

# Critical Evaluation of Research Methodological Errors in World Happiness Report 2024: A Perspective from Bharat

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to evaluate methodological inconsistencies in World Happiness Report 2024 from the view of Bharat that is India. Bharat is time tested ancient philosophy which stands affirm to instill Dharma (the righteous way of living) in this world. Happiness is not an equivalent word to represent "Ananda" which people in Bharat attain more by way of spiritual options. World Happiness Report 2024 framework, heavily skewed towards material indicators to assess happiness among nations. Firstly, a philosophical critique is presented with logical argument why factors used in assessing happiness are not suitable in case of Bharat. In following section methodological drawbacks of World Happiness Report 2024 are presented. Further section explained lack of scientifically robust methodologies in World Happiness report 2024. At end conclusions are presented with a subtle recommendation to follow established research methods and procedures when evaluating societies as complex and ancient as Bharat.

**Keywords:** Bharat, Ananda, Happiness, Methodological errors, World Happiness Report 2024

## 1. Introduction

"Bharat" that is India is time infinite civilization still surviving and being practiced. In Bharat people derive "Ananda" which cannot be loosely represented by happiness as done by World Happiness Report 2024. In Bharat people attain Ananda from two categories of factors; one-spiritual variables like bhakti, moksha, spirituality, dharmic practices, ancestral identity, culture, family system, marriage/divorce, festivals, food variety, community service, community events/participation. Two – some material variables people in Bharat consider like higher education, jobs/start-ups, cost of domestic services, digital economy. Ingelström & Deijl (2021) in their study concluded calibration of measuring happiness is quite difficult, they argue that happiness is time bound, today's happiness rating by an individual may not be same as couple of days after, also the definition of happiness is re-defined over time across geographic locations. Aishat & Gulnara (2023) in their study discuss World Happiness Index 2021 for measuring happiness not considering effect of development on environment, ethnic peculiarities, territorial features of Central Asia given the fact that happiness is subjective. Hirschauer, Lehberger, & Musshoff (2014) concluded in measuring happiness several interventions can be considered like taxes on tobacco products, environment safety, safety measures in food, schooling, traffic regulations and so on. The purpose of this paper is to critically examine the methodological limitations of the World Happiness Report 2024, particularly in the context of Bharat. This study holds significance in advancing cross-cultural research integrity and in cautioning against universalized metrics that ignore local values, thereby contributing to more inclusive and context-sensitive global indices.

## 2. Literature Review- Philosophical Critique

Factors what people in Bharat derive Ananda (happiness) were not considered. World Happiness Report 2024 presented factors measuring happiness starting with GDP (PPP) as given below; as part of introduction a philosophical critique is presented below for each factor.

*GDP per capita is in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) -*

Critique: In Bharat majority of population does not have idea about GDP, and methodologically how GDP can be attributed to happiness is bizarre, Aishat & Gulnara (2023) conclude happiness cannot be represented by arithmetic averages. Hirschauer, Lehberger, & Musshoff (2014) bring to light improvement in economic income and well-being do not result in improvement in happiness. If countries with highest GDP are happier, why there are gun shootings and homelessness are in USA, why there are ghost towns in China, rock bottom birth rates in Japan, high cost of living across Europe. In terms of GDP Bharat stands at fifth place and in PPP it stands at third (WORLDSTATS, 2025).

*"Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) " is a variable indicating healthy life experiences at birth -*

Critique: Living more years cannot contribute to Ananda (happiness), alternatively short years also does not contribute either. Living a balanced age score depends on societal norms. In Bharat, plus ten years after retirement age of 60 is considered fulfillment of once life, logically by the age of 70, children marriage and arrival of grandchildren happens hence once life is fulfilled. The average life expectancy of Bharat is 72.48 years (Worldometer, 2025).

*“Social support” when in trouble, are family and friends available for help-*

**Critique:** There is turnaround socialization difference between Bharat and other countries. Society in Bharat is closely knitted. Divorce rates are so low in Bharat; rift between couples, is solved with involvement of whole society starting from neighbors, colleagues, parents, relatives, ending with police and courts, hence social support is part of culture.

