RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Exploring the Elicitors of Happiness in India

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Abstract Happiness in the Indian context is a multidimensional construct. It goes beyond the mainstream understanding of hedonism and eudaimonia, encompassing concepts like spirituality/religiosity and righteousness. Research shows that globalization and traditions both have influenced the notion of happiness. In this study, we conducted a content analysis of qualitative responses to the Cantril Ladder of Life scale by rural women in India (data collected as part of Singh et al., 2020 study) to identify 15 areas of life (or elicitors) which may contribute to happiness. Subsequently, a diverse community sample ($N = 359$) rated each of the 15 areas on a 4-point Likert scale indicating how much each area contributed to their happiness. Principal components analysis revealed a three-factor model: achievement, interpersonal, religious/spiritual. All factors were correlated with mental/physical health, social support, quality of life, spiritual well-being, and both independent and interdependent self-construal. In India, elicitors of happiness present a tri-factor model with the orthogonal factors representing collective, spiritual, and agentic factors, representing pluralism in Indian perspective of happiness which comprises of both traditional and western values. All three dimensions of happiness are related to better health and quality of life.

Keywords Happiness · Well-being · India · Spirituality · Interpersonal relationships · Achievement · Quality of life

Introduction

Happiness, also referred to as well-being, is multidimensional, comprises of episodic and personal attributes, and contributes to physical and mental health and quality of life (Kushlev et al., 2020; Medvedev & Landhuis, 2018; Pupavac et al., 2020; Raibley, 2012). The experience of happiness is dynamic and varies based on context and temporal factors (e.g., decline in happiness/well-being during the recent pandemic related to older age, being married, proximity to the heart of the pandemic, and perceived knowledge, Yang & Ma, 2020).

Happiness is composed of affective/hedonic well-being (e.g., increased/decreased positive/negative affect, respectively); cognitive well-being (evaluative or life satisfaction); and eudaimonic well-being (achievement of personal potential, goals, meaning/purpose) (Chen et al., 2012; Liu & Fernando, 2024; Rego & Cunha, 2009; Ryff, 2017; Shin, 2015; Steptoe, 2019; Willroth et al., 2020).

Happiness and Culture

Culture and identity are entwined and influence the perception of happiness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oishi & Gilbert, 2016). Individualistic and collectivistic cultures emphasize independent and interdependent self-construal of identity, respectively (Cross et al., 2011; Markus &

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Kitayama, 1991), and identity construal affects cultural variation in experience and expression of happiness with differential attention paid to cognitive/affective states of pleasure, harmony, interpersonal relationships, and spirituality (Delle Fave et al., 2016; Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Nagar, 2018; Smith & Reid, 2018; Singh et al., 2019; Suh & Choi, 2018). Collectivist cultures (e.g., China and Japan) emphasize transcendence, spirituality, and quality interpersonal relationships, and individualist cultures (e.g., the USA) emphasize physical and personal achievements as crucial determinants of happiness (Lu & Gilmour, 2004; Suh & Choi, 2018). In general, data from collectivist East Asian and Asian countries suggests that social values rather than economic development and success contribute to happiness (Lim et al., 2020).

India and Happiness

The Indian conceptualization of happiness takes inspiration from ancient texts and philosophies (Bhattacharyya et al., 2019). Happiness is a diverse range of experiences, external or internal, that varies according to context *(desh),* time *(kaal),* and person (*patra*) (Misra & Srivastava, 2011). Both hedonic/subjective well-being (seeking pleasure) and eudaimonic/psychological well-being (seeking self-improvement) are focused on the self (Gotise & Upadhyay, 2018); Indian concepts of well-being emphasize going beyond the self to embody social and spiritual well-being. Self is defined in relation to others, embedded in quality interpersonal relationships, particularly family and happiness of family, and well-being is the dynamic adaptation between the self and environment (Nagar, 2018; Singh et al., 2019, 2022, 2023; Sinha, 2011; Srivastava & Misra, 2011). Relatedly, happiness can be achieved through internal growth, transformation, transcendence, by seeking happiness for others, and by following a spiritual path (Gotise & Upadhyay, 2018; Nagar, 2018; Sinha, 2011; Srivastava & Misra, 2011). Personal attributes such as contentment, control over desires, surrender to the divine, non-attachment, equanimity in the face of adversity/success, and perseverance contribute to achievement of happiness (Misra & Srivastava, 2011). Happiness is seen as a transcendental journey toward *sat–chit–ananda* (existence–consciousness–happiness) with the realization of five layers of existence or *"Panch Koshas"* including the *Annamaya kosha* (the physical level), *Pranamaya* (vital energy), *Manomaya* (mind/emotion), *Vijnanamaya* (intellect/wisdom), and *Anandamaya* (innermost; bliss) (Nagar, 2018). The achievement of bliss is associated with a dissolving of differences between self and others, and self and divine (Nagar, 2018). However, the lay notion of happiness has been changing in recent times.

