Association Between Leisure and Happiness: Evidence from Indian States

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Abstract

This study investigates the association between leisure time and happiness across Indian states and Union Territories (UTs) during 2019-2020. Using data from the Time Use Survey 2019 and the India Happiness Report 2020, it explores leisure participation rates for men and women, gender differences in leisure allocation, and the correlation between leisure time and state-level happiness scores. Employing Spearman rank correlation, the research finds no significant relationship between leisure time and happiness scores, aligning with previous studies.

The study highlights the nuanced nature of leisure activities, emphasizing that the quality of leisure pursuits, rather than their quantity, plays a pivotal role in shaping happiness. It underscores the evolving leisure consciousness in Indian society and calls for further research into the qualitative dimensions of leisure experiences and their impact on well-being. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of leisure's role in enhancing individual happiness in India.

Keywords: Leisure time, Happiness, Gender differences, India, Time Use, Leisure participation, Well-being, Leisure quality.

1. Introduction

Happiness is a positive state of mind that is purely subjective. The intensity and duration of happiness differ from person to person. It can be a momentary feeling; that lasts only for a few seconds or days." I was happy when I scored well on my previous exam" denotes the momentary state of happiness of the concerned person after getting the scores of his exam. Happiness can also be of a long-term character, referring to a person's total well-being over some time." I was a happy person when I lived in the U.S." This statement describes a person's happiness that lasted for a long period. Be it long-term or short-term, individuals experience happiness as a result of a wide range of personal and social circumstances. Owing to its advantages, many attempts have been undertaken around the world to analyze and assess the idea of happiness. First, happiness research can help us better understand the overall impact of economic policy. Second, empirical research on happiness helps us better understand how institutions affect people's happiness. Third, these studies aid economists in their investigation of the origins of individual pleasure, which in turn illuminates fundamental notions and assumptions in economic theory.

The term utility is used in classical economics to describe an individual's happiness. As explained in the theoretical model of individual labor supply, work causes disutility because it involves the exertion of both mind and body into a set of tasks. This implies that there exists a negative relationship between working hours and an individual's well-being. Leisure, on the other hand, provides utility; it entails activities that improve people's physical and mental well-being, such as resting, reflecting, listening to music, visiting parks, and so on. Thus, the advantages of having enough free time can be stated in a variety of ways, the most notable among them are health and productivity. Various studies have proved that having more leisure improves an individual's overall health and enhances their productivity at work. Over the years, with rising incomes across different countries, leisure has also become an emerging domain of scientific inquiry in modern societies. In academic circles, the link between leisure and happiness has also become an important issue of discussion.

The present study intends to explore the relationship between leisure time and happiness among states in India in 2019-20. To the best of our knowledge, this is the only study analysing the association between leisure time and happiness among states in India. In the following sections, we review the existing studies discussing the association between leisure and happiness. Then, we proceed to describe the definitions of leisure and happiness along with the statistical tools and methodology used in the present study. This is followed by discussing the major results of the study using the data available from the time use survey in 2019 and India Happiness Report 2020 and relevant conclusions are derived accordingly.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Until the 1980s, the leisure segment was mostly unexplored. This domain and related activities were regarded as unimportant in comparison to the other paid and unpaid activities that individuals engaged in daily. It was frequently interpreted as playtime and scholars always believed that there was little to learn about this activity in terms of the economy. However, in the aftermath of the 1990s, plenty of research surfaced that linked leisure to economics. They concentrated on recognizing leisure as an individual's unique experience, analyzing the quality of those experiences, and comprehending the underlying difficulties. The importance of leisure has grown throughout this time to the point where it has become an interdisciplinary concern for experts in several fields.

From the ancient Greek philosophers to the European enlightenment philosophers, happiness was one of the fiercely disputed topics. Even in the domain of economics, happiness, and well-being became important with the predictions of John Maynard Keynes in his controversial Economic Possibilities of Our Grandchildren (1930). According to Keynes, men will be faced with the real and permanent problem of how to employ their freedom from pressing economic concerns and how to use the time for leisure, once the era of abundance is attained. Veenhoven et al (2013) defined happiness as the worth of life, well-being, or simply the overall appreciation of one's own life. Stebbins(2012)defines it as a description of a broad swath of life.

