na tsha med, sems lu sdug bsngal med pa dga’ tog to yod* which can be roughly translated as “I am happy without any physical illnesses and mental worries”. Similar conception of happiness seems to exist in other countries too, especially in Norway, Croatia, Hungary, and Brazil where more than 20 percent of respondents defined happiness from the perspectives of health (Fave et al., 2016, p. 9).

Despite having no common consensus on the definition of happiness, there is a surge in wellbeing and happiness research around the world, both by individual researchers as well as institutions. In Bhutan, the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH (CBS), an autonomous government research institute based in Thimphu, has been at the forefront in deepening the understanding of happiness. It has been conducting GNH surveys every three to five years since it first started its GNH survey in 2006. Among various other questions, the GNH survey questionnaire also includes a structured open-ended question designed to collect textual data on the perceived sources of happiness from the respondents. For the earlier three waves of the GNH survey the question asked was: *What are the six or seven things that you consider to be most important in leading to a happy and contented life?* The question

¹ Dzongkha is Bhutan’s national language.

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was slightly reworded for more clarity during the 2015 GNH survey and it reads: *Please think deeply and tell me, what are the most important things (sources) that will make you lead a truly happy life?*

Although these surveys generated huge data on the perceived sources of happiness, these textual data remains largely unanalysed to yield meaningful information, except for the pilot survey data which was categorised, coded and analysed, albeit briefly, by Choden, Kusago, and Shirai (2007). Besides this work, there was no concrete attempt to analyse these data. Moreover, there are no other studies conducted in Bhutan to find out the sources of happiness. Therefore, an analysis of the existing textual data on the sources of happiness collected by the 2015 GNH survey would be very useful for the CBS's future surveys in particular, and for planning and programme development in general. The uses of information on the sources of happiness would be more pronounced hereon because the draft guideline for the preparation of the twelfth FYP states that the long-term development goal of the country should be the maximisation of the GNH (GNHC, 2016).

As briefly noted in the previous section, there are several studies that identify the sources of happiness; both investigators determined sources of happiness and participant generated sources of happiness. However, no two studies yielded the same or similar results, confirming the belief that happiness is a culturally construed concept (Lee et al., 2000; Lu, Gilmour, & Kao, 2001; Veenhoven, 2012, p. 456) where different individuals derive happiness from different sources. Therefore, studies conducted in different places and in different cultural settings produced different list of the sources of happiness both in terms of content as well as the number of categories. A list of different categories of the sources of happiness generated by different studies is annexed for easy reference (see annexure 1).

In Bhutan, as mentioned already, the earliest and the only attempt to derive participant generated sources of happiness was made in 2007. Based on the data gathered from 348 adult Bhutanese as a part of the pilot GNH survey conducted in 2006-2007, Choden et al. (2007, p. 8) categorised and coded the perceived sources of happiness reported by respondents into 15 categories. Since this study formed only a small part of the larger survey report, the process adopted for categorisation and coding was not documented in detail. Therefore, in absence of the description of the categorisation and coding procedure adopted, the rigour of the categorisation and coding process adopted is not very clear.

Away from Bhutan, several similar studies were conducted to identify the perceived sources of happiness (Røiste, 1996; Lu & Shih, 1997; Lee et al., 2000; Crossley & Langdrige, 2005; Kim et al., 2007; Jaafar et al., 2012; Primasari & Yuniarti, 2012; Leontiev & Rasskazova, 2014; Gunawardena, 2015; Sotgiu, 2016). Røiste (1996) collected information on the sources of happiness from 515 study participants using the question: *What are your three greatest sources of happiness at the moment, from greatest to least great?* The list of the sources of happiness provided by respondents was then grouped into 14 categories of sources of happiness.

Similarly, Lu and Shih (1997) collected perceived sources of happiness through in-depth interview using two semi-structured question: *What is happiness?* and *What sort of things will make you happy?* They identified 180 different statements of the sources of happiness from the interview responses of 54 adult Taiwanese. These 180 statements were later categorised into nine broad categories.

To study cross-cultural differences in the sources of happiness Lee et al. (2000) conducted a pilot study involving 60 Canadian

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teacher-trainees to develop a list of the sources of happiness. They used four open-ended questions: *In general, what makes you happy?*, *What could make you happier?*, *Elaborate in detail on three memories in your life so far that have made you either happy or unhappy*, and *What are the three wishes you have for your life?* The information collected from the 60 participants were then content analysed that resulted in generation of 14 categories of the sources of happiness which they called it as “life goal”. These categories were then later used for classifying the sources of happiness collected using the same questions in their main study using matching samples from Canadian and Korean respondents.

Similarly, Kim et al (2007) conducted Focus Group Interviews (FGI) involving 61 adult Koreans. They used the following three open-ended questions for the FGIs: *“What makes you happy?”*, *“What could make you happier than now?”*, and *“In general, who is a happy person?”* The responses from FGIs were classified into 152 statements which in turn were grouped into 18 categories. Based on the initial FGIs and the pilot study, involving 548 adult Koreans to understand the importance people attach to these dimensions of a happy life on a 6-point scale, they identified 16-item sources of happiness called “Happy Life Inventory” through a nationwide survey involving 1503 participants. These 16 sources of happiness, or the factors, are extracted from 156 items using factor analysis.

In England, Crossley and Lagdrige (2005) conducted a small exploratory pilot study involving 20 participants selected through opportunity sampling to find out the reasons for happiness. The reasons of happiness, of respondent themselves and the people in general, as provided by these 20 respondents were categorised into 32 categories.

Leontiev and Rasskazova (2014) asked 76 Russian university students to report five things that make them happy and classified the responses into 21 categories. The category they developed is a slightly modified version of the categorisation

system used by Galati et al. (2006, as cited in Leontiev & Rasskazova, 2014).

