Major Fall in World Happiness Index – India

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Abstract: It does crush the pride of a nation to find itself ranked as low as 133rd in a global ranking of happiness.While it's debatable whether something as subtle as happiness can be plotted on the basis of gross factors such as income and life expectancy or intangible values like social support and generosity, we cannot brush aside the fact that we are ranked much unhappier than our counterparts in terror-ravaged Pakistan (80) or poverty-stricken Somalia (93) and Ethiopia (119).Interestingly, the 11-place decline from the preceding year has come at a time when our GDP growth seems to be doing just fine. So where have we slipped up? Much as beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, happiness is a state of mind. And like all things mental, happiness is subtle and delicate. Despite being the ultimate motivation behind all our actions in this world, only a few people genuinely experience happiness in today's hectic and fast-paced world. This research paper tries to give answer to the question 'Despite being the world's biggest democracy and showing good GDP growth, why India is ranked so low in Happiness Index? Which factors leads to India's poor position in Happiness Index and why is India showing continuous decline in rankings of World Happiness Index from past few years?'

Introduction:

We live in an age of stark contradictions. The world enjoys technologies of unimaginable sophistication; yet has at least one billion people without enough to eat each day. The world economy is propelled to soaring new heights of productivity through ongoing technological and organizational advance; yet is relentlessly destroying the natural environment in the process. Countries achieve great progress in economic development as conventionally measured; yet along the way succumb to new crises of obesity, smoking, diabetes, depression, and other ills of modern life.One key example of this contraction is world's economic superpower, USA has achieved striking economic and technological progress over the past half century without gains in the self-reported happiness of the citizenry. Instead, uncertainties and anxieties are high, social and economic inequalities have widened considerably, social trust is in decline, and confidence in government is at an all-time low. Perhaps for these reasons, life satisfaction has remained nearly constant during decades of rising Gross National Product (GNP) per capita (Helliwell, John F.; Layard, Richard; Sachs, Jeffrey, 2012).The World Happiness Index is a landmark survey of the state of global happiness published by UN sustainable development solutions network. The World Happiness Index 2018, ranks 156 countries by their happiness levels, and 117 countries by the happiness of their immigrants. The main focus of this year's report, in addition to its usual ranking of the levels and changes in happiness around the world, is on migration within and between countries (Jeffrey D. Sachs & Richard Layard & John F. Helliwell, 2018). Significance of this Index can be seen by the fact that in July 2011, UN General Assembly adopted resolution 65/309 inviting member countries to measure the happiness of their people and to use the data to help guide public policy (UN General Assembly, 2014). This was followed by UN first high level meeting which was chaired by the thenUN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Prime Minister Jigme Thinley of Bhutan, a nation that adopted gross national happiness instead of gross domestic product as their main development indicator(United Nations, 2012). World Happiness Index were issued in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and recently in 2018 with countries like Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland holding the top positions. Countries like United States, Spain, Pakistan, Bhutan and Bangladesh were ranked 18th, 36th, 75th, 97th and 115th respectively at the world Happiness Index 2018 where India was ranked at 133rd position behind most of the SAARC nations which includes Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India. Objectives of my paper are to understand the happiness index, understand trends of happiness index in India and causes of such trends.

Literature Review:

Happiness Index is calculated on basis of different parameters which includes housing, income, peace and security, education, healthy life expectancy, life satisfaction, work life balance, environment, GDP per capita, social support, freedom to make choices, generosity, perceptions of corruption, and happiness of immigrants (added as measure in 2018).The key factors of a country are pitched against a hypothetical country 'dystopia' which has the lowest score for each of these factors across countries. 'Dystopia is an imaginary country that has the world's least-happy people', says the report. In 2018, the happiness score of Dystopia is 1.92. The higher the score than 1.92, the happier the country is.Healthy life expectancy is the population health measure that combines mortality data with health status data to estimate expected years of life in good health for persons at a given age. Work life balance is a term used to describe the balance that an individual need between

time allocated for work and other aspects of life. Areas of work life balance may be personal interests, family and social or leisure activities. GDP per capita is obtained by dividing country's gross domestic product by its total population and is the best measure of country's standard of living. Social support is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people and that one is part of a supportive social network. Happiness of immigrants is new measure which calculates happiness of those people who has come to a foreign country to live their permanently. India's rank in happiness index for past 5 years are as follows:

| Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Rank	111th	117th	118th	122nd	133rd
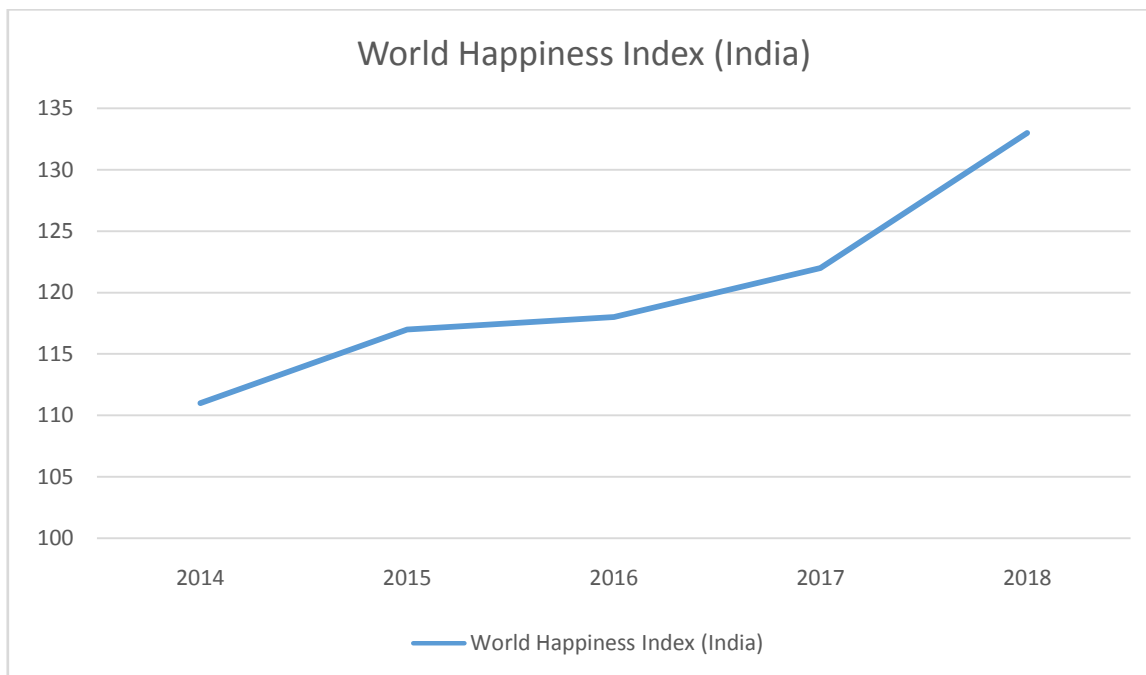
Research methodology:

The study is a qualitative study based on data collection from secondary sources such as Google Scholar and Jstor. Information has gathered from books and articles that aid the study of World Happiness Index. Researchers also looked into country's gross domestic product, education facilities, corruption, health life expectancy etc. Information is also gathered through reports published by UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). Information is also gathered through questionnaire to understand people's view of this topic.

Findings:

India's rank has been decreasing on a continuous basis from 111th to 117th to 118th to 122nd to 133rd in 2018. Following are the respective scores of India for year 2017 and 2018 along with score comparison of different parameters.

| Year	2018	2017
Score	4.190	4.315
GDP per capita	0.721	0.792
Social support	0.747	0.754
Healthy Life expectancy	0.485	0.455
Freedom to make choices	0.539	0.470
Generosity	0.172	0.232
Perceptions of corruption	0.093	0.092
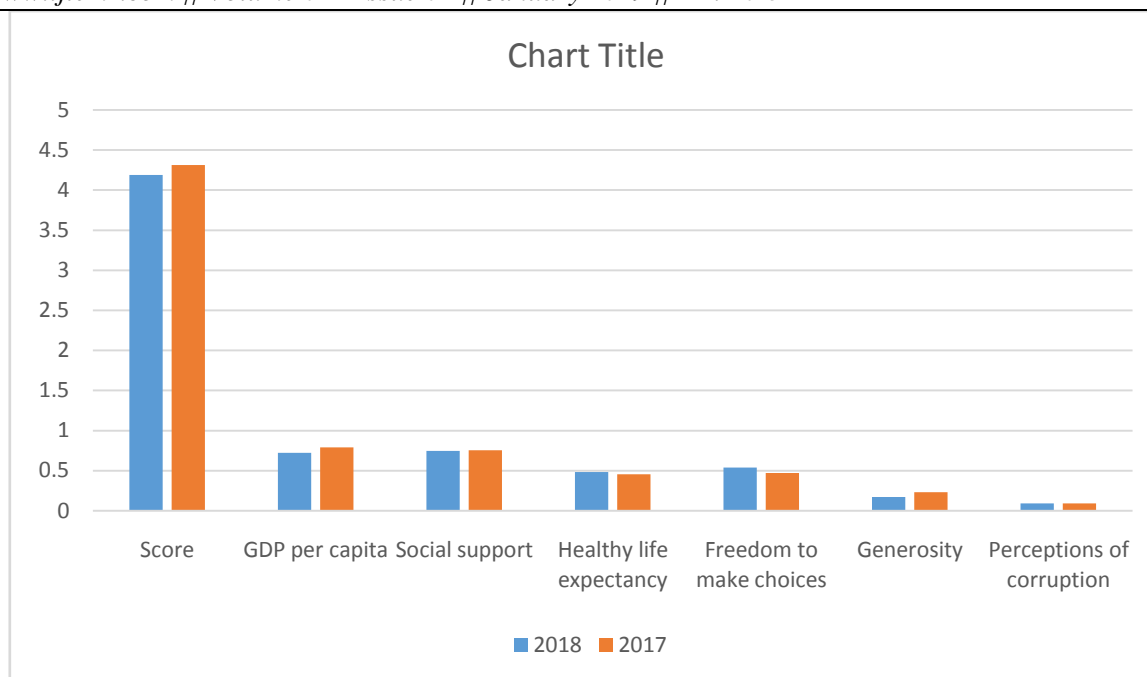
Score of year 2018 is less when compared to year 2017 and thus is the position on World Happiness Index. Decrease in GDP per capita has been seen by a score of 0.071 from year 2017 to 2018as the data for GDP of year 2018 is not available so the GDP per capita of year 2018 is estimated based upon population and previous year GDPs. As per 1st January 2019, population of India is about 136 crores whereas population for year 2017 was about 134 crores, so a drastic increase in population has been seen for this year which when divided from the GDP of current year leads to lower GDP per capita, though GDP for year 2018 is expected to rise when compared to year 2017 but the drastic increase in population leads to poor impact on GDP per capita. There is no major difference between the score of social support for year 2017 and 2018 but the health life expectancy for year 2018 has increased by a difference of 0.030, a report by Dr. George Thomas, editor of the Indian journal of medical ethics states that steady supply of food is the primary reason for increased life expectancy. Since the independence, famine has reduced dramatically in India and people have a decent supply of nutrition. Dr. S Balasubramanian, joint director of Tamil Nadu public health states that increase in life expectancy shows that policies are in right direction. Policies like creating awareness about family planning has helped a lot in increase of life expectancy, earlier people had more children and chances of getting balanced diet were low but now people tend to follow family planning and thus the chances of getting balanced diet increases, he also stated that childhood vaccinations has helped a lot in saving lives and elimination of threatening diseases like Diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio further added feather to the cap. Compared to 2017, India has improved in terms of freedom to make choices in 2018, according to current report on economic freedom in world released by Centre of Civil Society (CSS), India's rank improved by couple of notches compared to 98th rank in 2017 report. India improved score on parameters such as legal system and property rights, access to sound money, freedom to trade internationally, regulation of credit, labour and business. Report also stated that according to research in top-peering academic journals people living in countries with high level of tend to enjoy greater prosperity and tend to live happier live. Fred McMahon, Dr. Michael