Applied Economics Journal Vol. 24 No. 2 (December 2017): 34-51

ISSN: 2586-9124 (PRINT)
ISSN: 2586-9132 (ONLINE)

Received: 7 October 2017
Received in revised form: 25 February 2018
Accepted: 26 February 2018

Happiness and Community-Specific Factors

Nisachon Leerattanakorn*

Faculty of Economics, Maejo University, Chiang Mai 50290, Thailand. Email: nisa.aom@gmail.com

Aree Wiboonpongse

Faculty of Agriculture, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand and

Academic Expert, Prince of Songkla University, Songkla 90110, Thailand

Email:aree@chiangmai.ac.th

Abstract

The majority of previous studies on happiness have mainly focused on individual factors, such as gender, age, income, educational level, and religion. Only a few studies have examined the role of community or society on individual happiness. This study analyzes the effects of community-specific factors on individual happiness using the survey data of 700 farmers in Thailand. The result of the ordered logit model reveals that community- (community economic strength and social capital) and individual-specific factors are significant determinants of individual happiness. Thus, previous studies that have ignored community environment have led to biased estimates of individual happiness. This study also proposes suggestions for policy makers.

Keywords: happiness, life satisfaction, community-specific factors, social capital, Thailand.
JEL Classification: A12, D01, I31

Introduction

Happiness is the ultimate goal of human life (Yacobi, 2015). After the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, the UN launched a program that focused on human happiness and identified the pursuit of happiness and human well-being as the global development goal for post-2015 development agenda

* Corresponding author: Nisachon Leerattanakorn, Faculty of Economics, Maejo University, Chiangmai Thailand, Tel:+66 5387 5250, Fax +66 5387 5252, E-mail: nisa.aom@gmail.com

(WHO, 2013). Given that happiness generates positive advantages in three major life domains, namely, work, personal relationship, and health (DeLeire and Kalil, 2010), happiness research has attracted attention from psychologists and economists, especially those on the relationship between happiness and economic and social factors.

For many decades, international organizations, academics, and governments developed methods for collecting and measuring individual happiness. Nowadays, basic happiness measurement survey has been accepted academically. Considerable evidence and empirical studies have reported and affirmed the validity and reliability. For example, significant evidence and empirical studies have indicated that reported happiness level correlates with physical functions and brain activity, blood pressure, fibrinogen stress responses, and heart rate (Layard, 2010), as well as emotion expressions, such as smiling and frowning (Smith, 2013) and the length of an individual's life (Palmore, 1969).

In Thailand, since the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan, The National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) set "a happiness society" as a target for public policy and started the creation of policies to boost the happiness level of Thais. Recently, the World Happiness Report 2017 revealed that Thailand ranked 32nd compared with the previous year's 33rd ranking.

Despite growing interest, most happiness studies in Thailand have addressed individual factors associated with happiness. Quantitative studies on community-specific factors or institutions' performance have remained scarce even though Thais have given precedence to their communities. Therefore, community characteristics should be significantly determine individual happiness. This paper aims to provide a significant answer and fill the missing knowledge in Thai society concerning the potential of community-specific factors leading to individual happiness.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature. Section 3 outlines the methodology of the study. Section 4 presents the results and discussion. The last section draws the conclusion.

Literature review

The concept of happiness has been most extensively analyzed by philosophers and economics. Scholars of happiness have debated on the causes of such emotion. Some robust empirical studies have explored the relationship among individual-specific factors, such as income (Easterlin, 1995, 2001; Cummins, 2000), age (Oswald, 1997; Frey and Stutzer, 2000), gender (Graham and Chattopadhyay, 2012; Chui and Wong, 2016), education (Vanpraag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2004; Layard, 2005), social relationship (Lane, 2000; Helliwell and Putnam, 2004), self-esteem (Dogan, Totan, and Sapmaz, 2013; Sato and Yuki, 2014), optimism (Hasnain, Wazid, and Hasan, 2014), and happiness.

The findings of these studies helped develop academic theory and introduced policy implications. Generally, these studies have agreed that individual factors play a role in predicting happiness. Recent research has proposed that community-specific circumstances or institutions' performance may be important factors that have been overlooked and that such community-specific factors are important in predicting happiness.

Given that human beings by nature are social animals, society precedes individual mental state and happiness. Therefore, the specific community or society an individual belongs to significantly affects individual happiness. These community-specific factors are a part of social capital. Numerous definitions of social capital exist, but all are geared toward the same direction. For example, Putnam (2000) stated that social capital refers to the relationship between individuals as a social network and social norm, which is characterized by sharing, trust, generosity toward others, and good relationships with neighbors. Coleman (1988) claimed that social capital composed of trust and obligations, information channels, norms, and sanctions. World Bank defined social capital as the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of social interactions in a society. Moreover, the impact of social capital is supported by various aspects, such as transaction costs reduced by trust, improved quality of public institutions, and contribution to economic performance (Gabriel and Paulo, 2008).

