How Socio-Cultural Factors Affect the Wellbeing of India

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Introduction

Wellbeing is defined as an individual's or a group's health, happiness and fortune. According to the US National Library of Medicine in the National Institute of Health, wellbeing is a holistic integration of physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing that is a personalized approach to living life for different people. It has eight dimensions: physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, vocational, financial, and environmental (Stoewen 2017). However, measures of a nation's wellbeing primarily depend on economic measures like Global Domestic Product (GDP). GDP measures economic welfare by summing up the market value of consumer expenditures, government spending, net exports and net capital production in a country. (Giannetti et al.,2015). GDP thus allows for cross country comparisons of economic growth. Yet, using GDP as a measure of national wellbeing brings up several limitations, as GDP does not account for the health, happiness and fortune of a nation.

First, GDP ignores non-monetary factors that improve wellbeing like that of childcare and volunteerism. It also doesn't take into account government instituted programs like emerging housing and healthcare. GDP doesn't account for changes in human capital that may occur through circulation of capital among individuals. GDP does not discriminate between monetary transactions that improve welfare versus those that don't. Furthermore, it ignores the cultural differences among nations' priorities and methods for economic development. GDP also overlooks the socioeconomic inequalities that may result from increased GDP. Lastly, it disregards detrimental environmental effects that increased economic growth can have from industrialization and urbanization. (Giannetti et al., 2015). All these factors and more are not

included in GDP and prove to be severe limitations of this metric as a measure of a nation's wellbeing.

A prime example of a nation whose GDP does not show the true wellbeing of the nation is India. India has the fifth highest GDP in the world of 3.16 trillion. However, the nation's socioeconomic gap has been increasing. India's top 1% hold 73% of the nation's wealth, while the nation's bottom 50% (in terms of economic measures of income) only saw their wealth increase by 1% this past year. The high GDP shows signs of high quality of life and economic prosperity, but the socioeconomic gap indicates that many experience a low quality of life.

This project aims to discover how sociocultural beliefs and norms impact the wellbeing of a nation, specifically that of India. India is an incredibly diverse nation with over 26 different languages in its 29 states. It also is one of the oldest nations in the world, as it was roughly 1500 BCE, when people gathered to create the Vedic Civilization, which instilled deep rooted cultural norms and values in India. The immense culture thus must play a role in national and individual wellbeing. I aim to examine sociocultural influences on the health and happiness of India, that is left unexplained by GDP.

Defining Culture

The framework I will be using is that of socio-cultural values. Before understanding how this framework will be used to examine the relationship between culture and wellbeing, it is important to understand the components that make up a culture. According to Ruth Benedict (2016), in her book titled "Patterns of Culture", culture provides a patterning for people's lives. In her structuralist view, culture is an outside force that molds us and our patterns. However, a more progressive view is that culture is seen through our interactions with others. With this

interpretation, culture includes activities as simple as placing a napkin on your lap before eating or greeting people with a handshake. Using a mix of these views, culture can more broadly be defined as a structure that not only informs our actions, but is composed of the entities that impact our interactions. It ensures a set of behavioral patterns transmitted symbolically through language and other means to the member of a particular society (Banerjee 2008).

Using this view of culture, as a structure that informs our actions and interactions, we can examine the factors that make up Indian culture. As a nation with over 26 languages and 720 dialects, language must have some impact on the 100s of subcultures that are prevalent. Anthropologist Edward Sapir believes that language is a form that people use to express themselves. It thus informs our interactions, and since interactions are shaped by our culture, language is also a key component of culture. For example, in Hindi, it is the norm for men to call their wives by their first name. However, women generally refer to their husbands in a more formal manner, and in some subcultures, women don't even say their husbands' name. This inequality is a direct manifestation of the patriarchal society that exists in Indian culture and society. Additionally, the importance of religion and spirituality is embedded in the tradition of greeting others with the word "namaste" and bowing down with folded hands. The word "namaste" is used to tell the other person that "the divine in me sees the divine in you." (Banerjee 2008). Different subcultures use different words for this greeting, but most of them are referencing God in a way to show their respect and reverence for each other. This is one great example of a behavioral pattern transmitted through the symbolic meaning of prayer hands and the word "namaste".

