

Family Happiness: An Empirical Study

Sasmita Panda¹, Dr. C. Satapathy²

¹Research Associate, Amity, Bhubaneswar, 751015, India
Email: sasmita.panda290[at]gmail.com

²Director, Amity, Bhubaneswar, 751015, India
Email: satapathy_c[at]yahoo.co.in

Abstract: *Everyone in the society desires happiness in families but unhappiness is increasing day by day with advancement of science, technology and living standard. There are certain variables accounting for happiness in family like income, religious faith, need based expenditure, free communication etc. which need to be taken care of. On the basis of happiness the families can be categorized to focus their problems properly for solution. The level of participation of husband and wife in family decisions is coming close due to expansion of education and awareness of responsibilities. The housewives should be armed with certain qualities like patience, supportive nature, and understanding of situation, self control to make their families happier. The reasons of unhappiness are to be correctly identified and focus be given to solve the problems. The conflict between husband and wife arise out of multiples causes which can easily be handled provided these are correctly identified and brought to the focus.*

Keywords: Family Conflict, Decision-Making, Unhappiness, Interwoven variables

1. Introduction

We live in family and wish it to be a place of happiness, inspiring and full of good will peace giving and cohesive. A family can be two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments to one another, and usually live in the same house. Families range from all sorts of races, forms and sizes. Families may differ in various ways but each one has its own definition of a happy home and family.

A well-organized family will be able to function smoothly and easily in completing various tasks that each individual must do. When each individual knows his/her own responsibility, he/she is capable and able to bring more harmony and peace in the family.

A happy family stands on an open communication system between each individual. It is important that each member of the family is heard, either it be about a problem, sharing good news or just because that person is there. Everyone is important enough have their own opinion. An open communication between parents and their children will help increase trust and decrease the problems.

At present many of the families are faced with the problems of unhappiness living either in urban or rural areas. It is a matter of experience that individuals living in a disturbed family can achieve less in life and contribute insignificantly to society as whole. Some people neither find out the reasons of unhappiness nor able to solve the problems and spend disturbed life through out. The output of each and every member of the family directly or indirectly is influenced by the climate of the family. The contribution of individuals to society is blocked because of unhappy living. The cases of suicide because of unhappiness in family are not rare in our society.

The Economic Times (politics) on 2nd September 2020 reported that New Delhi: India reported an average 381 deaths by suicide daily in 2019, totalling 1, 39,123 fatalities

over the year, according to the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data. "A 3.4 per cent increase was observed in suicides during 2019 (1, 39,123 suicides) as compared to 2018 (1, 34,516) and 2017(1, 29,887)". Out of these figures the suicide because of family problem is quite high Statistics. The suicide because of family problem was 28602 out of 33711 deaths accounting to about (84.84%) in the period under report.

Moreover, disturbed family life irrespective of urban or rural areas is a community problem leading to increase of crime rate in the society. After all for what we live and do hard work? Because to lead peaceful living.

A happy family is a family who spend time together, love and understand each other and get on well together. Some authors mentioned the family happiness encompasses aspects like, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. These are noble qualities but whether we are able to have these or not and that too in our daily life.

About unhappiness in family life we have dozens of questions. These questions need analysis to reach at a conclusion so that steps can be taken to overcome these obstacles for to have peaceful living.

Keeping these considerations in view an attempt was made in Odisha to investigate into the various aspects of happiness in family life.

Objectives

- 1) To determine the factors of family happiness as perceived by the sample respondents.
- 2) To examine the extent of involvement of housewives in family decision making process.
- 3) To determine the desirable traits that housewives should have for a happy family.

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- 4) To find out reasons of unhappiness and conflict between husband and wife as perceived by the sample respondents.

