

Comparative analysis of Russian citizens' well-being Before and after the collapse of Soviet Union

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Highlights

- A larger number of people suggest that they were happier in Soviet period than in present capitalist Russia;
- Stability in their life, stability of the state, certainty of life they wanted to live, guarantee of livelihood and confidence in the ability to live a better life in the days to come, were the main reasons for their happiness in Soviet Russia;
- Those who think they were happier in Soviet period, do not want to go back to that system as they fear that such a shift might involve uncertainty while certainty was the main reason for their happiness in that period;
- Those who suggest that they are happier in the present capitalist Russia, put forward freedom, expansion of choices, expansion of opportunities as their arguments.
- Although freedom is considered a main element of happiness in present capitalist Russia, it can contribute to increasing happiness only after an individual is able to fulfil his or her necessities and has some excess money for investment or entertainment.

Abstract

This study, analysing the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the residents of some Russian regions, compares the level of people's well-being between the Soviet period and the present capitalist regime. It finds that a larger number of respondents felt happier in Soviet period; but most of those people do not want to go back to the Soviet system as, they fear, any shift like this might involve uncertainty while certainty was the main factor for their happiness and that freedom which is considered the main factor for happiness in present Russia, can add to happiness only after people are able to meet their necessities and then have some extra money for investment or entertainment.

Keywords: Well-being, happiness, certainty, freedom, confidence, choice.

1. Introduction

Scholars in philosophy often use the words ‘happiness’ and ‘well-being’ synonymously. Well-being researchers, however, define happiness as subjective well-being, which comprises mental states such as life satisfaction and emotional well-being. Well-being refers more to the condition of life in terms of goods individuals possess, services individuals have access to, achievements individuals attain, which makes life comfortable. On the other hand, happiness is a mental state of feeling good. Two persons having the same condition of life might not feel equally good. That is, happiness is subjective. It has been discussed elaborately later in section-2. Now, we just make it clear that we have, through our survey, collected data on both happiness and well-being. This study, therefore, compares both happiness and well-being between Soviet Union and present Russia although the title of the article mentions only well-being.

Happiness likewise subjective well-being has been a widely researched topic in the last decade. The view that quantitative measures of development do not tell much about people’s well-being, has become more and more popular in recent times. In the studies of well-being, mostly the factors contributing to the level of well-being have been investigated. A substantial amount of research has been done on the comparison of well-being between countries, societies, communities having different cultural, economic, ethnic, political, historical and geographical characteristics but a little has been done on the comparison of well-being between regimes—especially between socialist regime and capitalist regime of a country. On these perspectives, we are motivated to conduct a comparative analysis of well-being of the Russian citizens before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Since Soviet Union was the first state built on the basis of socialist ideology in history, it was a matter of great interest for the people all over the world to see how this state did, especially in ensuring well-being for its people. Also, since this state was a challenge for the capitalist block of countries led by the USA to expand the market of their products, those countries—especially the USA under challenge, not only kept an eye on the developments of this newly built state but also took measures in various forms in an effort to deter its progress. What the level of well-being of the citizens under Soviet regime was, was of a great interest for the people all over the world. The collapse of the USSR was a very significant event in the world history. The current president of Russia, who accepted the switch of the country from the socialist system to capitalist system, described the collapse of the union as the greatest catastrophe in the history of mankind. The reaction of the people of the then Soviet Union to the collapse of the union was mixed. Although there is no reliable statistics on what percentage of the population was happy and what percentage of the population was unhappy with this switch, the people in general were awe-struck by the event. Twenty-five years have passed after the regime change in Russia and most of the people who ran families in soviet period, are still alive and are still living in the midst of worries and eases of running families. Therefore, it is a good idea to analyse the perception of happiness in two periods and compare the levels of happiness now when that generation is still alive.

There is an age-old and worldwide debate on ‘capitalism is better or socialism is better?’ This populist debate may be taken as a research question such as ‘which system makes people happier: socialist system or capitalist system?’ Accordingly, the main thrust behind conducting this research is to understand the impact of the structures of the state and society on people’s well-being. While doing that, it is expected to have an insight on the elements of happiness as

well. With this end, we have collected quantitative and qualitative data from the people who ran families in the Soviet period and are running families also now or living in the midst of worries and eases of family life mainly in Krasnoyarsk region and a few in some other regions (details are given in section- 4). This study does both quantitative and qualitative analyses on the data collected and inferences have been made on in which period people were/are happier.

