

An Educational Traverse through Gross National Happiness

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Abstract

Gross National Happiness (GNH) is a philosophy that guides the government of Bhutan. It includes an index which is used to measure the collective happiness and well-being of a population. Gross National Happiness is instituted as the goal of the government of Bhutan in the Constitution of Bhutan, enacted on 18 July 2008. The term Gross National Happiness was coined in 1972 during an interview by a British journalist for the Financial Times at Bombay airport when the then king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, said "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product."

In 2011, The UN General Assembly passed Resolution "Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development" urging member nations to follow the example of Bhutan and measure happiness and well-being and calling happiness a "fundamental human goal."

In 2012, Bhutan's Prime Minister Jigme Thinley and the Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon of the United Nations convened the High Level Meeting: Well-being and Happiness: Defining a New Economic Paradigm to encourage the spread of Bhutan's GNH philosophy. At the High Level meeting, the first World Happiness Report was issued. Shortly after the High Level meeting, 20 March was declared to be International Day of Happiness by the UN in 2012. Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay proclaimed a preference for focus on more concrete goals instead of promoting GNH when he took office, but subsequently has protected the GNH of his country and promoted the concept internationally. Other Bhutanese officials also promote the spread of GNH at the UN and internationally. **This article gives an overview on Gross National Happiness and its parameters and importance.**

Key-words: Gross National Happiness, Happiness Index, Education

Introduction

GNH was born from the realization that the existing development paradigm of the 1970's, measuring solely the accelerations and decelerations GNP (or GDP), did not mean increasing/decreasing happiness between countries. It demonstrated the notion that money doesn't equal happiness, and that material progress was not the most important contributor to well being. The concept was realized in Bhutan, by the former king who was known for challenging the conventional, materialistic notions of humankind.

GNH it is based on four pillars and 9 dimensions. The four pillars describe the promotion of sustainable development, the preservation and promotion of cultural values, the conservation of the natural environment, and the establishment of good governance. The 9 (nine) dimensions are as follows

- Education
- Psychological well being
- Health
- Time-use
- Cultural diversity and resilience
- Good governance
- Community vitality
- Ecological diversity and resilience

- Living standard

Gross National Happiness: The survey in Bhutan

The first survey was conducted in late 2007 in Bhutan where 950 people across Bhutan were asked 180 questions grouped into the nine dimensions mentioned above:

Psychological well-being: Assessed the degree of satisfaction and optimism in individual life. The indicators analyzed self-esteem, sense of competence, stress, spiritual activities, and the prevalence of positive and negative emotions.

Health: Measured the effectiveness of health policies, with criteria such as self-rated health, disability, patterns of risk behavior, exercise, sleep, nutrition, etc.

Use of time: The use of time is one of the most significant factors in quality of life, especially time for recreation and socializing with family and friends. A balanced management of time was evaluated, including time spent in traffic jams, at work, in educational activities, etc.

Community vitality: Focused on relationships and interactions in communities, examined the level of confidence, the sense of belonging, the vitality of affectionate relationships, safety at home and in the community, and the practice of giving and volunteering.

Education: Took into account several factors such as participation in formal and informal education, development of skills and capabilities, involvement in children's education, values education, environmental education, etc.

Culture: Evaluated local traditions, festivals, core values, participation in cultural events, opportunities to develop artistic skills, and discrimination due to religion, race or gender.

Environment: Measured the perception of citizens about the quality of their water, air, soil, forest cover, biodiversity, etc. The indicators included access to green areas, system of waste management, etc.

Governance: Assessed how the population views the government, the media, the judiciary, the electoral system, and the police, in terms of responsibility, honesty and transparency. It also measured involvement of citizens in community decisions and political processes.

Standard of living: Evaluated individual and family income, financial security, the level of debt, employment security, the quality of housing, etc.

Gross National Wellness (GNW)

The International Institute of Management proposed that **GNH** be changed to Gross National Wellness (**GNW**), The development areas are:

Economic Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of economic metrics such as consumer debt, average income to consumer price index ratio and income distribution

Environmental Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of environmental metrics such as pollution, noise and traffic

Physical Wellness: Indicated via statistical measurement of physical health metrics such as severe illnesses, overweight, etc.

Mental Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of mental health metrics such as usage of antidepressants and rise or decline of psychotherapy patients

Workplace Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of labor metrics such as jobless claims, job change, workplace complaints and lawsuits

Social Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of social metrics such as discrimination, safety, divorce rates, complaints of domestic conflicts and family lawsuits, public lawsuits, crime rates

Political Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of political metrics such as the quality of local democracy, individual freedom, and foreign conflicts.

World Happiness Index

Background

Created by Pierre le Roy, founder of GLOBECO, the world happiness index is calculated to measure world happiness per country since the year 2000. It focuses on collective, country-level happiness and aims to capture evolution and not the statistical situation of the country.