Changing Conception of Happiness

A contemporary understanding of happiness in India needs to include the juxtaposition of a) its cultural milieu where traditional values of collectivism, family, and spirituality are salient in defining identity and life; b) it's colonial past; c) the pluralistic Indian society and mindset; and d) accelerated globalization characterized by rapid urbanization, rising inequity, and migration from rural to urban areas, and consumerism (Gautam, 2019; Sinha, 2014; Suchday, et al., 2018; Suchday, 2015).

Indian culture is dualistic, and this dualism stems from an emphasis on an internal life that comprises opportunities for internal growth through transformation and transcendence and a focus on *Dharma* and *Karma* which include duty, responsibility, and right action, and an external element of achievement (Srivastava & Misra, 2011; Suchday et al., 2018). The dualistic nature of Indian society leads to a dynamic conceptualization of happiness which varies with context (time, situation Suar et al., 2020).

Prior data from our laboratory (e.g., Suchday et al., 2018) showed that despite porous borders and rapid globalization, interpersonal relationships (particularly relationships with family) and spiritual values continue to permeate all aspects of life and identity in India. This emphasis on interpersonal and spiritual support remains consistent in the face of adversities (physical and economic) (Sakamoto et al., 2017), where interpersonal/spiritual support may act as effective emotional buffers during challenging times (Singh et al., 2022, 2023). Change in living arrangements among older adults necessitated by loss or conflict within the family leads to significant decline in well-being (Srivastava & Muhammad, 2021).

Preponderance of these traditional values has not precluded the emphasis on western values (Suchday et al., 2018), and the notion of happiness among Indians encompasses both collectivistic and individualistic values (Mishra, 1994; Suar et al., 2020). It also encompasses elements of hedonism, eudaimonia, spirituality/religiosity, and righteousness (Gotise & Upadhyay, 2018). Research has validated both the ongoing emphasis on traditional values and the effects of globalization. For example, a study on rural Indian women indicated that, despite rapid globalization, collectivist and traditional values continue influence life and functioning among women in rural India (Singh et al., 2019). Another qualitative study in India found a greater endorsement of independent self-construal (among 67% of participants) than interdependent self-construal (37%) (Varma & Gupta, 2020).

Other potential contributors to happiness include internal harmony, professional life, achievements, financial security, and health (both self and family; Singh et al., 2019, 2022, 2023; Suar et al., 2020). Despite evidence of the influence of globalization among both urban and rural populations in India (in terms of changed consumerism behavior and lifestyle), studies have not explored the extent to which it has shaped the lay notion of happiness. Moreover, despite substantial happiness research in India, the multidimensionality of happiness elicitors remains under-researched.

The Present Study

Given the dynamic nature and variance of happiness based on culture and identity and the existence of strong traditional and Western influences, the study of happiness through conventional strategies (e.g., hedonic/eudemonic) may not capture all variables that influence the experience/ expression of happiness (Kumar et al., 2022). A recent study examining the factors influencing the happiness of nursing students in India identified several contributors to their happiness, including progress toward completing their education, engaging in physical activities, and maintaining close friendships. Conversely, stress was reported to be a significant detractor from their happiness (Kumar et al., 2022). The purpose of the present study was to identify the elicitors of happiness among Indians. Given the multidimensional nature of happiness, and its interaction with culture, the study focused on the aspects of life that contributed to happiness.

In this study, we conducted a content analysis on the qualitative responses to the Cantril Ladder of Life scale to identify the dominant contributors of happiness. Data were collected as part of the Singh et al. (2020) study, and through an extensive review of literature, dominant contributors were identified (e.g., Alexander et al., 2021; Karris Bachik et al., 2021; Koenig, 2015; Rasheed et al., 2020; Sandstorm & Dunn, 2014). Each of the identified domains formed an item on the Elicitors of Happiness and Life Satisfaction Scale. The scale was developed to identify the extent to which that domain contributed to the participant's happiness ("how much does each area contribute to happiness"). Participants responded using a four-point Likert scale; "1 = does not contribute to happiness at all" to "4 = always contributes to happiness." The specific aims of the study were to identify and examine the multidimensional elicitors of happiness and to examine the relationship of these elicitors with measures of health, quality of life, social support, and self-construal.