Our results show that a greater number of the respondents in our sample think that they were happier in Soviet period and the reasons for this view appeared to be stability in their life and stability of the state, certainty of life they wanted to live, guarantee of livelihood, and confidence in the ability to live a better life in the days to come. On the other hand, the respondents who suggest that they are happier in the present capitalist Russia, put forward freedom, expansion of choices, expansion of opportunities as their arguments.

This study offers two new findings: first, although freedom is considered an important element of well-being or happiness but in order for freedom to contribute to the elevation of the level of happiness of a person, the person must have been able to meet all the basic needs and have some excess money for investment or entertainment. Freedom does not add to the happiness of a person who has not been able to meet his or her necessities and then have some extra money; second, most people who held the view that the Soviet period was happier, do not want to go back to the Soviet system when asked if they would like to have the Soviet system back. It gives the testament to their view that certainty or guarantee of life was the main reason for their feeling of happiness in the Soviet period because they fear that any initiative to switch the country to the old system might involve uncertainty in their lives, which would make them unhappier again.

2. Literature review

Griffin (1986) defines an individual's well-being in terms of pleasurable states of mind and fulfilment of desire while he adds that desires must be 'informed'. The concept of an individual's well-being he presents is objective because he measures well-being by the fulfilment of what the individual desires for— not of what is desirable.

Well-being as a term is both positive— therefore, rational for individuals to maximize and normative— an important aspect of almost all views of morality. The conception of well-being may be derived from the degree of conformity between an individual's life and an objectively defined ideal life. Between these two extremes, Griffin (1986) gives emphasis on desire fulfilment as an element of well-being and insists that desires be formed after they are able to compare alternative life plans and then these desires be 'informed' (Hamlin, 1997).

Griffin (1986) advocates the idea that the maximization of well-being lies at the heart of morality and rejects the notion that the only true utilitarianism is hedonistic. To measure the 'betterness' of life in terms of well-being a person's desire has to be informed or revealed, and a desire is informed if it is one which the person would love to fulfil if she were fully aware of its true nature. The informed desires of a person, are those which determine a ranking of possible lives and one of these lives, which represents higher level of well-being than another if it occupies higher place in this ranking (Griffin 1986). According to Griffin (1986), goods and services, achievements, certain conditions contribute to a person's well-being provided

they offer a life which stands at a higher rank in the ordering informed by herself (Scanlon, 1991).

The goods that make people's lives valuable to them, constitute well-being while these values include values of personhood (autonomy, liberty, and capacities for action), accomplishment, understanding, deep personal relations, and aesthetic enjoyment (Griffin, 1986; Simpson, 1993). The approach put forward by Sen (1977), Sen (1979) and Sen (1999) argues that 'it is the opportunity to live a good life rather than the accumulation of resources, that matters most for well-being, and that opportunities result from the capabilities that people have. This so-called 'capability' approach thus focuses more on people and less on goods. In it, resources do not have an intrinsic value; instead, their value derives from the opportunity that they give to people' (Anand, Hunter, & Smith, 2005, p. 10).

Sen (1993) proposes to measure of well-being in terms of 'functionings' an individual can achieve while by 'functionings' he means a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being. According Sen (1993, p. 30), well-being transcends 'personal utility (focusing on pleasure, happiness, or desire fulfilment), absolute or relative opulence (focusing on commodity bundles, real income, or real wealth), assessments of negative freedoms (focusing on procedural fulfilment of libertarian rights and rules of non-interference), comparisons of means of freedom (e.g. focusing on the holdings of "primary goods" as in the Rawlsian theory of justice) and comparison of resource holdings as a basis of just equality (e.g. as in Dworkin's criterion of "equality of resources").' It may well be the case that a person might have a goal other than the advancement of his or her own well-being— she might have a desire for the betterment of others, which would make her happier and which would generate orderings different from that of well-being. To understand the overall well-being of a person we must consider the freedom she enjoys to achieve as well as achievement itself (Sen, 1993).

The well-being achievement of a person is a kind of evaluation of the 'wellness' of the person's state of being. To assess the extent of the well-being of a person, the constituent elements of her being, have to be considered from the perspective of her own notion of welfare. For example, doing good to others may make a person happier— in which case source of well-being could easily be external to the person (Sen 1993).

