



Research Paper

Happiness Index is very Materialistic and hence entirely Meaningless

Prabhakar Deshpande

Abstract: World Happiness Report measures happiness index of nations through every respondent's assessment of their own happiness. The report compares other elements of happiness that influence quality of life. Prima Facie it seems a good idea. Just like Human Development Index, some would argue that Happiness Index offers an alternate measure of well-being instead of meaningless per capita GDP. However a close examination will reveal that the elements of happiness index are closely tied to per capita gdp and hence developed nations figure high on happiness index. Hence since the happiness index is so materialistic, it defies the very reason it was constructed and hence is entirely meaningless.

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I. Introduction

In July 2011, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 65/309 *Happiness: Towards a Holistic Definition of Development* inviting member countries to measure the happiness of their people and to use the data to help guide public policy. On April 2, 2012, this was followed by the first UN High Level Meeting called *Wellbeing and Happiness: Defining a New Economic Paradigm*, which was chaired by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and Prime Minister Jigmi Thinley of Bhutan a nation that adopted gross national happiness instead of gross domestic product as their main development indicator.

The rankings of national happiness are based on survey undertaken world-wide by the polling company Gallup Inc. Nationally representative samples of respondents are asked to think of a ladder, with the best possible life for them being a 10, and the worst possible life being a 0. The variables included are :

- a. Real GDP per capita
- b. Social Support
- c. Health Life Expectancy
- d. Freedom to make Life Choices
- e. Generosity
- f. Perceptions of corruption

Very Materialistic

Happiness Index is supposed to be different from Gross Domestic Product. However the variables used in Happiness Index are so Materialistic.

Consider Real GDP per capita : Clearly this as materialistic a variable as it can get.

Health Life Expectancy is also correlated to Material Well Being

Social Support can be provided by government only in developed nations

Freedom to make choices cannot exist in poor economies

Generosity is difficult when you are struggling to survive.

And poor nations are naturally more corrupt as some try to match living standards in rich nations.

Thus all variables in Happiness Index are so materialistic.

Rich Nations rank Higher in Happiness Report

One just has to examine the rankings of happiness reports to realize that most of the top ranks go to rich nations. Yes it is possible that a rich nation may not rank very high, but it is entirely impossible for a poor nation to rank high. This paper does not cover the rankings but that can be searched on Internet. Suffice it to say that most of the top rankings in happiness report go to rich nations of the world. And indeed all lower rankings

on happiness report go to the poor nations of the world. And there is not a single rich nation in low ranking nation of the world. And Bhutan the nation that measures itself by gross national happiness ranks pretty low at 97 in world happiness report.

II. Conclusion

Happiness Report is very materialistic since the variables that are used to form Happiness Index are rather materialistic. Hence the high ranks in Happiness Report go to developed nations of the world and underdeveloped nations of the world rank pretty low in Happiness Report. Hence the happiness index must be entirely abandoned. A new Happiness Index based on different variables must be devised to measure happiness.

References

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