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 359$; Mean Age = 29.29 years (SD = 12.04)); Range 18–75 years; Females = 64.9%; Hindu: 67.4%; Catholic/Christian: 6.7%; Islam: 6.4%; Sikh: 5.3%; Jain = 4.7%; Zoroastrian/Parsee: 1.9%; Buddhist: 0.3%; Other: 2.8%; Choose not to respond: 4.8%; 21.7% regarded themselves as being religious minorities; 62.7% single 35.9% married; 54% college students (most 2nd/3rd year) from Mumbai and the Delhi National Capital area participated in the present study. Regarding housing arrangements, 7.8% of the sample was living in college housing (89.4% did not and 2.8% did not respond); 54.9% of the sample reported living in a household primarily supported by the father (1.7% the mother, 16.2% both parents, and 18.9% for others); 23.1% reported that their mother was currently working, and 69.4% reported that their father was currently working. Participants rated themselves as being 4.86/7 when asked to compare themselves financially to others in their community with 1 being worse off and 7 being better off.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling by inviting participants from community centers and educational institutes to complete a link to the questionnaires. Participants were also requested to forward the link to colleagues, friends, and family members to complete. Following informed consent, participants completed a series of measures on Qualtrics. Participants were informed that their participation is voluntary, and they can leave the study at any time and no data will be recorded. Participants who were recruited from community centers were provided with assistance if requested in completing the questionnaires. Participants were not compensated for participating in the study. Ethics approval was sought from the Pace University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Measures

Elicitors of Happiness and Life Satisfaction Scale

As discussed, the Elicitors of Happiness/Life Satisfaction Scale comprised of 15 areas identified as being important contributors to happiness and life satisfaction. These included family, religion, friend, spouse, spirituality, in laws, career, money, success, social position, community connection, community respect, love, duty, responsibility. Participants responded on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = does not contribute to happiness at all to 4 = always contributes to happiness to the question "how much does

each area contribute to happiness." Details of the factor analyses are described in the following sections.

Health and quality of life instruments were used in the present study to provide preliminary data to assess how each of these areas of happiness associated with these measures. Each of these instruments was examined for their psychometric properties by: (i) computing internal reliability (Cronbach's α); (ii) Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with principal components extraction and a varimax rotation, using a mixture of the scree plot inspection, Kaiser's K1 criterion (eigenvalues > 1), and interpretability of the factorial solutions to identify the underlying factor structures; and (iii) using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using the package "lavaan" (Rosseel, 2012) for R. In line with current procedures, instruments that were theoretically unidimensional were investigated using a unidimensional (i.e., congeneric) model, while instruments that were theoretically multifaceted were investigated by estimating (i) a unidimensional (general factor) model; (ii) a multidimensional model with independent factors, (iii) a multidimensional model with correlated factors; (iv) a hierarchical model (several independent factors that are indicators of a second-order factor); and (v) a bifactor model (items are predicted simultaneously by a general factor and one of the specific factors, all factors being independent). To note, the same models were tested for the Happiness scale, although more comprehensively discussed in the results. We used in conjunction with the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)—with acceptable thresholds of 0.90 and satisfactory thresholds of 0.95 (Hu & Bentler, 1999)—as well as the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR)—with acceptable thresholds of 0.10 and satisfactory thresholds of 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

*PROMIS Global Health (*Hays et al., 2009*)*

The scale measures global physical health, global mental health, general health, and usual social activities using 10 items (Hays et al., 2009). A high score represents a high level of health and social activities. The reliability of Global Mental health was α = 0.61 and for Global Physical Health was α = 0.61. The EFA indicated that the scale was, as expected, bidimensional, with a clear drop in eigenvalues after the second component and only the first two components having an eigenvalue above 1. Among the CFA models, the bifactor model had the best fit according to all fit indices considered, and its fit was borderline acceptable — $\chi^2(27) = 151.2, p < 0.001, CFI = .911, TLI = .852, RMSEA = .116, SRMR = .077$. The superior fit of the bifactor model indicates that using both a general score and specific scores is indicated for this instrument.

EUROHIS-QOL 8-Item Index-a QOL Measure

The items are derived from WHOQOL-100 and WHOQOL-BREF (The WHOQOL GROUP, 1998). There are two items each for each dimension of psychological, physical, social, and environmental domains. The 5-point Likert scale (Range: "not at all" to "completely") had satisfactory Cronbach alpha values (0.80) for internal consistency in three countries, UK, Germany, and France (Power, 2003). In this study, reliability for total QOL score α = 0.90. The EFA of the EUROHIS-QOL indicated that the scale was unidimensional, with a clear drop in eigenvalues after the first factor and only the first factor having an eigenvalue above 1. The unidimensional model had a moderately acceptable fit – $\chi^2(20) = 127.0, p < 0.001, CFI = .928, TLI = .899, RMSEA = .125, SRMR = .046$– in the present study, but was out performed by a unidimensional model with a local dependency (between items 7 and 8) suggested by the original authors (Schmidt et al., 2006) — $\chi^2(19) = 106.4, p < 0.001, CFI = .941, TLI = .913, RMSEA = .115, SRMR = .041$. They also reported that the scale provided an accurate index in cross-cultural field studies, satisfactory convergent, and discriminant validity and recommended it for use in public health research. A high score represents a high level of QOL.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (PSS; Zimet, et al., 1988)