2. Review of Literature

- 1) Hall (1976) on a survey with a British national sample found that the most often mentioned domains were, family and home life; money and prices; living standards; social values and standards; social relationships; housing; health and work. Thus, happiness is associated with both extraversion and neuroticism and extraversion is generally considered the more important.
- 2) Campbell, Converse and Rogers(1976) pointed out that unhappiness appear to be self evident because extraversion is associated with friendship and social activity which are major sources of joy, happiness and personal satisfaction in both private and public life. There are other plausible reasons for this attribution.
- 3) Andrews and McKennell (1980) used 23 subjective well-being measures with substantial British and American samples. They found clear affective and cognitive factors and that happiness measures correlated more with the affective factor. The affective and cognitive variables are correlated.
- 4) Wills (1981) assembled a lot of diverse findings to support the hypothesis that people can increase their subjective well-being by comparison with less fortunate others and the hypothesis that downward comparison is evoked by a decline in subjective well-being. He also concluded that generally people make upward comparisons, but those with low self-esteem are more likely to make downward ones.
- 5) Fordyce (1988) devised a Happiness Measure consisting of two questions: (1) "In general how happy or unhappy do you usually feel?" from "Extremely happy "(feeling ecstatic, joyous, and fantastic) which scores 10, to "Extremely unhappy" (utterly depressed, completely down which scores 0; (2) "On average what percent of the time do you feel happy?" (Or unhappy or neutral). The two scores are combined the average for the first was 6.9 ("mildly happy") and for the second 54%.
- 6) Furnham and Brewien (1990) investigated the relationship between personality and happiness and reported a positive correlation for scores on happiness with those on extraversion and a negative correlation with those on neuroticism.
- 7) Research was carried out by Argyle and Lu (1990) to explain the correlation between measures of happiness and extraversion. They found that scores on happiness were correlated with those on extraversion and enjoyment, and on participation in social activities. Argyle showed a similar result and argued that extraversion was the best predictor of participation in leisure activities which resulted in happiness.
- 8) Moos and Moos (1994) reported other factors that influence the family climate are: children's personal characteristics, coping skills and well-being, acute life crisis and ongoing stressors and resources from settings outside the family such as school and work. More so, life crises such as child's serious physical illness can also alter the family members' coping skills and

personal characteristics). Thus a cohesive family can affect adult's coping skills and functioning. It can also influence children's cognitive and emotional development, self-confidence and well-being and happiness.

- 9) Lucas, Diener and Suh (1996) found that different measures of life satisfaction formed a clear factor correlating tightly together and they were separate from a group of measures of positive emotion and from the negative emotion factor, also from measures of optimism and self-esteem.
- 10) According to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), the characteristics related to positive affect include confidence, optimism, and self-efficacy; ability and positive construal's of others; The other variables are, sociability, activity, and energy, prosaically behaviour; immunity and physical well-being; effective coping with challenge and stress and originality and flexibility which are known to have significant effect on one's happiness.
- 11) Lee and Im (2007) examined the interrelations among self-enhancing bias in personality, subjective happiness, and perception of life-events. Elderly people with higher subjective happiness, compared to those with lower happiness, were predicted to have higher self-enhancing bias in personality, and perceive negative life-events less negatively. One hundred and forty elderly Korean citizens were assessed as to their tendency to self enhance and to perceive positive and negative life-events. A correlation of 0.26 was found between subjective happiness and self-enhancing bias. Those with higher subjective happiness perceived positive life-events more positively than those with lower subjective happiness.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted in Khorda district of Odisha covering three blocks namely Jatni, Baliana and Balipatna. From each block 80 rural women respondents were selected following snow- ball techniques. Thus a total of 240 samples were selected with criteria of having children and completing a minimum of five years of marriage and staying with husband in one family to provide response based on own experience.

The respondents were interviewed through a structured schedule designed basing on objectives of the study.

4. Results

1) Factors of Happiness:

What contributes to happiness in family has been the focus of study of psychologists. From psychological point of view they have studied happiness and inferred that happiness is the mind set of individuals. Taking judgemental opinion of sample respondents the factors of happiness as perceived by rural women samples were determined.

Table 1: Factors of Happiness (N=240)

Factors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1.Income	46	19.17	I
2.Good understanding	13	5.42	IX
3.Discipline	22	9.17	VI
4.Cooperation	17	7.08	VIII
5.Free communication	24	10.00	IV
6.Respect for opinion	13	5.42	IX
7.Need based expenditure	30	12.50	III
8.Duty consciousness	23	9.58	V
9.Religious faith	34	14.16	II
10.Loyalty	18	7.50	VII
Total	240	100.00	-

As per judgement of the sample there are ten important parameters to reveal factors of family happiness. The first parameter was found to be family income. It is the opinion of the sample that constant inflow of money is the prime factor of family happiness in rural areas. Insufficient income brings unhappiness followed by not having religious faith. In rural areas majority of the families has home God which are to be worshipped by the family every day. Religious faith acts as social control to keep all in line as per social norm. The third parameter was mentioned to be need based expenditure of the members. It is a fact that once the income of the family is not utilized on need based consideration the family becomes poor and all sorts of conflicts arise out of this issue. The fourth factor was found to be free communication. Free interaction among the members of the family brings stability and removes all kinds of ill- feelings in absence of which family suffers and conflicts start doubting integrity of others. Duty consciousness was found to be a fifth factor in the ladder of family happiness. Every adult in the family needs to be punctual to duties and responsibility. Once a chain is broken, it will have endless bad consensus. Discipline in the family was ranked as sixth factor of family happiness. It needs no emphasis to describe importance of discipline in family as well as individuals life. Loyalty as factor of family happiness was placed in the seventh position. This is social value that each and every members of the family have to exhibit for family happiness. The factor like cooperation was ranked in 8th position. However, good understanding and respect for opinion of other members of the family was equally ranked in the ninth position.

