Change in Country-Related Emotions in Nepal from 2021 to 2024: A Trend Study

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Abstract

Emotion-related longitudinal studies are rare in Nepal. This study aimed to track changes in various emotions, including basic and country-related emotions, over four years. Data were collected from 286 individuals over four years in four time periods using the survey method. The data were processed in trend analysis and time series regression analysis. This trend study showed that basic emotions did not change consistently over time. Some country-related emotions like country pride and country love showed a consistent decline/incline. Moreover, anger toward leaders was also seen consistently rising. The conclusion is that tracking changes in basic emotions may not be useful in the future. However, tracking changes of country-related emotions can give insights to modify the government's behaviors, programs, policies, and decisions.

Keywords: basic emotions, country-related emotions, anger, jealousy, love

Change in Country-Related Emotions in Nepal from 2021 to 2024: A Trend Study

Emotion is strong feeling with complex reactions (Baron & Misra, 2016) that include physiological responses (e.g. variations in blood pressure and heart rate), subjective experiences/cognitive evaluation (Feldman, 2019a) we label as joy, happiness, fear, anger, sorrow, and disgust, and expressive behaviors (e.g. facial expressions or changes in posture) that convey these internal states. Emotions play a vital role in various aspects of behavior, including personal well-being and psychological disorders. Moreover, they significantly impact cognition, shaping or even dictating our judgments and decisions in meaningful ways. Emotions help us prepare for action, plan for the future, and behave with others (Feldman, 2019b). Emotions can be negative (such as anger, sadness, and fear) or positive (such as joy, love, and pride).

Emotions have feelings and intentionality, which consists of evaluation, cognition, and motivation (Ben-Zeev, 1987). Emotions have a mental, behavioral, and neurophysiological basis. Ben-Zeev considers it a mental state. Emotions are object-directed. Emotions are not isolated internal entities but ongoing attitudes of the whole agent with public and private features. Intentions, goals, and social context shape emotional experiences (Campos et al., 1994). Emotions and the mind have evolved through natural selection to increase fitness or adaptation (Plutchik, 2001).

Anger, fear, disgust, sadness, and enjoyment are basic emotions with universal facial expressions and changes in voice (Ekman, 2003, 2016). Surprise may not be a basic emotion. Our brains rapidly and unconsciously assess situations for their emotional relevance. Emotions are short-lived, intense reactions, whereas moods are longer-lasting, less intense emotional states. Basic emotions are universal, evolved for basic life tasks, and have distinct physiological patterns (Ekman, 1999). They are fleeting in duration and quick to start. They occur unbidden

and are associated with specific thought patterns, memories, and mental images. Emotions may be felt with little or no consciousness (Feldman, 2019a). Emotions also play a role in rational/non-emotional decisions.

In 2020, a pandemic-induced lockdown caused positive, negative, and changing emotions (Adhikari, 2020). Fear, sadness, and frustration were common but were counterbalanced by hope, happiness, and personal growth. The nature of emotions changed from moment to moment.

Emotional expression or regulation is contributed by social and cultural factors. For example, Brahman and Chhetri children in Nepal could express and hide negative emotions more than Tamang children. Tamang children discovered this on their own, but Brahman and Chhetri children were taught emotion regulation (Cole & Tamang, 1998). Nepali mothers reacted punitively to children's emotions (Cho et al., 2022). They also showed distress reactions.

Emotions have a social nature. Emotions are elicited by, expressed toward, and regulated to influence others or comply with social norms (Van Kleef et al., 2016). Van Kleef et al. have shown the need for further research into the social nature of emotion. So, this research, which mostly focuses on changes in emotions toward country-related aspects, is justified.

Theoretical Framework

Affective adaptation theory (or hedonic adaptation) is a theory relevant to this study. It says that despite vicissitudes in life, people tend to return to their normal level of feeling emotions after a rise or dip of emotions for some time. Speeds of adaptation to positive or negative emotions differ (Lyubomirsky, 2012). People adapt quickly to positive emotions/events but more slowly to negative emotions/events.

