

## CHAPTER 6

### Subjective and Objective Happiness of Farmers

Happiness is an abstract concept that refers to one's inner feelings. The breadth of this state varies among people, and it cannot be observed directly by others. In spite of this case, academicians continuously seek approaches that can be used to evaluate human happiness. Happiness can be classified into two, namely, subjective and objective happiness.

Subjective happiness is directly self-reported on the fact that a person is considered the best judge of the overall quality of his/her own life. This kind of happiness can be used as a straightforward strategy to determine one's own happiness. Contrarily, objective happiness can be evaluated by other people and can be appraised from factors that require people to lead a good life. Compared with subjective happiness, objective happiness is more substantial, but does not cover all components of human happiness.

#### 6.1 Subjective happiness level and its measurement

This dissertation focused on the overall happiness of farmers and assumed that SE can yield a profound inner mental happiness that can hardly be observed directly. This study defined subjective happiness as a "global happiness" following the work of Rojas and Veenhoven (2011) who posited that subjective happiness is the degree to which an individual favorably judges the overall quality of his/her own life as a whole. Survey data were collected through self-evaluation (The reliability and validity of the evaluative method are discussed in Chapter 3).

A Seven-Likert scale was used because defining happiness level is a significant element for data accuracy. Cummins (2007) stated that the five levels of happiness may be

inaccurate and incapable of reflecting one's exact feeling. However, having numerous happiness levels is a disadvantage as well because it will be extremely narrow to clarify the distinct differences of each level. Thus, the happiness scale should be an odd number to create a middle point as one of the choices.

The outcome of the survey conducted in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Lampang showed that the self-reported subjective happiness level of farmers ranges from moderate to high and is inconsistently distributed. In particular, the level of subjective happiness of farmers is almost normally distributed and is left skewed, which is a standard determinant cited in many previous studies.

The extent of happiness of most farmers varies between 5 and 6. In particular, 42.18% of farmers are quite happy (subjective happiness level 5), and 37.85% of them are happy (subjective happiness level 6). Only a few farmers admitted that their happiness level is at its minimum (subjective happiness level 2). The median of the data was 5, and the mean was 5.35. The mean of low happiness was 4.17, and the mean of high happiness level was 5.81 (Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1).

The range of subjective happiness, representing either happiness or emotional stability, was evaluated by subtracting the minimum subjective happiness level from the maximum level. A wide range of subjective happiness implies that an individual has a high instability of happiness. In this study, 53.35% of farmers have a range of subjective happiness at 2, and 40.98% of them have their range of subjective happiness equaled to 1. In sum, Thai farmers are generally "happy" and have good emotional stability.

Table 6.1 The subjective happiness level of farmers

Happiness level	Happiness	Low happy	High happy	Range of happiness
0				1 (0.15%)
1	-	-	-	275 (40.98%)
2	1 (0.15%)	4 (0.60%)	-	358 (53.35%)
3	2 (0.30%)	90 (13.41%)	2 (0.30%)	35 (5.22%)
4	92 (13.71%)	392 (58.42%)	19 (2.83%)	2 (0.30%)
5	283 (42.18%)	160 (23.85%)	196 (29.21%)	-
6	254 (37.85%)	25 (3.73%)	340 (50.67%)	-
7	39 (5.81%)	-	114 (16.99%)	-
Total	671 (100%)	671 (100%)	671 (100%)	671 (100%)

