

Demographic Variations in Perceptions of 'Enjoy Life'- A Preliminary Investigation

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Abstract

This study looks at changing patterns of preferences for human activities for enjoyment in life in five different age groups, 18 to 81 years old. The data were gathered through google forms and were discussed how social, solitary, and altruistic, as well as digimedia and mobile engagement, evolve as individuals move through life. The results revealed that, while young adulthood draw enjoyment by peer socialisation and digital-based media consumption, middle age is mostly enjoy life by family ties, travel and travel, civic engagement, etc. Late adulthood showed a decline in digital leisure in favour of a blended focus on family, nature and core social networks.

Keywords: Demographic Variations, Enjoyment in Life, Age Cohorts, Social Relationships, Digital Media Engagement

Introduction

Understanding how individuals spend their time and interests throughout life provides critical insights for sociology, public health, and gerontology. Human priorities are not static; they are highly variable, influenced by career paths, family structures, physical capabilities, and changing psychological needs. This paper categorises and evaluates seven different types of activities - from people-to-people contacts to digital consumption - across five age groups to map the trajectory of adult life choices. The concept of Joy in life is interpreted in different ways in different cultures. Different cultures have different interpretations of what constitutes a joy in life. While some traditions emphasise virtue, balance, and transcendence, others associate happiness with pleasurable sensory experiences. The combination of Indian philosophy, Tamil wisdom and global thought provides a comprehensive understanding of the joys of life, from material fulfilment to spiritual bliss. Indian philosophy provides a particularly complex and nuanced answer to the question of what true enjoyment in life is. Enjoyment, also known as ananda, is a deeper state of fulfilment that results from aligning with truth, duty, and self-realization rather than just pursuing pleasure.

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Published: 27 May 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70558/IJSSR.2026.v3.i3.301114>

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Philosophical Thoughts and Quotes

According to Aristotle, leading a moral life is the path to true enjoyment. "Enjoyment depends upon ourselves," he wrote. He defined enjoyment as the realization of human potential via morality and reason rather than just pleasure. Bertrand Russell connected love and curiosity to enjoyment. "A good life is one that is guided by knowledge and motivated by love". He defined enjoyment as the balance between love and intellectual pursuits rather than self-centered indulgence. Confucius placed a strong emphasis on happiness via relationships and virtue: "The inferior man is happy in wealth; the superior man is happy in righteousness.". According to his philosophy, moral integrity and harmonious social ties are the sources of enjoyment. The foundation of Swami Vivekananda's conception of joy was selflessness. The most successful people are those who are completely selfless and don't ask for anything in return. This is the great secret to true success and happiness. He believed that joy was the result of fortitude, selflessness, and spiritual awakening.

'Enjoy life' is a common catch phrase often used by friends, colleagues and others. Even this phrase is used as a wish upon departure. An idea has occurred to us to assess what this phrase communicates to different age groups and also to infer whether there are differences in the enjoyment of life between different parts of the community. This preliminary investigation was taken up with the single objective of how the enjoyment in life differs between different age groups.

Methodology

Information on how people enjoy life is collected through online google forms using seven thematic domains such as i) being with family and relations, ii)being with friends, iii)when alone with nature, iv) digital media (movies, TV shows, mobile, video games), v) spiritual and religious activity, vi) tours and travel and vii) while serving people/society, in the age class from 18 to 81 years. The survey was carried out online using Google Forms and a questionnaire only with two questions without disclosure of their identities for six months from November, 2025 to April, 2026. About 200 voluntary responses from various age groups were received and data presented with appropriate illustrations and data analysis.

The dataset measured participation age group which included five age-based cohorts such as Emerging/Young Adults (18–30), Established Adults (31–45), Middle-Aged Adults (46–60), Seniors (61–70) and Super seniors (71–80).

Results and Discussion

The data (Table 1 & 2; Fig. 1) provide a clear hierarchy of enjoyment preferences through different age groups, and revealed distinct shifts and variations.

