

## Module 2.2: Happiness

### What is Happiness? Two Traditions: Hedonic & Eudaimonic

#### **Hedonic View:**

- Quality of Life is more important for many of us than just quantity of life.
- Happiness might be No.1 on our list of Quality of life.
- Most people hope for good things & pleasant experiences outnumber bad one.
- Defining the Good life in terms of personal happiness is the general thrust of the Hedonic view of Well-being. A general version of Hedonism holds that the chief goal of life is the pursuit of happiness & pleasure.

- Subjective wellbeing (SWB) takes a broad view of Happiness, beyond the pursuits of short-term or physical pleasures defining a narrow hedonism (sensual self-indulgence).
- SWB is defined as life satisfaction, the presence of positive affect, & relative absence of negative affect.
- In short, this view defines happiness as enjoyment of life & its pleasures in day-to-day life.

## Eudaimonic Happiness:

- **We do feel** there is more to life than happiness & subjective pleasure.
- Seligman suggests there is a deeper & more “authentic happiness”.
- This view defines happiness as self-realization, meaning the expression & fulfillment of inner potentials. The good life results from living in accordance with your true self.

- That is happiness results from striving towards self-actualization- a process in which our talents, needs, & deeply held values direct the way we conduct our lives. Thus happiness results from realization of our potentials.
- We are happiest when we follow & achieve our goals & develop our unique potentials.
- Eudaimonic happiness has much in common with concept of self-actualization (Maslow) & the fully functioning person (Roger).

## What Kind of experiences lead to Eudaimonic happiness?

- Waterman argued that eudaimonic happiness results from experiences of personal expressiveness. Such experiences occur when we are fully engaged in life activities that fit & express our deeply held values & our sense of who we are.
- Under these circumstances we experience a feeling of fulfillment, of meaningfulness, of being intensely alive-a feeling that this is who we really are & who we were meant to be.



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- There are many more activities that produce hedonic enjoyment than activities that provide eudaimonic happiness based on personal expression.
- To evaluate the similarities & differences between Hedonic enjoyment & Eudaimonic enjoyment, Wateman asked a sample of college students to list five activities that addressed the following question:



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“If you wanted another person to know about who you are & what you are like as a person, what five activities of importance to you would you describe?”

- This question was meant to evoke activities that define & express a person’s personality, talents, & values.
- Each activity listed was then rated on scales describing personal expressiveness (Eudemonic) and Hedonic enjoyment of the activity.



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- Expressive questions were about whether activity gave strong feelings of 'who am I really', fulfillment, intense involvement, etc.
- Hedonic questions focused on whether activity produced good feelings such as warm glow, happiness, pleasure or enjoyment.
- Waterman found substantial overlap in expressive (eudaimonic) & hedonic ratings. Appr. 60% times, personally expressive activities also generated a comparable level of hedonic enjoyment (e.g. Eudaimonic & Hedonic happiness can go together).

**Love & Career,**

**Sports & Study**



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## However, two may diverge for some activities:

- Hedonic form of Happiness is associated with activities that made people feel relaxed, excited, led to loose track of time, & forgetting personal problems.
- Eudaimonic (feelings of personal expressiveness) were more strongly related to activities that created feelings of challenge, competence, & effort that offered the opportunity for personal growth & skill development.



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## Research Findings:

1. Happy people, whether by temperament, or recent experiences, are more tolerant & less prejudicial, more compassionate, more focused on others rather than self-focused, more helpful to others, & more enjoyable to be with. Happiness seems to produce a more expansive view of the world around us.

## 2. The Relationship between Happiness & Success:

- Its widely believed that success makes people happy.
- A recent extensive research examined whether Happiness can lead to Success? (Happiness → Success).

- **Are chronically Happy people more successful in multiple domains of life?**

**(Yes)**

- Hundreds of cross-sectional, longitudinal, & experimental studies found happy people were found to enjoy greater success in marriage, friendship, income, work, & mental as well as physical health.

3. People whose demographic profiles show many apparent advantages (e.g. young people with higher incomes) are not significantly happier than those with fewer apparent advantages (e.g. elderly individuals with lower incomes).

That is once basic needs are met, life circumstances do not offer much explanation for why some are happier than others.

- Thus, why life circumstances (High income young vs. Lower income adults) are weak predictors of happiness?
- ✓ Ans: Major source of subjective wellbeing (happiness) lies in psychological realm. Happiness is a subjective psychological state that depends more on the quality, rather than the quantity of our lives.

#### 4.Happiness & Life-span:

Despite changes in our emotional lives, personal goals, & sources of happiness across life-span, happiness is not related to age.

Thus, we should take each stage of life as it comes. Personal happiness is not 'out there' in the future at some later stage, & neither is it in the 'good old days'.

## 5. Gender & Happiness:

Who is Happier? Men or Women?

- Large scale surveys reveal that women & men report approximately the same levels of happiness. Men & Women are, on an average, equally likely to report feeling happy & satisfied with their lives as a whole.

- The Paradox of Gender: Though men & women have different emotional lives, overall level of happiness is the essentially same(?).

Explanations: (i) Women's more intense positive emotions may be balanced by their more intense negative emotions, averaging-out the extremes resulting in happiness averaging.



