

# Factors of Unhappiness in India

Manu Yadav<sup>\*1</sup>, Laveena Yadav<sup>#2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CSE undergraduate, Department of CSE, Chandigarh University, Mohali, Punjab, India.

<sup>2</sup>Former Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, National Institute of Engineering and Technology, Alwar, Rajasthan, India

<sup>1</sup>yadavmanu57@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>linalohotia10@gmail.com

**Abstract** — In 2019, United Nations published a report of World Happiness and it shocked the world, India the fifth largest economy of the world, fastest-growing trillion-dollar economy, a second-most populous country in the world ranks 140 out of 156 countries in Happiness Index and the previous reports tell us that Happiness in India is in continuous decline over the last 5 years. Now, what causes the unhappiness among Indians? By doing data analysis of many different datasets, we found that there are six main reasons of unhappiness among Indians, these six reasons are Poor Education System which causes unemployment, Corruption, watching excessive news, Decline in freedom, Less Trust in natives and low GDP per capita. These findings can be useful in boosting happiness in a country.

**Keywords** — Happiness; Unhappiness; India; United Nations; World Happiness Report.

## 1. Introduction

Ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus once said that worshipping of god is a waste of time and there is no existence after death, so the sole purpose of life is to be happy. In ancient times Epicureanism was rejected by most people, but today it has become the default view. The idea of happiness is beneficial not only to the individual but also to the families, workgroups, and societies. How to achieve that happiness? Epicurus suggested that the pursuit of happiness is a personal quest. But modern thinkers (Yuval Noah Harari, 2015) tend to see it as a collective project. Individual persons will not get their expedition of happiness, without economic resources and government planning. If your country is apart by war, the economy is in crisis and health care is non-existent, you are most likely to be miserable [1].

Now in the case of India, data shows (World Bank, 2019), it is the fifth-largest economy of the world, fastest-growing trillion-dollar economy and home to the world's largest youth population. So by the above definition, India must be a happy country. But if we look at the World Happiness Index (United Nations, 2019), India ranks 140 out of 156 countries

Now in figure 1(UN, 2015-19), it is clearly visible that average happiness score of the world (excluding India) is quite stable over last 5 years whereas happiness score of India is in a continuous decline i.e. from 2015 to 2019 India's happiness score was slipped from 4.565 to 4.015 making 4.2978 as its average happiness score. While the average score of happiness over the last 5 years of all the countries excluding India is 5.3858.

In Groups of twenty (G20), India stands last in happiness score and in Indian Subcontinent (India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives) also India stands last in happiness score. This clearly shows an image that India is on the wrong track. But why does it matter to concern about India the most? Well because India is one of the world's top emerging market, it is the home to approx. 1.3 billion people and also India has the largest young population in that world which makes it more important than anyone else.

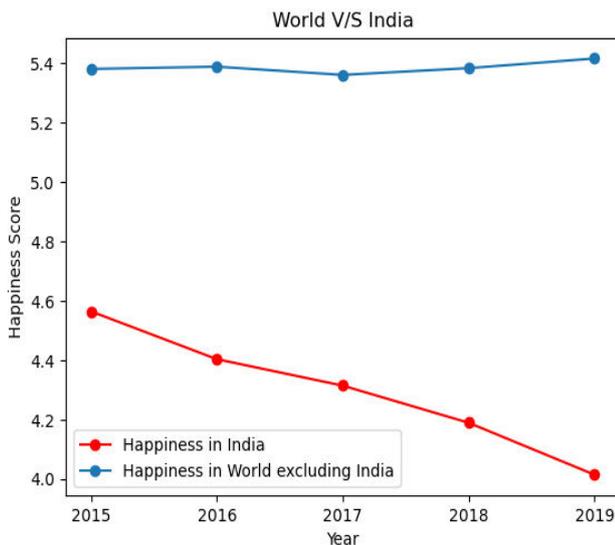


Fig. 1: Average happiness score of the world

## 2. Main Factors causing Unhappiness in India

According to Meik Wiking (happiness researcher and CEO of the Happiness Research Institute in Denmark) (2019), there are a lot of factors that impact happiness, everything from biology to income levels to the city they live in, but the best predictor to check whether they are happy or not is to check whether they are satisfied with their life or not. So to determine life satisfaction in different countries, the UN uses six different categories,

which are GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, and freedom to make life choices, social support, generosity, and absence of corruption. But still, there are many countries that lack the score of these categories and are poor and unstable but still, they are far happier than India. So there are still many invisible factors which are indirectly making Indians unhappier, some of those factors are,