Source: Author's Survey

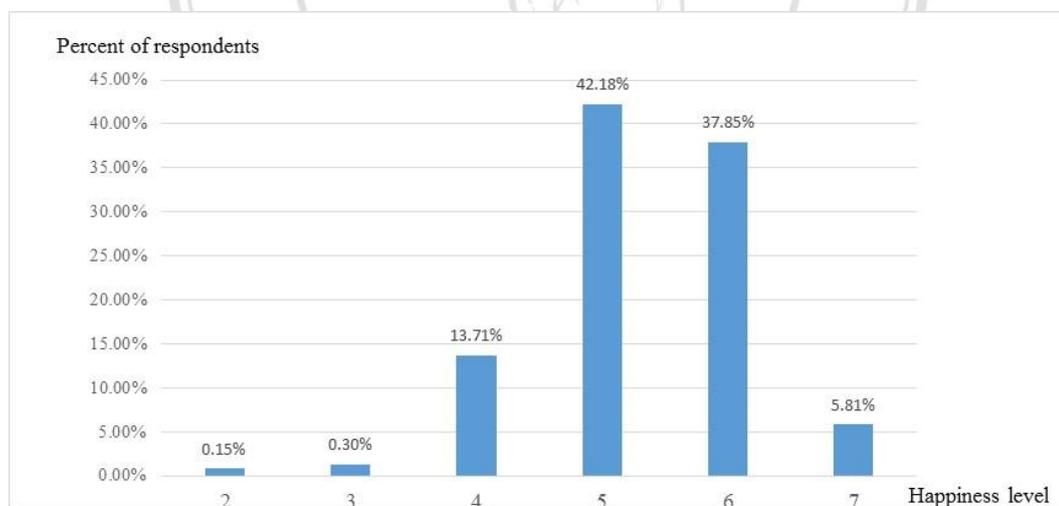


Figure 6.1 The distribution of subjective happiness level

Differences were observed in the distribution of subjective happiness of farmers at varying SEI levels. Figure 6.2 shows that the subjective happiness level at all SEI levels are almost normally distributed with a different skew. A huge amount of left skewness was noted when the SEI level increased. This finding demonstrates that the ratio of extremely happy farmers increases when they have high SEI level.

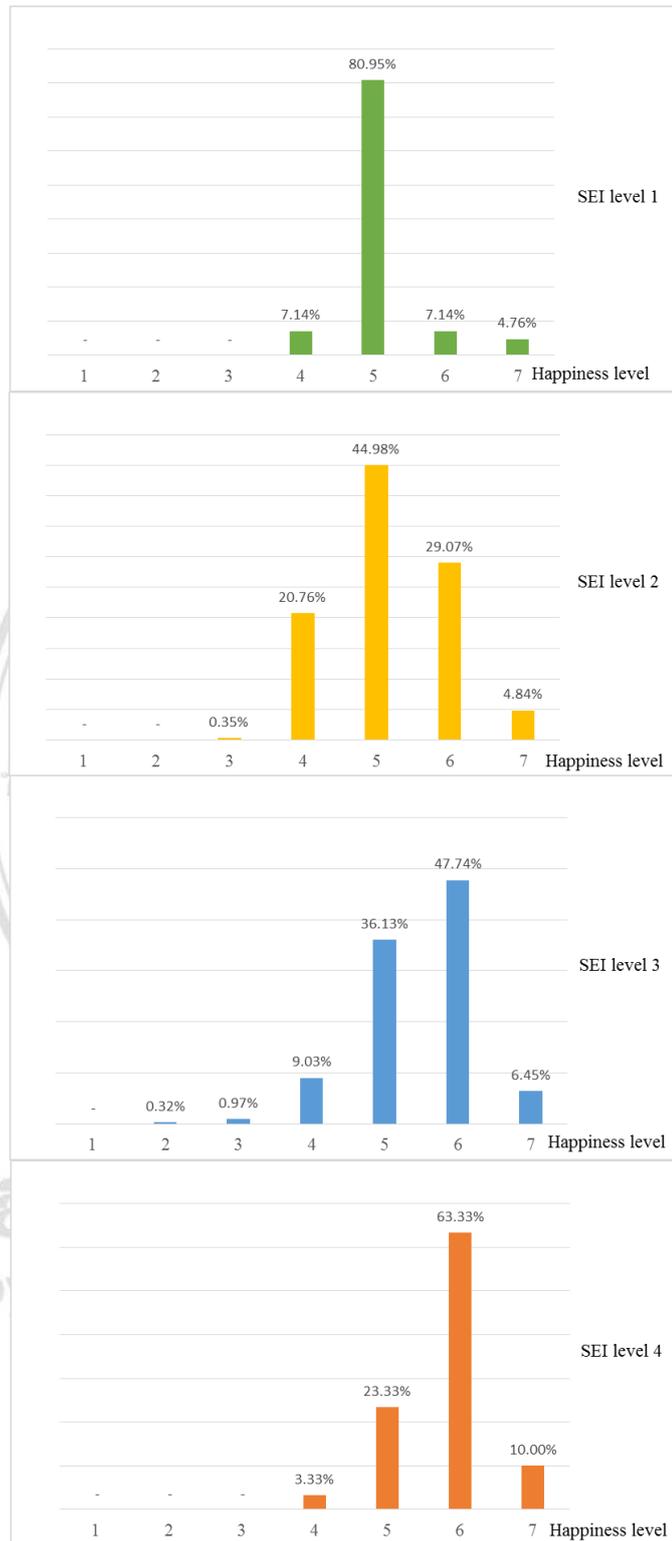


Figure 6.2 The distribution of subjective happiness level in each SEI level

Only a few farmers have a happiness level below the ranges of 2 and 3. Thus, the researcher adjusted a new level of happiness into four levels as follows:

Subjective happiness level 1 = farmer with subjective happiness level 1 - 4

Subjective happiness level 2 = farmer with subjective happiness level 5

Subjective happiness level 3 = farmer with subjective happiness level 6

Subjective happiness level 4 = farmer with subjective happiness level 7

The results showed that 41.00% of male farmers have happiness level 2, and 39.50% have happiness level 3. Similarly, 44.20% of female farmers have happiness level 2, and 35.10% have happiness level 3 (Table 6.2). The farmers were then classified into groups in terms of age. The findings indicated that every age group has a moderate to high level of subjective happiness in adjacent ratio (Table 6.3). In fact, all farmers have a relatively similar structure when different characteristics, such as educational level (Table 6.4) and location (Table 6.5), are considered. No statistically significant deviation was observed on the subjective happiness level regarding the different characteristics of farmers.

Table 6.2 Crosstabutaion between subjective happiness level and gender

Subjective happiness level	Gender	
	Male	Female
1	59 (14.00%)	36 (14.30%)
2	172 (41.00%)	111 (44.20%)
3	166 (39.50%)	88 (35.10%)
4	23 (5.50%)	16 (6.40%)
Total	420 (100.00%)	251 (100.00%)

Pearson Chi-Square= 1.453, df = 3, Asymp. Sig. = 0.693

Source: Author's Calculation

Table 6.3 Crosstabutaion between subjective happiness level and age

Subjective happiness level	Age (year)				
	< 39	40-49	50-59	60-69	>70
1	5 (15.20%)	16 (11.30%)	42 (14.90%)	27 (17.40%)	5 (8.30%)
2	17 (51.50%)	63 (44.40%)	113 (40.20%)	66 (42.60%)	24 (40.00%)
3	11 (33.30%)	53 (37.30%)	108 (38.40%)	52 (33.50%)	30 (50.00%)
4	0 (0.00%)	10 (7.00%)	18 (6.40%)	10 (6.50%)	1 (1.70%)
Total	33 (100.00%)	142 (100.00%)	281 (100.00%)	155 (100.00%)	60 (100.00%)

Pearson Chi-Square= 0.413, df = 12, Asymp. Sig. = 0.413

Source: Author's Calculation

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Table 6.4 Crosstabutaion between subjective happiness level and educational level

Subjective happiness level	Education level				
	Uneducated	Primary school	High school	Diploma	Higher than diploma
1	2 (20.00%)	56 (12.40%)	33 (20.90%)	2 (13.30%)	0 (0.00%)
2	3 (30.00%)	205 (45.40%)	58 (36.70%)	7 (46.70%)	2 (15.38%)
3	4 (40.00%)	166 (36.70%)	59 (37.30%)	5 (33.30%)	7 (53.85%)
4	1 (10.00%)	25 (5.50%)	8 (5.10%)	1 (6.70%)	4 (30.77%)
Total	10 (100.00%)	452 (100.00%)	158 (100.00%)	15 (100.00%)	13 (100.00%)

Pearson Chi-Square= 37.707, df = 18, Asymp. Sig. = 0.024

Source: Author's Calculation

Table 6.5 Crosstabutaion between subjective happiness level and location

Subjective happiness level	Chiang Mai	Chiang Rai	Lampang
1	26 (11.50%)	14 (6.20%)	55 (25.10%)
2	94 (41.40%)	106 (47.10%)	83 (37.90%)
3	93 (41.00%)	97 (43.10%)	64 (29.20%)
4	14 (6.20%)	8 (3.60%)	17 (7.80%)
Total	227 (100.00%)	225 (100.00%)	219 (100.00%)

Pearson Chi-Square= 42.017, df = 6, Asymp. Sig. = 0.000

Source: Author's Calculation

## 6.2 Objective happiness index and its measurement

Objective happiness pertains to the degree to which the requirements for having a high quality of life (e.g., basic needs, home ownership, freedom, and education) are met. Objective well-being theory is typically supported by a list of requirements people should obtain to lead a good life; these requirements are universal and constant across societies (Guillen and Velazco, 2006; Promphakping, 2006). In this dissertation, objective happiness was measured using a composite index that represents the level of happiness from various factors, except income.

