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Happiness determinants in a Buddhist community: Where Inner Happiness Matters

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores happiness determinants in a green-space community with Buddhist culture in Bangkok's periphery. The study conceptualizes indicators from various happiness determinants for empirical tests. A primary survey of almost 500 samples of community residents during late 2018 to early 2019 was conducted. The study reveals that much of the happiness of community members is generated by inner happiness and environment quality, among other significant factors such as the perception of equal income status, good family and community relationship, health, and time balance. In addition, appropriate household economic management (with sufficient net income) is highly significant for creating happiness in this community, while absolute income is not necessarily significant. The study also examines happiness determinants and their effects on different sub-groups in the community.

Keywords: Happiness, Inner Happiness, Subjective-Well-being, Sustainable Happiness, Sustainable Development, Happiness in Buddhism.

JEL Classification: I31, Z12

1. Introduction

Happiness has been one of the most stimulating new developments in economics in recent years (Frey and Stutzer, 2005) and is becoming an object of serious research in 21st century economics (Van Praag, 2007). As happiness is an important area for academic and development studies, determinants of happiness have been studied and categorized in various ways. While a lot of happiness studies have been conducted with Western concepts, little has been studied with Eastern concepts with case studies. Therefore, this study aims to explore another concept of happiness based on Eastern Buddhist Philosophy, in order to test the Buddhist concept of inner happiness.

As noted in Kittiprapas (2018b), happiness in Buddhism focuses on mind-based and wisdom-based happiness (or so called inner happiness), rather than physical-based happiness such as materials and outside dependence. Based on Buddhist concept, people can be happier with less consumption or moderate consumption, rather than continued increasing consumption (reflecting increasing well-being as assumed by mainstream economics' utility function). In other words, people can be happy with living in moderation and contentment, which is in line with sufficiency economy philosophy (SEP) initiated by H.M.King Bhumipol Adulayadej of Thailand. However, little has been done to test the significance of these factors to happiness.

There have been studies indicating the significance of mind-based happiness such as role of giving and positive psychology to happiness; however, happiness studies so far have not focused much on wisdom-based happiness such as mindfulness, unattachment to suffering, and knowing 'what is

moderate² for one's life or feeling "enough". Thus, this study would like to capture these factors of inner happiness. This may shed some light on happiness theories that are mostly dominated by Western thought.

The study conducted in a community in Thailand where people are Buddhists to test factors affecting their happiness by including these inner happiness factors that have not been covered in other studies. Bangkajao community has a unique geographical landscape surrounded by Chao Praya river- like an island with a lot of greenspace – while being in close proximity to Bangkok in Samutprakarn province, was selected for this community case study. The community has preserved its green environment for a long time, while surrounding urban areas of both provinces have a lot of concrete buildings and materialistic life styles. It is interesting to investigate factors affecting this community happiness, which can vary in different societies with different culture and values.

The structure of this paper is as follows: first the literature is reviewed and related concepts are discussed, then this study conceptualizes a model of happiness determinants for this community, followed by discussions on empirical results and analysis leading to conclusion and recommendations.

2. Rationale of the Study and A Review Discussion of Happiness Determinants

Happiness studies have different focuses and results from different cases /areas have different stages of development, cultures and values. To be beneficial for policy making, happiness economists such as Bruno Frey suggested that it is more useful to do micro studies of happiness determinants of

² For example, what is an appropriate amount for consumption, or what is the 'right amount' is conceptually explained in Payuto (1992); It is the "right amount" to meet real quality of life (in Buddhist meaning).

particular groups/places/societies than try to maximize happiness numbers/indicators in macro level which still have problems with regards to concept, methodology and data. Frey (2007) suggests that happiness research should produce insights into the policy discussion process to improve life, both individually and collectively. Instead of using a single national indicator, happiness researchers should construct a number of indicators to reflect well-being in different aspects of life, as well as disaggregate the happiness indicators into regional, country and community levels. Frey and Gallus (2012) also suggest that using official national happiness index to guide development seems useless as it will be easily distorted or manipulated by political interests and the government. Thus, it seems more useful to try to understand what affect people's happiness insightfully which would be useful for policy design on how to improve population happiness.

Factors affecting happiness in any society or community depends on the particular context of development and human behavior in each society. Thus, knowing happiness determinants of a population in different areas is useful for development plans and policy responses to targets. Kittiprapas (2018a) investigates happiness determinants of different groups in a case study of Bangkok and found that happiness determinants and their effects can vary by sub-groups in that case study. For example, income though generally has little effect, it has a larger effect on the unemployed than the employed.

As this study is designed for a micro community level, it covers happiness determinants at micro level only. Although macro level factors such as inflation, political stabilization and freedom, or economic structure and power may affect population happiness nationwide, the study includes only micro community-related factors of happiness. In addition, this study does not focus on personal demographic factors as

it aims to investigate specific happiness domains at the community level and to explore whether inner happiness in Buddhist happiness concept is important or not.

Conceptually, there are common happiness domains significant in many studies. Kittiprapas et. al. (2007, 2009) draws a synthesis and noted that social relationship and health are among the two of the most important determinants of happiness for people everywhere including in Thailand, while income is also an important instrument to improve quality of life but its impact may be relatively less than other non-economic factors.

Hussien and Heshmat (2010) concluded from many researches and noted that much of an individuals' happiness depends on non-economic factors, such as relationships, emotional state, self-confidence, freedom, equitable chances, good education, good health, altruism and fairness, which are not market mechanisms. Layard (2005) mentions relationships with family, friends and community, work, health, personal freedom and value as affecting happiness. Also, well-being indexes used in different countries may have different domains. For example, Australia's wellbeing index³ currently uses seven domains: standard of living, health, achieving in life, relationships, safety, community-connectedness, and future security.

The study considers only domains relevant for this community case; some factors which do not vary much among individuals in this community are not included.

2.1. Role of Income, income distribution and relative income

How much of an effect income has on happiness is an interesting question for many happiness economists. Easterlin

³ <http://www.acqol.com.au/instruments#measures>

(1974) using US panel data showed that although the increase in income makes individuals happier in short run, over time the increase in income cannot lead to the increase in happiness of individuals. This so-called “Easterlin paradox” has drawn the attention of economists to consider the effects of income to happiness and seek explanations. Other researchers such as Clark et. al. (2008) also found that happiness for the case of US has not increased for over thirty-year period (1973-2003) while real income per capita increased. Consistently, Kusago (2007a, 2007b) also found similar findings for the case of Japan that subjective-wellbeing of population has not increased with the rising national income over time and even slightly declined over the twenty-year period (1978-1999).

