Self Rated Health in India

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Introduction

The idea of Self Rated Health has been extensively used as a measure to capture an individual's perception about his health (Jagger et al. 1998; May et al. 2006; Garrity et al. 1978; WHO, 1996; Fayers & Sprangers, 2002; Lundgerg & Manderbacka, 1996). It is measured on the basis of the reply of the respondent to a question like "What is your Perceived Overall Health" on a Likert scale. SRH has been found to be linked to the socio-economic environment in which an individual stays (Blazer, 2008). A positive social and economic environment leads to a higher perception of wellness and vice-versa. An individual who is well educated and is also comfortable with his financial situation tend to report better health (Bobak, 2000; Emerson & Hatton, 2008; Mirowsky & Ross, 2008; Molarius et al., 2007). Other factors like Association with one's Family, Relationship with Friends, Participation in society, Stability of Marriage and Social Capital have also been found to be associated with Self rated Health (Harris & Thoresen, 2005; Vaillant & Mukamal, 2001; Mansyur et al. 2008; Sudha et al. 2006; Young & Glasgow, 1998).

Methods

Data

The data for this study has been taken from the World Value Survey (WVS). This survey provides an opening into understanding the SRH of the population of the country and also helps in determining its relation with various socioeconomic factors as listed in the section above. There are six rounds of WVS that have been conducted until now which are technically called as Waves. The First wave was conducted between 1981 & 1984, Second wave between 1990 & 1994, Third Wave between 1995 & 1998, Fourth Wave between 1999& 2004, Fifth Wave between 2005 & 2009 and the latest round is the Sixth Wave between 2010& 2014. All of these surveys are face-to-face interviews with sample being drawn from a population of age 18 years and above. The minimum size of the sample is 1000 and it is drawn through some kind of stratified random sampling. The latest data on India that is available was collected in the Fifth Wave between 2005 & 2009 and the sample size was 2001.

Variables

Independent Variables: The choice of variables for this study out of almost 350 odd variables that have been collected as a part of the WVS-5 has been dictated by a study done by Carlson (1998), albeit with some modifications. These modifications have been necessitated by the non-availability of the data related to few variables in the Indian context. The rationale for looking at the Carlson (1998) is that he has identified the variables which have an influence on Self Rated Health, the identification of which would have otherwise been a complex task given the number of variables on which the WVS collects data. He has considered the following variables for his study: Membership of non-political association, Life Control, Job satisfaction, Freedom to make own decisions at work, Satisfaction with economic situation of household, Political Interest, Importance of Family and Importance of Friends.

However, in the survey conducted in India, two variables viz. "Job satisfaction" & "Freedom to make own decisions at work" didn't find any mention. Also, there is no single direct measure of the variable "Membership of non-political association" but there are multiple variables which can help in understanding the impact of membership of non-political organisations on Self-rated health.

Thus, the following independent variables were taken as a part of the study:

- ➢ Membership of Sport Or Recreation
- ➢ Membership of Art, Music, Education Organisation
- ➢ Membership of Environmental organisation
- ➢ Membership of Professional organisation
- ➢ Membership of Charitable organisation
- ➢ Membership of Consumer organisation
- ➢ Membership of Any other organisation
- ➢ Life Control
- ➢ Satisfaction with Financial Situation of household
- ➢ Interest in Politics
- ➢ Importance of Friends
- ➢ Importance of Family

Dependent Variable: The dependent variable in this case is Self Perceived Health measured on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being Very good and 5 being Very Poor.

Results

The tables 1-12 (Appendix) show the relation of each independent variable with Self Rated Health and how each of them has an influence on an individual's perception of his health.

Discussion

Social Relationships & Health

Table 1 to 7 clearly shows the fact that being a member in any organisation has a positive influence on the self rated health of an individual. The scores of the "Active Member" category are better than the scores of those respondents who are not a member of any organisation. These findings are in consonance with the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) literature according to which people that have better social connections and social networks tend to enjoy better health than those who are not well socially connected (Reynolds & Kaplan, 1990; Kawachi et al. 1996; Kaplan et al.1988 Blazer 1982; Bosworth & Schaie, 1997; Schoenbach, 1986). The importance of social ties and its importance for SRH are also evident from Table no. 10, 11 & 12. These three tables clearly demonstrate that respondents who are better connected to others tend to perceive themselves healthier than those who are not socially connected. This difference becomes even more discernable in case of those people who consider family to be important and those who do not.

Life Control

Respondents who had a view that they have control over their life tend to perceive their health to be better than those who think that their life is determined by fate.

Satisfaction with Financial Condition

The results have revealed that more the level of satisfaction of an individual with his financial condition, the higher is the level of his Self Rated Health.

Conclusion

In summation, we can clearly see that an individual's perception of his health is a function of the environment he lives in. Therefore any explanation of an individual's health based on just his inadequacies without taking into account the family and the society in which he lives is bound to be both misleading and incomplete.

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Annexure

Table 1: State of health & Membership of sport or recreation organization

Membership of sport or recreation	State of health
Not a member	2.13
Inactive member	2.26
Active member	1.94
Total	**2.16**

Table 2: State of health & Membership of art, music, educational organisation

Membership of art, music, educational	State of health
Not a member	2.13
Inactive member	2.22
Active member	2.02
Total	**2.16**

Table 3: State of Health and Membership of Environmental Organisation

Membership of Environmental Organisation	State of health
Not a member	2.15
Inactive member	2.20
Active member	2.04
Total	**2.16**

Table 4: State of Health and Membership of Professional Organisation

Membership of Professional Organisation	State of health
Not a member	2.13
Inactive member	2.22
Active member	2.02
Total	**2.16**

Table 5: State of Health and Membership of Charitable/Humanitarian Organisation

Membership of Charitable/ Humanitarian Organisation	State of health
Not a member	2.16
Inactive member	2.21
Active member	2.00
Total	**2.16**

Table 6: State of Health and Membership of Consumer Organisation

Membership of Consumer Organisation	State of health
Not a member	2.17
Inactive member	2.19
Active member	2.02
Total	**2.16**

Table 7: State of health & Membership of any other organization

Membership of Charitable/Humanitarian Organisation	State of health
Not a member	2.16
Inactive member	2.18
Active member	2.07
Total	**2.16**

Table 8: State of health & Life Control

Membership of Charitable/Humanitarian Organisation	State of health
Everything is determined by Fate	2.30
5	2.14
People shape their fate themselves	1.99
Total	**2.14**

Table 9: State of health & Satisfaction with Financial Situation of Household

Satisfaction with the financial situation of household	State of health
Dissatisfied	2.60
3	2.60
5	2.19
7	1.82
Satisfied	1.49
Total	**2.15**

Table 10: State of health & Interest in Politics

Interested in politics	State of health
Very interested	1.87
Somewhat interested	2.05
Not very interested	2.25
Not at all interested	2.30
Total	**2.16**

Table 11: State of health & Importance of Family

Family important	State of health
Very interested	2.14
Somewhat interested	2.36
Not very interested	2.13
Not at all interested	4.00
Total	**2.16**

Table 12: State of health & Importance of Friends

Family important	State of health
Very interested	1.96
Somewhat interested	2.25
Not very interested	2.38
Not at all interested	2.51
Total	**2.15**