



## รายงานวิจัยฉบับสมบูรณ์

โครงการ: ความสุขจากการเห็นแก่ผู้อื่น: การวิเคราะห์ทางเศรษฐศาสตร์  
**Happiness from Giving: A Quantitative Investigation from Thai Buddhists**

โดย ศาสตราจารย์ ดร. พริยะ ผลพิรุฬห์

กรกฎาคม พ.ศ.2556

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Happiness from Giving: A Quantitative Investigation from Thai Buddhists

โดย ศาสตราจารย์ ดร. พริยะ ผลพิรุฬห์  
คณะพัฒนาการเศรษฐกิจ สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์

สนับสนุนโดยสำนักงานกองทุนสนับสนุนการวิจัยและสถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์

(ความเห็นในรายงานนี้เป็นของผู้วิจัย สกว. และสถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์ไม่จำเป็นต้องเห็นด้วยเสมอไป)

## กิตติกรรมประกาศ

รายงานการศึกษานี้คงจะไม่สามารถเสร็จสมบูรณ์ได้ถ้าปราศจากการช่วยเหลือจากบุคคลต่างๆ ผู้วิจัยขอขอบคุณสำนักงานสถิติแห่งชาติที่ได้ให้ความอนุเคราะห์ข้อมูลการสำรวจที่นำมาใช้เป็นข้อมูลหลักในงานวิจัยฉบับนี้ ขอขอบคุณคุณคุณฉัตรพร สันติพงษ์และคุณธนาณัติ สิงหาเทพสำหรับการเป็นผู้ช่วยวิจัย และในท้ายที่สุด รายงานการศึกษานี้คงไม่สามารถสำเร็จลงได้ถ้าปราศจากการสนับสนุนจากสำนักงานกองทุนสนับสนุนการวิจัย (สกว.) และสถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์ซึ่งผู้วิจัยขอเคารพและขอบคุณแก่หน่วยงานทั้งสองนี้อย่างสุดซึ้ง

พิริยะ ผลพิรุฬห์

## Abstract (บทคัดย่อ)

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**Investigator:** Piriya Pholphirul, School of Development Economics, National Institute of  
Development Administration

(ชื่อนักวิจัย): ศาสตราจารย์ ดร.ปริยะ พลพิรุฬห์ คณะพัฒนาการเศรษฐกิจ  
สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์

**E-mail Address:** [piriya@nida.ac.th](mailto:piriya@nida.ac.th)/ pholphir@hotmail.com

ระยะเวลาโครงการ: 1 ปี (16 กรกฎาคม พ.ศ. 2555 ถึง 15 กรกฎาคม พ.ศ. 2556)

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## Abstract

In the Buddhism's thought, giving without condition leads to higher level of happiness. Even though there are a number of literatures explaining factor determinations to happiness level, none of those literatures quantitatively test this happiness from giving relationship. Using household dataset in Thailand where Buddhism is her national religious. This paper suggests that religious and non-religious giving leads to higher happiness level than not giving at all. Moreover, for non-religious giving, it is found that charitable giving in term of money and goods provides a donor more happiness than volunteer work, but giving both will even enhance his/her happiness level. Religious giving that involves offering foods and dedicating offerings to Buddhist monks is found to increase happiness level. Happiness level is increased in greater value for respondents who regularly give for religious purposes. In particular, dedicating offerings to monks regularly leads the highest happiness level. This is probably because of that Thai society has a close relationship with Buddhism, and that dedicating offerings to monks is believed to provide great value of merit. This belief might result from the fact that when dedicating dedicating to monks donors usually do it randomly and that most donors prefer to do this activity in a temple, which suggest that making merit at a temple also leads to higher level of happiness. Besides after the performance of religious giving, Thai Buddhist should share the merits gained with all beings.

## บทคัดย่อ

ตามแนวคิดทางพุทธศาสนา การให้โดยไม่มุ่งหวังสิ่งตอบแทน (หรือที่เรียกว่าทาน) คือหนทางหนึ่งในการนำไปสู่ความสุข งานศึกษาจำนวนมากพยายามอธิบายถึงความสัมพันธ์ของการให้กับระดับความสุข แต่ยังไม่มีการไหนที่พยายามประเมินความสำคัญดังกล่าวในเชิงปริมาณ โดยเฉพาะสำหรับข้อมูลของศาสนาพุทธ งานศึกษานี้ใช้ข้อมูลการสำรวจในระดับบุคคลของประเทศไทยที่มีศาสนาพุทธเป็นศาสนาประจำชาติ ผลการศึกษาพบว่า การให้ทางศาสนา (เช่นการตักบาตรและการทำสังฆทาน) และการให้ที่ไม่ใช่ทางศาสนาส่งผลต่อระดับของความสุขที่เพิ่มขึ้นของพุทธศาสนิกชนไทย โดยความถี่ของการให้ยังส่งผลต่อระดับความสุขที่เพิ่มขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ ผลการศึกษาพบว่าการทำสังฆทานจะส่งผลต่อระดับความสุขมากกว่าการให้ประเภทอื่นๆ

**Keywords :** Happiness, Religious Giving, Non-Religious Giving, Buddhism

**(คำหลัก):** ความสุข การบริจาคทางศาสนา การบริจาคที่ไม่ใช่ทางศาสนา พุทธศาสนิกชน

### **Output จากโครงการวิจัยที่ได้รับทุนจาก สกว.**

งานวิจัยศึกษาชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตีพิมพ์ในวารสารวิชาการนานาชาติ โดยผู้วิจัยจะนำงานดังกล่าวไปตีพิมพ์ในวารสารทางวิชาการในต่างประเทศที่อยู่ในฐานข้อมูล ISI, Scopus, และ Scimago เท่านั้น ซึ่งฐานข้อมูลดังกล่าวเป็นข้อบังคับในการร่วมสนับสนุนเงินทางจากสถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์ นอกจากนี้ ผู้วิจัยจะนำผลการศึกษาที่ได้มาใช้ในการเรียนการสอนในคณะพัฒนาการเศรษฐกิจ สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์