A. Walker Research Chair in Economic Freedom with the Fraser Institute stated that 'Where people are free to pursue their own opportunities and make their own choices, they lead more prosperous, happier and healthier lives'.Generosity was measured through donations to charity in the past month. India underperformed in 'freedom to make life choices' and 'generosity', according to the index. India's score on generosity and perceptions of corruption are lowest and form a miniscule part of its overall happiness score. Donations to charity in 2018 when compared to 2017 was less and thus the rank. Perceptions of corruption is based on person's general perception of corruption in government and businesses. India's position fell to 81st in Annual Corruption Index released by Transparency International (TI).The Corruption Perception Index 2017 also singled out India as one of the "worst offenders" in the Asia-Pacific region.The index measures perception of corruption in the public sector, using a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. India's score remained intact at 40 points in both 2016 and 2017. Transparency International said the results from the 2017 index show that corruption in many countries is still strong. In some countries across the Asia-Pacific region, journalists, activists, opposition leaders and even
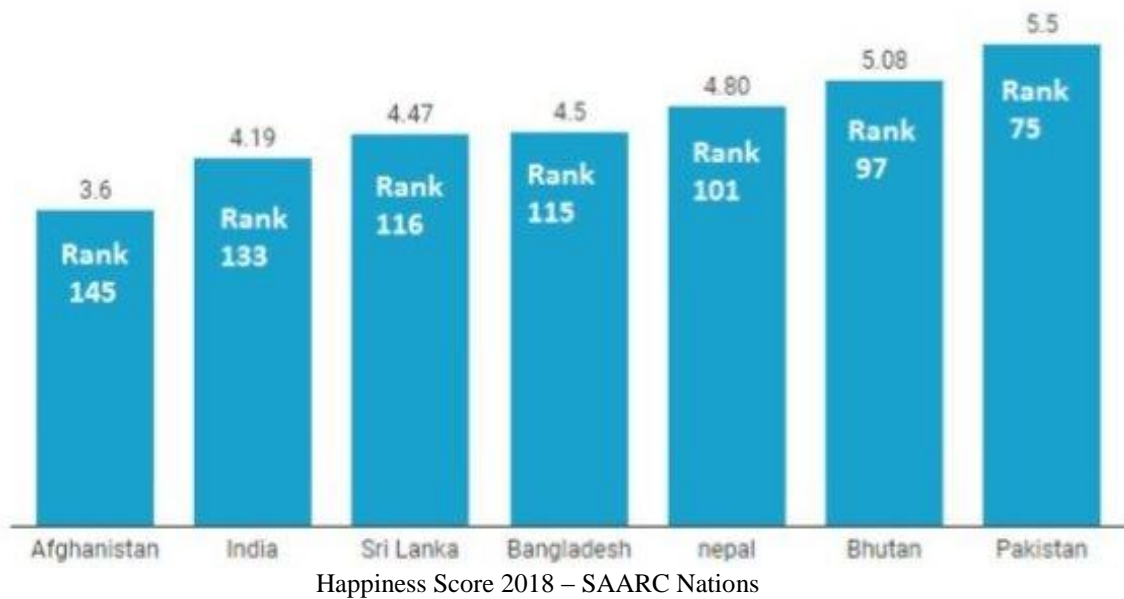
staff of law enforcement or watchdog agencies are threatened, and in worst cases, even murdered, the report stated. "Philippines, India and the Maldives are among the worst regional offenders in this respect. These countries score high for corruption and have fewer press freedoms and higher numbers of journalist deaths," it added. In the last six years alone, 15 journalists working on corruption stories were murdered in these Asian countries, TI pointed out using figures reported by the Committee to Protect Journalists. Globally, more than 9 out of 10 journalists were killed in countries that score 45 or less on the index. The 2018 WHR observed Indians were increasingly migrating to other countries. "There were big flows from the Indian sub-continent to the Gulf States," it stated. The 2018 World Happiness Index took into account happiness of immigrants for the first time. With globalization and conflicts, migration has become a vital issue. Increase in urbanization was already leading to rise in rural-urban migration. International migration is also on the rise and has become a political issue as well. For instance, US President's recent bans and general anti-immigration policy, the discourse around Brexit, and recent migration of people as refugees from strife-torn regions to Europe and resulting fallouts (death of Alan Kurdi a three year old Syrian boy became the symbol of the tragic plight of the refugees). The report mentions that around 10 percent or 25 million international migrants are refugees. Findings show that in the typical country, immigrants are about as happy as people born locally. However, in the happiest countries, immigrants are significantly less happy than locals, while the reverse is true in the least happy countries. This is because the happiness of each migrant depends not only on the happiness of locals but also on the level of happiness in the migrant's country of origin. And obviously, the happiness of immigrants also depends importantly on how accepting the locals are towards immigrants.
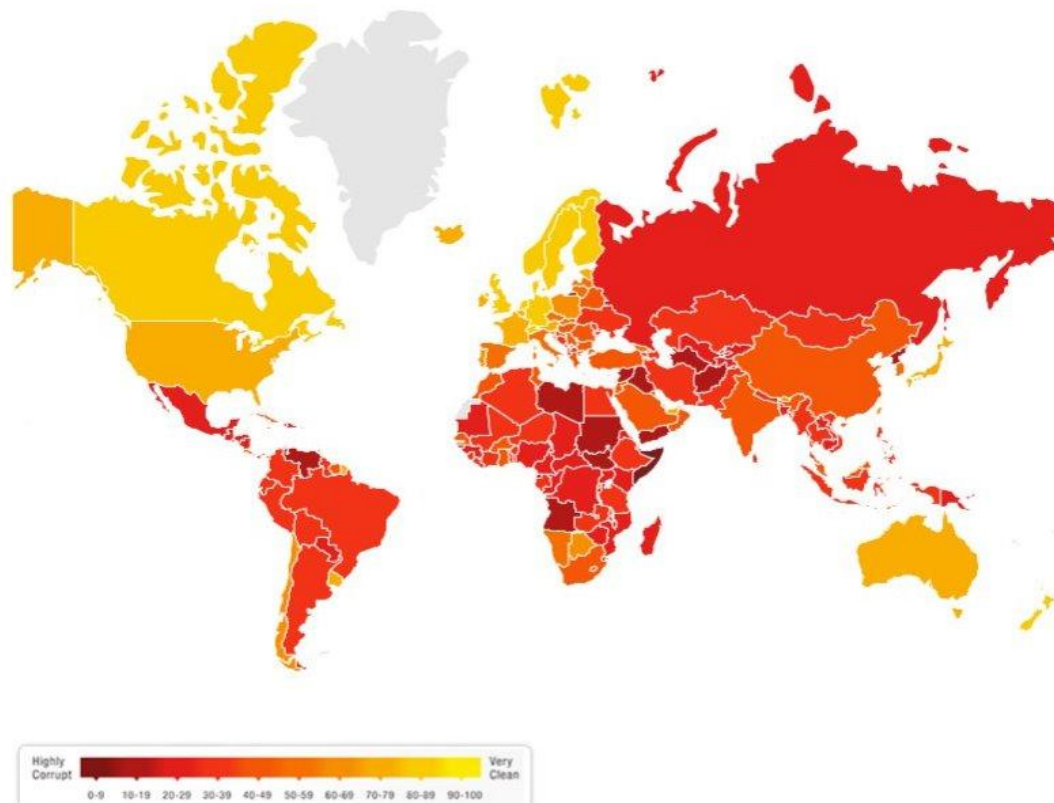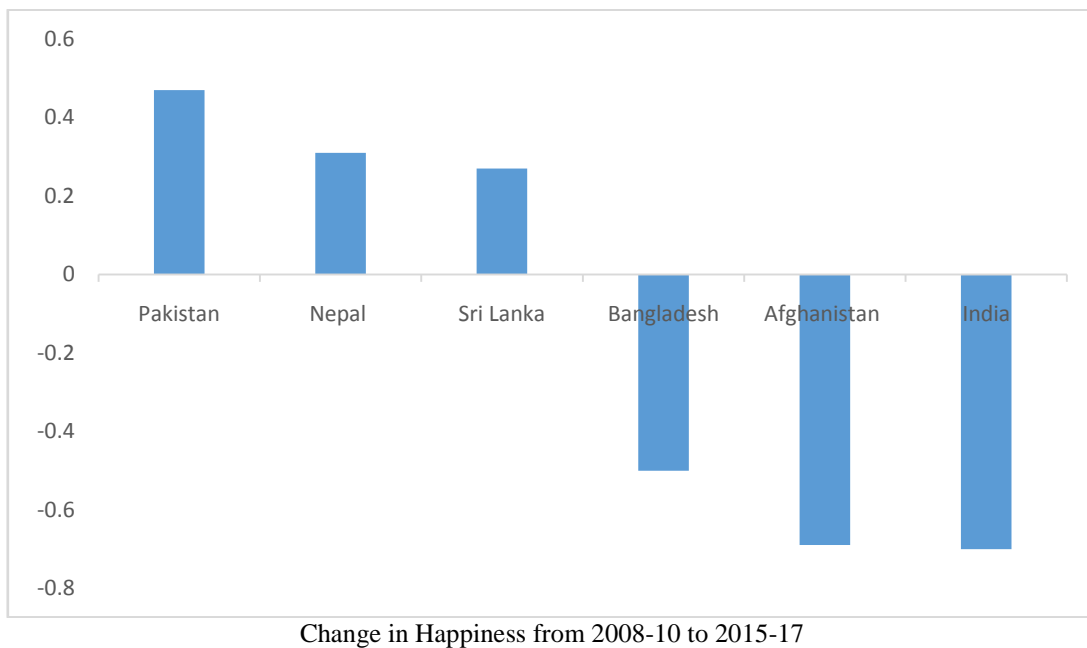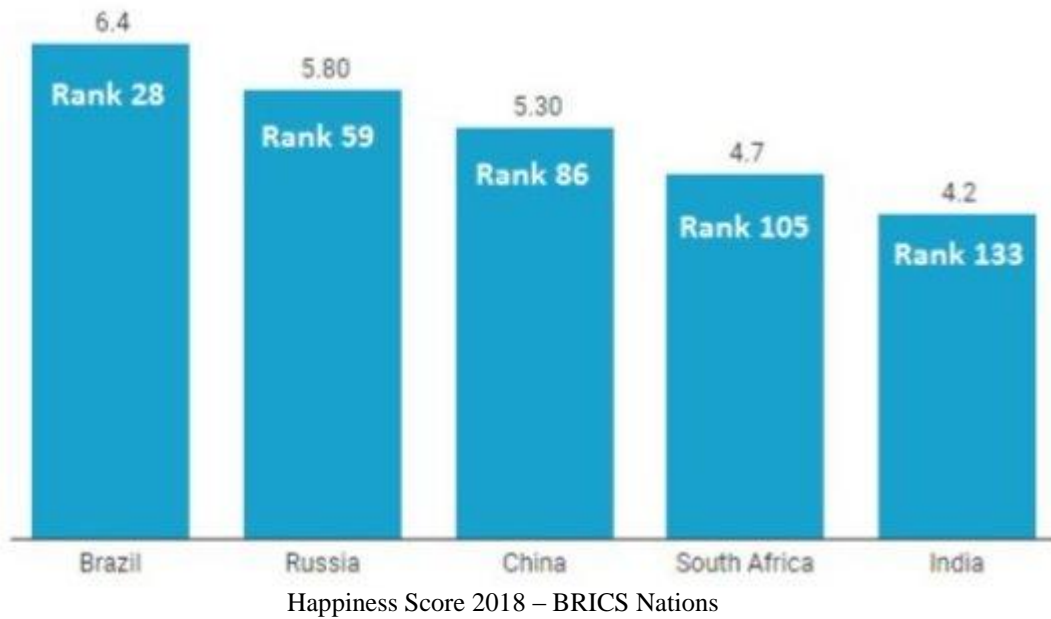