The PSS is a 12-item scale with three subscales assessing perceived support from significant other, family, and friends. For each subscale, respondents identify if they can get help, are able to talk, get decision-making support, and discuss feelings with significant other, friends, and family on a 7-point Likert scale (1—very strongly agree to 7—very strongly disagree) with low scores suggesting better support. The three-month test retest reliability for the total scale was 0.85, 0.72 for significant other, 0.85 for family, and 0.75 for friends (Zimet et al., 1988). The EFA indicated a drop in eigenvalues after the 1st and the 3rd factor. The inspection of the loadings indicated that this was in line with both the unidimensional (overall social support) and tridimensional (significant other, friends, and family) aspects of the scale. The CFA confirmed this, with the correlated factors model showing acceptable fit—$\chi^2(160) = 524.2, p < 0.001, CFI = .941, TLI = .930, RMSEA = .082, SRMR = .047$—and the best fit in all the models tested, even though the second-order factor model both had borderline acceptable fit. It suggests that both unidimensional and tridimensional aspects of the scale are suitable to use. Reliability for the entire scale was 0.90 and for subscales was 0.94 for significant other, 0.91 for family, and 0.92 for friends in the present study.

Additionally, eight items similarly worded as the original 12 items were added to assess reliance on the internet for support ($n = 4$) and reliance on family over friends ($n = 4$). The latter four items were added to assess values specific to the collectivist culture where family loyalty is emphasized and the discussion of personal issues outside the home is discouraged. Thus, this scale had 5 factors named, Perceived Social Support—Significant Other, Perceived Social Support—Family, Perceived Social Support—Friend, Perceived Social Support—Internet, and Perceived Social Support—Family vs Friend.

Spiritual Well-Being Scale

The 20-item Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) measures non-denominational spirituality (Scott et al., 1998) on a 6-point Likert-type scale (range = 0— strongly disagree to 5—strongly agree). The Religious Well-Being (RWB) subscale (10 items; internal reliability range 0.73 to 0.98) assesses respondents' relationship with God. The Existential Well-Being (EWB) subscale (10 items; internal reliability range 0.82 to 0.99) measures participants' sense of purpose and satisfaction with life. The SWBS has demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity among college students, various religious groups, and individuals with physical and mental health conditions (Bufford et al., 1991). Reliability statistics of 0.82 for RWB and 0.81 for EWB subscales were found in a prior study with a sample of Asian India youth (Santoro et al., 2016). In this study, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 for RWB and 0.83 for EWB was found. The EFA of this instrument indicated to retain either one or three factors based on the scree plot examination. The varimax-rotated solution indicated that two of the factors corresponded to the facets (religious and existential), and the other one corresponded to a nuisance factor of the reversed items in both subscales. Among the initially tested CFA models, only the bifactor model had a (borderline) acceptable fit—$\chi^2(150) = 495.9, p < 0.001, CFI = .908, TLI = .883, RMSEA = .083, SRMR = .123$. Based on the EFA, we decided to fit an additional bifactor model with a common nuisance factor explaining the reversed items. It showed improved and acceptable fit—$\chi^2(141) = 412.1, p < 0.001, CFI = .928, TLI = .903, RMSEA = .076, SRMR = .084$—suggesting that using both general and facet scores is supported empirically here.

Cultural Identity

The 30-item Interpersonal Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994) assesses perception of self in relation to others. The scale comprises two subscales measuring independent self-construal where the unique characteristics of the self are emphasized and interdependent self-construal where the self is viewed in relation to others and social context (Christopher, et al., 2012). Typically, these dimensions are viewed as the person-level manifestations of cultural dimensions such as individualism and collectivism (Christopher et al., 2012). Internal reliabilities of the two subscales were within the acceptable range (Interdependent Self-Construal $\alpha = 0.80$; Independent Self-Construal $\alpha = 0.82$). The EFA showed a sharp drop in eigenvalues after the first factor and a second drop after the second factor, indicating the retention of either a unidimensional or a two-factor solution. As expected, the two-factor solution corresponded to the two facets of the scale. Unfortunately, none of the confirmatory model had satisfactory fit, with the bifactor model having the best and closest to acceptable fit—$\chi^2(366) = 913.2, p < 0.001, CFI = .781, TLI = .74, RMSEA = .065, SRMR = .065$. This indicates that using both a general score and specific facet scores is the most appropriate, even though it also indicates room for improvement regarding the instrument's structural validity.