This index comprised seven dimensions, namely, economics, social status, family, health status, culture and religion, as well as education and freedom. Each dimension consisted of three elements, namely, physical, individual beliefs, and social conventions. To evaluate the objective happiness index, 57 questions were used (Table 6.6; see Appendix C for further details).

Table 6.6 Number of questions used for calculating objective happiness composite index in each dimension

Dimensions	Number of questions		
	Physical elements	Individual beliefs elements	Social conventions elements
Economics	12	4	-
Social status	2	3	6
Family	3	2	-
Health status	7	3	-
Culture and religion	4	5	-
Education	1	-	-
Freedom	-	3	2
Total	29	20	8

This index was particularly calculated through five steps developed from the research of Thapsuwan (2007). These procedures are explained in the succeeding paragraphs.

**First step:** The answer for each question was scored. The score added up one point in each step based on the theory of happiness and the literature review. For example, a question regarding current debt was raised in the physical element of the economics dimension. Each answer was scored according to the following benchmark:

More than 60,000 Baht	= 0 score
40,001 - 60,000 Baht	= 1 score
20,001 - 40,000 Baht	= 2 score
1 - 20,000 Baht	= 3 score
No Debt	= 4 score

**Second step:** Using the below formula, the score was adjusted from the first step by appointing 1 as a full score to alter the equally based score.

Adjusted score = score from first step/ the highest score of answer in the same question

For instance, farmer had 30,000 Baht debt. In the first step in which the highest score that can be obtained was 4, this farmer scored 2. Therefore, the adjusted score of this farmer's answer was  $= \frac{2}{4} = 0.5$  (this farmer had 0.5 out of 1).

**Third step:** The overall score of each element was calculated in each dimension based on a full score of 10. For example, 12 questions were raised in the physical element of the economics dimension (Table 6.6); thus, the overall score was calculated using the following formula:

Overall score = (adjusted score question1+ adjusted score question2 + adjusted score question3+ ...+ adjusted score question 12)  $\times \frac{10}{12}$ .

**Forth step:** The mean score of each dimension was calculated and was classified as either economics mean score (D1), social status mean score (D2), family mean score (D3), health status mean score (D4), culture and religion mean score (D5), education mean score (D6), and freedom mean score (D7) (Table 6.7).

**Fifth step:** The objective happiness index was measured with the following formula:

$$\text{Objective happiness index} = \left( \sum_{i=1}^7 D_i \right) / 7$$

Table 6.7 The details of objective happiness index calculation

Dimensions	Number of questions (Indicators)			Mean of each dimension
	Physical elements	Individual beliefs elements	Social conventions elements	
Economics	XX (out of 10)	XX (out of 10)	-	D1
Social status	XX (out of 10)	XX (out of 10)	XX (out of 10)	D2
Family	XX (out of 10)	XX (out of 10)	-	D3
Health status	XX (out of 10)	XX (out of 10)	-	D4
Culture and religion	XX (out of 10)	XX (out of 10)	-	D5
Education	XX (out of 10)	-	-	D6
Freedom	-	XX (out of 10)	XX (out of 10)	D7
Objective happiness				Mean D1 to D7

Table 6.8 Mean score of each dimension from objective happiness calculation

Dimensions	Mean score
Economics	5.78
Social status	6.84
Family	7.01
Health status	5.08
Culture and religion	7.37
Education	3.34
Freedom	7.84
Objective happiness	6.18

Source: Author's Calculation

In particular, this table shows that the score of education dimension was noticeably the lowest at 3.34 out of 10. This finding indicates that the educational structure of farmers is generally at the average. Among all dimensions, freedom received the highest score because Thailand is ruled by democracy. During the data-gathering period, Yingluck Shinawatra governed the country before the political demonstration and coup d'état. After Shinawatra was dismissed from her office, the Thai people experienced their absolute freedom, which explains their relatively high score in this dimension.

Culture and religion received the second highest score (7.37), denoting the regional practice, regional belief, and cultural inheritance of Thai farmers. The family dimension came in third with an average score of 7.01. This observation implies that the farmers have a strong family proximity. To scrutinize the detail of objective happiness calculation in each dimension, this study defined the significant perspective of each dimension in the subsequent paragraphs.