Methodology

The World Happiness Index is an alteration of the Human Development Index as it adopts the same statistical aggregation method. It aims to measure the happiness of countries and it defines the following themes as pre-conditions for a happy country:

- ✓ peace and security
- ✓ freedom, democracy and human rights
- ✓ living standards
- ✓ research, education, information, communication and culture

For the calculation of the index, it considers 10 indicators under each of the above four themes.

The World Happiness Report 2018

The World Happiness Report is an annual publication of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network which contains rankings of national happiness and analysis of the data from various perspectives.

The World Happiness Report is a landmark survey of the state of global happiness. The World Happiness Report 2018, ranks 156 countries by their happiness levels, and 117 countries by the happiness of their immigrants.

The main focus of this year's report, in addition to its usual ranking of the levels and changes in happiness around the world, is on migration within and between countries.

The overall rankings of country happiness are based on the pooled results from Gallup World Poll surveys from 2015-2017, and show both change and stability. There is a new top ranking country, Finland, but the top ten positions are held by the same countries as in the last two years, although with some swapping of places. Four different countries have held top spot in the four most recent reports- Denmark, Switzerland, Norway and now Finland.

All the top countries tend to have high values for all six of the key variables that have been found to support well-being: income, healthy life expectancy, social support, freedom, trust and generosity. Among the top countries, differences are small enough that that year-to-year changes in the rankings are to be expected.

The analysis of happiness changes from 2008-2010 to 2015-2015 shows Togo as the biggest gainer, moving up 17 places in the overall rankings from the last place position it held as recently as in the 2015 rankings. The biggest loser is Venezuela, down 2.2 points on the 0 to 10 scale.

Five of the report's seven chapters deal primarily with migration, as summarized in Chapter 1. For both domestic and international migrants, the report studies not just the happiness of the migrants and their host communities, but also of those left behind, whether in the countryside or in the source country. The results are generally positive.

Perhaps the most striking finding of the whole report is that a ranking of countries according to the happiness of their immigrant populations is almost exactly the same as for the rest of the population. The immigrant happiness rankings

are based on the full span of Gallup data from 2005 to 2017, sufficient to have 117 countries with more than 100 immigrant respondents.

The ten happiest countries in the overall rankings also ll ten of the top eleven spots in the ranking of immigrant happiness. Finland is at the top of both rankings in this report, with the happiest immigrants, and the happiest population in general.

The closeness of the two rankings shows that the happiness of immigrants depends predominantly on the quality of life where they now live, illustrating a general pattern of convergence. Happiness can change, and does change, according to the quality of the society in which people live. Immigrant happiness, like that of the locally born, depends on a range of features of the social fabric, extending far beyond the higher incomes traditionally thought to inspire and reward migration. The countries with the happiest immigrants are not the richest countries, but instead the countries with a more balanced set of social and institutional supports for better lives.

While convergence to local happiness levels is quite rapid, it is not complete, as there is a 'footprint' effect based on the happiness in each source country. This effect ranges from 10% to 25%. This footprint effect, explains why immigrant happiness is less than that of the locals in the happiest countries, while being greater in the least happy countries.

A very high proportion of the international differences in immigrant happiness (as shown in Chapter 2), and of the happiness gains for individual migrants (as studied in Chapters 3 and 5) are thus explained by local happiness and source country happiness.

The explanation becomes even more complete when account is taken of international differences in a new Gallup index of migrant acceptance, based on local attitudes towards immigrants, as detailed in an Annex to the Report. A higher value for migrant acceptance is linked to greater happiness for both immigrants and the native-born, by almost equal amounts.

The report studies rural-urban migration as well, principally through the recent Chinese experience, which has been called the greatest mass migration in history. That migration shows some of the same convergence characteristics of the international experience, with the happiness of city-bound migrants moving towards, but still falling below urban averages.

The importance of social factors in the happiness of all populations, whether migrant or not, is emphasized in Chapter 6, where the happiness bulge in Latin America is found to depend on the greater warmth of family and other social relationships there, and to the greater importance that people there attach to these relationships.

The Report ends on a different tack, with a focus on three emerging health problems that threaten happiness: obesity, the opioid crisis, and depression. Although set in a global context, most of the evidence and discussion are focused on the United States, where the prevalence of all three problems has been growing faster and further than in most other countries.

Conclusion

In addition to the usual ranking of the levels and changes in happiness around the world, the main focus of the 2018 World Happiness Report was also on migration within and between the countries. The overall ranking of a country's happiness is based on the collective results from Gallup World Poll Surveys from 2015-2017, which show both- change and stability. The top ten positions in the Index are held by the same countries as in the last two years, although with some swapping of places. Finland emerged as the happiest place to live in. Europe's Nordic nations dominate the index this year as well. The Top 10 countries that rule the World Happiness Index are Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and Australia. All the top-10 nations scored highest in overall happiness and in the happiness of immigrants as well. The United States fell to the 18th rank this year, four places down from last year. It fetched 11th rank in the first index and has never been in the Top 10. Togo came out as the biggest gainer, moving up 17 places in the overall rankings, while, the biggest loser is Venezuela, down with 2.2 points on the 0 to 10 scale.

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