Henderson (1990) in his integrative review of leisure establishes that the concept is discussed in the studies focusing mainly on three aspects.1) As a measure of time 2) As an experience and 3) As an activity. The effect of leisure on happiness varies depending on each of these aspects. In a study by Wong et al(2014), a detailed analysis of the relationship between leisure and happiness is conducted using international survey data. The study employed data from the Leisure Time and Sports Survey 2007 and found that

leisure time does not significantly contribute to happiness. However, other leisure measures like leisure's role in self-fulfilment and social interaction; leisure's relation to work and other spheres of life, etc significantly contribute to individual happiness scores. The study also found that individual demographic and economic characteristics like age, income, marital status, and number of children also affect individual happiness scores. Another interesting finding of the study is that different leisure activities contribute to different happiness levels. Engaging in leisure forms like exercise, listening to music, etc increased happiness while watching the internet affected happiness adversely. In a study by Whillans (2020) conducted in the Netherlands where it tried to analyze the time use of millionaires, it was found that participating in active leisure activities contributed to more happiness among millionaires. This is mainly because active leisure is more connected with personal control and control over time. Other variables that positively affect their happiness include job autonomy, the neighbourhood where they live, and the health of the individual. Galay(2008)in his study on Bhutan found that people who participated in socializing, religious activities, sports, and leisure activities were found to have a higher amount of happiness as against people who were engaged in community participation and those who worked for longer hours daily.

Numerous studies analyze the health benefits of leisure. In a study by Mannell(2007) in which he provides an overview of the scientific evidence available on the impact of leisure on individual health and well-being, it is found that leisure is not automatically good for health, but it depends on the leisure choices and activities in which they are engaged in. Leisure also contributes to personal psychological growth through identity formation and affirmation. To examine the relationship between leisure and family bonding, Orthner et al(1990)conducted a study and found that leisure positively affects family interaction, family satisfaction, and family stability by changing interpersonal barriers.

The majority of the studies have looked into the relationship between leisure and happiness as linear and positive. The possibility of curvilinear relationships was explored in a paper by Lee(2020). Using the 2016 national leisure data of the Republic of Korea, the study found that weekday and holiday leisure quantities, and leisure repertoire(leisure activities) have a significant inverted U-shaped relationship with happiness. This implies that there exists a point of leisure satiation beyond which the leisure quantity and activities adversely impact the happiness outcomes. The role of leisure beliefs in determining happiness at individual and country levels was analyzed using the data of 79 countries in a study by Macchia et al(2021) which found that countries with citizens who value leisure more than work found to be happier as against others. Also, in countries where work-life policies were effectively implemented, the level of happiness was higher.

Reviewing the existing literature, it is evident that sufficient attention is not given to research in leisure and happiness in the Indian context. As a developing country, an analysis of the correlation between leisure and happiness is introspective as the time spent for leisure and happiness is largely determined by personal attitudes and taste as well as real-life conditions including those related to work.

DATA AND METHODS

This study aims to analyze the association between the leisure time dispositions of individuals at the state level and their happiness scores during 2019-2020. The data on leisure time allocation at the state level is compiled from the latest time use survey of India in 2019. The happiness index rankings have complied

from the first-ever India Happiness Report 2020 prepared by Professor Rajesh K Pillania, who is rated as the top Professor of Strategy in India by The Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM) and Education Post.

The first pan-India time-use survey was conducted in the year 2019 by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO). It was carried out from January to December 2019 collecting the time use data from all states in the country. The survey covered around 1.37 lakh households and 4.48 lakh individuals analyzing their patterns of time use on SNA(System of National Accounts), non-SNA, and residual activities. A two-stage-stratified sampling method was followed to identify the representative sample. The survey used the personal interview method by deploying trained investigators to collect details on the time spent on different activities. Data about the activities done from 4. a m on the day before the interview at 4. a m on the scheduled day were noted carefully.

The definition of leisure used in the present study is quite straightforward; It is defined as the residual free time left after meeting the contracted (paid work), committed (unpaid domestic and care work), and necessary activities (physiological needs) in the day-to-day life of an individual. This definition is consistent with the activity classification followed in the Indian time-use surveys. This is recorded in code 8 of the activity classification of the survey.

