

A Review: Urbanization and Life Satisfaction

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Abstract :- With urbanization, the burden to earn more and live rich is mounting and the ability to reach their own /societal expectations lead to pressure that may lead to varied degree of satisfaction in life. Life satisfaction is a subjective assessment of the quality of one's life. The present study tends to find the criteria that influence life satisfaction of the people in modern world. The following objectives were set to achieve the stated aim (a) To understand life-satisfaction (b) To find determinants of life satisfaction (c) Who are more satisfied with life. The study was conducted through desk research method. Attempts have been made to draw inferences from various researches and reports. The view of multi-angled literatures has been incorporated as felt fit to the context. The results interpreted are that education, increase of income, being married, family size (number of children), good health, connection with community, religious attitude are some important happiness drivers and has positive impact on life satisfaction.

Introduction:

India is the second most populous country in the world and has reached a state where urbanization is taking place at a faster rate and the desire of the people to live life in modernity is rising. People strive hard to make their family life up-to date and feel satisfied. Satisfaction with one's life implies contentment with or acceptance of one's life circumstances, or the fulfilment of one's wants and needs for one's life as a whole.

The last decade has seen an increase in cross-cultural studies, in which perceptions of national characteristics (e.g. societal, political and economical ones) has received more attention. In 2006, data was analysed to create the index by using reference from UNESCO, the CIA, the NEW Economic Foundation, the WHO, the Veenhoven Database, the Latinbarometer, the Afrobarometer, and the UNHDR. These sources were analysed to create a global projection of subjective well-being and India ranked 125 among 178 countries of the world studied and Denmark happens to be at first rank. This study will therefore examine life satisfaction and the composition of determinants of life satisfaction present in world.

The polling firm's Global Well-Being Index ranked India 71st out of 135 countries and areas surveyed in 2014. The index ranks a country according to its people's level of satisfaction with day-to-day life, relationships, finances, community and health.

Understanding Life Satisfaction:

Life satisfaction is stemming from the Aristotelian ethical model, eudaimonism, (from eudaimonia, the Greek word

for happiness). Veenhoven (1991) defined life satisfaction as "The degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole favourably." Life satisfaction defines as person's subjective evaluation of the degree to which his or her most important needs, goals, and wishes have been fulfilled (Frisch, 1998; Valois et al., 2004). However few scientists described life satisfaction as the most important and stable component of a person's subjective well-being, in addition to affective component (Kim-Prieto et al., 2005).

Life satisfaction often considered a desirable goal, where correct actions lead to individual well-being, with happiness representing the supreme good (Beutell, 2006). Further, he stated that life satisfaction is related to better physical, and mental health, longevity, and other outcomes that are considered positive in nature. In modern context, well-being is believed to be inherent to features such as social relationships, health, work related conditions, personal welfare, liberty, moral values and personality traits.

Life satisfaction can be defined as the cognitive component of subjective well-being (Martikainen, 2008). This is consistent with Bradley & Corwyn (2004) who say that life satisfaction reflects both the extent to which basic needs are met and the extent to which a variety of other goals are viewed as attainable. From this perspective it seems only reasonable that by accomplishing more goals, satisfaction with life will also increase.

Chow (2009) argues that improved levels of life satisfaction might give rise to better health in the future, and that this can already be identified within a three-year timeframe.

Conclusion: Life satisfaction is an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive. Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith (1999) assessed life satisfaction in research studies also include the following under life satisfaction: desire to change one's life; satisfaction with past; satisfaction with future; and significant other's views of one's life." (Beutell)

Determinants of life satisfaction:

- **Income and life satisfaction:**

According to Diener & Lucas (1999) relative standards theory implies that people's satisfaction with various life domains is determined by the comparison of their standing in each domain to relevant standards (a.o. individuals who are similar or proximal).

Schyns, (2002) argued that above a certain level, income does not have an extra effect on life satisfaction, since basic needs have been fulfilled and income has no real utility beyond that.

Luttmer (2005) argued that the influence of relative standards in relation to income and life satisfaction is identifiable within neighbourhood borders only. He indicates that the effect, caused by neighbours' earnings, is particularly strong for individuals who socialize more frequently with neighbours, but not for those who socialize more frequently with relatives, friends outside the neighbourhood or people they work with. It is therefore unlikely that individuals living in economically prosperous regions compare their standard of income to their counterparts residing in economically deprived regions, and vice versa.