Corruption Perception Index 2017
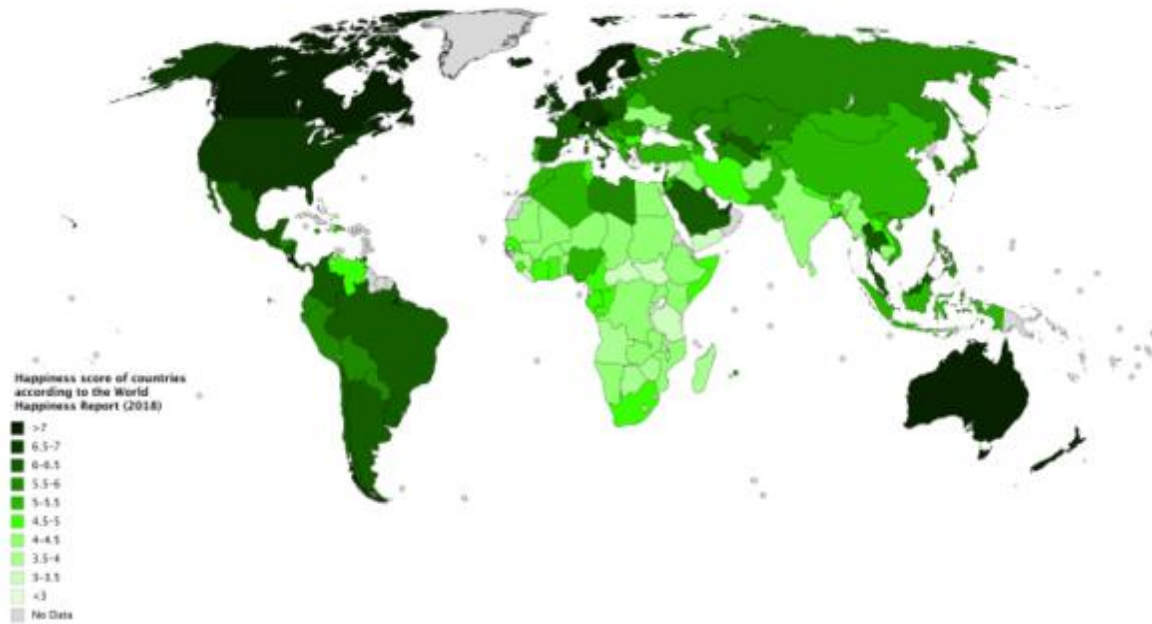
Happiness score of all countries according to World Happiness Index 2018