Many cross-country findings are also similar in finding that happiness rises with income to a certain level, but over time happiness in many countries remained constant despite economic growth (Kittiprapas et. al., 2009). In addition, Kahneman and Deaton (2010) indicates that higher income does not lead to more happiness nor the relief of unhappiness or stress in the United States when income is higher than \$75,000. Veenhoven (2007) drawing from 90 nations in late 1990s found that the correlation of income and happiness regression line is almost flat after reaching the point \$20,000. This also indicates that when income (either for individuals or for a country) is higher beyond a certain level, its effect on happiness declines. Clark et. al (2008) mentioned that the ‘subsistence level’ or above poverty line that income is not the main sources for well-being could be as low as \$10,000 (Frey and Stutzer, 2002). These reflect the belief that income is not a prime factor affecting happiness when income is higher beyond basic needs. This is consistent with Buddhist thought.

Other researchers with cross-sectoral surveys find positive relationships between income and happiness in both developed and developing countries such as Blanchflower and

Oswald (2004) for UK and US, Graham and Pettinato (2001) in Latin America and Russia, and Sarracino (2007) for Italy. However, the effect of income on happiness depends on the particular case. For example, Frijters et. al (2004) find positive relationship in life satisfaction and income in East Germany after the reunification. Generally, countries with low income or developing countries seem to have happiness gain with income growth more than developed countries. Similarly, individuals' happiness increases with income when they are poor, but they gain less happiness when they are richer. This can be explained by the diminishing marginal returns of happiness to income. Thus, the positive or negative relationship of income to happiness in different studies also depends on what status of the individual or country's income is.

The Easterlin paradox which states that while income can bring happiness, but over time it cannot raise happiness can be explained by psychological effects such as the theories of social comparison/aspiration and adaptation. Clark et. al. (2008) empirically demonstrates the importance of social comparisons and adaptation. For social comparison, as people care about their positions/income levels relative to other people in their reference group, individual's gain in actual income may not generate the same increase in happiness. In other words, relative income has more effects than absolute income. People normally compare their statuses with others, which drives competition and often results in stress/tension, weak family and social relationship. Negative effects of social comparison to happiness are found in many studies in many countries such as Clark and Oswald (1996) using British Panel data and Luttmer (2005) using US Data.

According to aspiration theory, individuals' happiness is affected by the difference between levels of aspiration and achievement (Frey and Stutzer, 2001). It may imply that if a

person cannot achieve what they aspire for, they would be less happy. Interestingly, it is found that the richer residents are, the higher an individual's aspiration level. This may be a factor to explain why getting richer does not result in more happiness. Thus, the Buddhist concept of feeling contentment with what ones have can reduce this negative effect from aspiration. That seems difficult for people in modern economic system that drives high competition and unlimited want that can bring in suffering.

Hussien and Heshmat (2010) suggests that government media tools need to avoid the negative impact of high aspirations, related to higher income levels, on happiness through reminding people of moderation in consumption and appreciation of the concept of 'sufficiency economy'. This reflects the belief that the Buddhist concept of sufficiency economy can help promote happiness by reducing aspiration effects.

Another reason for the fade down of happiness from material goods and income over time is adaptation. International studies have found that positive effect of the increase in income has decline year after year. Di Tella et al (2005) using German socio-economic panel during 1984-2000 found that after 4 years of the increase in income, only 42 % of the positive effect to happiness still remains. Inglehart and Rabier (1986), using pooled Eurobarometer data from ten Western European countries between 1973 and 1983, showed that life satisfaction and happiness scores are essentially unrelated to the level of current income, but are positively correlated with a measure of change in financial position over the past twelve months. Their conclusion is that aspirations adapt to circumstances, thus, in the long run, stable characteristics do not affect well-being. In this connection, Clark et. al. (2008) mentioned that the only way to achieve the

same effects of increasing happiness is to continually increase income.

This income phenomenon can also be applied for material goods. One can be very happy when get new items, but after a while their happiness from that item decreases due to adaptation. This is a type of temporarily or unsustainable happiness. In Buddhism, continually increasing wants or position goods cannot bring in real happiness; instead that can cause suffering when those wants are not met.

Income inequality

Inequality affects social happiness and well-being. Van de Stadt et. al. (1985) found that past income distributions also matters in determining one's present well-being. Alesina et. al (2004) also found the degree of inequality negatively affect happiness in the US and some European countries. This is obviously the effects of relative income, aspiration and social comparison. Sarracino (2007) found that those in the lower income quintiles are less happy than those in the higher quintiles. In addition, Coccia (2018) found that socio-economic inequality at country level negatively affects human behavior and leads to high rates of violent crime in society. Socio-economic inequality is one of the contributing factors that generate aversive environments, unhappiness and, as a consequence, high rates of intentional homicides in society. Social problems also increase with socio-economic inequality, combined with high density of population, hot climate and other factors, as it may generate high levels of psychological stress (e.g., frustration and anger) that most likely induce violence (Regoeczi, 2003).

Role of relative income

The above research discussions imply that ‘relative income’ from comparing with their peers is more relevant to happiness than actual income. Rising national income in poor countries with low inequality can make people happier, but rising national income in rich countries with high inequality may not increase happiness accordingly due to counter effects of worsening “relative income”.

Clark et. al. (2007) which explains Easterlin paradox by ‘relative income’ also referred to Knight and Song (2006) which found that relative income is at least twice as important for individual happiness as actual income, even in poor regions (in their case rural China). Controlling for own income, and for village income, those rural respondents who say that their income was much higher than the village average report far higher happiness than those who say that their income was below the village average. This study indicates that relative income is the most important variable.

However, the role of relative income can be subjective such as the ‘perceived relative income’. Happiness depends on whether people feel poorer than others in their reference group or not. Gray and Kranmanon (2007) found from a case study in Chainat, Thailand, that people who do not feel poor report the highest level of happiness, compared to those who feel as poor or poorer than their neighbors. This is the effect of “relative perceived poverty” to happiness.

In sum, higher aspiration and social comparison are negative to happiness and that is why an increase in actual income may not lead to an increase in happiness. Relative income and the reduction of income inequality are more likely to have an effect on the happiness of individuals and society as a whole.

2.2. *Health*

Health is likely a top factor contributing to happiness from a number of studies; physical health and mental health inarguably affects well-being. As mentioned in Diener et. al. (2009), it is evidenced that individuals who suffer life-threatening illnesses or illnesses that interfere their daily life and causes pain have considerably lowered happiness levels. Steptoe (2019) mentions that the mechanisms potentially linking happiness with physical health include lifestyle factors, such as physical activity and dietary choice, and biological processes, involving neuroendocrine, inflammatory, and metabolic pathways. Physical health benefits surrounding happiness include a stronger immune system, stronger resilience in the face of stress, a stronger heart and less risk of cardiovascular disease, alongside quicker recovery times when overcoming illness or surgery. There is even a body of research that indicates being happy may help us to live longer lives. Positive emotions predicted increases in both resilience and life satisfaction (ibid). Higher levels of happiness are related to lower physical and mental illness, as well better coping abilities in adversity (Machado, 2015).

