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PURPOSE, PERSEVERANCE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT ARE KEY PREDICTORS OF HAPPINESS IN SINGAPORE: STATE OF HAPPINESS STUDY

SINGAPORE, 6 October 2021 – A landmark study on Singapore’s happiness has found five key predictors – three psychological and social factors, and two socio-demographic factors. The psychological and social factors are *Purpose*, *Perseverance* and *People (Social Support)*, and the socio-demographic factors are *Household Income* and *Sexual Orientation*. Individuals who report lower Household Income, Perseverance, Purpose or are from a minority Sexual Orientation are more likely to report a lower level of Happiness.

While we often cannot control or readily change socio-demographic factors, but there is much we can do to change the psychological and social factors that affect our happiness. Focusing on the *Purpose*, *Perseverance* and *People (Social Support)* can help individuals improve their happiness and well-being.

The insights are from the State of Happiness Study (SOHS), which aims to understand how happy Singapore is, and what are the predictors of happiness in Singapore. It also offers recommendations of how can we improve the state of happiness in Singapore. SOHS is spearheaded by Happiness Initiative, a local social enterprise that aims to build a flourishing society with evidence-based interventions.

While there are four facets of happiness measured through the study, the report focuses mainly on Life Evaluation, which is also the main measurement used in the World Happiness Report (WHR). Life Evaluation looks at happiness on a more holistic level, asking respondents to rate their lives from a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being their worst possible life, and 10 being their best possible life.

The key findings from the study shows that:

1. There are three significant psychological and social predictors identified – *Purpose*, *Perseverance* (Grit) and *People* (Social Support). A hypothetical person who rated lowest on all these three factors would report a Life Evaluation of 3.36 – a score that would coincide with Rwanda’s average score on WHR. Rwanda is ranked is 150th in the WHR, just four places from the bottom.
2. A hypothetical person who rated highest on *Purpose*, *Perseverance* (Grit) and *People* (Social Support) would report a Life Evaluation score of 8.46 – a score that would even top Finland’s average score. Finland is currently ranked top in the WHR.
3. Two socio-demographic factors – *Household Income* and *Sexual Orientation*, consistently predicts happiness across all four facets measured in SOHS.
4. Respondents who report a higher household income are more likely to report a higher Life Evaluation. For example, if the household income of a person is increased from \$1,500 to \$2,500, the person would experience an approximately 1.9% increase in Life Evaluation.
5. Respondents who reported to be Bisexual or Homosexual are likely to report lower Life Evaluation. These sexual orientations are associated with approximately 11% decrease in Life Evaluation. To put it in the context of WHR, a decrease of 11% in Life Evaluation would cause Singapore’s ranking in the WHR to fall from 31st to 85th – a drop of 54 placings.



6. *Purpose, Perseverance (Grit) and People (Social Support)* can explain 17% of the variation in Life Evaluation, while socio-demographic factors can explain 15% of the variation in Life Evaluation.

Socio-demographic factors are often not within our control, and we cannot readily change it. However, the motivation behind SOHS is to identify the factors which we can focus on to improve our happiness. If we can focus more resources into cultivating our sense of purpose, our perseverance, and also build strong social support networks, we can develop better versions of ourselves, and a flourishing society.

Lead researcher and co-founder of Happiness Initiative, Simon Leow says, “There is a large proportion of our population who do not suffer from a mental health condition, but yet are also not living a happy or fulfilling life. This study gives us a lot of insight into what the important factors to focus on are in order to improve the well-being of these individuals and the larger community. “

The study was conducted via online surveys, with 1,230 respondents in Singapore, collected in 2020. It collected data on the happiness level of respondents, socio-demographic factors and other psychological and social factors such as sense of purpose and perception of social support.

The study is inspired by the World Happiness Report (WHR), which ranks countries annually based on how happy they are. However, one key difference is that WHR looks at national, macroeconomic factors that drive happiness, while SOHS focuses on individual and personal factors.

The report will be released publicly on 10.10.2021 on World Mental Health Day. It can be downloaded on <https://happinessinitiative.sg/sohs/>.

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About Happiness Initiative

Happiness Initiative is a social enterprise that aims to build a flourishing society with evidence-based interventions through our products and programmes. We help to translate the science of happiness and well-being into actions people can take. Through this, we aim to take a preventive approach towards mental health conditions and help people live more fulfilling lives.

We focus on three areas:

- Raising awareness on the science of wellbeing
- Translating research into application
- Building a community of well-being advocates

More information on our [Website](#) / [Instagram](#) / [Telegram](#).

