

## WORLD HAPPINESS INDEX AND INDIA: AN ANALYTICAL CRITIQUE

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### ABSTRACT

*The World Happiness Report is a report by the United Nations that measures national happiness. The ranking uses six key factors and fourteen areas within its core questions to measure happiness. The present paper based on secondary data analysis the India's rank in world happiness index from its inception. The data discover that India's position in the world happiness index is far behind, and its score is also very low. India's position in WHI has not improved over the time. India ranks one of the least happy countries in the world. In order to get a comparative picture of India's position in the World Happiness Index, India has been compared among different economies of the world such as the world's largest economy, World's smallest economies, World's highest and lowest per capita GDP etc. India falls behind the neighbour countries such as Nepal, China, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. According to the research paper Ecorwap from SBI, the World Happiness Index 2023 ranks India incorrectly at 126th, these are some controversy too. But there are some eye-opening comparison shows the research paper.*

**Keywords:** World Happiness Index, GDP, Secondary Data, Employment, Economic Factor.

### Introduction

#### Introduction and Concept of World Happiness Index

The United Nations publishes a report called the World Happiness Report that gauges happiness across countries. Since 2012, on March 20th, this report has been released yearly in conjunction with the International Day of Happiness event. The majority of the data comes from the Gallup World Poll and is based on how respondents rated their personal lives. Six essential factors—social support, income, health, independence, generosity, and lack of corruption—are used in the ranking to gauge happiness. Within its core questions, the Gallup World Poll measures 14 areas: (1) business and economic; (2) citizen involvement; (3) communications & technology; (4) diversity (social concerns); (5) education & families; (6) emotions (well-being); (7) environment & energy; (8) food & shelter, (9) politics and the government, ten) law and order (safety), eleven) health, twelve) ethics & religion, thirteen) transportation, and fourteen) employment. The report ranks global happiness basis survey data from people in over 150 countries.

- **GDP per Capita / Economic Factors:** Only economic factors alone do not determine happiness but it has huge impact on happiness in any part of the world which is also true. Economic indicators such as GDP per capita, income levels and employment rates are included in majoring happiness. GDP per capita is often considered as a baseline indicator of a country's overall wealth and standard of living.

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- **Social Support:** Strong social connections and support networks contribute to happiness. This indicator measures the extent to which individuals have social networks, friends and relatives they can rely on in times of need.
- **Healthy Life Expectancy:** Health is a crucial component of well-being. Healthy life expectancy measures the average number of years individuals can expect to live in good health. Indicators related to health include life expectancy, access to healthcare and rates of chronic illness or disability.
- **Freedom to Make Life Choices:** This indicator assesses the degree of freedom individuals have to make life choices, including freedom of expression, freedom of religion and individual rights.
- **Quality of Governance:** Effective governance, low corruption levels and trust in public institutions contribute to societal well-being.
- **Environmental Quality:** Environmental factors such as air and water quality, access to green spaces, and environmental sustainability are increasingly recognized as important components of happiness.
- **Education and Knowledge:** Access to education and opportunities for personal development contribute to overall well-being. Indicators may include literacy rates, educational attainment levels, and access to lifelong learning opportunities.
- **Work-Life Balance:** The balance between work and personal life is essential for happiness. Factors such as working hours, flexibility in employment and job satisfaction contribute to this indicator.
- **Cultural and Recreational Activities:** Participation in cultural events, hobbies and recreational activities enriches individuals' lives and contributes to overall happiness.
- **Generosity:** Generosity measures charitable giving and volunteering within a society. It reflects the willingness of individuals to help others and contribute to the common good.
- **Perceptions of Corruption:** This indicator measures the perceived level of corruption within a country's government and public institutions. Low levels of corruption are associated with higher levels of happiness and well-being.
- **Positive Affect:** This indicator assesses the frequency of positive emotions experienced by individuals in a society. It reflects the overall happiness and subjective well-being of the population.
- **Negative or Unpleasant Affect:** This concept gauges how frequently people experience unpleasant emotions like anger, concern, or despair. Higher happiness levels are correlated with lower negative affect levels.