Applying these parameters the samples were requested to locate their positions in the ladder of family happiness which yielded the following results.

Table 2: Samples in the Classification of Happiness Ladder

Degree of Happiness	Frequencies	Percentages
1.Very happy	12	5.00
2.Happy	60	25.00
3.Average	80	33.33
4.Unhappy	70	29.17
5.Very unhappy	18	7.50
Total	240	100.00

As contained in the table the percentages of sample being happy, average and unhappy is up to 87.5%. The sample in the scale point of 'very happy' was found to be only 5% against the lowest in ladder of 'very unhappy' of 7.50%. The result is based on the response of the sample who judged

their families on the basis of ten parameters described earlier.

2) Participation in Family Decision Making Process:

Decision making is the process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information, and assessing alternative resolutions. Using a step-by-step on decision-making process it can help to make more deliberate, thoughtful decisions by organizing relevant information and defining alternative.

Decision in family has special significance as it mostly rests with age and gender factor. The present study has identified and categorized important decisions of the family and participation of husband, wife and both as has been reflected in table below.

Table 3: Participation in Decision-Making Process

Domain of family decision	Husband		Wife		Both	
	F	Rank	F	Rank	F	Rank
1.Food and nutrition	22	8	148	1	70	1
2.Care of children	43	7	140	2	57	2
3.Education of children	120	5	87	4	10	8
4.Social function	130	3	75	6	35	5
5.Religious activity	87	6	114	3	39	4
6.Travel	127	4	86	5	27	7
7.Occupational activities	145	2	55	8	40	3
8.Investment and saving	148	1	62	7	30	6
Average	103	-	97	-	40	-

The result shows that husband dominates in the decisions relating to investment and saving, occupational activities, travel, social function and education of children. The wife on other hand dominates in decision relating to food nutrition, child care and religious activity. However, both are active in decisions on food and nutrition, child care, religious and occupational activity.

Table 4: Summary of Participation in Decision-Making Process

Decision Makers	Number	Percentages
1.Husband	103	42.92
2.Wife	97	40.42
3.Both	40	16.66
Total	240	100.00

The analysis as a whole reveals the participation of the sample in decision making process concerning to family management. The participation of the husband accounts for 42.92%, wife 40.42% and both to the extent of 16.66%. The difference between husband and wife is very less in participation while taking decision of families.

3) Desirable Traits of Housewives:

For effective management and happiness of the family, wife is the central point. To have such efficiency they need to have some desirable qualities. The study attempted to determine such desirable traits of the sample who rated themselves in a three point scale of very much, much and little with assigned scores of 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The analysis of the self expressions of the sample is presented herewith.

Table 5: Perceived Desirable Traits of Housewives:

Desirable Traits	Score	Gap (%)
1.Understanding of situation	2.92	42.20
2.Loyalty	3.25	35.00
3.Responsibility	3.63	27.40
4.Sacrifice	2.95	41.60
5.Smartness	3.23	35.00
6.Supportive	2.81	43.80
7.Patience	2.46	50.80
8.Respect to elders	2.96	40.80
9.Love to younger	3.25	35.00
10.Self control	2.90	42.00
Average	3.36	32.80

The response analysis shows that ten desirable qualities were ascertained taking opinion of the sample. As per their self expression gaps in desirable traits varies from 27.40 % to as high as 50.80%. The highest gap in desirable traits is found in case of patience followed by nature of supportiveness, understanding of situation, self control, sacrifice and respect to elders. The traits like smartness, love to younger and loyalty were found deficient at the same level. The minimum gap was observed in case of responsibility. The implication is that higher the gap lower is the possession of desirable quality. The study suggests that there should be training for housewives as how to possess and maintain desirable traits to keep their families happy.

4) Reasons of Unhappiness

It is difficult to isolate the reasons of unhappiness as unhappiness is the cumulative resultant out-come of many factors. The study has tried to enlist different reasons of unhappiness as contained in table

Table 6: Reasons of Unhappiness (Multiple Responses)

Reasons	Mentions	Percentage	Rank
1.Low/Insufficient income	180	75.00	I
2.Differential attitude	70	29.17	X
3.Lack of free communication	140	58.33	IV
4.Lack of patience	162	67.50	II
5.Individualistic attitude	125	52.00	V
6.Lack of coordination	110	45.83	VI
7.Selfishness	146	60.83	III
8.Difference in cultural environment	74	30.83	VIII
9.Constant illness	65	27.00	XI
10.Legal problem	18	7.50	XIII
11.Extra marital relation	48	20.00	XII
12.Alcoholism	72	30.00	IX
13.Interference of external factor	105	43.75	VII

Table contains a number of reasons that leads to unhappiness.

