

Happiness and Its Factors in Relation to Human Well-Being

Dr. Kashi Nath Pandey^{1*}

ABSTRACT

Happiness is a complicated and comprehensive notion that has been thoroughly researched in several areas, including psychology, sociology, economics, and philosophy. This paper explores the various factors that contribute to happiness and examines their relationship to human well-being. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understand of the factors that determine happiness and their implications for both individual and social well-being by evaluating literature from a variety of academic sources. Important elements like personality, social interactions, economic standing, genetics, and cultural influences are examined to see how they affect happiness. The findings underscore the importance of a holistic approach to understanding happiness and its role in enhancing human well-being.

Keywords: *Happiness, Factors, Human, Well-Being*

Happiness is a universal aspiration and a fundamental component of human well-being. Despite its importance, the concept of happiness is elusive and can be difficult to define and measure. This paper seeks to investigate the factors that contribute to happiness and their relationship to overall well-being. By drawing on existing literature, the paper aims to provide a thorough analysis of the determinants of happiness, highlighting both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence this state of being.

Defining Happiness

- 1. Psychological Perspectives-**From a psychological standpoint, happiness is often equated with subjective well-being, which includes emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction (Diener, 2000). Positive psychology, led by experts such as Martin Seligman, focuses on the importance of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA) in creating happiness.
- 2. Philosophical and Sociological Views-** Philosophically, happiness has been debated since ancient times, with Aristotle's concept of eudemonia (flourishing or the good life) being central. In contrast, hedonic happiness focuses on pleasure and the avoidance of pain (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Sociologically, happiness is examined in the context of social structures and cultural norms, highlighting how societal factors shape individual well-being (Veenhoven, 2008).

¹Department of Psychology, M.G.K.V.P. Varanasi, U.P. India.

*Corresponding Author

Received: August 09, 2024; Revision Received: August 16, 2024; Accepted: August 21, 2024

Factors Contributing to Happiness

- 1. Genetic and Biological Factors-** Research indicates that genetics play a significant role in an individual's predisposition to happiness. Twin studies have shown that genetic factors account for approximately 35-50% of the variance in happiness (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). Additionally, biological aspects such as neurochemicals (e.g., serotonin, dopamine) and brain structures (e.g., the prefrontal cortex) are crucial in regulating mood and emotional states (Davidson, 2004).
- 2. Personality Traits-** Personality traits, particularly those outlined in the Big Five model, are strong predictors of happiness. Traits such as extraversion and emotional stability are positively correlated with higher levels of happiness, while neuroticism is negatively correlated (Costa & McCrae, 1980). Positive personality attributes like optimism, resilience, and self-esteem also contribute significantly to an individual's overall happiness (Scheier & Carver, 1992).
- 3. Social Relationships-** The quality and quantity of social relationships are among the most robust predictors of happiness. Close relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners provide emotional support, companionship, and a sense of belonging, which are critical for well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Social integration and community involvement also enhance happiness by fostering a sense of purpose and connectedness (Putnam, 2000).
- 4. Economic Factors-** Economic status is another significant determinant of happiness. While there is a positive correlation between income and happiness, this relationship is subject to diminishing returns. Beyond a certain threshold, additional income has a limited impact on happiness (Easterlin, 1974). Economic stability, job satisfaction, and financial security are more important than wealth alone in contributing to happiness (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002).
- 5. Cultural Influences-** Cultural values and norms shape the expression and pursuit of happiness. Individualistic cultures, which prioritize personal achievements and self-expression, tend to report higher levels of happiness compared to collectivistic cultures, which emphasize group harmony and interdependence (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995). Cultural attitudes towards happiness, such as its desirability and moral implications, also influence how happiness is experienced and reported (Lu & Gilmour, 2004).

Measuring Happiness

- 1. Subjective Measures-** Happiness is typically measured through self-report surveys and questionnaires, such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Diener et al., 1985; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). These measures assess individuals' cognitive judgments and emotional experiences of happiness.
- 2. Objective Indicators-** Objective indicators of happiness include physiological measures (e.g., brain activity, hormone levels), behavioural observations (e.g., social interactions, productivity), and societal metrics (e.g., health, education, economic indicators) (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006). Combining subjective and objective measures provides a more comprehensive understanding of happiness.
- 3. The Role of Public Policy-** Governments and policymakers can play a crucial role in promoting happiness by creating conditions that enhance well-being. Policies aimed at improving mental health services, education, employment opportunities, and social welfare can significantly impact population happiness (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2020). Additionally, fostering environments that encourage social connections and community engagement can enhance collective well-being.

Criticisms and Challenges

- 1. Subjectivity and Measurement Issues-**One of the main criticisms of happiness research is its reliance on subjective self-reports, which can be influenced by various biases, such as social desirability and recall bias (Schwarz & Strack, 1999). Additionally, cultural differences in expressing emotions can affect the comparability of happiness measures across populations (Oishi, 2010).
- 2. Overemphasis on Positive Emotions-** Critics argue that an overemphasis on positive emotions and happiness can lead to the neglect of other important aspects of well-being, such as meaning, purpose, and resilience in the face of adversity (Ryff & Singer, 1998). A balanced approach that considers both positive and negative experiences is essential for a holistic understanding of well-being.