Methods

Participants

A total of 286 participants participated in the study. The aim was to stop at 300, but for unexplained reasons, Google removed the Forms. A possible reason is the removal (by reporting to Google) from my earlier college with which I had shared the form as editor and forgot to remove the editorship after I terminated my affiliation with it. The participants were the college students who had come to college(s) to pursue their bachelor's degrees and the participants they shared the link of Google Forms with. Participants ranged from 15 to 55 years. The mean age was 23.18 (SD=5.72), with 86% being emerging adults (18-29 years; Arnett, 2014).

Measures

A Google Forms was created. In the sociodemographic section, participants were asked their age. In the Emotions section, they were asked about 19 emotions they felt in the last 24 hours. The emotions were basic emotions and the emotions about country (love, pride) or related aspects (e.g., anger toward leaders) as shown in the Appendix 1. Since the Nepali people have been exposed to the international scenario in a daily basis in the last decade, the emotions related to foreigners and neighboring countries were also included (e.g., jealousy towards foreigners, negative feelings toward China/India). Cronbach's alpha for negative emotions was 0.82, and for positive emotions was 0.62. McDonald's Omega for them was 0.82 and 0.65, respectively. Alpha and Omega for country-related emotions (country pride, fear because of political reasons, country love, worry about country's future, and guilt of not contributing enough to country) were both 0.79 in this sample.

Procedure

An online survey was created. The implied consent was shown at the introduction of the form. The participation was informed to be voluntary. Students in three colleges were asked to fill out the survey and distribute the link among people with an age similar to theirs. The privacy and confidentiality of participants were regarded.

The data were collected beginning in 2021. The new participants were approached each year till the end of 2024. In other words, the trend study continued for four consecutive years. The project had to be terminated after Google Forms disappeared from Google Drive for reasons that Google did not provide. Table 1 gives the duration of time points in the trend study.

Table 1

Four Timepoints of Data Collection

Timepoint	Start	End	f	Mean Age (SD)
T1	2021/11/15	2022/2/6	31	21.74 (6.19)
T2	2023/3/7	2023/4/24	77	22.39 (5.60)
T3	2023/5/6	2023/9/20	34	21.71 (3.65)
T4	2024/1/30	2024/12/17	144	24.26 (5.92)

Data Analysis

With the help of Gemini and ChatGPT, scripts were created for R to plot graphs. Time series regression analysis (in JASP) was used to see if there were significant changes in emotions across the years. Jamovi was used to calculate reliability statistics.

Results

The descriptives for all emotions (and their four time periods) are given in Appendix 2. The emotions that showed consistent pattern were anger toward leader, love toward country, and

pride toward country. The last emotion was in decreasing trend and the former two were in increasing trend. Figure 1 below shows that the first three emotions have consistent trends/patterns, but the last emotion does not. Change in time (at T2 and T4) were not significant.

