

# Emotional Intelligence - A Reason for Rise in Indian Innovation Performance

Julie Sunil Ph.D.

*Visiting Faculty, Management, Jain (Deemed-to-be-University)*

**Abstract** - Nations that score high on happiness are also high on creativity and innovation. Incidentally, these countries also belong to high income categories. India is low on happiness (139th out of 149 countries), low on income yet has recently made it into the top fifty countries on innovation. Research is consistent on the positive correlation of happiness with the ability to be creative. The Indian paradox (of low happiness score and high innovation) could be due to the emotional intelligence that is strong in the Indian culture and is necessary to persist in the realm of innovation. The synthesis of scientific findings on happiness, creativity, innovation and emotional intelligence reveals connections on the reasons why happiness and emotional intelligence together contribute to the increase in creative and innovative output of a nation.

**Index Terms** - Innovation, creativity, emotional intelligence, happiness, social well-being.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the relationship between happiness, innovation, and emotional intelligence. The higher income countries have a high innovation score and high happiness, but this pattern does not hold true for India. India scores low on happiness. On 'social mindfulness,' too, India is at the bottom. Social mindfulness study scores countries on small acts of kindness in the absence of any incentive or disincentive to behave as such (The Times of India, 2021). Social awareness contributes to political structure and economic performance of a nation. Honesty, work ethics and level of trust drive the economic performance.

Happiness is another factor that helps to improve creative abilities. Therefore, countries with high happiness scores also are high on innovation. But India is low on happiness; it is riddled with a high degree of constraints such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and unequal distribution of wealth. Creative problem

solving is essential to survive in India. There is a need to explore if emotional intelligence is an important factor in India's potential to innovate.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Published reports and research findings from the field of psychology, cognitive science and anthropology is synthesized and compared to understand if there is a connection between emotional intelligence and innovation.

Happiness as a source of Creativity

Creativity is the ability to come up with a new idea and innovation is the ability to put the idea into practice. What makes someone outstandingly creative is their knowledge (practiced expertise) and the motivation to acquire more of it and use it (Margaret A. Boden, 1990).

According to Psychologist, Daniel Gilbert, happiness refers to feelings; people can claim to be happy because of their point of view which comes from a person's unique circumstances, experiences and expectations. With experience a person is introduced to something they did not know existed before, (therefore a loss of innocence) yet the experience is subjective to every individual and what makes someone feel happy is a very personal issue.

Aristotle referred to happiness thus, 'Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence. Happiness is getting what one wants. Positive emotions are important for good life. Making things happen make people happy.

India scores low on happiness

There are several factors that affect the determination of our state of happiness. A study conducted by Niels Van Doesum and his associates on social mindfulness found that India was among the bottom three of the 31

countries that were sampled while Japan was on the top (The Times of India, 2021).

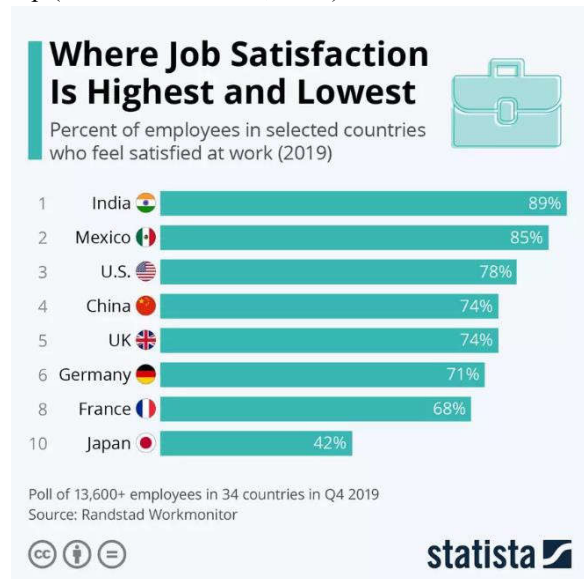


Figure 1 Randstad Workmonitor survey of 34 countries on Job Satisfaction

Source: (This Chart Shows Which Countries Have the Highest and Lowest Job Satisfaction, 2020)

A Study Deiner, Deiner and Deiner ((Culture and Subjective Well-Being, 2000, p. 16) found that social well-being is related to high income, individualism, human rights, and social equality of which individualism is a more important factor). This can be seen from the level of high income and well-being scores of western nations. It is found that people from the individualistic culture are more mobile and tend to gravitate toward jobs that they prefer and thus report high job satisfaction. Again even though everyone feels the same way through the day, some cultures, downplay happiness they experienced during a given day or week or months (Daniel Gilbert, 2007). In collectivist cultures like Japan and Hong Kong people are keenly connected to interpersonal relationships and those that defy these norms are considered counter cultural. Individuals unconcerned about others for the sake of their goals are ostracized and disliked by co-workers and therefore report dissatisfaction with their work. There is a need for cognitive ease to ensure creative output; thus, countries that prevent individual pursuit of happiness will do poorly on creative level.

