

Women Empowerment and Happiness: Evidence from Selected

Asian Countries



Researcher

Nayab Khalid

691-FEMSECO/F21

Supervisor

Dr Hamid Hasan

International Institute of Islamic Economics

International Islamic University Islamabad

TH-27973²⁴

MS

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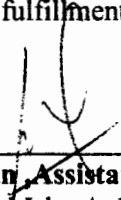
Asian Countries

by
NAYAB KHALID

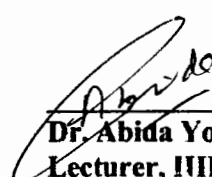
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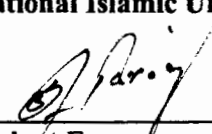
Supervisor:



Dr Hamid Hasan, Assistant Professor (IIIE)
International Islamic University Islamabad

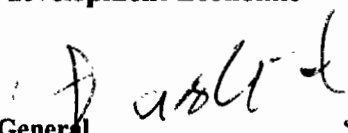
Internal Examiner:


Dr. Abida Yousuf
Lecturer, IIIE
International Islamic University, Islamabad

External Examiner:


Dr. Shujaat Fareed
Chief of Research
Pakistan institute of development Economic
Islamabad


Incharge/ HOD
School of Economics, Female campus
International Islamic University, Islamabad


Director General
International Institute of Islamic Economics
International Islamic University, Islamabad

Date of Viva Voce: 20-11-2024

Dedication

I express my deepest gratitude and respect to my family, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been the cornerstone of this work. To my loving parents, whose words of motivation and steadfast presence have made this journey possible, I owe my sincere thanks. I also dedicate this work to my uncle (Atlas khan), the former Controller of UST Bannu, and to my friends, whose constant support and belief in me have been invaluable throughout this process. I am profoundly appreciative of all they have done and will forever cherish their contributions to this achievement.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work entitled "women empowerment and happiness: evidence from selected Asian countries" is my own effort and composition, the joint contributions of other studies are acknowledged. This work has not been previously presented for other degree.

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I express my deepest gratitude to Allah Almighty, whose boundless blessings have far exceeded my expectations. I also extend my profound thanks to the true teacher and guide, Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W), who emphasized the paramount importance of acquiring knowledge.

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Abstract

The 21st century has presented numerous challenges for women, prompting them to work diligently toward their empowerment. Achieving gender equality has become the 5th goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These efforts have led to significant transformations, particularly in the socio-economic and political spheres, where women's participation has markedly improved over recent decades. The rise in literacy rates and higher educational attainment among women is commendable, and their involvement in research and development across various regions has grown substantially. However, this advancement has paradoxically coincided with a decline in women's happiness. The gains in gender equality and improved rankings on the Gender Development Index (GDI) appear to have adversely affected women's emotional and psychological well-being, with many feeling less happy despite their increased empowerment. This study investigates the negative impact of women's empowerment on their happiness, using the Gender Inequality Index (GII) and the Gender Development Index (GDI) as proxies for empowerment. Data from the World Values Survey (WVS) for 2017-2022 and the World Development Indicators were taken, using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, with robust standard errors applied to address heteroscedasticity. The results indicate a decline in women's happiness as empowerment increases, a trend more pronounced in developed economies. In contrast, in developing economies, happiness initially increases with empowerment but begins to decline once a certain threshold is reached.

Chapter 1

1. Introduction

Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) suggest that even with significant socioeconomic progress in developed countries over a span of thirty-five years, women's subjective well-being has decreased in comparison to men, both in an absolute sense and relatively. This is referred to as the "paradox of declining female happiness." This contradiction inspires the current research, aiming to examine if a comparable pattern is present in Asian nations, where women have also achieved great progress. The empowerment of women involves women gaining independence and authority in their lives, allowing them to make intentional choices. In recent years, there have been notable advancements for women: the gender pay gap has reduced, women's education levels have risen and are now higher than men's, and women have more autonomy in making decisions about their reproductive health. Moreover, advancements in technology for household items have lessened domestic responsibilities, leading to a significant women's freedoms in both family and work settings. Blau's assessment in 1998 of objective indicators of women's well-being from 1970 shows that women have made significant progress. The results in the labor market have gotten better; women's actual pay has gone up for everyone except those with the lowest education levels, and their pay compared to men's has increased among all racial and education categories. Women's involvement in the workforce has reached record highs, both in terms of total numbers and compared to men (Blau and Kahn 2007). These advancements in the job market have probably boosted the bargaining power of women in the home by increasing their options beyond being married. Ironically, even with notable progress in women's objective well-being and empowerment, their levels of happiness have decreased. This research intends to investigate if the

phenomenon of decreasing female happiness, seen in developed countries, is also present in Asian nations. In order to accomplish this, the research makes use of data sources from the World Values Survey (WVS-7) and the World Development Indicators (WDI) dataset. The purpose of this study is to find out the association between women's empowerment and their subjective well-being across various cultural and economic settings through detailed statistical analysis and cross-country comparisons.

1.1 Background of the study

It is generally believed that wealth would, in theory, contribute to social progress and development under ordinary conditions (Blanc, 1998; Fitoussi & Siglitz, 2013). Likewise, many believe that improved circumstances would benefit women's welfare and well-being (Werber, 2017). Nevertheless, in practice, the situation may not turn out that way. According to Stevenson & Wolfers (2009), women in the United States are experiencing a decrease in happiness compared to men. According to Kabeer (2005), studies indicate that supporting social entrepreneurship enhances quality of life, boosts self-esteem, and raises life satisfaction levels. It also provides notable economic advantages that enhance productivity and economic expansion (Duflo, 2012). The area encompasses nations with varying degrees of economic growth, cultural diversity, and gender parity. Countries like Japan and South Korea have experienced economic development and advancements in female education, yet they continue to grapple with gender equality and employment challenges (Lee and Lim, 2016). On the other hand, countries like Bangladesh and India have effectively empowered women through entrepreneurial and technical education, despite facing modest economic growth (Kabeer, 2011). Comprehending the relationship between socioeconomic empowerment and happiness is essential as happiness is a comprehensive indicator of well-being that includes material, psychological, and social aspects (Diener, 2018). Empowered

women are more inclined to experience higher levels of happiness because of heightened agency, better health results, and increased engagement in social and economic endeavors (Sen, 1999). In any circumstance, the extent and type of this connection can vary greatly in diverse socio-cultural settings in Asia. Training is a crucial tool for empowering women by providing them with the updated information to actively participate in economic and social activities. Increased levels of academic success are related to better job opportunities, improved health outcomes, and greater personal autonomy (Malhotra, 2002).

Jha & Kelleher (2006) stated that endeavors to enhance girls' education in India have notably improved literacy levels and academic achievements, leading to the empowerment and well-being of women in society. Regardless, societal barriers and cultural biases continue to hinder achieving equal educational opportunities throughout Asia, thereby impacting the overall potential for empowerment. From the moment we are born, every individual has the capacity to feel and express a variety of emotions. Happiness is among the things that people desire most. It emphasizes long-term physical well-being and inspires individuals to approach each day with positivity. Crowley & Knowles (2014) suggest that the factors influencing the happiness of men are different from those affecting the happiness of women, even though society is categorized into males and females. Unfortunately, throughout history, women's happiness has not been valued as highly as men's in many societies (Glasberg and Deric, 2011). From ancient times, patriarchy has been the prevailing social structure with women being seen as the lesser gender (Zerzan, 2010). Men were often given a feeling of dominance by patriarchy, which meant that women often lacked the autonomy and freedoms to make decisions about their own bodies, marriages, and reproductive choices. Acker (1990) stated that women were viewed as belongings of men and were required to submit to men's commands. Aristotle and Plato, influential figures, asserted that women's primary

role in society was to support men in continuing the human race through reproduction and caring for the household, according to Fishbein (2002). Furthermore, Aristotle (Bar On, 1994) also believed that women are the reason for imperfections in the world. They even included the concept of women's inferiority in many of their pieces. The transfer from one generation to the next .These principles served as a foundation for the patriarchal belief system that was passed down from generation to generation, which in turn allowed patriarchy to continue from generation to generation. (Lerner, 1987).

Although women had limited freedom in earlier times, traces of feminism can be identified as far back as the 15th century. De Beauvoir (1953) stated that in her books, the French author Christine de Pizan from the 15th century had illustrated criticisms of gender bias. Schneir (1994) and Sarasohn (1984) suggested that authors like Agrippa, Cavendish, Woolley, and Bradstreet also promoted gender equality through philosophical writings in the centuries that followed. The initial push for gender equality led to the rise of second-wave feminism. On this occasion, women pushed for various rights such as autonomy in their sexual lives, the ability to make reproductive choices, resistance against male-dominated society, and liberation from being confined to domestic roles (Burkett, 2016). The second wave also addressed minority groups globally, linking their struggles to broader issues of societal structures, cultural differences, and political inequities (Freedman, 2003). Hunt (2014) stated that a survey conducted in 1963 by Betty Friedan revealed that women who could balance work and home life were more satisfied with their lives compared to those limited to homemaking. Friedan's (1963) efforts are recognized for opening up more job options for women and impacting many legal wins, including equal education, banning physical and mental abuse, legalizing abortion (Braunstein, 2004). In an era of masculine supremacy, these accomplishments were considered as major breakthroughs despite the paucity of intellectual

documentation. The 'First-wave feminism' of the late 19th and early 20th centuries represented a major breakthrough in feminism. A fresh conflict began with the rise of first-wave feminism (Rampton, 2015). Furthermore, the degree of socioeconomic empowerment and subsequent pleasure of women is significantly influenced by cultural and societal norms. Women's rights and opportunities are often restricted by patriarchal ideologies and gender stereotypes. The work-life balance and overall well-being of women in countries like South Korea, China, and Japan are influenced by social conventions around their roles in the home and in society (Tsuya, 2015). Advocating for changes to policies, carrying out projects, and Political empowerment requires women to participate in political processes and decision-making at all levels. In addition to increasing women's empowerment, a greater representation of women in politics produces laws that better protect the interests and rights of women. Higher levels of female participation in politics have been observed in nations like Indonesia and the Philippines, which has improved gender equality and societal well-being. Nonetheless, structural obstacles and patriarchal traditions continue to limit women's political empowerment throughout Asia. Health is a critical component of socioeconomic empowerment. Reproductive health rights, general well-being, and access to high-quality healthcare services all have a substantial influence on women's happiness. There have been notable improvements in healthcare outcomes and accessibility in Thailand and Malaysia. However, in countries like Pakistan and Nepal, where access to healthcare is limited and health outcomes are poor, there are significant barriers to women's empowerment and happiness (Baru, 2010). The objective of this study is to perform a thorough investigation on the impact of socioeconomic empowerment on women's happiness in certain Asian countries with differing GDP levels. By examining variables including income, education, health, and employment and evaluating indicators like the gender development and inequality indices, it seeks to illuminate the

complex link between empowerment and well-being. It also addresses the issues that still prevent women from being empowered in these circumstances and offers recommendations for legislative changes that can increase women's empowerment and happiness. Two data sources, the world and WVS-7.

2.1 Research Gap

While the link between women's empowerment and happiness is widely acknowledged, there remains a significant gap in understanding how specific dimensions of socio-economic empowerment influence happiness across varying socio-cultural and economic contexts. Existing research predominantly focuses on developed nations, often neglecting low- and middle-income countries where the interplay between empowerment and happiness may follow distinct trajectories. Furthermore, much of the literature treats socio-economic empowerment as a homogenous construct, failing to disentangle its individual components—such as education, financial independence, and social participation—and their nuanced impacts on happiness. Although studies suggest that factors like health, wealth, education, and marital stability positively correlate with female happiness (Powdthavee, 2010; Isen & Stevenson, 2010), findings are not always consistent. For instance, while gender equality and empowerment generally enhance life satisfaction (Journal of Happiness Studies), they can also introduce increased stress and pressures, as highlighted in *Frontiers in Psychology*. The gender pay gap, though linked to female happiness in some contexts (Baldwin & Johnson, 1992), and the role of cultural and economic variability remain underexplored. Notably, research on women's satisfaction with progress in gender equality and empowerment is scarce. Given these gaps and the often contradictory findings, this study aims to investigate the relationship between women's empowerment and happiness through a

comparative analysis across high-, middle-, and low-income countries, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of the socio-economic and cultural factors at play.

1.3 Objective

This study's primary goal is to determine how empowerment affects women's happiness in different nations. The study examines the validity of the following paradox on female happiness in the chosen nations.

The specific objective is

To investigate how women's empowerment affects women's happiness in the selected nations.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to establish the hypothesis of the empirical investigation, the research question is set as:

Q. What is the relationship between Female Empowerment and Happiness?

1.5 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study are as follows:

H_0 : Women Empowerment does not impact Female Happiness

H_1 : Women Empowerment impacts Female Happiness.