Dance is another key part of Indian culture, because most classical Indian dance styles like Bharatanatyam and Kathak were developed as a way to tell stories of Hindu epics. Kathak

itself means "story" in Sanskrit, and was developed as a dance form in Northern India in 400

BCE as a way for travelers to transmit stories of Hindu epics to each other. It was used as a form

of communication and interaction between each other. As it informs people's interactions, dance

is a key part of Indian culture. Furthermore, due to the increasing influence of Islam brought in

by the Turkish invasions in the 12th century, Kathak has evolved into a dance form that conveys

stories of Hinduism and Islam. This flexibility in conveying stories of different religions, is

shown by the flexibility, elegance, and grace that the dance form emphasizes. It emphasizes the

use of soft yet strong movements, in a way that makes the dancer look like they are floating

across stage. On the other hand, Bharatanatyam a dance form originating from South India, is a

much more structured, powerful, rigid dance form. It focuses on telling stories strictly of Hindu

epics through the emphasis on abhinaya(expressions) and mudras (hand forms). The more

structured dance form has maintained its traditional roots and has not evolved as much with other

cultural or religious influences. This is reemphasized by the lesser presence of Islam and other

religions in South India, and a stricter adherence to Hindu rituals and norms by the people in this

region.

Therefore, these factors of language and dance, in addition to fashion, festivals, religion,

food, music etc., make up a part of Indian culture as they impact the interactions, norms, and

values existent among the people in society. These norms may influence repetitive behaviors and

show patterns in how sociocultural factors impact wellbeing.

Socio-Cultural Framework

Sociocultural factors will be the framework used to explore the relationships between

cultural norms and values and the wellbeing of the people of India. The concept of culture is

helpful in seeking greater understanding of wellbeing because it shows how cultural behaviors, norms and practices affect individuals' activities on a daily basis (Stephenson et al., 2010). Since culture is made up of both tangible and non-tangible components, the non-tangible facets of Indian culture will compose the sociocultural factors used to examine how these values and norms are embedded in the tangible components of Indian culture.

There are 6 pan-Indian cultural facets that I will use to examine the relationship between culture and wellbeing. According to studies done by J.B.P Sinha in five locations in India, his surveys indicated a collectivist behavioral disposition of Indians (Panda et al., 2004). They act more collectively as a community especially in family settings, because the core of Indian culture is extremely familial. This collectivist orientation is not only seen in a familial context, but also a regional context. Different regions in India have nurtured the creation of distinct subcultures, which gives rise to regional collectivism. Another pan Indian cultural facet discovered by Sinha's studies include that of a great respect for power and status. Respect for power and status in a way has to come from an acceptance of unequal power in society, which is rooted into the caste system that existed in ancient Indian civilization. Despite the eradication of the caste system from Indian society, the Indian social system is still extremely hierarchical and Indians' are highly conscious of their status. The third pan-Indian cultural facet observed through Sinha's studies in 5 distinct regions across India, is that of primacy/preference for personalized relationship. There is a great desire for emotionally intimate relationships as well as a respect for hierarchy. An example would be women's desire to have a close relationship with their children and husband by taking on the caretaker role, in perseverance of the patriarchal family structure. According to research done by the Gallup World Poll in 2012, qualitative analysis of observational surveys of women living in rural states showed insights into the social world and