Figure 1

Trend Lines for Change in Emotions
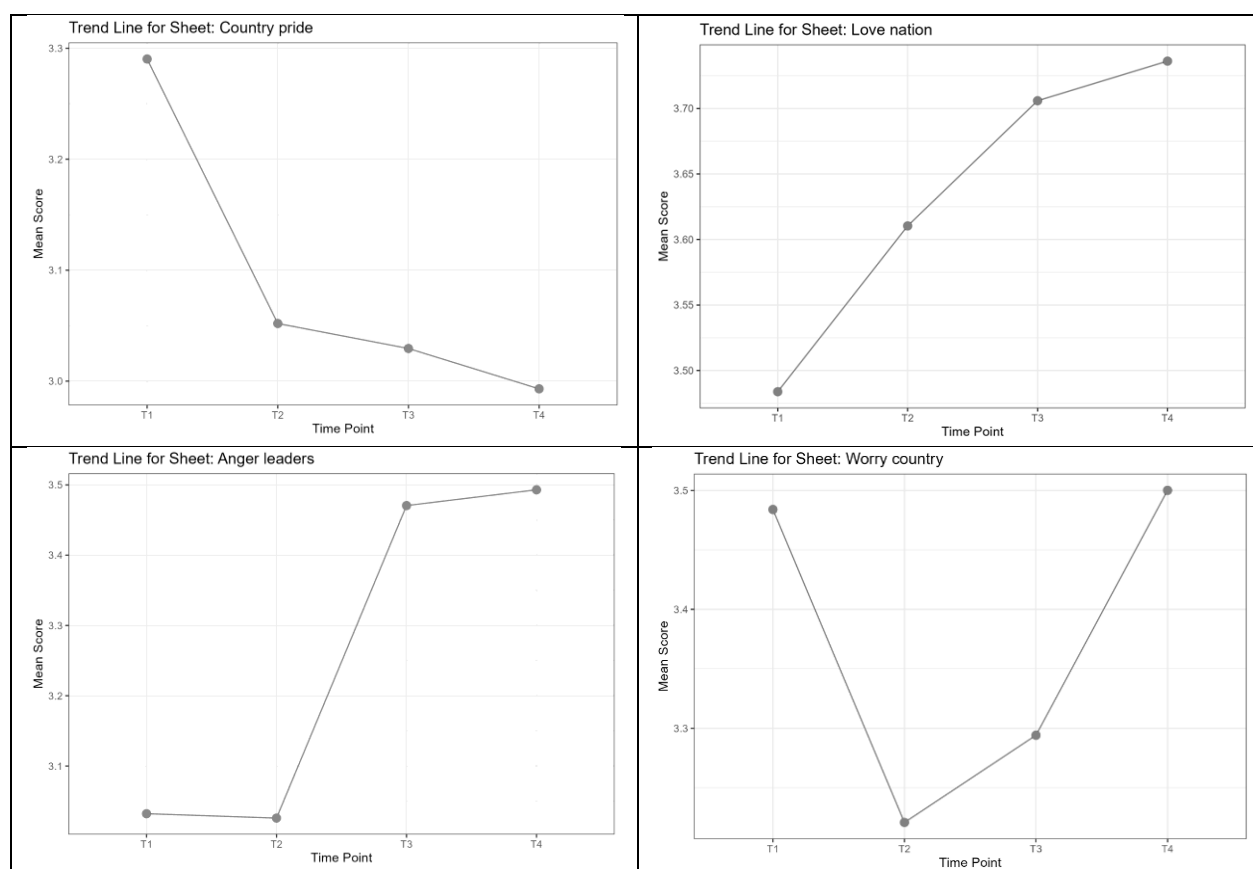
Note. The data in Excel Sheets were imported into R to draw trendlines.

Time series regression analysis showed that models with jealousy toward foreigners or other negative feelings (hatred) were significant. As shown in Table 2, the changes were not significant across various timepoints. Insignificant models and their coefficients have not been showed.

Table 2

Time Series Regression Analysis for Two Emotions (df1=3, df2=282)

Emotion	Model		b	SE	t	p	Model R^2	RMSE	ANOVA F	p
Jealosy Foreigners	M_0	c	2.13	0.08	25.96	< .001	0	1.38	8.26	< .001
	M_1	c	2	0.25	8.16	< .001	0.08	1.33		
		T2	-0.12	0.29	-0.4	0.69				
		T3	0.85	0.34	2.52	0.01				
		T4	0.12	0.27	0.44	0.66				
Hatred India	M_0	c	2.13	0.08	25.96	< .001	0	1.39	4.12	0.01
	M_1	c	2	0.25	8.16	< .001	0.03	1.36		
		T2	-0.12	0.29	-0.4	0.69				
		T3	0.85	0.34	2.52	0.01				
		T4	0.12	0.27	0.44	0.66				

Change in time explained 8% of the variance in jealousy scores. Change in time explained 3% of variance in hatred scores. These are both small but meaningful effects. There is a notable spike at time point 3 for both emotions. These findings could point to a contextual or historical event around this time point (e.g., political, or social change) that temporarily raised negative emotions. Time in general is not a strong predictor (low R^2), but the specific increase at T3 is statistically and substantively interesting.