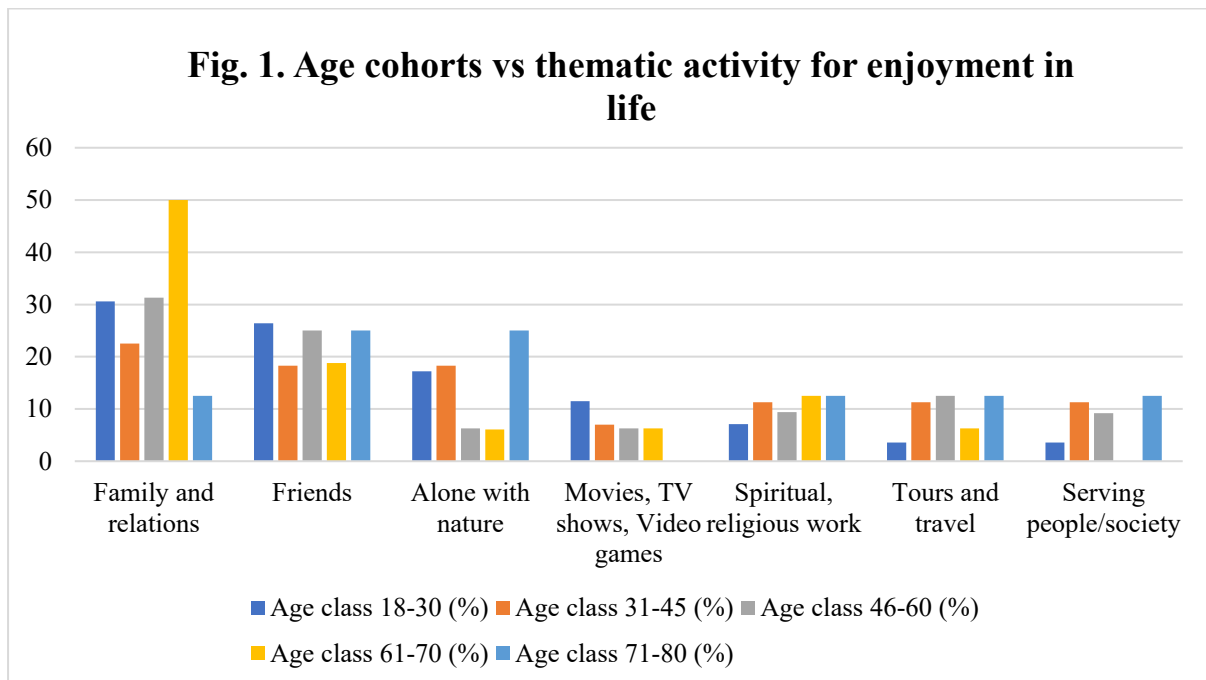
Age Cohort Influence on Thematics in Enjoyment in Life

The most important source of overall enjoyment is the feeling of 'being with family and relatives'. This activity has strong, similar peaks in early to early and mid-adulthood, but suffers from a sharp and dramatic drop in the oldest age cohort. It was followed by 'being with friends'. This peer-oriented socialization is consistently popular in the young adult age group,

reaches its peak in the 30-40-year-old cohort, falls to a low in the 60+ age group, and finally rebounds slightly in the older age group.

Table 1. Thematic activities across age cohorts

Thematic activity	Age class	Age class	Age class	Age class	Age class	mean
	18-30 (%)	31-45 (%)	46-60 (%)	61-70 (%)	71-80 (%)	
Family and relations	30.6	22.5	31.3	50	12.5	29.38
Friends	26.4	18.3	25	18.8	25	22.7
Alone with nature	17.2	18.3	6.3	6.1	25	14.58
Movies, TV shows, Video games	11.5	7	6.3	6.3	0	6.22
Spiritual, religious work	7.1	11.3	9.4	12.5	12.5	10.56
Tours and travel	3.6	11.3	12.5	6.3	12.5	9.24
Serving people/society	3.6	11.3	9.2	0	12.5	7.32
Mean	14.81	34.61	14.31	14.31	14.29	
Standard Deviation (SD)	10.99	13.89	9.86	16.81	8.63	



The thematic activity of being 'alone with nature' serves as a moderate base source of enjoyment in the intermediate tier of preferences. Both younger (18-45 age) and older (71-80 age) adults place high value on individualised environmental interaction, but it drops drastically in other age cohorts. Overall, the average of the culturally-oriented activities shows only slight variations, with spiritual and religious activities leading the way. This domain peaks in early to mid-adulthood and maintains a consistent, flat baseline throughout the two oldest age groups. On the other hand, the term 'tours and travel-' shows slightly lower average preference. Early to mid-life is when mobile leisure activity reaches its peak, middle age is when it remains moderately active and the youngest participants experience the lowest frequency.