1.6 Significance of Study

Women's socioeconomic empowerment is crucial for promoting sustainable development and achieving gender equality. Global Economic Forum. (2020) highlights the importance of gender equality by stating that nations with greater gender equality are more inclined to have political stability and peace. The research highlights the significance of gender equality in reaching sustainable development objectives (SDGs). This involves ensuring that women have equal participation in and access to fair employment, social security, market opportunities, and control over their economic resources, by emphasizing the link between empowerment and well-being, it strengthens the importance of inclusive policies that tackle gender inequalities in socio-economic prospects. The study advocates for gender equality as a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for a just society. United Nations Organization for Education, Science, and Culture. (2020). According to the Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and Education, educating females raises literacy rates, reduces the number of child marriages, and improves societal well-being. Demonstrating the benefits of socio-economic empowerment strengthens the argument for continued work to break down gender-based obstacles. Previous research predominantly focused on industrialized nations, and the policy recommendations from these studies may not be relevant to developing countries, particularly in Asia, due to the significant differences in culture and social norms compared to developed, particularly Western, nations. Examining data from countries at different income levels, the research provides a comparative view that aids in grasping the contextual disparities and similarities in how socio-economic empowerment affects happiness. This comparison enhances the theoretical frameworks concerning socio-economic development and subjective well-being. With a significant percentage of the workforce being made up of women, research (Oswald, 2015) indicates that increased happiness can enhance performance in

the workplace, suggesting that higher levels of happiness among women can result in improved work performance and productivity. Therefore, the results of this research aids in expanding the scope of gender studies and addressing gender inequality in low and middle income nations. This study provides insight to government, development ministries, policymakers, and employers on the factors contributing to women's happiness. Hence, developing appropriate and more efficient strategies for a nation with contented women.

Chapter 2

2 Literature Review

The aim of this chapter is to provide all the empirical studies on women empowerment and happiness. This chapter covers various domains of women empowerment by providing empirical evidences, showing the significant impacts of women socio-economic empowerment on the subjective wellbeing. Firstly, the general empirical literature is quoted. Secondly, the empirical evidences of women empowerment and happiness for developing nations are underscored. At last, the empirical findings of developed economies are discussed to draw a comparison between developed and developing economies and their relative women empowerment.

2.1 Women Empowerment and Happiness

Happiness and the empowerment of women are closely related. Ahmed et al. (2001) examine the self-reported emotional well-being of Bangladeshi women who are not involved in BRAC's micro-credit program vs those who are those who are part of the organization's micro-credit program. The authors discover that, *ceteris paribus*, a woman is more likely to express emotional stress if she believes she makes a larger contribution to the household income, based on a survey that includes 198 BRAC and 1,169 non-BRAC homes (Ahmed et al. 2001). It appears that early empowerment has a negative impact on SWB and has also resulted in behavioral attitudes that are contrary to the empowerment's ethos. In comparison to non-members, regardless of wealth, BRAC members "were more likely to adopt a fatalistic or resigned attitude" when asked how they handled emotional stress.

Kabeer (2012) reports that despite women's silence on wages and claims—which suggests a stronger safety net in the event of market fluctuations—they nevertheless felt valued, cherished, and respected. Encouraging gender equality is a prerequisite for accelerating economic development. Household poverty can be greatly decreased by providing women with career and educational possibilities. In order for women to contribute to economic progress, they must have access to financial resources. Gender inequities persist as seen by women's poor labor force participation, which is often limited to gender-segregated job markets. This gap is caused by a number of factors, including difficult-to-access educational possibilities, inadequate training, and loan options; it is also exacerbated by issues like property ownership uncertainty, time-consuming business registration procedures, and exclusion from business networks (Kabeer, 2012). Women's health can be improved, including access to fertility information, early marriage can be discouraged, education can be made easier for women, and poverty reduction strategies can be put into action to increase women's economic empowerment (Aid, 2010).

2.2 Marriage and women happiness

Diener (2009) highlights that cultural context plays a critical role in the relationship between marriage and happiness. In some cultures, marriage is a significant determinant of social status and economic security, which can enhance happiness. Conversely, in cultures where marriage roles are rigidly defined and less egalitarian, women may experience less happiness in marriage. The German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) provides longitudinal data indicating that while marriage initially boosts happiness for both men and women, the effect tends to diminish over time. However, individuals who remain in long-term, stable marriages often maintain higher levels of happiness compared to those who divorce or remain single. Research by Amato and Hohmann-Marriott (2007) emphasizes that the quality of the marriage is crucial. Women in high-quality

marriages report significantly higher happiness levels than those in low-quality marriages. Poor marital quality can negate the positive effects of marriage on happiness and even contribute to decreased well-being. Research by Amato and Hohmann-Marriott (2007) emphasizes that the quality of the marriage is crucial. Women in high-quality marriages report significantly higher happiness levels than those in low-quality marriages. Poor marital quality can negate the positive effects of marriage on happiness and even contribute to decreased well-being. A study by Simon and Barrett (2010) found that married women often report lower levels of happiness and higher levels of psychological distress compared to married men. This discrepancy is partially explained by the unequal division of domestic duties and the strain of juggling job and family obligations. It follows that marriage has a detrimental effect on women's happiness.

2.3 Education and Women's Happiness

Study by Kruss, McGrath, Petersen, and Gastrow (2015) revealed a relationship between female happiness and education level, indicating that education has been increasing over time and that happiness is positively correlated with education level. The human capital point of view makes extensive use of this one, which states that a college degree improves one's ability and knowledge, increasing one's chances of being employed and earning more money. As to the findings of Cheung & Chan (2011), Lyubomirsky, King & Diener (2005), and Frey & Stutzer (2002), there is an overall positive correlation between happiness and education. Director of the Higher Education Policy Institute Nick Hillman concurs with this assertion (Bothwell, 2017). Higher educational attainment is another key factor in the socio-economic empowerment of women, which substantially enhances their happiness and life satisfaction. Michalos (2008) demonstrated a positive correlation between education and happiness, suggesting that higher education leads to greater life satisfaction. Powdthavee (2010) also explored the impact of education on happiness,

showing that educational achievements lead to better job opportunities and higher social status, thereby boosting well-being. So, it can be said that education is positively correlated with women happiness.

2.4 Employment and Women's Happiness

Employment is a crucial aspect of women's empowerment and is strongly linked to their happiness. Research indicates that employed women generally report higher life satisfaction compared to those who are unemployed. Clark and Oswald (1994) found that unemployment significantly decreases happiness. Similarly, Dolan, Peasgood, and White (2008) emphasized that employment improves subjective well-being by providing financial stability and social networks. Thus, it can be said unequivocally that employment may empower women in many aspects of life. Therefore, women happiness and employment are interlinked each positively

2.5 Financial Independence and Women's Happiness

Financial independence and higher income levels are essential components of socio-economic empowerment and are positively associated with happiness among women. Alesina, Di Tella (2004), and MacCulloch (2004) highlighted that higher income and financial security have a positive effect on happiness in developed countries. Stevenson and Wolfers (2008) reaffirmed the strong link between economic growth, income, and subjective well-being, indicating that higher income contributes significantly to happiness. Thus, financial stability brings happiness to women lives.

2.6 Gender Equality and Women's Happiness

Gender equality in both the workplace and society plays a crucial role in women's socio-economic empowerment and their happiness. Stutzer and Frey (2006) discussed how social inclusion and gender equality positively influence happiness, noting that equitable social conditions lead to higher life satisfaction. Ferrant, Pesando, and Nowacka (2014) stressed the importance of gender equality and social inclusion in socio-economic empowerment, particularly highlighting the impact of unpaid care work on gender disparities in labor outcomes. It concludes that gender equality promote women happiness and subjective well-being.

2.7 Correlation between Women Health and Happiness

Good health is a vital aspect of socio-economic empowerment and a major determinant of happiness. Access to healthcare and healthy living conditions significantly improve women's well-being. Diener and Chan (2011) illustrated the strong connection between health and happiness, showing that healthier individuals tend to be happier and live longer. Graham and Chattopadhyay (2013) explored the relationship between gender, health, and wellbeing on a global scale, underscoring the importance of health in achieving overall happiness. Dandona (2015) posits that women's personalities should possess traits such as self-efficacy, self-confidence, self-motivation, trustworthiness, and competence in order to empower them. According to Dodd's (2012) research, women's personalities may be impeded from achieving empowerment by a lack of drive, confidence, and socialization. Awan (2016) further suggested in her research that good education is the key to changing society's mindset in order to empower women. It is beyond any debate that women health is dependent upon good health.

2.7.1 Empirical Evidence from Selected Asian Countries

Due to their inability to freely make decisions regarding their lives, including marriage, divorce, childbirth, health, mobility, inheritance, education, and employment, Asian women are trapped in a vicious circle of old patriarchal standards (Awan, 2016). Sarfraz, Tariq, Hamid, and Iqbal (2015); Ye and Zhang, 2017; subordinate status (Awan, 2016). According to Kiraj and Kobia (2012), it is challenging to overcome these socio-cultural hurdles. In addition to restricting women as possible obstacles to their own empowerment, these sociocultural elements also perpetuate their status as marginalized and discriminated against groups (Rafai, Habib, Tariq, and Asghar Ali, 2016). In Pakistani society, it is typical for women to view themselves as weak because of societal discrimination and cultural standards against them. The fear of violence or acts of violence itself undermines women's self-worth (Baehr & Amy, 2013). The institution of marriage and dowry-related traditions in South Asia demolish women's potential and weaken their psychological makeup (Begum, 2016). The attitudes of women are shaped by society to be subservient and obedient. Social conventions that were patriarchal demanded that parents provide their daughters with obedient care. According to Rafael (2016), social factors also contribute to early inadequate socialization inside the family. Women's empowerment is also seriously hampered by this inadequate socialization (Kiraj and Kobia, 2012). Bangladesh has achieved notable strides in enhancing the health of women, mostly as a result of its microfinance and women's education initiatives. According to Kabeer (2001), Bangladeshi women who have access to microcredit are more economically and socially empowered, which improves their health and self-esteem. Furthermore, Asadullah and Wahaj (2012) discovered a link between women's health and education levels since educated women tend to be healthier, engage in family decision-making, and enjoy better relationships. The goals of Indonesia's women's

empowerment initiatives are to increase political representation and economic engagement. According to Cameron (2015), women who run their own enterprises and are active members of their communities tend to be healthier. Furthermore, the Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS) demonstrates that women's life satisfaction and mental health are higher when they have financial assistance and decision-making authority within the family (Strauss 2004).

The Philippines has made significant progress on gender equality with the participation of women in business and politics. A study by Datu and King (2018) found that Filipino women who received financial support and participated in community activities reported higher happiness. Additionally, women's access to education and healthcare has been shown to improve their overall health (Lasco, 2017). Jampaklay (2017) showed that Thai women who are employed and highly educated have higher life satisfaction. Additionally, women's participation in local government and decision-making processes is associated with increased health as it allows them to influence the development of society (Pongquan and de Guzman, 2006).

Malaysia's efforts to empower women's socio-economic empowerment have yielded positive results in terms of women's well-being. A study by Abdullah et al. (2018) found that women who are employed and financially independent experience higher levels of life satisfaction. Additionally, women's participation in education and job training programs has been shown to improve economic opportunities and overall well-being (Ng & Tey, 2014). Women's health has seen substantial changes as a result of China's development. According to Zhang and Posso's (2017) research, women who are involved in business have happier lives overall, particularly in metropolitan regions where income confers advantages. Furthermore, statistics from the China General Social Survey (CGSS) demonstrate the significant influence of higher income and financial independence on women's health (Liu et al., 2012). The outcomes of this effort have been

amazing. Women with jobs and education have higher life satisfaction, according to the Vietnam Household Survey (VHLSS) (Nguyen, 2016). Phan (2016) also mentioned that women's abilities and general well-being can be enhanced by their involvement in society and politics.

The link between women's well-being and socioeconomic empowerment varies among Asian nations. The empowerment and well-being of women are greatly impacted by cultural norms and traditional gender roles. Patriarchal norms restrict women's access to work, education, and decision-making chances in many Asian nations. Nevertheless, women experience more empowerment and happiness when gender roles become more fluid and cultural norms evolve (Nussbaum, 2000). The advancement of the economy and the accessibility of job possibilities are crucial for the empowerment and well-being of women. Higher economic growth tends to give women greater opportunity to enter the workforce and become financially independent, which raises their quality of life (World Bank, 2012). Women's empowerment and well-being are significantly impacted by economic development and the availability of employment possibilities. Greater economic development is typically associated with increased chances for women to enter the workforce and attain financial independence, both of which boost life happiness (World Bank, 2012). Women's socioeconomic empowerment and well-being depend on a legislative and policy environment that upholds women's rights and advances gender equality. According to UN Women (2018), policies that promote equitable access to health care, work opportunities, and education also benefit women.

For women's empowerment and wellbeing, social support networks such as those within the family, community, and peer group are crucial. According to Diener and Seligman (2002), women who possess a robust social support system are prone to experiencing a sense of empowerment and elevated personal happiness. Happiness in Nepal is positively correlated with women's

socioeconomic empowerment, especially when it comes to obtaining an education and engaging in the economy. In 1983, Acharya and Bennett conducted a study which revealed that women's life satisfaction and self-esteem were much enhanced when they had access to education and engaged in income-generating activities. According to a recent study by Kafle (2019), women's involvement in microfinance programs increases their level of financial independence and general well-being. Through numerous empowerment efforts, women's socioeconomic empowerment in Cambodia is associated with enhanced well-being and happiness. Women's engagement in microfinance programs greatly enhanced their economic and social standing, which in turn increased their level of life satisfaction, according to a study by Malhotra et al. (2002). According to Brickell (2014), women's empowerment and well-being are also linked to their involvement in community organizations.