According to Seghieri, Desantis & Tanturri (2006) it is assumed that high levels of income are implicitly associated with high levels of well-being.

Deaton (2008), who argues that data from the World Values Survey as well as data from the Gallup World Poll reveal a particularly strong relationship between income and life satisfaction among 'low-income' countries, but a virtually non-existent one among the 'highest-income' countries. Because of the dissimilar composition of the two surveys an inconsistent pattern is found for 'moderate-income' countries. Further, he said income is also often seen as both relatively unimportant and relatively transitory compared to other life domains such as family circumstances, employment status and health.

Jan, M and Masood, T (2008) found that with an increase in personal income, the overall life satisfaction increases. Moreover, with an increase in family income, the overall life satisfaction of women also increases.

Pittau, Zelli & Gelman (2009) indicates that, in general, personal income matters more in economically deprived regions than in economically prosperous ones, and that this pattern also holds for regions within the same country.

Pittau et al. (2009), still to be expected that income generally matters more for individuals living in economically deprived regions than for individuals living in economically prosperous regions.

Vinson, T and Ericson, M (2012), in their study found that, there is a highly significant association between income and happiness, and income and life satisfaction.

Conclusion: Income is probably one of the most extensively examined determinants of life satisfaction. This may be because as income and consumption increase, a greater number of needs can be satisfied, and thereby, a higher level of well-being can be attained.

- **Marriage and life satisfaction:**

Diener, Gohm, Suh & Oishi (2000) based on prior literature, conclude that married individuals consistently report greater subjective well-being than never-married individuals, who in turn report greater subjective well-being than previously married individuals (i.e. divorced, separated, or widowed).

Chipper field and Havens (2001) conducted a study to examine life satisfaction among individuals who had undergone a transition in marital status and those whose marital status remained stable over 7- year period. Among those individuals whose marital status remained stable over the 7 years, women's life satisfaction declined and men's remained constant.

Kousha and Moheen (2004) explored life satisfaction among unmarried Iranian women in urban areas. Data was analyzed from a sample of 335 women of which 61% were married and 39% were unmarried (i.e., single, divorced or widows). A series of path analysis and cross tabulations suggest that for married women life satisfaction is directly linked to their satisfaction with marriage, employment and their leisure experiences. There is an inverse relationship between satisfaction and the women's activity. However, for unmarried women, satisfaction is affected by their leisure experiences and educational level. The study suggests that any effort to reduce or increase the educational, employment, or leisure activities or women while directly affect women's general satisfaction and therefore affect Iranian society as a whole.

In an educational report (Subjective Well-Being, 2005) it is argued that national as well as international studies generally report a positive relationship between marriage and subjective well-being.

Shapiro & Keyes (2008), who say that marriage, represents a social contract that bonds individuals together in an intimate relationship that can be stress-buffering and socially integrative. They also maintain that a substantial body of research indicates that married individuals do not only have additional mental benefits over their non-married counterparts, but also sizeable physical advantages.

According to Vinson, T and Ericson, M (2012) 60.9% of the respondents who were married described themselves as being highly satisfied with their lives, the next highest concentrations of life satisfaction occurring within the categories 'widowed' (55.8%) and 'living together as married' (47.2%) followed by 'divorced' (39.8%) and 'separated' (33.3%). only 38.4% of people in the 'single/never married' category enjoyed high life satisfaction is attributable to marital status per se.

Conclusion: The relationship between marital status transitions or stability differs for men and women. Researches show that for married women life satisfaction is directly linked to their satisfaction with marriage, employment and their leisure experiences. Married individuals do not only have additional mental benefits, but also sizeable physical advantages.

- **Family size and life satisfaction:**

According to Vinson, T and Ericson, M (2012), a little over a fifth (22.5%) of the sample did not have a child, with 62.7% having between one and three children and a further 14.8% having four or more children. Almost identical proportions of these three categories – approximately 90% – declared themselves to be very/quite happy. However, the same three categories of offspring – no children, 1-3 children and four or more children, saw a progressive increase in the proportion of respondents in the high 'life satisfaction' category and the differences were statistically significant

Conclusion: As the number of children increases the life satisfaction level increases.