The final categories show the lowest overall average in the study. While serving people and society yields a low aggregate preference, driven almost entirely by a large increase in the early to mid-life cohort, interest in public service falls to zero in late adulthood. Finally, the consumption of digital media through movies, TV shows and video games shows the lowest baseline preference overall. This technology-oriented hobby shows the same levels of popularity in the two youngest cohorts, declines gradually through middle- and late adulthood, and reaches an all-time low in the oldest.

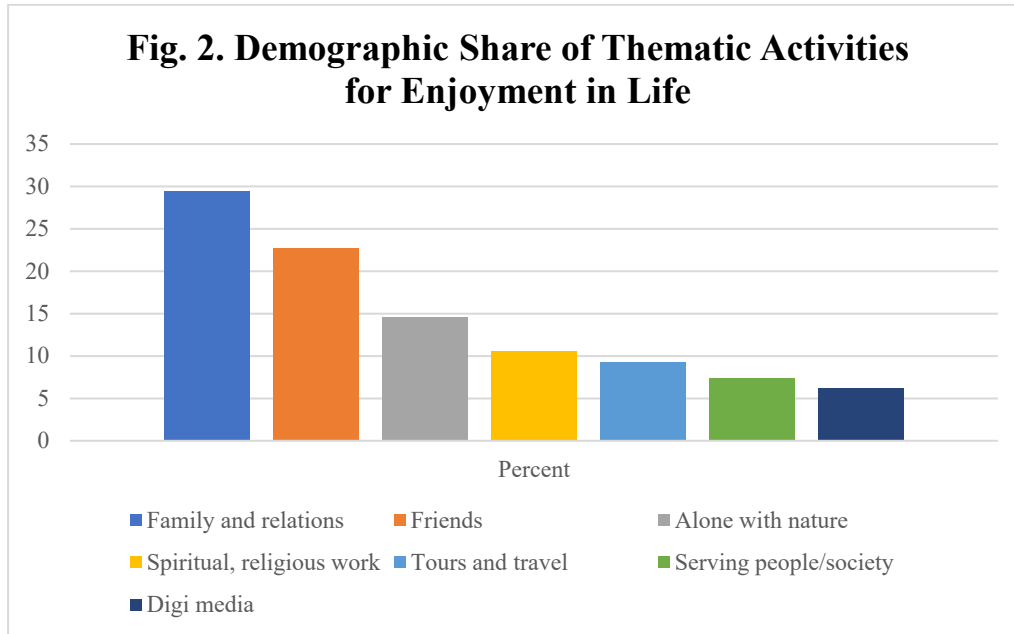
Thematic Activities Across Age Cohorts In Enjoyment In Life

What gives people the most pleasure in life? Among the seven thematic activities related to personal enjoyment, family and relatives came out with a maximum preference (Table 1 & 2; Fig.2)), with 29.38 percent of responses. This was followed closely by the theme, being with friends with 22.7 percent. Combined, these two categories account for more than half of the total response (52.08), underscoring the enduring power of family institution as the main source of happiness in our society. It is noticeable that our deeply-rooted family traditions remain the backbone of our personal happiness. The data showed that for most people - across all age groups - social interaction with family and friends remains crucial for a fulfilling life. Although this may not be true for everyone, the vast majority of people, regardless of age, agree that a happy life is based on spending time with loved ones and friends.

Table 2 Most preferred theme of enjoyment

Age class	Top thematical activities of enjoyment
18-30	Being with Family and relations, Being with Friends Alone with nature
31-45	Being with Family and relations, Being with Friends Alone with nature
46-60	Being with Family and relations, Being with Friends, Tours and travel
61-70	Being with Family and relations, Being with Friends, Spiritual, religious work

71-80	Being with Family and relations, Being with Friends Alone with nature
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Then there is the ‘alone with nature’ and ‘religious and spiritual activities’, followed by thematic leisure activities. Here, it is clear that a part of the population feels happy when alone with nature, and about six percent say that when they are alone in digimedia (Movies, TV shows, Video games, mobiles), they are happy. Here, too, the notion of individualisation is possible, as most digital activities are personal and not socialised.