General indicators of social capital include variables such as trust and confidence in institutions, as well as social interaction. Apart from these variables, this study applies social capital on community-specific factors and institutional performance variables at the amphoe level, such as levels of community income, happiness, and religiousness.

Research methodology

Data collection

Multi-stage sampling was employed for data collection. The first step was the selection of three provinces, namely, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Lampang. This study focuses on agriculturalists due to traditional and strong community-specific way of life. These provinces have the highest number of officially registered agricultural households (i.e., 55% of agricultural households in the upper north of Thailand). The second step is the application of geographical concepts to classify areas in each province into three layers, namely, core, middle, and outer layers. Three amphoes in the middle area of each province are selected.

The authors interviewed 700 farmers who are household head in 2013. The descriptive statistics of the survey data satisfied the requirements of the National Statistical Office of Thailand, which confirmed that the sample can effectively infer the population of the upper north of Thailand.

Variables, measurement, and hypothesis

Dependent variable

Happiness level: Happiness is analyzed based on the multidimensional evaluations of individual quality of life as defined by Rojas and Veenhoven (2011). The present study assessed happiness on a seven-point scale (very unhappy, moderately unhappy, slightly unhappy, neither happy nor unhappy, slightly happy, moderately happy, and very happy). Respondents answered the following question, "All things considered, 12 months ago, how happy would you say you were?" The happiness question is placed at the beginning of the questionnaire to minimize bias from previous questions.

Survey data showed that more than 80% of respondents feel happy their entire lives. However, the ordered happiness level in the questionnaire begins with seven levels based on the international happiness report. This research found that few Thais are unhappy with responses only at levels 2 to 4. The responses are grouped into level 1 and recoded from levels 5–7 to 2–4. Happiness level is recategorized from 7 to 4 levels fitting to the true distribution of happiness of the Thais. Although the unbalance distribution may affect the efficiency of result, this paper has provided the robustness check of 3-level result which is more balance in the appendix and found the same pattern of significance. The distribution of happiness levels is shown in Figure 1.

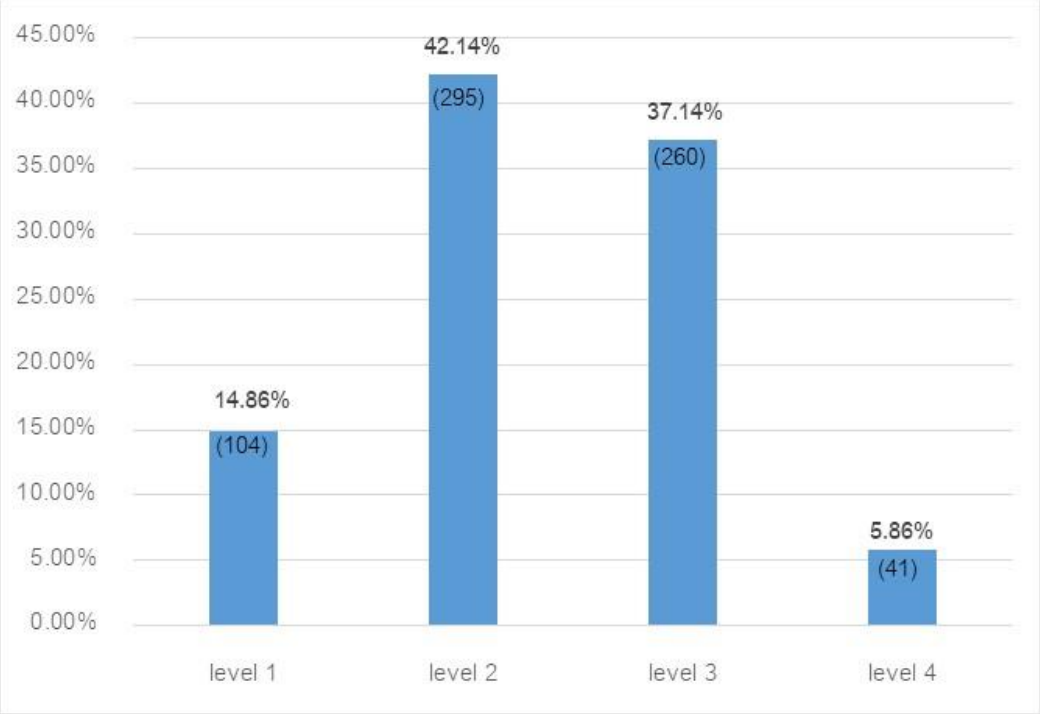

Figure 1 Distribution of happiness level. (The number in parenthesis is the number of observations)

Independent variables

This part describes four individual- and four community-specific factors.

Household income: Economists view income as a basic factor for happiness because well-being is directly related to income. As income represents wealth and purchasing power, higher income induces higher utility in purchasing of food, health services, and education. However, Easterlin paradox proposed that absolute income is not only factor to happiness, but also relative income.