Happiness Score 2018 – SAARC Nations

Happiness Score 2018 – BRICS Nations

Change in Happiness from 2008-10 to 2015-17

SAARC Countries

In terms of change in the happiness score, India ranks 128th among 141 countries. Between 2008-10 and 2015-17, India's happiness score has fallen by -0.698, on a scale of 0-10. It isone of the 59 countries to witness a significant fall in happiness for the period under consideration.World Happiness Index 2018 revised the base period to 2008-10, and the changes are measured from then to 2015-2017. India has also registered the worst performance among both SAARC and BRICS countries. While Pakistan is best placed at 27th with an improvement score of +0.47, Afghanistan finds itself one place ahead of India at 127th position (-0.688).

Sub-Bars for BRICS Nations

Sub-Bars for SAARC Nations
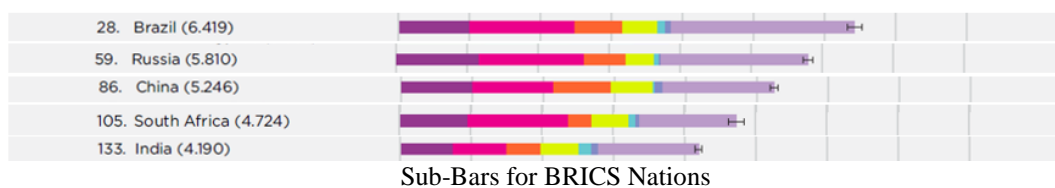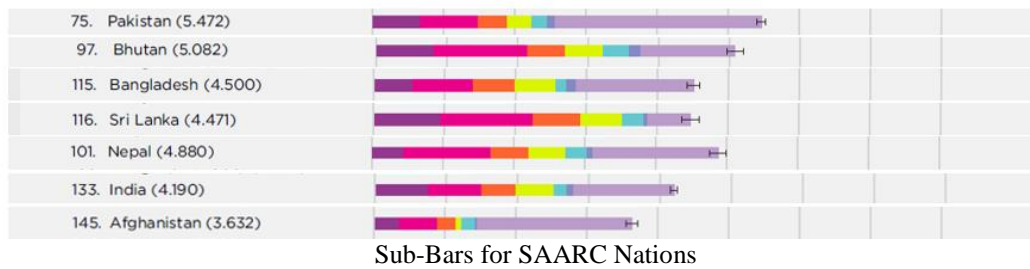
The extent of the happiness score explained by each factor is indicated by the size of the sub bars. The last sub bar indicates that portion of the score which is not explained by any of the 6 key factors like education, life satisfaction, peace and security, work-life balance etc. India has a population of 1.3 billion and still counting, such a large population leads to more competition for getting admissions to colleges, getting good scores, getting jobs, good life partner etc. even to book a seat in trains or buses there is a lot of competition. According to a survey by NDTV about 16,38,428 students gave CBSE Class 10th Examination whereas about 11,86,306 students gave CBSE Class 12th Examination, this itself is a proof of increasing competition among students which forces them to give away their life to study and thus stay away from playing. Education and happiness are very much connected, children are not happy due to fact that they have to suffer a lot of competition not only in terms of performance but also in terms of reservations, recently 10 percent reservation has been provided to economically backward in general class in jobs and education, this reservation is over and above already existing 49.5 percent reservation for schedule caste and schedule tribes; not only this a bill was passed recently which will provide Marathas 16 percent reservation in jobs and education in Maharashtra, this 16 percent is over and above the already allowed reservations by Supreme Court. Currently 52 percent seats in Maharashtra are reserved and the Maratha quota will take it to 68 percent, so the people who are not from Maharashtra and seeking education or job there have to face a lot of competition and often feel neglected although they might be better performers than the one who are being selected due to reservations. These reservations are a reason due to which youth of India is unhappy. According to IIM reservation policy 27 percent of seats are reserved for other backward classes, 7.5 percent seats are reserved for Schedule Tribe (ST), 15 percent seats are reserved for Schedule Caste (SC) and 3 percent seats are reserved for Persons with Disability (PwD) leaving only 47.5 percent seats for General category for which about lakhs of people compete.
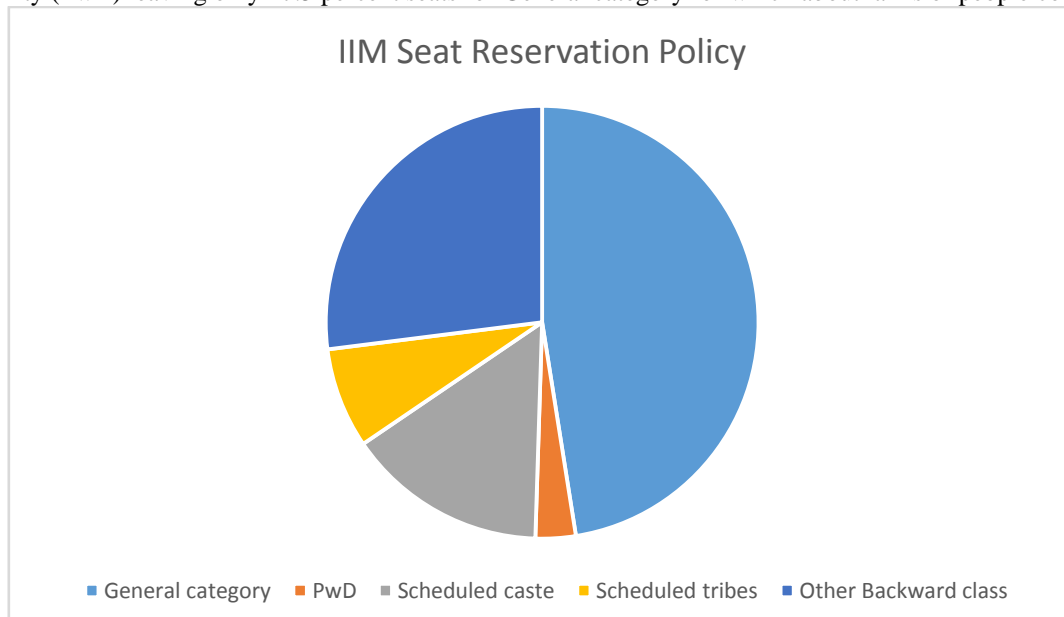
Other factors affecting World Happiness Index can be explained using Human Development Index. A composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. Life expectancy at birth is Number of years a newborn infant could expect to live if prevailing patterns of age-specific mortality rates at the time of birth stay the same throughout the infant's life, expected years of schooling is number of years of schooling that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child's life and to calculate standard of living Gross National Income per capita is used which is Aggregate income of an economy generated by its production and its ownership of factors of production, less the incomes paid for the use of factors of production owned by the rest of the world, converted to international dollars using PPP rates, divided by midyear population.The indicators of the three dimensions are calibrated and combined to generate an HDI score between zero and one. Countries are grouped into four human development categories or quartiles: very high, high, medium and low. A country is in the very high group if its HDI is in the top quartile, in the high group if its HDI is in percentiles 51–75, in the medium group if its HDI is in percentiles 26–50, and in the low group if its HDI is in the bottom quartile. India was ranked 130th according to Human Development Index 2017 with score of 0.640 and expected years of schooling was 12.3 years only. Less education leads to less possibility of getting jobs and thus leads to unemployment which therefore creates unhappiness among people and they are dissatisfied with their lives. One key source of inequality and unhappiness within countries is the gap in opportunities, achievements and empowerment between women and men. Worldwide the average HDI for women is six percent lower than for men, due to women's lower income and educational attainment in many countries. Although there has been laudable progress in the number of girls attending school, there remain big differences between other key aspects of men and women's lives. Women's empowerment remains a particular challenge. Global labor force participation rates for women are lower than for men – 49 percent versus 75 percent. And when women are in the labor market, their unemployment rates are 24 percent higher than their male counterparts. Women globally also do much more unpaid domestic and care work than men.


