

IS MONEY THE KEY DRIVER TO HAPPINESS – KEY FINDINGS & SUGGESTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Since the advent of time, man has always taken up many activities which provide him happiness and making money was one of them. As the saying goes “Money can buy happiness” but the biggest question is what makes one happy. While money can at times buy happiness, how each one defines the term “happiness” determines the extent.

Happiness means different things to different people. For some happiness is a good night’s sleep, while for some luxuries like fancy cars, watches provide happiness. What is important here is, what are the means to achieve the level of happiness that actually one wants to experience.

KEYWORDS: *Happiness, Money, Expectation, Minimalistic*

INTRODUCTION

The term happiness as per Wikipedia means “A mental or emotional state of well-being which can be defined by, among others, positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense *joy*”.

Researchers have defined a happy person “As someone who experiences frequent positive emotions, such as joy, interest, and pride, and infrequent (though not absent) negative emotions, such as sadness, anxiety, and anger”.

Anyone reading this article might expect a definite answer to the question “what is happiness and how once can achieve it” but what is being presented is a set of varied experiences across age groups and within the same age group across individuals.

Data Sources and Methodology

Data presented in this research paper has been collected from various sources which include journals, websites, independent & government publications etc. Methodology encompassed analysis based on previous research and an honest attempt to add experiences of self in arriving at the various suggestions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- Evaluate multiple happiness inducing factors which individuals assess
- Analyze each of these factors individually/independently with respect to the happiness levels provided and
- Conclude on those factors that give maximum happiness

KEY FINDINGS

What is happiness?

Let's look at some real-life examples to delve more into this amazing area & in the process better understand what happiness is –

Watching a Movie - A friend of mine is extremely delighted when we go to the cinema and watch a superhero movie. His eyes start glowing; he has this big smile on his face and he seems to be totally content with his life. With me, it is not so. I'll go watch it with him because I know it makes him happy but I just don't feel the same way. I'm sorry. This superhero stuff just isn't for me.

Here's another thing: Most of us are usually searching for happiness on a bigger scale. While my friend's definition of true happiness is being able to go to the movies, most of us would describe this as a nice evening but not necessarily true happiness. And I think that's one of the reasons why we tend to get frustrated and believe we will never be truly happy. We are expecting happiness to be a constant state of mind. We expect to be running around with a huge smile on our faces & bliss in our hearts. Or even worse, some of us might attach the feeling of happiness to material goods. We think we can only be happy if we can buy the new Ferrari, if we are able to afford a nice house in an even nicer neighborhood, or if we can take our family on vacations to such exotic places like...France.

Traveling - While I agree that traveling is definitely high on my happiness list, it is not for the material quality of it. I don't need to stay in a 5 star hotel and eat in luxurious restaurants when I go on vacation. For me, it's about the experience. Being able to see new places, meet people from different cultures, and create memories with the person I love. That's why traveling makes me happy.

Point to be noted here is happiness can't be achieved as a constant state. We have to feel down, sad, or even depressed sometimes in order to be able to appreciate what happiness means. Happiness should also be something that comes from within, that doesn't need an external source to be activated. What if you lose your job and you can't afford a fancy house, an expensive car, and all the little gadgets you love anymore? Will you never be happy again?

Working with NGO's – A very dear friend of mine who was on a good post in a large telecom MNC used to derive tremendous happiness on seeing his subordinates deliver outstanding results on the job front. And the beauty of this was, he used to share his happiness with the entire team either by taking them all to a movie or to a fast food joint for a meal. He was also passionate about working for the underprivileged people and wanted to devote a lot of time for their wellbeing. As a result, he quit the corporate world and immersed himself wholeheartedly to fulfill his passion. Every act of kindness or help or support which he performed gave him immense happiness and joy.

Living a Minimalistic Life - While money may give you happiness, it could be momentary and possibly not long term. For example, driving my cousin's fancy car might give me happiness but maybe owning one might not. For me being minimalistic gives immense happiness as it makes me feel much more freer and unshackled from the worldly riches. As such, owning a low-end car with basic accessories serves my purpose.

Above examples bring out various facets of human personality and how events create an influence on their happiness quotient. What comes out very clearly is that money is certainly not THE deciding factor for a large number of individuals when it comes to deriving happiness.

So do we conclude that other than money, there could be other factors which provide happiness. Let's look at some more areas before we conclude –

Fulfill Basic Needs of Life – Money certainly helps to fulfill certain basic needs of life like shelter, food & clothing, without which an individual cannot survive. In other words, we can call these as survival basics. One can lead a simple life by consuming basic food, wearing simple clothes and staying in a house which has basic amenities. Money can buy you all fancy things like dining at expensive restaurants, wearing clothes from upmarket designer companies and staying in lavish houses fitted with the latest electronic gadgetry and ultra-modern amenities. But then is that what we want out of life to be happy?