Income aspiration: People instinctively draw relativeness in every situation. Several people compare themselves with others, such as cousins, friends, or neighbors. They also compare their current situation with their past situation or their expectations for the future. In this study, income aspiration refers to the comparison of current and expected income. The idea of relative income is a part of general aspiration level theory (Stutzer, 2004). Moreover, the variable of income aspiration provides expected individual income.

Religiousness: Several studies have examined the effects of religion on individual happiness. A number of studies have observed a positive association between religiousness and happiness (Lewis, Maltby, and Day, 2005; Nettle, 2005; Brooks, 2008), whereas other studies have failed to detect any relationship (Snoep, 2008). Respondents are asked to self-evaluate the degree of their religiousness on a four-point scale (1 = not at all to 4 = strongly).

Attitude toward one's financial situation: Attitude is an essential aspect of human life. Positive attitude leads to happiness. This study assesses an individual's attitude toward his or her own financial situation with a four-point scale. Respondents are asked the following, "In your opinion, your financial situation is?" (1 = strongly inadequate, 2 = inadequate, 3 = adequate, and 4 = more than adequate).

Individual happiness level is hypothesized as the product of community-specific factors of the community or society an individual belongs to. Unlike in Western societies, Thailand has a cultural tradition of Buddhism that emphasizes collectivism rather than individualism. Specific factors added to the standard individual happiness equation are proxy variables of community economic strength and social capital.

Four community-specific factors are defined and measured, as shown in Table 1. Community income, personal relationship, social support, and religious community are averages of individual responses of given variables within an amphoe.

Table 1 Description of community-specific variables and measurements

Aspect of community-specific variables	Definition	Measurement	Variable name
Community economy strength (community income)	The community income	The average household income in each amphoe	Community income
Personal relationship	The structure and nature of people's personal relationship (OECD, 2013).	"How easily did you get along with neighbor and community?" The answer has a five-point scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very strongly).	Neighbor relation
Social support	The level of resources or support that a person can draw from their personal relationship (OECD, 2013).	"During the past 12 months, how often did you give assistance to neighbor, friend, or kin without any compensation or payment." Choose from a five-point scale (1 = not at all often to 5 = extremely often). Average score represents social support.	Assistance
Religious social capital	The level of religiousness.	"How often did you engage in religious activities? The respondents are shown a five-point scale (1 = not at all to 5 = strongly). Average score represents the community-religiousness.	Religious community

Control variables: Control variables comprise gender, age, and physical health. Gender and age denotes the gender and age of the respondent, respectively. A dummy gender variable is coded as 1 = female and 0 = male. In terms of physical health, respondents are requested to indicate their level of satisfaction toward their physical health using a seven-point scale (1 = weak to 7 = strong). The hypothesis and explanation of all independent variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Independent variables and hypotheses

Independent variables	Expected sign	Explanation of the hypothesis
Household income	+	Household income reveals current purchasing power, which follows the idea that "more is better" and utility theory. When income is high, the level of consumption is high, which in turn increases utility linked to happiness.
Income aspiration	-	Following aspiration theory, individual happiness is determined by the gap between aspiration and achievement (Stutzer, 2004). Individuals closer to their aspiration levels are happier.
Religiousness	+	People who follow religious principles and doctrines have positive attitudes toward life, high self-esteem, and good psychological adjustment. Several economists have claimed that religion could serve as insurance during negative shock (Chen, 2010) or protect people against depression. Therefore, religious people are happier than nonreligious people.
Attitude toward own financial situation	+	People satisfied with their financial situation tend to control their minds, wants, and consciousness and to eliminate greed. Therefore, people satisfied with their financial situation tend to be happier.
Community income	+	A rich society has suitable and sufficient infrastructures, high standard of living, good environment, and low crime rate, which enhance the happiness of the members of society. Thus, people who live in rich societies are happier.
Neighbor relation	+	These variables represent social capital in the community level and are hypothesized to be positively related to happiness level. If people live in a community or society with strong social capital, then they feel secure and are probably less likely to move; thus, they are happier.
Assistance	+	
Religious community	+	Moral values and spirituality are the norms of a highly religious community. People who live in a highly religious community respect each other and live together harmoniously based on moral values and spirituality. Therefore, individuals belonging to a relatively highly religious community are happier compared with their counterparts.
Gender	+	Women are more optimistic, have lesser expectations in life, and have lower risks of health problems; thus, women are happier than men.
Age	+	Older individuals have already passed adolescent and middle-aged stresses, and are therefore happier than younger individuals.
Physical health	+	Healthy people are happier than those with illnesses.

This study interviewed 700 farmers in the upper north of Thailand. The sample included of 62% male and 38% female respondents (71% agricultural male; National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2013). The average age was 55 years old. Farmer household was medium size, where 31% of families comprised more than 4 people. Of the respondents, 71% graduated from primary school, whereas only 4% held degrees higher than diploma courses. In addition, 41% of respondents earned less than 10,000 Baht per month, whereas only 5% earned more than 30,000 Baht per month.