World Human Development Index 2014
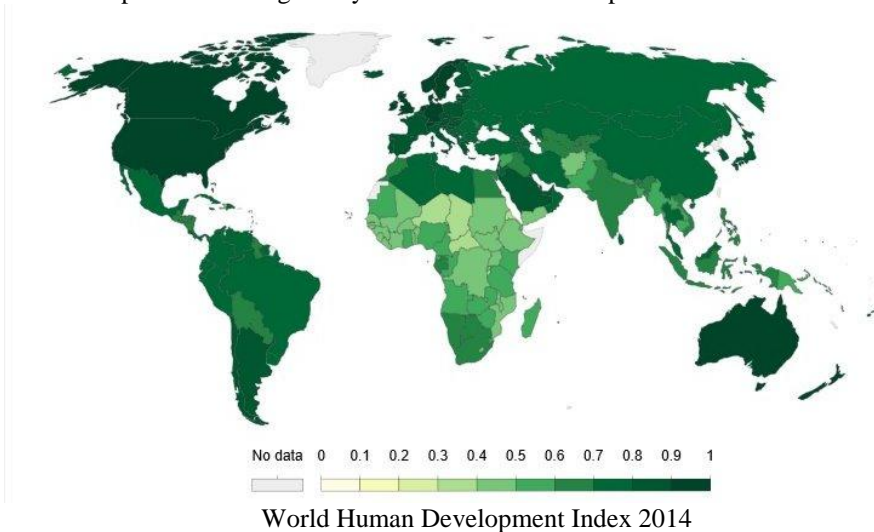
People are also unhappy with the way government is handling different frauds like Vijay Malaya case and Punjab National bank case. The way government is using public money in term of taxes is also making people unhappy rather than using same money towards development of economy and business in such a time where money circulation in economy is less, they are using the same money towards making statues. The happiness of person is also depended on social category or class of people:Rich class- Rich class is not happy as they think they are not getting what they actually deserve like they have tons of money but they are not getting clean roads, good hospitality services, and clean society rather they are facing traffic jams, congested roads, polluted air etc. Middle class- They are the most frustrated class as they become a sandwich between rich and poor class. They are the one who pay taxes, have no work life balance and then watch people committing fraud and taking away their money.

Poor class- They are the people who are depended on government for basic needs, they are the one who just need 3 time meals and a roof to live without considering anything about environment and society. Government has established ration shops to provide these people basic requirements at minimal price but these ration shop managers sell most of the product to big grocery stores and sell adulterated goods to these poor people, so they are not happy.