Layard and Clark (2015) found that, in Britain, one in six of all adults suffers from depression or a crippling anxiety disorder and roughly a third of families include someone who is mentally ill. Mental illness is not only common, but it can be truly disabling through its impact on people's ability to care for themselves, to function socially, to get around and to avoid physical and mental pain, so mental pain is as real as physical pain and is often more disabling (ibid). It also suggested that tackling mental health problems in society can actually save governments money as the economic benefits would be greater than the cost of the treatments. This also confirms the importance of mental health to happiness.

Clark et al. (2018), drawing on a comprehensive range of evidence from longitudinal data on over one hundred thousand individuals in Britain, the US, Australia, and Germany, found that the mental well-being of young people is a prime determinant factor for happiness in adults. The effects of mental health is even 4 times higher than the effects of income. Thus, this study indicates that the strongest factor predicting a happy adult life is not children's qualifications on academic records or I.Q., but their emotional health (even correlated with mother's mental health).

However, given the positive correlation between health and happiness, it is intriguing that researchers sometimes have reported weak and sometimes nonexistent correlations between happiness and objective health as assessed by medical personnel (Diener et al., 2009). Whereas associations between objective health and happiness are often weak, research documents the consistently strong associations between happiness and subjective health—as reported by the individual (Okun et al., 1984). Diener et al. (2009) discusses that this kind of curious phenomenon seems to be the consequence of (1) clinical error, meaning that objective health measures are sometimes not as objective as one would hope, and (2) the notion that subjective reports of health reflect emotional adjustments on the part of the individual, thus inflating the correlation between self-reported health and happiness.

However, in general, studies across the globe clearly confirmed the significant of health for happiness (for example, Camfield et. al, 2007; Gray and Kramanon, 2007; Mahaarcha and Kittisuksathit, 2007; Kittiprapas (2018a) for case studies in Thailand; Sabatini (2014) for Italy; Mendes et. al. (2007) for Portugal; Van den Berg (2007) for Australia, and Hussien and Heshmat (2010) for Egypt). The positive relationship of health and happiness is more obvious and much less controversial than the case of income.

2.3. Social and family relation

Relationships both within family members and among social/community members are one of the most significant variable to happiness. Many studies report that having good family and having groups of friends and social activities are often ranked as highly important to a good life (Mendes et al., 2007). Having close friends and a network of social support has a distinct positive effect on happiness, which some scholars have suggested that such kind of relationship could be the single most important source of happiness (Reis & Gable, 2003). Diener and Seligman (2002) support this view as their study found that every single ‘happy’ person had excellent social relationships.

Clark et al. (2008) noted an argument that when individual income rises above a poverty line or ‘subsistence level’, the main source of increased well-being is not income but rather friends and a good family life. In addition, people’s happiness increases with having membership with voluntary organizations (Putnam, 2000; Helliwell, 2003, 2006), or participation with organizations (Sarracino, 2007), and social supports including from family members, friends, colleagues, neighbors (Liping, 2001).

2.4. Time use and balance

Time balance is an important factor conducive to happiness. Happiness economists suggest work-life balance to promote happiness (Layard, 2005). Bataineh (2019) indicates that work-life balance positively and significantly affects happiness and employee performance. Similarly, Alesina et al. (2006) points out that people who work fewer hours have been demonstrated to have higher life satisfaction. This shows that time balance significantly affects happiness.

A number of studies indicate that leisure activities such as music, exercise, and reading significantly contribute to happiness (Argyle, 2002). Machado et al. (2015) indicates that physical leisure activities have been shown to increase subjective well-being both in the short and long term; involvement in sport also appears to have a causal relationship with higher levels of happiness. Balatsky and Diener (1993) even reported that, among Russian students, leisure satisfaction was the single best predictor of happiness. Thus, this reflects that time use or time balance is a very important factor determining happiness. Time use is also a domain of Gross National Happiness (GNH)'s indicators of Bhutan.

2.5. Environment

Krekel and Mackerron (2020) studies how the natural environment and its quality affect our happiness around the world, using data from the Gallup World Poll covering more than 160 countries (about 1000 observations per country). Given this extensive coverage, it was found that environmental quality affects happiness worldwide, the importance of the natural environment and its protection to their continued well-being, and the particular threat posed by climate change. The study also focuses on the case of London and found that being outdoors in green or blue spaces is predictive of a significant boost in happiness. Responses that are from public green spaces such as parks and allotments are on average approximately one percentage point happier than responses that are not (after taking into account all controls).

There is evidence that green or natural environments are positive for physical and mental health and human wellbeing. For example, observational and experimental studies report the beneficial impacts of natural environments on health and wellbeing. MacKerron and Mourato (2013) indicates that

green or natural environments are positive for physical and mental health and wellbeing.

MacKerron and Mourato (2013) shows evidence from their primary research study exploring the relationship between momentary subjective wellbeing (SWB) and individuals' immediate environment within the UK. It is found that happiness is greater in natural environments. On average, study participants are significantly and substantially happier outdoors in all green or natural habitat types than they are in urban environments. This study provides some evidence strengthening the link between the exposure to nature in daily life and subjective wellbeing.

O'Brien (2005) defined 'sustainable happiness' as the pursuit of happiness that does not exploit other people, the environment, or future generations. The concept of sustainable happiness holds significant possibilities for individual, community, and global well-being. This combines sustainability and happiness concepts.

However, a Buddhist approach defines 'sustainable happiness' as a higher level of happiness (up to wisdom-based or inner happiness) beyond physical-based temporary happiness that is easily affected by adaptation and aspiration. This higher level of happiness (or called as sustainable happiness) can also lead to effective sustainable development (Payutto, 2006). Thus, the concept of Buddhist Sustainable Development (BSD) of which inner happiness is a pathway was introduced to link happiness and sustainable development (Kittiprapas, 2018b).

2.6. Inner happiness

Buddhist approach place more weight on happiness generated from inside oneself. Payutto (2011, 2012) indicates that happiness in Buddhism focuses more on inner happiness,

which is more important and more sustainable pattern than material-related happiness as it is usually accompanied by less suffering. Being less concerned for oneself and less dependent on materials, higher or inner happiness can lead to more societal happiness with peace and sustainable development. The key implication from this approach is that people can be happy with moderate or less consumption and acquisition, thus there is no need to accelerate consumption as per the consumption led-growth model, which is counter to the sustainable development path. Therefore, it is important to realize a more sustainable happiness and living with moderation, rather than keep increasing unnecessary wants and try to meet those desires that could generate sufferings. Thus, BSD can be achieved through inner happiness.