# **Happiness from Giving: Quantitative Investigation of Thai Buddhists**

**Piriya Pholphirul<sup>\*</sup>**

## **Abstract**

According to Buddhism, giving without condition leads to a higher level of happiness. Even though there are a number of studies examining factors that determine happiness, none quantitatively examine happiness from the perspective of a “giving” relationship. Using a household dataset from Thailand, where Buddhism is the main religion, this paper suggests that religious and non-religious giving leads to a higher happiness level than not giving at all. Moreover, for non-religious giving, it is found that charitable giving in terms of money and goods gives a donor more happiness than does volunteer work, but that both types of giving enhance one’s happiness. Religious giving (offering food and dedicating other offerings to Buddhist monks) is also found to increase happiness, increases more for respondents who regularly give for religious purposes. In particular, regularly giving to monks leads to the highest happiness level, perhaps since Buddhism permeates Thai society and dedicating offerings to monks is believed to provide great merit. In addition, when making offerings to monks, donors usually do it randomly, at a temple, which suggests that making merit at a temple also leads to higher level of happiness.

**Keywords:** Happiness, Religious Giving, Non-Religious Giving, Buddhism

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Graduate School of Development Economics, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) and International College of National Institute of Development Administration (ICO-NIDA), Serithai Road, Klong-Chan, Bangkok, Bangkok 10240, Thailand. Email: piriya@nida.ac.th.

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## 1. Introduction

These days, besides focusing on economic growth, society has resulted in more emphasis on the happiness of a society as a path to economic sustainability. For this reason, various studies aim to explain the relationships among factors contributing to happiness. These factors include level of income, education, unemployment status, marital status, health condition, and urbanization (such as Gerdtham and Johannesson (1997), Easterlin (2001), Frey and Stutzer (2003), Frey and Stutzer (2004), and Elster (1998)). However, even though happiness resides inside a person's mind and is influenced by different values and cultures in different societies

Happiness is referred to as a state of mind or feeling that can be classified into levels from satisfaction to pleasure. In religious and philosophical approaches, happiness is referred to as a feeling of well-being and prosperity, rather than merely a state of mind or feeling. According to Buddhist principles, happiness is categorized into physical happiness and mental happiness. Physical happiness is defined as happiness derived from the five senses—visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile—which are called the Five Sensual Desires (*Kamma-Khun-Ha*) or bodily pleasant feeling. Another category of happiness in Buddhism, mental happiness, is defined as happiness derived from mental pleasure, delightfulness, and satisfaction.

Happiness can be measured using two approaches: 1) subjective well-being, and 2) objective well-being. In general, it is theoretically accepted to measure subjective well-being by interviewing people as to their level of overall happiness. The interview questions are about overall satisfaction with life, for example, “What is your level of overall life satisfaction?” Interviewees are required to give a score of 1-10. Subjective well-being concerns the valuation of what individuals have rather than the desire to have something, which might in turn cause unhappiness or suffering. In order to gauge their happiness level, respondents are urged to assess their overall quality of life, taking into account their past experiences as well as their expectations for the future. This question aims to have respondents reflect on their overall life satisfaction. Measuring objective well-being, on the other hand, focuses on measuring factors considered to contribute to happiness, for example, health, education, housing, safety, etc. These factors are weighted for each variable or index, which varies according to the research methods used in different countries.

The objective well-being approach assumes that all people have basic needs and rights, ranging from adequate food and water to physical health and education. Using this approach, well-being can be assessed through analysis of objective (observable) indicators of the extent to which these needs/rights are satisfied. The examples of such indicators generally include income, wealth, and proportion of children in education, education attainment, life expectancy, crime rate, pollution, and water quality. Objective well-being measures are well established in the literature. However, this approach is paternalistic: it assumes that certain things are good or bad for well-being.

In Buddhism, one way to promote happiness is by “giving”. Making altruism and giving, the so-called *Dana* of life, is part and parcel of pursuing happiness. *Dana* is a Pali word that can be translated as giving, generosity, charity, and liberality. It occupies an important part in the Buddha's teaching, which is often formulated under



three headings—*dana*, *sila*, *bhavana* (giving, morality, meditation or mental cultivation).

Giving is not seen purely as the exchange of material possessions, however. In Buddhist terms, giving includes non-tangibles such as education, confidence, and wisdom. It is believed that “giving” is basic social behavior and is also regarded as a manner of helping one another. Givers give things for the purpose of providing benefits to other people, and helping others takes different forms as goods or services are transferred from a person or a group of people to another person or group of people without any conditions. This type of giving is based on altruism.

In the case of Thailand, there are a couple of reasons why giving and happiness are worth studying. First, major progress in the developing story of the importance of happiness is reflected by the emphasis on “A Happy Society with Equality, Fairness, and Resilience” included in Thailand’s 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016), which in turn has led to an increased interest in the study of happiness in the country. Second, Thailand is recognized as a prominent Buddhist country with its culture profoundly influenced by Buddhism, making it a unique society in terms of moral principles. The teachings of Buddha are principally focused on giving, which has contributed to the strong link between Thai social values and generosity. If some members of the society encounter dilemmas or sufferings, the majority of Thai people tend to provide assistance as best they can to make sure that nobody is left abandoned. According to the World Giving Index (2011), which uses data gathered from people age 15 and older in rural and urban areas in 153 countries, Thailand ranks ninth in terms of giving? In particular, for the sub-index of charitable giving, Thailand ranks first in the world. This fact raises an interesting question of how being altruistic by giving to others affects the happiness of Thai people.