### 2.1 Unemployment

Studies (Fumio Ohtake, 2012) find that being unemployed, experiences of unemployment, and fear of unemployment reduce people’s happiness. In simple words, unemployment and happiness are negatively correlated, which means if unemployment increases then happiness decreases and this correlation can easily be seen in India. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2019), Youth (15-24) unemployment rate in India is in continuous incline. In 2008 it was 18.5% and after 11 years, in 2019 it was jumped to 23.34%.

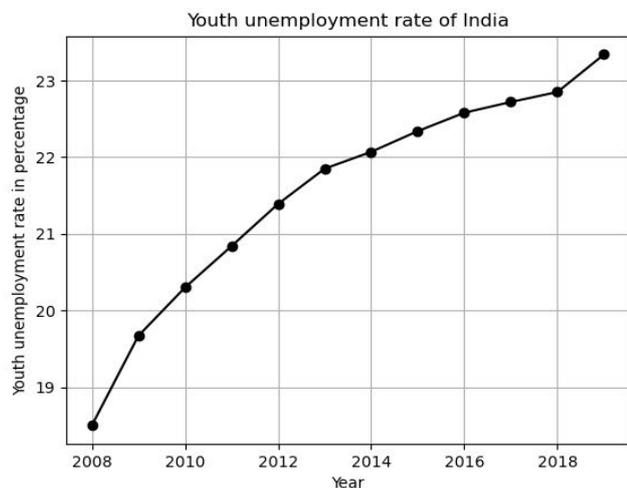


Fig. 2: Youth unemployment rate in India

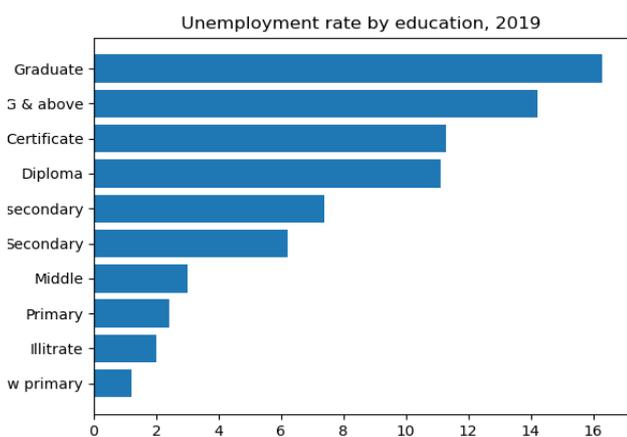


Fig. 3: Unemployment by Education

Unemployment is present in almost all countries but the contribution of unemployment in unhappiness is notably hurt India most. Because in most countries, unemployment is due to underqualification or having less education but in India, even overqualified persons are unable to get a job. According to a report prepared by the Centre for Sustainable Employment(2019), Graduates, with a share of 16.3 percent, made up the highest unemployment rate in 2019. This was followed by individuals with a post-graduate degree or above with a share of 14.2 percent. According to data, there are 55 million people who hold at least a graduate degree. About 9 millions of them are unemployed. Therefore, the youth with higher educational qualifications has higher unemployment rate in the India. These depressing numbers create fear of unemployment in the country, most notably in youths and make them less optimistic about the future, which ultimately ends up making them unhappier.

### 2.2 News

The latest research published in BBC Future (2020) suggests that the news can shape us in surprising ways – from our behaviour to our health, to the content of our dreams. We perceive news in very dramatic and in very negative ways. According to psychologists, watching excessive News isn’t good for our mental health, the more news coverage a person was exposed to, the more likely they were to develop symptoms such as stress, anxiety and PTSD. For example in 2020, After months of nonstop headlines about Covid-19, there are hints of an impending crisis of coronavirus anxiety. Mental health charities across the world are reporting unprecedented level of demand. So Excessive watching or reading the News (especially negative news) is very bad for our mental health. Now in India, People are really very much thirsty for news. As consumption of newspaper in India is one of the largest in the world and it is still thriving in India.