Empirical data represented the farmer population structure in this area. Approximately two-thirds of the farmer population were male, not highly educated, quite old, with extended family, and had low income. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables used in the model.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics of variables.

Variable	Definition	Mean	SD	Number of observations
Happiness	Happiness level (1–4)	2.3546	0.7951	700
Household income	Monthly household income (thousand baht per month)	11.5797	12.3523	700
Income aspiration	The income that is sufficient to meet the individual expected income level	0.5648	1.6988	700
Religiousness	Individual religiousness level (1–4)	3.2652	0.7194	700
Attitude toward own financial situation	Their satisfaction with their own financial situation (1–4)	2.8643	0.4173	700
Community income	Average household income (thousand baht per month) in the amphoe level	11.6274	2.9132	700
Neighbor relation	Average degree of being in harmony with neighbor and community	3.8509	0.2113	9
Assistance	Average of the assistance index in the amphoe level	2.0120	0.5204	9
Religious community	Average of the religious community index in the amphoe level	4.9242	0.2001	9
Age	Age (years)	55.1100	9.7439	700
Gender	1= female, 0 = male	–	0.4838	700
Health	Opinion of his/her own health (1–7)	1.2300	2.0338	700

Estimation

To analyze how individual- and community-specific factors influence individual happiness level, we adopted ordered logit regression. In ordered logit regression, we hypothesized that the probability that an event occurs is determined by the following:

$$p_i = F(Z_i) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-Zi}} . \quad (1)$$

The marginal effect of Z on probability is denoted by:

$$f(Z) = \frac{dp}{dZ} = \frac{e^{-Z}}{(1+e^{-Z})^2} . \quad (2)$$

The equation (2) is provided by the derivative of the function with respect to Z . The ordered logit regression is fitted by maximum likelihood estimation. To express the effect of a particular independent variable on the probability of the dependent variable's occurrence, the marginal effect at the sample mean is calculated. Marginal effects are calculated by multiplying $f(Z)$ by estimates of the coefficients of the ordered logit regression. In this study, elasticities are calculated from the marginal effect to estimate the probability of the independent regressors on the dependent variable.

Results and discussion

Based on the discussion in the previous section, the independent variables are household income, income aspiration, attitude toward one's financial situation, religiousness, gender, and age, as well as physical health with four community-specific factors, namely, community income, neighbor relation, assistance, and religious community.

Table 4 shows selected ordered logit models of the farmers' happiness equation in which all six model specifications are presented. The equation linking happiness with all individual-specific factors and personal characteristics is used as the baseline equation. To investigate the effects of community-specific factors, one community-specific income and then two specific factors was are added and observed. These terms are entered into the happiness equation. The last specification included all four community-specific factors to the baseline equation. Table 4 presents the estimated coefficients and robustness check of selected specifications. The statistics for each equation is reported at the end of each column. The highest LR χ^2 show that Eq. 6 exhibits the best fit with the dataset. Collinearity is determined between assistance and neighbor relation. (r = 0.7), as only one factor appears statistically significant. The elasticities of Eq. 6 are reported for four-level of individual happiness, from levels 1 to 4, as shown in Table 5.

Table 4 The selected ordered logit models of the farmers' happiness equation.

	(1) Baseline	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6) Full model
	Coefficients					
Household income	0.0218***	0.0202***	0.0198***	0.0200***	0.0198***	0.0197***
(1,000 Baht)	(0.0061)	(0.0063)	(0.0062)	(0.0062)	(0.0062)	(0.0063)
Income aspiration	-0.1687***	-0.1628***	-0.1820***	-0.1867***	-0.1788***	-0.1765***
	(0.0462)	(0.0463)	(0.0469)	(0.0475)	(0.0478)	(0.0480)
Religiousness	0.1717*	0.1802*	0.1661*	0.1684*	0.1671*	0.1700*
	(0.1020)	(0.1024)	(0.1025)	(0.1026)	(0.1025)	(0.1026)
Attitude toward own financial	0.4148**	0.4463**	0.4319**	0.4365**	0.4325**	0.4291**
situation	(0.1798)	(0.1815)	(0.1816)	(0.1818)	(0.1815)	(0.1814)
Age	0.0114*	0.1132*	0.0103	0.0106	0.0103	0.0105
	(0.0067)	(0.0067)	(0.0067)	(0.0067)	(0.0070)	(0.0067)
Gender	-0.0586	-0.0308	-0.0232	-0.0249	-0.0237	-0.0249
	(0.1523)	(0.1538)	(0.1540)	(0.1540)	(0.1540)	(0.1541)
Health	0.0077	0.0091	0.0108	0.0090	0.0111	0.0100
	(0.0356)	(0.0356)	(0.0357)	(0.0356)	(0.0357)	(0.0358)
Community income		0.0344	0.0797***	0.0471*	0.0823***	0.0822***
		(0.0264)	(0.0301)	(0.0270)	(0.0312)	(0.0312)
Assistance			0.5192***		0.5832**	0.5636**
			(0.1623)		(0.2516)	(0.2536)
Neighbor relation				0.3632**	-0.1879	-0.0115
				(0.3633)	(0.5650)	(0.6352)
Religious community						-0.2712
						(0.4456)
Statistical report						
Log likelihood	-770.1673	-769.3146	-764.1523	-766.7933	-764.0969	-763.9112
Pseudo R^2	0.0246	0.0257	0.0322	0.0289	0.0323	0.0326
LR χ^2	38.87	40.57	50.90	45.62	51.01	51.39
Prob > χ^2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Remarks: *, **, *** indicate the level of significance at 10%, 5%, and 1%, respectively. The standard error is in parenthesis. Number of observations = 671

