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POWER OF MONEY TO SATISFY, NO DOUBT

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Money can't buy happiness, you say? Not quite true. Last month, inquiring economists at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business said money indeed tends to bring happiness to people.

In their research, Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers found that there's a strong connection between wealth and subjective well-being.

They said countries with high gross domestic product (GDP) per capita rank near the top of surveys on happiness, while the poorest are stuck at the other end of the scale. Within each country, higher incomes translate into higher life satisfaction ratings.

"There appears to be a very strong relationship between subjective well-being and income, which holds for both rich and poor countries," the economists said.

Basically, what they're saying is contrary to a longstanding theory postulated by economist Richard Easterlin in 1974. Drawing on surveys from Japan, where national happiness has been flat despite economic growth, Easterlin concluded that happiness of a country's population does not necessarily rise with wealth. In other words, more money doesn't make people happier.

But it seems Stevenson and Wolfers have proven Easterlin wrong. In fact, the World Database of Happiness shows that Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Iceland and Finland - all with high per capita incomes - lead the happiness index rating among 95 countries.

At the bottom of the list are poorer countries: Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia. The database is an ongoing register of scientific research on happiness developed by Ruut Veenhoven, a professor at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

A 2004 Associated Press poll also showed that people who earn more than \$75,000 a year are far more likely to say they are "very satisfied" with their lives than those who make \$25,000 or less.

Yes, there must be a link between wealth and happiness. If there weren't, you'd be less likely to work harder or even work at all. The correlation is simple. You work to make money. If you have money, you can get what you want. If you get what you want, you will be happy.

That's the kind of thinking that's beneficial to any economy. If people believe that producing more wealth will make them happier, they will double their efforts to fatten their wallets. When a country's population strives, the economy will grow.

The major downside on the part of the consumers, however, is that the more they have money, the more they want. If a person buys his dream Porsche Carrera, for instance, he normally gets a blast of happiness. But the sudden rush

does not translate into long-term bliss. Soon, he gets used to driving that pricey car and later finds himself eyeing on a Ferrari or Bugatti Veyron.

So, money can indeed affect one's well-being. Whether its impact is lasting or temporary is beside the point. But if you want your country's economy to grow, just ditch that perpetual saying about how money can't buy you happiness.

There must be a link between wealth and happiness. If there weren't, you'd be less likely to work harder or even work at all. You work to make money. If you have money, you can get what you want. If you get what you want, you will be happy.

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