Discussion

Interpretation of Results

Basic emotions fluctuate in people's lives. However, this collective representation of emotions revealed that they are not significantly different across periods (from 2021 to 2024). This same pattern is expected for the time to come because life is the mixture of good and bad emotions always. As predicted by hedonic adaptation theory, the basic emotions return to set

point, and significant changes might not have been noticed. It is the decrement in the emotional intensity of favorable and unfavorable conditions over time (Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999).

Regarding jealousy toward foreigners and negative feelings toward neighboring countries, no consistent trend was observed, but significant differences in emotion were found between specific time points. There might have been nonlinear changes. Moreover, the negative feelings might have come out because of some deals between the neighboring country and Nepal or the contrast between the achievements of Nepal and foreign countries. The Nepali have been exposed to the global scenario of economy and development, and they compare those things related to Nepal. Consequently, negative feelings have emerged because Nepal has not been able to catch up.

The results may indicate that neighboring countries should be balanced in their diplomatic relationship with Nepal, or they should improve the public image, at least if their behaviors are just fine. Negative feelings toward neighboring nations did not show a consistent trend, even though a significant change was noticed. Even significant, the lack of consistent pattern (or fluctuating mean values) does not indicate a clear trend. So, it can be concluded that Nepali people do not hate their neighboring nations, but the changing dynamics between Nepal and these countries overwhelm them with negative emotions sometimes.

It is the right time to catch up with the foreigners' pace of development; the government should be proactive. Doing so may keep country pride in check, country love intact, and placate the anger toward leaders.

The findings may be interpreted with reference to the events that happened during the time of data collection. For example, Nepal was fighting with COVID-19 in November 2021,

president had dissolved parliament six months before this month, there were protests against MCC, an American corporation in February 2022, Prachanda, the then prime-minister had switched his partners in government in March 2023, there was an uproar about degrading air quality in Nepal in April 2023, there were floods in Koshi in June 2023, Nepal exported electricity for the first time in July 2023, the highest amount of remittance was collected in October 2023, increase in suicide rates was brought to notice in August 2023, Nepal welcomed most number of tourists in 11 months as reported in February 2024, political instability continued in March 2024, there were floods and landslides in many districts in September 2024, and inflation rose very high in December 2024. In the last month of 2024, a strong government with a majority in parliament could not deliver expected outcomes, and a popular politician from the opposition party faced corruption charges.

Comparison With Past Studies

Emotions are caused by specific events or objects (Robbins & Judge, 2024). So, change in country-caused emotions were studied in this research. The study done during the pandemic showed that people have an amazing ability for resilience and they display positive emotions despite sources of distress because they have the adaptational ability (Adhikari, 2020). So, emotions do not last long to bother people. After all, emotions have been defined as cursory feelings. The lack of consistency in most of the emotions may be attributed to the very momentary nature of emotions.

Moods, personality traits, and emotional disorders are related to specific emotions (Ekman, 2016). So, studying emotions is always needed. When they are persistently negative, regulating them is necessary, too. For example, walking in the natural environment (versus

walking in an urban area) has been shown to boost positive emotions and decrease negative affect (Bratman et al., 2015).

There are some areas in which further studies are needed. What triggers emotions is unknown. There is disagreement among psychologists on cognitive appraisal and physiology related to emotions (Ekman, 2016).