## 1. Economics dimension

Approximately 31.70% of farmers own less than 5 rai of land, whereas only 22.20% own 6 rai to 10 rai of land. Impressively, 73.20% of Thai farmers have their own property; the remaining percentage is only renting a land or has another kind of deal.

Roughly half of the farmers herd animals in their household, and they generally own 17 units as part of their asset (Table 6.9).

Table 6.9 Economics dimension

Description	Details	Number (%)
Amount of land (rai)	0-5	213 (31.70%)
	6-10	149 (22.20%)
	11-15	90 (13.40%)
	16-20	34 (5.10)
	>20	71 (10.60%)
	Missing	114 (17.00%)
Type of occupancy	Own	491 (73.20%)
	Rent	117 (26.4%)
	the others	3 (0.40%)
Style of house	Wooden House	174 (25.90%)
	Brick House	187 (27.90)
	Half wood half brick	310 (46.20)
livestock	Herd	326 (49.60)
	Do not herd	345 (51.40%)

Source: Author's Survey

## 2. Social status dimension

This dimension represents the farmers' community or village strength. This study determined that the level of trust, cooperation, and strength of farmers within their respective communities is relatively high. For example, the average score of the farmers' community satisfaction was 3.94, and their pride to be part of their community was 3.91 out of 5 (Table 6.10). This score illustrates social capital.

The social capital of the farmer community is relatively high according to each perspective. This observation demonstrates that the rural society manifests collectivism, which contributes to the close relationship and assistance among locals who are mostly blood relatives. Rural people have higher social capital than urban people, especially in Asian countries, including Thailand.

Table 6.10 Social status dimension

Description	Average score (out of five)
Level of trust in community	3.86
Level of cooperation among locals	3.86
Level of pride to be a part of community	3.91
Safetiness in community	3.90
Community satisfaction	3.94

Source: Author's Survey

## 3. Family dimension

This dimension portrays the farmers' level of family assistance and proximity. The research findings showed that the level of assistance and proximity in agricultural household is high (Table 6.11) because farmers sustain or live with their extended family. Over 31% of farmers have more than four members in their family, and their relatives

tend to settle relatively near them. These circumstances explain the relatively high level of farmers' proximity and assistance among their relatives.

Table 6.11 Family dimension

Details	Average score (out of five)
Frequency of Seeing Relatives	3.75
Level of assistance when facing any problem	3.42
Frequency of communication among family members	3.76
Time spending with family and relatives	3.81

Source: Author's Survey

#### 4. Health status dimension

This dimension refers to one's physical and mental health. In the physical health context, most farmers are relatively old, which explains why most of them face some health issues. In particular, 38.00% of farmers suffer from a number of medical problems, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart diseases. Nonetheless, only a few farmers are frequently admitted to the hospital. The survey results showed that 53.72% of farmers have no severe illness until they visit their physician as required during the year, and 89.85% do not seek admission in the hospital. In spite of their old age, Thai farmers are relatively healthy probably because their tasks are already a form of exercise and outdoor work. The majority of the farmers also enjoy a healthy lifestyle without any risk behaviors such as alcohol drinking and tobacco smoking.

Similar to their physical health, the mental health of farmers is also considered good. This dimension was measured using the optimistic and self-esteem index. In particular, 64.08% and 63.64% of farmers rated their optimistic and self-esteem as 3 and 4 out of 5, respectively. This high self-esteem score may be due to the fact that most farmers are males who are leaders of the family in the Thai society. Thus, these farmers perceive themselves higher than the females, continuously holding a high self-esteem. In addition,

Thai farmers live in rural areas, which are peaceful and laidback compared with an urban environment, thereby contributing to their good mental health (Table 6.12).