Therefore, higher levels of happiness focused in Buddhism are far beyond material goods or feelings of satisfaction that mentioned in Western economic and happiness theories, which mostly relate to sensual pleasures and involve unnecessary wants that can also bring conflicts and tensions among people. Happiness development in Buddhism is dynamic that it encourages people to move up their happiness from lower type of physical happiness into higher type of inner happiness (ibid), (Kittiprapas, 2018b).

This Buddhist development approach encourages people to realize real value of products/materials to be consumed only for improving real quality of life, rather than to meet defilements that never end. The concept classifies human desires at the physical level into two types: (1) that really needed for true human well-being, and (2) unlimited wants not necessary for real well-being (Payutto, 1992). With inner happiness in mind, the second type of want is less important, not necessary or over-accumulation. Also, this type of want may not lead to the increase in happiness but can use a lot of natural resources.

Following that happiness from this Buddhist approach, this study also aims to investigate factors affecting this kind of happiness, especially those relating to inner happiness in Buddhism. With negative effects of social comparison, aspiration and adaptation as discussed earlier, Buddhist concept of inner happiness which is less dependent on material outside oneself can help promote happiness with higher quality and more sustainable whereas can reduce the over consumption and resource exploitation (Kittiprapas, 2018b).

Thus, this study, conducted in Thailand where the majority are Buddhists and the “sufficiency economy philosophy” was introduced, will examine how the application of sufficiency economy philosophy and Buddhist values can contribute to happiness of this community. The findings could contribute to new knowledge in the happiness subject and lead to different implications for development direction and policies.

3. Concept and Methodology for this Study:

The term “happiness” used in different studies may vary in terms of concepts and definitions due to different cultures/perspectives or disciplines. While a number of happiness studies done by Western academics and researchers focus on Western theories/concepts, this paper introduces a new concept based on Eastern philosophy of Buddhism and tests some variables or proxies of inner happiness in addition to other important domains /indicators.

Therefore, as discussed, domains of happiness designed for this case study are: economics (i.e., income, real income, and family income), health, time, family and community/social relationship, and environment, as well as inner happiness indicators such as levels of mindfulness, levels

of stress, feeling of “enough” in materials, want beyond basic needs, giving, and management of suffering.

Model

These above factors are independent variables, or X_i , denoted as a vector of independent variables. The dependent variable or Y is subjective well-being or happiness.

The relationship of the dependent and independent variables are: $Y = f(X_i)$; where $X_i = x_1, \dots, x_n$, in the empirical model as: $Y = \alpha + \beta_i X_i + \mu$.

Then, what should be a good proxy for happiness (Y). Life-satisfaction is mostly used in happiness research to measure ‘overall happiness’. For example, Veehoven (1984, 2007) suggests it is measured by the degree to which someone evaluates the overall quality of his or her present life-as-a-whole positively. Happiness of individuals is defined by respondents’ scale which is an objective measurement and does not depend in any way on the observer (Van Praag, 2007). Thus, it has been academically accepted that happiness can be well measured using self-reports and self-rated scales.

Thus, for dependent variable (Y), overall life satisfaction scaled (from 0 to 10), is used as a proxy of happiness. People were asked: “considering life as a whole, how much are you satisfy with your life?”, where 0 represents the lowest level and 10 is the highest rank. For independent variables (X_i), indicators or their proxies are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Variables and Indicators in Happiness Equations

Variables (and definitions)	Proxy indicators and explanations	Remarks
Income (economic indicators including actual and relative terms as well as household economic status)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Absolute income monthly (ranging 0-10,000; 10,000 -20,000; 20,000-40,000; 40,000 -70,000B, and beyond 70,000 Baht. 2. Relative income perception (self-rated economic status compared to others in the community: poorer, similar, or higher) 3. Family net income (household income minus expenditure: surplus with saving, sufficient, lower or in debt) 	Choose one or two from these three income indicators for each estimation depending on purposes of the tests.
Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actual health situation (informed from their health units) 2. Self-rated health perception 	Physical health ratings of which 1) and 2) are similar in this case, so both choices are consistent. The study chooses 1) as it is less subjective, while the rest of indicators inevitably have a lot of subjective self-rated ones.
Family relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-rated warm family 2. Proud of family members by levels 	The study uses 1) to reflect family relationship
Community / social relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-rated relationship with community members 2. Frequency of community participation 3. Being a member of informal community group 	There are several proxies for community participation in the survey, but the empirical tests choose 1)- relationship to reflect social relationship
Environment (community environment)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rating quality of environment level 2. Rating well environmental management level of the community 	This study uses 1) to reflect levels of community's environment quality .
Time (Time available for useful and personal preferences)	Having enough time for doing useful/creative activities and for personal & family preferences. Rating levels of time available for these activities.	Levels of overall time used for these activities
Enough (enough in materials beyond basic needs)	Feeling “enough’ in materials, or not enough	Reflecting in dummy variables 1, 0

Suffering management (ability to manage sufferings when occur, or un-attachment)	Self-rated levels of management of suffering	Skill of suffering management or un-attach to suffering, represented by low to high levels.
Stress Management (ability to leave stress)	Self-rated levels of stress management	Levels of stress management from low to high ranks
Giving (actions of giving)	Frequency of donation or volunteer work in a month	Using levels of frequency instead of quantitative amount.
Want in materials (wants more than subsistent level of living)	levels of want/ demand in materials (beyond basic needs)	Meaning extra wants beyond basic needs they have, from low to high levels.
Mindfulness (mind development)	Self-rated levels of mind development or mindfulness/ Dhamma practice, including participating in temple activities	How much (in levels) the one do these activities at home and in temples overall.

As this case study aims to test some factors affecting inner happiness at mind and wisdom levels besides those affecting happiness at physical level that often founded in general studies, related questions were particularly designed for self-rating on subjective aspects to cover these related variables/ indicators.

Data Collection and Process

The study was planned in early 2018; geographical locations of 6 Tambons were considered for distributing samples to each Tambon according to their proportions of community population. The whole Bangkokjao population of 6 Tambons are about 50,000 persons. Following Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967), the study aims to collect at least 400 samples for the empirical study.

The survey was randomly conducted in 6 Tambons in Bangkokjao community during late 2018 to early 2019 with

direct questions asking both objective and subjective aspects of relevant happiness domains as well as general information. For example, health, social (community) and family relationships, environment, time used, income, perceptions of economic status (relative income) and family net income, as well as subjective aspects of inner happiness and cultural aspects. Target interviewees were those who have lived in the community for a long period, through generations, or those who were born there. They were asked by accidental sampling in different types of locations: their houses, temples, parks, street corners, food shops and markets, etc. There are in total 490 samples from the community survey randomly obtained from 6 Tambons. After screening variables and selecting most suitable indicators as well as cross -checking all correlations among variables, the data with selected indicators are run using ordinary least square (OLS) by the program ‘STATA’.