Limitations and Strengths

The time points were not equidistant. So, the trend should be cautiously considered. The sample was convenient and dominated by young adults. The findings may not be generalizable because of small sample size and unequal sample sizes across time points. The basic emotions should not have been collected to keep the survey short. Undirected emotions should not have been assessed because these keep changing. The basic emotions reset to the set points. In other words, even the people from poor nations learn to be happy over time. If some person transitions to poverty, they may begin to accept and adapt, and gain a set point of emotions.

A strength of the study is that it measured the change in emotions longitudinally. Another strength is that it tested the widespread rumors or claims empirically. For example, the data have supported the widespread claim that anger toward leaders is increasing but refuted the claim that love toward the nation is decreasing. However, the claim that the feeling that 'I am proud to be Nepali' is waning was found to be true.

Implications

The findings showed that general/basic emotions were not significantly changing, but country-related emotions were. Such a finding is important theoretically. In other words, generic or basic emotions keep fluctuating regardless of circumstances. People have the set point of

feeling them. However, a consistent pattern is found in country-related emotions because they are very much affected by political, social, and cultural developments in the society.

Practically, the pattern in data should be a wake-up call to stakeholders like the government to adapt their behaviors so that people can have positive emotions. Moreover, circumstances should be created so that people will have the right attitude toward their countries. If the behaviors of stakeholders are just fine, they should introduce interventions to drive people's emotions toward positivity. So, a positive branding is needed.

Future Research

The research of this nature should go on. The country-related emotions should be consistently assessed, and the changes over time should be evaluated in the future also. Moreover, specific event-related emotions can be assessed in the future. For example, emotions related to a particular decision of the government may be assessed. Such assessment may work as systematic feedback for the government.

Conclusion

The basic emotions were not found to vary significantly across time. Some country-related emotions showed a consistent pattern of change. For example, country love was steadily increasing, but country pride was steadily decreasing. Moreover, anger toward leaders was in a constant incline. In addition, even though not consistent, there were significant changes in negative emotions toward neighbors and jealousy toward foreigners. These changes in emotions should be a wake-up call for related stakeholders. For example, the government should be aware that country pride is declining. It may utilize the capital of country love incline for some good cause. Theoretically, tracking changes in emotions may be useful if they are not basic emotions and are country- or any other target/event-related.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire Used in the Study

Socioeconomic Section

What is your age? तपाईंको उमेर कति हो?

Emotions Section

In the last 24 hours, how much did you feel the emotions given below? Choose one answer in the five-point scale. पछिल्लो २४ घण्टामा, तपाईंले तल दिइएका भावनाहरू कति महसुस गर्नुभयो? पाँच-बिन्दुको मापनमा उत्तर दिनुहोस्।