This paper therefore uses an individual sample to investigate the impacts on happiness and well-being from giving. Using a household dataset in Thailand as a case study, this paper aims to investigate both religious and non-religious giving’s effects on happiness in terms of the subjective well-being of Thai people.

Section 2 presents concept and literature reviews as to whether giving makes people happy. Section 3 examines the dataset from Thailand that is used in this study. Section 4 quantifies impacts of both religious giving and non-religious giving among Thai people, Section 5 concludes.

## **2. Happiness from Giving: A Survey of the Literature**

Various studies on giving and philanthropy have been conducted in a number of diverse fields. Andreoni (1990) studied motivations for giving and found that giving can be motivated by two factors—pure altruism and impure altruism. Pure altruism is giving for the benefits of other people. Donors’ satisfaction increases when the donations are seen to be sufficient to meet the needs of intended recipients. On the other hand, impure altruism is giving with awareness of the benefits to donors themselves as well as to recipients.

Indeed, social scientists and economists have identified a host of ways in which charitable behavior can benefit the giver, for example, economically via tax breaks

(Becker, 1974; Glazer and Konrad, 1996; Griskevicius, et al., 2007). In addition, a number of researchers have studied the effects of religious giving on physical health, mental health, and well-being (Andreoni, 1989, 1990; Dunn, et al., 2008)

Dialogue on whether giving behavior increases well-being and happiness dates back to ancient Greece. Aristotle argued that the goal of life was to achieve *eudaimonia*, which is closely tied to modern conceptions of happiness. Contemporary research (for example, Harbough, et al., 2007) includes studies that measure neural activity as an indication of pleasureableness. Harbough did so examining participants who decided how to split a one-hundred-dollar sum between themselves and a local food bank. Results showed that donations of the entire one-hundred-dollar sum to the food bank led to activation in the ventral striatum. This result suggests that giving in the form of charitable donations is rewarding to givers.

In another study, Dunn, et al. (2008) asked representative Americans to rate their general happiness and provide monthly estimates of personal and pro-social spending. Participants were asked to estimate how much they spent in a typical month on 1) bills/expenses, 2) gifts for themselves, 3) gifts for others, and 4) donations to charity. Result show that participants reported greater general happiness for items 3) gifts for others and items 4) donation to charity. Even controlling for income, higher pro-social spending was found to be associated with happiness. The most recent study (Aknin, et al., 2013) demonstrates that the emotional benefits of spending money on others (pro-social spending) are unleashed when givers are aware of their positive impact. In their study, giving more money to charity led to higher levels of happiness only when participants are explained how these funds are used for benefit a recipient.

Besides gauging the effects of giving money on donors themselves, a number of research papers investigate the impacts of non-monetary spending on happiness. Analyzing the issue on a national level, Meier and Stutzer (2008), using German Socioeconomic Household Panel Data, demonstrate that volunteering increases life satisfaction. They found that higher levels of volunteer work were associated with higher levels of overall life satisfaction.

Another study, by Field, et al. (1998), asked a volunteer group of retired senior citizens to give help to take care of infants and found that the seniors experienced less anxiety and depression, as well as improved health, from providing such help. This result is supported by Lyubomirsky, et al. (2004), which shows that simply asking students to commit random acts of kind giving can significantly increase happiness levels for several weeks compared to students in the control group.

A study from Ferguson, et al. (2012) examines the impacts of donating blood in terms of experiencing a “warm glow” (“I donate blood because it makes me feel good”). Compared to non-blood donors, blood donors were found to be motivated in general by the “warm glow” it makes them feel.

With regard to religious giving, it has long been argued just how religious giving is distinguished from non-religious giving. Chang (2005) found that religious giving is closely related to after-life consumption. People who give for religious purpose hope to have a good after-life. In contrast, non-religious giving is not related to after-life consumption. In addition, research results also noted the relationship between age and

giving; older people were more likely to give for religious purposes than were younger individuals.

Attending religious activities allows people to connect with a social network, which in turn yields positive impacts on physical and mental health (Lehrer, 2004). Moreover, from studying the relationship between religiosity and happiness, it is found that religiosity and happiness have a positive relationship. For instances, there is a study on the relationship between religiosity and self-rated indices of physical health, subjective health status, and happiness. After controlling individual variables such as age and gender, it was found that respondents who were more religious were less likely to report health problems than were those who were less religious or who did not attend religious activities (Gokce, et. al., 2004).

Furthermore, happiness has been found to be related to the frequency of attending religious activities and complying with the teachings of one's religion. Accordingly, happiness is associated with social beliefs, such as the belief in good and evil (Ferriss, 2002). Religiosity thus has effects on life satisfaction. To some people, religion serves as a safety net, protecting them from bad luck and suffering. It is found that Christians who attend church regularly are more likely to handle problems in their lives, for example, divorce or unemployment, better than those who are not strict adherents to their religion.

Merely, attending religious activities seems to have beneficial impacts on physical health and personal happiness (Witter et al., 1985). Researchers have been curious about why attending religious activities/going to church could reduce the probability of encountering health problems and lead to healthiness, and many reasons have been put forth. First, religious activities provide opportunities for social gathering, which allows people to talk and exchange their interests. Second, religious activities serve as a platform for exchanging information on social and life aspects during which individuals can learn and gain knowledge from others. Third, participating in religious activities encourages people to be aware of their own personal significance. By attending such activities, people tend to feel good about their life and become happier.