Future Directions

- 1. Integrating Multidisciplinary Approaches-** Future research should integrate insights from various disciplines to develop a more nuanced understanding of happiness. Combining psychological, economic, sociological, and biological perspectives can provide a comprehensive framework for studying happiness (Kahneman, 1999).
- 2. Longitudinal Studies-**Longitudinal studies are needed to examine the stability and changes in happiness over time. Such studies can help identify causal relationships between different factors and happiness, providing valuable insights for interventions aimed at enhancing well-being (Lucas, 2007).
- 3. Cultural Sensitivity-** Research on happiness should account for cultural differences in the conceptualization and experience of happiness. Developing culturally sensitive measures and methodologies can improve the validity and generalizability of findings across diverse populations (Uchida, Norasakkunkit, & Kitayama, 2004).

CONCLUSION

To summarise, happiness is a complex and ever-changing concept that is affected by various aspects such as heredity, personality, social connections, financial situation, and cultural environment. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these aspects and how they interact with each other is essential for improving the well-being of both individuals and society as a whole. Researchers and policymakers can develop successful solutions to increase happiness and improve the quality of life for individuals and communities by using a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach.

REFERENCES

- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (2017). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Interpersonal development*, 57-89.
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2001). Optimism, pessimism, and self-regulation.
- Costa, P. T., & McCrae, R. R. (1980). Influence of extraversion and neuroticism on subjective well-being: Happy and unhappy people. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38(4), 668-678.
- Davidson, R. J. (2004). What does the prefrontal cortex “do” in affect: perspectives on frontal EEG asymmetry research. *Biological psychology*, 67(1-2), 219-234.
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 34-43.

Happiness and Its Factors in Relation to Human Well-Being

- Diener, E. D., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of personality assessment*, 49(1), 71-75.
- Diener, E., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2002). Will money increase subjective well-being? *Social Indicators Research*, 57(2), 119-169.
- Diener, E., Diener, M., & Diener, C. (1995). Factors predicting the subjective well-being of nations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 851-864.
- Diener, E., Diener, M., & Diener, C. (1995). Factors predicting the subjective well-being of nations. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 69(5), 851.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49(1), 71-75.
- Easterlin, R. A. (1974). Does economic growth improve the human lot? Some empirical evidence. In P. A. David & M. W. Reder (Eds.), *Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honor of Moses Abramovitz* (pp. 89-125). Academic Press.
- Helliwell, J. F., Layard, R., & Sachs, J. (Eds.). (2020). *World Happiness Report 2020. Sustainable Development Solutions Network.*
- Kahneman, D. (1999). Objective happiness. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener, & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Well-being: The Foundations*
- Kahneman, D., & Krueger, A. B. (2006). Developments in the measurement of subjective well-being. *Journal of Economic perspectives*, 20(1), 3-24.
- Kahneman, D., Diener, E., & Schwarz, N. (Eds.). (1999). *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology. Russell Sage Foundation.*
- Lu, L., & Gilmour, R. (2004). Culture, Self and Ways to Achieve SWB: A Cross-Cultural Analysis. *Journal of Psychology in Chinese Societies.*
- Lucas, R. E. (2007). Adaptation and the set-point model of subjective well-being: Does happiness change after major life events? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16(2), 75–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2007.00479.x>
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of general psychology*, 9(2), 111-131.
- Oishi, S. (2010). The Psychology of Residential Mobility: Implications for the Self, Social Relationships, and Well-Being. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(1), 5-21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691609356781>
- Putnam, R. D., & Goss, K. A. (1995). Robert D. Putnam. Bowling alone: America's declining social capital, *Journal of Democracy*, 6(1), 65-78.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual review of psychology*, 52(1), 141-166.
- Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. (1998). The contours of positive human health. *Psychological Inquiry*, 9(1), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli0901_1
- Seligman, M. (2018). PERMA and the building blocks of well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(4), 333–335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2018.1437466>
- Strack, F., & Schwarz, N. (2007). Asking questions: Measurement in the social sciences. *Psychology's territories: Historical and contemporary perspectives from different disciplines*, 225-250.
- Uchida, Y., Norasakkunkit, V., & Kitayama, S. (2004). Cultural constructions of happiness: Theory and empirical evidence. *Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being*, 5(3), 223–239. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-004-8785-9>

Happiness and Its Factors in Relation to Human Well-Being

- Veenhoven, R. (2008). Healthy happiness: Effects of happiness on physical health and the consequences for preventive health care. *Journal of happiness studies*, 9, 449-469.
- Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: the PANAS scales. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 54(6), 1063.

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Pandey, K.N. (2024). Happiness and Its Factors in Relation to Human Well-Being. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(3), 1242-1246. DIP:18.01.121.20241203, DOI:10.25215/1203.121