1= Did not feel at all बिल्कुलै महसुस गरिनँ

5= Felt very much धेरै नै महसुस गरें

1. Anger रिस

2. Happiness खुशी

3. Sadness दुःख

4. Surprise अचम्म

5. Disgust घिन

6. Fear डर

7. Loneliness एक्लोपन

8. Bliss आनन्द

9. Proud of your country देशप्रति गर्व

10. Fear because of political situation राजनितिक कारणले गर्दा डर

11. Anger towards government सरकारसँग रिस

12. Love to this nation यो देशको माया

13. Jealousy of the foreigners
विदेशीहरुको ईर्ष्या

14. Hatred toward India भारतसँग
घृणा

15. Hatred toward China चीनसँग
घृणा

16. Worry about your future आफ्नो
भविष्यको चिन्ता

17. Worry about country's future
देशको भविष्यको चिन्ता

18. Anger toward leaders
नेताहरुसँग रिस

19. Guilt of not contributing
enough to country देशलाई
उचित सेवा गर्न सकिनँ भनी पश्चाताप

Appendix 2: Descriptives of Each Emotion

Table 4

Descriptives Related to Each Emotion in Four Points of Time: T1, T2, T3, and T4

Emotion	Time	Mean	SD	Mdn	Min	Max
Anger	T1	2.23	1.06	2	1	4
	T2	2.61	1.41	3	1	5
	T3	2.91	1.50	3	1	5
	T4	2.72	1.34	3	1	5
Happiness	T1	3.45	0.99	3	1	5
	T2	3.22	1.34	3	1	5
	T3	2.91	1.33	3	1	5
	T4	3.39	1.09	3	1	5
Sadness	T1	2.68	1.33	2	1	5
	T2	2.44	1.49	2	1	5
	T3	2.74	1.52	3	1	5
	T4	2.53	1.36	2	1	5
Surprise	T1	2.52	1.34	3	1	5
	T2	2.39	1.38	2	1	5
	T3	2.47	1.26	3	1	5
	T4	2.24	1.37	2	1	5
Disgust	T1	2.23	1.23	2	1	5
	T2	2.03	1.40	1	1	5

Emotion	Time	Mean	SD	Mdn	Min	Max
	T3	2.15	1.46	2	1	5
	T4	2.01	1.26	1	1	5
Fear	T1	2.48	1.26	2	1	5
	T2	2.17	1.39	2	1	5
	T3	2.71	1.22	3	1	5
	T4	2.44	1.33	2	1	5
Loneliness	T1	2.65	1.31	2	1	5
	T2	2.45	1.43	2	1	5
	T3	2.35	1.52	2	1	5
	T4	2.54	1.45	2	1	5
Bliss	T1	3.32	1.17	3	1	5
	T2	3.09	1.43	3	1	5
	T3	2.85	1.16	3	1	5
	T4	3.10	1.29	3	1	5
	T1	3.29	1.44	3	1	5
	T2	3.05	1.65	3	1	5
	T3	3.03	1.31	3	1	5
	T4	2.99	1.43	3	1	5
Fear Political	T1	2.97	1.38	3	1	5
	T2	2.68	1.67	2	1	5
	T3	3.21	1.55	3	1	5
	T4	2.99	1.50	3	1	5
Anger Government	T1	3.58	1.57	4	1	5
	T2	3.06	1.65	3	1	5
	T3	3.68	1.41	4	1	5
	T4	3.51	1.50	4	1	5
Love Nation	T1	3.48	1.52	4	1	5
	T2	3.61	1.47	4	1	5
	T3	3.71	1.38	4	1	5
	T4	3.74	1.39	4	1	5
Jealousy Foreigners	T1	2.58	1.48	2	1	5
	T2	1.83	1.17	1	1	5
	T3	3.12	1.47	3	1	5
	T4	2.14	1.35	2	1	5
Hatred India	T1	2.00	1.26	2	1	5
	T2	1.88	1.25	1	1	5
	T3	2.85	1.64	2	1	5
	T4	2.12	1.38	1	1	5
Hatred China	T1	1.65	1.20	1	1	5
	T2	1.49	0.87	1	1	4
	T3	1.97	1.11	2	1	5
	T4	1.69	1.20	1	1	5
Worry Future	T1	4.29	0.90	5	2	5
	T2	3.69	1.62	5	1	5

Emotion	Time	Mean	SD	Mdn	Min	Max
	T3	4.24	1.30	5	1	5
	T4	3.99	1.38	5	1	5
Worry Country	T1	3.48	1.39	4	1	5
	T2	3.22	1.63	4	1	5
	T3	3.29	1.51	3	1	5
	T4	3.50	1.51	4	1	5
Anger Leaders	T1	3.03	1.45	3	1	5
	T2	3.03	1.66	3	1	5
	T3	3.47	1.58	3	1	5
	T4	3.49	1.55	4	1	5
Guilt of Not Contributing Enough to the Nation	T1	2.65	1.40	3	1	5
	T2	2.27	1.29	2	1	5
	T3	2.85	1.44	3	1	5
	T4	2.46	1.25	2	1	5