A part of the population feels happy to travel and visit new places during a trip. Coercion travel makes you feel happy, but it's not common for everyone because of economics and the state of our health. The elderly cannot travel as much as the younger and middle-aged.

The survey's extremely low response rate suggested that the idea of serving society is not a joyful occasion for the majority of people. The concepts of "helping hands" and "giving is happy" are gradually fading from people's consciousness.

Foundational Theories Of Human Enjoyment And Aging

The Indian family institution is widely acknowledged for its extraordinary structural strength, adaptability and flexibility. It operates primarily on a collectivist ethos, placing a high priority on deep interdependence, emotional attachment and intergenerational socio-economic support. Unlike Western individualistic models, the Indian family serves as a vital informal social safety net and psychological safety net for its members. While processes such as urbanization and modernization have shifted physical living patterns from communal to nuclear, the cultural ideal of solidarity - characterised by shared responsibilities, family networks, and collective decision-making - remains very resilient and intact.

The robustness, resiliency, and stability of the Indian family institution are well documented in sociological, psychological, and anthropological literature. The Indian family functions as a collectivistic, interdependent system that offers its members strong social, economic, and psychological safety nets in contrast to Western individualistic models. Chekki, D. A. (1974) showed in his sociological study that India's extended family network is still remarkably robust, resilient, and adaptable in spite of urbanization and modernization. Mendiratta and Kumar (2020) conducted empirical research and showed that Indian joint and extended family settings help younger generations develop a high degree of emotional stability and psychological resilience. Shahi and Srivastava (2018) talked about how the traditional family structure serves as a strong psychological first line of defense and "in-built buffer" against contemporary environmental and economic stresses.

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST): The high overall average for 'being with family and relatives' supports the Carstensen (2021) Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST), which declares that the elderly shifts motivation towards emotionally meaningful, close-knit relationships. But the dramatic waning in the oldest cohort suggests that this primary social network will eventually be disrupted by physical weakness or the loss of kin.

Convoy Model of Social Relations: The steady popularity and late-life rebound of 'being with friends' fits Kahn and Antonucci's (1980) model of a crowd. Individuals navigate life within a protective layer of social relationships; social engagement peaks in early adulthood, declines during the busy middle-life, and stabilizes again at the end of life, to counter loneliness.

Psychosocial Development and Gerotranscendence: The sharp peak of middle age in the theme of serving people and society at the same time, reflects the Erickson Generativity phase, when middle-aged people are focused on how they can make a contribution to the next generation. The late-life revival of the phrase alone with nature, on the other hand, is consistent with Torstam's theory (2005) of gerotranscendence, which describes the natural transition from materialistic social roles to solitary contemplation as one grows older.

Continuity Theory: The minimal overall preference and the absolute fall in digital media (movies, TV shows, video games, mobile phones) fits the Atchley Continuity Theory (1989). Older cohorts maintain their wellbeing by retaining familiar, analogue habits from their youth rather than adopting newer, digital media for entertainment.

Conclusion

The transition from young adulthood to middle age marks a shift from self-centered and relationship-oriented behaviour towards social and family responsibility. The middle-aged cohort is the peak period for civic participation and spiritual exploration, which is likely to be correlated with career stability and empty nest transitions. For the older and super-older cohorts, the total disappearance of digital media suggests a generational digital divide or a conscious refusal to use the screen for sitting in front of it, in favour of tactile, real-world experiences. This oldest cohort emphasizes high-value, fundamental dynamics such as family, nature, and reconnecting with friends

Life-time evolution dictates a fluid allocation of personal time. The enjoyment of digital media and the drawing of happiness through social dependence decline linearly with age. Middle age is a crucible of social service and spiritual reflection, while later adulthood is a return to low-stimulus, high-impact loneliness with nature and close family ties.

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