4. Empirical results

This section aims to show various results from empirical tests, both from general tests (with different proxy variables for income) and from classified groups (by disaggregating samples to test for different groups). There are in total eleven empirical tests to examine determinant factors in question presenting significant variables at 95% confidence.

The first empirical result is the general one, covering all samples, as shown in Table 2. Factors significantly affecting happiness of the community members are: perception in relative income, health, time, enough, management of suffering, family relationship, community connected, and environment quality; whereas actual income is not significant.

Table 2. Happiness determinants of community members
 n = 490

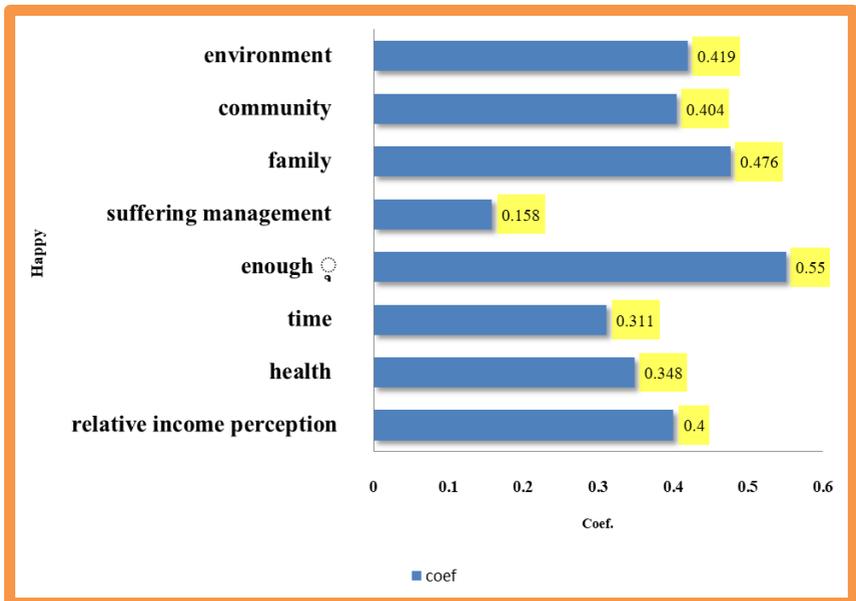
Variables	Coefficient	p> [t]
Income	-0.043	0.466
Perception in Relative Income	0.409	0.003
Health	0.348	0.00
Time	0.311	0.039
Giving	0.080	0.484
Enough	0.555	0.00
Manage of suffering	0.158	0.041
Family	0.476	0.04
Community	0.404	0.00
Environment	0.419	0.00
Constant	1.923	0.00

The empirical test confirms the importance of non-economic factors. The community members are happy from feeling “enough” as this variable has the strongest effect (.55 coefficient), followed by family relationship (.47 coef.), environment quality (.42 coef.), perception in relative income (.41 coef.) and community relationship (.40 coef.). These are among the strongest effects, which is consistent with other country studies discussed earlier. Other non-economic factors such as health (.35), time (.31), and management of suffering (.16), are positively significant for happiness. These results also confirm that in the reviewed discussions of happiness determinants in section 2.

The positive relationship of community happiness and environment is also consistent with MacKerron and Mourato (2013) because this community residents live in green areas or have natural exposure in daily life. They are able to link that kind of environment to their happiness more than those in urban environments.

Also, in line with reviewed theories and studies, actual income does not increase happiness accordingly, but relative income matters in this study. While monetary income is not significant, the perception in relative income/ economic status is significant and positive, reflecting that the higher perceived economic status to their reference group they are, the higher happiness they feel. This study indicates that the perception of economic status relative to their neighbor or subjective aspect of relative income, is more important than absolute number of income. This result confirms and is consistent with other studies' results already discussed in the role of relative income and social comparison sections.

Figure 1. Factors significantly affect happiness by sizes



Selecting only significant variables to happiness from Table 2, the magnitudes of the effects of these significant

variables to happiness (in comparative scales) are illustrated in the Figure 1.

This figure clearly shows that ‘enough’ has the largest effect. The high effect of feeling enough confirms the theoretical strong negative effect of the feeling associated with aspiration, social comparison and adaptation, because these effects could be low if people felt satisfy with what they have (or feeling enough).

Next, the study aims to explore the effect of household’s economic management on happiness. In Table 3, the individual income variable is changed to be family net income (indicating whether income can cover the expenditure or not (or with surplus or deficit)). When using the economic indicator as ‘family net income’ reflecting levels of family economic management instead of levels of individual income (which is not significant in Table 1), the results are shown in Table 3.

It is found from the Table 3 that the variable of family economic management is positively significant and has the strongest effect (.588 coef.). Thus, the higher family net income is, the higher happiness they gain. This also supports the concept of sufficiency economy that as long as households can manage to reduce expenditure from unnecessary things, the low level of monetary income does not matter because they are able to have saving or no debt. Survey data also shows that the majority of respondents can manage their economic situation to live happily with simple living⁴, although some may have problems with family economic management.

⁴ The majority answered that they have sufficient income for expenditure with no debt (about 68%) and about 15% have surplus net income and for saving.

Table 3. Happiness determinants (using family economic management as a proxy for income)

n = 490

Variables	Coefficient	p> [t]
Family net Income	.588	0.000
Health	.315	0.001
Time	.348	0.018
Giving	-.059	0.793
Enough	.452	0.002
Want	-.067	0.214
Manage suffer	.171	0.024
Family	.431	0.050
Community	.396	0.000
Environment	.385	0.000
Constant	2.006	0.000

Other significant factors are similar to Table 2; namely, feeling enough in material, role of relationship with family and community, environment, time balance, health, and the level of suffering management. This supports the argument discussed in section 2 that when income is beyond subsistent level, more influential factors to happiness is non-income factors such as relationship with family, friends, and social groups, time balance, and health, which are among proven factors highly determining happiness in other countries/case studies.

Both Tables 2 and 3 indicate two important economic indicators for happiness: roles of relative income and family's sufficient net income, which can be used alternatively for actual income variable. The study results show that perception in relative income, not absolute monetary income, significantly effects happiness. As the majority of community members have similar range in economic status, they do not

feel that they are poorer than others⁵. Thus, the perception of equal status affects their happiness significantly. This would have implications for building equality in any society. In addition, the family net income (relative income and expenditure) has a strong positive relationship with happiness. Even if their actual income levels seem low⁶, if they have enough income to cover their low expenditures and are not in debt, they can live happily in moderation. This kind of economic management is in line with sufficiency economy principle which they can apply to manage their households' income and expenditure economically as well as live happily, even if they cannot earn very high income.