Table 6.12 Health status dimension

Description	Details	Number (%)
Health problems (diabetes, bloods pressure, heart diseases)	Yes	255 (38.00%)
	No	416 (62.00%)
The frequency of seeing doctors during the year (times)	0	361 (53.80%)
	1	144 (21.46%)
	2	6 (0.89%)
	> 2	160 (23.85%)
The frequency of admit in hospital during the year (times)	0	603 (89.87%)
	1	51 (7.60%)
	2	12 (1.79%)
	3-4	5 (0.75%)
The frequency of exercise in one week	0	153 (22.80%)
	1-2	201 (29.96%)
	3-4	220 (32.79%)
	> 4	97 (14.46%)
Smoking behavior	Non smoking	555 (82.71%)
	Smoking	116 (17.29%)
Drinking behavior	Non drinking	395 (58.87%)
	Drinking	276 (41.13%)
Optimistic index	2-3	134 (19.97%)
	3-4	430 (64.08%)
	4-5	107 (15.95%)
Self-esteem index	2-3	110 (16.39%)
	3-4	427 (63.64%)
	4-5	134 (19.97%)

Source: Author's Survey

## 5. Culture and Religion Dimension

Among all surveyed farmers, 69.30% of them admitted that they pray only on special religious days, whereas 19.23% pray only once a week. The results also showed that 58.42% of the farmers follow the “Sangha-vatthu 4” doctrine from low to moderate level, whereas only 1.79% highly intensely follow such principle. Sangha-vatthu 4 refers to the principles that bond people to achieve social solidarity and consists of Dàna, Piyavàcà, Atthacariyà, and Samànatatà. In sum, Thai farmers apply moral values into their daily life, strongly believing in them. These farmers also practice religious activities regularly and have therefore developed a strong bond with Buddhist temples.

This study also determined that Thai farmers only moderately (2 to 3 out of 5) give and share their blessings to other people. These farmers give value more to “giving” in terms of money, such as donating money to foundations, than in terms of labor and sharing, such as participating in community landscape development or volunteering in any projects. In fact, 71.1% of the farmers admitted that they do not participate in any volunteering activities of foundations without compensation, and 55.2% of them do not volunteer in any public campaigns at all.

These farmers also prefer more to give to specific receivers such as giving to beggars or their relatives than giving in general such as giving donations to educational institutions or natural disaster victims.

A significant finding of this study is that the tradition of gathering for growing rice without any compensation or payment has been neglected. The survey results showed that 37.85% of farmers are uninterested in gathering for growing rice without any compensation at all. This tradition comes from a long historical social solidarity, and it establishes relationship, unity, harmony, and reliance within a community. Nowadays, the majority of the primary outsourcing labors in the agricultural sector come from employment (Table 6.13).

Table 6.13 Culture and religion dimension

Description	Details	Number (%)
Frequency of praying during the Week	Only on special religious day	465 (69.30%)
	One day per week	129 (19.23%)
	everyday	77 (11.48%)
The “Sangha-vatthu 4” index	1-2	58 (8.64%)
	2-3	392 (58.42%)
	3-4	209 (31.15%)
	4-5	12 (1.79%)
The giving and sharing behavior index	0-1	111 (16.54%)
	1-2	148 (22.06%)
	2-3	242 (36.07%)
	3-4	113 (16.84%)
	4-5	57 (8.49%)
Frequency if gathering for growing rice without any compensation or payment	Not at all often	254 (37.85%)
	Slightly often	95 (14.16%)
	Moderately often	245 (36.51%)
	Very often	77 (11.48%)

Source: Author’s Survey

## 6. Education Dimension

Agriculturist is a career that is considered a low educational occupation. This study determined that 69.80% of farmers completed their primary education, and 24.40% finished high school. Only 2.00% of Thai farmers have higher than a diploma’s degree (Table 6.14).

Table 6.14 Education dimension

Education level	Uneducated	Primary school	High school	Diploma	Higher than diploma
Number	10	452	158	15	13
(%)	(1.50%)	(69.80%)	(24.40%)	(2.30%)	(2.00%)

Source: Author's Survey

## 7. Freedom

This study identified that most farmers believe that the Thai society provides them with a high level of freedom (i.e., freedom of speech and thought), social equality, and accessibility to public services, conforming well to the country's democratic form of government (Table 6.15).