The shift of Myanmar's economy towards more openness has created new avenues for the social and economic empowerment of women. According to a 2017 study by Lall et al., women's well-being is positively impacted by their employment and educational options. Women's sense of empowerment and life happiness have also been demonstrated to rise when they participate in local governance and decision-making processes (Oxfam, 2016). In Kazakhstan, women's financial empowerment—particularly via work and education—is linked to happier lives. According to a 2010 study by Aidis and Krupik, women with more life satisfaction were also more educated and experienced in the workforce. Enhancing women's well-being has been made possible in large part by government initiatives that support gender equality and women's economic engagement (UNDP, 2016).

Increased happiness is linked to women's socioeconomic empowerment in the Maldives, particularly when it comes to work and education. Shahid and Hafeez's (2019) study discovered that Maldivian women who had access to professional careers and higher education also reported higher levels of life happiness. The general well-being of women has been positively impacted by government initiatives supporting gender equality and women's employment. According to Kabir (1999), women who achieve economic independence through job and income creation are better able to make autonomous decisions, have more negotiating power at home, and have a higher standard of living, all of which contribute to their happiness. Women who have access to school gain information and skills that enable them to take advantage of better employment prospects with greater pay.

Additionally, educated women are more likely to make knowledgeable decisions regarding their families' health, which promotes greater pleasure and well-being (Nussbaum, 2000). Women's well-being is directly impacted by improvements in health outcomes, as indicated by life expectancy and access to healthcare. The ability of healthy women to engage more completely in familial, social, and economic life raises their level of happiness overall (WHO, 2019). Women are more represented and have more influence in decision-making processes as a result of their involvement in social and political arenas. Their well-being is positively impacted by this empowerment since it fosters the growth of agency and self-esteem (Sen, 2000).

In Asian nations, cultural conventions and conventional gender roles frequently impact the extent of women's empowerment. The effective empowerment and well-being of women require socioeconomic policies and programs that are adapted to this cultural context (Hofstede, 1980). Women's empowerment is either aided or hindered by the degree of economic growth and

infrastructure available in Asian nations. Nations with robust economic frameworks and auxiliary infrastructure are in a better position to advance gender parity and enhance women's welfare (World Bank, 2020).

2.8 Women's Socio-economic Empowerment and happiness in developed countries.

Numerous studies on women's empowerment and happiness in industrialized countries have revealed strong links between better levels of well-being among women and enhanced empowerment. These are some important conclusions.

2.8.1 Economic Empowerment and Happiness

The attainment of economic empowerment, encompassing education, work, and financial independence, significantly influences the well-being of women. Report by the OECD (2013): This study emphasizes that women in industrialized nations that have higher employment rates and higher-quality jobs have higher levels of life satisfaction. Happiness levels are often greater while anxiety and depression are generally lower among women who are financially independent and actively employed. 2020 UN Women: Economic empowerment, according to the UN Women report, enhances women's psychological health and gives them the ability to make wise decisions in life. According to the report, women who have authority over their income and possessions report feeling more satisfied with their lives overall and with their self-worth.

2.8.2 Educational Attainment and Women Happiness

For women to feel more empowered and happy, education is essential. World Bank Research, 2018: According to this study, women who obtain greater levels of education also tend to be happier and have more life satisfaction. Women who have more education are better able to engage in social and political activities, make educated health decisions, and participate in the labor

market, all of which are beneficial to their general well-being. In the 2016 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report: According to the survey, women who possess higher levels of education not only have a tendency to be happier, but they also make a greater contribution to the happiness of their families and communities. Education promotes self-efficacy and critical thinking, which improves both individual and societal well-being.

2.8.3 Political Empowerment and Social Participation leading to women Happiness

In addition to being politically empowered, women who actively participate in social and civic life are also much happier. The 2021 World Happiness Report claims that women tend to be happier in nations with higher levels of gender equality in political representation. Women who are politically empowered can influence the policies that impact their lives, which improves social services and raises standard of living. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), women who participate actively in social and communal activities report happier lives. Engaging in social activities gives one a feeling of support, purpose, and belonging all of which are critical elements of wellbeing.

2.8.4 Health and Well-being

Access to quality healthcare and reproductive rights significantly impacts women's happiness. Lancet Global Health (2019): This study found that women's health outcomes, particularly maternal health and access to reproductive services, are closely linked to their overall happiness. Women in developed nations with better healthcare systems report higher life satisfaction and lower stress levels .WHO Report (2018): The World Health Organization emphasizes that mental health is a critical component of women's well-being. Policies that promote mental health awareness and provide support services contribute to higher happiness levels among women.

Japan is a unique case where gender inequality in socioeconomic empowerment still persists despite high levels of economic development. A study by Nemoto (2016) found that Japanese women who completed higher education and professional occupations had higher life satisfaction. However, social expectations and workplace norms often limit women's full participation, affecting their overall well-being. Efforts to balance work and family life through measures such as parental leave and flexible work arrangements have been shown to have a positive impact on women's well-being (Ochiai, 2013). Korea has made significant progress in strengthening the socioeconomic empowerment of women, especially through education and employment. A study by Kim and Kim (2012) found that higher education and professional employment significantly contributed to women's happiness. Nonetheless, women's wellbeing is still in danger due to prevailing gender norms and the necessity to juggle work and family obligations. Women's life happiness has increased significantly as a result of workplace policies that support gender equality and work-life balance (Sung, 2003). Singapore's enlightened gender policy and swift socioeconomic development are well-known. Women's satisfaction was shown to be greatly boosted by their access to higher education and engagement in the labor market, according to a 2010 study by Lim and Sun. Furthermore, programs like maternity leave and childcare subsidies that support working moms and advance gender equality have a favorable effect on women's general well-being (Teo, 2013).

Turkey offers insight into the effects of socioeconomic empowerment on women's well-being in contexts of transition because it is both positioned in Europe and Asia. According to a 2008 study by Dincer and Gunduz-Khosgaard, women's engagement in the labor force and level of education were significant predictors of life satisfaction. Regional variations and conventional gender norms, however, continue to present significant obstacles. Women's chances and well-being have

increased as a result of initiatives to support their political and entrepreneurial endeavors (Kandiyoti, 1988). In the United States, a number of factors can affect the happiness of women, such as the state of the economy, social status, career prospects, work-life balance, and accessibility to healthcare and education. According to research, women's life satisfaction and general happiness can be greatly impacted by gender equality in several areas.

Despite advancements in objective measurements of gender equality, women's subjective well-being has decreased in comparison to men's, according to Stevenson and Wolfers' 2009 research, "The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness." Their theory is that the abundance of options and chances may have raised stress levels and expectations, which would have a detrimental effect on total pleasure. Studying the relationship between wealth and happiness, Blanchflower and Oswald (2004) discovered that although there is a general correlation between income and happiness, it is less strong for women than for males. According to this, women's happiness is not just determined by economic equality, even though it is still important.

Women who possess greater information are better able to make decisions, improve their socioeconomic status, and achieve better health outcomes. Within the American Psychological Association (APA), women are underrepresented. The advancement and well-being of women in terms of socioeconomic status depend on a legislative and policy environment that upholds women's rights and encourages gender equality. Women benefit from policies that promote equitable access to health care, work opportunities, and education (UN Women, 2018). Peer, community, and family support are examples of social support networks that are crucial for women's empowerment and overall wellbeing. According to Diener and Seligman (2002), women who have a strong social support system are more likely to feel powerful and have better levels of

life satisfaction. Women's socioeconomic empowerment in Nepal is linked to higher levels of happiness, especially when it comes to economic engagement and educational attainment.

2.9 Measures of Empowerment

This section discusses the two main indices of women's empowerment: the Gender Inequality Index (GII) and the Gender Development Index (GDI). The UNDP report (2022) contains these two indices of women's empowerment.

2.9.1 The Gender development index (GDI)

Three important facets of human development are measured here: ownership of economic resources (GNI per capita), life expectancy (life expectancy), and education (average number of years of schooling)—all of which differ significantly between men and women. Women have more socioeconomic prospects when there is greater gender equality and reduced inequality, as indicated by higher GDI values (UNDP, 2020). Men's and women's achievement gaps are evaluated by the GDI in order to determine gender developmental differences. In general, women's happiness and well-being are enhanced by lower GDI values since they promote gender equality and socioeconomic empowerment for women (UNDP, 2020).

2.9.2 Gender Inequality Index (GII)

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) created this index, known as the GII, which assesses gender-based differences in three important areas: involvement in the labor market, empowerment, and reproductive health. Lower values of the index indicate less inequality. The index runs from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (highest inequality). This indicator analyzes advancement over time and assists in identifying crucial areas where gender inequities continue (UNDP Human

Dev Reports). Global Women's Gap Study: This yearly study from the World Economic Forum assesses gender disparities in four important areas: political empowerment, health and survival, educational attainment, and economic participation and opportunity. The report for 2023 emphasizes that the wage gap for comparable labor has only been narrowed in a small number of countries—more than 80%. It also highlights notable variations in how women are portrayed in various socio-economic and political domains.

Conclusion

Women's empowerment is a complex, multifaceted process that significantly impacts their happiness and well-being. Various studies conducted in this regard show that the efforts for women empowerment and emancipation have positive impacts on the level of happiness. For instance, the economic participation, education, and financial independence are crucial, the quality of marital relationships, health, and social inclusion also play vital roles. There are some contradictory evidences as well that show that in developed states the higher level of empowerment is leading to decline in women happiness, but the developing states are showing quite different results as there are still a lot of work to be done in this regard. Policies and programs aimed at reducing gender disparities and promoting women's socio-economic empowerment can enhance their life satisfaction and overall happiness. But cultural expectations and conventional gender roles continue to be major obstacles, particularly in many Asian nations, therefore specific strategies are needed to achieve real gender equality and women's empowerment.

Chapter 3

3. Theoretical Framework and Empirical Model

This chapter's primary goal is to align the fundamental ideas of happiness with women's empowerment. Furthermore, this chapter throws light on the gender development approaches and their impacts on women subjective wellbeing, thereby describing that how women empowerment affects the level of women happiness

3.1 Theories of Happiness

Hedonism and life satisfaction are the two categories of happiness that most scientists distinguish between. According to hedonism theory, happiness is essentially about avoiding suffering and pursuing pleasure. Ancient Greek philosophers like Epicurus are credited with developing the notion that hedonic well-being is centered on pursuing pleasure and avoiding suffering; nevertheless, in contemporary psychology, this theory is frequently linked to positive psychology scholars like Ed Diener and Daniel Kahneman (2010). He advises individuals to reduce suffering and pursue joy in life. It can be faulted, nonetheless, for being overly straightforward and neglecting long-term considerations. Happiness is said to follow from good behavior throughout one's life via life satisfaction.

What is commonly referred to as "healthy thinking" is the fulfillment of happiness, which assigns enjoyment to the representation of the entire mind. A person's heart contains happiness. People's propensity to maintain numerous views, which might alter over time, may potentially have a role, however other writers disagree (Hill 2007, Klausen 2015, and Rossi 2018). Hedonic bliss is the antithesis of unhappiness, and melancholy or worry are the opposites of happy from this

standpoint. Perhaps this qualifies as the bliss of hedonism rather than thinking since, for instance, someone in excruciating agony might be preoccupied with trying to live the happiest life possible, one that is only interrupted by tears in private times. Emotionally speaking, there are several facets of happiness. Paul Dolan defined three broad kinds of affective experiences—endorsement states, engagement states, and attunement states—and discussed them in his book "Happiness by Design: Finding Pleasure and Purpose in Everyday Life" (2014). These constitute the notion of happiness. Dolan goes into further detail in this book on how these many aspects of affective experiences might be used to understand happiness. According to Paul Dolan, happiness encompasses three main types of affective states: "engagement" states, such as flow or a sense of vitality, "endorsement" states, such as joy versus sadness, and "attunement" states, such as tranquility, emotional expansiveness versus compression, and confidence. In light of these deviations from conventional definitions of what constitutes a "good mood," this proposal defines happiness as "psychic affirmation" or "psychic flourishing".

Furthermore, a number of philosophical and psychological works address the idea of hybrid theories of happiness, which integrate several dimensions of happiness such as enjoyment, life satisfaction, and emotional states. Philosopher Dan Haybron (2008) is a prominent advocate of this viewpoint. In his book "The Pursuit of Unhappiness: The Elusive Psychology of Well-Being," Haybron makes the argument that happiness should be viewed as a multifaceted state that involves a variety of elements, such as emotional states and life satisfaction. Although the precise remark you gave might not be explicitly ascribed to one person, it captures concepts that are frequently discussed in relation to hybrid theories of pleasure.