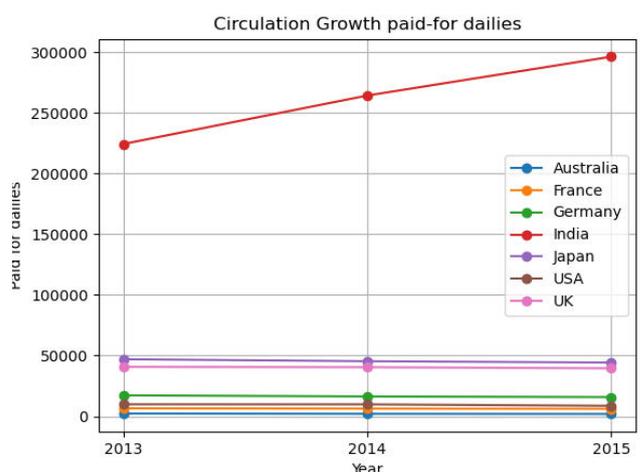


Fig. 4: Circulation Growth paid for Dailies

Moreover, a study published by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) (2017) shows that, over the last decade, newspaper circulation has grown from 39.1 million copies in 2006 to 62.8 million in 2016 – a 60% increase, for which there is no parallel in the world. Whereas in the developed economies, paid circulation of newspapers is on a decline. But in India, the growth in paid circulation is significantly increasing.

The Indian TV news industry is also in an unprecedented incline. Nowadays most of the top TRP gaining channels in India are News Channels such as *Aaj Tak*, *Zee News*, *ABP News*, etc. This shows that the consumption of news in India is getting higher and higher day by day which ends up making Indians unhappier.

### 2.3 Freedom

Freedom is considered one of the major factors in determining Happiness. United Nations also uses Freedom as a category to determine the life satisfaction of people's in a country. Researches (Thrive Global, 2018) suggested that Freedom is directly proportional to Happiness means if freedom increases, happiness increases, and vice versa. Below listed figure clearly illustrates the relationship between Happiness and Freedom.

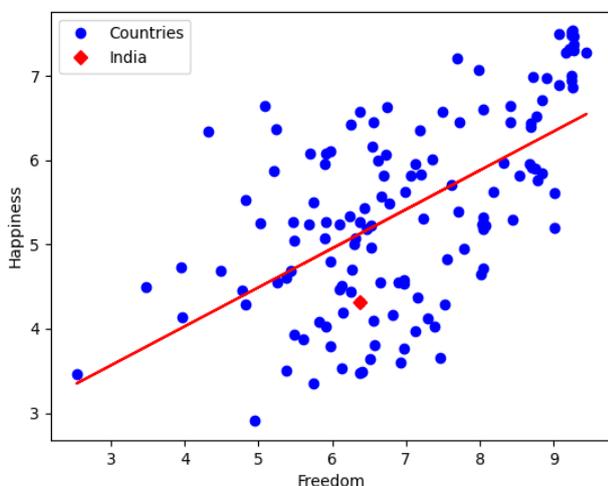


Fig. 5: Regression between Freedom and Happiness

According to scholars, democracy is the institutionalization of freedom, freedom of everything, and figure 5 clearly illustrates the relationship between freedom and happiness i.e. more freedom brings more happiness. So in a line, it can be concluded that democracy brings freedom and freedom brings happiness or it can be concluded that democracy is the institutionalization of happiness. Also, it is a fact that

citizens of Democratic countries are happier than any other type of government. But if that would be the case then why India is an unhappy country, as India is regarded as one of the world's largest Democracy and in World Democracy index, India holds 51 rank out of 167 countries? Well, its answer is freedom itself. According to Human Freedom Index published by CATO Institute (2019), the Personal Freedom Score of India is falling day by day (see fig. 6). And Personal Freedom score rank of India is also declining, from 2008 to 2017 it slipped from 87 to 108.