Related to theories discussed previously, community happiness is likely to be due to low negative effects of aspiration and social comparison. It is shown from these tables that the feeling "enough" is a crucial factor to happiness in this community. Satisfaction in the mind can reduce suffering; in other words, it increases happiness. As this relates to inner happiness which has not been much explored in other happiness studies, the study investigates more details about characteristics of happiness of different groups with additional tests.

The study then disaggregates samples by occupations, income levels, and age groups for specific groups' empirical tests in order to see happiness determinants that may be varied by sub-groups. The study can also explore further how much effects of 'enough' for different groups. Results show that the effect of 'enough' in agriculturalists are stronger than that of

⁵ From the survey, 78 % of them perceived they have similar economic status with other community members, while about 10% feel higher than average and the rest feel poorer.

⁶ Their average income is likely to be lower than other towns as about 43% have monthly income less than 10,000 Baht and 33% is between 10,000 - 20,000 baht.

the non-agriculture group and is also stronger for the lower income group (indicated in the Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 as follows).

Break down by occupation

The study has covered samples in different occupations in the community and grouped into two main categories: agriculture and non-agriculture (of which a lot are under service sector such as community’s food related, local transportation, etc.).

Table 4. Happiness Determinants of the Agricultural Group

n= 126

Variables	Coefficient	p> [t]
Income	.117	0.390
Health	.231	0.140
Time	.371	0.236
Giving	-.353	0.428
Enough	1. 04	0.002
Want	-.055	0.562
Manage suffer	.457	0.003
Family	-.116	0.835
Community	.521	0.006
Environment	.454	0.001
Constant	1.89	0.033

For the agricultural group, the feeling of “enough” has the largest significant effect (with 1.04 coef.) on happiness, followed by the effects of good community relationship, management of suffering, and quality of environment respectively. Unsurprisingly, those who remain in agricultural

sector, whereas a lot have changed careers for not working hard with uncertainty income as those in agriculture, must have self-satisfaction in mind. Of course, living in that green community and environment are important factors for their happiness; otherwise, they may work in non-agricultural sector elsewhere.

Table 5. Happiness Determinants of the Non agriculturalists

n= 352

Variables	Coefficient	p> [t]
Income	-019	0.791
Health	.361	0.001
Time	.287	0.111
Giving	-.113	0.661
Enough	.591	0.001
Want	-.107	0.137
Manage suffer	.076	0.409
Family	.808	0.002
Community	.388	0.000
Environment	.377	0.000
Constant	3.157	0.000

For the non-agricultural, the feeling of ‘enough’ also has a positive effect on this group’s happiness, but its coefficient is smaller than the agricultural group (0.591, compared to 1.04), reflecting the lower magnitude of ‘enough’ to happiness compared to those of agriculture. Moreover, family and community relationship, quality of environment and health are also positively significant. However, the effects from community and environment are lower, comparing with those in the agriculture.

Break down by income levels

When breaking down by levels of monthly income into three levels: (1) less than 10,000 Baht, 2) between 10,000-20,000 Baht, and 3) beyond 20,000 Baht), the variable of relative income is used for income variable due to the limited range in nominal income of each group. The results also show that the lowest income group has the largest effects of ‘enough’. Those who have monetary income below 20,000 baht are the groups that “enough” are significant to their happiness, but it is not significant for those with income higher than 20,000 baht/month (as shown in Tables 6, 7, and 8).

Table 6. Happiness Determinants of those earn less than 10,000 Baht a month

n=204

Variables	Coefficient	p> [t]
Relative Income Perception	.468	0.058
Health	.290	0.041
Time	.407	0.125
Giving	.362	0.306
Enough	.551	0.033
Want	-.076	0.400
Manage suffer	.090	0.450
Family	.598	0.107
Community	.154	0.339
Environment	.290	0.014
Constant	3.117	0.000

From Table 6, factors significantly affecting happiness of the lowest income groups are the feeling of ‘enough’ (with the largest coef. of .55), followed by environmental quality and

health (with .29 coef.). For the lowest income group, the prime factor for their happiness is the feeling of enough in materials. Obviously, satisfaction with what they have is crucial for happiness of the low income. They are also happy with good health and quality of environment.

Table 7 shows factors affecting happiness of the middle-income group (of this study); it is shown that community relationship, enough, environment, and health are significantly positive to happiness respectively, while levels of wants beyond basic needs have significantly negative relationship. This reflects that increasing wants (beyond necessities) which can reduce happiness as it can induce suffering (according to aspiration theory and Buddhist concept). Thus, reducing want (beyond basic need level) or eliminating unnecessary want can increase happiness of the middle-income group.

Table 7. Happiness Determinants of those between 10,000 – 20,000 Baht a month

n=158

Variables	Coefficient	p> [t]
Relative Income	.182	0.477
Health	.267	0.048
Time	.171	0.531
Giving	-.707	0.135
Enough	.510	0.042
Want	-.226	0.024
Manage suffer	.298	0.064
Family	.564	0.239
Community	.630	0.000
Environment	.332	0.016
Constant	2.961	0.002

Comparing tables 6 and 7, “enough” has more effects to the lower income group, as it is positively significant to happiness of the lowest income group (with coef. .55), higher than that of the middle group (with coef. .51). In contrast, “enough” is not significant to happiness for those who have relatively higher income group (more than 20,000 baht) as shown in Table 8 below. It implies that for the relatively highest income group, their happiness does not relate to “enough” in materials.

For this relatively higher income group, factors significantly affecting their happiness are environment, community/social relationship, and health, while enough is not significant. Appreciation of environment quality can lead to happiness of all groups across income levels; this confirms the positive effect of community environment to happiness.

Table 8. Happiness Determinants of those higher than 20,000 Baht

n=116

Variables	Coefficient	p> [t]
Relative Income	.349	0.110
Health	.347	0.026
Time	.234	0.336
Giving	.412	0.364
Enough	.316	0.211
Want	.004	0.971
Manage suffer	.098	0.470
Family	.555	0.121
Community	.475	0.002
Environment	.512	0.000
Constant	1.413	0.007

These last three tables interestingly present that the groups with relatively low income and uncertainty in earning (i.e., agriculturalists) feel “enough” or sufficiency in materials with larger effect to happiness. However, “enough” is not significant for the highest income group in comparison (above 20,000 baht a month). Thus, the feeling of sufficient in materials does not relate to how much materials they have. Those who have lower level of materials seem to have satisfaction in material than those who have more materials. Thus, the feeling of enough relates to subjective well-being rather than actual level of income.