Anand, Hunter and Smith (2005) examine the predominant view in the well-being literature that freedom should play a key role in social evaluation and that we must consider what people are free to do as well as what they actually do under the capabilities framework using data from the British Household Panel Survey along with a list of substantial values provided by Martha Nussbaum. They conduct an econometric analysis using overall life satisfaction as the dependent variable in their OLS regression, and capabilities, personality traits and a bunch of other explanatory variables. The analysis is not free from omitted variable bias because of the presence of heterogeneity in personality traits and since both the error term and the regressors include the personality traits. They find capabilities as an important constituent of well-being. However, they present the finding with some caveat: all capabilities might not have the same amount of impact on well-being— some may have a bigger impact than others. They warn that a consequence is determined by the functional form chosen for the model and that further work on different models may lead to a different conclusion.

In a recent research paper Clark et al. (2017) find income inequality to explain only 2% of the variance of life satisfaction meaning that economic growth doesn't increase life satisfaction

considerably. This study also reveals that people compare their own income to that of their peers and that life satisfaction is determined mainly by an individual's income relative to that of others in their peer group, which has been found to be true in Britain, Australia and Germany. Emotional health of a child, as has been found in the analysis, is the biggest determinant of the wellbeing of the future adult. Non-numerical measures like mental health, child behaviour, are seen to have much larger impact on wellbeing than numerical figures like income (Clark et al., 2017).

Economic literature on well-being in the period of socialism was characterized by comparison of welfare in the Soviet Union with the welfare in the capitalist countries. The main arguments in favour of the socialist economic system were a systematic increase in standard of living, the absence of inflation and unemployment (Zherebin & Ermakova, 1991).

Guriev & Tsyvinski (2012) conducted institutional analysis of the conditions of labour and capital accumulation in Russia in the 1990s and came to the conclusion that poverty and wealth in modern Russia has turned it into the economy of inequality. Since 1991 the conversion of state power into the capital and vice versa has happened after the fall of the Soviet Union. As a result, the power was in the hands of big business and the bureaucracy. They lobbied for laws that have led to unprecedented polarization between the rich and the poor. As the examples of such laws, the authors mention flat income tax rate, the labour code, which deprived employees of the right to legal forms of protest, the act of mortgage auctions, in which national wealth was sold at a nominal price.

The recent studies of well-being based on longitudinal studies prove the necessity of integrated approach to studies of subjective wellbeing in Russia as its economy is still in transit and its population has many important characteristics of well-being, for example, adaptability to unfavourable life events. The study by Bauer et al. (2015) underlines the effects of anticipation and adaptation to remarkable life events on life satisfaction. The paper uses the panel data from 16 waves of the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey (RLMS) and covers years 1995-2013. Its regression of subjective well-being on sample of 65,633 men and 77,562 women aged between 15 and 60 shows experience of adaptation to unfavourable life events (unemployment, marriage, divorce, widowhood). The control variables of the panel data regression model may vary together with social events in people's lives but they always include such crucial fields as income, education, self-rated health and age. Unlike the analogous studies based on German and British panel data, this study shows little evidence of effects of adaptation to life events on subjective well-being. The differences in these findings between Britain & Germany and Russia could be explained by cultural peculiarities affecting adaptability to certain life events. Another reason maybe the fact that economic transition lowers happiness on average as revealed in many studies on Eastern Europe. Thirdly, the meaning of the term 'happiness' could explain differences in adaptation of life satisfaction to life events across countries by not equal perception of conditions of satisfaction. The authors find economic transition factors to be more reasonable than other reasons.

3. Measurement of well-being

There is now a consensus on the fact that the material components that are commonly believed to contribute to the well-being of an individual, are not enough to measure well-being. Well-being is more than the combined effect of the linear combination of domain specific satisfaction variables, such as satisfaction with income, housing, or social contacts and so on, which is a

way of measuring subjective well-being in the so-called ‘bottom-up’ model (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Argyle, 1991; Campbell et al., 1976). The alternative model for measuring well-being is so-called ‘top-down’ model proposed by Diener (1984), which is based on the idea that satisfaction is personality-specific, which is influenced by living conditions (Saris, 2001). However, Costa & McCrae (1980) and Costa & McCrae (1984) suspect that since personality traits which might cause the subjective well-being and the domain-specific satisfaction to covary, the relationships between subjective well-being and the domain-specific satisfaction variables would end up with spurious relationship.

4. Methodology and data

The analysis on the comparison of the level of well-being between two regimes has been done using a comparative design as Bryman (2015) suggests that social phenomena may be better understood when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations. The comparative design here has been realized in the context of a combination of quantitative and qualitative research known as mixed method as we collected both quantitative data which are believed to constitute well-being and qualitative data on the perception of the respondents about well-being.