community in India. Women reported that their marriage and relationships with their children, gave them greater happiness than material possessions (Biswas-Diener et al., 2012). This shows how the sociocultural factor of a patriarchal society gave women a sense of happiness in creating strong interpersonal relationships with their family despite the subordinate nature of them. Sinha, additionally noticed a strong desire to be embedded in a group. Indians feel more comfortable if they are with other members of preferred groups which can include their family, friends, members of their subculture, those who speak the same language, members of the same caste. This can be a factor as to why there is so much disparity between north and south India, and why there is a stigma against marrying even out of a specific subculture. Another cultural factor explored by Sinha, that reemphasizes the cultural value of collectivism is familial responsibilities. Identification with family is incredibly important, as family and increasing family status is often a bigger motivation for achievement than for personal gain. Lastly, a slightly more negative pan-Indian cultural factor is that of having cynical views about others. Indians aren't very accepting of those that are different. It can be a huge reason for why India has so many conflicts between the Hindu and Muslim communities. While Hinduism doesn't define Indian culture, the two are very heavily intertwined. There is great animosity against Muslims, as shown by current president Narendra Modi's passing of the bill to allow people of all religions except Islam be able to renew for Indian citizenship.

These are some of the overall cultural facets of the Indian subcontinent that were found by Sinha's studies, and these will be used to guide my research. Using these 6 facets of Indian culture, I can examine their prevalence in people's lives and how they individually affect people's wellbeing. For a more profound understanding, tangible aspects of Indian culture will

be analyzed to view how these sociocultural factors have been embedded through much of Indian culture.

Research Questions and Methods

Thus, my research question is: How does Indian culture affect the happiness of those in India? Happiness is one of the three components of wellbeing, and is the only factor that is qualitatively measurable. Understanding how happiness is affected by different cultural factors will also help me gain a better sense of cultural wellbeing. I will gather data using surveys and conducting interviews via videoconferencing technology. The surveys will allow me to gain a more basic idea of the cultural factors that affect the happiness of Indians. Using interviews will allow me to dig deeper into certain cultural factors, and better understand the results of the surveys.

Each survey will start with background questions regarding their gender, their age, the region of India they are from, where they were born, where they have lived most of their lives, the language they speak, etc. These background questions, will prove instrumental in allowing me to perform comparisons of the results among different groups of people. Then, ordinal scale questions will be used to assess how different aspects of their culture affects their happiness. The cultural factors that will be assessed are the pandemic cultural values and norms discovered by J.B.P Sinha: Collectivist Orientation, Desire and Respect for Power and Status, Preference for Personalized Relationships, Strong Desire to be Embedded in a Group, Familial Responsibilities, and a Cynical View about Others (Panda et al., 2004) [Table 1]. On a scale of 1-10, 1 being not at all and 10 being extremely prevalent, I asked how prevalent these values were in their personal lives, and in their family/communities. I then asked how these values affected their happiness on

a scale of 1-10, where 1 meant extremely negatively and 10 meant extremely positively. In addition to these pan-Indian cultural values, questions were asked regarding the importance of more tangible cultural elements like: language, art, dance, music, food, festivals, religion, etc. Asking how these factors improved their connection to their culture and increased their wellbeing allows me to gain a better sense of the more material aspects of culture that affect wellbeing. Lastly, the survey asks a multiple-choice question, of whether or not they feel more connected to their Indian subculture or the idea of being Indian as a whole, and how this impacted their happiness. This question was meant to evaluate the important of a "collectivist orientation", and how this impacted their wellbeing. I conducted 20 surveys and interviews: 10 from Indian American students at UVA, 5 from Indian international students at UVA, and 5 from Indian American members of my family. Interviews were completed after the survey to gain a more profound understanding of their survey responses. They were semi-structured, initially asking simple questions of what cultural factors positively and negatively impact their happiness, and then probing deeper, by connecting their responses to the sociocultural framework.

Table 1. Sociocultural factors

Sociocultural Factor	Significance
Collectivist Orientation	Acting more collectively as a community rather than individually
Desire and Respect for Power and Status	Having greater respect for those who have higher status in society
Preference for Personalized Relationships	propensity to form intimate relationships with those who have familiar characteristics
Strong Desire to be Embedded in a Group	Obtaining more comfort from being surrounded by people of similar backgrounds
Familial Connections	Familial values and responsibilities are first priority
Cynical View about Others	Having a negative view of those who are different

Results

   The results of my research indicated that the cultural factor that most positively impacted happiness overall was that *of familial connection and values*. The cultural factor that most negatively impacted happiness overall was that of a *cynical view of others*. Furthermore, the results for questions regarding cultural value of a desire to be embedded in a group varied tremendously and seemed to have a significant impact on happiness. The trend seemed to be that individuals who felt more connected to their subculture than to the idea of being Indian, found this to have a more positive effect on their happiness. The interviews established a common theme among many of the subjects that affected individuals' happiness positively or negatively: the idea of belonging. Whether it was through the importance of familial values, the connection to their cultural traditions through festivals, dance and art, or the desire to be embedded within a subculture, the desire to belong is what seemed to drive how happy people were.