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory principal components factor analyses with varimax rotation using R were computed on the 15 Elicitors of Happiness/Life Satisfaction items in the initial item pool. Factor analysis was computed on responses of two groups of participants from Mumbai and Delhi—NCR, respectively, to see if items group differently for individuals from different regions. Data indicated that both computations yielded similar findings with similar groupings. Secondly, given the wide age range of the sample, the impact of age on item loadings was assessed by computing the factor analysis on two age groups: > 35 years and younger and < 36 years and older. Again, the analysis yielded similar item loading for both groups. The factor analysis was then computed on the entire sample of participants. Results (presented in Table 2) indicated the presence of three components with eigenvalues greater than 1. An examination of the scree plot revealed a leveling of the slope after the third factor. In addition, a parallel analysis indicated retention of 3 components. Therefore, the analysis was then repeated with the number of factors set at three and subjected to varimax rotation, accounting for 49.2% of the total variance.

The first factor comprised of items describing status and material gains and was labeled "Achievement." Two items ("Responsibility" and "Duty") did not have a clear separation (loading < 0.30) from the other two factors. These items were rejected because they conceptually did not fit in with

Table 1 Factor loadings for elicitors of happiness items (3-factor solution)

Item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
Success	**0.795**	0.229	−0.005
Social Position	**0.758**	0.146	0.135
Money	**0.691**	0.216	0.053
Community respect	**0.609**	0.213	0.305
Love	0.264	**0.659**	0.063
Friends	0.255	**0.485**	0.004
Spouse	0.168	**0.616**	0.183
Family	0.105	**0.566**	0.119
Spirituality	0.105	0.188	**0.590**
Religion	0.068	0.065	**0.891**

Values given in bold indicate the factor on which the items loaded

Table 2 Items that comprise each of the 3 factors with the eigenvalue, percentage of variance accounted for, and the alpha levels for each factor

Factor 1: achievement	
Eigenvalue	4.963
Percent of variance accounted for	22.9%
Cumulative percentage of the variance accounted for	22.9%
Cronbach alpha	0.83
	Alpha if deleted
Social position	0.76
Success	0.77
Money	0.81
Community respect	0.82
Factor 2: interpersonal relationship	
Eigenvalue	1.528
Percent of Variance accounted for	15.8%
Cumulative percentage of the variance accounted for	38.7%
Cronbach alpha	0.72
	Alpha if deleted
Spouse	0.64
Family	0.67
Lover	0.63
Friend	0.69
Factor 3: religion/spirituality	
Eigenvalue	1.304
Percent of variance accounted for	10.5%
Cumulative percentage of the variance accounted for	49.2%
Cronbach alpha	0.71
	Alpha if deleted
Religion	0.55
Spirituality	0.56

the factor and the removal of these two items did not have a significant impact on the alpha level for the factor. Although one item, Career, did fit in conceptually with the factor, it was rejected due to high secondary loading. Factor 2 was named "Interpersonal"-based item content comprised of self-statements that emphasized interpersonal relationships as being important to happiness and life satisfaction. The third factor consists of items describing religion and spirituality and was therefore named "Religion/Spirituality." Two items ("In-laws" and "Community connection") were deleted because they appeared to be conceptually different from the other items that comprise the factor and loaded high on the Interpersonal Factor as well as the Religion/Spirituality Factor (i.e., issue of cross-loading). The factor loadings of the items from the varimax rotation are shown in Table 1. Table 2 depicts the eigenvalues and internal consistencies of each of the three factors. Alpha levels did not change perceptibly when the conceptually unclear items (e.g., duty, responsibility, and in-laws and community connection) are deleted from Factor I and Factor III. For the entire scale, Cronbach's alpha was 0.80, showing adequate internal reliability.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Since the items were ordinal with 4 response categories, we conducted the following Confirmatory Factor Analyses using the Weighted Least Squares Mean and Variance-adjusted (WLSMV) estimation procedure implemented in "lavaan," an estimation procedure generally recommended for categorical data. The unidimensional model had insufficient fit—$\chi^2(35) = 376.1, p < 0.001, CFI = .678, TLI = .586, RMSEA = .173$. However, the correlated factors model (which in this case, because there are 3 facets and one of the facets is measured by 2 indicators, is equivalent to a second-order factor model) had borderline acceptable fit—$\chi^2(33) = 146.3, p < 0.001, CFI = .893,$ $TLI = .854, RMSEA = .103, SRMR = .062$. The bifactor model had a fit that was comparable to the correlated factors model—$\chi^2(26) = 120.9, p < 0.001, CFI = .911, TLI = .845, RMSEA = .106, SRMR = .056$—with a lower AIC but higher BIC. Due to its similar fit to the data but lower parsimony, we decided to proceed to interpret the correlated factors model instead. In this model, all loadings were strong (they ranged between 0.555 and 0.819), F1 and F2 were strongly correlated (0.581), while F3 was moderately correlated with F2 (0.359) and weakly correlated with F1 (0.285). These results suggest that a 3-factor solution is appropriate, and that using 3 subscale scores is preferable.