### **3. Data**

Since this paper aims of testing the Buddhism's thoughts in which giving should bring to higher level of happiness. Secondary data were used in this study from the 2011 Survey on Conditions of Society and Culture in Thailand, which is a national survey conducted by the National Statistical Office with the cooperation of the Ministry of Public Health and covering a sample group of 27,766 Thai people aged 15 and over.

Subjective well-being was measured, as shown in Table 1, by having respondents estimate their level of happiness by giving themselves a happiness score of 0-10, from absolutely unhappy to absolutely happy. By tabulation, male respondents, accounted for 39.15 percent of the sample group, are were found to be slightly happier than female respondents (60.85 percent of total respondents). Respondents aged 15-24 (8.88 percent) scored themselves the happiest (8.01 out of 10), whereas older respondents indicated a lower level of happiness (7.07).

Considering how marital status might affect happiness, the survey suggests that single respondents had the highest level of happiness, with an average score of 7.82,

followed by married couples living together (7.60). In contrast, those widowed, divorced, or separated (16.97 percent) reported the lowest level of happiness (6.96).

As for education, respondents with no education (5.33 percent) had the lowest level of happiness. Respondents with more than a bachelor's degree (9.9%) tended to have the highest level of happiness.

Lastly, in terms of occupation, those who were still students had the highest educational level (8.27) followed by government officials and state enterprise employees (8.07), entrepreneurs (7.64), and private company employees (7.59). The unskilled, self-employed, or construction workers had the lowest average happiness score (6.98)

Figure 1 compares levels of happiness between respondents who were involved with religious giving, which are classified into 1) offering food to Buddhist monks, and 2) offerings dedicated to Buddhist monks. Respondents were asked how often they participated in religious giving activities—"often," "sometimes," or "never." Monks who receive food and other requisites from devotees also have a duty to fulfill. The monks should realize that those who are offering them food are not their relatives. Buddhists believe that they do not owe the monks anything. They are not offering food so that the monks can enjoy life and have a good time. Rather they are offering with the wish that would lead toward their happiness and prosperity.

Figure 2, on the other hand, compares levels of happiness between respondents who were involved with non-religious giving, which are classified into 1) donating money and goods to public, and 2) volunteer and social work. Respondents were also asked how often they participated in these religious giving activities.

By tabulation, a respondent who frequently gave or dedicated offerings seems to be happier than those who never gave anything. Compared to other types of giving, offerings to Buddhist monks tended to generate the highest level of happiness (with an average happiness score of 8.17 out of 10). Regardless of the types of giving, the average levels of happiness of those who occasionally gave are slightly different. Nevertheless, respondents who occasionally offered food to monks tended to have a slightly lower level of happiness than did those who did it regularly.

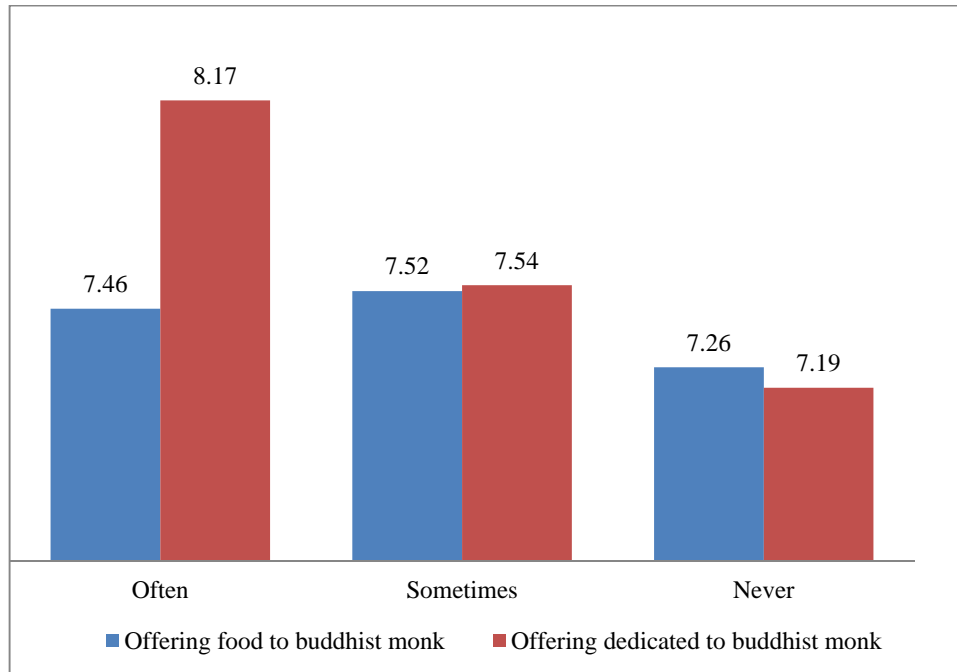
For non-religious giving, frequently or occasionally donating money and goods seemed to promote a higher level of happiness than did volunteering. Nevertheless, it is impossible, at this stage, to come to a definite conclusion since other factors affecting happiness level have to be taken into consideration as the tabulation does not take into account other control factors such as the socio-characteristics of each person (age, gender, education level, career, etc.).

