

Predicting Happiness in Urban Males and Females Through Perception of Resource Adequacy

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ABSTRACT Happiness could be sought through both spirituality and material affluence by different people of different cultures. According to Indian school of thought, the state of joyousness is a natural state of happiness. It considers different dimensions of wellness ranging from social, physical to spiritual. The lifestyle satisfaction from accumulation is difficult to come, and the technological revolution has made it harder by challenging everything that is conventional, stereotyped, stagnant and reluctant to change. Perceptual indication can be useful in identifying conditions affecting quality of life or happiness. The present paper will focus on a comparison of perceived adequacy of resources among 30 couples with dual earnings (working wives) and 30 couples with single earnings (homemakers). The results indicate a non-significant difference between the PAR scores of males and females. Further, the PAR scores of Human Resources were higher than scores of material resources.

INTRODUCTION

Happiness or well-being has been one of the primary goals of human beings in all the cultures ever since dawn of civilization. Although, its meaning and definition keeps on changing with time and context and thus, could be sought through both spiritually and through material affluence by different people of different cultures. If truth be told “to a great extent, well-being depends on person’s ability to choose a direction in life, to form intentions and then to make sure that the preferred path is being tracked” (Boniwell 2007). Orientation goals such as self-actualisation and intrinsic aspirations such as self-acceptance, affiliation and community feeling goals have been demonstrated to be associated with overall higher well-being (Fromm 1976).

According to Indian school of thought also, the state of joyousness is a natural state of happiness. It considers seven dimensions of wellness that includes social, physical, emotional, intellectual, environmental, spiritual and occupational (Sharma 2005). The materialism (non-human resources) trails behind idealism (human resources) in assuring happiness, according to Indian ideology. Although, both are important since idealism shows the

goals and materialism supplies the tools (Sherlekar 2007).

The technological revolution has come as a challenge to everything that is conventional, stereotyped, stagnant and reluctant to change. It is beyond the capacity of the human mind to be able to draw an exact picture of the life in the coming century on account of information explosion, information technology revolution and above all, fierce competition for being different and ahead of others. The consumerist, capitalistic modern society dominating the west explicitly also encourages obtaining wealth and status and extrinsic goals such as financial success, social recognition and appearance (Craig 2009). As a result, people possess more than ever before, their lifestyles have changed with a considerable rise in the standard of living. But as a matter of fact, extrinsic goals are associated with lower self-esteem, more television watching, more drug use, more difficult and less satisfying relationships, and acting in a narcissistic and competitive manner (Boniwell 2007).

The debate on whether one should follow spirituality or go behind material affluence is effectively explained through ‘comparison judgment’. People evaluate their well-being based on their internal standards and other comparison judgments (Diener et al. 1999). These standards may include comparison with others (Festinger 1954); comparison with past performance or future expectations (Michalos 1985) and can be made from an upward or downward perspective (Helgeson et al. 1993).

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Contentment is rather difficult to come, and so where the wealth of even the entire world is bestowed lavishly, one might not be happy. Gautam Buddha once said that desire is the root of all evils. Desire is a chain shackled to the world and is a difficult one to break. But once that is done, there is no more grief and no more longing. There are no more chains. Campbell (1981) argued that the general sense of well-being, is more dependent on the individual satisfaction with resources rather than on the actual quality of these resources. 'What is best', is guided by the wisdom, since, wisdom is unchanging. Wisdom acquired over the last 5000 years or in the 20th century, is still wisdom in the 21st century and will be wisdom in centuries to come. It is people's perception, guided by the wisdom of their own well-being that define the quality of their lives.

Objective situations affect individuals through their perceptions of them (Luthans 2007) and therefore, individuals are the best judges of their well-being. Such perceptual indication can be useful in identifying conditions affecting quality of life or lifestyle satisfaction among different groups. They also provide a basis for understanding the relationships of objective conditions and changes in these conditions to the subjective sense of well-being. Perceptual indicators are therefore, essential for understanding the impact of objective conditions upon individual satisfaction. Since, the individual perception of resources is more important than actual resources in explaining the variance of outcome measures (Goldsmith et al. 1988). Perception of level of resource adequacy for human and non-human resources, ultimately, leads to happiness and satisfaction in one's life.