The sources of happiness identified were different for different age groups even for studies conducted by using same questions in the same region with similar cultural setting. For instance, Jaafar et al. (2012), based on interviews involving adult population aged 21-60 years, categorised the sources happiness into 12 categories while Primasari and Yuniarti (2012), based on interviews involving high school students aged 14-18 years, categorised the sources of happiness into three broad groups which was further disaggregated into eight sub-categories.

Sotgiu (2016) developed a list of 26 categories of the sources of happiness through a questionnaire survey involving 178 Italian undergraduate psychology students. The respondents were asked to note down a minimum of five things that made them feel happy and the responses collected were later content analysed and categorised based on the initial works by Galati, Manzano, and Sotgiu (2006, as cited in Sotgiu, 2016). Unlike other earlier studies, this study also explored the sources of unhappiness. Although, majority of the sources of unhappiness were found to be semantic equivalent of the sources of happiness, they observed few distinct categories.

This study is unique from the studies discussed above on three dimensions: cultural context, sample size, and representativeness, and the methodology. Firstly, Bhutan is culturally distinct and may offer unique perspective of the happiness and how it is being construed. Moreover, Bhutan being vastly different in terms of socio-economic conditions, compared to countries where similar studies were already conducted, is expected to offer unique perspective on the sources of happiness.

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Secondly, almost all prior studies, which generated the list of the sources of happiness, were based on small exploratory studies using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Therefore, since the proposed study developed a list of the sources of happiness from responses collected through a nationally representative sample survey, it is expected to compile a comprehensive list of the sources of happiness.

And lastly, all earlier studies used either inductive category development approach or deductive category application approach. The proposed study used both the approaches which is expected to benefit from their combined strengths.

3. Methodology

The research adopted an explorative study design. The first phase of the study involved conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) of text data collected from a large cross-section of Bhutanese population aged 15 years and older using an open-ended question. After the text data has been categorised and coded, the second phase of the study involved quantitative-descriptive analysis of the data in the form of frequencies and proportions, which is referred to as the “quantitative analysis of qualitative data”. The study used raw data from an existing database.

The data was sourced from an existing database containing a large nationally representative sample survey conducted in 2015 by CBS for constructing 2015 GNH index. The 2015 GNH survey was conducted involving a representative sample of 8,871 Bhutanese who were 15 years or older during the day of the interview. The survey covered all the 20 Dzongkhags². The survey was designed to be nationally representative and also representative at rural-urban as well as Dzongkhag levels

² ‘Dzongkhag’ is a Dzongkha term for the district.

(CBS, 2016). The survey adopted multistage stratified random cluster sampling design and the sample selection was done in three stages – selection of rural chiwogs or urban blocks as PSU in the first stage, selection of households from selected PSUs in the second stage, finally selection of individuals who were above 15 years or older from the selected households. The total sample size of 8000, determined to yield representative estimates at rural and urban, and at the Dzongkhag level, was allocated to each Dzongkhag in the proportion proportional to the size of each Dzongkhag's population. However, for Dzongkhags that received less than 300 samples due to relatively small population size, the sample was increased to a minimum of 300 samples, except for Gasa Dzongkhag which was allocated only 200 samples to ensure reliable comparability with the results of 2010 GNH survey. Therefore, the final sample size was determined at 8,871 as noted above.

Because of the non-response and also due to exclusion of observations containing incomplete information, the final database contains only 7,153 sample of Bhutanese aged 15 years and older. The data was collected through face-to-face interview by trained enumerators under the supervision of researchers from CBS. The data collection took place from January 2016 to May 2016.

Of the 7,153 respondents, data on key variable for seven respondents were missing. Further five respondents were excluded from the analysis because of presence of unreadable or ambiguous data. Therefore, the final sample included for this analysis contains 7,141 respondents.

In terms of sex, 2,960 (41%) were males and 4,178 (59%) females. Three respondents reported their sex as 'Other'. By area of residence, 72 percent were from rural areas and remaining 28 percent from urban areas. The age of

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respondents ranged from 15 to 96 years, with mean and median age of 40.29 and 38 years respectively. Majority of the respondents has no formal education (58%).

The main variable of interest to this study, i.e., the sources of happiness, was collected using open-ended structured question: “*Please think deeply and tell me, what are the most important things (sources) that will make you lead a truly happy life?*” Respondents were asked to report a maximum of five things that they think would make them live a truly happy life.

Most people reported two sources of happiness (37.33%) followed by three sources (29.95%). About 13 percent of the respondents reported only one source of happiness while 14 percent and six percent reported four and five sources, respectively.

Of the 35,730 (7,146 respondents times five sources) total possible responses, the survey recoded 18,867 responses. However, a total of 17 responses were dropped from the final analysis because of presence of unreadable or incomprehensible data. The final category of the sources of happiness is developed based on 18,850 responses.

The data classification and coding preceded quantitative-descriptive analysis. In order to develop a list of the sources of happiness through inductive category development approach (Mayring, 2000), a subsample of 20 percent ($n = 1,431$) of the total respondents was randomly selected using simple random sampling (SRS) method. All the response items reported by these randomly selected respondents were read and reread to find out different themes. The themes that emerged from individual response items were classified into 42 categories. These categories capture higher conceptual level meanings than the individual response items. In order to make the categories into a manageable number, these 42 categories were then further grouped into 18 major categories to enable a meaningful data analysis and interpretation.

In the second stage, a deductive category application of content analysis was conducted for the response items of the rest 80 percent ($n = 5,722$) of the respondents. However, with the view towards developing a comprehensive list of the sources of happiness, it was decided to add new categories if distinctively new themes emerged from the response items of the remaining 80 percent of respondents. However, no new distinctive themes emerged during deductive category application approach to content analysis. To speed up the data categorisation and coding process in the second stage, statistical software, STATA version 14, was used in classifying and coding different responses.