Break down by Age groups

Another group category is divided by age group. The study divided the generations into two groups (below 40 years and above 40 years) as happiness studies often found that happiness pattern changes from midlife (around 40-50 years). For example, a study by Mroczek et al. (2005) found that life satisfaction increased from age 40 to 65, but then declined, particularly with impending death. As the survey of this study categorized senior age group for over 60 (not 65 years old), so it groups people between 40 and 60 together with the above 60 as one group. In addition, the community has largely changed from the past 40-50 years with a lot of reduction in green space (from about 95% to 45% now) which can affect the change in environment for the new generation under 40 years.

Table 9 shows that factors positively significant to happiness for the older group are family relationship (with the largest coefficient .84), followed by time (.54), enough (.45), environment (.38), and community relationship (.32) respectively. It shows that family and time-balance are very important to happiness for people above the middle age.

**Table 9. Happiness Determinants of the above 40 years old
 n= 271**

Variables	Coefficient	p> [t]
Income	-.075	.345
Health	-.022	.528
Time	.5414	.007
Giving	.033	.758
Enough	.454	.050
Want	-.093	.177
Manage suffer	.174	.066
Family	.840	.046
Community	.320	.010
Environment	.380	.000
Constant	3.85	.000

**Table 10. Happiness Determinants of the below 40 years old
 n= 155**

Variables	Coefficient	p> [t]
Income	.248	.032
Health	.670	.000
Time	.333	.230
Giving	-.187	.376
Enough	.490	.044
Want	-.116	.284
Manage suffer	.007	.960
Family	.918	.020
Community	.690	.000
Environment	.403	.004
Constant	1.307	.125

From Table 10, the largest significant effect on happiness for the younger generation is family (.92), which is similar to the older group, followed by community relationship (.69) and health (.67), enough (.49), environment (.40), and income (.25). Although income is not significant for the older group, it is significantly positive to happiness for the younger. While time balance is significant for the older group, it is not significant for this younger group. However, family and community relationship, environment and enough are significant for both age groups.

The significant of income to the younger group below 40 years old implies that money (income) matters for young workers who may have to secure their economic and family lives. Thus, this is the only group that income is positively significant, although its effect is minimal. In comparison with other groups, this group may need more income as they may look for job in non-agricultural sector or still have low earnings⁷. As discussed in Kittiprapas (2018a), happiness determinants of each specific group can be different; while income effect to happiness is generally small, its effect to the unemployed is higher than the employed. This reflects that income matters for those who are short of money, but may not affect happiness of those who can secure with subsistent income level and beyond because at that stage other factors are more important to their happiness, as mentioned in Clark et al., (2008), Layard (2005) and Bataineh (2019).

In addition, the study investigates further into the sample of those responding as having “enough” in order to examine in more details of inner happiness determinants of this group. Then, another model with only 325 samples of this group (reporting as “enough” in materials) are selected for empirical

⁷ From the survey data, 46% of this group is under 30 years old and 27% of the below 40 is unemployed.

tests. To explore wisdom-based happiness of this group, only related variables are selected; for example, levels of material wants beyond basic needs, management of suffering, level of stress, and frequency of mindfulness practice. The result is presented in Table 9.

Table 11. Happiness Determinants of those feeling enough in materials

n=325

Variables	Coefficient	p> [t]
Want	-.025	0.684
Manage suffering	.457	0.000
Stress	-.053	0.446
Mindfulness	.133	0.049
Constant	6.708	0.000

The table shows that for those who respond “enough”, the management of suffering is the key significant factor for happiness (with .46 coef.). Also, level of mindfulness is another significant factor for this group (with .13 coef). Those feeling “enough” or have sufficient materials would have satisfaction in mind that leads to less negative effects from social comparison and aspiration, associating with less suffering and leading to the increase in happiness. This is supported by the frequency in mindfulness practice which has positive relationship to this group’s happiness. That means happiness of the “enough” group comes tandem with the level of unattachment to suffering and mindfulness practice significantly. This somehow reflects the role of inner happiness at wisdom level.

In sum, these empirical findings discussed earlier confirm that various indicators for inner happiness and moderation in material living significantly relate to the happiness of the community members. The sufficiency in materials and

managed expenditures within limits are crucial economic factors. Social comparison/aspiration (main factor of unhappiness discussed in many studies) is low in this kind of community where monetary income does not matter as long as most of the people feel that they have similar or equal economic status/rank with good financial management within households. This reduces the negative effect of aspiration and adaptation on happiness.

Thus, for those with simple living, economic income may not be the ultimate aim, but other factors matter for their happiness as shown by the empirical results. The sufficiency of materials, quality of environment, and inner happiness can make them live happily in harmony with green space environment that community members have tried to maintain. Drawn from these results and survey data, their life satisfaction comes mostly from subjective aspects such as the feeling that they are not in poor economic status, their pride with family members with strong bonds and good community/social relationship as well as the community's environmental quality. With a moderate and simple life style, they have enough time to do what they like to do and help others as well as having good health. These subjective and objective aspects relate to the increase in happiness.

5. Conclusion and policy implications

The results of this case study show the positive effects of higher level of happiness beyond physical level, role of perception in relative income and family economic management, apart from non-economic factors such as health, time-balance, family and social relationship, as well as environment to happiness. These are consistent with other happiness studies discussed in section 2 about role of income and relative income, health, family and social relationship,

time-balance, and environment to happiness. However, an additional contribution found in this study's findings is the role of inner happiness confirmed by related indicators. Specifically, there are several key conclusions and policy implications drawn from this case study as follows:

First, perception in relative income plays significant role for happiness, while absolute income does not (with only exception for the younger age group). Therefore, policies aim at reducing income inequality would be more likely to have an effect on the happiness of individuals and the society as a whole rather than the aim to increase income or GDP only. As the increase in perceived inequality would reduce happiness, a policy shift to narrowing income gap can lead to an increase in social happiness. Therefore, to distribute benefits from development inclusively or reducing the feeling of inequality would be beneficial to societal/community happiness.

Second, family net income is highly essential for happiness. Although actual income is low, it does not significantly affect their happiness. As long as they can manage family's financial situation without debt or have saving, they can live happily in that situation. This finding is in line with sufficiency economy principle which should be promoted especially in times of economic crisis.

Third, the empirical study found that environment quality is very crucial to happiness of this community, confirmed by the positively significance of environment variable across all groups. Thus, preserving good quality of environment for community happiness is essential. Government policies should support and provide incentives for environmental protection, particularly with people participation.

Forth, findings in this community study confirm that inner happiness indicators are significantly relevant. It is evident that feeling "enough" in materials, with supportive inner happiness indicators, is essential for this community's

happiness. It is a key influential factor for happiness of community people who can live within this kind of environment for a long time.