The average leisure time disposition of the persons participating in Activity A is calculated based on the formula given below;

$$\text{Time spent per participant on a day for activity} = \frac{\text{Total time spent by participants in Activity A}}{\text{Total number of participants in } activity \text{ A}}$$

The leisure data available from the published reports of the NSSO (https://www.mospi.gov.in/reports-publications) is used to rank the states for statistical analysis. The highest rank will be given to the state with the highest leisure time and so on. The happiness index at the state level includes 6 different indicators (1) work and related issues like earning, and growth etc, (2) relationships including family and friends, (3) health including physical and mental,(4)philanthropy including social concerns,(5)religious or spiritual orientation and(6)impact of covid on happiness. The state-level rankings are already available in the India Happiness Report 2020 available at https://www.pillania.org/reports

We, then proceed to analyse the relationship between the state-level leisure estimates and happiness index rankings using the Spearman rank correlation method. This statistical technique enables us to analyse the strength of the relationship between two variables. The Spearman rank correlation is calculated using the following formula;

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n^3 - n}$$

The r value generated will help us to understand the direction and strength of the relationship between leisure time spent and happiness at the state level. One of the major problems faced by time-use surveys is the issue of quality. Time is just a quantifiable entity and having adequate time for an activity does not

indicate anything about its quality and efficiency. A slow person might take a longer time to complete an activity than a person who is faster in action. Also, as the time estimates are solely provided by the respondents, the chances of errors are higher for illiterate persons as their daily work is organized in a more complex way.

Another limitation of the study includes using data from two different years. However, as happiness is derived by taking into consideration different long-term aspects, we assume that happiness scores do not vary much from what they would have been if a survey had been conducted in 2019. Also, in the process of finding the Spearman rank correlation, we omitted Dadra& Nagar Haveli and Daman& Diu due to the unavailability of happiness rankings for these union territories. Only a total of 29 states and 5 union territories are used for the statistical analysis. Only activities related to free time are taken into account to serve the purpose of this study. The activities related to free time are denoted in code 8 in the survey. These include attending/visiting cultural, entertainment, and sports events/venues (81), Cultural participation, hobbies, games, and other pastime activities (82), sports participation and exercise and related activities (83), mass media use (84), activities associated with reflecting, resting, relaxing (85), Travelling time-related to culture, leisure, mass media, and sports practices (86) and other activities related to culture, leisure, mass-media, and sports practices (89).

Figure 1: Gender wise Leisure Participation in different states
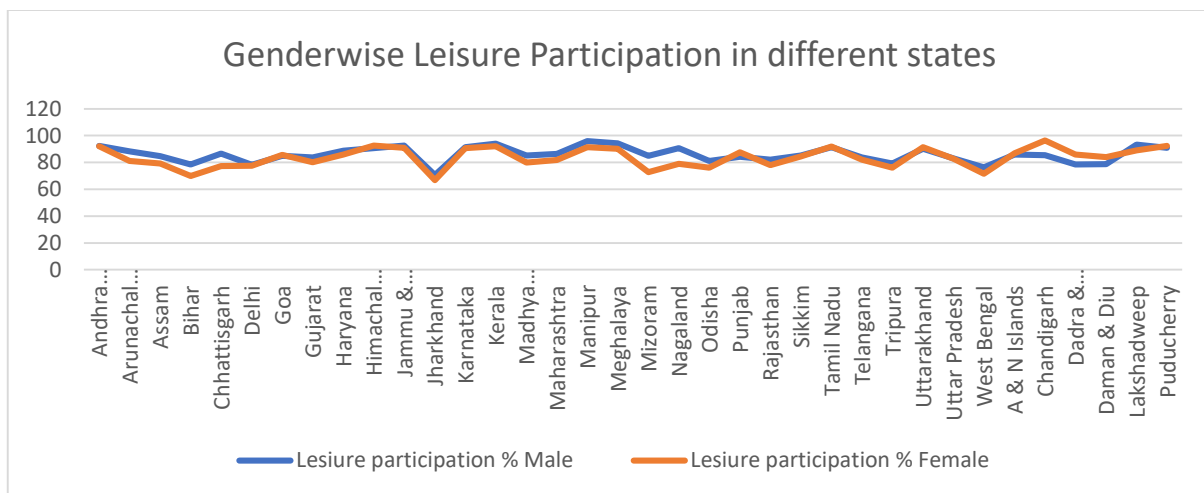
The figure shows the percentage of both males and females participating in leisure activities in different states according to 2019-time use survey data. It is evident from the figure that, not much variation between genders is visible. Men and women equally tend to spend time across different states except for some states like Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Bihar, Chattisgarh etc. A different trend is shown in the case of Chandigarh and Dadra Nagar Haveli where women tend to participate more in leisure activities than men. The strong work culture and the freedom enjoyed by the women in their workspaces and within their families are the major reasons behind this tendency. Roughly on average, around 80 % of both men and women participate in leisurely activities across states in India.