- **Health and life satisfaction:**

Bettencourt and Molix (2003) conducted a study to examine the ways in which satisfaction with health care may be associated with the lives of rural women. The results showed that rural, women who had poor health were less satisfied with the available health care than were healthier women.

Mroczek & Spiro (2005) through various cross-sectional studies have shown that reports of good physical health are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction.

Borg et al. (2006) investigated life satisfaction and its relation to living conditions, overall health, self-care capacity. Life satisfaction in older people with reduced self-

care capacity is determined by several factors, with social, physical, mental and financial aspects probably interacting with each other; especially feeling lonely, degree of self-care capacity, poor overall health, feeling worried and poor financial resources in relation to needs. These factors need to be considered in the care of these people to preserve or improve their life satisfaction.

According to Vinson, T and Ericson, M (2012), respondents who described their health as 'very good' were more than five times likely to be in the high life satisfaction category as those who said their health was 'poor' (a ratio of 5.1:1). These differences were also highly statistically significant.

Conclusion: The people with good health were more satisfied in comparison to those with poor health.

- **Education and life satisfaction:**

According to Witter, Okun, Stock & Haring (1984) education is significantly positively related to subjective well-being, accounting for 1 to 3 percent of the variance. Their study also reveals that education contributes to subjective well-being primarily by affecting occupation, and that it has a rather small effect apart from this.

Light, Hertsgaard & Martin (1985) stated that individuals who attained relatively higher levels of education and income also experience greater life satisfaction because they appear to be more optimistic in their outlook on life and have more realistic expectations for life in general.

According to Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith (1999) small but significant correlations between education and subjective well-being have often been found. They say that education may affect subjective well-being by allowing individuals to make progress towards their goal or to adapt to changes.

Worell (2002) said that education appears to be highly related to life satisfaction in poor nations, but also among individuals with lower income levels. In line with the law of diminishing marginal utility she suggests that these individuals may value and appreciate the experience of education more than those who perceive access to education as universal and easily available. Additionally, she says that economically deprived individuals might obtain greater life satisfaction from education because the achievement surpasses their expectations of what is attainable.

Besides arguing that the relationship between education and well-being is affected by national wealth, Kahneman, Diener & Schwartz (2003) conclude, based on an extensive literature review, that the effect of education is also stronger for those with low incomes.

According to Vinson, T and Ericson, M (2012), there are small but significant correlations between education and happiness, and education and life satisfaction.

Kahneman, et al., (2003) and Worell (2002) stated that education is primarily means to ensure employment and adequate levels of income so that eventually psychological needs can be satisfied. Either way, it is to be expected that education will generally have a greater impact on life satisfaction among individuals living in economically deprived regions.

Conclusion: As education is closely related to income as well as occupational status which further satisfies psychological needs and thereby gives satisfaction from life.

- **Political orientation and life satisfaction:**

According to Vinson, T and Ericson, M (2012), when people were asked to characterise their position on a ten point political scale ranging from 'left' (1) to 'right' (10), there was a greater tendency for those on the right to express a higher degree of happiness.

- **Community connection and life satisfaction:**

Bettencourt and Molix (2003) conducted a study to examine the ways in which satisfaction with health care may be associated with the lives of rural women. The results showed that rural women's satisfaction with their health care was associated with the extent to which they hold their community esteem and their degree of life satisfaction.

According to Vinson, T and Ericson, M (2012), the degree to which respondents saw themselves as a member of their local community was strongly correlated with a high level of both happiness and life satisfaction.

Conclusion: People who are connected to community are more likely to have higher life satisfaction.

- **Social class, social support and life satisfaction:**

Young (2006) conducted a study to explore the relationship between social support and life satisfaction for people with long-term mental illness. Research sample included 146 subjects, coming from two large residential homes in Hong Kong. Results show that different sources of social support have different effects on individual's life satisfaction. Emotional and instrumental supports from staff and friend have different predictive power and importance on individual's life satisfaction. These findings suggest that strengthening staff and friend's support could improve life satisfaction for people with long-term mental illness.

Numerous studies concluded that good and close relationships with other people –partners and spouses, parents and children, kinsmen, friends, neighbours and workmates – area major source of life satisfaction (Haller & Hadler, 2006).