Hybrid theories look for common answers to our many conceptions of happiness. In other words, it associates happiness with emotional states, life satisfaction and enjoyment, and maybe even

other emotions like contentment with one's line of work. Subjective well-being stands out as the most likely contender in this case. It is commonly characterized by life satisfaction, work contentment, and a combination of good and negative emotions. (Students frequently confuse happiness with subjective well-being, life satisfaction, and most frequently, emotional or hedonistic emotions.) Hybrid theory's key selling point is how comprehensive it is.

Even if some aspects of subjective well-being are occasionally excluded from the commonly used definition of "happiness," all aspects of subjective well-being seem to be significant. Hybrid theories, like subjective well-being, may appear like an appealing alternative to more limited theories of happiness given its drawbacks. Though Sumner's theory of life satisfaction is best categorized as hybrid, the philosophical literature has not extensively examined this tactic (Martin 2012). Besides, the hybrid technique has its own set of drawbacks. This approach to developing a hybrid theory might be interpreted as combining two promising iterations, or a promising theory with another promising theory.

Advocates of life happiness see two primary benefits from their strategy. First of all, a person's whole life, or their complete existence over a period of time, is included in the holistic concept of life satisfaction. It captures both the entirety of a person's life events as well as the general caliber of that person's existence (Raibley 2010). And we tend to care about the distribution of kindness in our lives as much as the total amount of it. For instance, according to Slote (1982, Velleman 1991), a happy conclusion is more significant than a pleasant middle. Second, the example of the suffering artist suggests that life pleasure is more directly linked to our priorities than emotions. It makes sense to concentrate on emotions since we are concerned with such concerns; but, most individuals are also concerned with other matters, and their emotional states may not completely represent how their lives are developing in regard to their priorities.

3.1.1. Hedonism versus Emotional State

Hedonism and emotionality are the foundations upon which the two systems diverge. Hedonism has a clear attraction since, as many argue, the pleasure we derive from it is the core of truth. Conversely, what is the basis for an explanation of value states that resembles hedonism but leaves out a significant portion of happiness? It seems that motivational problems are a significant concern for emotional science: What does one gain by dwelling on unpleasant feelings? The effect and the emphasis are distinct. The philosophy of hedonism holds that the greatest good and source of motivation in human life is pleasure or enjoyment. He stated that if a deed makes someone happy, it is good; if it makes someone unhappy, it is wrong.

Hedonism is classified into many categories: According to this notion, humans usually want to avoid suffering and seek out pleasure. The quest of happiness, according to him, is a vital aspect of the human condition. According to ethical hedonists, a deed is right when it results in total happiness or bliss. A person's present emotional or mental condition is referred to as their state. Emotions are multifaceted and encompass a wide range of feelings, including fear, love, rage, grief, and happiness. Several things impact emotional states, such as: Hormones and neurotransmitters have an impact on the mind and spirit. For instance, sentiments of happiness and well-being are correlated with serotonin and dopamine levels.

For instance, one's emotional state might be influenced by how they understand things. Positive social ties may lift one's spirits, yet bad ones might bring on despair. The term "state of mind" refers to a broad category of human cognition. These are the points where they overlap and diverge. The pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of suffering are emphasized by hedonism as the keys to living a happy life. On the other hand, the study of emotional states acknowledges many hypotheses and seeks to comprehend the ways in which different elements impact these moods.

Hedonism is a philosophical perspective on what, in general, makes life attractive. Examining how emotions develop and impact behavior and health, the study of emotional states is mostly psychological in nature. Though it is not a sign of ethics, understanding the emotions of the mind is crucial for creating treatment plans and enhancing mental health. Between pleasure and suffering, hedonism calculates happiness. Emotional state assessment, which considers a range of emotions, discovered that rather than focusing on happiness, health entails reducing bad behavior and enhancing wellbeing.

In summary, philosophy of mind offers a more thorough knowledge of human emotions, encompassing all cognitive processes and their influence on happiness, whereas hedonism emphasizes happiness as the ultimate objective. Though they approach understanding human drive and happiness from different angles, both viewpoints are valuable. Although they come from different places, both viewpoints are helpful in understanding human drive and happiness. Rich nations are not any happier than poor countries, notwithstanding their tendency toward happiness, and—most strikingly—economic progress is essentially useless (Easterlin, 1974). For instance, since 1947, happiness measures have not grown even if money and income are abundant in the United States. In other words, when they get out of poverty, total wealth and income levels don't really affect how happy individuals are. As an illustration. 2008 saw Stevenson and Wolfers). The topic is still debatable, however two sizable studies from 2010 that made use of the Gallup data set and developed impact and life satisfaction metrics imply that both sides could be somewhat correct (Kahneman and Deaton 2010; Diener, 2010).

To put it briefly, the correlation between money and happiness is contingent upon the definition of happiness that each of us adheres to. Regarding life satisfaction, the relationship can be both challenging and robust, while contemplative thought can occasionally result in weaker bonds.

Understanding actual findings and their ramifications can be greatly aided by adopting a philosophical viewpoint on the nature and significance of happiness. Governments have traditionally prioritized economic expansion, for instance, and research on the effects of this growth on human health may have significant policy ramifications.

3.1.3 The Savanna Theory of Happiness

The Savannah Theory of Happiness, also known as the Savanna Principle, is an idea rooted in evolutionary psychology. It suggests that human preferences and behaviors, including those related to happiness, are influenced by the environment in which our ancestors evolved. This theory posits that because modern humans are not significantly different from their hunter-gatherer ancestors on a genetic level, the conditions that made our ancestors happy and fulfilled are likely to be the same conditions that contribute to our happiness today. According to the Law of Savanna, commonly known as the Savanna Theory of Happiness, human actions, thoughts, and behaviors are instinctively and subconsciously guided by evolutionary adaptations (Kanazawa and Li, 2016). In other words, our brains are programmed to adapt to the places, situations, and conditions in our ancestral environment. As a result, we forget to follow our ancestral instincts every day of our lives (Tooby, Cosmides, & Barkow, 1992). It can also indicate that the human brain has difficulty understanding, assimilating and processing the environment, events and experiences.

3.1.4 Doubts about the Value of Happiness

Philosophers across the ages have consistently held this opinion, frequently interpreting happiness in terms of hedonism. Almeder (2000) says that contentment with life is the same as happiness. The notion that happiness alone is adequate for a decent existence, however, is rejected by the majority of philosophers, along with hedonistic and other psychological state explanations of

happiness. First, the bad things in our life are thought to be significant for our level of happiness: whether or not our loved ones genuinely care about us, whether or not our requests are granted, and whether or not the things we care about are getting done. The most contentious work of this kind is Robert Nozick's *The Case of the Experience Machine*, in which the reader is invited to picture a virtual machine that is capable of flawlessly simulating reality and allowing the user to perceive that he is truly experiencing it (Nozick 1974). Will you spend the remainder of your life using this kind of machine? This is typically regarded as a rejection of the happiness hypothesis because the majority of people won't do it. It would appear that having a positive attitude is not as crucial as making sure that things are going well in our life and that our emotions are in line with what is happening. These feelings don't seem to have much of an impact on happiness in terms of moral judgment.

Happiness, however, continues to be regarded as a central idea in moral philosophy and is one of the most crucial, if not the most crucial, components of a decent existence. There are theoretical and practical justifications for the importance of happiness in spite of these reservations.

3.1.5 Diverse explanations of Happiness

Hybrid theories, like happiness theory, look like an appealing answer given the drawbacks of a limited theory of happiness. Philosophical literature has not adequately addressed Sumner's idea of "life satisfaction," despite the fact that it is best understood as a synthesis (Martin 2012). Besides, the hybrid method itself is a recipe for opposition. This approach would lead to a hybrid theory that resembles a mixture of two non-profit accounts or a non-profit account with a contract number. This combo won't work well. Second, no single definition of happiness can satisfy everyone as different individuals have varied definitions of what happiness is. Nobody will be

satisfied with any theory that attempts to achieve this. Thirdly, happiness could not seem to respond to a particular issue since distinct components might be significant for completely different reasons. An excessive casting of nets might prevent the knowledge of bliss.

3.1.6 Measurement of Happiness

One key question that emerges from empirical study on the happiness boom is if and how happiness can be quantified. Scholars might not recognize the validity of Edgeworth's original "measure of happiness," which he developed to quantify happiness (Edgeworth 1881). Actually, the existence of so many factors that are connected to pleasure that are impossible to precisely measure or integrate makes the creation of such a tool impractical in theory. If so, it might be feasible to enhance the many dimensions of happiness, or at least the approximative measurement of it. Similar to this, depression may not have a single, accurate number, but in the event that a number exists, it is certainly helpful. It is significant to emphasize that assessments of happiness are still dependent on people's levels of stress, pleasure, happiness, etc. It makes sense that it may provide details about their degree of happiness and hence give us with some insight into it. It has been demonstrated that numerous beneficial outcomes, including smiling, peer pressure, body proportions and cleanliness, lifespan, and more, are favorably correlated with even the most basic personal measures utilized in the literature (Pavot 2008).

Because it leaves people to define happiness for themselves, the method of assessing happiness that involves asking people to express clearly that they are "happy" can occasionally be unhelpful. This idea maintains that happiness is independent of what you enjoy or if you are content ("happy"), as opposed to contending that the declaration of happiness is about individual preferences in life. Furthermore, the study would depend on giving participants the freedom to

select whether they define "happiness" as life satisfaction, a hedonic state, an emotional state, or something else entirely.

Therefore, a statement such as "I'm happy" might refer to something different from "My experiences are excellent," such as "I'm happy with my entire life," according to one speaker. Given that many respondents would reply to the questions in different ways, it is unclear if it is necessary to pose ambiguous ones. Nothing of substance (whose definition is established and well-known). To put it another way, researchers must first choose what they wish to measure—life happiness, hedonic state, mood, or something else entirely—and then specifically inquire about it in the instances. Given the challenges of defining "happiness," particularly in cases where the English definition of the term is contested, this idea could be more applicable in cross-cultural research (Wierzbicka, 2004). Hedonic adaptation is an event or mechanism that reduces the affective impact of substantial emotional events. Generally, hedonic adaptation involves a happiness "set point", whereby humans generally maintain a constant level of happiness throughout their lives, despite events that occur in their environment. The process of hedonic adaptation is often conceptualized as a treadmill, since no matter how hard one tries to gain an increase in happiness, one will remain in the same place. Since happiness is stable over time it can be taken at a single point of time.

3.1.7 Various Schools of Thought on the Concept of Happiness and Empowerment

An actor who has experienced trauma may be less sensitive to emotional issues and more accepting of life's challenges throughout their life. Hedonistic intuitions suggest that psychological perspectives view life satisfaction as compatible with negative emotions like depression (Carson 1981, Davis 1981b, Haybron 2005, Feldman 2010). To assume that such a person is happy, though,

is ridiculous. The term "happiness" is also occasionally used to describe a feeling of contentment with life; this usage of the term appears to be consistent with life theory. Ned Block (1995) refers to the idea of consciousness as a "hybrid concept," and here is where the trouble lies. Normal ideas are disorganized.

The capacity approach developed by Amartya Sen offers a conceptual foundation for comprehending empowerment. It demonstrates that increasing one's capacity to lead a life they love is what empowerment is all about. This entails expanding women's access to political, economic, healthcare, and educational possibilities. Gender inequalities in human development are measured by the GDI, which takes these aspects into account (Sen, 1999).

According to Maslow's theory, needs—both bodily and psychological—are what drive humans. The spread of socioeconomic empowerment will occur at several tiers of this system. For instance, having access to resources (money, health care, and education) can provide security and fundamental requirements, but having a say in decisions can satisfy self-worth and other wants. Therefore, by better meeting these requirements, more motivation might result in higher well-being (Maslow, 1943).

3.1.8 Theories of women empowerment

The necessity of seeing economic issues via a gender perspective is emphasized by feminist economics. It makes the case that conventional economic measures frequently ignore the unpaid work and social contributions made by women. The GDI highlights the economic injustices that must be addressed for real empowerment by accounting for the differences in lifespan, income, and education between men and women (Folbre, 2001; Elson, 1999). The first wave of feminism

laid the groundwork for future feminist movements by highlighting the systemic inequalities faced by women and achieving significant legal reforms.

Consequently, in the UK, women over 30 were granted the right to vote in 1918, and in 1928, this privilege was expanded to include all women over 21. The United States approved the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, allowing women to vote. First-wave feminists addressed a variety of problems, including property rights, work rights, and educational possibilities, even though suffrage was their main concern. Women gained the ability to own property and keep their income through the Married Women's Property Acts in a number of nations. The movement had equivalents outside of the US and UK and was impacted by global events and beliefs in addition to having an impact on them. In the years that followed, further significant cultural changes were brought about by the feminist movement, which had its roots during this foundational period. Starting in the United States in the early 1960s and lasting for almost two decades, the second wave of feminism swept throughout the Western world. The first wave of feminism, which was mainly concerned with suffrage and legal matters, was expanded upon, and its achievements were further enhanced.

The second wave, in contrast to the first, covered a greater variety of topics, such as de facto inequality, the workplace, family, sexuality, and reproductive rights. This well-known catchphrase emphasized the relationship between individual experiences and more extensive social and political systems. It highlighted the close relationship between women's political reality and their personal lives. The interconnectedness of social categories including gender, class, and race was first discussed, even though Kimberlé Crenshaw did not invent the word "intersectionality" until much later. The second wave is sometimes attributed to Betty Friedan's 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*.