Table 1: Percentage Dispersion and Average Happiness Level Classified by Economic and Social Factors

Variables	Percent of Total Sample	Average Happiness Level	Standard Deviation	Number of Respondents
<i>Economic and social factors</i>				
Male	39.15	7.59	1.70	10,871
Female	60.85	7.49	1.70	16,895
<u>Age factor</u>				
15 - 24 years	8.88	8.01	1.58	2,465
25 - 39 years	25.48	7.79	1.59	7,075
40 - 49 years	23.30	7.61	1.64	6,470
50 - 59 years	20.00	7.39	1.71	5,554
60 and over	22.34	7.07	1.81	6,202
<u>Marital-status factor</u>				
Single	15.86	7.82	1.67	4,403
Married	67.17	7.60	1.65	18,650
Widowed/divorced/separated	16.97	6.96	1.79	4,713
<u>Educational factor</u>				
No education	5.33	6.95	1.78	1,480
Primary school	55.09	7.29	1.73	15,295
Secondary school	12.58	7.75	1.66	3,493
High school/vocational certificate	12.29	7.90	1.54	3,412
Diploma/high vocational certificate	3.66	8.03	1.54	1,016
Bachelor's degree	9.90	8.16	1.42	2,749
Higher than Bachelor's degree	1.16	8.13	1.32	321
<u>Occupational factor</u>				
Student	4.15	8.27	1.51	1,152
Government official/state enterprise employee	8.17	8.07	1.49	2,269
Private company employee	14.57	7.59	1.61	4,046
Entrepreneur	24.45	7.64	1.63	6,788
Farmer	20.82	7.47	1.67	5,781
Unskilled/self-employed/construction worker	3.75	6.93	1.75	1,041
Housewife/unemployed	21.08	7.22	1.83	5,853
Other occupations	3.01	7.03	1.86	836
Total		7.53	1.70	27,766

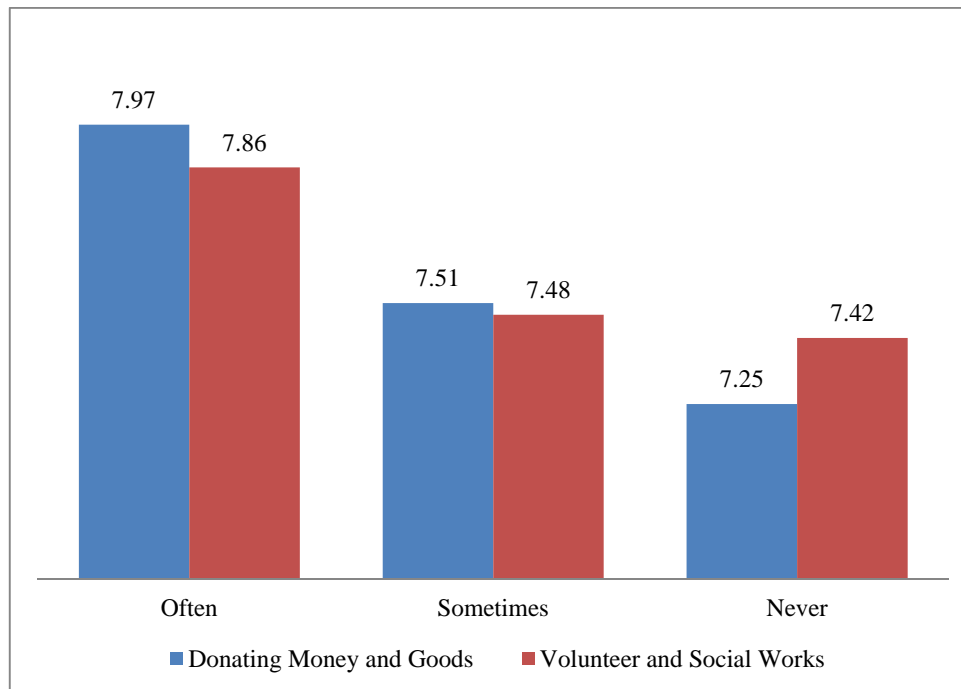
Source: Author's Calculation.

Figure 1: Level of Happiness according to Religious Giving



Source: Author's Calculation.

Figure 2: Level of Happiness according to Non-Religious Giving



Source: Author's Calculation.

#### 4. Econometrics Estimation and Results

This paper adopts the econometric model to quantitatively investigate the effects of giving factors on happiness level, as gauged on a 0-10 scale. Independent variables include gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, religion, and occupation. Giving is classified into religious giving, which includes presenting food and other offerings to monks (for Thai Buddhists), and non-religious giving (charitable giving), including donating money or goods and participating in volunteer work. Frequency of giving is also incorporated in the model.

The model estimation in this study is based on 1) the Ordinary Least Square Estimation and followed by 2) the Ordered Probit Model, and 3) the Ordered Logit Model as the dependent variable, in this case a ranking from 0-10. Ordered probit is a generalization of the popular probit analysis to the case of more than two outcomes of an ordinal dependent variable. A similar method also has a counterpart in ordered logit. Both models are appropriately used here for assessing the happiness level. Estimating the frequency of giving (both religious and non-religious giving) should avoid the endogeneity problem (between giving and happiness) here in the estimated regression since frequency of giving is based on people's observed behaviors in the past, which should affect their happiness level today.

In Table 2, the first Models 1-3 (generated by estimating OLS, ordered probit, and ordered logit, respectively) present the estimated results by including only socioeconomic control variables such as gender, age, age<sup>2</sup>, religion, occupation, and education level with dummy non-religious giving factors, including giving money or goods to others and the frequency of doing so. Models 4-6 add the factors of participating in volunteer and social works as well as the frequency of such acts. Models 7-9 analyze impacts in the case of people who participate in both types of non-religious activities.

The analysis gained from using econometric models suggests that the effect of age on happiness level is statistically significant and negatively related to happiness level. An increase in age of 1 year causes happiness to decrease by 0.011-0.018 on the 10-level scale. Gender has no statistical significance on happiness level. As for marital status, results show that its effect on happiness level is statistically significant. Married respondents tend to have the highest happiness level, followed by single respondents and widowed, divorced, and married-but-separated respondents, respectively. The happiness level of married respondents is 0.09-0.158 higher than that of single respondents and 0.23-0.43 higher than that of widowed, divorced, and married-but-separated respondents.