These indicators are typically measured through surveys and other data sources and are used to calculate a country's overall happiness score. In order to help politicians make better decisions to raise the standard of living for their constituents, the World Happiness Report attempts to give them insights into the elements that lead to happiness and well-being.

#### **Objectives**

The major objectives as well as subsidiary objectives of the present paper are as under:

- To give the introduction of World Happiness Index.
- Attempt to examine the India's progress in the World Happiness Index.
- To analyze the World's various economy in the World Happiness Index
- To analyze the World Happiness Index position of India with various economies of the world.

#### **Research Methodology**

The present paper "**World Happiness Index and India: An Analytical Critique**" has been prepared by using secondary data. "Secondary data means data are already available i.e., they refer to the data which already been collected and analyzed by someone else. Secondary data may either published data or unpublished data." The most reliable sources (Original Reports) have been used for this. Details given below explains the methodology of World Happiness Index.

- GDP per capita is in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) adjusted to constant 2017 international dollars, taken from the WDI (World Development Indicators) released by the World Bank on 16, December - 2021. So GDP time series extend from 2020 to 2021 using country-specific forecasts of real GDP growth from the OECD Economic Outlook No. 110 (December 2021-Edition) or, if missing, the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects (Last Updated: 01/11/2022), after adjustment for population growth. The equation uses the natural log of GDP per capita, as this form fits the data significantly better than GDP per capita.
- Based on information from the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Health Observatory data source, which includes data for the years 2000, 2010, 2015, and 2019, the time series for healthy life expectancy at birth is created. The sample period in this report (2005–2021) is matched through the use of interpolation and extrapolation. Appendix 1: Statistics provides further information.
- The Gallup World Poll (GWP) question, "If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?" yields binary replies (0=no, 1=yes). The national average of these responses is known as social support.
- The national average of binary answers to the GWP question, "Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?" (0=no, 1=yes).
- When the national average of GWP responses to the donation question "Have you donated money to a charity in the past month?" is regressed on log GDP per capita, the residual represents generosity.
- The average of two GWP questions, "Is corruption widespread throughout the government in this country or not?" yields the perception of corruption. and "Is corporate corruption pervasive in this nation or not?" The general measure of corruption perception in cases where government corruption data are unavailable is the perception of business corruption.
- The mean of the affect measurements from the prior day for laughing, enjoying oneself, and accomplishing or learning something new is known as positive affect. Compared to previous years, when solely joy and laughter were expressed, this represents a shift. The addition of interest provides us with three components for both positive and negative effect, and it also somewhat enhances column 4's equation fit. The affect questions generally take the following form: Did you feel any of the following yesterday for a significant portion of the day? The interest question, which reads, "Did you learn anything interesting yesterday?" is the only one that is worded differently. Appendix 1: Statistics provides further information.
- The average of the preceding day's affect measurements for females is known as negative affect.

**Table 1: Top ten happiness index countries and their Nominal GDP and Per capita GDP**

Rank In Happiness index	Name of the country	Nominal GDP	Rank in the world	Nominal GDP Per Capita	Rank in the world	Population	Percentage of World Population	Rank in population
1	Finland	305689	48	54507	15	5545475	0.07	118
2	Denmark	420800	37	71402	09	5910913	0.07	115
3	Iceland	30570	111	78837	08	375318	0.00	180
4	Israel	521688	29	53196	18	9174520	0.11	98
5	Netherlands	1092748	18	61770	11	17618299	0.22	72
6	Sweden	597110	25	55216	14	10612086	0.13	87
7	Norway	546768	27	99256	04	5474360	0.07	119
8	Switzerland	905684	20	102,865	03	8796669	0.11	101
9	Luxembourg	89095	74	135,605	01	654768	0.01	168
10	New Zealand	249415	53	48072	22	5228100	0.06	123

Source: World Happiness Report 2023 & others.