Although, each response item was supposed to capture only one idea or construct, some response statement contains two or more distinct ideas or constructs in one statement. Ideally, the response item that contains two or more distinct ideas or constructs in one statement should have been bifurcated into separate units. This was not possible in this study due to time limitation. Therefore, for example, the response item "*having good drinking water supply and farm road accessibility*" which contains two unique constructs – "water supply" and "farm road" – was considered as one. And the code was assigned for the construct appearing first; in this example access to "*Drinking water*" was chosen and "*Farm road*" was ignored.

In order to enhance the reliability of categorisation, a sub-sample of 10 percent ($n = 572$) from the remaining 80 percent of the respondents were drawn using SRS. The responses of these 10 percent of the respondents were classified and coded by a second coder using the same coding categories developed in the first stage following inductive category development approach. An inter-rater reliability test, using Cohen's kappa (κ), was conducted and the inter-rater agreement score greater than 0.80 was decided to be taken as an acceptable threshold for this study. The κ between 0.81 – 0.99 is generally

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interpreted as having ‘almost perfect agreement’ (Viera & Garrett, 2005).

The coefficient of agreement for all five sources of happiness coding was above 0.83, which indicates very good level of agreement between the two coders. The κ value and associated significance levels are presented below for all five sources of happiness (Table 1).

Table 1: *Kappa statistics for five sources of happiness coded by two independent coders*

	Agreement	Expected Agreement	Kappa	Std. Err.	Z	Prob>Z
Happiness source 1	88.95%	11.65%	0.8749	0.0149	58.70	0.0000
Happiness source 2	92.20%	11.55%	0.9118	0.0156	58.32	0.0000
Happiness source 3	88.59%	10.76%	0.8721	0.0195	44.68	0.0000
Happiness source 4	86.51%	11.09%	0.8482	0.0307	27.66	0.0000
Happiness source 5	85.37%	13.56%	0.8307	0.0582	14.26	0.0000

To ensure descriptive validity, other researchers were consulted to get the multiple perspectives on the categories developed from the item responses. This process helped in reducing ambiguity and overlap among the categories which in turn ensured mutual exclusiveness of the categories developed.

Although the interpretive validity is usually ensured by getting feedbacks from the research participant, or by contacting research participants for additional information or clarification, it was not possible to perform either of these two options as the survey was conducted some two years back. However, the categories developed from the responses were kept as close to the actual response (source material) as possible to ensure interpretive validity.

After the data was cleaned, classified, and coded, quantitative-descriptive analysis was conducted. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and proportions are presented for overall as well

as at different socio-demographic subgroup levels are presented in the results section. The STATA statistical software, version 14, was used for data preparation and data analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

Following the two-stage data coding process described above, statements of the perceived sources of happiness reported by respondents were classified into 42 categories of the sources of happiness. These 42 categories were further aggregated into 18 major categories (Table 2). While the major categories are expected to provide broad picture of the construal of happiness, the sub-categories will help in devising practical policies and actionable programmes towards enhancing happiness.

Although the categories like ‘money, wealth, or financial security’, ‘health’, ‘relationships, or friendship’, ‘family’, and ‘spirituality, religion, or faith’ appeared in almost all other studies conducted elsewhere (Lu & Shih, 1997; Lee et al., 2000; Crossley & Langdrige, 2005; Kim et al., 2007; Jaafar et al., 2012; Primasari & Yuniarti, 2012; Leontiev & Rasskazova, 2014; Gunawardena, 2015; Sotgiu, 2016), categories such as ‘employment, education, and future success of significant others’, ‘access to facilities and services’ and ‘agricultural support and productivity’ are unique to this study. While the former can be explained by the collectivistic attitude associated with the Asian culture where the tendency to seek personal happiness is lower compared to western individualistic society (Uchida, Norasakkunkit, & Kitayama, 2004, p. 230), the latter two may be due to the stage of Bhutan’s current economic development. Although the access to most public facilities and services has been immensely improved since Bhutan embarked on the planned development since 1961, there are

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places where access to public facilities is inhibited due to geographical or climatic conditions. The citation of 'agricultural support and productivity' may be due to a large majority of Bhutanese who still live off the land. Other unique sources of happiness that emerged from this study are 'governance, leadership, & welfare' and 'national peace and security'. These two sources did not feature in any of the prior studies conducted elsewhere.

Table 2: *The perceived sources of happiness, Bhutan 2015*

Code	Major categories of happiness	Code	Sub-categories of happiness
01	Family & Family Relationships	0101	Family
		0102	Family support
		0103	Family relationships
02	Community Relationships	0201	Community relationships
		0202	Friendship
		0203	Safety in the community
03	Health & Well-being	0301	Health (self)
		0302	Mental peace
04	Health, Well-being & Happiness of Significant Others	0401	Health (family)
		0402	Happiness of family members
05	Money & Financial Security	0501	Financial security
		0502	Basic needs
		0503	Business success
06	Asset Ownership	0601	House
		0602	Land
		0603	Vehicle
		0604	Agricultural machineries & Other HH equipment
		0605	Livestock
07	Education, Employment & Job Satisfaction	0701	Employment & Job satisfaction
		0702	Education/learning/knowledge (self)
08	Education, Employment & Future Success of Significant Others	0801	Education/learning/knowledge (Children/other family member)
		0802	Employment & Job satisfaction (Children/other family members)
		0803	Children's future
09		0901	Drinking water