It was with this background that the present work was planned to study Perceived Adequacy of Resources (PAR) separately for human and non-human resources in Indian settings.

The research finding may be of value to researchers desirous of studying all types of social and ethical problems to search solutions in different social groups with different socio-economic characteristics, cultures and in the society at large.

METHODOLOGY

1. Sample

The data for the present study was gathered in the months February and March, 2006 in

the urban localities of Udaipur City. The sample of sixty couples of the study consisted of 30 couples with dual earnings (working wives) and 30 couples with single earnings (home-makers). The wives' age varied between 35 years to 55 years and that of husbands' between 39 years to 60 years. The subjects of both the categories had similar level of educational qualifications viz. graduation and post-graduation in different disciplines including medical and engineering. However, the spouses from working wives couple category had higher qualifications than the home-makers couple category. Among the sample, there were school and college teachers, clerks, class I officers, business owners, engineers and doctors. The working wives couples (Rs. 55,000 to Rs 73,000 per month) had higher incomes than homemaker wives couples (Rs34,000 to Rs 52,000 per month).

2. Tools and Techniques

In the present study, a scale of 24 items equally divided into human resource and non-human resource sub-dimensions (that is, 12 items each in both dimensions) was developed and standardized through item-analysis, reliability and validity on a sample of 200 males and females by Likert Summated Rating method. While the human resource category included items on faith in God, intimacy in relations, knowledge, skills, managerial abilities, humanity and ethical living, reputation, social relations, environment, rest and educational qualifications, the non-human resource category had items on vehicular facilities, clothes, electricity, communication facilities, water, equipment, money, community facilities, nutritious food, furniture and adequacy of space inside and outside the house. The items were based on literature and evaluated by panel of judges. The reliability of scale was established by Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation through split-half method. The reliability of the scale came to be 0.848 and the index of reliability was calculated to be 0.920. The item responses were elicited on a Likert scale that ranged from zero (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Thus, any respondent could have overall resource adequacy score ranging between '0' and '96' which was divided into four levels:

Less than 24 scores - 'poor' adequacy
25 - 48 scores - 'average' adequacy

49 - 72 scores - 'above average' adequacy
 73 - 96 scores - 'excellent' adequacy

Similarly, since there were equal number of items in both the dimensions that is, human resource dimension and non-human resource dimension, an individual could score anything in between 0 - 48 scores. Here, 0 - 12 indicated 'poor' adequacy in individual dimension, 13 - 24 indicated 'average' adequacy, 25 - 36 meant 'above average' adequacy and 37 - 48 scores were for 'excellent' resource adequacy perception.

3. Procedure

A self-developed scale on Perceived Adequacy of Resources (PAR) was used for data collection. The study was a comparative study. An equal number of single earner and dual earner couples were selected and PAR scores of both human and non – human resources , between wives' groups and husbands' groups, were compared with the help of student's 't' test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the total scores received by the individuals in human and non - human resources category, the respondents were classified into different levels of resource adequacy as perceived by them (Table 1).

The study on perception of adequacy of resources indicated that while no woman in any of the category pointed toward 'poor' perception of either kind of resource adequacy, two men each from both the categories have indicated so for non - human resources. According to Malka et al. (2003), this can be associated to individual differences in intrinsic and extrinsic work orientation as the work values have an enduring impact of on the cognitive and affective responses of an individual.

The study also indicated that the human resources were perceived more adequate than the non - human resources by all the categories of sample selected for the study. While comparing the overall scores of PAR between males and females, the study revealed that both the categories perceived the adequacy of resources at par to one another. To a great extent, the feeling of being adequate depends on one's ability to choose a desired direction in life, to form intentions and to make sure a preferred path is being pursued.