Table No. 1 shows the detail of nominal GDP of a country and its rank in world's economy, per capita GDP and its rank in world's economy, population, percentage of world population and countries rank in world on the base of population of the world's top ten Happiest country in 2023. According to the research, 136 countries were ranked in 2023. Finland topped in the list for the 6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, followed by Denmark, Iceland, Israel, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Luxembourg and New Zealand.

The details in the table states that none of these countries are among the world's 10 largest economies. Switzerland (20) is the only country in the top 20 world economies. However, there are a total of seven countries in the world's top 50 economies. While Iceland (111) is the only economy that ranks behind 100 in the world economy. Thus, countries leading the WHI are not the world's largest economies.

However, out of the top 10 countries in the WHI, 5 countries are also in the top ten in the world in terms of GDP per capita. Also the rest of the countries (except New Zealand i.e. 22) are in the top 20 in the world in terms of per capita income. Countries with high per capita incomes lead in the WHI. Which indicates a relationship between high per capita income and happiness.

All of the world's leading WHI countries shown in the table are very small in terms of population. The largest country in terms of population among these nations is the Netherlands with a population of 0.22% of the total world population. While the smallest country Luxembourg has only 0.01% of the world's population. All these countries together account for 0.86% of the world's total population. While India alone accounts for 17.86% of the total world population. In another way, the population of India is 20.65 times more than the total population of all these countries.

**Table 2: India's Performance in World Happiness Index**

Year	Rank		Total Countries	Score	Change over Previous year
2016	118		157	4.404	-0.750
2017	122	-4	155	4.315	-0.089
2018	133	-11	156	4.190	
2019	140	-7	156	4.015	
2020	144	-4	153	3.573	
2021	139	5	149	3.819	
2022	136	3	146	3.777	
2023	126	10	137	4.036	

Source: World Happiness Reports Various years.

Table no. 2 shows India's rank and score in the World Happiness Index and its changes from they year 2016 to 2023.

India's rank in the World Happiness Index was 118 out of 157 countries In 2016. While its score was 4.0404 / 10. In the year 2017, India's rank dropped to 122 out of 155 countries. While the score decreased to 4.315. Thus India's position went down by 4 places and score decreased by 0.089 in 2017.

India's rank dropped by 11 places to 133 out of 156 countries and score also decreased by 0.125 to 4.190 In the year 2018,

India's position and score in the World happiness index continued to decrease / go backward in the year 2019, compared to the year 2018, India moved back by 7 places in the year 2019 and reached the 140<sup>th</sup> position out of 156 countries. While the score also decreased by 0.175 to 4.015.

Even in the year 2020, India's position and score in the World happiness index continued to decrease. In 2020, compared to 2019, India slipped 4 more places to 144<sup>th</sup> position out of 156 countries. While the score also decreased by 0.442 to 3.573.

There was a positive change in 2021 with the comparison to 2020. In the year 2021, India's position improved by 5 ranks to 139 out of 149 countries. When the score improved by 0.246, the score became 3.819.

In the year 2022, India's position improved by 3 more places to 136 out of 146 countries. However, the score decreased by 0.042 and the score reached 3.777.

In the year 2023, India's position improved by 10 ranks to 126 out of 137 countries. However, compared to the year 2022, the report also noted that 9 countries have decreased. However, the score improved by 0.259 to 4.036.

it can be concluded from the above detail that India's position in the world happiness index is far behind, and its score is also very low. India's position in WHI has not improved over the time. India ranks as one of the least happy nations in the world. In order to get a comparative picture of India's position in the World Happiness Index, India has been compared among different economies of the world such as the world's largest economy, World's smallest economies, World's highest and lowest per capita GDP etc.

**Table 3: World's largest economy and their Rank in World Happiness Index**

Sr. No.	Country Name	Nominal GDP Count (USD)	Rank in Happiness Index
1	United States	2,50,35,164	15
2	China	1,83,21,197	64
3	Japan	43,00,621	47
4	Germany	40,31,149	16
5	India	34,68,566	126
6	United Kingdom	31,98,470	19
7	France	27,78,090	21
8	Canada	22,00,352	13
9	Russia	21,33,092	33
10	Italy	19,96,934	70

Source: List of countries by GDP (nominal) from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia & World Happiness Report 2023.