Needs, Wants, Desires & Expectations – The extent of happiness can be further analyzed based on every individual's needs, wants, desires & their expectations from life. A simple life which can be fulfilled by basic needs with little or no room for having wants and desires creeping in could be extremely satisfying and full of happiness for some. While this is better said than done, we have some amazing real-life examples who have very clearly focused on needs with wants and desires being kept at bay. Examples here being Narayan Murthy, co-founder of Infosys and Azim Premji, owner / Chairman of Wipro Ltd.

There is nothing wrong in wanting or owning fancy, extremely expensive objects but don't let these be the only source of happiness for you. Look inside you and find what makes you truly happy, look around and be grateful for the little things that light up your day, and embrace every moment that you are allowed to spend on this beautiful planet. For some, that's what happiness is all about.

Factors Inducing, Responsible for Making One Happy

Above examples bring out some very unique and varied findings. These are the so-called factors which make one feel happy.

While a few more factors are shared below, there are many more which could be responsible for making a person happy

Defining Happiness – For individuals, there are various reasons and varied situations which make them happy. As such, how one defines happiness will depend on the nature of activity or activities that they indulge in and what outcomes will provide them happiness.

Self & People at Large– Happiness could be individualistic, group, society, country wide or a global phenomenon. There is a global happiness index (comprising of multiple parameters) which measures the extent to which people of various countries are happy. It was found that people from Scandinavia, Switzerland, New Zealand, Canada, Netherlands, and Australia were placed in the top 10 happiest countries of the world.

Demography of a Country– Demography plays a very strong role in creating situations which provide a high degree of happiness to its nationals. For e.g; Nationals from African & South Asia countries have high-stress levels due to the economic conditions and geographical location making them fight harder even for receiving basic amenities like food, water, and shelter. This has an adverse impact on the happiness quotient and thus they tend to be at the bottom of the global happiness index.

Goal Prioritization - Professor Robert Waldinger, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and Zen priest, presented a speech titled 'A 75-Year Study on Human Happiness'.

He explained how over 80% of America's youth listed 'getting rich' as a life goal while being famous is the driver for almost half. However, the findings of the study that followed two groups of men over 78 years and now their Baby Boomer children indicate that happiness is achieved due to very different criteria. "None of it was about wealth, none of it about fame. None of it about how much they achieved in the world. Close relationships were the strongest predictor of what kept people happy throughout their lives." As such priority for every individual varies and could be different for the same individual at different phases of his or her life, resulting in varied happiness levels.

Surrounding – Happiness to an extent is also defined by where (the surrounding and location) you work, nature of work and a group of people with whom you are working. Peer pressure, non-supportive reporting officer, inefficient processes and systems, non-conducive work environment are some of the areas which are likely to cause dissatisfaction, thereby impacting the happiness levels.

Developing a Work-Life Balance – As the businesses get increasingly dynamic, people employed across various sectors like information technology, finance, telecommunication, and manufacturing are making increased efforts to develop a close to perfect work-life balance.

While salary is certainly an important determining factor for candidates making a career decision, there are additional aspects of the benefits package that must not be overlooked. Employees who are given the option to work from home are 73% happier with their employers. They enjoy the cost-cutting benefits and flexibility provided by a telecommuting program. Whether it is offsetting costs of daycare or saving time otherwise spent commuting, work-at-home is invaluable to providing personal and professional balance.

It is important to note that work-life balance is not one-size-fits-all. Life harmony means different things to different people. As a result, not all employees are looking for the same options.

SUGGESTIONS

Life is a blessing and to make it more meaningful and enjoyable one must list down the below-mentioned set of questions and try to find answers or solutions to each.

It will certainly go a long way in accomplishing a happier, healthier and longer life.

- What is his/her expectation from life?
- How does he/she intend to achieve it?
- Is he/she willing to stretch that extra mile to achieve the desired level of happiness?
- Is one willing to enjoy the state of happiness even from the simplest of things/activities?

CONCLUSIONS

Happiness is a state of mind and how one wants to achieve happiness and for what duration does he/she intend to stay in that state depends on his state of mind and what he expects out of life and the situations that arise along the way.

Money does help in fulfilling life's needs but whether one wants to earn money to go beyond the needs and achieve the WANTS and DESIRES will decide the extent to which one needs to push himself/herself and whether this sense of achievement will transform into a state of happiness will depend on the intensity with which one strives to achieve it and what importance does it have in one's life.

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