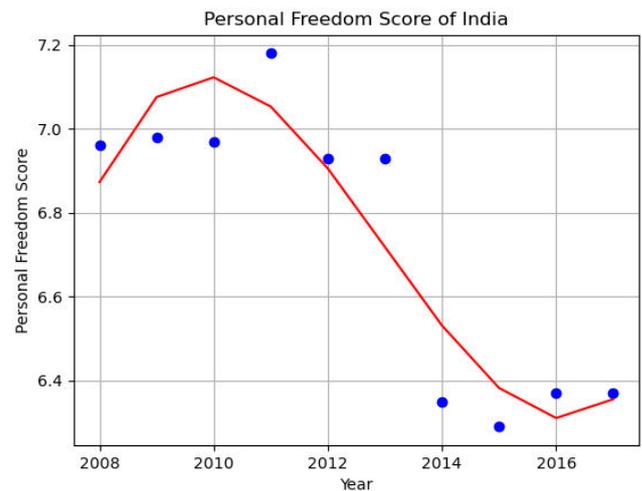
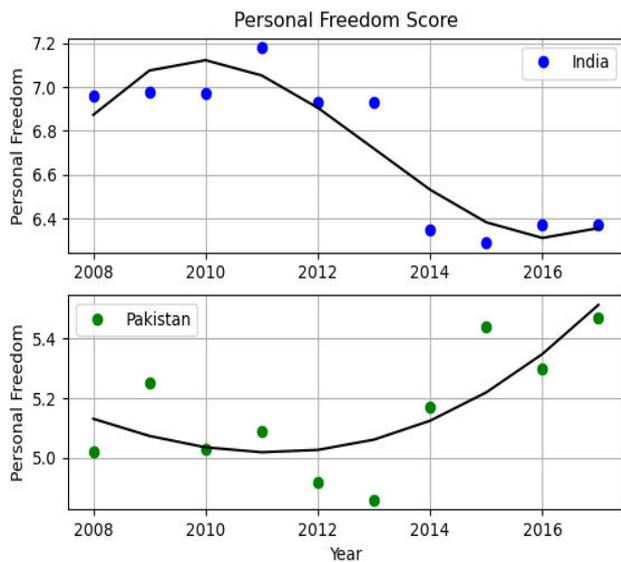


Fig. 6: Personal freedom score Vs Year

Now to understand this let's compare India with its neighbour country, Pakistan. After seeing the World Happiness Report of the United Nations, many people argue that this report is wrong because according to report Pakistan ranks far better than India even Pakistan's Personal Freedom, Life Expectancy, GDP per capita, etc are less than India's. This argument seems logical and it is. As figure 5 clearly illustrate that freedom is the key factor in happiness, no one can be happy while being a slave. And the Data released by CATO Institute gives the crystal clear image of both countries personal freedom. So one of the main factor which makes Pakistan a much happier country than India, is the rising Personal freedom of Pakistan's and falling personal freedom of India's, even though in 2017, the personal freedom score of Pakistan is 5.47 while India's is 6.37.

In figure 7, you can easily see the difference between rising Personal Freedom of Pakistan and falling Personal Freedom of India. Here personal freedom scores doesn't matter, the thing here which matter the most is rising and falling. You'll be happier if you have more freedom in present than you have in your past. In case of India, people have less personal freedom in present than they have in

their past, which makes them subconsciously unhappier in present.



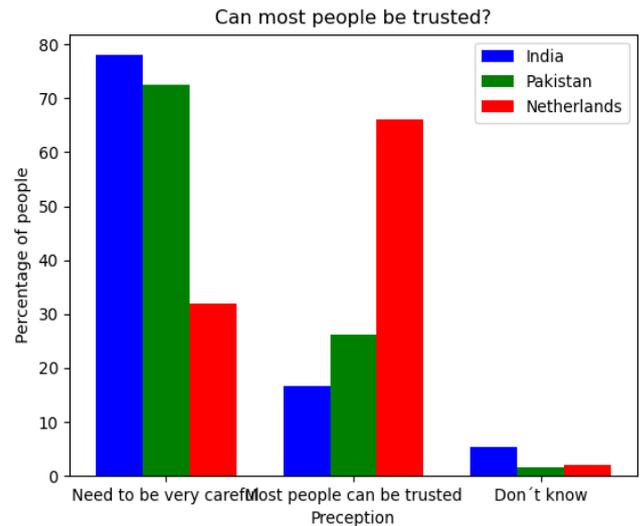
**Fig. 7: Falling Personal Freedom of India and rising Personal Freedom of Pakistan and**

#### 2.4 Trust

As they say, Trust precedes Happiness or Happiness is having heart to heart with someone you trust. Some people argue that happiness has nothing to do with Trustiness because, in this 21st century, no one is actually trustworthy and if someone does trust on someone then he/she will definitely regret after some time to do trust, which ultimately makes him/her unhappier.