Figure 2: Gender wise Leisure time spent in different states

Gender wise leisure time spent in different states
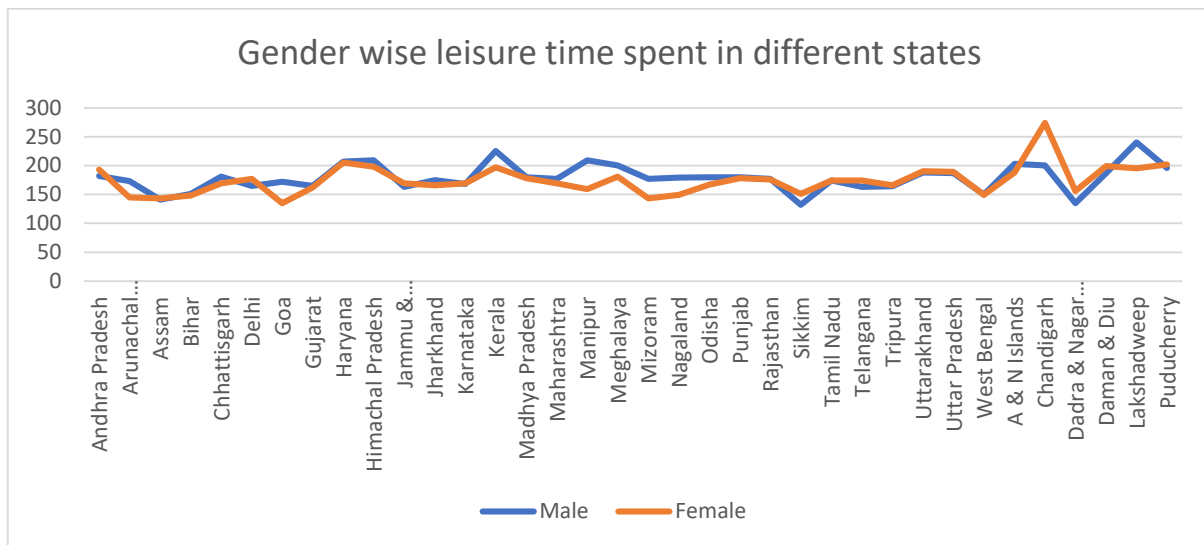
Now, if we look into the leisure time spent by both men and women, again we see a more or less equal picture except in the case of Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, Northeastern states, and in UTs like Chandigarh and Lakshadweep. The leisure time divide is the largest in Chandigarh, where women tend to spend around 74 minutes more leisure activities. Does this mean that men and women are equal in enjoying leisure when gender struggles are real? Prior research has shown that women experience fragmented leisure as against men who enjoy pure leisure. Fragmented leisure refers to participating in leisure while engaging in non-leisure doings simultaneously. It is a common sight in our neighbourhood where women juggle all their activities due to lack of time or time pressure. They may be watching TV which is a leisure activity at first glance, but also engaged in taking care of their children or grandchildren or any other non-leisure activity. Men, on the other hand, enjoy pure leisure with no obligations of unpaid work. Time spent on leisure also has an age, education, and income gradient. Aged people tend to spend more leisure time in passive activities while young people spend their time in active leisure activities. Highly educated people tend to engage in more complex jobs which require more skills and qualifications. This makes their work life more challenging leading to less time for leisure than the uneducated. Another interesting finding of the time use survey is that Indian poor and rich tend to spend more time on leisure activities than middle-income people. This paradoxical u-shaped relationship between income and leisure may be attributed to the community living of the extremely poor sections in India. Extreme poor live in slums and opportunities for them to engage in inexpensive leisure activities like chit-chatting, and knitting is available. Richer sections spent time on more expensive and quality leisure activities like weekend getaways, visiting tourist destinations, etc. In other words, the leisure of the poor is often homebound or limited in their own spaces as against the rich. It should be emphasized that the time-use survey did not collect information on the availability of several critical domestic facilities such as a washing machine or piped water, which can significantly affect the anatomy of women's leisure time.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Happiness score		*Leisure time*	
Mean	3.356471	Mean		176.8529
Standard Error	0.014348	Standard Error		3.794201
Median	3.36	Median		174
Mode	3.41	Mode		174
Standard Deviation	0.083662	Standard Deviation		22.1238
Sample Variance	0.006999	Sample Variance		489.4626
Kurtosis	0.25744	Kurtosis		0.224111
Skewness	0.248039	Skewness		0.534581
Range	0.38	Range		94
Minimum	3.19	Minimum		141
Maximum	3.57	Maximum		235
Sum	114.12	Sum		6013
Count	34	Count		34

The sample size is 34 including the states and union territories in India. The mean happiness score is 3.35 and its range is 0.38. Variance 0.006 which is the square of the standard deviation 0. 083. In the case of leisure time, the mean time spent per day in minutes across states and UTs is 176.82. The minimum time spent for leisure is 141 min/day (Assam) and the maximum is 235 min/day (Delhi). The sample variance is 489.46 which is the square of standard deviation 22.12. Spearman rank correlation is assigned to determine the correlation between leisure time and happiness scores of the states. States are given ranks for both the variables with the highest value receiving the top rank. The scatter diagram below shows the nature of the correlation between the ranks of different states.