Code	Major categories of happiness	Code	Sub-categories of happiness
	Access to Facilities & Services	0902 0903 0904 0905 0906 0907	Health facilities Education facilities Electricity Road & related infrastructure Transport & communication facilities Other facilities/infrastructure/services, n.e.c
10	Agricultural Productivity & Support	1001 1002 1003 1004	Agricultural productivity Agriculture/Livestock facilities & services Irrigation water Crop protection from wild animals
11	Independence & Autonomy	1101	Independence/autonomy
12	Spiritual & Religious Pursuits	1201	Spiritual/religious activities
13	Peace and Security of the Country	1301	Peace & security of the country
14	Governance, Leadership, & Welfare	1401	Governance, Leadership, & Welfare
15	Principles & Responsibilities	1501	Principles & responsibility
16	Social & Leisure Activities	1601	Social & leisure activities
17	Clean Environment	1701	Clean environment
18	Others, n.e.c	1801	Others
Note: n.e.c = not elsewhere classified			

The most frequently cited source of happiness among 18 major categories of the sources of happiness is ‘money and financial security’. Of the 18,850 statements or responses, 19.6 percent were related to ‘money and financial security’. Other frequently cited sources of happiness are ‘health and wellbeing’ (13.5%), ‘asset ownership’ (11.9%), ‘family and family relationships’ (11.2%), ‘access to facilities and services’ (11.1%), ‘education, employment and future success of significant others’ (8.8%),

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and 'education, employment and job satisfaction' (7.2%). The remaining 11 categories accounted for about 17 percent of the total responses.

The citation of the 'education, employment and future success of significant others' as a source of happiness is unique to Bhutan. The fact that this has even higher citation compared to one's own 'education, employment and job satisfaction' suggest that Bhutanese are more other-oriented and derive happiness from the successes of significant others. The citation of different sources of happiness expressed as a percentage of total responses is presented below (see Fig. 1).

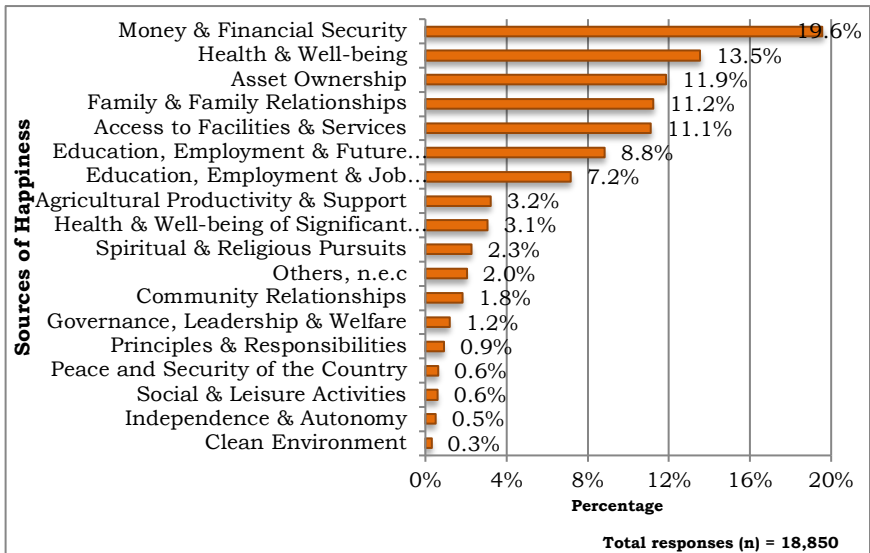


Figure 1: Distribution of the sources of happiness (as % of total responses), Bhutan: 2015

The study also found some significant gender differences in terms of citation of sources of happiness. Of the 18 sources of happiness, significant difference between males and females

was observed in 15 categories with level above 0.05. Although the most cited sources of happiness for both male and female is 'money and financial security', relatively fewer males cited it as the source of happiness compared to females. For instance, about 21 percent of the total responses of females is 'money and financial security' compared to 18 percent for the males (see Table 2 and Annexure 2). This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Fave et al. (2016) where they reported men as being more likely to refer to material conditions while defining happiness though the study is slightly different.

Significantly higher proportion of females compared to males cited 'family and family relationships', 'health and well-being', 'health and well-being of significant others', and 'education, employment and future success of significant others' as sources of happiness. The higher citation of sources of happiness such as 'health and well-being of significant others' and 'education, employment and future success of significant others' by females indicate women's motherly nature in ensuring the well-being and happiness of family members. Moreover, this result also corroborates with earlier findings where women are found to be more other-oriented than men (Kite, Deaux, & Haines, as cited in Cuddy et al., 2015; Wood & Eagly, as cited in Cuddy et al., 2015) although such differences depends on nation's cultural values (Cuddy et al., 2015).

On the other hand, more males, compared to females, cited 'community relationships', 'asset ownership', 'access to services and facilities', 'agricultural productivity and support', 'peace and security of the country', and 'governance, leadership, and welfare' as the sources of happiness.

Sources of happiness such as 'education, employment and job satisfaction', 'independence and autonomy', and 'spiritual and religious pursuits' seem to be gender neutral. There is no

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statistically significant difference between males and females in the proportion of people citing the latter three sources of happiness (see Table 3).

Table 3: Frequency of citation of different sources of happiness, by sex, Bhutan: 2015

Sources of happiness	Male (n =2,960)		Female (n=4,178)		z
	f	p	f	p	
Family & Family Relationships	740	0.09	1,377	0.12	-6.52***
Community Relationships	177	0.02	169	0.02	3.67***
Health & Well-being	913	0.12	1,637	0.15	-6.32***
Health & Well-being of Significant Others	216	0.03	364	0.03	-2.13**
Money & Financial Security	1,408	0.18	2,280	0.21	-4.61***
Asset Ownership	1,040	0.13	1,196	0.11	5.07***
Education, Employment & Job Satisfaction	569	0.07	784	0.07	0.40
Education, Employment & Future Success of Significant Others	563	0.07	1,104	0.10	-7.44***
Access to Facilities & Services	1,057	0.14	1,036	0.09	8.83***
Agricultural Productivity & Support	314	0.04	295	0.03	5.10***
Independence & Autonomy	38	0.00	59	0.01	-0.47
Spiritual & Religious Pursuits	196	0.03	234	0.02	1.72*
Peace and Security of the Country	71	0.01	49	0.00	3.93***
Governance, Leadership & Welfare	145	0.02	81	0.01	6.94***
Principles & Responsibilities	91	0.01	82	0.01	2.97**
Social & Leisure Activities	63	0.01	52	0.00	2.89**
Clean Environment	36	0.00	22	0.00	3.18***
Others, n.e.c	190	0.02	196	0.02	3.10***
Total (citations)	7,827	1.00	11,017	1.00	