Table 5 Elasticities of farmers' happiness equation (equation 6).

Variables	(1) Predicted prob. Happiness = 1	(2) Predicted prob. Happiness = 2	(3) Predicted prob. Happiness = 3	(4) Predicted prob. Happiness = 4
	Elasticity	Elasticity	Elasticity	Elasticity
Household income	-0.2717***	-0.1410**	0.0465	0.1454**
(1,000 Baht)	(0.0993)	(0.0674)	(0.0539)	(0.0702)
Income aspiration	0.1179***	0.0612**	-0.0202	-0.0632**
	(0.0353)	(0.0251)	(0.0240)	(0.0306)
Religiousness	-0.6571	-0.3410	0.1125	0.3517
	(0.4021)	(0.2283)	(0.1481)	(0.2574)
Attitude toward own	-1.4546**	-0.7549**	0.2491	0.7785
financial situation	(0.6064)	(0.3645)	(0.3186)	(0.4788)
Age	-0.6861	-0.3561	0.1175	0.3671
	(0.4411)	(0.2478)	(0.1573)	(0.2804)
Gender	0.0405	0.0210	-0.0069	-0.0217
	(0.2516)	(0.1313)	(0.0423)	(0.1329)
Health	-0.0146	-0.0076	0.0025	0.0078
	(0.0524)	(0.0272)	(0.0094)	(0.0283)
Community income	-1.1314**	-0.5872**	0.1937	0.6054*
	(0.4668)	(0.2978)	(0.2310)	(0.3238)
Assistance	-1.3422*	-0.6966	0.2299	0.7184**
	(0.7362)	(0.4707)	(0.2362)	(0.3285)
Neighbor relation	0.0523	0.0271	-0.0090	-0.0280
	(2.8994)	(1.5068)	(0.4917)	(1.5453)
Religious community	1.5804	0.8202	-0.2706	-0.8458
	(2.7579)	(1.5184)	(0.3935)	(1.2663)

Remarks: *, **, *** indicate the level of significance at 10%, 5%, and 1%, respectively. The standard error is in parenthesis. Number of observations = 671

The results indicated that household income is a powerful and significant source of happiness. Within a range of income (1000 to 110,000 Baht), rich individuals tend to be happier than poor individuals. The findings confirmed conventional utility theory as stated in previous studies (e.g., Clark et al., 2006; Frey, 2008; Dolan et al., 2008; Frey and Stutzer, 2002; van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2008). An individual with high income can obtain more and better goods, services, and resources than their counterparts. Moreover, people with money can enjoy more leisure and effortless activities than those people with lower income (Gailliot, 2012). The elasticities of household income variable indicate that a 1% increase in household income would result in 0.27% decrease in the probability that an individual had low happiness (happiness level 1) and 0.15% increase in the probability that an individual would have high happiness (happiness level 4).

As expected, the results showed a negative and highly significant correlation between income aspiration and happiness level. With other things held constant, high income aspiration reduces individual happiness, which confirms aspiration theory. An interesting finding from this study was that income aspiration increased the probability of low happiness level by about 0.12% and decreased the probability of high level of happiness by about 0.06%.

A positive significant relationship between individual religiousness and happiness level was observed. The more religious a person is, the happier he or she is. The effect of religion on happiness empirically confirmed the findings of many researchers (Ferriss, 2002; Nettle, 2005; Brooks, 2008); this effect has been observed across different religious communities, such as Muslims (Tilouine and Belgoumidi, 2009; Abdel-Khalek, 2007), Israeli Jewish (Levin, 2013), Protestants (Loewenthal et al., 2000), and Christians (Francis et al., 2003). Religiousness improves a person's health (Levin, 1994), ensures better self-control and self-regulation (McCullough and Willoughby, 2009), provides emotional release (McCauley and Lawson, 2002), reduces stress and anxiety, supports positive thinking, increases psychological well-being, and guides people's lives. This finding may be attributed to the fact that most of the farmers are Buddhists, and thus, they strictly conform to religion.