A. Familial Connections

   Throughout the interviews, the importance of family was mentioned most frequently. Some responses from participants regarding aspects of their culture that positively impacted their happiness include: "family is really important to me we can rely on each other and support each other", "we have a very close knit inner culture in the sense that family always comes first, "being surrounded by family on holidays like Diwali and Navratri always give me a sense of peace and happiness." The positive impact of familial values on individuals' happiness is reiterated by the survey results, which were mostly unimodal with the most common score being an 8 out of 10 [Fig 2]. The importance of familial values is shown in Indian culture through the many festivals and holidays celebrated. For example, one of my interview subjects describes that

the holidays and festivals celebrated helps her feel more connected to her family. Specifically, she says, " my favorite holiday is Raksha Bandhan because it's a holiday where sisters tie rakhis[bracelets] around their brothers as a symbol of protection and love for each other and the special bond they have." Another subject says the importance of family is shown through marriage customs in that, "marriage isn't just a joining of two people, but of two families, and it's not uncommon but rather expected for children to live with their parents until they get married. Even after marriage, it's common for the husband's parents to live with them, as way to maintain and strengthen their familial connection." This is reinforced by the joint family structure more commonly existent in Indian culture than a nuclear family structure.
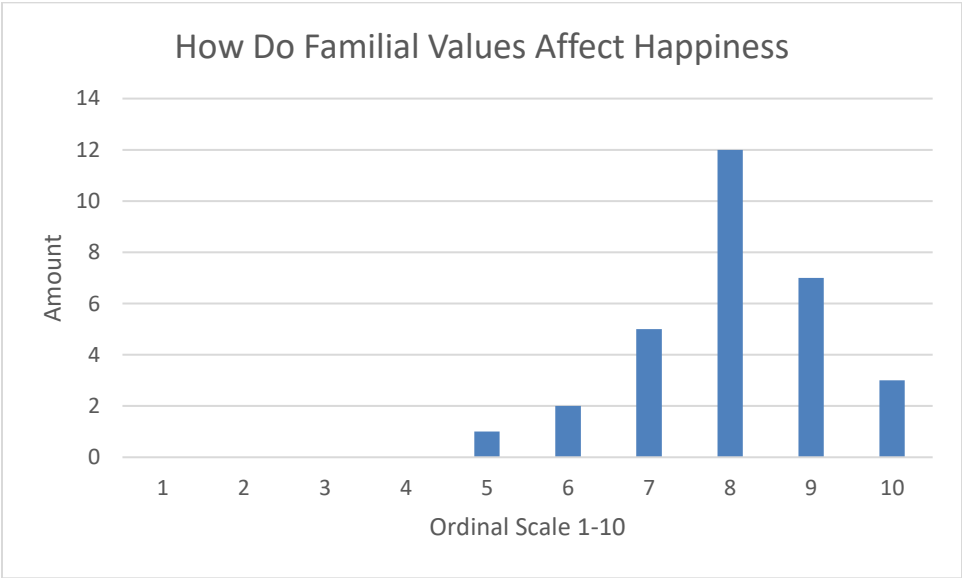

Figure 2. [Survey results of "How Familial Values Affect Happiness"]

