



Happiness increases in our life

In recent years, people's lives have taken unexpected changes, some have been able to get the job they wanted or travel to new destinations, while others have had to go through difficult situations. Recently, I read an article in the *New York Times* that I found very interesting; it was titled: "The Rising Tide of Global Sadness." This piece written by journalist David Brooks, affirms and explains that the level of sadness has increased around the world in recent years. Personally, I do not agree with the claim of the article. People's satisfaction with their lives has been good and this has led to their happiness being greater. The world has gone through events that have changed people's lives, but I do not think it was all for the worse. After reading the article, I thought: "Talking about happiness is something relative." Each person experiences happiness in their own way. Although I cannot say exactly what makes a person happy, the vast majority of people tend to seek happiness in their lives.

Talking about life is talking about a concept with an immense meaning, a meaning that is different in each culture that exists in the world. In the *New York Times* article, journalist Brooks uses the following phrase: "The negativity in the culture reflects the negativity in real life." He shares his opinion saying that people have a negative attitude, both individually and in society. He expresses that for this reason citizens tend to be sadder. Although, according to the great collection of information that is made thanks to the surveys, the results do not indicate that people are

currently negative or sad. One of the most recognized surveys in the world is *Gallup*. It is a source that has provided very useful information to understand the growth of society. There are also other reliable surveys such as: *Ipsos* and *World Happiness Report*.

According to their results, it is reflected that: "Simple things such as physical well-being or interaction with family and friends caused joy in most people." In fact, it is known that 55% of people who participated in the data collection, place health and physical well-being as the first source of joy. In addition to qualifying well-being in the first place, when referring to the level of optimism of people, the age of the population and the growth possibilities that are to come are also considered. Some results showed that one group of people rate feeling in control of their lives as their biggest happiness factor, 43% to be exact. In another group, 43% considered having a meaningful job or employment as the source of their joy. While lastly, satisfaction with the direction of how life is going was rated by 40% as a main factor of happiness ("Ipsos Global Happiness Report" – *Kreyon Media*, par.15).

Another idea that is expressed in the *New York Times* article says that people are sadder because of economic problems and that it has also harmed them, causing them to have more and more worries. People's concerns may have increased, but..."Happiness and well-being do not only depend on the economy" (*Aleteia* par. 11). In the surveys carried out, the participants placed money in the tenth position as a source of happiness. Economic problems have had an impact on people's lives, but the results show how people tend to worry more about their families, children or their health. The reason why people stopped giving too much importance to money was the COVID pandemic, because for many families it meant more to be united and healthy than to be concerned about assets (*Kreyon Media*, par. 8).

Having explained a bit of my point of view, I would like to tell the following anecdote. When the pandemic began, I came from having great experiences at school, as well as in the sports field. At first it was not very easy to get used to being locked up in my house due to the restrictions by the Panamanian government. I could not go to Peru to see the rest of my family because the flights had been restricted and I could not see my friends, online either. Despite everything that happened, I did not get sad. I knew that the only way to move forward is to believe and think that everything was going to turn out well. In fact, it was those months of quarantine that taught me to spend time with my family and to value it much more than I already did. I had doubts about many things but knowing that my parents and brother were with me and most importantly, in good health, gave me happiness.

Another point made in David Brooks's piece is this: "Happiness in America has declined." This is what he said: "Between 1990 and 2018 the share of Americans who put themselves in the lowest happiness category increased by more than 50 percent." Although it is true that the levels of Happiness have changed, the United States is a nation that has had a significant change in its happiness. Currently the country has risen from three places in the ranking of the happiest countries in the world, in the 2022 edition. The United States was ranked 19th as one of the happiest countries in the world during 2021, but this 2022, the country has ranked 16th out of 146 countries. It has been recorded that the U.S. has increased his level of happiness by 8% after the report made ("World Happiness Report"- *Fox News*, par. 2).

The results do not reflect what is written in the article. Besides, in the piece it was mentioned that the really bad news was located abroad, thus referring to the rest of the nations around the world. In the article David Brooks points out that: "Experiences of negative emotions — related to stress, sadness, anger, worry and physical pain — hit a record high last year."

Nevertheless, some countries such as China and India have recorded an increase in their happiness or have hardly changed in recent years. China with 93% had the highest percentage of happy adults, while India still positioning itself as one of the countries with the happiest population, indicating that their happiness has been thanks to the development they have had in recent years despite the pandemic. Other countries that have had good numbers in the results have been the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia. The Netherlands came in second with 87% happy people, followed by Saudi Arabia with 80% (*Kreyon Media*, par. 4).

Finally, the author of the *New York Times* column quoted: "We live in a world of widening emotional inequality." The journalist Brooks supports this claim by saying that there is a top 20% and bottom 20% group. He points out that the first group is experiencing the highest level of happiness, while the second group is experiencing an unfair and unstable situation. The truth is that Gallup's observations show otherwise. Their results indicate that 56% of the world's population considers themselves happy. In addition, the report indicates that more than a tenth says that it is more or less unhappy, while about a third say they are "neither happy nor unhappy." Indeed, there is a specific part of the population that does not consider their lives to be happy, but the fact that these people do not consider themselves happy at all does not mean that the level of sadness has increased as the newspaper article says. Certainly, the pandemic has had an impact on people's daily lives, but not at catastrophic levels (*Aleteia*, par. 19; *Gallup's Word Happiness Report*).

Today each person has different expectations for the future. Last year, 38% of the world's population thought that 2022 would be better than 2021. 28% expected a worse year, and 27% believed that 2022 would be the same as 2021 (*Aleteia*, par.7). Combining the results obtained by the reports, the conclusion is reached that, despite everything, happiness is still present in the

population and therefore prevails. It prevails since in addition to collecting data on the well-being of people; age and the perception of upcoming growth are taken into account. Also, because for a large number of people reaching the end of the year is a good thing. The transition from one year to another marks the closing and beginning of a new cycle in people's lives, that is, a new opportunity to improve. It is something that generates positive feelings in the population and makes the index of hope and happiness increase. The information collected indicates that people all over the world are now quite content when it comes to personal happiness (*Aleteia*, par. 18).

The meaning of life is one of the greatest sources of happiness for people above all the things they live in their day to day. Knowing that life has a special meaning for each one of them makes them have great expectations to the things that are to come. As I said at the beginning, happiness is something relative. Personally, I think that happiness is a matter of perception. For example, not everything will make everyone happy and not everything will make everyone sad. Adding the above, for me that was an interesting point, that is why I wanted to work with this topic. Something I can say is that in recent months I have seen a happier and more optimistic world, full of energy to achieve everything what they propose. Some think that happiness is a goal, others think that happiness is a mood, the truth is that happiness is enjoying a great moment how you want it, so if you want something, pursue it and always look for your happiness.

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Writer's questions:

- 1) What do you think about happiness in the world? How I developed the topic?
- 2) What is your position? Do you think sadness has increased or happiness has increased?
- 3) Does the conclusion close the essay well? Does it connect well to the topic?