This looks fine but if we look at the data of the World Value Survey (wave 6), it gives us a different story. In the below figure you can easily see the difference in Trust between 3 different countries, India, Pakistan, and Netherlands. According to data, 68.1% Netherlanders (Happiness Rank- 5), 23.5% Pakistanis (Happiness Rank- 67), and 16.6% Indians (Happiness Rank- 140) believe that most people of their country can be trusted. So here one can see that the more trusting people are, the happier they are, and vice versa.

As by founding the similar results Paul Zak, founding director of the Centre for Neuroeconomics Studies at Claremont Graduate University writes in a 2007 paper, “Nature has designed us to be conditional co-operators because it literally feels good. So less trust in peoples is one of the factors of unhappiness among Indians.



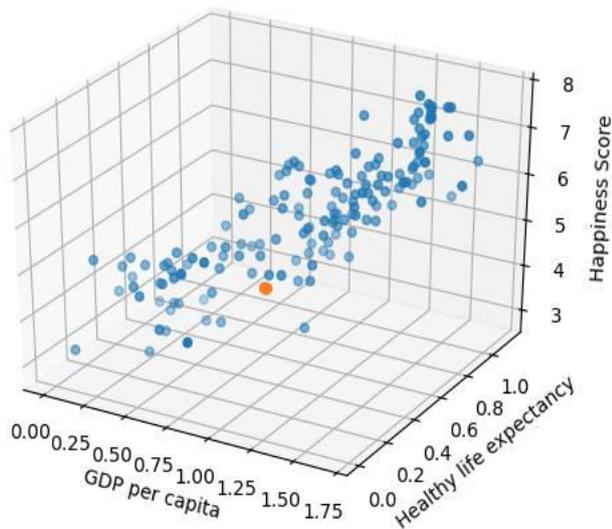
**Fig.8: People Trust Perception**

#### 2.5 Less per Person

In 2019, India overtakes the United Kingdom and France and become the fifth largest economy in the world. India is the fastest-growing trillion-dollar economy in the world, with a nominal GDP of \$2.94 trillion. So after seeing this, many people argue that despite the fact that India is a rich country, then why it's people are not happier? Well, the truth is that India is not that rich, and measuring the richness of a country by its nominal GDP is not the best way. Just take an example, the forecasters show that it is China and India, that are increasing CO2 emission at a speed that will cause dangerous climate change. It was like claiming that obesity was worse in China than in the Germany because the total bodyweight of the Chinese population was higher than that of the Germans population. Arguing about emissions per nation was pointless when there was such enormous variation in population size. In this case, to get the meaningful and comparable measures, total emission per nation needed to be divided by the population of each country.

So to measure richness, we should divide the Nominal GDP of a country by its population, which gives its GDP per capita and it is more meaningful then Nominal GDP. So let's talk about GDP per capita. According to the world bank, India ranks 142 out of 189 countries in GDP per capita index.

Now if we look at the World Happiness Report of the United Nations than we find that GDP per capita is highly correlated with Healthy Life Expectancy and with Happiness Score. In mathematical terms,



**Fig. 9: GDP per capita  $\propto$  Healthy Life Expectancy  $\propto$  Happiness**

Here's the 3D graph which illustrates the above equation. The orange point in this graph represents India. Here you can easily see that India is way behind from many countries in GDP per capita which causing a less healthy life expectancy and become the ultimate factor of Low Happiness Score.

### 3. Conclusion

Despite India's rich economy and diversity, it is one of the least happy countries in the world. As data shows that India's economy is increasing day by day, but its happiness is decreasing day by day, so at the same time India should also focus on GDH (Gross domestic happiness) as it does in GDP. So in this paper, we list the top five factors other than the UN's which are contributing in unhappiness in India, these factors are, increasing unemployment and its fear, increase in news consumption, a decline of personal freedom, less trust among natives, and less income or GDP per capita. So people of India should understand that happiness is a collective project and there are many factors that can affect happiness and above-listed factors are the major one.

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