B. Respect for Power and Status

In terms of the cultural value of a desire and respect for power and status, responses from interviewees, seemed to have a negative connotation. One said, "there's such a huge value on success, that some career choices are frowned upon, so we're constantly nudged into careers that

seem lucrative and respectful to society." Another said, "our culture teaches us to give importance to money and respect in society and less importance to time and passions." This could be because the importance of power and status can be seen through the cultural foundations of the caste system. A higher caste demonstrated greater power in society, and since the caste system has been eradicated, the value of power and status among individuals has also declined. However, our surveys give a variation of answers. It seemed that individuals from a south Indian subculture, gave a higher score to how this cultural value impacted their happiness than individuals from a northern Indian subculture. This could be because of the stricter hold on traditional values, particularly the caste system, that exists in Southern parts of India in particular. As I mentioned earlier, this discrepancy is seen through Indian dance forms, with the North Indian dance style of Kathak being a more graceful and contemporary dance form, and the South Indian dance style of Bharatanatyam being a more rigid and structured dance form. Furthermore, it seemed that Indian international students studying at UVA also gave a higher score to how this value impacted their happiness than Indian American students at UVA. This could be because of the fact that most Indian international students at UVA come from the top tier of the upper classes in terms of socioeconomic status in India. Their respect for power and status could be more amplified as they come from respectful and powerful families in India.

C. Preference for Personalized Relationships

In terms of the cultural value of a preference for personalized relationships, survey results were similar among participants, with scores hovering mostly between 8-10, regarding how this value affected their happiness. From a quote from an interviewee, "I joined an Indian dance team in college to stay close to my culture but also to develop deep connections with a new group of

people that have since become my best friends." This shows the importance of building connections between people in Indian culture because of the sense of familiarity existent. Another quote from an interviewee further showed the importance of personalized relationships in terms of the ability to use language as a form of connection. "Having a language that I share with a specific group of people reminds me that I have a group of people make connections with." This shows the importance of language in promoting the creation of personalized relationships, which is reinforced by the different forms of greetings prevalent in different cultures. Formal greetings include Namaste (Hindi and Sanskrit), Namaskar (Marathi), Namaskara (Kannada), Namaskaram (Telegu, Malayalam), Vanakkam (Tamil), Nomoshkaar (Bengali), Nomoskar (Assamese), Aadab (Urdu), and Sat Shri Akal (Punjabi). Despite the differences in word form, they are all meant as way to show respect and consideration for each other, as the literal meaning is "the divine in me sees the divine in you." There are additional distinctions in the informal greetings existent in different regions, which vary based on language and religion that is most common in a region. Examples include Jai Jaganath in Odia, Ami Aschi in Bengali, Jai Shri Krishna in Gujarati and the Rajasthani dialect of Hindi, Ram Ram/ Jai Sita Ram in the Awadhi and Bhojpuri dialects of Hindi, Sat Sri Akal in Punjabi, As-salamu alaykum used in Urdu, etc. The ability to greet someone of a similar language in a distinct way promotes the ability to create personalized relationships with people of familiar backgrounds.

D. Collectivist Orientation

Regarding the cultural value of collectivist orientation, the results of this were varied, between scores of 2-7 [Fig 3]. Doing further analysis, it seemed that the average score for how this cultural value affected their happiness on a scale of 1 -10, (1 being very negatively and 10