- 1) Low or Insufficient Income: Money is the top most reason for happiness or unhappiness. Families without required income face the problems of expenditure causing disturbances among the family members. It is one of the major reasons for unhappiness in family. Sometimes the family earring person is one with burden of supporting many.
- 2) Lack of Patience: The people in general have no or little patience to solve the problems. Nobody is prepared to listen others and is in habit of insisting on own point of view leading to misunderstanding in families.

- 3) Selfishness: The element selfishness has entered into our family system which was not earlier. With scarcity of resources the spirit of selfishness increases causing disharmony among the members of the family.
- 4) Lack of Free Communication: It is fact that more of communication better is doubt clearance and understanding. At present due to work load members of the family are unable to make free and frequent communication among members for which family problems go on increasing.
- 5) Individualistic Attitude: It is matter of observation that women become more individualistic in nature and think of own husband and children neglecting others in the family which causes family conflict.
- 6) Lack of Co-ordination in the Family. The earning members of the family fail to keep coordination among the members of the family in fulfilling individual requirements which leads to unhappiness.
- 7) Interference by External Factors: In some cases external factors like outsiders, relatives also add fuel to fire and cause family problems leading to separation and sharing of family properties.
- 8) Difference in Cultural Back Ground: In some families the new comer ladies to family after marriage fail to adjust to family environment of husband due to differential family back ground. This becomes a cause for unhappiness in family.
- 9) Alcoholism. At present the rural areas are gradually being engulfed with wines and injurious drinkables. More of the families in villages are in problem due to addiction of family members to alcohol. It is becoming dangerous day by day.
- 10) Difference in Attitude: This is a social problem. The villagers who get education in cities come in conflict with their parents who are not much educated and sticking to family tradition. The differential attitude, feeling of children towards family tradition also cause climate of unhappiness in families.
- 11) Constant illness: In some cases the prolonged illness of family members requiring more expenditure beyond the capacity of family earners also cause disturbances in family life.
- 12) Extra Marital Relation: This not new variable in our society. Some family suffer because extra marital relation of family members. Many families have suffered, separated and ruined because of such factors.
- 13) Legal Problems. Families with legal problems for land, money and physical violence also suffer and never dream of happiness in family life.

5) Conflict between Husband and Wife:

Family problems start with misunderstanding between husband and wife. If both do not come together to solve it then conflict continues endlessly putting family life in problem. The causes of conflict was studied on a three point scale in terms of first, second or third important reason with assigned scores of 3 2 and 1 respectively which yielded the following result.

Table 7: Causes of Conflict between Husband and Wife

Causes	Average	+/- than average
1.External marital relation	1.92	+
2.Resource use	2.00	+
3.Lack of respect to parents of both sides	1.88	+
5.Uncontrolled children	1.90	+
6.Family expenditure	1.83	-
7.External interference	1.83	-
8.Alcoholism	2.33	+
9.Feeling of superiority	1.52	-
10.Friend circle of husband and wife	1.50	-
11.Sex incompatibility	1.66	-
Average	1.84	-

The major causes of conflict between husband and wife were found to be alcoholism, resource use, extra marital relation, lack of respect for parent and uncontrolled children. The minor reasons were found to be unwise expenditure, external interference, feeling of superiority, influence of friends and sex incompatibility.

5. Conclusions

- 1) The study “Family Happiness: An empirical study” covering 240 rural women samples from Khorda district of Odisha based on objectives like factors of happiness, participation in family decision making process, desirable traits for competent housewives and reasons of unhappiness and family conflict lead to arrive at the following conclusions.
- 2) Constant income, religious faith, need based expenditure, free communication, duty consciousness, discipline are major contributors to family happiness.
- 3) In the area under study the percentage of unhappy families are relatively more than happy families.
- 4) The process of decision making process concerning to families the difference in participation between husband and wife is not much.
- 5) A competent housewife should have desirable qualities like patience, supportive nature, understanding of situation, self control, nature of sacrifice and respect to elders in the family for happiness.
- 6) The major reasons for unhappiness in family are, insufficient income to manage the family, lack of patience, selfishness, lack of free communication, individualistic attitude and lack of coordination among the members of the family.
- 7) The husband and wife face conflict because of external marital relation, resource use, lack of respect to parents, uncontrolled children and alcoholism.
- 8) There is need for training programme for housewives to increase their competency to make family happier.

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