Table No.3 shows the world's ten largest economies in terms of GDP (Nominal) and their World happiness index rank in the year 2023. Canada (8<sup>th</sup> largest economy) ranks first in WHI among these ten economies. Its rank is 13<sup>th</sup> in WHI. Followed by America (World's largest economy in nominal GDP) with 15 ranks in WHI. Among the ten largest economies of the world, 6 economies are within the rank 35 in WHI. India is the fifth largest economy in the world. But India ranks last among all ten major economies in the World happiness index, at 126. Apart from India, the economies ranked behind in the world happiness index are China (64<sup>th</sup> rank) and Canada (70<sup>th</sup> rank). Their condition can be said to be much better than compared to India. Thus, among the world's largest economies, India lags behind in the World Happiness Index with a huge gap.

**Table 4: Countries with Highest per Capita GDP and its rank in Happiness index**

Sr. No.	Country Name	Per capita Nominal GDP Count (USD)	Rank in Happiness Index
1	Luxembourg	135,605	09
2	Ireland	112,248	14
3	Switzerland	102,865	08
4	Norway	99,266	07
5	Singapore	87,884	25
6	Qatar	81968	-
7	United States	80,412	15
8	Iceland	78837	03
9	Denmark	71402	02
10	Australia	63,487	12

Source : List of countries by GDP (nominal) per capita from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia & World Happiness Report 2023.

Table No. 4 shows the world's ten largest economies in terms of per capita GDP (Nominal) and their World happiness index rank in the year 2023. Among the ten countries with the highest GDP per capita in the world, 8 countries are among the top 15 countries in the WHI. Denmark is in the best position with second place in the WHI. While the lowest position is Singapore at 25<sup>th</sup>. Countries with higher GDP per capita also rank higher in the WHI. Which shows the relationship between income and happiness. India ranks 125 in the world in per capita nominal GDP. And it is ranked 126 in WHI. Thus, India lags far behind high per capita income countries in WHI.

**Table 5: World's Smallest Economy**

Sr. No.	Country Name	Nominal GDP Count (USD)	Rank in Happiness Index
204	Tonga	547	122
195	Comoros	1,364	130
183	Gambia	2,388	119

174	Sierra Leone	3,519	135
169	Liberia	4,347	125
160	Montenegro	7,058	67
157	Togo	9,111	122
154	Mauritania	10,357	103
153	Kosovo	10,469	34
151	Tajikistan	11,816	80
5	India	34,68,566	126

Source: List of countries by GDP (nominal) from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia & World Happiness Report 2023.

Table No. 5 shows the world's ten smallest economies in terms of GDP (Nominal) and their World happiness index rank in the year 2023. The sum of nominal GDP of all these ten economies is only 2.49% of India's total GDP. Among these smaller countries, the best positions in the WHI are Kosovo 34, Montenegro 67 and Tajikistan 80. The rank of all the rest of the countries is after 100. However, among these small ten economies, only 2, Comoros (130) and Sierra Leone (135) rank behind India. Thus, it is not difficult to say that India lags behind in WHI even compared to the world's smallest economy.

**Table 6: Countries with smallest per Capita GDP and its rank in Happiness index**

Sr. No.	Country Name	Per capita Nominal GDP Count (USD)	Rank in Happiness Index
193	Afghanistan	443	137
192	Sierra Leone	415	135
190	Madagascar	530	127
187	Malawi	580	131
184	Niger	631	109
183	Mozambique	647	97
181	DR Congo	675	86
180	Chad	703	114
178	Liberia	800	125
176	Gambia	903	119
175	Mali	913	120
140	India	2612	126

Source : List of countries by GDP (nominal) per capita from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia & World Happiness Report 2023.