The study revealed that both the categories of sample had more or less similar PAR (Fig.1). It can be seen that about two - third of the sample from each category had 'above average' level of PAR, approximately one - fifth of the sample in each category had 'average' PAR scores and more or similar proportion had 'excellent' PAR. When the data was put to student's 't' analysis for ascertaining the difference in PAR scores of

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents at different levels of perceived adequacy of human and non - human resources

Categories			Perception level of resource adequacy			
			Poor	Average	Above average	Excellent
Wives n = 60	Home - makers n = 30	Human resource	-	1 (3.33)	12 (40.0)	17 (57.67)
		Non-human resource	-	11 (36.67)	15 (50.0)	4 (13.33)
		Overall*	-	6 (20.0)	18 (60.0)	6 (20.0)
	Working wives n = 30	Human resource	-	2 (6.67)	15 (50.0)	13 (43.33)
		Non-human resource	-	9 (30.0)	18 (60.0)	3 (10.0)
Overall*		-	4 (13.33)	20 (66.67)	6 (20.0)	
Total** n = 60				10 (16.67)	39 (65.0)	11 (18.33)
Husbands n = 60	Husbands of home - makers n = 30	Human resource	-	6 (20.0)	15 (50.0)	9 (30.0)
		Non-human resource	2 (6.67)	19 (63.33)	9 (30.0)	-
		Overall*	2 (6.67)	6 (20.0)	20 (66.66)	2 (6.67)
	Husbands of working wives n = 30	Human resource	-	2 (6.67)	13 (43.33)	15 (50.0)
		Non-human resource	2 (6.67)	6 (20.0)	17 (57.66)	5 (16.67)
Overall*		0	5 (16.67)	19 (63.33)	6 (20.0)	
Total** n = 60			2 (3.33)	11 (18.33)	37 (61.67)	10 (16.67)

Note: Figures in parentheses represent percentages.
 * = Total of human resource and non-human resource
 ** = Total sample of wives or husbands

Table 2: Statistical summary of perceived adequacy of resources

Sample		Resource categories	Range	CV	SE	SD	Average scores
Wives n = 60	home-makers n = 30	Human resource	20 -46	21.06	1.05	7.47	35.46
		Non-human resource	8 -46	31.22	1.199	8.48	27.16
	Overall*		30 -91	15.19	1.345	9.51	62.62
	Working wives n = 30	Human resource	18 -47	22.17	1.06	7.49	33.82
		Non-human resource	13 -40	24.8	0.980	6.93	27.94
Overall*		34 -86	21.82	1.90	13.46	61.76	
Husbands n = 60	Husbands of home-makers n = 30	Human resource	13 -44	29.24	1.287	9.1	31.12
		Non-human resource	7 -33	27.96	0.857	6.06	21.8
	Overall*		20 -77	26.96	2.02	14.27	52.92
	Husbands of working wives n = 30	Human resource	17 -47	21.68	1.107	7.83	36.12
		Non-human resource	12 -47	31.31	1.284	8.94	28.5
Overall*		29 -94	24.68	2.256	15.95	64.62	

human, non – human, overall and total PAR among different categories of the sample, the test differentiated the categories of resources but kept the sample categories at the same level.

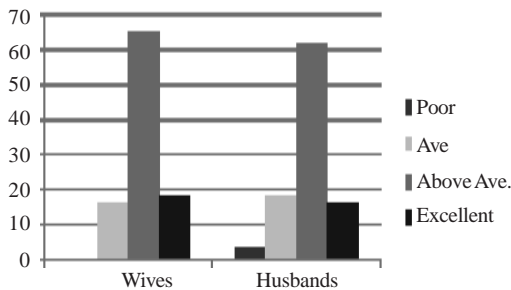
**Fig. 1. Level of PAR in wives and husbands**

Table 2 of statistical summary of PAR scores indicates that there were wide ranges of scores for human resources, non – human resources and overall scores, which could be further confirmed from CV values as high as 31 percent. The standard deviation calculated for individual categories was varying between 6.06 and 8.94 indicating low variation of data on resource adequacy from standards within sample, however, it was a little more for total PAR scores (between 9.5 and 15.95) indicating little higher deviation of data from standards on resource adequacy.

The tcal values in Table 3 indicate that there was significant difference between PAR of human and non - human resources in all the categories of sample that is the adequacy of human resources was perceived significantly higher than the adequacy of non - human resources. On the other hand, there was no

significant difference between the PAR scores of different categories of sample that is, although the respondents of all the categories were distributed at different levels of PAR, but all the classes of sample had more or less similar pattern of PAR.