However, these results should be interpreted with caution, because the confirmatory analyses were performed on the same data set as the exploratory factor analyses, which has previously allowed to identify these facets. Thus, the fit of these models (and thus the structural validity of

the instrument) may be artificially overestimated, due to overfitting.

Finally, we attempted to study measurement invariance based on the (best fitting) correlated factors model, but unfortunately, we could not estimate categorical multigroup CFA models because all response categories were not observed in all groups.

Measurement invariance was investigated across gender based on the correlated factors model. The configural invariance model $\chi^2(66) = 172.4, p < 0.001, CFI = .900, TLI = .863, RMSEA = .099, SRMR = .062$ did not significantly outperform $(\Delta\chi^2(6) = 11.5, p = 0.073)$ the metric invariance model — $\chi^2(72) = 184.0, p < 0.001, CFI = .894, TLI = .868, RMSEA = .098, SRMR = .069$, which significantly outperformed $\Delta\chi^2(7) = 18.9, p = 0.009)$ the scalar invariance model — $\chi^2(79) = 202.9, p < 0.001, CFI = .883, TLI = .867, RMSEA = .098, SRMR = .073$. This suggests that the instrument shows metric invariance but not scalar invariance with respect to gender, thus not supporting mean score comparisons across gender.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to identify significant associations between elicitors of Happiness/Life Satisfaction components (interpersonal, religious/spiritual, achievement), and general, physical, mental, and social health measures, quality of life, religious and spiritual well-being, interdependent and independent self-construal, and measures of social support. Data indicated positive relationships between all measures and all elicitors of happiness and life satisfaction subscales. Correlations among variables are presented in Table 3.

Regression

Regression models were developed to predict elicitors of happiness using the full scale from health, quality of life, religion/spirituality, social support, and self-construal measures scores. In step one, age and gender were entered as predictors. All three subscales of the Happiness and Life Satisfaction Scale were entered in step two. Gender is dummy coded (male = 0, female = 1). Results are reported in Table 4.

We attempted to examine these relations using a similar model, but with all traits as latent variables and the items as their indicators. Unfortunately, probably due to the ratio between total number of items and the sample size, the model failed to converge.

Discussion

Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2012; Ryff, 2017), our study supports the proposition that factors eliciting happiness are multifaceted. The present study data

Table 3 Pearson correlations between the three factors and single factor and all variables of interest

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Achievement				
2. Interpersonal	0.45**			
3. Religion/spiritual	0.27**	0.26**		
4. Happiness/life satisfaction (single score)	0.81**	0.79**	0.61**	
5. Perceived social support—significant other	0.12*	0.33**	0.18**	0.28**
6. Perceived social support—family	0.15**	0.34**	0.18**	0.30**
7. Perceived social support—friend	0.11*	0.33**	−0.09	0.25**
8. Perceived social support—internet	0.00	0.07	0.01	0.04
9. Perceived social support—family vs friend	0.20**	0.18**	0.32**	0.30**
10. Religious well-being	0.14**	0.14**	0.63**	0.36**
11. Existential well-being	0.14**	0.33**	0.25**	0.31**
12. PROMIS physical health	0.20**	0.16**	0.19**	0.24**
13. PROMIS mental health	0.24**	0.31**	0.23**	0.35**
14. PROMIS global health	0.19**	0.22**	0.18**	0.26**
15. PROMIS social health	0.26**	0.40**	0.17**	0.38**
16. Quality of life	0.21**	0.35**	0.15**	0.32**
17. ICS—Interdependent self-construal	0.14**	0.16**	0.20**	0.22**
18. ICS—Independent self-construal	0.23**	0.17**	0.17**	0.26**

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 Regression results with happiness as the outcome