Table 2: Correlation between leisure and happiness

CORRELATION	**-0.06883**
Number	**34**
t statistic	**0.39027**
DF	**32**
p-value	**0.698922**

Figure 3: Correlation between Leisure and Happiness
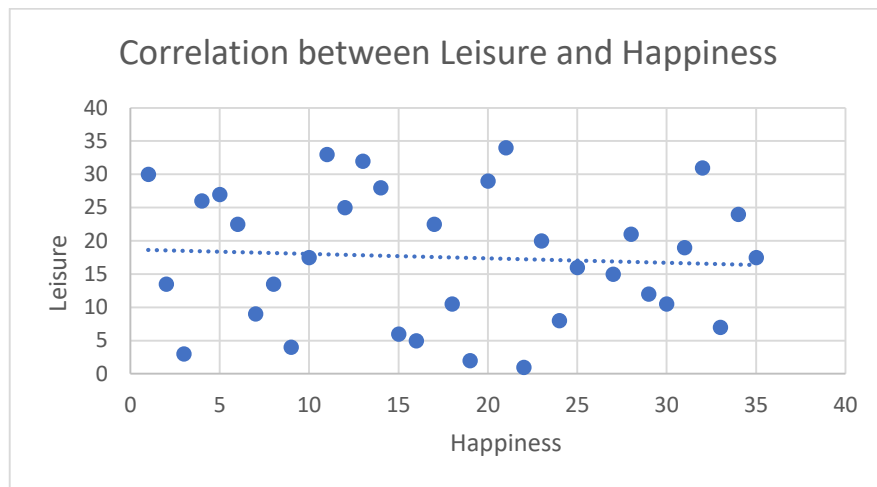
Eyeballing the figure and the table above, it is evident that the relation between leisure time and happiness is -0.068 which is a close zero correlation. The p-value is 0.69 which is greater than 0.05 implying no significant relationship between these variables in the case of India. As we have seen in the study by Wang et al (2014) time spent for leisure by people is not an effective indicator of the happiness they enjoy. Spending too little time for leisure will reduce a person's well-being and spending too much time will also affect adversely as people feel unproductive and unfocused in their life goals. Thus, between this "too little time effect" and "too much time effect", moderate time spent for leisure is the key to happiness. Also, in addition to the time aspect, it is very important to look into the experiences derived from leisure. The sense of freedom and relaxation that one gets from participating in leisure activities will add to the happiness enjoyed. The existence of a non-linear relation between leisure and happiness can also be tested which is beyond the scope of this paper.

Conclusion

In this paper, we contributed to the discussion of the relationship between leisure time and happiness among states and Union Territories in India based on the data available from the recent Time Use Survey 2019 and India Happiness Report 2020. We focused on the leisure time dispositions of both men and women and tried to numerically measure the correlation between leisure and happiness scores.

First, we analysed the leisure participation rate of both men and women in Indian states. Our results showed that both men and women tend to participate equally in leisure activities. Gender differences in participation were not very visible in the case of India. This shows that there is increased leisure consciousness in the lifestyle of Indian women along with men.

Second, we looked into the differences in leisure time among men and women keeping income, education, and other socio-demographic factors to be constant. We again see that in many states men and women enjoy similar amounts of leisure time except in Chandigarh where women spend more time than men for leisure. In states like Arunachal Pradesh and North Eastern states, men outperform women in time spent for leisure. Third, we looked into the association of leisure time and happiness scores among people in different states using the Spearman rank correlation method and found that no significant relation exists between these two variables in the Indian context. This result was in line with the findings of Wang et

al(2014). It is not the quantity of leisure that matters, but the nature of leisure activities and their quality that contributes to happiness. Analysis of the association between leisure quality and happiness was beyond the scope of this study. More importantly, leisure time at present is a part of the consumer lifestyle. Technological progress along with social transformation has resulted in the development of the leisure time industry in India. Over the years, Indians are also increasingly becoming a part of it.

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