For satisfaction with their financial situation, attitude toward their financial situation is a significant and positive sign of happiness level. The variable, attitude toward one's financial situation variable, reveals individuals' subjective internal factors according to feelings of satisfaction. Respondents who feel that their current financial situation is adequate tended to be happier than those who feel that their current financial situation is inadequate. The average marginal effect of this factor indicates that the feeling of financial sufficiency satisfaction is the most important individual factor compared with the other scaled factor (religiousness). Increased feelings of satisfaction increase the probability of high individual happiness level by about 0.78% and reduce the probability of low individual happiness level by about 1.45%.

This study focuses on the effects of community-specific factors. As expected, the strength of community economy (community income) is highly significant. The estimates are robust in all model specification. The elasticities of community income reveal that community income is particularly important for individual happiness. This factor significantly decreased the likelihood of low happiness level by 1.13% and significantly increased the likelihood of high happiness level by 0.61%. Individuals who live in poor societies are likely to have low happiness levels.

For community-specific social factor represented by three factors, namely, assistance, neighbor relations, and religious community, this study revealed that happiness has only one factor, that is. "Assistance." Religious individuals are expected to tend to share more compared with their counterparts. In Thai rural society, religious activities and events influence people's participation, thereby developing close relationships. The major finding indicates that participating and sharing affect social capital in the community level on individual happiness.

Logically, people who live with others in close and supportive relationships are happier than individuals who live alone. From the economics point of view, social capital decreases imperfect information, thereby reducing unnecessary cost of transaction and over exploitation of farmers' earnings. Consequently, these factors contribute to the individual happiness of farmers.

At present, satisfaction with life does not differ significantly between men and women because of the balanced gender roles in Thailand. Surprisingly, physical health status had no significant effect on individual happiness level. In depth investigation finds that sampled farmers on the average are relatively older (55 years), with 90% of the respondents aged from 45 to 65. With heavy fieldwork, Thai farmers at this age normally suffer from health problems.

In summary, community-specific factors upgraded the effect of individual income on individual happiness across the four levels (Figure 2). However, the elasticity results showed that community-specific factors are powerful to farmers with low income. This finding indicates that even if farmers are poor, they are glad of the community's happiness level.

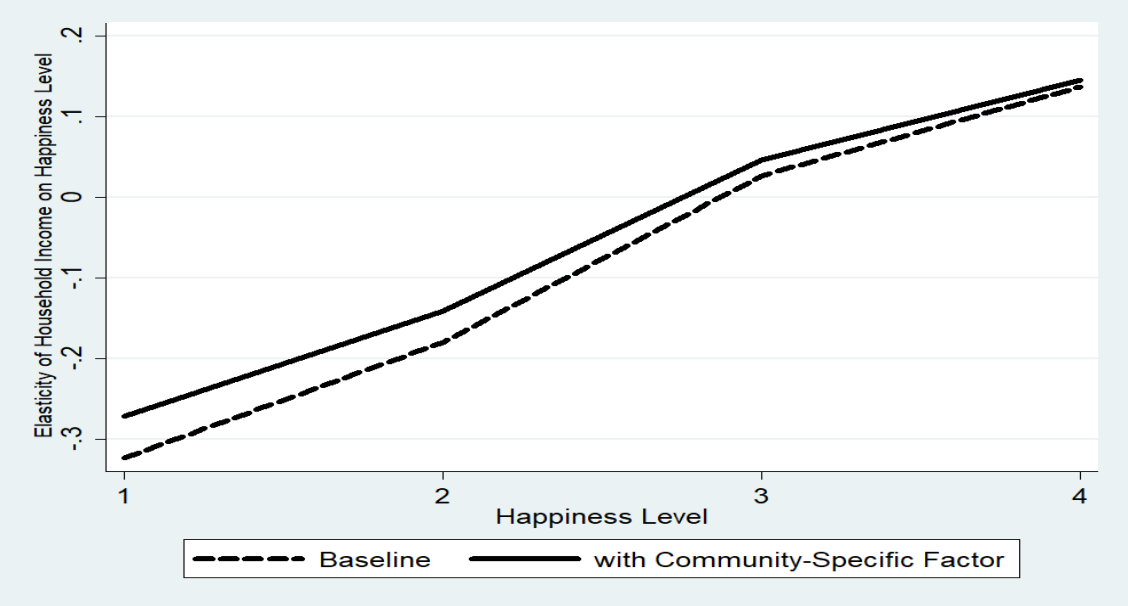

Figure 2 Elasticity of household income on individual happiness level categorized by happiness level.

Conclusion

Human beings are social animals. Thus, community-specific factors significantly affect individual happiness. The activities or beliefs of other people in the same community influence minds and emotions. This finding suggests that happiness depends on individual factors and the social contexts in which individuals live. This study evaluated the influence and contribution of individual or personality and community-specific factors on individual happiness.