It challenged the idea that women could only be fulfilled by taking care of the home, getting married, being sexually inert, and raising children. In order to promote equal rights for women in all spheres of society, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded. Women's engagement in sports and education has been greatly impacted by this provision of the Education Amendments of 1972, which forbade sex discrimination in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial aid. The Supreme Court's historic ruling legalized abortion in the US and acknowledged a woman's right to privacy, which includes the freedom to choose. The ERA campaign was important because it attempted to ensure that all American citizens, regardless of gender, would have equal legal rights, even though it was never enacted.

The second wave of feminism was a complex and transformative period that reshaped societal norms and laid the groundwork for subsequent feminist movements, including the third wave of feminism that began in the 1990s. The third wave of feminism, emerging in the early 1990s, represents a diverse and dynamic period in the feminist movement, characterized by a focus on individuality, diversity, and intersectionality. It built upon the achievements and addressed the perceived limitations of the first wave (focused on suffrage and legal rights) and the second wave (centered on broader issues such as sexuality, family, and workplace rights). Here are some key features and themes of the third wave of feminism: third-wave feminists emphasized the importance of intersectionality, a concept introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). Intersectionality acknowledges that women's experiences of oppression are shaped by various interconnected factors, including race, class, sexuality, and gender identity.

3.1.9 Gender Development Approaches

These frameworks help to comprehend and resolve the disparities between the demands, roles, and obligations of men and women in development. These are Women in Development (WID), and Gender and Development (GAD) Moser, C. (1993). The goal of the WID strategy, which first surfaced in the early 1970s, is to include women into ongoing development programs. Its emphasis on women in development initiatives and Economic Empowerment, which promotes giving women access to economic possibilities including credit, work, and education, are two of its salient characteristics. In addition, Policy Change aims to impact policy in order to rectify gender inequalities.

From the literature reviewed, several key insights emerge, helping to construct a conceptual framework linking happiness and women's empowerment.

3.2.1. Happiness: A Multidimensional Concept

Happiness is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon encompassing **hedonic well-being** (pleasure and avoidance of pain), **life satisfaction**, and **emotional states**. Hybrid theories highlight the interrelation of emotional, cognitive, and subjective experiences, offering a holistic perspective. For instance, Paul Dolan's engagement, endorsement, and attunement states reflect the various layers of happiness. This comprehensive understanding aligns with subjective well-being, which incorporates emotional balance and life satisfaction.

3.2.2. Empowerment: A Catalyst for Happiness

Empowerment, as conceptualized through frameworks like Amartya Sen's capability approach, provides individuals with the resources, opportunities, and agency necessary for a fulfilling life. Women's empowerment specifically involves access to education, healthcare, political

participation, and economic independence, directly influencing their subjective well-being. The literature shows that fulfillment of basic needs and self-actualization leads to greater life satisfaction, as per Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

3.2.3. Economic Growth and Happiness

The relationship between economic growth and happiness is non-linear and context-dependent.

The Easterlin Paradox suggests that beyond a certain threshold, increases in wealth do not proportionally enhance happiness. This insight underscores the importance of non-material factors, such as emotional states, personal agency, and relational well-being, in fostering happiness. Interaction between income and other socio-economic factors (e.g., social support) to investigate how the impact of income on happiness varies by social context. (Easterlin, R. A. (1995). This study concludes that happiness depends not just on absolute income but on income relative to societal factors.

3.2.4. The Role of Gender Development Approaches

Frameworks like Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) emphasize that gender inequalities in access to resources and opportunities constrain women's empowerment and happiness. Policies that prioritize economic inclusion, policy change, and education have the potential to enhance women's well-being and their overall life satisfaction.

3.2.5. Intersectionality and Diversity

Feminist waves and the concept of intersectionality highlight the varied and interconnected experiences of oppression that women face based on race, class, gender identity, and sexuality. A

theoretical framework must account for these dimensions to understand the diversity of experiences and ensure inclusivity in empowerment strategies.

Chapter 4

4 Data and Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is line up all the steps including estimation techniques, empirical models and construction of variables. This chapter also covers the data sources.

4.1 Data Sources and Description

As per the requirement of the study, data sources including World Value Survey (WVS 7) and World Development Indicators (WDI) are considered. The recent World value survey is conducted between 2017 and 2022. It is a cross sectional data. Stevenson, B., & Wolfers, J. (2008) utilizes WVS cross-sectional data to reassess the relationship between economic growth and happiness, challenging earlier findings about the "Easterlin Paradox." Similarly, Delhey, J., & Newton, K. (2005) uses WVS cross-sectional data to study factors influencing social trust across nations, with attention to regional differences like Nordic countries.

This study takes total sample size of 5,297 from 47 countries (high income, upper middle income, lower middle income and low income) across the globe. The research is extended to global level. Initially it was proposed to analyze the level of happiness with varying levels of empowerment .However, the research extended to global level for broader lens. Furthermore, UNDP data set and the world development indicators, are also used in this study. The variables are constructed according to the requirements of the study and are arranged to enable coding and tabulations before statistical analysis

4.2 Definition and Construction of Variables

This study takes the dependent variable of women’s happiness and proxies of independent variables of women empowerment that consists the further two variables i.e. gender development index and gender inequality index.

Variable	Description	Unit of measurement	Data source
Dependent Variable			
Women Happiness (HAPP)	Dependent variable	Likert scale(1 to 8) 1 for not happy 8 for very happy	WVS 7(2017-2021) at a single point of time
Women Empowerment Proxies			
Gender Development Index (GDI)	Main variable of interest variable	Range from 0 to 1 1 for perfect gender equality ,0 no equality	UNDP data set 2022
Gender Inequality Index (GII)	Main variable of interest	0 for least unequal 1 for most unequal	WHO and UNDP 2022

Control Variable			
Marital status (MS)	Control variable (Dummy)	1 for Married 0 for unmarried	WVS 7(2017-2021)
Region	Control variable (Dummy)	1 for urban 0 for rural	WVS 7(2017-2021)
Age (AGE)	Control variable	15-60 years of women	WVS 7(2017-2021)
Education (EDU)	Control variable	16 years education	WVS 7(2017-2021)
Gross Final Consumption (GFC)	Control variable	Billions of dollars	WDI (2022)
Inflation	Control variable	CPI Percentage	WDI (2022)
Gross Domestic Product(GDP)	Control variable	At current prices (dollars)	WDI (2022)

4.3 Gender Development Index (GDI)

The Gender Development Index (GDI) compares the accomplishments of men and women in three fundamental areas of human development: health, which is determined by the life expectancy of the sexes at birth; education, which is determined by the mean and expected number of years that

adults 25 years of age and older spend in school; and command over financial resources, which is determined by the estimated earned income of the sexes.

4.4 Gender inequality index (GII)

The Gender Inequality Index is a composite metric that represents the disparity in accomplishments between The GII is a composite index that represents the disparity in attainment between genders in three areas: the labor market, empowerment, and reproductive health.

4.5 Empirical Models

This study formulates empirical model in the light of the study Lena Malesevic Perovic and Sivia Golem (2010) which has taken the variables including Happiness, GFC, GDP, UNEMP and INFLATION. Further variables like GDI, GII, MS, EDU, are taken to extend the model. Gender Development Index and Gender Inequality Index are used as proxies for Women Empowerment. Klasen, S., & Lamanna, F. (2009). Interaction between gender inequality indices (e.g., in education and employment) and levels of economic development (GDP) to determine how gender gaps influence growth differently across development stages thus founding that gender inequality hampers growth more significantly in lower-income countries. Unobserved heterogeneity is endemic in cross-sectional analyses. Without repeated observations of the same units (panel data), control variables that will capture some (hopefully much) of the heterogeneity. As GDP per capita is taken in the study, this will control for unobserved heterogeneity. In addition, the interaction terms like $GII \ln GDP$ and $GDI \ln GDP$ are added further in this study which was not part of the background model. The interaction terms $GII \times \ln (GDP)$ and $GDI \times \ln (GDP)$ test whether the effect of gender inequality and gender development on happiness depend on the income level of a country. Interaction terms can help model Capture Non-Linear or complex Relationships. For

example, the effect of gender inequality on happiness might not be constant across GDP levels but could vary significantly in richer versus poorer nations. This study ask for the research question of whether the empowerment of women affects the happiness level of female. In this context, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender inequality Index (GDI) serve as proxies to measure women's empowerment. This framework aims to elucidate how improved socio-economic status and reduced gender disparities contribute to women's happiness in selected countries Using the Gender development index and gender inequality index as proxies of women empowerment an independent variable.

The functional form of the general model is given below

$$\text{HAPPINESS} = f(\text{MS}, \text{AGE}, \text{EDU}, \text{WE}, \text{GFC}, \text{GDP}, \text{INFLATION}, \text{UNEMP})$$

The econometric model of the above functional form is given below:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{HAPP}_i = & \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{MS}_i + \alpha_2 \text{AGE}_i + \alpha_3 \text{AGE}_i^2 + \alpha_4 \text{EDU}_i + \alpha_5 \text{WE} + \alpha_6 \text{WE} * \ln \text{GDP} + \\ & \alpha_7 \ln \text{GDP} + \alpha_8 \text{GFC} + \alpha_9 \text{INFLATION} + \alpha_{10} \text{UNEMP} + u_i \dots \dots \dots (4.1) \end{aligned}$$

Where HAPP denotes women happiness, GII denotes gender inequality index, showing the relation between women happiness and gender inequality. Similarly, MS denotes marital status, AGE denotes age, EDU denotes education, GDP denotes gross domestic product, GFC denotes gross final consumption, UNEMP denotes unemployment level and u stands for error term. Equation shows the relation between dependent variable HAPP and the independent variable showing that how MS, AGE, EDU, GII, GDP, GFC, INFLATION and UNEMP affect women happiness.

The marginal effects of women empowerment on happiness is calculated by taking the partial derivatives of equation (4.1) as follows:

$$\frac{\partial HAPP}{\partial WE} = \alpha_5 + \alpha_6 \ln GDP \dots\dots\dots (4.2)$$

If α_5 and α_6 have same signs then it strengthens the effects of WE on HAPP at different levels of $\ln GDP$. But if α_5 and α_6 have the opposite signs then it weakens the effects of WE on HAPP at different levels of $\ln GDP$.

However, when the signs are positive, then the effect of women empowerment on Happiness can be positive or negative depending on the level of $\ln GDP$. If the level of $\ln GDP$ is above or below certain threshold value GDP , it changes the direction of effects.

In order to find the threshold level of $\ln GDP$ where the derivatives of effect changes, we apply first order condition for optimization on equation (4.2)

As follows;

$$\frac{\partial HAPP}{\partial WE} = \alpha_5 + \alpha_6 \ln GDP = 0$$

$$\ln GDP^* = -\frac{\alpha_5}{\alpha_6}$$

This threshold value determine the effect of Empowerment on Happiness whether it is +ve or -ve.

The equation (4.1) is extended separately for the two proxies of WE that is GII and GDI.

4.6 Impact of Age on Happiness:

$$\frac{\partial HAPP}{\partial AGE} = \alpha_2 + \alpha_3 AGE$$

$$\alpha_2 + \alpha_3 AGE = 0 \text{ (Applying first order condition for optimization)}$$

Moreover, by equating it to zero, we can find the age threshold where the relationship between happiness and age changes.

$$AGE^* = -\frac{\alpha_2}{2\alpha_3}$$

If it is positive then Age has a positive impact on Happiness at the given level of Age. Otherwise, it has a negative impact.

$$\frac{\partial HAPP}{\partial AGE} = \beta_2 + \beta_3 2AGE \begin{matrix} \geq 0 \\ < 0 \end{matrix}$$

4.7 Estimation Method:

The coefficients of the regression model are estimated using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method. OLS provides the best linear unbiased estimators (BLUE), which makes it one of the most widely used methods.

Additionally, robust standard errors are employed to take into consideration any heteroscedasticity, guaranteeing the reliability of the standard errors even in the event of deviations from homoscedasticity.

Chapter 5

5 Estimation and Results

The main goal of this chapter to line up all the regression results and the associated tables. Further, this chapter provides graphical representations of the nonlinear terms.

The summary statistics for four distinct income categories are shown in tables from 5.2 to 5.5, which also include important variables linked to economic, demographic, and happiness measures. The tables display the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values for every variable and correspond to distinct income groups, ranging from high to low income.

5.1 Summary statistics of the variables

Table 5.1 below shows the summary statistics of the variables based on the data sets of world value survey 7 and world development indicators.