being very positively), was 4 for Indian Americans, and 6 for those brought up in India. This could be because of the American cultural influences of individualism on those who have lived most of their lives in the United States. However, in interviews where questions about this specific value weren't explicitly asked, responses included: "the traditions we have make me feel connected to a bigger purpose, and that community feeling makes me feel safe in knowing that there's some kind of structure in my life", " I love that whenever we celebrate holidays, they're done so in a way that engages every member of the community." It's clear from these responses, that the community that Indian culture provides seems to be an important aspect of their happiness. This may come from regional collectivism existent in India through the 1000s of subcultures prevalent. However, there seemed to be some negative responses in terms of the pressure from community members to act a certain way. A subject said, "I constantly feel like I have to keep up a reputation as a perfect Indian girl, because if someone in the community sees me acting differently, I'll get judged and ostracized." Another referenced popular comedians of Indian origin stating that "Hasan Minhaj put it perfectly when he said in his movie [Homecoming King] that Indian people are constantly worried about log kya kahenge [what will people say], because of all the norms and restrictions established by the community."
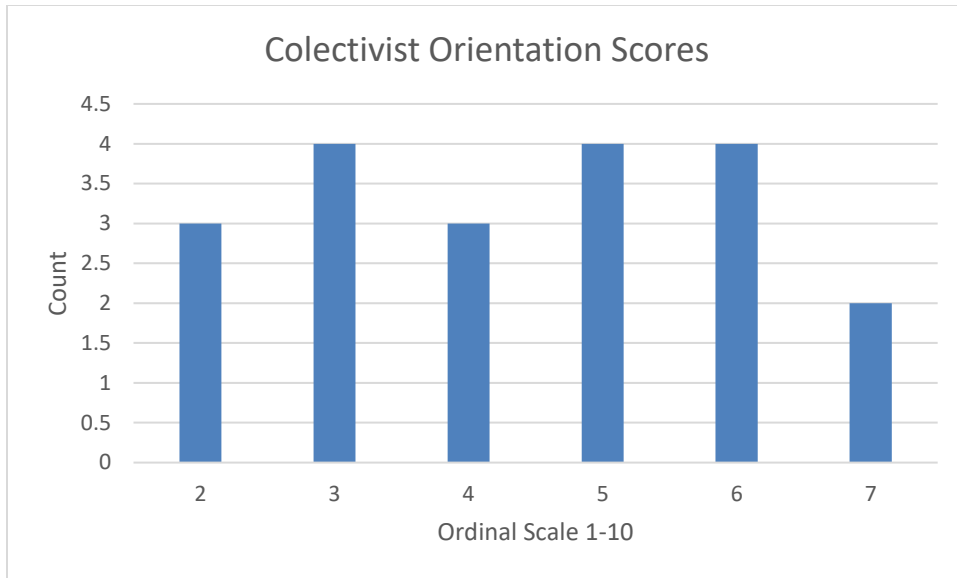
Colectivist Orientation Scores

Figure 3. [Survey Results of "How Collectivist Orientation Affects Happiness"]

E. Desire to be Embedded in a Group

Regarding the cultural value of a desire to be embedded in a group, interviews suggested an acknowledgement that their culture helped them find a place to belong with responses including: "My culture gives me a support system I can fall back on", "it gives me a place where I fit in." However, in surveys, results were varied once again. After further analysis, it seemed that those who indicated a closer connection to their subculture than to the idea of being Indian as a whole, gave on average a higher score to how this value impacted their happiness. The overall variability in the responses to the question, may be because of the constant pressure on individuals to fit a certain mold of a group. An interviewee said, "since there's 1000s of cultures, and 100s of languages, and our parents think we have to fit the norm of each exact characteristic, and control the factors that they can and hope the differences sort themselves out." This can lend to poor mental health, if one does not feel they belong. With the stigma against mental health

prevalent in the nation, this value seems to decrease the happiness of some individuals who don't feel like they fit the mold.

F. Cynical View of Others

Lastly, in terms of the cultural value of having a cynical view of others, this had an overall negative impact on individual's happiness, with scores mostly between 2 and 4. This is supported by the interviews in which a respondent said, "our parents often teach us to only hang out with Indians. Everyone else will cheat us somehow." This cynical view is reemphasized by the animosities existent in India between Hindus and Muslims, the demeaning term "Madrasi" that many north Indians called south Indians, and the desire to marry only withing a subculture or even a village, because others won't understand their traditions. One of the responses said, "it's so difficult among parents to accept even other subcultures, as even between north and south India, my parents embedded this belief in me that north Indians are not people I should associate with because they took away my grandparents' farmland back in the day. Also, the negative portrayal of South Indians in many Bollywood movies, shows the film industry's inherent bias towards North India, and makes me feel even more distant from North Indians." It seems to come from the desire to be embedded in a group, and the fear of changing traditions and values within the group. Another portrayal of the sociocultural factor of a cynical view against others comes from the stigma against mental health. "Mental health is just not existent in the Indian community. Parents and elders often just think it's a phase, and it's now been more prominent among our generation and our generation to come, and we hope to bring more awareness to these issues. It's harder however, because people generally are very averse to new ideas and thoughts, and like to stick with what they know." There is an immense lack of mental