For education level, results show that a higher education level leads to a higher happiness level. For example, respondents with a bachelor's degree and higher have a higher happiness level than those who with no education.

The effect of occupation on happiness level is also statistical significant. Students have the highest level of happiness, and respondents who have regular work, except for those who are unskilled, self-employed, and work in construction and other such occupations, score themselves happier than do housewives and unemployed individuals,.

But apart from the above factors, we have missed one of the most important socioeconomic control variables here, which is income level, since it was not reported in this survey.

As for the “giving” factor, results indicate that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between giving and happiness. The happiness level derived from charitable giving in terms of money is 0.12–0.21 higher (on the scale of 10) than that of respondents who never give to charity. Furthermore, regular charitable giving is found to increase happiness level even more (0.31–0.53). In a similar way, respondents who participate in volunteer work are found to be happier than those who never do. And, as with charitable giving, the level of happiness is likely to increase when doing volunteer work regularly. In comparison, the happiness level derived from charitable giving in terms of money is found to be slightly higher than that from volunteer work. Nevertheless, regular participation in volunteer work is found to yield higher a happiness level than regular charitable giving. Table 2 also presents a comparison between happiness levels of respondents who give both money to charity and participate in volunteer work. From this analysis, it is suggested that respondents who both give money to charity and do volunteer work are happier than those who do either activity alone.

Analysis of religious giving—presenting food and other offerings to monks—in Table 3 suggests that a Thai Buddhist who offers food to monks seems to be happier than those who never do so, by around 0.083–0.172 points on the scale of 10. More frequent food offerings seems to even promote an even higher level of happiness. Making other offerings to monks increases one’s happiness level by 0.159–0.276 points, which is more than does merely offering food to monks. Respondents who regularly make offerings to monks are happier than those who do not do so only infrequently. Compared to other types of giving, religious giving by making non-food offerings to monks seems to promote the highest happiness level. This is probably because Thai society has a close relationship with Buddhism, and that making offerings to monks is believed to provide great merit. In addition, the higher happiness score for making offerings other than food might result from the fact that donors usually make such offerings at a temple, which suggests that making merit at a temple increases the level of happiness.

Even though, as noted in a number of studies cited above, giving seems to promote happiness, a number of other studies find an opposite relationship. For example, happy people may give more than unhappy people (Isen and Leven, 1972; Anderman, 1972; Harris and Huang, 1973; and Kazdin and Bryan, 1971). Those studies find that positive moods have been shown to facilitate helpful behavior to the society.

Nevertheless, Anik, et al. (2009) explain a circular relationship between giving and happiness: happier people tend to give more, and giving indeed increases happiness.



**Table 2: Estimation of Non-Religious Giving on Happiness Level**

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Variables	OLS	Ordered Probit	Ordered Logit	OLS	Ordered Probit	Ordered Logit	OLS	Ordered Probit	Ordered Logit
Socioeconomic Control Variables									
Age	-0.018 (0.003)***	-0.012 (0.002)***	-0.019 (0.004)***	-0.016 (0.003)***	-0.011 (0.002)***	-0.018 (0.004)***	-0.016 (0.003)***	-0.011 (0.002)***	-0.017 (0.004)***
Age <sup>2</sup>	0.001 (0.001)**	0.001 (0.001)**	0.001 (0.001)**	0.001 (0.001)*	0.001 (0.001)**	0.001 (0.001)*	0.001 (0.001)*	0.001 (0.001)**	0.001 (0.001)*
Male	0.025 (0.021)	0.019 (0.013)	0.036 (0.022)	-0.004 (0.021)	0.002 (0.013)	0.007 (0.022)	0.022 -0.021	0.017 -0.013	0.032 -0.022
Married	0.148 (0.032)***	0.088 (0.020)***	0.146 (0.035)***	0.153 (0.032)***	0.09 (0.020)***	0.149 (0.035)***	0.158 (0.032)***	0.093 (0.020)***	0.156 (0.035)***
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	-0.222 (0.040)***	-0.139 (0.025)***	-0.257 (0.044)***	-0.222 (0.041)***	-0.139 (0.025)***	-0.258 (0.044)***	-0.221 (0.041)***	-0.138 (0.025)***	-0.256 (0.044)***
Primary	0.195 (0.045)***	0.12 (0.028)***	0.224 (0.049)***	0.211 (0.045)***	0.129 (0.028)***	0.234 (0.049)***	0.199 (0.045)***	0.122 (0.028)***	0.222 (0.049)***
Secondary	0.383 (0.054)***	0.241 (0.034)***	0.445 (0.059)***	0.421 (0.054)***	0.263 (0.034)***	0.477 (0.059)***	0.406 (0.054)***	0.254 (0.034)***	0.466 (0.059)***
High School/Vocational Certificate	0.543 (0.054)***	0.337 (0.034)***	0.595 (0.059)***	0.593 (0.054)***	0.367 (0.034)***	0.64 (0.059)***	0.567 (0.054)***	0.352 (0.034)***	0.617 (0.059)***
Diploma/High Vocational Certificate	0.704 (0.069)***	0.446 (0.044)***	0.805 (0.075)***	0.769 (0.069)***	0.485 (0.043)***	0.866 (0.075)***	0.73 (0.069)***	0.462 (0.044)***	0.832 (0.075)***
Bachelor's Degree	0.822 (0.058)***	0.517 (0.037)***	0.898 (0.063)***	0.915 (0.058)***	0.573 (0.036)***	0.99 (0.063)***	0.872 (0.058)***	0.548 (0.037)***	0.952 (0.063)***
Higher than Bachelor's Degree	0.814 (0.104)***	0.502 (0.066)***	0.872 (0.111)***	0.912 (0.104)***	0.562 (0.066)***	0.966 (0.111)***	0.883 (0.105)***	0.545 (0.066)***	0.942 (0.111)***
Student	0.51 (0.064)***	0.333 (0.041)***	0.573 (0.070)***	0.509 (0.064)***	0.329 (0.041)***	0.567 (0.07)***	0.51 (0.064)***	0.33 (0.041)***	0.567 (0.070)***
Government/State enterprise Employee	0.144 (0.047)***	0.088 (0.030)***	0.139 (0.051)***	0.122 (0.048)**	0.072 (0.030)**	0.114 (0.052)**	0.162 (0.048)***	0.099 (0.030)***	0.158 (0.051)***