*“Freedom to make life choices” is there freedom to individual for making independent decision in their life-*

**Critique:** Culturally Bharat is collectivistic society distanced from individualism. Group involvement is by far preferred for decision making. Group decision making is prevalent for cultural and religious practices, marriage, divorce, education, job, business, vacation, buying home/ whitegoods/ automobile/ jewelry and list goes on. So Bharat cannot be mirrored with individualistic scale.

*“Generosity” donation to charity-*

**Critique:** Majority of society in Bharat practice “Bhakti”, devotion of quality time for god. People in Bharat are high on spirituality which is not considered in happiness measurement. Aishat & Gulnara (2023) discuss importance of spirituality in happiness. People visit temples regularly and offer their donations. Temples and gurudwaras offer free food to people named as prasada.

*“Corruption Perception” corruption in government and businesses-*

**Critique:** In almost all government offices there is corruption. This is cultural contribution of illegal British and mogul occupiers. British and mogul came to loot vast wealth of Bharat, as part of their treacherous policy encouraged and threatened locals to accept bribes or death for betraying their countrymen, this became virus which still exists. Corporate businesses there is no corruption towards customers in absolute terms, hence they business are clean.

*“Positive affect” is defined by laugh, enjoyment and doing interesting things and “Negative affect” is defined by worry, sadness and anger-*

**Critique:** Laugh, enjoyment and doing interesting things are subject to time. Acts of laugh and enjoyment spike up few seconds to minutes depending on content exposure, many a times majority of people do not get chance for exposure to content, hence they do not fit to measure happiness. For doing interesting things only very few get chance, a large population do things as part of job and lifestyle which they never thought they would do. Therefore, measuring happiness by such fleeting experiences may not be practical, instead develop interest in things what we do is more logical. Similarly worry, sadness and anger are subject to time.

*“giniIncGallup” household income in international dollars-*

**Critique:** Household income will have direct effect on lifestyle. Household income is different in villages, towns, cities ranging tier1, tier2, and tier3. Lifestyle is proportionate to household income. Income X in village derive lifestyle Y and income X1 in city derive lifestyle Y1, but satisfaction with lifestyle Y in village may derive more satisfaction than lifestyle Y1 in city. Hence standardizing household income

in terms of dollars across geographies to measure happiness is methodologically in-correct.

*“Institutional trust” is confidence in national government, judicial system/courts, honesty of elections, local police force, perceived corruption in business-*

**Critique:** Trust on local and national government. Bharat is largest democracy in the world. Local and national governments are elected by people every five years. If people do not have trust in government, they have option to change it periodically, which they are doing it. Hence after electing government if people do not have trust and faith, its people who must blame themselves. People need to give up prejudices while electing government, hence in democracies institutional trust cannot be attributed to happiness.

### 3. Analysis

*Methodological drawbacks of happiness report*

- 1) Definition of happiness is highly subjective and vague. There can be no universal definition of happiness (Ingelström & Deijl, 2021). Single definition cannot be universalized, as there exists vast differences among nations from the point of factors such as cultural, religious, social, legal, technological and others.
- 2) Happiness report did not consider direct measurement of happiness. It measured happiness using materialistic factors which are methodologically not proven to be the right representative of happiness in the report. Happiness report 2024 should have operationalized variables.
- 3) Happiness report applied in-direct measurement using factors measured by other institutions which did not match the measurement of happiness to perfection leading to erroneous collection of data (Debusho et al., 2025). In their study Delios et al., (2024) have concluded researchers have to invest in primary data.
- 4) Convenience outweighed reality. Debusho et al., (2025) concluded more than 40% of research studies have convenient data collection. Happiness report 2024 considered data collected at convenience which resulted in the study lacking true representation of actual behaviour of subjects.
- 5) Several errors effected happiness report such as Surrogate information error (SIE), Population specific error (PSE), Sampling frame error (SFE), Instrumentation error (INE), which are not addressed by this research and in the report they did not explain. Delios et al., (2024) have concluded researchers have to address and report measurement errors explicitly (Kokku, 2023).
- 6) The objective reflecting Bharat in the Happiness report was about life satisfaction which does not lead to happiness the core of this report, hence there is confusion about cause and effect variables. Lot of research studies mis-represent the variables of cause-and-effect relationship (Temple, 2025).
- 7) Chapter 5 of the Happiness report on Bharat considered sample distribution as 11%  $\geq$  80 age, 59% are between 60 to 69 age, 30% are between 70 to 79 age.