## 6. Marriage & Happiness:

- A meta-analytical review of nearly 100 studies found marriage to be a strong predictor of life satisfaction, **happiness**, & overall well-being.
- In a national survey of 35,000 people in U.S. found that married adults who said they were “very happy” (40%) was nearly double that of those who never married (26%).
- Compared to other domains of life (such as job status & health), being married & having a family repeatedly showed the strongest connection to life satisfaction & **happiness**.

## Judgement of Happiness

### **(A study of College Students: Can we predict Happiness?).**

- A study was conducted on college students for whom Dorm-room (hostel room) assignment is critical ('roommate from hell' kind of experiences).
- The social & physical aspects of students housing may affect students happiness with campus life.
- The study by Dunn et al looked at how much room assignment has *predicted* satisfaction level and *actual* impact on students' satisfaction levels.

- University authorities randomly assign the First year (Freshman) students to Rooms (Dorms) on sharing basis.
- However, at the end of First year, each student has an opportunity, in collaboration with peers, to choose his/her own roommate assigned to the same room for next 2 years.
- Group of students apply together, so before the lottery of housing assignments, at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> year, students already know with whom they will be living with following year.
- The lottery settles only the question of which specific room they will be living in.

Under these conditions would students (you) worry very much about the particular room assigned?

- It was found that students were actually very much concerned about where they would live!! (which dorm/room they get allotted), regardless of they will have your preferred roommates in assigned dorm.
- First years students often stayed up all night waiting for their room assignments & were elated if they got their preferred choice & extremely disappointed if assigned to a non-preferred choice.

- Then, students' predicted happiness (surveyed shortly before they learned of assignments) *before moving into their assigned rooms* was compared to their *actual happiness later on* (at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> year & 3<sup>rd</sup> year).

## Findings:

- (i) Students judgement of bad or good assignment were based primarily on Rooms location on campus & its physical characteristics.
- (ii) Were students actually as happy or miserable (sad) with their room assignments as they believed they would be?

Ans.'NO'.

- ✓ Thus, Students significantly overestimated how happy they would be with their preferred room assignment, as well as how unhappy they would be with an undesirable assignments.
- ✓ Students assigned to their desired rooms were less happy than they predicted, & students assigned to a less-desired room turned out to be happier than they had predicted. Overall, the vast majority of students were satisfied with life in their rooms.

(iii) What predicted actual dorm (room)-life satisfaction?

- ✓ Ans. **Social relationships.**

## Conclusion of study:

- The quality of students' social lives was the most powerful predictor of actual happiness than getting preferred room/dorm.

## **Explanation of students faulty prediction of Happiness:**

- However, why first year students base their predictions of anticipated happiness on the location & physical features of rooms?
- Dunn suggested **Isolation effect** to explain it. Isolation effect occurs when people try to simplify the amount of information they need to consider when making choices (*easy way out-cognitive misers!*)

- If we cancel out the many features that alternatives have in common, isolation of features occurs (which are fewer in number).

### Example : Choosing Smartphone. A vs Smartphone Mob. B

Features	Smartphone A	Smartphone B
1. Cost	15,300/-	15,800/-
2. Warranty	1 year	1 year
3. Free accessories	Back-cover	Back-cover
4. RAM	6 GB	6 GB
5 Storage	24 GB	20 GB
6 Long lasting battery	10 hrs	14 hrs
7. Camera	30 megapixel	40 megapixel
8. Infrared remote control	not available	not available
9 Wireless charging	Yes	Yes



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- **Isolation of effect** can be an efficient way to reduce the complexity of choosing among potential options.
- However, in thinking about how happy we will be with a particular choice, the isolation effect can cause an impact bias\* as we focus only on the differences & forget about the contributions of shared

- That is in giving preference for a particular room; students disregarded social life & focused on differences in physical features in making their judgements.
- As a result they exaggerated the anticipated satisfaction or dissatisfaction with room assignment. That is they wrongly believed they will be 'more happy if they get room of choice or more sad if they dont get it'.

*( Exaggeration in the strength & duration of anticipated emotional reactions. (e.g. more regret if missed train by a min, than a wider margin))*

# Understanding Money & Happiness

- People living in rich nations, on an average happier than those living in poor nations. However, related variables (for eg. buying health policy, job of interest) that co-vary with wealth may be responsible.
- Among individuals within particular country, the money-happiness correlation is quite small & primarily evident among the very poor (basic needs play imp role).

- Among economically & technologically advanced nations, increased economic growth over the last several decades has had little appreciable effect on SWB.
- In affluent nations the money –happiness association appears to be curvilinear, with money making a greater difference at lower income levels, but much less so at moderate or higher income levels , so that the curve levels out after a certain income is reached.
- (Even richest Americans only slightly happier than moderate income people)

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## What Collegians think about money & happiness??

- survey of college students over last 30 years (Mayers,2000) indicates that the importance of money in people's lives may be increasing. A 1998 survey of over 2 lakhs students found that being financially well-off was endorsed as a major life objectives by a majority of students (74%), whereas in 1970 only 39% had rated money as a very important objective.
- An emerging body of research within psychology suggests that the accumulation of wealth & material possessions are central features of many people's lives.



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## Happiness → Money:

Students (13,676 freshman) who were most cheerful at college entry went on to make more money, enjoyed higher job satisfaction , & suffered substantially less unemployment compared to their less cheerful classmates.

Cheerfulness disposition remains relatively stable across time. Denier suggests Cheerful outlook may create “**Can Do**” attitude (persistence) , and is related to better social skills-approachable & easy to work with, get higher performance evaluation.



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