To understand more about reasons for unhappiness among people, I conducted a survey through different social media websites. This survey belongs to people of different ages, genders and belong to different states of India:
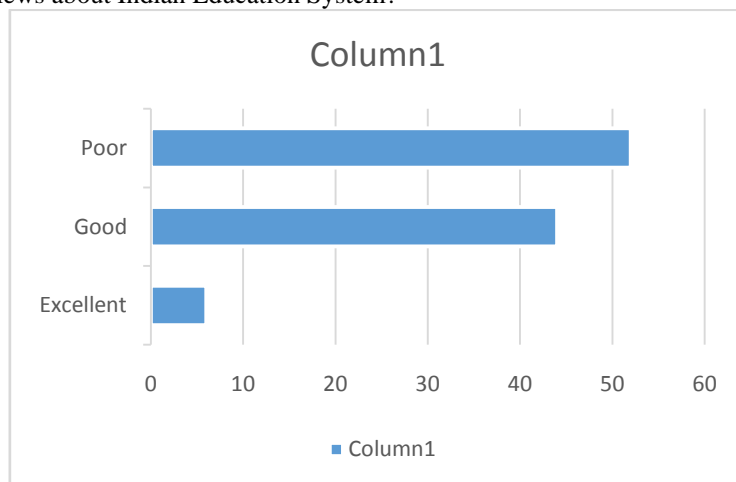
- Are you aware of India's position in Happiness Index 2018?
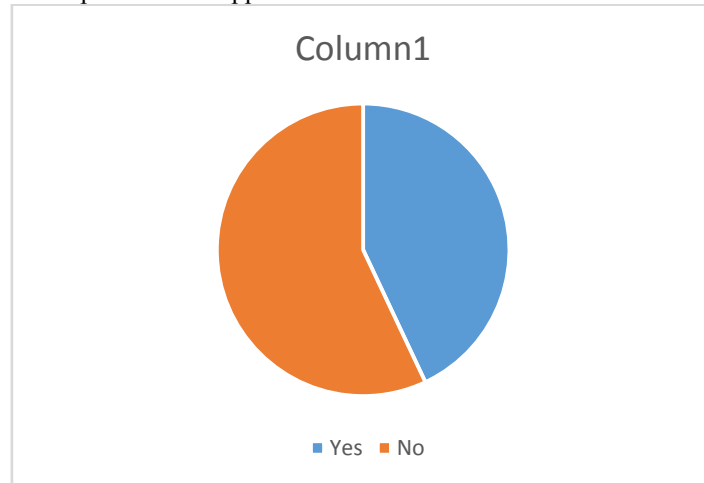
- Do you face problem of corruption in your regular life?
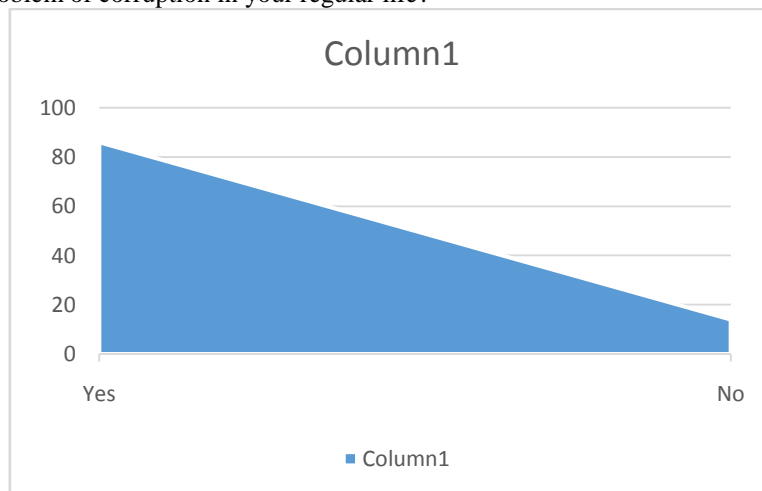
- What are your views about Indian Education System?

- Are you happy with government decision of building statue of unity?
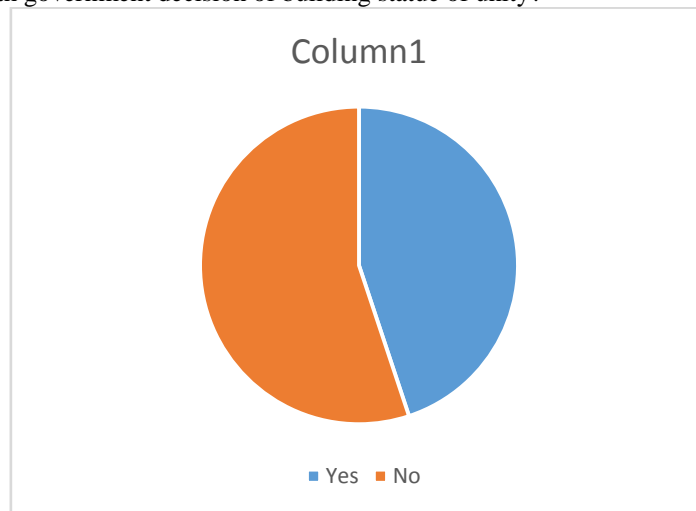
- Are you thinking of leaving India and to settle in some other country?
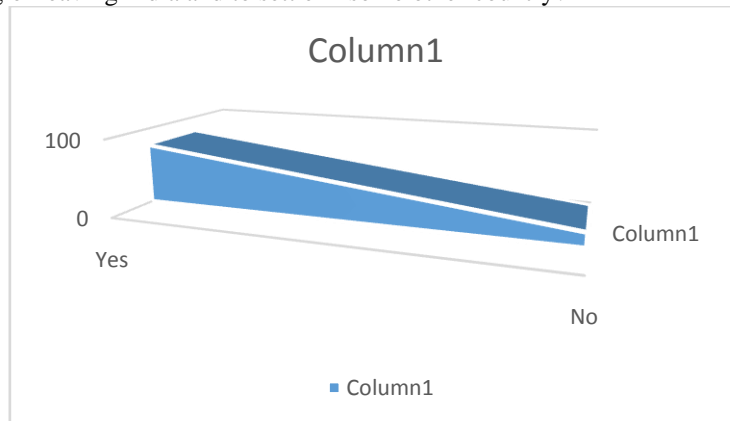
- If you were given a chance to rate India on basis of happiness, what your rating would be (Out of 5)?
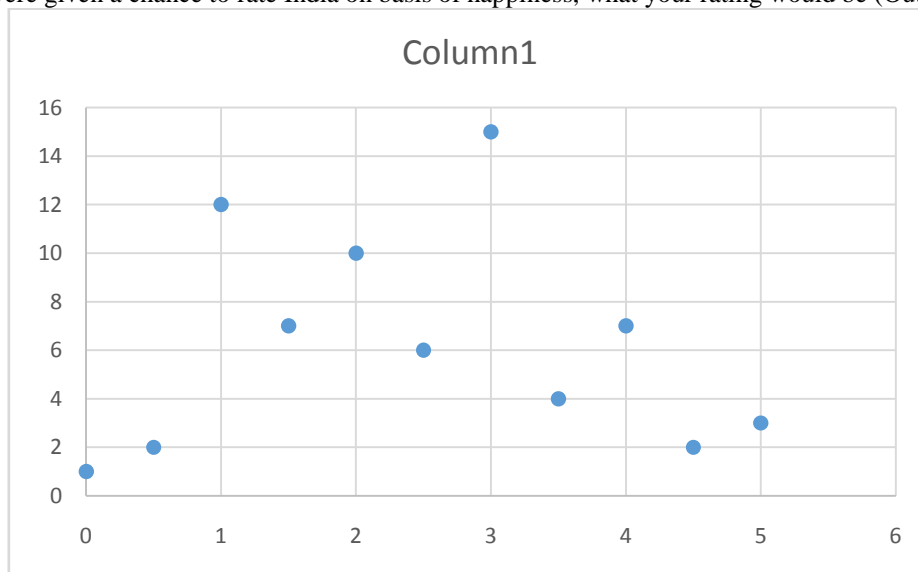
This survey clearly shows that people are unhappy with certain government decisions and face corruption in their regular life, thus leading to unhappiness among people and that's why a large number of people are thinking of leaving India and settling somewhere else. A lot of people have given a rating of 3 to India in terms