Table 2 (Continued)

Private Company Employee	<b>0.012</b>	<b>-0.007</b>	<b>-0.026</b>	<b>0.026</b>	<b>0.003</b>	<b>-0.011</b>	<b>0.014</b>	<b>-0.005</b>	<b>-0.023</b>
	(0.037)	(0.023)	(0.040)	(0.037)	(0.023)	(0.040)	-0.037	-0.023	-0.04
Entrepreneur	0.151	0.085	0.141	0.18	0.103	0.169	0.156	0.089	0.145
	(0.031)***	(0.019)***	(0.034)***	(0.031)***	(0.019)***	(0.034)***	(0.031)***	(0.019)***	(0.034)***
Farmer	0.09	0.049	0.074	0.052	0.023	0.028	0.08	0.041	0.061
	(0.032)***	(0.020)**	(0.036)**	(0.033)	(0.021)	(0.036)	(0.033)**	(0.021)*	-0.036
Unskilled Self-Employed Worker	-0.342	-0.22	-0.411	-0.397	-0.256	-0.468	-0.36	-0.232	-0.427
	(0.056)***	(0.035)***	(0.062)***	(0.057)***	(0.035)***	(0.062)***	(0.057)***	(0.035)***	(0.062)***
Other Occupations	-0.237	-0.149	-0.266	-0.212	-0.133	-0.238	-0.223	-0.138	-0.246
	(0.060)***	(0.038)***	(0.066)***	(0.061)***	(0.038)***	(0.066)***	(0.061)***	(0.038)***	(0.066)***
Non-Religious Control Variables									
Donating Money and Goods	0.208	0.119	0.206	-	-	-	0.293	0.17	0.285
	(0.024)***	(0.015)***	(0.027)***	-	-	-	(0.031)***	(0.019)***	(0.033)***
Frequently Donating Money and Goods	0.460	0.309	0.533	-	-	-	-	-	-
	(0.027)***	(0.017)***	(0.030)***	-	-	-	-	-	-
Volunteering to Social Work	-	-	-	0.045	0.031	0.05	0.198	0.129	0.208
	-	-	-	(0.022)**	(0.014)**	(0.024)**	(0.048)***	(0.030)***	(0.054)***
Frequently Volunteering to Social Work	-	-	-	0.407	0.269	0.465	-	-	-
	-	-	-	(0.027)***	(0.017)***	(0.030)***	-	-	-
Donating Money and Goods and Volunteering to Social Works	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.376	0.232	0.392
	-	-	-	-	-	-	(0.029)***	(0.018)***	(0.031)***
Constant	7.649	-	-	7.665	-	-	7.503	-	-
	(0.135)***	-	-	(0.135)***	-	-	(0.136)***	-	-
R-Squared/Pseudo R-Square	0.088	0.025	0.026	0.083	0.023	0.024	0.079	0.022	0.022
Number of Observation	27,766	27,766	27,766	27,766	27,766	27,766	27,766	27,766	27,766

Notes: 1) Numbers in parenthesis are Standard Error, 2) \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.0, 3) Reference group is Female, Single, No Education, Housewife/Unemployed

**Table 3: Estimation of Religious Giving on Happiness Level**

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	(OLS)	(Ordered Probit)	(Ordered Logit)	(OLS)	(Ordered Probit)	(Ordered Logit)	(OLS)	(Ordered Probit)	(Ordered Logit)
Economic and social factors									
Age	-0.012 (0.004)***	-0.008 (0.002)***	-0.013 (0.004)***	-0.014 (0.004)***	-0.009 (0.002)***	-0.014 (0.004)***	-0.015 (0.004)***	-0.01 (0.002)***	-0.016 (0.004)***
Age <sup>2</sup>	0.001 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)
Male	0.010 (0.021)	0.01 (0.013)	0.021 (0.023)	0.032 (0.022)	0.022 (0.013)	0.04 (0.023)*	0.025 (0.021)	0.019 (0.013)	0.034 (0.023)
Married	0.173 (0.033)***	0.102 (0.021)***	0.168 (0.036)***	0.168 (0.033)***	0.099 (0.021)***	0.168 (0.036)***	0.162 (0.033)***	0.096 (0.021)***	0.161 (0.036)***
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	-0.229 (0.042)***	-0.141 (0.026)***	-0.261 (0.046)***	-0.231 (0.042)***	-0.142 (0.026)***	-0.26 (0.046)***	-0.236 (0.042)***	-0.146 (0.026)***	-0.267 (0.046)***
Primary	0.270 (0.048)***	0.164 (0.030)***	0.304 (0.053)***	0.252 (0.048)***	0.154 (0.030)***	0.287 (0.053)***	0.249 (0.048)***	0.152 (0.030)***	0.286 (0.053)***
Secondary	0.468 (0.057)***	0.288 (0.036)***	0.529 (0.062)***	0.451 (0.058)***	0.278 (0.036)***	0.514 (0.062)***	0.436 (0.057)***	0.27 (0.036)***	0.501 (0.062)***
High School/Vocational Certificate	0.648 (0.058)***	0.396 (0.036)***	0.703 (0.062)***	0.628 (0.058)***	0.386 (0.036)***	0.686 (0.062)***	0.609 (0.058)***	0.375 (0.036)***	0.669 (0.062)***
Diploma/High Vocational Certificate	0.829 (0.073)***	0.517 (0.045)***	0.933 (0.078)***	0.808 (0.073)***	0.505 (0.045)***	0.915 (0.078)***	0.786 (0.073)***	0.492 (0.046)***	0.894 (0.078)***
Bachelor's Degree	0.972 (0.061)***	0.603 (0.038)***	1.053 (0.066)***	0.951 (0.061)***	0.591 (0.038)***	1.034 (0.066)***	0.927 (0.061)***	0.578 (0.038)***	1.013 (0.066)***
Higher than Bachelor's Degree	0.976 (0.108)***	0.597 (0.067)***	1.039 (0.113)***	0.958 (0.108)***	0.587 (0.068)***	1.023 (0.113)***	0.933 (0.107)***	0.573 (0.068)***	1.002 (0.113)***
Student	0.573 (0.068)***	0.368 (0.042)***	0.624 (0.073)***	0.562 (0.068)***	0.363 (0.043)***	0.619 (0.073)***	0.558 (0.067)***	0.36 (0.043)***	0.613 (0.073)***