Table 5.1**Overall Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
HAPP	5297	1.881	.759	1	8
AGE	5297	48.154	15.98	16	99
GII	5297	.342	.136	.025	.558
GDI	5297	.947	.052	.803	.922
GDP	5297	11634.068	15105.427	840.45	59907.754
GFC	5297	13.449	3.927	5.9	25.09
INFLATION	5297	5.398	5.64	.25	30.594
LnGDP	5297	8.7	1.032	6.8	11
UNEMP	5297	17.341	14.343	3.744	70.133

5.2 Summary statistics for income groups according to World Bank criterion given WB description

Group 1, which displays the summary data of high-income nations, has a mean happiness score of 2.08 on a scale of 1 to 8, with a standard deviation of 0.81 (Table 5.2). The average degree of happiness in this group is quite high. An elderly population is also shown by the average age of 57.97 years. There is very little gender inequality when the mean value is low, 0.157.

Table 5.2 **High Income Group 1**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Happ	1,026	2.082846	.8060491	1	8
Age	1,026	57.97368	17.88713	18	93
GII	1,026	.1578577	.0633692	.025	.282
GDI	1,026	.9894133	.0188822	.944	1
GFC	1,026	15.22189	4.498605	7.9	25.09001
Inflation	1,026	3.979413	3.990889	.250371	15.10017
Unemp	1,026	18.45446	13.88497	3.744	48.384
lnGDP	1,026	10.38	0.53	9.344	11

This table, with a mean of 0.989, demonstrates nearly complete gender equality. With significant variance, the average inflation rate is 3.98% and the average government spending is 15.22% of GDP. At 18.45%, the average jobless rate is quite high. The GDP logarithm's mean of 10.38 indicates that the country is high-income.

Table 5.3**Upper Middle Income Group 2**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Happ	2,286	1.771216	.6955142	1	8
Age	2,286	48.6133	13.75866	18	90
GII	2,286	.3282034	.0888343	.131	.481
GDI	2,286	.9511995	.0413651	.898	1
GFC	2,286	13.43052	2.870209	8.321201	18.21681
Inflation	2,286	5.269332	5.614414	.5431497	16.33246
Unemp	2,286	13.93724	7.578366	4.029	36.306
LnGDP	2,286	8.9	0.368	8.26	9.4

The mean happiness of group is 1.77, which is somewhat less than that of the high-income group (see Table 5.3). The average age is 48.61, which is lower than that of the group with high incomes. With a mean value of 0.328, the gender inequality is larger than in the group with high incomes. While not ideal, a mean of 0.951 indicates decent gender equality. At 13.43% of GDP, government spending is somewhat lower. At 5.27%, the mean inflation rate is greater.

Table 5.4 **Lower Middle Income Group 3**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Happ	1834	1.9	.79	1	8
Age	1834	43.6133	14.5866	16	99
GII	1834	.4476	0.0945	.2	.558
GDI	1834	.919	.0613651	.808	0.99
GFC	1834	13.43052	2.870209	8.321201	18.21681
Inflation	1834	5.269332	5.614414	.5431497	16.33246
Unemp	1834	13.93724	7.578366	4.029	36.306
LnGDP	1834	7.9	.468	7.137	9.2

Table 5.5 **lower Income Group 4**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Happ	151	1.794702	.6862252	1	4
Age	151	30.00662	9.99633	18	69
GII	151	.52	0	.52	.52
GDI	151	.921	0	.921	.921
GFC	151	9.193047	0	9.193047	9.193047
Inflation	151	15.80963	0	15.80963	15.80963
Unemp	151	6.882	0	6.882	6.882
lnGDP	152	6.7	0	6.7	6.7

The income group of nations with lower national incomes is shown in Table 5.5. The group with the highest income, upper middle-class, had a mean happiness score of 1.79. With an average age of 30.01 years, the population is substantially younger. Significant gender disparity is shown in the mean gender inequality value of 0.52. Gender development index mean value is set at 0.921, same as lower middle-income group. At 9.19% of GDP, government spending is substantially less. The fixed mean inflation rate of 15.81% indicates a high rate of inflation.

While critically analyzing the summary statistics of 4 income groups, it can be concluded that the level of happiness varies across various income levels. The proxies of women empowerment including GII and GDI show different level at varying income groups, showing that the level of national incomes also play significant role while ensuring women empowerment and level of

happiness. There other variable, including age, inflation, Gross final consumption and unemployment level that affect the level of women happiness.

Table 5.6: Regression results of the Effects of GII on Women Happiness

Happiness	Coeff	P value	Obs.
Age	.012695 ***	0.001	5297
Age ²	-.000918 **	0.018	5297
D*married	-.1524374 ***	0.000	5297
Highly*Edu	-.051388 **	0.025	5297
GII	3.36585 ***	0.000	5297
LnGDP	.0906378 ***	0.003	5297
GII*LnGDP	-.411876 ***	0.000	5297
GFC	.033299 ***	0.000	5297
Inflation	.009307 ***	0.000	5297
Unemp	.0057527 ***	0.000	5297
Cons	0.2710509	0.449	5297

Note! *** For p value<0.01, ** for p value<0.05, * for p value<0.10

A regression analysis of the dependent variable, happiness, is shown in Table 5.6. The impact of each independent variable on happiness is also shown. Age has a positive and statistically significant link with happiness (coefficient of .012695). It would appear from this that happiness tends to rise with age, albeit only little. The nonlinear link between happiness and age is indicated by the negative coefficient on Age Squared. In particular, individuals' happiness doesn't improve with age; in fact, happiness may eventually begin to decrease as people become older. The link between happiness and age may thus have an inverted U-shaped curve as a result.

The negative coefficient of marriage (-.1524374) indicates that women's happiness decreases with marriage. With a coefficient of gender inequality index of 3.36585, happiness is strongly and

favorably correlated. This may suggest that happiness is generally higher in nations with less gender disparity. The coefficient of the interaction term $GII*lnGDP$ is .411876, suggesting that the positive effect of gender inequality on happiness decreases as GDP grows. This shows that the influence of gender inequality on happiness relies on the amount of GDP. This might suggest that the negative impacts of gender inequality are more noticeable in nations with higher levels of income.

The positive value of gross final consumption (.03329) is positively associated with happiness. This could imply that in countries where the government spends more on public goods and services, people are happier. Similarly, the coefficient of inflation is .009307 that shows a positive but small and statistically significant effect on happiness. The coefficient of unemployment (.0057527) is positively associated with happiness in this model.

5.2.1 Effect of Women Empowerment (proxy GII) on Women Happiness

We take the first derivative of the standard equation given in table (5.5) to find the effect of GII on Happiness as follows:

After taking derivative with respect to GII

$$\frac{\partial HAPP}{\partial GII} = 3.36 - 0.412lnGDP$$

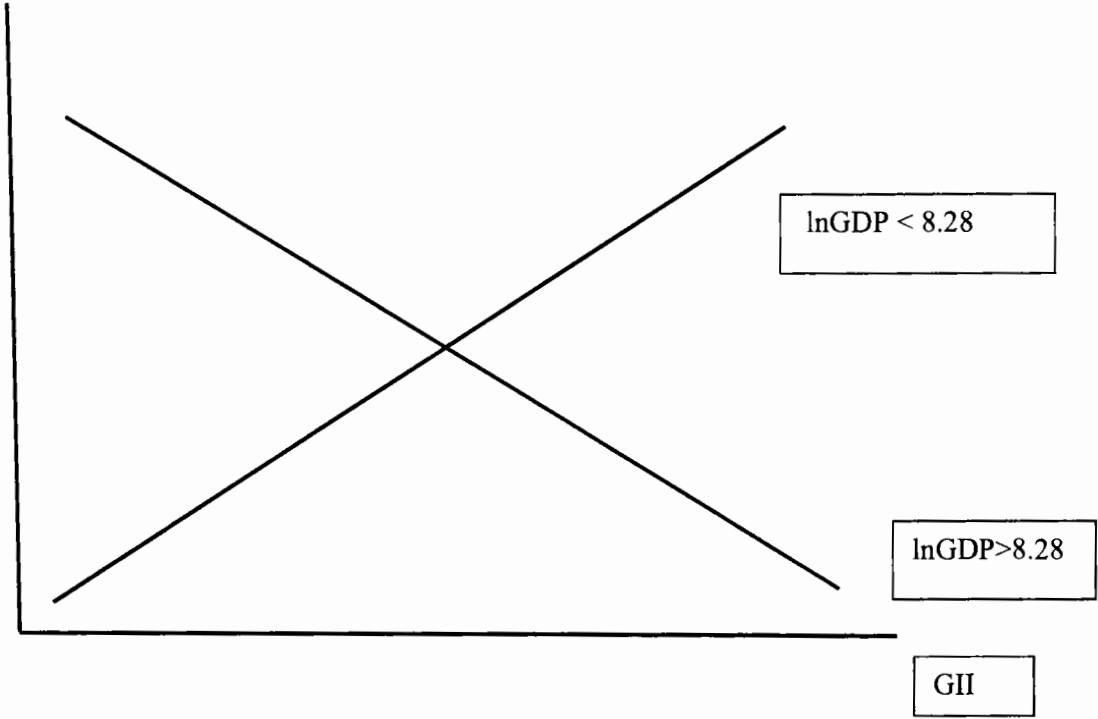
$$LnGDP^* = \frac{3.36}{0.412} = 8.15$$

Threshold level of GDP is 8.15

Table.5.7

LnGDP	$\frac{\partial HAPP}{\partial GII}$
MEAN(8.7)	0.2656
MIN(6.8)	0.5996
MAX(11.0)	-1.172

Graph 5.1



Graph 5.1 represents the GDP threshold level equal to 8.28 that shows that the happiness level starts to fluctuate beyond this point. The threshold is located between the mean and maximum levels of GDP. Thus, on the minimum level of GDP (6.8), the relation between women happiness and GII is positive and on the maximum level of GDP the relation is negative.

5.2.2 Interpretation of nonlinear term

Interpretation of AGE^2

After taking derivative w.r.t to age

$$\frac{\partial HAPPW}{\partial AGE} = \alpha_2 + \alpha_3 2AGE$$

$$\alpha_2 + \alpha_3 2AGE = 0$$

$$AGE = -\frac{\alpha_2}{2\alpha_3}$$

$$AGE = \frac{0.0124}{0.0001974}$$

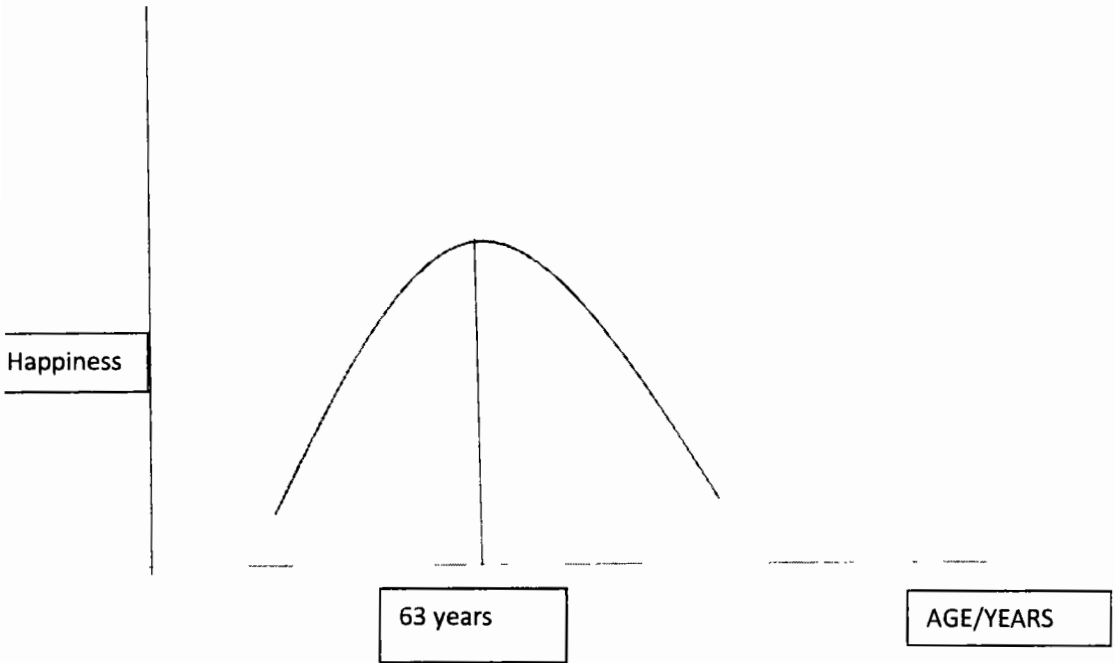
$$AGE^* = 63$$

Threshold level of age is 63 .Up to the age of 63 year, the happiness level increases after this threshold, the happiness starts declining.

Table.5.8

AGE	$\frac{\partial HAPP}{\partial AGE}$
MEAN	0.03159
MIN	0.0189
MAX	0.1654

Graph 5.2



Graph 5.2 shows that Age and its squared term are both statistically significant, indicating a non-linear relationship between age and happiness. Graph 5.2 shows that happiness increases with age (0.0134 per year), but the effect diminishes as age increases. This suggests a non-linear relationship, often described as U-shaped, with happiness increasing during midlife and decreasing again in later years.