World Innovation Report 2021

Now consider how nations score on Innovation. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) uses 80

innovation indicators to compute Global Innovation Index (GII). It compiles data on 131 countries that make up 94 per cent of the world population and 97 per cent of the world GDP. As shown in fig.2, among the top high income countries, Switzerland with the second highest GDP holds the top spot in innovation and it has retained the top rank since 2011. It also holds the first position on Knowledge Creation and Global Brand Value.

Table 1 Relationship between wealth of a nation and level of innovation

Income Group	Group Rank	Country (Overall Rank)
High	1	Switzerland (1)
High	2	Sweden (2)
High	3	United States of America (3)
Upper Middle	1	China (14)
Upper Middle	2	Malaysia (33)
Upper Middle	3	Bulgaria (37)
Lower Middle	1	Vietnam (42)
Lower Middle	2	Ukraine (45)
Lower Middle	3	India (48)
Low	1	Tanzania (88)
Low	2	Rwanda (91)
Low	3	Malawi (111)

Source: Visual Capitalist (Wood, 2021) *The value in brackets is the rank of the country relative to others*  
Income and investment drive innovation and the reverse causation is also true. China made it into the top 15 slots in 2019 and is the only country from the middle income categories to be among the top 50. India is another country from the lower middle income category to enter the top 50 countries and this should pave way for investment and innovation in a virtuous cycle. Factors that foster innovations include institutions (e.g. Universities), Human Capital & Research (Regulatory Environment), Infrastructure (Intangible Assets), Market Sophistication (Entrepreneurship), Business Sophistication (R&D Spending, Venture Capital Deals, Researchers). Output depends on knowledge, technology and creativity and is measured on the basis of patents, creative goods and services, scientific publications, national feature films, entertainment and media, high-tech manufacturing (Wood, 2021).

World Happiness Report, 2021

World happiness report studies ‘Subjective Well-Being’ on three main factors. These are: Life Evaluations (rating 1 for best possible life and 10 for

the worse); Positive Emotions (whether they smiled, laughed or enjoyed most of yesterday); Negative Emotions (Felt emotions such as anger, worry, and sadness). India was 139 out of the 149 countries studied. High income countries have high scores on innovation and happiness. Switzerland has made the well-being of its citizens its goal. Since happiness is related to achieving goal, Switzerland’s top position confirm the connection.

India is high on job satisfaction and is among the top 50 countries on innovation but people in India are not happy. India does not fit into an intuitive model i.e. low happiness cannot result in high innovation. If happiness can propel creativity thus innovation which improves the quality of life then the relation of happiness to well-being becomes a virtuous cycle.

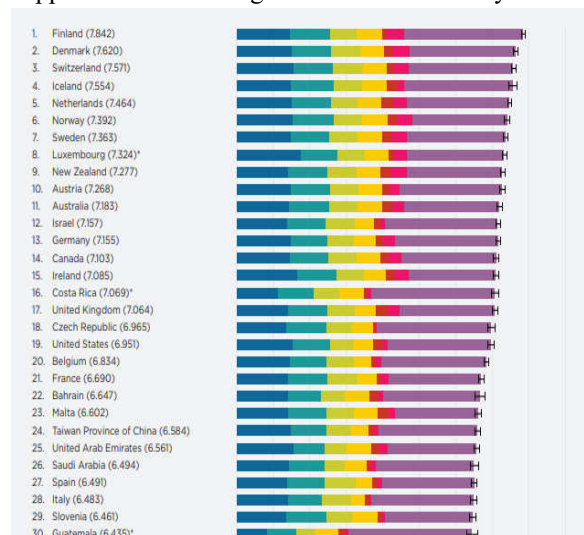


Figure 3 Ranking of happiness 2018 – 2020

Source: (World Happiness Report 2021, 2021)

Using the two findings on happiness and innovation, below is the comparison of top countries on income, innovation and happiness.