of happiness from their personal aspect which may not be according to official parameters but ratings are according to their personal life, thinking and reasons which may include government decisions, freedom, inequality and corruption etc.

A similar survey was conducted by oxford to measure happiness (Michael Argyle and Peter Hills of Oxford Brookes University, 2002)

1. I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree
2. I am intensely interested in other people.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree
3. I feel that life is very rewarding.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree
4. I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree
5. I rarely wake up feeling rested.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree
6. I am not particularly optimistic about the future.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree
7. I find most things amusing.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree
8. I am always committed and involved.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree

       4.   Slightly agree
       5.   Moderately agree
       6.   Strongly agree

9. Life is good.
       1.   Strongly disagree
       2.   Moderately disagree
       3.   Slightly disagree
       4.   Slightly agree
       5.   Moderately agree
       6.   Strongly agree

10. I do not think that the world is a good place.
       1.   Strongly disagree
       2.   Moderately disagree
       3.   Slightly disagree
       4.   Slightly agree
       5.   Moderately agree
       6.   Strongly agree

11. I laugh a lot.
       1.   Strongly disagree
       2.   Moderately disagree
       3.   Slightly disagree
       4.   Slightly agree
       5.   Moderately agree
       6.   Strongly agree

12. I am well satisfied about everything in my life.
       1.   Strongly disagree
       2.   Moderately disagree
       3.   Slightly disagree
       4.   Slightly agree
       5.   Moderately agree
       6.   Strongly agree

13. I don't think I look attractive.
       1.   Strongly disagree
       2.   Moderately disagree
       3.   Slightly disagree
       4.   Slightly agree
       5.   Moderately agree
       6.   Strongly agree

14. There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done.
       1.   Strongly disagree
       2.   Moderately disagree
       3.   Slightly disagree
       4.   Slightly agree
       5.   Moderately agree
       6.   Strongly agree

15. I am very happy.
       1.   Strongly disagree
       2.   Moderately disagree
       3.   Slightly disagree
       4.   Slightly agree
       5.   Moderately agree
       6.   Strongly agree

16. I find beauty in some things.
       1.   Strongly disagree
       2.   Moderately disagree
       3.   Slightly disagree
       4.   Slightly agree
       5.   Moderately agree

      6. Strongly agree

17. I always have a cheerful effect on others.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

18. I can fit in (find time for) everything I want to.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

19. I feel that I am not especially in control of my life.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

20. I feel able to take anything on.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

21. I feel fully mentally alert.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

22. I often experience joy and elation.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

23. I don't find it easy to make decisions.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

24. I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

25. I feel I have a great deal of energy.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Moderately disagree
3. Slightly disagree
4. Slightly agree
5. Moderately agree
6. Strongly agree

26. I usually have a good influence on events.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

27. I don't have fun with other people.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

28. I don't feel particularly healthy.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

29. I don't have particularly happy memories of the past.
    1. Strongly disagree
    2. Moderately disagree
    3. Slightly disagree
    4. Slightly agree
    5. Moderately agree
    6. Strongly agree

Interpretation of score:
- Between 1 and 2 – Not happy You may be seeing yourself and your situation as worse than it really is.
- Between 2 and 3 – Somewhat happy
- Between 3 and 4 – Neutral, not really happy or unhappy
- Between 4 and 5 – Pretty happy
- Between 5 and 6 – very happy

Conclusion:

Though India is referred to as the biggest and the greatest democracy in world but findings clearly shows that people of India are unhappy leading to lower position of India at Happiness Index 2018. Happy countries which have topped the latest rankings have risen to their pole positions more on intangibles like social capital, trust and generosity than the conventional measures of prosperity. Clear answers have been given to questions that were raised duringthe start of paper which were 'Despite being the world's biggest democracy and showing good GDP growth, why India is ranked so low in Happiness Index? Which factors leads to India's poor position in Happiness Index and why is India showing continuous decline in rankings of World Happiness Index from past few years?' The continuous rise in population has caused decrease in per capita income which is a measure of World Happiness Index, thus leading to poor ranking of India. Other parameters of World Happiness Index which are Social support, Healthy life expectancy, Freedom to make choices, Generosity and Perceptions of corruption are also analysed in the paper using certain United Nation Indexes like Corruption Perception Index, Education Index and Human Development Index. Other than this factors which are not the part of any of these parameters but affects India's position in World Happiness Index are also analysed in this paper like Education, Housing and life satisfaction etc.

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