Interestingly, the feeling of ‘enough’ has stronger effect to happiness for the lower and uncertain income groups such as those with the lowest income group and in agricultural sector. Only those with relatively highest income group in the community, their happiness does not relate to the feeling of enough or satisfaction in materials. In addition, it is found that fewer unnecessary wants leads to higher happiness for the middle-income group. For the group responding with ‘enough’, mindfulness and unattachment to suffering are significantly important, reflecting happiness at wisdom level. Thus, inner happiness should be promoted and policies should raise social awareness about ‘real happiness’ in Buddhism (rather than stimulate unnecessary wants for consumption-led growth policies all the times).

Simple living with moderation also allows community members to have more time to spend for useful activities that they are happy with and creativity works; thus, the increase in such time leads to the increase in happiness, confirmed by positive results of ‘time’ for those in the general group and sub-group of the above 40 years old. In addition, they have time to go to temples and do mindfulness practice allowing them to have some ability of unattachment to suffering. Time balance and quality of environment can lead to good health (physically and mentally). These all affect happiness positively as mentioned in Layard (2005), Bataineh (2019) and Machado (2015).

The case study of Bangkokjao community’ happiness also supports the concept of BSD as presented in Kittiprapas (2018b) that inner happiness is the key to achieving sustainable development. This community happiness with simplicity and moderation can maintain the environment,

while the environment increases their happiness. Thus, inner happiness, especially with feeling “enough” or sufficiency in materials, is crucial for preserving environment and should be promoted as a pathway to sustainable development.

Also, what could be learnt from this case study is that economics of moderation characterized with the sufficiency in household financial management, low income inequality and low social comparison as well as good environment can increase happiness of this community’s population. Thus, this kind of economic system should be promoted, especially in light of the global movement towards sustainable development goals and high uncertainties in world economic situation often facing risks from financial, economic, and pandemic crises.

Moving Policies forward

The study points to a crucial country’s policy movement - narrowing income inequality gap which is very important for people’s happiness; thus, government policies should plan for inequality reduction which is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that Thailand has to achieve by 2030.

Concerning equality, one possible policy recommendation to ensure that all have basic needs equally could be basic welfare provision and resources distribution so that people would feel that they have at least sufficient basic needs equally, such as policies which relate to food security, basic health care access, land and shelter, and clothes. Therefore, programs providing basic welfare for all, such as universal health care should be continued with priority, in addition to supporting land distribution to those in need which will also help to guarantee food security if those lands can be used as resources for agriculture under sufficiency economy concept. Sufficient food and clothes at subsistent level could

also be provided as a certain of allowance to the needy, which may be the disadvantaged or the vulnerable in times of crisis. Sufficiency economy philosophy with inner happiness is encouraged for moderate living with care for quality of environment; this should be promoted as a pathway to the achievement of sustainable development goals for Thailand.

However, not only economic indicator for inequality reduction is needed, subjective or qualitative aspects for mind development to increase inner happiness should also be promoted. Mindfulness and living in moderation will reduce the negative effects of social comparison which are a major cause of unhappiness as indicated in the theoretical reviews. As indicated in this study and others, perceived relative income significantly effects happiness. Thus, promoting inner happiness to reduce social comparison is crucial for increased happiness. The importance of inner happiness is consistent with Clark et al. (2018) suggesting that mental well-being is the main determinant of happiness and should be the focus of policy in promoting happiness. Thus, policies focusing on mental well-being could bring in much more happiness of the people than that emphasis on income or economic well-being, comparing the same costs or resources spent. Inner happiness is happiness with low cost and transmissible to others and society. Thus, policy consideration should turn to be inward-looking for personal/mental well-being and promoting inner happiness, rather than only looking for outside but neglect human-inside.

For households, sufficiency economy principle should be promoted for good household financial management; even households which do not have high income they can live happily. The sufficiency economy philosophy (SEP) can also help people to go through economic hardship in any time of crisis. In everyday life, SEP's key principle of moderation is crucial for people to feel "enough" and to not be driven by

unlimited wants that can generate unhappiness. To promote that way of life, policy direction should promote economy of moderation based on Buddhist and sufficiency economy philosophy with supportive policy environment. Policies should encourage people in the society to be aware about benefits of mindfulness, reasonableness, wisdom to know appropriate level of living and consumption, management of stress and suffering for improving mental well-being. On the other hand, policies should not promote greed, continuously increasing wants for unnecessary things or encourage over-spending all the time (which has been evident before the time of crisis). As over-stimulating consumption continuously may lead to family's financial problems, policy measures (in normal times) should not escalate consumption led-growth only for short-run GDP concern without due consideration to the long-run effects on resource/budget limitation, non-economic effects and human behavior with carelessness as well as high risks for being indebted. Moreover, over consumption and careless production can destroy natural resources and harmful for lives, which contradict to the movement for sustainable development.

Another important policy implication highlighted from this study is that the government and the society have to urgently preserve environment quality in Bangkokjao, as it is crucial for community happiness shown consistently across all groups. In addition, green spaces in Bangkokjao have been generating positive externalities to the public at large outside the community. While the ratio of green space in this community has gradually declined since the past 40-50 years, serious environmental protection is urgently needed. As the green area of Bangkokjao is very important for outside community area such as Bangkok and Thailand due to its high production of oxygen and carbon reduction as being called as “Bangkok's green lung”, all parties should try to protect this

large green area which was once called the ‘best urban oasis in Asia’ by Time Magazine Asia in 2006. Otherwise, unplanned business and investment from outside together with poor regulation enforcement will gradually destroy the quality of environment and community happiness. Land use planning and strong legal enforcement for those invading environment regulations should be seriously implemented. In addition, incentives for people participating in environmental protection should be provided with measures supporting them to have returns from investing and preserving those green areas. There are many vacant public land slots that can be reformed for community benefits from green production from those land. Otherwise, this uniquely green community would be at high risk of losing its green area and traditional life style, which can happen very quickly if stakeholders and the government do not seriously protect it nor see its importance - especially when the community cannot resist with the stronger business power and facing strong invasion from materialistic urbanization surrounding them just across the Chao Praya river.

Limitations and future research

This study survey covers community residents who have lived there through generations or for a long time as permanent residents, not outsiders who have come to do business or those from other urban areas who construct their second houses there. However, the future changes in population with new comers and economic structure may bring in new business and investment (such as for tourism related, construction, etc.) that could affect future community happiness. In addition, the survey was conducted in the daytime or working time, so it may not cover those who go out of their houses and the community for work or may be struggle in life. Finally, this micro case study is an effort to test the concept of happiness in

Buddhism which still requires more case studies and data sets for further exploration. More studies should be done to cover greater geographical locations.

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