Considering sample elements above age 60 is a major setback for this happiness report. Jose et al., (2026) in their study discussed the disadvantage of under representative sample in research studies. As of 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 the total

population of Bharat is 1438 million (WORLD POPULATION REVIEW, 2025). This study considered 140 million old population with a sample size of n=30795, this is by all research standards a shoddy representation of population considered. Additionally, this low-grade study did not bother to consider 1438-140 million = 1298 million which is 90.26% of total population, means satisfaction among n=30795 out of 140 million is universalized to total population of 1438 million, this represents a deeply flawed research methodology by any standard. Schubert et al., (2025) reported in their research that when sample size is small there is over estimation of population of size effect which can be addressed by estimating Cohen's d or partial  $n^2$ , happiness report did not show any relevant estimates of sampling validity.

*Systematic scientific research reporting shortfalls in World Happiness report 2024 discussed below*

#### *Need for the study*

Every research study or report must give exactly what is the need for such study or report, how such report benefits its subjects or what is the social validity; Wellons et al., (2023) have discussed the importance of research usefulness to the elements involved in the study. Nowhere in the World Happiness report 2024 they had given need for such report, nor how this report will bring change in the subjects, hence their intentions to bring such report is a hidden objective agenda. This methodological error files a question whether world needs such report, let us examine. When there is a wide gap between nations on levels of income, health, economy, technology, political system and so on; hence it can be concluded that life of people across world will be different in terms of joy, enjoyment, sadness or happiness. By observing all disparities among nations (Aishat & Gulnara, 2023), with a layman common sense it can be easily judged life of people is not same across countries hence happiness; lack of understanding such simple logic so many intellectuals have wastefully contributed to such an absurd report hence the relevance of this report is void. Do world need this report? definitely not.

#### *Establish clear objectives of the study*

For a research study or report, readers should be given clarity on objectives. World Happiness report 2024 did not establish objectives, this is a serious methodological flaw. Reader is left to interpret it is all about happiness. As reader is left to interpret, most of times it leads to misinterpretation, hence it sparks serious critique, like World Happiness report 2024.

#### *Clear definitions of independent and dependent variables of study*

A research study or report need to establish independent and dependent variable (happiness) with clear definitions. Also, it should discuss established definitions from past studies or reports with alternative arguments in support and criticism of the definitions (Hirschauer, Lehberger, & Musshoff, 2014). Ingelström & Deijl (2021). Further an elaborate discussion should be given to enlighten the readers with literature sufficient to understand what definitions are used for variables and any modifications are being considered in the study.

World Happiness report 2024 did not give any clear definition of happiness in the report. They started the report with a laughing woman, indirectly indicating that's happiness. Anyone with common sense know laughing is not happiness. Further loosely referred happiness report with Shakespear's "seven ages of man." In his work Shakespear wrote a man in his later stages of life will be depressed. Shakespear lived 500 years back, from then on 360 degrees changes happened geographically, demographically, psychologically, and behavioral. Similar changes happened in PESTEL factors. With huge changes in last 500 years by all common sense it is obvious human beings' quality of life improved, this shows World happiness report 2024 reasoning appears intellectually shallow. Comparing with Shakespear's work is a methodological blunder.

#### *Localization of definitions of independent and dependent variables if the study involves multiple countries*

In a global context universalization-generalization of subjective definitions of independent and dependent variables leads to mis-representation of definitions for local population. The problem of generalization of subjective definition is the arrogance of ethnocentric mindset. World Happiness report 2024 assuming subjective definition of happiness with home country in mind suitable to all countries is a methodological disaster. Bharat that is India, in this report was given exclusive focus in chapter 5. World Happiness report 2024 abruptly shifts from its core topic happiness to satisfaction. Further confusion is created for reader citing satisfaction to be indicator of quality of life, but failed to establish how life satisfaction and quality of life are related to happiness.