Quantitative data have been analysed with various tools of Stata. For qualitative data, content analysis of the text of the qualitative information and perception collected through surveys and interviews, has been done. For content analysis, coding method has been applied and for this, we used NVivo.

Data have been collected for quite a good number of quantitative, qualitative and indicator variables which, according to literature, are believed to indicate the level of well-being. More than one variable of similar meaning, were put in the questionnaire because the idea was that if the collection of information for one variable fails due to the reluctance of respondents or in case the respondent did not have the information in mind, then we could use information received for another variable of the similar meaning enabling us to conduct the research and make inferences.

This analysis is not done on the basis of a representative sample of Russia. Firstly, the sample is small with respect to the size of population and number of regions, cities, towns, villages, ethnic groups. Sampling is not done following any recognized scientific method using any population listing. It was not possible to do that due to lack of resources because we had no fund for this project. Teachers and students have taken this venture from their personal interest to examine which system makes people happier. Since the research has been done under the auspices of the Department of Economics of the Institute of Economics, Management and Environmental Studies, Siberian Federal University situated in Krasnoyarsk and only students were involved in the data collection process, data were collected mainly in Krasnoyarsk region. Some students who are from other cities in other regions collected data from their respective areas, namely Altayskiy kray, Irkutskaya oblast, Kemorovo, Republic of Tuva, Republic of Khakassia, Zabaykalskiy kray. The respondents were selected by data enumerators (students) on the basis of their acquaintances i.e. the students approached those whom they knew, following the criterion that the respondent must be sixty years’ old who ran a family in Soviet period. Therefore, the sampling method used in this study is convenience sampling method.

As has already been mentioned, data used in this study are primary data i.e. collected directly from respondents. Data are collected conducting survey using structured, semi-structured and open-ended questions; therefore, our data are survey data. There are 16 quantitative questions, 7 qualitative questions and 18 indicator variables in the questionnaire. Besides the data collected through survey, in order to develop our insight, in-depth interviews are taken from people of various professions who keenly observed the change in life in the member countries of the erstwhile USSR, who know what really happened and why happened.

5. Results

Consumption level in terms of both quantity and quality is considered an indicator of material well-being of the people. Although we collected data for the satisfaction level of consumption in terms of both quantity and quality, we present the results of comparison of only consumption quality between two regimes. The result shows that out of 244 respondents 20 i.e. 8.19% people think that quality of consumption in Soviet regime was lower than the quality of consumption in present capitalist Russia, 21.31% people think that the quality of consumption in two regimes are equal and 70.49% people think that quality of consumption in Soviet regime was higher. In another estimate, out of 306 respondents 95.41% people's satisfaction level about nutrition from food in Soviet period was 3 and above (in a scale from 1 to 5 while 5 is the maximum level) while 74.63% people's satisfaction level about the nutrition in present capitalist Russia is 3 and above. What these two estimates reveal is that maximum people believe that nutrition in Soviet regime was higher than that in present capitalist Russia.

There is a common belief that production in private sector might not maintain quality i.e. nutrition level of the food produced by private sector tends to be low as it is motivated by profit motive. On the other hand, when food is produced by publicly-owned enterprises, nutrition is commonly believed to be higher. However, in many capitalist countries food production in private sector maintains high quality. On these perspectives, it is interesting to learn how the Russian citizens consider the nutrition quality in state-ownership system and capitalist system in Russia. The result shows that out of 306 respondents 58 i.e. 18.95% people think that nutrition level in Soviet regime was lower than the quality of consumption in present capitalist Russia, 43.79% people think that nutrition level in Soviet regime was the same as that in present regime and 37.25% people think that nutrition level in Soviet regime was higher. In another estimate, out of 305 respondents 95.1% people's satisfaction level about nutrition from food in Soviet period was 3 and above (in a scale from 1 to 5 while 5 is the maximum level) while 79.42% people's satisfaction level about nutrition level in present capitalist Russia is 3 and above. What these two estimates reveal is that a greater number of people believe that nutrition from food in Soviet regime was higher than that in present capitalist Russia.

People having substantial saving and a feeling of happiness tend to have a luxury of eating outside maybe every week or every month or so. Proportion of monthly income spent on eating outside in a month, therefore, may be considered a good indicator of material well-being. Proportion of monthly income spent on eating outside in a month in Soviet time (33.66) is slightly higher than that in present capitalist Russia (33.33).