Vinson, T and Ericson, M (2012), in their study found that the proportion of respondents describing themselves as very

happy progressively declines as one moves from a combined upper and upper-middle class category (40%), to a lower middle (31.9%), working class (29.5%) and 'lower' class category (2.6%). Similarly, the proportion of respondents within the higher satisfaction tertile declined with self-identified class: from 40% for the combined upper and upper-middle class category, to 31.8% in the lower middle (31.8%), 30.4% for working class and 1.7% amongst the lower class. Notably, only 10 (.7%) respondents described themselves as upper class.

Conclusion: Good and close relationships with people are major source of life satisfaction and life satisfaction declines with decrease in social class.

- **Sex difference for life satisfaction:**

Vinson, T and Ericson, M (2012), in their study found that, women and men are equally likely to be happy. The survey of 1400 respondents comprised 763 (54.5%) females and 637 (45.5%) males. A little over one-third (approximately 35%) of both groups were 'very happy' and the sexes were equally represented within the combined three highest steps on the life satisfaction ladder (males 54.5%; females 53.5%).

- **Age and Life satisfaction:**

Jan, M and Masood, T (2008) found that with an increase in age, the overall life satisfaction decreases. The simple cross-tabulation of age and life satisfaction reveals a pattern similar to that reported in the international literature. That is, there is a dip in the proportion of people in mid-life who express a high degree of life satisfaction and then resurgence in life satisfaction as people grow older.

- **Religious Attitude and Life satisfaction:**

According to Dorahy, Lewis, Schumaker, Akuamoah-Boateng, Duze & Sibiyi (1998) research findings with regard to the relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction have generally shown a positive relationship. They say that correlations have been found between life satisfaction and religious attitude, church attendance, closeness to God, divine experiences during prayer, and time spent on religious activities.

Fauteux (1990) suggests that religion can be a way to confront the various tasks that create anxiety, and that belief in God can encourage all that is good in a person, thereby facilitating the inner confidence to manage life's demands maturely.

Additionally, in an educational report (Subjective Well-being, 2005) it is argued that religious experiences may offer a sense of meaning in daily life and during major life crisis.

Although existing literature concerning the relationship between religion and life satisfaction is largely based on Christian samples in the US, Roemer (2006), who examined the association between religious beliefs, affiliation, and life satisfaction in Japan, found that Japanese religions also remain significantly correlated with life satisfaction even after controlling for socio-demographic variables.

Conclusion: With increase in religious attitude the satisfaction with life increases. The reason could be that it gives inner confidence to manage life's demands maturely and get meaning of life.

Who are more satisfied with life?

Suldo & Huebner, (2005) stated that an individual who has positive life prosperity is reported to have high level of life satisfaction and positive mood and emotional condition.

Diener discusses some aspects in his journal entitled Subjective Well Being: Three Decades of Progress (1999). He states that in the life satisfaction there are some components such as desire to change life, satisfaction with current life, satisfaction with past, satisfaction with future, and significant others' views of one's life.

The previous research (like Neely et al., 2009; Barnard & Curry, 2011) indicate that people with more self-compassion have higher level of life satisfaction, social relationship, emotional aptitude and happiness and have lower scores on anxiety, depression, discomfiture, fright or failure and anger.

Self-compassion creates an individual who is more intelligent and gentle toward himself in facing difficulties or feeling the flaws and admitting that suffering, failure and flaws are parts of human condition, and that all people, including him, deserve to get compassion (Neff, 2003b; Neff, Kirkpatrick & Rude, 2007; Akin, 2009).

Conclusion:

The recent overview of cross-sectional study on life satisfaction gives us the opportunity to verify empirically what matters for individuals for life satisfaction. After going through research studies it can be concluded that life satisfaction is an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one's life at a particular point in time. The wide array of research findings available in this booming literature display evidence that education, increase of income, being married, family size (number of children), good health, connection with community, religious attitude are some important happiness drivers and has positive impact on life satisfaction. The reason could be that the above said gives inner confidence, mental strength to satisfied needs and to manage life's demands maturely and thus gaining higher level of life satisfaction.

Further, gender has no impact on life satisfaction. With an increase in age, the overall life satisfaction decreases. Thus it can be said that economic policies, for many obvious reasons, cannot solely maximize life satisfaction as such but factors need to be tackled at individual level to attain ultimate satisfaction from life.

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