Bharat exists since infinite time. When entire Europe was in dark ages, Bharat was a prosperous culture with a strong economy. In Bharat various ancient texts since thousands of years back termed "Ananda" considered in English as "happiness". "Ananda" was defined well, few are discussed as; according to "Vedanta" in Hindu philosophy, when a "Jiva" means when a living being is free's from: "Klesha" means pains, "Abhilasha" means desires, "Papa" means sins, "Duhkha" means sufferings, "Sandeha" means doubts, and "Kriya" means actions; leading to a high degree of inner awareness and bliss within living being (The BROKEN TUSK, 2025). According to Bhagavad Gita, the one who practices and nurtures thoughts and deeds to a state of goodness by controlling mind will lead to supreme bliss (Ram, 2025). According to Ramanujacharya through his Vishishtadvaita Vedanta teaches Ananda is a state of living being sacrifices his ego to the divine (Stay, 2023). According to Ramana Maharshi Ananda is a practice of inner enquiry leading to engineering one's mind with recognition of divine within (Hridaya, 2025).

#### *Sample size matching population*

Chapter 5 of the happiness report on India considered sample distribution as 11%  $\geq$  80 age, 59% are between 60 to 69 age, 30% are between 70 to 79 age. Considering sample elements above age 60 is a major setback for this happiness report. As of 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 the total population of Bharat is 1438 million <sup>note1</sup>. This study considered 140 million old population with a sample size of n=1000, this is by all research standards a shoddy representation of

population considered. Additionally, this low-grade study did not bother to consider 1438-140 million = 1298 million which is 90.26% of total population, means satisfaction among n=1000 out of 140 million is universalized to total population of 1438 million, this is utter senseless research methodology by any standard (WORLD POPULATION REVIEW, 2025).

#### *Sample elements to represent entire population*

Most of the research studies refer 18 years as the age for participation in a survey. Starting from 18 years respondents give opinion with consciousness. World Happiness report 2024 picked up sample elements starting from age 60 and above, this does not represent the population accurately. They ignored the bigger proportion of population between 18 to 59 age. Jose et al., (2026) suggested in their study to avoid sample elements which do not properly represent population.

#### *Limitations of the report*

World Happiness report 2024 is full of limitations from the point of representing Bharat case. The report approach towards scientific rigor is missing on all methodological fronts. Findings are written with prejudices with explanations beyond the statistical data wrongly representing Bharat. Jose et al., (2026) had reported research studies should write findings which match actual data.

#### *Future direction of the report*

World Happiness report 2024 is methodological disaster, in future they should stop doing this kind of research blunder. What lays ahead for Bharat, it should initiate to develop a customized happiness index suitable to its culture, lifestyles, languages, geographies, rituals and practices, education and many other factors prevailing in their great civilization.

#### *Structure of the report*

Structurally, the World Happiness Report 2024 lacks coherence and academic rigor. It did not follow any standard report structure followed by researchers all over the world. It is very disappointing that World Happiness report 2024 presented their content unprofessionally.

### 4. Future Research Direction

Bharat specific Ananda (happiness) scale needs to be developed to measure the actual opinion of people. Integrated intellectual approach is needed to develop Ananda (happiness) scale with complete local approach by involving intellectuals across cross functional areas like psychology, business, yoga, culture and languages, spiritual studies, medicine, public administration, anthropology, information technology.

### 5. Conclusion

World Happiness report 2024 is not about happiness in real terms. It did not measure happiness directly instead used factors such GDP/PPP, healthy life expectancy (HLE), social support, freedom to make life choices, generosity, corruption perception, positive effect, negative effect, household income in international dollars and institutional trust. These factors do not fit Bharat, as people prefer spiritual way of

pursuing life more than materialistic. The time infinite scriptures like Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda, Upanishads, Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita, Vishnupurana, Garudapurana, Yoga sastra, Ayurveda and many others guide people's life in Bharat.

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