Not income but saving as a proportion of monthly income may indicate the level of material well-being because it creates the possibility of living a carefree life. Saving as a proportion of monthly income in our sample of 306 respondents is seen to be higher than that in present Russian period. 41.5% respondents saved higher proportions in Soviet period than in present

Russia and 37.9 saves now more than they did in communist regime while 18.3% suggested that they saved/save equally.

Whether or not the children receive desired kind, level and quality of education has an impact of the well-being of the people because they are concerned about the future of their children. If the children do not receive desired kind, level and quality of education, it not only destroys their happiness but also it compels them to save a greater proportion of income for the children sacrificing their current consumption so that they could survive when they would grow up and enter into practical life. Our survey shows that 30.06% of the respondents think that the children in the Soviet period were able to receive desired kind, level and quality of education, 61.76% think education are equal and 8.17% think education is better now than the soviet regime.

Career prospect of the children is another element which determines people's happiness. In answer to the question 'how much were/are you worried or optimistic about the career of your children?' 55.22% were more optimistic in Soviet period, 16.33% were less optimistic in Soviet period than now and 28.43% are equally optimistic or concerned.

The ability of an individual to spend time and money and to have opportunities for entertainment seems to have a close link to the well-being of the individual. To learn it, 'how many times did/do you go for entertainment in a month?'— this question was asked. Our survey shows, a larger percentage of respondents (44.44%) went for entertainment in soviet time than that in present capitalist Russia (31.69).

Going for holiday is an obvious measure of well-being because it does indicate not only material well-being but also a happy state of mind. This indicator shows a lower well-being in Soviet time than the modern Russian time. 31.69% suggest that they went for more holidays in Soviet time while 44.12% respondents think they enjoy more holidays now than Soviet time. However, this indicator is likely to have bias because the comparison of going for holiday between these periods is not perfectly appropriate because there were restrictions not only on travelling abroad but also across regions inside the country. Therefore, holiday-going between these two regimes is not comparable.

On the direct question of 'were you happier in Soviet period or in the present capitalist Russia?' 65.69% respondents think they were happier in the Soviet period and 23.53% respondents consider the present period happier and 10.69% feel they are equally happy.

Two other direct questions related to well-being are health and living standard. 55.23% people suggest that health was better in Soviet time, 43.46% don't think health was better in Soviet time. Living standard is considered lower in the Soviet period by 64.05% and higher by 35.29%.

In reference to the level of present income and if the present income is enough to maintain the living standard that they had during Soviet time, 59.8% people think that the current income is enough to maintain the living standard that they had during Soviet time and 39.54% think negatively.

One important indicator of development and well-being is functioning of the individual i.e. the ability to perform what he/she wanted to perform suggested by Sen (1993). In response to this question, 67.32% respondent answered that they were able to perform what they wanted to perform in Soviet period while 57.94% people are able to perform what they wanted to perform

in the present time. Sen (1988) emphasized freedom and expansion of choice as essential ingredients of well-being. Accordingly, respondents were asked how freedom was important for their well-being. In response, 42.06% respondents held freedom very important, 40.59% held it important, 15.87% held it as not very important. In response to the next question if freedom increased happiness of their lives, 68.40% answered 'yes' and 15.87% said 'no'.

Sense of security: security of life, security of jobs, security of basic needs— all are important elements of life. In this question, 77.05% of the respondents said, they were more secure in the Soviet regime and 23.05% think they are more secure in the present capitalist Russia.

Family bondage is an important element of happiness. Therefore, in an effort to understand the degree of happiness between these periods, 'when there was/is stronger family bondage?'— this question was included in the survey. In response, 67.65% think family bondage was stronger in Soviet period, 15.03% think it is stronger now and 17.32% think it is equal in the two periods.

From the findings presented above it can be seen than according to most of the data collected for most of the variables, a greater number of respondents believe that the Soviet period was happier than the present capitalist Russia. But when the respondents were asked if they wanted to go back to the Soviet system, they replied in negative. This fact implies a wide and deep meaning. The respondents who opined that they were happier in the Soviet period, one of the strong arguments they put in the favour of their stand is that they enjoyed security and certainty in every sphere of their lives. Now when they are asked if they wanted to go back to the Soviet system, they fear the involvement of insecurity and uncertainty in the proposed transition backwards and that's why, they don't want to go back.