This work relied on the primary data of farmers in the upper north of Thailand and employed the ordered logit model. The results presented robust and strong effects of household income, income aspiration, religiousness, and attitude toward one's financial situation with two community-specific variables, namely, community income and mean frequency of assistance.

Happiness increases with absolute income but decreases with income aspirations. People who participate in religious activities are comparatively happier. People who feel satisfied are happier. Moreover, community income and frequency of assistance are significant to individual happiness. Community income indicates the development of the entire community, whereas frequency of assistance reveals the important role of social capital. The most important factor is the mean frequency of assistance, followed by attitude toward own financial situation. Findings confirmed that individual happiness depends on individual or personality factors and social contexts. Policy implications for happiness should consider individual and community levels, as well as income and personal relationships.

References

Abdel-Khalek, A. M. (2007). Religiosity, happiness, health, and psychopathology in a probability sample of Muslim adolescents. *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture, 10*, 571-583.

Brooks, A. (2008). *Gross National Happiness: why happiness matters for America and how we get more of it*. New York: Basic Books.

Chen, D. L. (2010). Club goods and group identity: evidence from Islamic resurgence during the Indonesian financial crisis. *Journal of Political Economy, 118(2)*, 300-354.

Chui, W.H., & Wong, M.Y.H. (2016). Gender differences in happiness and life satisfaction among adolescents in Hong Kong: relationships and self-Concept. *Social Indicators Research, 125*, 1035–1051.

Clark, A. E, Frijters, P., & Shields, A. M. (2006). Income and happiness: evidence, explanations and economic implications, PSE Working Papers n2006-324. 2006. <halshs-00590436>

Coleman, J. M. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, *94*, S95–S120.

Cummins, R. A. (2000). Personal income and subjective well-being: a review. *Journal of Happiness studies, 1*, 133–158.

DeLeire, T., & Kalil, A. (2010). Does consumption buy happiness? evidence from the United States. *International Review of Economics, 57*, 163.

Dogan T., Totan T., & Sapmaz, F. (2013). The role of self-esteem, psychological well-being, emotional self-efficacy, and affect balance on happiness: a path model. *European Scientific Journal*, *9 (20)*, 31-42.

Dolan, P., Peasgood, T., & White M. (2008). Do we really know what makes us happy? A review of the economic literature on the factors associated with subjective well-being. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 29,* 94–122.

Easterlin, R. A. (2001). Income and happiness: toward a utility theory. *Economic Journal, 111*, 465-484.

Easterlin, R. A. (1995). Will raising the incomes of all increase the happiness of all?. *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization, 27(1)*, 35-48.

Ferriss, A. L. (2002). Religion and the quality of life. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 3*, 199 – 215.

Francis, L. J., Hans-Georg Z., & Christopher A. L. (2003). The Relationship between religion and happiness among German students. *Pastoral Psychology, 51(4)*, 273 – 281.

Frey, B. S. (2008). *Happiness*: a revolution in economics. MIT Press.

Frey, B. S. & Stutzer, A. (2000). Happiness, economy and institutions. *Economic Journal, 110,* 918-938.

Frey, B. S., & Stutzer, A. (2002). *Happiness and economics: how the economy and institutions affect human well-being*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Frey, B. S., & Stutzer, A. (2002). What can economists learn from happiness research?. *Journal of Economic Literature, 40(2)*, 402-435.

Gabriel, L. M., & Paulo, T. P. (2008). Happiness, economic well-being, social capital and the quality of institutions. *Working Papers Department of Economics 2008/40*. ISEG - Lisbon School of Economics and Management, Department of Economics, Universidade de Lisboa.

Gailliot, M. (2012). Happiness as surplus or freely available energy. *Psychology, 3*, 702-712.

Hasnain, N., Wazid S., & Hasan Z. (2014) Optimism, hope, and happiness as correlates of psychological well-Being among young adult Assamese males and females. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 19,* 44-51

Helliwell, J. F., & Putnam, R. D. (2004). The social context of well-being. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, 359(1449)*, 1435–1446.

Lane, R. E. (2000). *The loss of happiness in market democracies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Layard, R. (2005). *Happiness: lessons from a new science*. New York: The Penguin Press.

Layard, R. (2010). Measuring subjective well-being. *Science, 327*, 534-535.

Leerattanakorn, N. and Wiboonpongse, A. (2015). Sufficiency economy philosophy and the happiness of farmers on Thai way. *The Empirical Econometrics and Quantitative Economics Letters,* 4 (2), 31 – 46.

Levin, J. S. (1994). Religion and health: Is there an association, Is it valid, and Is it causal?. *Social Science Medical Journal, 38(11)*, 1475-1482.

Levin, J. S. (2014). Religion and happiness among Israeli Jews: findings from the ISSP Religion III survey. *Journal of Happiness Studies,15*, 593.

Lewis, C. A., Maltby, J., & Day, L. (2005). Religious orientation, religious coping and happiness among UK adults. *Personality and Individual Differences, 38(5)*, 1193-1202.