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

The results also reveal the existence of significant difference between rural and urban respondents in citation of the sources of happiness, except 'spiritual or religious pursuits' (Table 4). More rural respondents, as compared to urban, cited 'asset ownership', 'access to facilities and services', and 'agricultural productivity' as the sources of happiness. On the other hand, more urban residents reported 'education, employment, and

job satisfaction', 'family and family relationships', 'health and wellbeing', and 'clean environment' than rural respondents.

Table 4: Frequency of citation of different sources of happiness, by area of residence, Bhutan: 2015

Sources of Happiness	Rural		Urban		z
	(n = 5,121)		(n = 2020)		
	f	p	f	p	
Family & Family Relationships	1418	0.10	700	0.14	-6.84***
Community Relationships	227	0.02	119	0.02	-3.20***
Health & Well-being	1730	0.13	823	0.16	-6.61***
Health & Well-being of Significant Others	410	0.03	170	0.03	-1.36**
Money & Financial Security	2,646	0.19	1,043	0.21	-2.19**
Asset Ownership	1,792	0.13	445	0.09	7.90***
Education, Employment & Job Satisfaction	796	0.06	557	0.11	-12.34***
Education, Employment & Future Success of Significant Others	1152	0.08	515	0.10	-3.91***
Access to Facilities & Services	1,960	0.14	133	0.03	22.43***
Agricultural Productivity & Support	598	0.04	11	0.00	14.17***
Independence & Autonomy	56	0.00	41	0.01	-3.44***
Spiritual & Religious Pursuits	315	0.02	115	0.02	0.05
Peace and Security of the Country	78	0.01	42	0.01	-2.02**
Governance, Leadership & Welfare	152	0.01	74	0.01	-2.01**
Principles & Responsibilities	113	0.01	60	0.01	-2.34**
Social & Leisure Activities	71	0.01	44	0.01	-2.77**
Clean Environment	28	0.00	30	0.01	-4.28***
Others, n.e.c	248	0.02	138	0.03	-3.99***
Total	13,790	1.00	5,060	1.00	

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p <0.01

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The results also indicate association between the age and sources of happiness. For respondents between 20–64 years of age, ‘money and financial security’ is the most frequently cited source of happiness. This could be because it is the age when people are responsible for the material wellbeing of other family members, especially children and old age dependents. On the other hand, ‘education, employment and job satisfaction’ is the most frequently cited source of happiness for those under 20 years of age. For those who are 70 years and above, ‘health and wellbeing’ is the most frequently cited sources of happiness (see Annexure 3). This could be because with age, the health of individuals deteriorate and the increasing health issues related to aging may be impacting ones overall sense of wellbeing.

The citation of particular source of happiness changes with the change in age. For instance, about 29 percent of those in 15-19 years old reported ‘education, employment and job satisfaction’ as the source of happiness while less than two percent of those who are 75 years and older reported the same (as represented by dotted line in the Fig. 2). The reverse is the case with the ‘spiritual and religious pursuits’ where higher proportion of those in older age groups, as compared to younger generation, reported it as the source of happiness (as represented by line with triangle marker in the Fig. 2). For instance, only about 0.2 percent of those in 15-19 years old reported ‘spiritual and religious pursuits’ as source of happiness while over 10 percent of those who are 75 years and older reported the same.

The ‘education, employment, and future success of significant others’ as a source of happiness is reported more by those aged 25 – 59 compared to below 25 and above 59 years of age (as represented dotted line with square marker in the Fig. 2). Similarly, relatively higher people from middle age groups reported ‘money and financial security’ as the source of happiness compared to younger and older age groups.

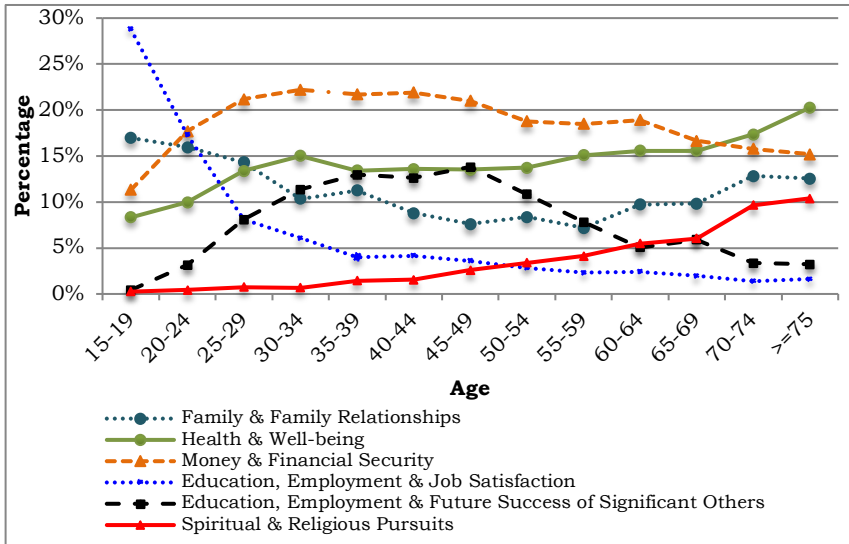


Figure 2: Citation of different sources of happiness (as % of total responses), by age, Bhutan: 2015

The citation of sources of happiness also differs by the level of education of respondents. Except for respondents with higher secondary education and postgraduate level education, ‘money and financial security’ is the most frequently cited sources of happiness. The most frequently cited source of happiness for those with higher secondary education is ‘employment, education, and job satisfaction’ while ‘family and family relationships’ is the most cited source of happiness for those with postgraduate level education (see Annexure 4). The citation of selected sources of happiness by educational level is also presented graphically (see Fig. 3).