Table 6.15 Freedom dimension

Freedom	Details	Number (%)
The Freedom degree of free speech	Slightly	30 (4.47%)
	Moderately	249 (37.11%)
	Strongly	316 (47.09%)
	Very strongly	76 (11.33%)
The degree of freedom in voting	Slightly	21 (3.13%)
	Moderately	217 (32.34%)
	Strongly	340 (50.67%)
	Very strongly	93 (13.86%)
The freedom degree of belonging to or support any party	Slightly	20 (2.98%)
	Moderately	214 (31.89%)
	Strongly	326 (48.58%)
	Very strongly	111 (16.54%)

Table 6.15 (continued)

Freedom	Details	Number (%)
The feeling about “Thailand is a fair and equal society”	Slightly	13 (1.94%)
	Moderately	219 (32.64%)
	Strongly	324 (48.29%)
	Very strongly	115 (17.14%)
The feeling about “Thailand is not discriminated based on ethnic or national origin, color, race, religion, or sex”	Slightly	14 (2.09%)
	Moderately	218 (32.49%)
	Strongly	318 (47.39%)
	Very strongly	121 (18.03%)

Source: Author’s Survey

### 8. Overall objective happiness

The objective happiness index was measured, and the results indicated that 37.85% of farmers have an objective happiness index ranging from 5 to 6, and 35.47% have an objective happiness index varying between 6 and 7. The mean objective happiness index was 6.18 with minimum at 4.08 and maximum at 8.50 (Table 6.16). The objective happiness index was almost normally distributed without any difference value (Figure 6.3). The finding entails that Thai farmers consider the same components for achieving a good life that lead to happiness.

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Table 6.16 Objective happiness index

Objective happiness index	Number (%)
<5	52 (7.75%)
5-6	254 (37.85%)
6-7	238 (35.47%)
7-8	113 (16.84%)
>8	14 (2.09%)
Total	671 (100.00%)

Source: Author's Calculation

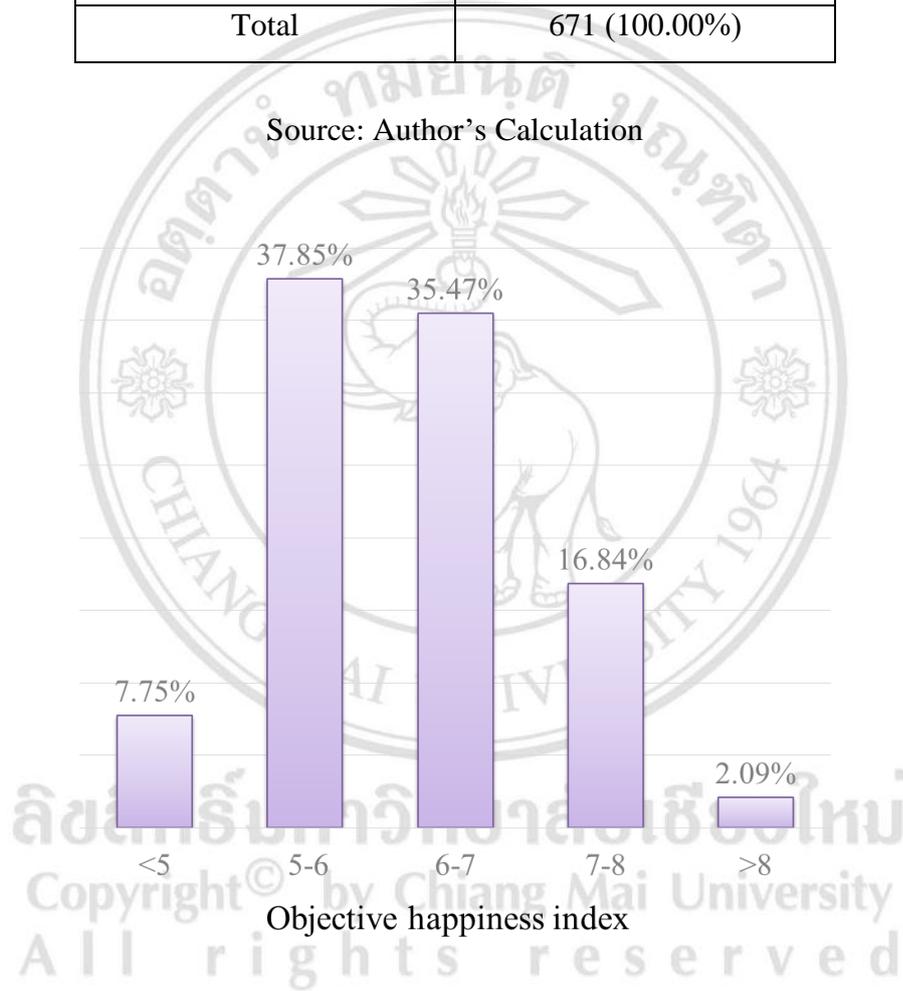


Figure 6.3 The distribution of objective happiness index