health resources in India, and a negative stigma associated with mental illness. Thus, only 10-12% of people struggling with mental health are willing to seek help. (Live Laugh Love Organization 2018). As seen in Figure 4, results from a survey done by the Live Love Laugh Organization in 2018, show that perception of people with mental illness in India is incredibly negative. This creates a sense that mental health problems are a disgrace to society. Therefore, many people neither seek help, nor acknowledge their mental health problems, which can be detrimental to individual wellbeing.
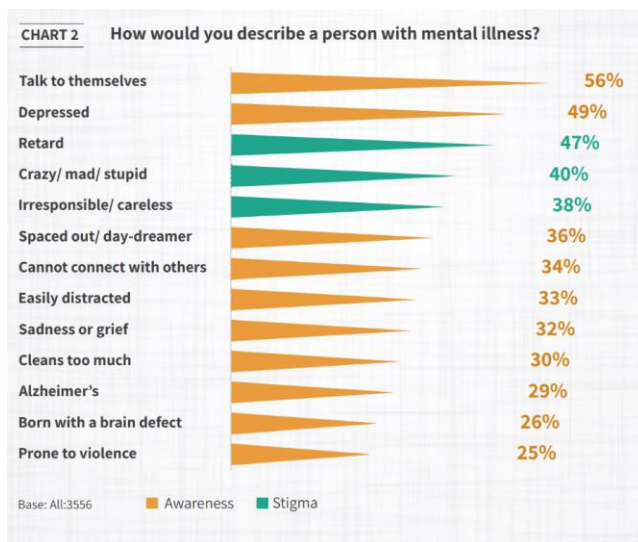

CHART 2   How would you describe a person with mental illness?

Talk to themselves	56%
Depressed	49%
Retard	47%
Crazy/ mad/ stupid	40%
Irresponsible/ careless	38%
Spaced out/ day-dreamer	36%
Cannot connect with others	34%
Easily distracted	33%
Sadness or grief	32%
Cleans too much	30%
Alzheimer's	29%
Born with a brain defect	26%
Prone to violence	25%

Base: All:3556   ■ Awareness ■ Stigma

Figure 4. [Public Perceptions of People with Mental Illnesses as Observed in Studies done by Live Love Laugh Organization]

Discussion

My research shows that the familial connections and values was a strong component of their happiness. The importance of this cultural factor can be seen more tangibly embedded in Indian culture through the holidays and festivals prevalent. Many of the festivals celebrated in India are rooted in supporting familial values like that of Raksha Bandhan and Karva Chauth. Raksha Bandhan is a festival celebrated to honor the relationship between brothers and sisters,

and Karva Chauth is a festival celebrated to honor the relationship between husband and wife. In terms of familial relationship between generations, the custom of bowing down to elders' feet when meeting them for special occasions to ask for their blessing is an established norm of Indian culture as a way to maintain and respect familial connections between generations.

My research also showed that the value of having a cynical view of others had a negative impact on their happiness, which often resulted from the expectations of being embedded in a group. Individuals mentioned that there's an expectation to "fit in the norm" and "any deviations from this norm are often considered unacceptable or shameful to society." This may root from the social structure of society established by the caste system between 1000 and 2000 BCE. While it was eradicated in 1950, the values of being embedded in a group through the prohibition of inter-caste interactions and relationships have shown a great impact on Indian culture. This impact can be seen through the differences in cultural dance forms between different dance forms, as mentioned earlier, but also through the different foods, styles of dress, customs, festivals, and languages existent. These disparities create a sense of pride for their subcultures, so much so that they may be doubtful or hesitant of people from different cultures (Panda et al 2004). For example, deep rooted disparities between north Indians and south Indians are embedded through differences in language. Hindi is the national language of India, and is a language well known to most subcultures in North India, especially since many North Indian languages like Gujarati, Punjabi, and Marathi have similar roots to Hindi. South Indian languages like Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Telegu don't have as similar roots to Hindi. Thus, less than 15% of individuals in South India are well-versed in Hindi.