As has already been mentioned, a greater number of people suggested that they were happier in the Soviet time. On the question 'why they were happier in Soviet time?' the respondents put various reasons for their views. Among them four are prominent, which may be put under these four key terms: youth, stability, confidence, certainty or guarantee. In response to this question, the greatest number of respondents answered: 'I was young' or 'youth' or 'I was too young'. These answers are ambiguous. Therefore, we ventured to contact some respondents through our data enumerators. We asked data enumerators to get the answers explained. By the phrases 'I was young' or 'youth' the greatest number of respondents meant that youth is the golden time of somebody's life and they treasure whatever they received in this period of life. The fact is, although they have explained it philosophically and it sounds a bit abstract, what has been revealed through this explanation is that they had happy moments in their youth and they enjoyed their life. If they had bitter experiences or unhappy moments, they would not consider Soviet period happier than the present period. A small number of respondents meant that he/she was too young at that time to judge the level of happiness at that time. Therefore, although within these four causes of happiness 42.86% held youth for their happiness in the Soviet period, it is in reality lower than 42.86% if we deduct the answer 'I was too young to judge' but still highest number of respondents hold youth for concluding that Soviet time was happier. After 'youth', stability in life, in society and in the state, that prevailed during the Soviet period is regarded as the cause of happiness by the second largest number of respondents, which is 30.07%. Then confidence in the ability of doing something or running the life in a desired way or in having a better future is regarded as the cause of happiness by 21.8% of the respondents and finally, 5.26% of the respondents regards certainty in all spheres

of life as the cause of their happiness in Soviet period (see figure 1). The content analysis using coding method done through NVivo has come out as in figure 1. The larger the number of the people mentioning the word as a factor of happiness, the larger the font of the word. In the figure (figure 1), the word ‘future’ appears to be large meaning a large number of people mentioned it as an element/factor of their happiness. By ‘future’ they meant confidence that they had about living a better life for themselves in the days to come and for their children (future of the children was believed to be certainly good).



Figure 1. Elements of happiness in Soviet Russia (NVivo output from content analysis).
 Source: Authors’ own survey data.

Among those who suggested that the present capitalist Russia is happier than the Soviet period, 37.77% regard expansion of choices and another 37.77% regards expansion of opportunities and possibilities as the causes of happiness in the present Russia. 24.44% of the respondents regards freedom as the cause of their happiness and this freedom is freedom of choice, freedom of building enterprises, freedom of travelling and freedom as a whole (see figure 2).



Figure 2. Elements of happiness in present capitalist Russia (NVivo output from content analysis).
 Source: Authors’ own survey data.

When we looked at the yearly income of those who feel happier in the present Russia and suggest that freedom is the cause of their happiness, we find that their incomes are comparatively high—above the average income of the respondents. We tried to understand the issue from the in-depth interviews and discover that to have the joy of freedom, they need to be able to meet the necessities of life first and then have some excess money which they could spend in consumption or investment—in whatever way they wanted. That is, freedom can add to happiness only after the necessities of life are fulfilled and individuals own some means or are left with some money, that might be used in generating income or spent for entertainment.

6. Conclusion

Clearly, a greater number of respondents suggest that they were happier in the Soviet period. Stability, certainty of life, guarantee of livelihood, confidence in the ability to live a better life in future for themselves and their children, were put by these respondents as the causes of their happiness. The respondents who think they are happier now in the present capitalist Russia put freedom and expansion of choices and opportunities as the causes of their happiness—all of which can be put under one heading—freedom. The new finding that stands out is that although freedom is an important element of happiness, to have well-being or happiness from freedom one needs to be able to fulfil her basic needs and some money excess of his needs so that she can invest that money for generating income or spend for entertainment; otherwise, freedom is useless for her. The respondents who suggest that they are happy now because of freedom, they belong to those group who have managed to have some money excess of their basic needs and those who opine that they were happier in soviet time, are not able to meet their basic needs or have no excess money for entertainment now in the current regime.

Another interesting finding is that even those who considered Soviet period to be happier, do not want to go back to the Soviet system because they fear involvement of uncertainty in the transition because they considered Soviet period happier since there was certainty in that period. Now with the fear of uncertainty in the proposed transition, they do not want to take the risk of going back to the old system, which, with uncertainty in life, would make them unhappier than how they are now in present Russia.

Further work is necessary to make inference on which system offers more well-being and happiness for the people. A representative sample consisting of all walks of people across all the regions of the erstwhile Soviet Union needs to be used in such an analysis. Besides, in-depth interviews need to be taken and focus group discussions need to be held and all walks of people having deep insight in life before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, need be selected for such interviews and discussions, which is beyond our scope. This study, therefore, cannot make inference on the effectiveness of socialist and capitalist systems in ensuring well-being and happiness. Our study just gives a general impression about how Russian people now tend to compare the level of well-being and happiness between the two systems.

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