The results indicate that all four categories of sample perceived that it is the idealism (human resources) that can assure real happiness in their lives indicating a strong impact of culture on people. Contrary to this, in practice everyone can be seen to be running after materialism (non-human resources), it is just because materialism supplies the basic tools to happiness and thus could not be rejected altogether. Moreover, when the efforts made for material acquisition can be seen openly as these are external to human beings and exhibitory, the efforts made for idealism cannot be noticed so easily by the other person as these are internal to the personal.

Studies elsewhere in the world have shown a positive and linear relationship between material wealth and subjective well-being (Stevenson et al. 2008; Deaton 2008). Researchers have also shown that “people with above average income are relatively satisfied with their lives but they have also concluded that they are barely happier than others in moment to moment experience” (Kahnemna et al. 2006). They use this finding to possibly helping explain why “money is more highly correlated with general life satisfaction than with experienced happiness, as tension and stress may accompany goal attainment, which in turn contributes to judgments of life satisfaction more than it does to experience happiness” (Kahneman et al. 2006).

Table 3: Comparison of perceived adequacy of human and non - human resources among different categories of respondents

<i>Resources</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>tcal</i>
Human resource v/s non-human resource	Home-makers	1.865**
	Working wives	9.930**
	Husbands of home-makers	3.367**
Human resource	Husbands of working wives	5.900**
	Home-makers v/s working wives	0.122 ^{NS}
	Husbands of home-makers v/s husbands of working wives	0.0032 ^{NS}
	Home-makers v/s husbands of home-makers	0.0071 ^{NS}
Non-human resource	Working wives v/s husbands of working wives	0.0667 ^{NS}
	Home-makers v/s working wives	0.320 ^{NS}
	Husbands of home-makers v/s husbands of working wives	0.0017 ^{NS}
	Home-makers v/s husbands of home-makers	0.00094 ^{NS}
Total	Working wives v/s husbands of working wives	0.349 ^{NS}
	Home-makers v/s working wives	0.347 ^{NS}
	Husbands of home-makers v/s husbands of working wives	0.00050 ^{NS}
	Home-makers v/s husbands of home-makers	0.00094 ^{NS}
	Working wives v/s husbands of working wives	0.1507 ^{NS}

*Significant at 5% level, **Significant at 5% level, NS non-significant

CONCLUSION

Resources are used to achieve the goals that can provide greatest possible satisfaction. The perception of how much adequate or inadequate a resource is, besides the quality and quantity of utilizing the resource is a determining factor in accomplishing the desired goals and as a result, happiness. There is an understanding that actively wanting money might actually be toxic for happiness, where materialism is negatively correlated with measures of subjective well-being (Solberg et al. 2004). The perception of adequacy that has no relation with possession is a unique interpretation of the situation.

As far as the perception of resource adequacy is concerned, it has a great socio - cultural orientation. “In economically advanced countries people who value earning money more than other goals are less satisfied with their standard of living and their lives” (Carr 2004). The Indian culture speaks of idealism first and then materialism. Subtle, intangible and gross intangible objects are important. But the inner resources are much more powerful. The culture believes that “emotional stability, mental peace and harmony are important over material abundance” (Khandelwal 2007). The children are taught the theory of *Santosham Param Sukham* (satisfaction is the biggest happiness) in the beginning years of life. It was reflected in the results also where PAR scores of human re-

sources were significantly higher than the PAR scores of non - human resources.

The study has also concluded that there was no significant difference between PAR scores of males and females this indicates a better coherence and lesser conflicts between husband and wife that may lead to breaks. The results here also are in concurrence with the present day data on family and social conflict leading to separation, breaks and divorces, which are at very low rate than elsewhere on the globe.

There is a need, today, to understand the role of PAR in wide range of social problems, conflicts, leading to stress and health problems. The PAR score is reflexive of individual value structure, emotionality, standard of living and quality of life.

In the present study, maximum respondents’ PAR falling at ‘above average’ level is an encouraging note. Efforts are required that same ideology is transmitted to younger generation also so that the problems of divorces, corruption, conflicts, and stresses remain at their low in future also.

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