A Survey of Satisfaction with Life in a Cross-Section of Nepalese Society

Elaine Duncan, PhD
Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland

Usha Subba, PhD
Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal
Acknowledgements

Data collection/analysis
Dr. Alan Tuohy,
Elizabeth McKenzie, Lisa Lui, Cara Fleming
Nepal: A profile

147,182km², borders China & India
Nepal: A profile

- 60ft - 29.028ft above sea level
- GDP per capita = 1,500 US dollars (05)
- Hindu, Buddhist & others
- Federal Democratic Republic (May 08)
Nepal: A profile

- Population - 28 million (07)
- Approx 90% live in rural areas
- Agriculture, tourism revenue
- Transport/health infrastructure poor
  - disaster management difficult
Nepal: A profile

- Literacy levels low
- Access to education difficult
  - rural areas not well served
- Education valued but can conflict with means of living/cultural priorities
- Universities, IT training courses
Nepal: A profile

- Under-nutrition, malnutrition
- Health goals
  - Lower infant mortality/fertility rate, increase life expectancy
- Rise in non-communicable diseases
- Medical insurance almost negligible
Nepal: A profile

- Only 2% GDP goes to mental health
- NGO’s back-up Govt’ & private services
- Various forms of meditation, worship practiced daily
- Mental ill-health stigmatized
- *Dhami, Jhankri* use prevalent
Life-satisfaction construct/scale

- Global cognitive judgment about one’s life according to own criteria
- Temporal stability, sensitive to life changes
- Life-satisfaction has direct translation in Nepali
  - *Ji-van san-tus-tha* (most often expressed as san-tus-tha)
- Distinct from this is the term Happiness expressed as *Khu-si*
Previous Surveys of Life-satisfaction

- **Simpson et al.** (1996) compared Australian (311) & Nepalese students (250) on depression & life-satisfaction

- Nepalese life-satisfaction $m = 22.10$
  - $f = 23.08; m = 21.11$
    - urban higher than rural

- Australian life-satisfaction $m = 23.28$
  - $f = 23.59; m = 22.15$
Previous Surveys of Life-satisfaction

• Diener, et al. (2000)
  – 41 countries rated global satisfaction with life & specific domains (students)
• 98 Nepalese students rated their satisfaction with life as 20.93 (5-35)
• 25th of 41 countries (lowest 14.4, highest 26.40)
• Neutral point considered to be 20 (clinical samples often on or below this)
Present Study Details

• **400 Nepalese** (even gender split)

• Surveyed using
  – *Satisfaction With Life Scale* (Diener, et al., 85)
    • Translated by bi-lingual co-researcher
  – *Demographics (correlates)*
    • age, gender, years of education, number of languages, geographical location (not for females), income, siblings, marital status, religion, occupation

• Non-random, snowball/convenience sampling
Results: sample demographics

• Age range 18-48
• Caste distribution
  – Brahmin 28.8%
  – Newar 26.2%
  – Ethnic 12.2%
  – Chhetri 11.5%
  – Yadav 9.2%
  – Dalit 6.0%
  – Teli 4.5%
Results: sample demographics

- 14% no formal education
- 5.2% achieved graduate level
- 59% had reached secondary &/or further qualification
- Only 29.5% were students
- Others = professional, housewife, farming, business, skilled work
Results: sample demographics

• Religion
  – 85.5% Hindu
  – 10% Buddhist
  – 2.2% Islam
  – 1.5% ethnic religion
  – 0.8% Christian

• Marital status
  – 51.8% married
  – 47.2% unmarried
  – 1% widowed
Results - overall S.W.L

- Mean = 21.6, SD 6.02
  - Mode = 19
  - Median = 21
  - Range = 30

- For scale categories:-
  - 32% satisfied
  - dissatisfied 12.5%
Results: gender differences in S.W.L

- **Female** = $m22.8; \text{SD } 6.4; \pm \text{SE } .45$
- **Male** = $m20.4; \text{SD } 5.4; \pm \text{SE } .38$

- **Significant gender difference**
  - $(t = 4.053; \text{df } 398, p = .000)$
Results: monthly income

• Mean = 12,176 rupees (£92)
  – Mode = 10,000
  – Median = 9,500
  – Range = 180,000 (£1,355 - outliers removed)
  – 70.6% between 0-10,000 rupees (up to £75)
Results: gender differences in monthly income

• Female mean = 9,955 rupees (£74)
• Male mean = 14,395 rupees (£107)

• Significant gender difference in income
  – (t = -2.98, df 398, p = .003)
Results: correlations

• S.W.L & income positively correlated
  \( r = 0.157, p = 0.002 \)

• However estimated curve fit departs significantly from linear at very high income levels
  \( R^2 = 0.030, p = 0.003 \) (after 50,000 rupees)
Results: partial correlations/regressions

- **Gender, marital status, religion, caste** each have impact on relationship between S.W.L & income but these factors do not explain enough of variance in sample

- In regressions with gender, religion & caste entered **caste** was best predictor of S.W.L (however again variance explained low)
Interpretations...

• Scale accessible
• Overall S.W.L outside 23-28 norm  
  (Diener, et al. 93)
• Not the lowest despite economy & poor developmental status
• Despite Nepalese women reporting sig’ less income than Nepalese males they report being sig’ more satisfied with life
Interpretations…

- In terms of correlates of S.W.L  
  - caste was best predictor (though weak)  
  - perhaps the most interesting finding is even in this less well developed country there is still no *additive value of rising income on S.W.L*
Further investigations...

- Item analysis of responses
  - especially final question

- Domain specific S.W.L
- Additional well-being/negative affect measures
- **Longitudinal** evaluation of S.W.L as political landscape changes & infrastructure develops
Further investigations…

- Compare global rating with experience sampling of positive affect
- Cross-cultural research
- **However, first,** I think it’s important to know more about *folk theory* of well-being in Nepalese society
Thank you for listening
Your questions, reflections welcomed