Table 5.9 Regression Results of the Effects of GDI on Women Happiness

Happiness	Coeff	P value	Obs
Age	.0106166	0.005	5297
Age ²	-.00070	0.063	5297
D*married	-.1499107	0.000	5297
Highly*Edu	-.1191193	0.000	5297
GDI	-9.723738	0.000	5297
LnGDP	-1.18942	0.000	5297
GDI*lnGDP	1.219281	0.000	5297
GFC	.0347149	0.000	5297
Inflation	0116481	0.000	5297
Unemp	.0059666	0.000	5297
Const	10.55287	0.000	5297

Table 5.9 provides regression results, showing the effects of independent variables on dependent variable. The positive coefficient of age suggests that as the age increases, happiness also increases. In contrast, the negative coefficient (-0.00070) of Age^2 suggests a decrease in happiness with age when this variable is considered; however, the magnitude of the effect is extremely small. The negative coefficient of being married (-.1499107) shows that marriage is linked with lower happiness. Similarly, the negative coefficient (-.1191193) of the variable highly educated suggests that higher education is associated with a decrease in happiness. The large negative coefficient (-9.723738) suggests that lower gender equality (as measured by GDI) is associated with a significant decrease in happiness. The negative coefficient of $\ln GDP$ (-1.18942) suggests that higher economic output as measured by GDP is associated with a decrease in happiness. The positive value of the interaction term $GDI * \ln GDP$ (1.219281) is suggesting that the combined effect of GDI and $\ln GDP$ positively impacts happiness. The positive coefficient of gross final consumption (0347149) suggests that happiness is positively linked with the government expenditure. Surprisingly, the impact of inflation is also positive on happiness.

To wrap up, it can be said that the results show several significant relationships, like the negative impact of GDI on happiness and others that might seem counterintuitive (like the positive association of inflation and unemployment with happiness).

The interactions between gender development (proxy GDI) and gross domestic product ($GDI * \ln GDP$) show that these dynamics can be complex and interdependent as increasing national economies or decreasing national income differently affect the level of women happiness. The negative relationship between higher education and happiness might reflect factors like increased stress or expectations among more educated individuals. It would be beneficial to explore the

context of this analysis, particularly the dataset, the population under study, and the interpretation of certain variables, especially those with counterintuitive results.

5.3.1 Effect of Women Empowerment (proxy GDI) on happiness

Impact of GDI on Happiness:

We take the first derivative of the estimated equation given in table (5.6) to find the effect of GDI on Happiness as follows:

$$HAPP_W = -9.7237GDI + 1.219GDI * \ln GDP$$

$$\frac{\partial HAPP}{\partial GDI} = -9.7237 + 1.219\ln GDP = 0$$

$$-9.7237 + 1.219\ln GDP = 0$$

$$\ln GDP = \frac{9.7237}{1.219} =$$

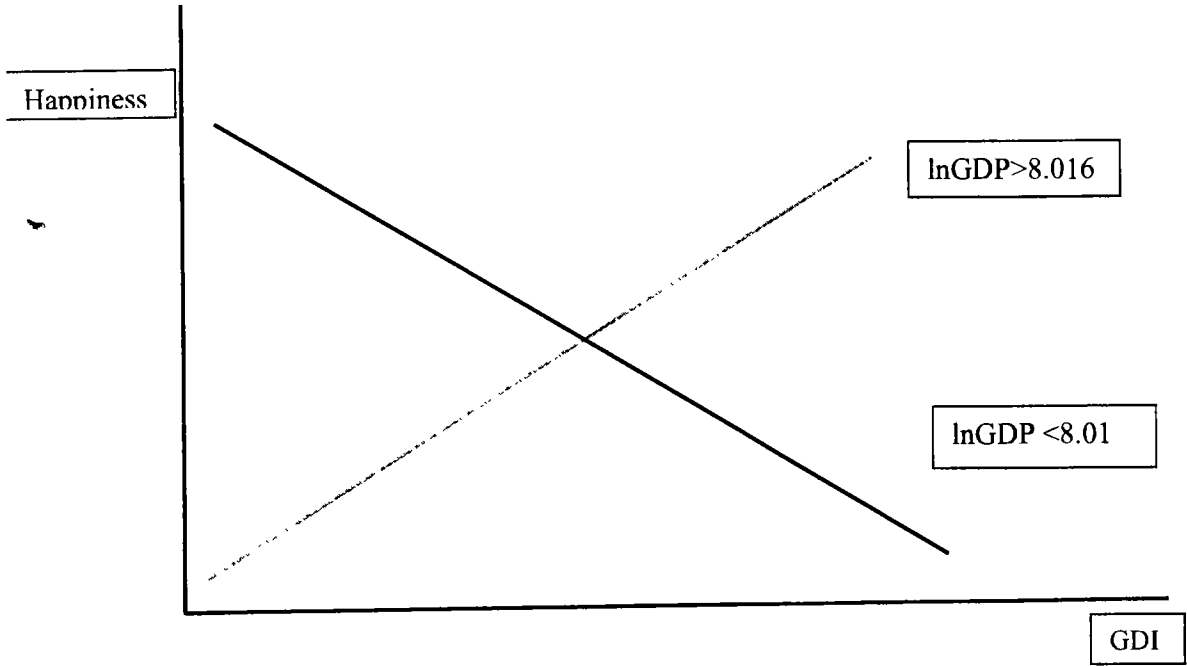
$$\ln GDP * = 8.0162$$

If $\ln GDP$ is greater than 8.0162, there is a positive correlation between happiness and GDI. If $\ln GDP < 8.0162$, then the connection between GDI and happiness is inverse. The GDP threshold level of 2.024 trillion (8.0162) shows where happiness levels start to diverge. The cutoff is lower than the GDP minimum. The criterion is determined by taking into account the mean GDP level (8.7), the maximum GDP level (11.0), and the lowest GDP level (6.8).

Table.5.10

LnGDP	$\frac{\partial HAPP}{\partial GDI}$
MEAN(8.7)	0.8816
MIN(6.8)	-1.4345
MAX(11)	3.6853

Figure 5.3



The correlation between GDP, the Gender Development Index (GDI), and happiness is seen in Figure 5.3. The 8.01 GDP threshold level shows how happiness levels start to differ. The threshold level of GDP is situated in the middle of the GDP range. A positive correlation will exist between happiness and GDI if GDP above the threshold level of 2.07944 tr. Conversely, if GDP is below the GDP threshold (2.07944 tr), the relationship will be negative. Therefore, better happiness is correlated with higher GDI.

5.3.2 Effect of Age on Happiness

$$\frac{\partial HAPpw}{\partial AGE} = 0.0106 - 0.00007AGE$$

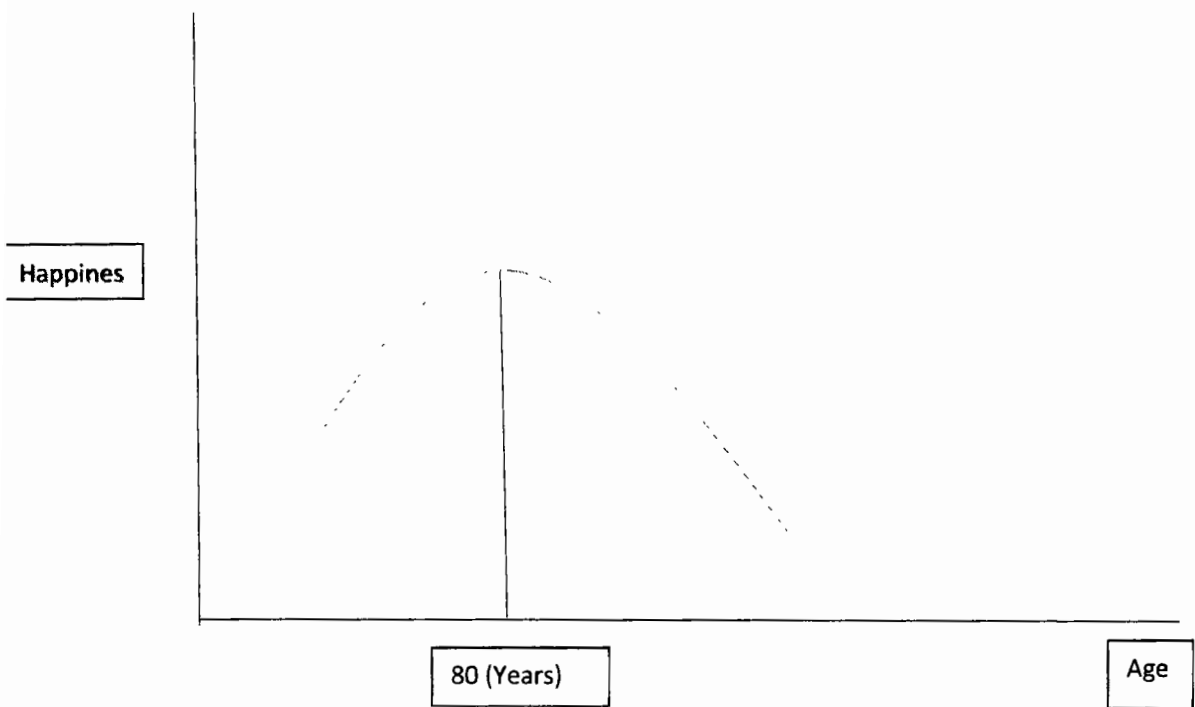
$$AGE = \frac{0.0106}{0.00007}$$

$$AGE = 80 \text{ years}$$

Table. 5.11

AGE	$\frac{\partial HAPP}{\partial AGE}$
MEAN(48)	0.0106
MIN(16)	-0.0006
MAX(99)	0.00367

Graph 5.4 Relationship between Happiness and Age



Graph 5.4 shows a relationship between Happiness and Age. The graph depicts a curve representing how happiness changes over a woman lifetime. The curve rises during the earlier years, peaks around the age of 40, and then gradually declines as age increases, reaching a low point around 80 years old. It suggest that happiness follows a U-shaped trajectory over the lifespan, with a peak in midlife and a decline in later years.

Table 5.11 Comparative analysis of the Coefficients of Model 1 and Model 2

Happiness	Coefficient	P value	Coefficient	P value
Age	.0106166***	0.005	.012695 ***	0.001
Age ²	-.000070 **	0.063	-.000918**	0.018
D*married	-.1499107***	0.000	-.1524374***	0.000
Highly*Edu	-.1191193 ***	0.000	-.051388**	0.025
GDI	-9.723738 ***	0.000	-	-
LnGDP	-1.18942 ***	0.000	.0906378***	0.003
GDI*lnGDP	1.219281 ***	0.000	-	-
GFC	.0347149 ***	0.000	.033299***	0.000
Inflation	0116481 ***	0.000	.009307***	0.000
Unemp	.0059666 ***	0.000	.0057527 ***	0.000
Const	10.55287 ***	0.000	0.2710509	0.449
GII	=	=	3.36585***	0.000
GII lnGDP	=	=	-.411876 ***	0.000

Significance levels are denoted by stars: *** for $p < 0.001$, ** for $p < 0.01$, and * for $p < 0.05$.

The table 5.11 provides comparative analysis of two models where the first model focuses on the Gender Development Index (GDI) and its interaction with GDP, while the second model focuses on the Gender Inequality Index (GII) and its interaction with GDP. After critically analyzing, some key differences are observed like the first model suggests that higher gender development (equality) might lower happiness, especially in wealthier countries. The second model suggests the opposite, with higher gender inequality being associated with higher happiness, particularly in less wealthy countries. Moreover, the results indicate complex relationships between economic factors (GDP, Inflation, and Unemployment) and happiness. The unexpected positive effects of inflation and unemployment on happiness may reflect unique contextual factors. This table also shows the contrasting results between GDI and GII, highlighting that the relationship between gender equality/inequality and happiness is not straightforward and may vary based on other country-specific factors such as wealth.

Thus, these results suggest that happiness is influenced by a complex interplay of individual characteristics (age, education, marital status), economic factors (GDP, inflation, investment), and social indices (gender equality/inequality), with the effects varying significantly across different contexts.

5.4 Results and discussions

The regression results show that the Gender Inequality Index (GII) has a statistically significant impact on happiness. According to this, happiness rises for every unit increase in the GII, assuming all other variables remain same. Model 1 results demonstrate the paradoxical nature of the findings, since they contradict earlier research emphasizing the empowerment of women as a means of achieving higher pleasure. Women may feel happier and contented with their lives as the GII declines and gender differences close (Kabeer, 1999; Sen, 1999). A significant rise in happiness is correlated with an increase in the Gender Inequality Index, holding other factors constant. The favorable correlation between GII and happiness defies previous research findings and popular thinking.