Table 3 (Continued)

Government/ State Enterprise Employee	0.229 (0.049)***	0.142 (0.031)***	0.231 (0.052)***	0.233 (0.049)***	0.145 (0.031)***	0.238 (0.052)***	0.221 (0.049)***	0.138 (0.031)***	0.224 (0.052)***
Private Company Employee	0.006 (0.039)	-0.010 (0.024)	-0.032 (0.042)	0.012 (0.039)	-0.006 (0.024)	-0.025 (0.042)	0.002 (0.039)	-0.012 (0.024)	-0.034 (0.042)
Entrepreneur	0.177 (0.032)***	0.099 (0.020)***	0.164 (0.035)***	0.169 (0.032)***	0.096 (0.020)***	0.157 (0.035)***	0.166 (0.032)***	0.094 (0.020)***	0.156 (0.035)***
Farmer	0.106 (0.034)***	0.058 (0.021)***	0.086 (0.037)**	0.099 (0.034)***	0.055 (0.021)**	0.079 (0.037)**	0.111 (0.034)***	0.061 (0.021)***	0.091 (0.037)**
Unskilled Self-Employed Worker	-0.346 (0.058)***	-0.223 (0.036)***	-0.414 (0.063)***	-0.344 (0.058)***	-0.221 (0.036)***	-0.413 (0.063)***	-0.327 (0.058)***	-0.212 (0.036)***	-0.395 (0.063)***
Other Occupations	-0.256 (0.063)***	-0.159 (0.039)***	-0.282 (0.068)***	-0.251 (0.063)***	-0.156 (0.039)***	-0.277 (0.068)***	-0.252 (0.063)***	-0.157 (0.039)***	-0.281 (0.068)***
Giving factors (Religious giving)									
	-	-	-	0.172 (0.051)***	0.083 (0.032)**	0.118 (0.057)**	-	-	-
Frequent x Offering foods to monks	-	-	-	0.179 (0.031)***	0.118 (0.019)***	0.204 (0.034)***	-	-	-
Offering Dedicates to Monks	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.276 (0.031)***	0.159 (0.019)***	0.268 (0.034)***
Frequent x Offering Dedicates to Monks	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.792 (0.214)***	0.493 (0.136)***	0.753 (0.230)***
Constant	7.369 (0.106)***	-	-	7.249 (0.113)***	-	-	7.229 (0.107)***	-	-
R-Squared	0.071	0.019	0.020	0.072	0.020	0.021	0.074	0.020	0.021
Number of samples	26,019	26,019	26,019	26,019	26,019	26,019	26,019	26,019	26,019

Notes: 1) Numbers in parenthesis are Standard Error, 2) \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.0, 3) Reference group is female, single, No Education, Housewife/Unemployed, 4) Estimation only for Thai Buddhist

## **5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

In conclusion, results here show a positive relationship for both religious giving and non-religious giving and the happiness level of Thai people, most of whom are Buddhist. Using a Thai household dataset, this paper investigates the relationship between giving and happiness. The results suggest that both religious and non-religious giving generate greater happiness than not giving at all. Moreover, for non-religious giving, it is found that charitable giving in terms of money and goods provides a donor greater happiness than does volunteer work, but doing both enhances happiness even more.

Religious giving that involves offering food and making other, non-food offerings to Buddhist monks is found to increase happiness. And this happiness level is increased even more for respondents who regularly give for religious purposes. In particular, regularly making offerings to monks leads to the greatest happiness. This is probably because of Thai society has a close relationship with Buddhism, and making offerings to monks is believed to provide great merit. This suggests that making merit at a temple generates even more happiness. In addition, after performing religious giving, Thai Buddhists know they should share the merits gained with all beings. This is very beneficial, as sharing of merits is in itself a good deed. The mind thus enjoys a wholesome state associated with loving kindness and compassion as we share the merits of our good deeds.

With a positive relationship between both religious giving and non-religious giving to happiness level among Thai people, in term of public policy, it is advisable that the government introduce policy measures that encourage giving and participating in volunteer work to strengthen social networks, enhance the sense of altruism, and develop mindset that is appropriate with Thai society. For this purpose, Buddhism has been playing an important role in emphasizing the importance of giving. According to Buddhism, giving practically helps enhance the quality of human resources since it provides donors with more happiness and satisfaction, and thus lessens selfishness. In summary, when members of Thai society are altruistic and supportive of each other, Thailand will become a happy society and will continue to be a pleasant place to live as happiness can be enhanced, shared, and benefit society as a whole.

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