Loewenthal, K. M., MacLeod, A. K., Goldblatt, V., Lubitsh, G., & Valentine, J. D. (2000). Comfort and joy? Religion, cognition, and mood in Protestants and Jews under stress. *Cognition and Emotion, 14*, 355–374

McCauley, R. N., & Lawson, E. T. (2002). *Bringing ritual to mind: Psychological foundations of cultural forms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCullough, M. E., & Willoughby, B. L. (2009). Religion, self-regulation, and self-control: Associations, explanations, and implications. *Psychological Bulletin, 135*, 69-93.

Nettle, D. (2005). *Happiness: The science behind your smile*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

OECD, Scrivens, K., & Smith C. (2013). Four interpretations of social capital: an agenda for measurement. *OECD Statistics Working Papers*, 2013/06, OECD Publishing.

Oswald, A. J. (1997). Happiness and economic performance. *Economic Journal, 107,* 1815-1831.

Palmore, E. (1969). Predicting longevity: a follow-up controlling for age. *Journal of Gerontology*, *39*, 109-116.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Rojas, M., & Veenhoven, R. (2011). Contentment and affect in the estimation of happiness, *Social Indicators Research*, 111(2).

Sato, K., & Yuki, M. (2014). The association between self-esteem and happiness differs in relationally mobile vs. stable interpersonal contexts. *Frontiers in Psychology, 5*, 1113.

Smith, C. (2013). Making happiness count: Four myths about subjective well-being. *OECD Working Paper*.

Snoep, L. (2008). Religiousness and happiness in three nations: a research note. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 9,* 207–211.

Stutzer, A. (2004). The role of income aspirations in individual happiness. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, 54(1)*, 89-109.

Tiliouine, H., & Belgoumidi, A. (2009). An exploratory study of religiosity, meaning in life and subjective wellbeing in Muslim students from Algeria. *Applied Research in Quality of Life, 4,* 109-127.

Van Praag, B., & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, A. (2008). *Happiness quantified: a satisfaction calculus approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Oxford: UK Revised & Paperback edition: Oxford University Press.

World Health Organization (2013). *Post-2015 Development Agenda*, Retrieved from http://apps.searo.who.int/pds_docs/B4960.pdf

Yacobi Ben, G. (2015). Life and the pursuit of happiness. *Journal of Philosophy of Life, 5 (2),* 82-90.

Appendix

Table 1A Alternative estimation and robustness check.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Baseline					Full model
	Coefficients					
Household income	0.0235***	0.0208***	0.0216***	0.0207***	0.0218**	0.0218**
(1,000 Baht)	(0.0075)	(0.0075)	(0.0078)	(0.0064)	(0.0079)	(0.0079)
Income aspiration	-0.1668***	-0.1589***	-0.1833***	-0.1872***	-0.1756***	-0.1740***
	(0.0466)	(0.0467)	(0.0474)	(0.0482)	(0.0485)	(0.0487)
Religiousness	0.1658	0.1801*	0.1668	0.1677*	0.1693*	0.1711*
	(0.1039)	(0.1044)	(0.1046)	(0.1046)	(0.1047)	(0.1048)
Attitude toward own financial	0.3982**	0.4430**	0.4287**	0.4314**	0.4311**	0.4277**
situation	(0.1805)	(0.1823)	(0.127)	(0.1827)	(0.1827)	(0.1829)
Age	0.0124*	0.0122*	0.0111*	0.0115*	0.0111*	0.0112
	(0.0069)	(0.0069)	(0.0069)	(0.0069)	(0.0069)	(0.0069)
Gender	-0.0767	-0.0412	-0.0377	-0.0389	-0.0381	-0.0383
	(0.1550)	(0.1564)	(0.1573)	(0.1568)	(0.1573)	(0.1573)
Health	0.0126	0.0154	0.0184	0.0158	0.0189	0.0183
	(0.0366)	(0.0366)	(0.0369)	(0.0367)	(0.0369)	(0.0370)
Community income		0.0483*	0.1060***	0.0628**	0.1131***	0.1130***
		(0.0268)	(0.0313)	(0.0275)	(0.0327)	(0.0327)
Assistance			0.6394***		0.7950**	0.7832**
			(0.1670)		(0.2627)	(0.2646)
Neighbor relation				0.9447**	-0.4563	-0.3549
				(0.3794)	(0.5936)	(0.6549)
Religious community						-0.1623
						(0.4443)
Statistical report						
Log likelihood	-652.3004	-652.6787	-645.1983	-649.5323	-644.9035	-644.8367
Pseudo R^2	0.0275	0.0299	0.0410	0.0346	0.0415	0.0416
LR χ^2	37.03	40.27	55.23	46.56	55.82	55.95
Prob > χ^2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Remarks: *, **, *** indicate the level of significance at 10%, 5%, and 1%, respectively. The standard error is in parenthesis. Number of observations = 671