Table 2 Comparison of countries high on Innovation with their scores on happiness

Country	Income	Innovation rank	Happiness rank
Switzerland	High	1	3
Sweden	High	2	7
United States of America	High	3	19
Finland	High	7	1
Denmark	High	6	2
Iceland	High	21	4
Netherlands	High	5	5
Norway	High	20	6

While the usefulness of happiness in innovation is evident from the above table, India is a paradox. The source of innovation here cannot be happiness. It could be the constraints that force innovation engine to produce workable low cost solutions. Sarnoff Mednick (1962) defined, “...creative thinking process as the forming of associative elements into new combinations which either meet specified requirements or are in some way useful.” He concluded that an ability to connect unrelated ideas into a coherent unit will result in creative solution and anything that deters this ability will obstruct the possibility to arrive at a creative solution. He identified three ways in which creative associations take place:

1. Serendipity: usually an accidental connection between two seemingly dissimilar elements
2. Similarity: usually found in creative writing that uses similarities of words, structure and sounds to connect ideas
3. Mediation: used in areas where use of symbols is mandatory example- in psychology ‘cortical satiation’ can be mediated with the word ‘fatigue’.

Later research in this field found that mood can impact the ability to associate triad of words. Sarnoff Mednick developed Remote Association Test (RAT). One group of respondents were made to recollect happy episodes in their life and another group was made to recollect sad episodes. After they entered these happy and sad states they were told to identify whether the series of word triads were linked; they had to press the buzzer within two seconds. It was found that people who had happy thoughts were more than twice accurate. The respondents who were made to recollect sad episodes were so affected that they could not even make any accurate guesses.

Daniel Goleman (1995) outlines characteristic of emotional intelligence as abilities for self-motivation, persisting even under frustrating circumstances, controlling impulse and delaying gratification, regulating one’s moods, keeping distress from becoming too overwhelming to prevent thinking, ability to empathize and hope. Unlike IQ, emotional intelligence is better correlated with success and happiness. Mind is controlled by feelings and feelings govern intellect and intellect governs creativity.

Creativity is closely linked to emotional intelligence because no one can achieve a creative breakthrough unless they go through the pain of failure, waiting, and limits of imagination. Personal intelligence is not just

about language and mathematical abilities (IQ) alone – it's about knowing one's emotions (self-awareness), managing emotions (to make them appropriate), motivating oneself (marshalling emotions to pursue the goal), empathy (understanding what others are feeling), and managing the emotions of others to channel it (Daniel Goleman, 1995).

### III. CONCLUSION

The comparison of national scores on happiness, innovation and job satisfaction gives a strange combination for India. Low happiness despite very high job satisfaction and innovation is contradictory to other countries. The reason for high innovation could be due to the high emotional intelligence. The findings on low job satisfaction can be on account of how the memory organizes events of life in general and tags experiences of the previous day into pleasant and unpleasant categories. It is possible that the innovations are emerging from individuals and groups within India who are happier than their general counterparts and it is employees from these innovative firms that enjoy a very high job satisfaction. There is a need to further isolate the influence of emotional intelligence on innovation. The common perception that happiness contributes to creativity is proved in the case of high-income nations but happiness does not account for the high level of innovation and job satisfaction reported in India.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Culture and subjective well-being. (2000). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. <http://archive.org/details/culturesubjectiv0000unse>
- [2] Daniel Gilbert. (2007). *Stumbling on Happiness*. Vintage Books.
- [3] Daniel Goleman. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence*. A Bentam Book.
- [4] Margaret A. Boden. (1990). *The Creative Mind Myths and Mechanisms*. Harper Collins.
- [5] Mednick, S. (1962). The associative basis of the creative process. *Psychological Review*, 69(3), 220–232. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0048850>
- [6] The Times of India. (2021, September 8). Being nice pays: Social norms influence both a country's politics and economic performance. Behaviour always matters. The Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-editorials/being-nice-pays-social-norms-influence-both-a-countrys-politics-and-economic-performance-behaviour-always-matters/>
- [7] This chart shows which countries have the highest and lowest job satisfaction. (2020, June 10). World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/job-satisfaction-global/>
- [8] Wood, T. (2021, January 28). Global Stars: The Most Innovative Countries, Ranked by Income Group. Visual Capitalist. <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/national-innovation-the-most-innovative-countries-by-income/>
- [9] World Happiness Report 2021. (2021). <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2021/>