Outcome	Age Std β	Gender Std β	Achievement Std β	Interpersonal Std β	Religion/spirituality Std β	R² Δ	F-test (df), p-value
Physical health	0.000	−0.166	0.108	0.075	0.099	0.058	<0.001
Mental health	0.001	−0.168	0.068	0.244	0.098	0.117	<0.001
Global health	0.003	−0.306	0.078	0.222	0.105	0.062	<0.001
Social health	0.006	0.011	0.116	0.479	0.027	0.153	<0.001
Religious well-being	0.014	0.287	0.017	−0.068	0.712	0.325	<0.001
Existential well-being	0.011	0.059	−0.040	0.342	0.105	0.104	<0.001
Quality of life	0.003	−0.038	0.058	0.342	0.040	0.118	<0.001
Perceived social support—significant other	0.000	−0.087	0.141	−0.727	−0.139	0.115	<0.001
Perceived social support—family	0.002	0.085	0.075	−0.629	−0.140	0.128	<0.001
Perceived social support—friend	0.013	0.055	0.111	−0.673	−0.044	0.123	<0.001
Perceived social support—internet	0.023	0.349	0.028	0.087	−0.065	0.003	<0.001
Perceived social support—family vs friend	−0.010	0.166	−0.169	−0.100	−0.340	0.100	<0.001
Interdependent self-construal	0.009	0.084	0.066	0.097	0.102	0.036	<0.001
Independent self-construal	0.004	0.133	0.169	0.060	0.048	0.056	<0.001

showed elicitors of happiness as a general factor comprising of three domains—achievement, interpersonal relationships, and religion/spirituality. These three components incorporate traditional values of familial relationships and religion/spirituality and the domain of achievement, which is characteristic of western notions of happiness. The inclusion of the latter reflects the influence of globalization in shaping the Indian notion of happiness (Derne, 2016; Singh et al., 2019; Suchday, 2015; Suchday et al., 2018). Surprisingly, despite the wide age range of the sample, 18–75 years, there was no statistically significant difference among older and younger participants. This lack of difference between the older and younger generation is surprising since conventional wisdom suggests that young people may adapt more easily to globalization-related changes (Bhatia, 2018). Similarly, there were no differences based on gender precluding analyses based on gender differences.

Preliminary data from our laboratory have suggested that younger people value tradition as much as achievement; in other words, people in India continue to respect traditions while imbibing values developed over time because of globalization (Suchday et al., 2018). This notion in the present study appears to be supported as indicated by the specific items comprising the achievement factor. The endorsement of achievement alludes to a more western globalized perspective on achievement, where individual agency and achievement are valued, with emphasis placed on career, money, and achievement. However, a closer examination of the achievement subscale points to some intriguing findings. A distinctly collectivist perspective is reflected in the items concerning community respect and social position, both of which loaded on the achievement factor. This concept of achievement points to the complexity of globalization in cultures like India with long and deep traditions. Although there is a strong impetus toward material success, there is also an equal emphasis on social and community standing which is consistent with India's collectivist roots. Prior data from our laboratory (Suchday et al., 2018) have shown a similar pattern in young people's beliefs with emphasis on career and achievement; however, reasons for the achievement focus among people in India may differ from their western counterparts. In contrast to the western individualistic cultures, the motivation for achievement for eastern collectivist stems from their desire to support parents and make them proud. Therefore, although achievement is valued and contributes to happiness in both individualist and collectivist cultures, it is intertwined with the welfare of family—materially and socially—within collectivist cultures (Suchday et al., 2018).

Just as the subscale of achievement has a uniquely Indian aspect to it with the inclusion of community respect and social position, the items on duty and responsibility form part of both achievement and interpersonal relationships. Although these two items are not included in the final factor structure due to correspondence with two subscales, it is important to acknowledge that they both form crucial elements of happiness for Indians. Traditional Indian culture emphasizes the importance of right action, duty, and responsibility embodied in the concepts of Dharma and Karma (Gotise & Upadhyay, 2018; Nagar, 2018; Sinha, 2011; Srivastava & Misra, 2011). These ideals

underlie personal agency and achievement as well as social relationships, suggesting that Dharma and Karma permeate all aspects of life. Therefore, an amalgamation of community respect, social position, duty, and responsibility reflect the importance of interpersonal interactions and relationships as well as spiritual value systems within Indian culture (Singh et al., 2020).

Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Graham et al., 2017; Kushlev et al., 2020; Pupavac et al., 2020), our happiness and life satisfaction scale and its three factors—Achievement, Interpersonal Relationships, and Religion/Spirituality—were positively associated with all aspects of health (physical, mental, and social) and quality of life. Notably, the relationship with quality of life was small compared to prior studies (Medvedev & Landhuis, 2018). One possible explanation for low correlations can be that the scale did not actually measure the experience or level of happiness or satisfaction but intended to identify the factors that elicit them. These elicitors of happiness may not have direct relations with aspects of life that contribute to quality of life.

The elicitors of happiness and life satisfaction correlated significantly with self-rated health and with physical, mental, and social health. This positive association of elicitors of happiness and life satisfaction with all aspects of health is consistent with prior studies (Pupavac et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2019; Steptoe, 2019). The correlation with seeking support from the internet was not significant suggesting that although internet may be widely used in the country, participants did not endorse it as associated with happiness. Previous studies have evidenced detrimental effects of internet use on mental health indices (Castellacci & Tveito, 2018; Çikrıkci, 2016).