Table No.6 shows the world's eleven smallest economies in terms of per capita GDP (Nominal) and their World happiness index rank in the year 2023. These are countries whose per capita income is very low compared to India. Afghanistan having the lowest per capita income among these countries has a per capita income of only 16.96% of India's per capita income. While the per capita income of Mali, which is the highest among these countries, is only 34.95% of India's income. Among these eleven countries, the per capita income of 7 is less than a fourth of India's per capita income. However, even among these countries, seven countries rank ahead of India in WHI. Only five countries Afghanistan (137), Sierra Leone (135), DR Congo (133) Malawi (131) and Madagascar (127) are behind India in WHI. It is not that these countries are particularly advanced in the WHI. All countries except Mozambique (97) are ranked after 100 in the WHI. However, it is noteworthy that even the world's lowest per capita income countries rank as well as India in the WHI, or even moderately better.

**Table 7: World Most populate Country and Happiness Index  
(Population of the world as on 1 July 2023 )**

No	Country	Population	% of World Population	Rank in Happiness Index
1	India	1,42,86,27,663	17.76	126
2	China	1,42,56,71,352	17.72	64
3	United States	33,99,96,564	4.23	15
4	Indonesia	27,75,34,123	3.45	84
5	Pakistan	24,04,85,658	2.99	108
6	Nigeria	22,38,04,632	2.78	95
7	Brazil	21,64,22,446	2.69	49
8	Bangladesh	17,29,54,319	2.15	118
9	Russia	14,44,44,359	1.8	33

10	Mexico	12,84,55,567	1.6	36
11	Ethiopia	12,65,27,060	1.57	124
12	Japan	12,32,94,513	1.53	47
13	Philippines	11,73,37,368	1.46	76
14	Egypt	11,27,16,599	1.4	121
15	DR Congo	10,22,62,809	1.27	133
15	World	8,04,53,11,448	100 (64.4)	-

Source: World Happiness & Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, List of Countries by Population

Table No.7 shows the world happiness index rank of the largest 15 countries in terms of world population in 2023. India is the most populous country in the world. India has overtaken China in 2023. Currently India has 17.76% and China has 17.72% of the world's total population. After that America has 4.23% of the world's population. The 15<sup>th</sup> largest country in terms of world population, DR Congo accounts for 1.27% of the world's population. America (15) ranks best in the WHI among the world's most populous countries. It is followed by Russia 33, Mexico 36, Japan 47 and Brazil 49. Apart from this, 4 other countries rank between 50 and 100 in WHI. Only DR Congo ranks 133 behind India in the WHI. Thus, India lags behind in WHI even among the world's most populous countries.

### Major Findings

India's position in the WHI lags behind both in absolute terms and in comparative terms across different types of economies. Indeed India's rank should be good in WHI. India's per capita income has increased. India is a democratic country. Democracy gives all kinds of freedoms to the citizens. The social structure and family structure are such that people are getting help from each other under special circumstances or odd circumstances. There are no serious environmental issues unique to India. There is a diverse education system. India has a rich cultural heritage. Various types of festivals are celebrated, which increase happiness. However, the question of corruption is needed. Thus, India as a whole is far behind the prospects. So people of India do not know how to be happy? Questions such as why being happy or why thinking positively about one's life should be made a part of the curriculum are prompting new research.

### Conclusion

It even lags below neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, China, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Despite possessing the world's fastest-growing economy, India routinely scores poorly on the World Happiness Index, leaving some to wonder how it can be ranked behind unstable countries. The minister of external affairs, Jaishankar, disregarded the World Happiness Index 2023, which listed India among the unhappiest countries. Speaking to students at the BJYM Yuva Samvada at the RV Dental College in Bengaluru, Jaishankar cited a Singaporean acquaintance who once claimed that Indians seemed happier than Europeans. The study paper Ecorwap from the State Bank of India states that India is ranked 126th on the World Happiness Index 2023, which is inaccurate. Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser, State Bank of India, stated in the study that she estimates India to be in the 48th place in terms of happiness and that she summarily rejects India's ranking of 126th in the World Happiness Index as a measure of happiness.

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