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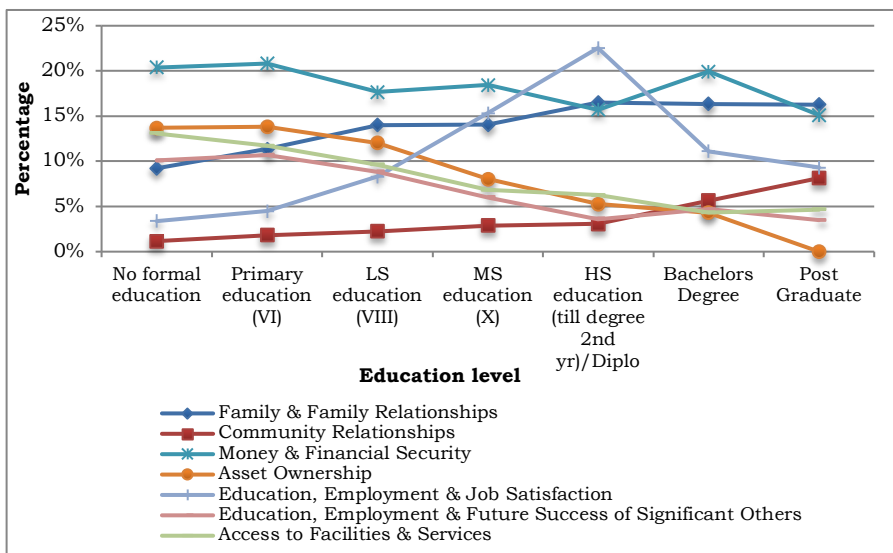


Figure 3: Citation of different sources of happiness (as % of total responses), by education level, Bhutan: 2015

5. Recommendations

The results indicate significant differences in citation of the sources of happiness by gender, area of residence, age and level of education of people. For targeted policy and programme intervention towards increasing happiness, these differences should be noted while planning development programme. Specifically, the continued economic development targeted at poverty reductions, enhanced access to improved health care services, and improved access to other public services would increase people's happiness as these are the most frequently cited sources of happiness.

The results, unlike studies conducted elsewhere, showed that significant number of respondents believe that ‘education, employment, and future success of significant others’ would make them happy. This indicates the importance parents attach to children’s education. Similar results were also reported where Koreans were found to attach very high importance to children’s education (Kim et al., 2007, p. 284). Therefore, strengthening education system and creating employment opportunities for children may lead to increase in happiness of both parents as well as children.

A follow up study to assess the importance people attach to each of these categories of sources of happiness using a Likert scale type response options may be carried out as done elsewhere (Lee et al., 2000; Kim et al, 2007) to prioritise while program planning and implementation.

Some of the sources of happiness such as clean environment, independence and autonomy, social and leisure activities, and peace and security of the country were cited by very few people. Nonetheless, these factors are very important for people to pursue happiness, and therefore, should not be neglected. Lee et al. (2000) found that most frequently cited categories were also the ones that scored least on the importance rating indicating that not all things that people think important necessarily give them happiness and vice versa.

6. Limitations of the study

Although, the response item that contains two or more distinct ideas or constructs together should have been bifurcated into separate units; this was not possible in this study due to time limitation. For example, the response item “*having good drinking water supply and farm road accessibility*” which contains two unique constructs – “water supply” and “farm

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road” – was considered as one. And the code was given for the construct appearing first; in this example access to “*Drinking water*” was chosen and “*Farm road*” was ignored. However, since the database contain very few numbers of such cases, it will not significantly affect the results as the question was designed to capture only one idea or construct.

The relevance of the study findings, for some cases, may have been lost due to the long intervening time period between the data collection and the analysis and report production. Since the data is already over two years old, some of the findings many not hold true due to rapid socio-economic changes that took place during these intervening years in Bhutan.

The survey, from which the data for the current study was sourced, had not included those below 15 years of age in the sample. Therefore, the views of younger generation of Bhutanese may not be represented and would require additional data collection to adequately capture the views of children below 15 years of age.

And finally, these findings are based on people’s perception of what things will make them live a happy life. Since people are limited in their thoughts, fulfillment of these conditions or sources of happiness may not bring them lasting happiness.

8. Conclusions

The interest in understanding human happiness and how public policy can influence it has been growing around the world. However, most studies tried to understand happiness through the study of socio-economic and personal characteristics associated with the subjectively assessed happiness measures. This study, therefore, attempted to understand the things that Bhutanese think would make them happy: the perceived sources of happiness. Although many such studies has been conducted in different parts of the

world, this study add new insights into the understanding of the sources of happiness from the perspectives of Bhutanese people who belong to a different socio-economic milieu.

Some of the sources of happiness reported here such as money, health, relationships, family, and spirituality share similarities with those found elsewhere, sources of happiness such as employment, education, and future success of significant others, access to facilities and services, and agricultural support and productivity are unique to this study.

The data also suggest that the sources of happiness vary by socio-demographic background of people. Therefore, it would be important to see how the sources of happiness vary based on other economic and social conditions of the people. Such study would be helpful for designing public policies aimed towards increasing happiness of people.

And finally, since CBS already possesses three older databases corresponding to year 2007, 2008, and 2010 containing comparable information, it would be interesting to conduct similar studies to track the changes in citation of the sources of happiness.