Previous research has linked gender inequality to poorer levels of happiness and well-being. Examples of this research include studies by Stafford et al. (2018) and Agampodi et al. (2019). This finding may appear paradoxical, but it may indicate that people of all genders feel more empowered, have better access to opportunities and resources, and are generally happier and well-off in cultures where there is greater gender equality. According to Fleischer, B., & Qian, X. (2022), economic growth and gender equality work together to increase happiness because more advanced economies better support efforts aimed at promoting gender equality. Numerous research investigations have demonstrated a beneficial correlation between gender equality and happiness. The well-being of society usually increases when women have equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources. There are several reasons for this. The interaction between GII and GDP underscores the complex relationship between economic factors and social outcomes. While higher GDP levels may mitigate the adverse effects of gender inequality to some extent, it does not eliminate them entirely. Even in wealthy nations, disparities in gender rights

and opportunities persist, impacting overall well-being (Helliwell et al., 2019). The trend shifts when the interaction between GDP and GII is observed. Happiness decreases when the interaction between GII and GDP per capita increases, all other things being equal. This negative coefficient implies that wealthier nations experience less of the detrimental effects of gender disparity on happiness. This may be explained by the notion that people in wealthier nations have greater means to protect themselves from the damaging impacts of inequality. The degree of education and happiness don't seem to be much connected. Several studies (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004), for example, show a positive correlation between happiness and education level, debunking the theory that says education has no effect on happiness. The direct impact of education on happiness may be lessened by other factors not included in this model, such as work satisfaction, social status, or health, even though education is usually associated with higher money, which has a positive influence on happiness.

Economic growth appears to dampen the link between happiness and gender inequality, as indicated by the negative coefficient for the interaction between GDP and GII. Nonetheless, it is critical to acknowledge that, at all economic development levels, gender inequality continues to have a substantial impact on well-being. According to the coefficient for GII, happiness rises in tandem with gender disparity. The majority of previous research, which generally shows that gender equality is positively connected with happiness, and common knowledge are at odds with this conclusion. This conundrum may have its roots in Economic theories frequently assert that, up to a certain point, income and happiness are positively correlated; after that point, the marginal utility of income decreases. Higher GDP and hence higher income levels are linked to higher levels of happiness, as indicated by the GDP coefficient ($\ln GDP$) which reflects this relationship. Happiness and GDI have a positive relationship if $\ln GDP$ is greater than 8.01. This suggests that

larger GDIs in industrialized economies are witnessed with lower levels of female satisfaction. Greater GDI is linked with higher levels of women's satisfaction in developing economies, as seen by the negative relationship between GDI and happiness. This illustrates the paradoxical relationship between women's empowerment and happiness in industrialized countries, with the former having a detrimental effect on the latter. Human Capital Theory states that investments in health, education, and skill sets boost productivity and raise personal income levels.

The findings run counter to this theory. From this angle, lowering gender differences in health and education (as measured by the GDI) ought to boost economic growth and human capital accumulation, which in turn should increase well-being. One could argue that the human capital theory's optimistic predictions are incompatible with the detrimental impact of GDI on happiness. From the standpoint of endogenous growth, the detrimental impact of GDI on happiness may seem paradoxical. According to this argument, happiness and GDP should both be positively correlated with gender equality. Efficiency wage theory proponents may argue that there is no causal connection between happiness and GDI. Neoclassical theory holds that increased utility or well-being is typically correlated with higher GDP and income levels. Generally speaking, neoclassical economics stresses individual rationality and utility maximizing through interactions with markets. Since the expectation is that economic development leads to improved welfare, neoclassical economists may challenge the negative effect of GDI on happiness and its relationship with GDP. Additionally, prior research suggests that contextual factors including social policies, cultural norms, and personal traits may have an impact on the association between gender development indices and happiness. Oishi et al. (2011)'s paper, "The Effects of Social Policies on Happiness and Well-Being in Europe," emphasizes how social policies have a moderating role in the relationship between happiness and gender equality. These results imply that particular contextual

elements that must be taken into account throughout the research may have an impact on the relationship between GDI and happiness. More gender empowerment is linked to higher levels of happiness among women, according to studies like "Gender Inequality and Happiness: Are Men and Women Equally Happy in a Gender-Equal Society?" by Alesina et al. (2013) and "Women's Status and Happiness: Evidence from Three Major Cities in China" by Zhang et al. (2018). These results cast doubt on the idea that GDI and happiness have a negative relationship, and instead show that gender equality may improve subjective well-being.

Encouraging gender equality is a prerequisite for accelerating economic development. Household poverty can be greatly decreased by providing women with career and educational possibilities. In order for women to contribute to economic progress, they must have access to financial resources. Gender inequities persist as seen by women's poor labor force participation, which is often limited to gender-segregated job markets. This inequality is exacerbated by a few factors that include, a lack of access to education, inadequate training, and financing opportunities; unclear property ownership; onerous business registration procedures; and exclusion from business networks (Kabeer, 2012). Improving women's health, including access to fertility information, preventing child marriage, promoting education, and putting poverty reduction strategies into action, can all contribute to empowering women economically (Aid, 2010). Strong welfare states that offer the unemployed substantial social assistance can lessen the detrimental effects of unemployment on wellbeing, according to research by Gallie et al. (2003). Easterlin and colleagues (2010) propose that the correlation between inflation and happiness may be intricate, wherein mild inflation may be linked to economic expansion and more job opportunities, ultimately contributing to improved well-being. According to Helliwell, Huang, H. (2021), social stigma and financial stress associated with unemployment have a significant detrimental impact on life satisfaction. Higher economic

development is linked to higher levels of happiness, as indicated by the positive coefficient for $\ln GDP$. This is consistent with the theory that wealth enhances life satisfaction and quality of life.

According to Diener (2010), people in affluent countries tend to report higher subjective well-being levels. Better access to healthcare, education, and other services that improve life pleasure is made possible by financial means. According to Bjørnskov (2007), life happiness is positively connected with government spending on public goods including healthcare, education, and social security. Good public services can lessen stress and enhance quality of life. According to Stone et al. (2010), well-being follows a U-shaped curve throughout life, with people reporting more well-being in their older years than in their middle years. Traditionally, Clark and Oswald (1994) found that unemployment has a detrimental effect on well-being; but, depending on the social support networks that are in place, this can vary greatly. Seguino and were (2014) talk about the ways that gender parity. Research showing that public spending on services like health and education improves well-being lends credence to the favorable relationship between government consumption and happiness. According to Radcliff (2001), government spending has a positive impact on life satisfaction, which is consistent with the regression results' positive coefficient of government final consumption. This is consistent with Keynesian economic theories, which contend that government expenditure can boost the economy and enhance welfare.

There is a complicated relationship between happiness and unemployment. Although the regression indicates a positive association, research frequently finds that unemployment generally lowers happiness because of social stigma and economic instability. Increased social advantages and support networks, however, may lessen this effect in some situations. Although it appears counterintuitive, Winkelmann and Winkelmann (1998) found that unemployment had a significant negative impact on happiness. However, the regression result may have been explained by context-

specific factors. Non-linear Age Effect: Happiness research has long acknowledged the U-shaped relationship between age and happiness, which includes a midlife decline. This U-shaped pattern in happiness across national boundaries was shown by Blanchflower and Oswald (2008), validating the positive coefficient for age and negative for $agesq$. The contradicting findings of this investigation are demonstrated by other studies. For example, although some research suggests differently, the regression result indicates that education is not a significant predictor of happiness. According to research by Oreopoulos and Salvanes (2011), happiness levels are systematically correlated with educational attainment. They contend that obtaining an education improves a person's chances for employment, raises their income, and elevates their social standing, all of which enhance wellbeing in general. The regression shows that gender equality has a significant beneficial impact on happiness, although other research raises doubts about the clarity of the association. According to Fortin (2005), women's subjective well-being is not always enhanced by gender equality in the workplace because greater participation in the workforce can result in higher. Regression analysis points to a negative relationship between happiness and economic progress and gender equality, which is not supported by other research. According to Moghadam (1999), stronger institutional support and progressive policies are the main reasons why gender equality benefits more in developed economies. Although the literature shows conflicting results, the extracted regression results show a favorable link between GDP and happiness. In his Easterlin Paradox, Easterlin (1974) discovered that GDP increases do not, above a certain threshold, significantly boost happiness, indicating that economic development is insufficient on its own to raise life satisfaction.

Additionally, the regression demonstrates a clear relationship between inflation and happiness, which is often contradictory and not widely accepted. Similar findings were made by Di Tella

(2001). Regression analysis shows a direct correlation between happiness and unemployment, which is mostly at odds with the study. The social stigma attached to losing a job and the financial instability caused by unemployment are the main reasons why Clark and Oswald (1994) concluded that unemployment had a significant negative influence on happiness. Even though the regression indicates that government expenditure increases happiness, other research indicates that this relationship may not be entirely good. According to Bjornskov (2010), there can be substantial national differences in the link between government spending and happiness. In particular, certain types of government spending have the potential to cause inefficiencies and unhappiness if they are not properly controlled.

5.5 Summary

The noteworthy correlations found in the regression analysis of the influence of several predictors, such as the Gender Inequality Index (GII), on happiness. Happiness is favorably correlated with a higher mean score, age, gender equality (GII), log GDP, government spending (GFC), inflation, and unemployment; it is inversely correlated with age squared and the interaction between GII and log GDP. These findings are consistent with some literature, including studies by Beja (2014) and Stevenson and Wolfers (2008) that demonstrate the beneficial effects of gender equality and economic development on happiness. In contrast to earlier studies, the non-significant effect of education, the positive effects of unemployment and inflation, and the negative interaction between GII and GDP are observed. For example, substantial benefits were discovered by Oreopoulos and Salvanes (2011) and Clark and Oswald (1994).

Furthermore, the regression's positive GDP-happiness relationship was questioned by Easterlin (1974), who pointed out that GDP growth do not always correlate with greater happiness beyond a certain point. Research by Fortin (2005) and Di Tella (2001) shows that while higher inflation usually lowers happiness by eroding buying power, increasing gender equality does not always translate into greater happiness because of increased stress and work-life balance concerns. Furthermore, Bjornskov (2010) point out that the impact of government expenditure on happiness varies depending on the situation and might occasionally result in inefficiencies. These differences highlight how context-dependent and intricate happiness drivers are, underscoring the necessity for careful readings of these kinds of investigations. Even while the regression analysis offers insightful information about the factors that influence happiness, it is important to take into account the larger body of literature, which occasionally offers contradicting results. These differences

draw attention to how difficult it is to quantify and comprehend happiness and how crucial context-specific elements are. These are the studies' references that dispute the regression's findings.

Chapter 6

Policy Recommendations

Here are a few concrete recommendations based on the study analysis, aimed at improving women's empowerment and happiness:

1. **Implement Targeted Gender Equality Programs in Economic Policies:** Governments should design economic policies that specifically target reducing the gender pay gap and supporting women's access to well-paying jobs. For example, offering tax breaks or subsidies to businesses that prioritize gender parity in hiring and pay scales, and mandating gender quotas in corporate boards could help close the gender gap in the workplace. Additionally, creating public sector programs that encourage female entrepreneurship, such as low-interest loans and mentorship programs, can empower women economically.
2. **Prioritize Gender-Sensitive Education and Skill Development:** While education is a cornerstone of empowerment, it is crucial to ensure that the education women receive is tailored to the changing demands of the labor market. Governments should invest in vocational training and digital literacy programs aimed at women, especially in developing countries. For example, offering coding boot camps or financial literacy programs can increase women's participation in emerging industries like technology and finance, improving both their economic independence and happiness.
3. **Support Gender-Responsive Healthcare Policies:** Ensure that healthcare systems prioritize women's health, including mental health services. Mental health is often overlooked in developing nations, and stress, anxiety, and depression are significant factors in women's overall happiness. Policies that provide affordable access to mental health services, especially for low-

income women, would significantly improve their well-being. For example, telemedicine services that offer psychological counseling can be rolled out to reach rural and underserved areas.

4. Improve Social Support Networks for Women in Developed Countries: In developed nations, women face high expectations that can lead to burnout, impacting their happiness despite economic success. Governments should focus on building comprehensive social safety nets, including affordable child care, parental leave, and flexible working arrangements. For instance, implementing universal child care programs or offering parental leave for both parents would help reduce the mental health strain on women and increase their overall happiness and work-life balance.

5. Encourage Intersectional Policy Approaches for Marginalized Women: The intersectionality of race, class, and gender needs to be considered in the formulation of empowerment policies. Women in marginalized groups, such as rural women or women from ethnic minorities, often face compounded barriers to accessing resources. To address this, policies should focus on inclusion by providing specific support for marginalized women in the form of targeted education grants, healthcare programs, and legal assistance. For example, introducing community-based legal aid programs for rural women to help them navigate property rights could improve their socioeconomic status and happiness.

6. Invest in Public Awareness Campaigns on Gender Equality: In countries with significant gender inequality, public awareness campaigns can play a crucial role in shifting societal attitudes. Governments should collaborate with NGOs and media organizations to create educational campaigns that emphasize the benefits of gender equality not only for women but for society as a whole. Campaigns that highlight the economic and social benefits of gender equality,

such as improved community health outcomes and higher GDP growth, could increase public support for gender-focused policies.

7. Develop Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Urban Planning: In many parts of the world, urban environments are designed without considering the specific needs of women. This can include safety concerns, lack of child care facilities, or insufficient public transportation options.

Policymakers should engage in gender-sensitive urban planning that includes well-lit public spaces, safe transportation, and accessible public amenities for women. For instance, cities could introduce women-only taxis or buses in areas where public transport is unsafe for women, thus improving mobility and autonomy.

By focusing on these specific strategies, governments and organizations can more effectively empower women, leading to improved happiness and well-being across different socio-economic and cultural contexts.

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