The full scale and the three subscales were also positively associated with social support and with Religious Well-Being and Existential Well-Being. These results are consistent with prior research in India which suggest that interpersonal relationships and spiritual and religious well-being are strong contributors of happiness (Dorji et al., 2017; Sakamoto et al., 2017; Singh et al., 2019; Sinha, 2011; Srivastava & Misra, 2011; Suar et al., 2020; Suchday et al., 2018).

Further, participants endorsed both interdependent and independent self-construal. Prior studies from our laboratory (e.g., Suchday et al., 2018) found similar endorsement of both interdependent and independent self-construal among young people in India. As discussed above, the elicitors identified in this study reflect both traditional and globalized aspects of Indian culture and capture the paradoxical Indian mindset where there is an emphasis on both materialism and spirituality (Sinha, 2014; Suar et al., 2020).

There was a positive association of independent and interdependent self-construal with all three aspects of happiness. This corresponds with the dualistic and pluralistic idea where there is a constant emphasis on interpersonal relationships throughout life, but also on the personal spiritual journey for each individual which is always alone and individualistic (Suchday et al., 2018). The positive correlation between both interdependent and independent self-construal and all aspects of happiness in our data reflects this contradiction.

In sum, the items of the Happiness scale point to a combination of areas of life including interpersonal relationships, spirituality, and achievement, representing values held within Indian culture such as duty and responsibility, which underlie them. Although these data are preliminary, they represent an effort to understand happiness in Indian culture.

A close examination of the correlations of these factors indicated that these variables were diversely related to the various scales described above. For example, the interpersonal factor had strong correlations with social support, existential well-being, mental health, social health, and quality of life. The achievement had stronger associations with mental and social health and independent self-construal compared to the other variables in the study. The religion/spirituality factor strongly associated with religious well-being and an emphasis on family. Overall, the measure had high correlations with existential well-being and mental and social health, and quality of life. This pattern of correlations may suggest diverse pathways toward happiness and need to be explored further.

The elicitors of happiness identified in this study present some uniquely Indian factors that contribute to happiness such as duty, responsibility, community connection, and social position. Although the subscales represent conventional notions of happiness such as interpersonal harmony, spiritual connection, and materialistic achievement, examination of their sub-components such as duty, responsibility, community connection, and social position reveals an interesting Indian touch to these conventional notions. This study presents an emic effort to understanding happiness consistent with the Indian Psychology tradition of exploring concepts within the culture to understand the Indian "mindset" (Suchday et al., 2018).

Although elicitors of happiness within this culture correlated positively with social support, spiritual well-being, self-construal, quality of life, and health, these correlations were modest suggesting that there are other aspects associated with happiness within Indian culture. These modest correlations suggest the complexity of the concepts measured. Alternatively, most of the measures used in this study were developed and normed on western populations and may not adequately capture the complexity of the concept in diverse cultures.
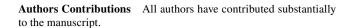
Limitations & Future Directions

The study had some limitations. First, since all the measures used were self-reports, there is a possibility that participants responded in socially desirable ways. While addressing this, future studies can follow up using a mixed-methods approach. Such studies can include open-ended questions enabling participants to elaborate on their responses. Second, the study sample comprised of participants from tier one cities in India, Mumbai, and Delhi-NCR. As the financial and political capital cities, respectively, both these areas represent parts of India with significant exposure to rapid globalization. Relatedly, participants who completed the survey represent English speaking adults with access to a computer and may not represent the general population. Hence, the data may not present an accurate picture of the rest of India, which is highly heterogeneous in culture. Future studies can replicate our study in other parts of India and even extend to other South Asian collectivist countries. Future studies can also develop items assessing different dimensions of happiness rather than just areas of life that may contribute to happiness. A larger item selection will also allow a deeper assessment of ideas of duty, responsibility, community respect, and social position and their differential emphasis within different cultures.

Conclusion

This study reinforces the idea that happiness is a multifaceted construct, shaped by both traditional and global influences. By conceptualizing happiness through the lenses of achievement, interpersonal relationships, and spirituality/religiosity, we capture the unique blend of values in Indian culture. Our findings indicate that despite the generational differences, younger and older participants alike value tradition and achievement, reflecting a harmony between India's collectivist roots and the individualistic aspects brought by globalization. The study highlights how achievement in India is deeply tied to community respect and social standing, which are integral to the collectivist ethos. This study offers an indigenous perspective on happiness, emphasizing the need for culturally nuanced measures to fully understand the concept within Indian society. Future research should aim to expand the scope of this study across diverse regions and develop more comprehensive tools to capture the intricate dimensions of happiness in Indian and other South Asian cultures.

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