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Appendices

Annexure 1: *Lists of the sources of happiness identified by different studies around the world*

Author/ Year	List of the sources of Happiness	Author/ Year	List of the sources of Happiness
Choden, Kusago, and Shirai (2007).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial security 2. Good family life and wellbeing of family 3. Good health 4. Resources for farm production 5. Access to basic facilities 6. Personal development and education 7. Faith and spiritual pursuits 8. Employment & job satisfaction 9. Good governance & welfare system 10. Good inter-personal relations 11. Principles & responsibility 12. Community vitality 13. Country's peace & security 14. Recreation 15. Mental peace 	Lu and Shih (1997)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gratification of need for respect 2. Harmony of interpersonal relationships 3. Satisfaction of material needs 4. Achievement at work 5. Being at ease with life 6. Taking pleasure at others' expense 7. Sense of self-control and self-actualization 8. Pleasure and positive affect 9. Health.

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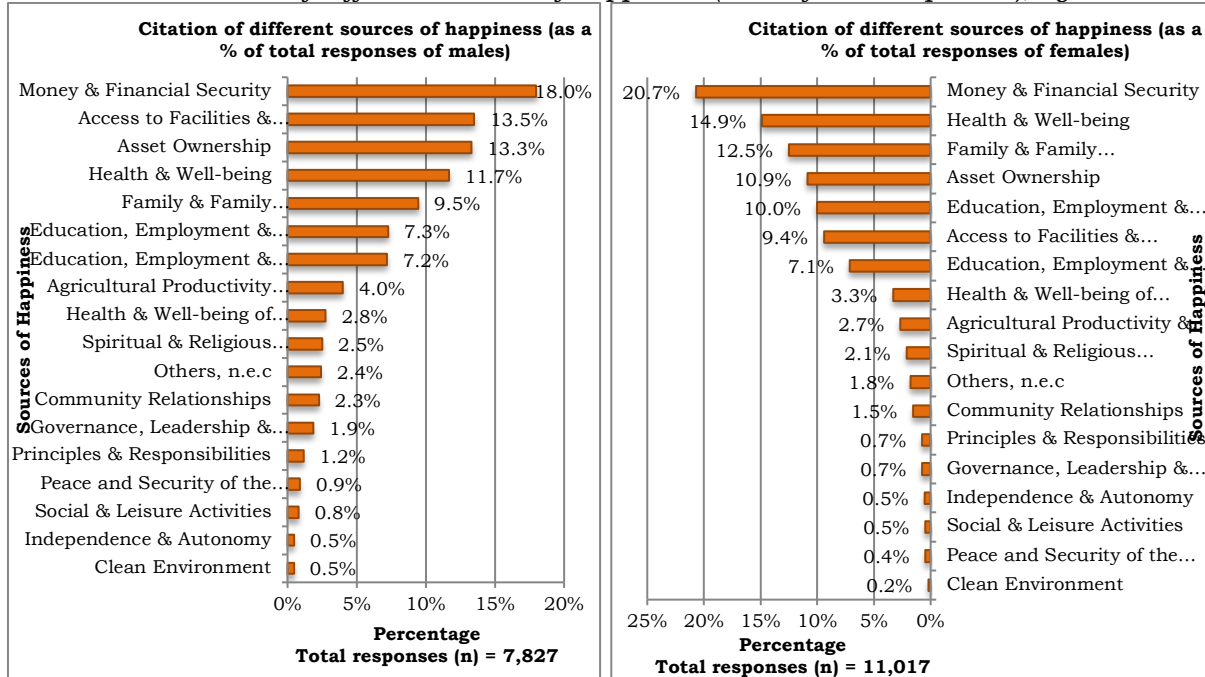
<p>Lee, Park, Uhlemann, and Patsula (1999)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family 2. Relationship with significant others 3. Financial/materialistic 4. Independence/autonomy 5. Spiritual/religious 6. Goal/mission in life 7. Stress-free, worry-free life 8. Health 9. Competence/ability 10. Recognition by others 11. Knowledge 12. Altruistic behaviour 13. Creativity 14. Artistic 		<p>Crossley and Langdridge (2005)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comfortable financially 2. Being rich 3. Close family 4. Self respect 5. Self confidence 6. Hobbies 7. Sports 8. Physically fit 9. Healthy/Well 10. Close relationships 11. No bereavement 12. Network of friends 13. Constantly challenged 14. Travelling 15. Sexual activity 16. Good social life 17. Being liked 18. Choices/Career 19. Physically attractive 20. Content in religion 21. Helping others 22. Live long time 23. Well fed 24. Free of stress 25. No family problems 26. Always improving 27. Having meaning 28. Use of alcohol/drugs 29. Loved by loved ones 30. Romantic love 31. Daily occupation 32. Weather
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<p>Kim, Kim, Cha, and Lim (2007)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Money 2. Self-acceptance 3. Leisure 4. Social status 5. Purpose in life 6. Autonomy 7. Social environment 8. Religion 9. Helping others 10. Relationship with children 11. Relationship with parents 12. Intimate relationship 13. Relationship with others 14. Appearance 15. Positive attitude 16. Health 		<p>Jaafar et al. (2012).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family 2. Social relationships/intra and interpersonal relationships 3. Self autonomy/freedom/self –fulfillment 4. Career/Achievement at work 5. Wealth 6. Recreation needs 7. Absence from negative feelings 8. Education 9. National prosperity, peace 10. Religious/spiritual needs 11. Health 12. Physiological/Basic needs
<p>Primasari and Yuniarti (2012)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family 2. Achievement 3. Spirituality 4. To love and be loved 5. Friends 6. Leisure time 7. Money 8. Others 		<p>Gunawardena (2015)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family 2. Career / Achievement at work 3. Wealth 4. Self autonomy/freedom / self – fulfillment 5. Social Relationships/intra and interpersonal relationships 6. Absence from negative feelings 7. Recreation needs 8. Health 9. Education 10. Religious / Spiritual needs 11. National prosperity, peace 12. Physiological / Basic needs