My research shows that cultural values have an impact on individual's happiness through the factors of familial connection, collectivist orientation, preference for personalized

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relationships, respect for power and status, desire to be embedded into a group, and a cynical. The importance of familial connections and values should be further analyzed among various demographics of India to validate the importance of this value for different demographics of Indians. Additionally, the differences in subcultures and their impact on views of other subcultures should be further analyzed to gain a better sense of how exactly these disparities lend themselves to a cynical view of others and thus a negative impact on happiness.

As my research is only of 20 Indian students at UVA, I do not have enough data to make strong claims for causation or correlation between sociocultural factors and the wellbeing of all individuals on the Indian subcontinent. However, there are noticeable trends that can be analyzed to gain greater insight into how sociocultural factors affect young adult Indian Americans. It's important to recognize the limitations of my research, the most important being my inability to obtain data and information from people living in India. As I myself am an Indian American born and raised in the United States, it was difficult for me to find valuable and reliable methods to research people living in India. Therefore, my results are certainly biased, and may not completely represent the views of the average Indian. Furthermore, the age group of my subjects was 15- 25 years old, indicating my data represented the thoughts of the millennial population. Most of their thoughts were hence, much more modern and contemporary comparatively to older generations of Indians. Furthermore, due to the onset of corona virus, I was unable to complete as many in person-interviews as I had intended on completing. I had to use Zoom to conduct online interviews but many individuals were not as willing to complete the online interviews.

In the future, I would focus my research mostly on Indian Americans, as that is the population, I am most easily able to reach. Additionally, I would vary the age of my subjects to see differences among different age groups of individuals. I believe, the results would be

different for these different age groups and would give a more robust analysis of the cultural values existent in Indian culture. Especially since there is a bigger Indian American population aged 30+ that immigrated to the United States halfway through their upbringings, it would provide an interesting comparison between the Indian culture and the American culture they experienced.

This research was incredibly useful, in helping me see the importance of understanding the different factors that must be considered in creating a metric. Systems Engineering greatly relies on top- bottom thinking, in terms of thinking of the bigger picture before ironing out smaller details. Thus, objectives and metrics are key concepts that must be learned to efficiently be a system engineer. When starting any project, it is important to start with a high-level objective and break it down into smaller more actionable and manageable objectives. Doing so, allows one to better understand the factors that must be considered in solving a problem. In this case, the problem here was finding a way to measure wellbeing, and it has been broken down into the factors that affect wellbeing. Social and economic factors have been taken into consideration by other established metrics, but none consider the cultural factors that may impact wellbeing. Thus, my research reminds me of the importance of systems thinking and how relevant it can be in various situations I may come across further along my career as an engineer.

Conclusion

The broader significance of this research, is that culture impacts individuals' wellbeing in terms of providing them a place in which they belong. In Indian culture, that place of belonging is typically a family structure and/or a particular subculture. In a society that is increasingly mobile, with less and less face to face interaction, culture may help in giving people that group

or that connection to which they can relate to. Whether it is through material or non-material components of culture, culture does have an impact on happiness and wellbeing, and thus it is an important factor that must be considered when measuring the wellbeing of a nation.

Next steps would be to find quantitative indices of performance through available national statistics, for each of the cultural values examined above, and integrate them into a metric that measures the cultural wellbeing of the nation of India. This can then be integrated into a metric that combines all the cultural, social, economic, environmental, and political factors that affect the wellbeing of a nation, to more accurately measure the wellbeing of the nation of India. As my research was focused merely on India, I can't conclude that this is true for all nations. It would be interesting to see the research and analysis of culture on wellbeing in nations around the world, to discover commonalities that can be used in the creation of a measure of wellbeing for all nations across the world. This is obviously an incredible feat to accomplish, but I hope that my research was an important first step in understanding that economic factors are not the only factors that measure the wellbeing of a nation, and steps need to be taken to change this view of the world.

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