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Leontiev and Rasskazova (2014)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health 2. Family 3. Money 4. Friendship 5. Love 6. Work 7. Success 8. Self-actualisation 9. Values 10. Pleasant events 11. Positive emotions 12. Good effective relationships 13. Serenity and well-being 14. Partner 15. Faith 16. Helping others 17. Sex 18. Absence of unpleasant events 19. Home 20. Hobbies 21. Culture and knowledge 		Sotgiu, (2016)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family 2. Friendship 3. Love 4. Health 5. Self-actualization 6. Good social relationships 7. Success 8. Self-knowledge 9. Money 10. Values and virtues 11. Goals 12. Partner 13. Hobbies and interests 14. Serenity/well-being 15. Positive emotions 16. Pleasant events 17. Work 18. Knowledge/education 19. Helping others 20. Environmental mastery 21. Autonomy 22. Absence of unpleasant events 23. Faith 24. Pets 25. Luck 26. Sex
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Annexure 2: Citation of different sources of happiness (as % of total responses), by sex



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Annexure 3: *Citation of different sources of happiness (as % of total responses), by age*

Source of happiness	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	>=75	Total
Family & Family Relationships	17.0	16.0	14.3	10.4	11.2	8.8	7.6	8.4	7.2	9.7	9.8	12.8	12.5	11.2
Community Relationships	3.7	3.0	1.6	1.5	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.2	1.2	0.3	1.8
Health & Well-being	8.3	10.0	13.4	15.0	13.4	13.6	13.5	13.7	15.1	15.6	15.6	17.4	20.3	13.5
Health & Well-being of Significant Others	4.4	3.3	3.3	2.8	2.8	3.7	2.5	3.0	2.1	2.8	3.5	2.8	3.7	3.1
Money & Financial Security	11.3	17.7	21.2	22.2	21.7	21.9	21.0	18.8	18.5	18.9	16.6	15.8	15.2	19.6
Asset Ownership	5.8	9.2	11.3	12.1	13.1	12.9	13.0	13.4	14.2	13.1	12.7	11.4	11.2	11.9
Education, Employment & Job Satisfaction	28.8	17.3	8.1	6.1	4.0	4.2	3.6	2.8	2.3	2.4	2.0	1.4	1.6	7.2
Education, Employment & Future Success of Significant Others	0.4	3.2	8.1	11.4	13.0	12.6	13.8	10.8	7.8	5.1	5.9	3.4	3.2	8.8
Access to Facilities & Services	7.8	9.2	10.1	10.0	10.3	10.3	11.3	12.6	15.5	14.4	17.1	11.0	13.3	11.1
Agricultural Productivity & Support	0.4	1.5	1.7	2.8	2.6	3.0	3.8	5.8	6.0	6.4	4.2	6.1	3.5	3.2
Independence & Autonomy	1.6	1.4	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.5
Spiritual & Religious Pursuits	0.2	0.4	0.8	0.7	1.5	1.5	2.6	3.4	4.1	5.5	6.1	9.7	10.4	2.3
Peace and Security of the Country	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.9	1.1	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.6	1.6	0.6
Governance, Leadership, & Welfare	0.7	1.3	0.8	0.9	0.7	1.5	1.8	1.7	1.2	1.5	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.2
Principles & Responsibilities	3.6	1.9	0.9	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.9
Social & Leisure Activities	1.7	1.1	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.8	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	1.4	0.5	0.6
Clean Environment	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3
Others, n.e.c	3.3	2.7	2.0	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.4	2.4	1.5	1.5	3.0	1.1	2.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Annexure 4: Citation of different sources of happiness (as % of total responses), by education level

Source of happiness	No formal education	Primary education	LS education	MS education	HS education	Bachelor's Degree	Post Graduate	Total
Family & Family Relationships	9.2	11.4	14.0	14.1	16.5	16.4	16.3	11.2
Community Relationships	1.2	1.8	2.3	2.9	3.1	5.6	8.1	1.8
Health & Well-being	14.2	11.9	12.6	13.7	12.1	13.3	12.8	13.5
Health & Well-being of Significant Others	3.0	3.1	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.6	2.3	3.1
Money & Financial Security	20.4	20.8	17.7	18.4	15.7	19.9	15.1	19.6
Asset Ownership	13.7	13.8	12.0	8.0	5.3	4.3	0.0	11.9
Education, Employment & Job Satisfaction	3.4	4.5	8.3	15.3	22.5	11.1	9.3	7.2
Education, Employment & Future Success of Significant Others	10.1	10.7	8.8	6.0	3.6	4.7	3.5	8.8
Access to Facilities & Services	13.1	11.7	9.6	6.8	6.2	4.3	4.7	11.1
Agricultural Productivity & Support	4.4	2.9	1.6	1.5	0.3	0.2	1.2	3.2
Independence & Autonomy	0.2	0.4	0.3	1.4	1.6	0.8	1.2	0.5
Spiritual & Religious Pursuits	3.0	1.8	1.6	0.9	0.6	1.5	2.3	2.3
Peace and Security of the Country	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.9	2.3	0.6
Governance, Leadership & Welfare	1.1	1.5	1.1	1.1	1.2	2.3	1.2	1.2
Principles & Responsibilities	0.3	0.7	2.5	1.5	2.5	2.4	3.5	0.9
Social & Leisure Activities	0.3	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.3	3.5	0.6

Perceived sources of happiness

Clean Environment	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.9	3.5	0.3
Others, n.e.c	1.6	1.6	2.6	2.7	3.2	5.5	9.3	2.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100